

albums

TEMPLE OF THE DOG (Polygram)

Awesome is not an appropriate word for much of today's music. However, give *Temple of the Dog* a spin and you might find one of the few rock releases of this year deserving the superlative.

This record is a tribute to one Andrew Wood, late of life and Mother Love Bone. It combines the talents of Chris Cornell and Matt Cameron (Soundgarden) and some other Seattle music luminaries. The result is some of the most dynamic and heartfelt music that ever graced these ears. Songs overflow with melody, showing you what rock should sound like.

Chris Cornell's voice is in superb form here. Bluesy and yet still metallic, this man means what he says. There is no pretension or hype, just excellent songwriting power. Check out 'Wooden Jesus' or the epic 'Reach Down'.

For a one-off record, this is a masterpiece. These young men could quite safely vacate their current bands to continue this far greater prospect. However, as they say, the magic might not be there a second time.

LUKE CASEY

FISHBONE The Reality Of My Surroundings (Columbia)

Oh yeah, Fishbone. Those guys have been around forever, they pretty much beat everyone to the punch with that black guys doing rock, funky metal musical melange deal. So why aren't they huge or at least opening for the Stones? Well, basically they were never really that good. The ideas were there but most of the time the music refused to gel. When it did work it was a thing of great beauty, like their utterly ferocious metal version of 'Freddie's Dead'.

Now, after a long absence Fishbone have reentered the fray with *The Reality Of My Surroundings*, a sprawling Funkadelic-like double LP that utterly and truly removes any doubt that Fishbone were anything but geniuses awaiting their time. The whole mess comes together here, the pieces are in one place, the circuits have connected and it's one big, beautiful thing.

That 'diverse musical influences' crap really does apply cos these boys make no sense at all. One moment they're a heavy metal band with a horn section ('Behaviour Control Technician'), the next those early ska days loom into view with a punk-ska hoedown ('Housework') and there's really heavy

Sly & the Family Stones leanings throughout which is certainly something to be admired. The 70s funk deal is very obviously a big thing, the horns kick, the guitars twang and there's even some nice Sly meets Blowfly humour on 'Naz-Tee Man' with zippers helping that funk along.

It ain't all fun and games though. Fishbone can pack a serious lyrical punch behind the carnival. 'Pray To the Junkiemaker' is that rarity, an anti-drug song that seems to have some conviction, while 'Sunless Sunday' is pure positive anger, sort of like the Bad Brains but under control. In fact those DC demigods have been put alongside Fishbone and held up as the very reason why Living Colour, the Chilli Peppers, Faith No More and their countless imitators exist. That may be taking it all a little far but hell, if you've ever liked anything about those bands then this puppy is going to make you shout. Basically *The Reality Of My Surroundings* can be summed up perfectly in one word. Awesome.

KIRK GEE

THE LONG WALK Heart of Darkness (Ode Records)

A quality local independent release. Singer/main songwriter Martin Forrest writes sullen, bluesy rock songs that glower, backed by a steady down beat from his band and spiced with some plucky guitar. He sings like Graham Brazier meets Heroes era Bowie. He's something of a poet and his songs tell stories, as in 'Sleepy Town' and although he says he doesn't write love songs, 'Can Anybody See Me' with its lilting chorus and lines like 'love is all you need' is a pretty fair imitation. There's something of an English folk rock feel going down here as well. Martin Forrest is originally from England where, his CV informs us, he has toured with such bands as the Jam, the Stranglers and the Clash but don't expect the lightening flash of those bands. These songs smoulder with subdued energy but you might end up playing them more than some of their more strident cousins.

DONNA YUZWALK

LENNY KRAVITZ Mama Said (Virgin)

Kravitz — vain prat who's borrowed unashamedly from Hendrix, Lennon, Wonder et al or precocious pop revisionist with a talent for stirring the best of the late 60s into his own strange brew?

Mama Said suggests the latter. Kravitz may dress like he's been time-machined from a Hendrix orgy



Temple of Dogs

and his well publicised marriage-divorce to Lisa Bonet and the rumours over his connection with Yoko Ono may make him glossy mag fare for hairdresser's salons but beneath the outlandish posing his songs are intelligently and lovingly crafted homages to sounds that haven't lost their potency.

Listing songs with attached influences starts with 'Fields of Joy', which could be early heavy Traffic with its 'Reprise' being the slowed down drug abuse option. 'Stand By My Woman' (which one?) with its plodding piano and echo chamber, 'The Difference Is Why' and his collaboration with Sean Ono-Lennon, 'All I Ever Wanted' are Lennon pastiches of 'Imagine' and 'Mother', to varying degrees.

Hendrix gets worshipped on 'Always On The Run', 'Stop Dragging Around' and 'When The Morning Turns To Night' and the genius of Smokey Robinson can be heard floating across 'It Ain't Over Til It's Over'.

So Kravitz makes it plain where he's from and where he's at and although he looks too cool to be credible he's breathed some of his own life into some old but classic stiffs.

GEORGE KAY

THE STONEFUNKERS Harder Than Kryptonite (Metronome)

Now here's a funk-rap album worth checking out. The Stonefunkers hail from Gothenburg, Sweden, and were formed in the early 80s, consisting of four musically talented 'skateboarders' usually recruited to juice up any local party with their energetic funky rhythms.

They are now emerging in the nineties as eight dedicated funk artists whose music has evolved using the



George Thorogood



Fishbone

sound of funk from the 70s mixed with hip-hop, some serious house beats and rap.

On this, their debut album, which had the Swedish press raving, the SF, with the assistance of producer Christian Falk, deliver eleven tracks which supposedly capture the energy of their live performances. Songs such as 'Talk', 'Bassrace' and 'Sucker For Yer Love' certainly have the ability to get even the most idle legs up and dancing.

Listening to *Harder Than Kryptonite* one gets the impression that these songs are a hint of what's to come in the 90s from rap and funk groups. All in all the SFs deliver a package of



The Long Walk (L-R) Steve, Martin, Ray, Chris.

good time, rock hard funk that never lulls and with its slick production deserves to be put up there with all the other classic funk albums in your record collection.

SHANE KING

GEORGE THOROGOOD AND THE DESTROYERS Boogie People (EMI)

I'm always puzzled by blues purists (or snobs as they're more commonly known) who like those smiling white boys blues bands who are all called something like Little Herbie And The Buttvagglers yet have a downer on George. At least the boy from Delaware is honest, he doesn't pretend to be a bluesman, but he does take those blues and crank 'em up some, sort of like all the early rockabilly guys.

And crank he does, even after all these years. 'Boogie People' is pretty much your standard Thorogood fare, tracks like 'If You Don't Start Drinkin' (I'm Gonna Leave)' that kick along nicely with that classic bar band feel. There's a few stinkers here too, like the title track which is probably designed for radio play and a version of 'Mad Man Blues' which isn't so bad, it's just nowhere near as good as John Lee Hooker ever did it.

There's some gems to make it all better though: a great acoustic version of 'Can't Be Satisfied' that made me think of the rockabilly connection, a real straight version of 'Six Days On The Road' which is just a great song, and to round it all out, a Chuck Berry number. Actually, George's version of 'Hello Little Girl' is sort of a nice encapsulation of the whole *Boogie People* deal, pretty much pointless, but what the heck — it's noisy and fun.

KIRK GEE

THE CURE Entreat (Fiction) THE HIGH Somewhere Soon (London) THE FARM Spartacus (Produce Records)

What is it with the definitive article — why not A Cure, A High or A Farm? Instead, we have all of these bands claiming to be the definitions, the pinnacles, the final words. Matt Johnson got it right when he took the piss with The The — the definitive definitive — pity about the music.

Of the three British bands here A Cure have the background, if not the talent, to deserve some unqualified identity. After a dozen plus years in the biz they've stayed off stagnancy with a number of intriguing if unsatisfying albums and then just when it felt comfortable to write them off along comes the mournful elegance of *Disintegration*.

Entreat, with the exception of 'Last Dance' and 'Homesick' is a live-at-Wembley animation of six of the songs from *Disintegration*. Live, 'Pictures of You' and 'Closedown' are even more elegiac, more statuesque in their grief, but in the absence of the deep beauty and futility of 'The Same Deep Water As You', 'Untitled' steals the show with its measured, melodic grace. You can waltz to it — *Entreat* is one for the fans. Arise the Cure.

On the face of it A High have suspiciously too much going for them; a guitar band from Manchester with an arty sleeve and a singer in John Matthews who makes Ian Brown sound macho, they however overcome an ordinary second side with an opening six song impetus that does the business. 'Box Set Go' is quite immediate, an intro for the growing intensities of 'Take Your Time' and the hot core of 'This Is My World'. Rather Be Marianne and 'So I Can See' are very fine slow burners leaving the fragile beauty of 'A Minor Turn' to complete a well conceived bracket of rock n'roll.

The High are alright, despite the soft-focussed exterior their songs have a hard wearing depth that should make their second album worth catching.

Liverpool's A Farm are also trying to latch onto coattails — this time it's the Happy Mondays. They try to capture that same solid funky shuffling bottom end and their melody lines are strung out through that. But *Spartacus* never sparks or excites or gives you the feeling that they were genuinely born to funk. 'Sweet Inspiration', 'Groovy Train' and 'Very Emotional' are the best of some stilted fodder with 'Family of Man' and 'Altogether Now' carrying the strongest tunes and sentiments.

A Farm have cottoned onto the fact that socially aware lyrics scattered through danceable noises are selling records and pleasing critics. Too convenient and contrived, the Happy Mondays have no worries.

GEORGE KAY

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