

#### SHIHAD Devolve (Pagan)

At last, a New Zealand group not afraid to compete with the major overseas acts. *Devolve* is a very strong first release and one which should see Shihad increasing their already large fan base. This record was delayed due to remixing efforts and the wait was definitely worthwhile. Although there are only four songs on this 12", the emphasis is on quality rather than quantity. This is an extremely precise platter, which injects some much needed melody into the stagnant speed metal scene. Check out the track 'Subject Matters' for real proof of the groups skill.

Shihad begin a national tour on July 10. Listen closely, this is where the real musical progressions are going to be made.

LUKE CASEY

#### THE WATERBOYS The Best of 1981-90 (Ensign)

Richard Thompson Rumor and Sigh (Capitol)

Break out the Morris dancers, it's time to deal with a couple of better known folk/rock crossover acts.

Actually, Thompson has been around long enough to have invented folk music but this is possibly his least organic record to date. Produced once again by Mitchell Froom, the first side contains some of the most foreful songs Thompson has done in a while. 'I Misunderstand' is wistful, quite moving, a contrast to the strong insistent chorus hooks of 'Feel So Good', 'Behind Grey Walls' and 'You Dream Too Much'.

The second side loses momentum with novelty stuff like 'Don't Sit On My Jimmy Shand's' — a tribute to the great accordionist nowhere near as irresistible as its counterpart 'Nobody's Wedding' on *Henry The Human Fly*, and the narrative 'Psycho Street' doesn't really come off. Only the country lament of 'Keep Your Distance' and the traditional empathy of 'God Loves A Drunk' can match the first side leaving Thompson with another frustratingly uneven album but one at least made worthwhile by an early surge of some fine songs.

The Waterboys have improved with age. On release, their second album *A Pagan Place* sounded full of second hand Dylanisms dressed up in pompous arrangements and fatuous emotions. Now the best of this and follow up *This Is The Sea* sound quite potent. 'All The Things She Gave Me' and 'Whole of the Moon' pre-date the Gaelic soul of Hothouse Flowers by a few years, the only gripe on the *Best Of* being that *A Pagan Place* should have replaced the inferior 'The Big Music'.

But no worries, *The Best Of* is an accurate album selection of a band who've had few hits but have grown in stature through the '80s.

GEORGE KAY

#### INHALERS

##### Nudists On The Beach of Love (Henry Boy Records)

It's one of those albums you'll either love or hate first play. Nigel Beckford's voice sounds like he's pushed it through a coriander and given it a good squeeze. Unlike some rock singers he can put vocal variety into his singing making it interesting. I've seen this band live so some of their music loses its theatrical quality transferred to vinyl and may seem pretentious. The wacky inserts make up for it. Kelly Tarlton swims in for a guest sample. Musically they're competent but it doesn't shake mountains or set precedents. They have a full band sound which leaps beyond a three chord thrash. The lyrical snipping at small town New Zealand is matched by musical parodies. If you haven't seen their 'Stars On 45' song live you've missed a pure piece of satire.

It's all tongue in cheek with a black edge. Me and Mrs Jones' lead the band to come second in the Wellington Battle of the Bands competition and it's a nasty piece of work. Dub Reggae combines with rap to slap promiscuity in the face. 'Nico On A Bike' sums up the bands lyrical style: "I like your songs but why are they all bitter ones". The ballad 'Alas She Cried' proves the Inhalers can produce serious music without the melodramatics. They are less subtle than the Front Lawn and rock harder than the Big Muffin Serious Band. Last impressions — clever, very clever, now let's see you experiment more with your music style.

CATH CLARK

#### YES

##### Union (Arista)

When singer John Anderson left Yes after the *Big Generator* tour he reconnected with four previous Yes members who had all been part of the classic *Fragile*, *Close To The Edge* and

*Yessongs* period. Although they weren't able to call themselves Yes due to legal matters, the *Anderson Bruford Wakeman Howe* album and tour were a great success.

Meanwhile, Chris Squire, Trevor Rabin, Alan White and Tony Kaye had shelved their Yes recordings (probably due to not having Anderson's distinctive voice) and began working on projects of their own. When Jon was in LA putting finishing touches to the second ABWH album he met with Trevor Rabin who played him some tracks which he immediately liked. Both agreed that he should sing on them and when Chris Squire in turn added his vocals to some of the ABWH songs it was unanimously decided that the two bands should become one.

*Union* combines these separate recordings into sixty-five minutes of Yes sounds which is such a plethora of themes and styles that it's a lot to take in at once. 'I Would Have Waited Forever' comes at you something like 'Fragile' meets '90125' and is real busy as it chops and changes with Steve Howe's guitar work right out front. 'Shock of the System' centres around a powerful bass riff which ironically is not Squire but Tony Levin and is the first time another bassist has performed on a Yes album (except for one track played by Trevor Horn on *Drama*). The song breaks mid-way as Jon sings about 'the order of the sun and everyone is one', then it pieces together again and rocks on. The current single 'Light Me Up' is an ideal example of the group's musical expertise moulded into a catchy tune which, like 'Owner Of A Lonely Heart' is mainly due to the many talents of Trevor Rabin as guitarist, singer, producer and songwriter.

Another great contributor is friend Jonathan Elias who produces and co-writes with Jon Anderson on many diverse pieces. 'Without Hope We Cannot Start The Day' is very deep lyrically and gradually develops into a heavy rhythm with unpredictable drum patterns from Bill Bruford while 'Dangerous' is like an acid house dance mix. For more traditional Yes the remarkable 'Miracle of Life' and 'Silent Talking' contain plenty of weird time signatures and playing that not only compete with but also complement each other to perfection. 'Let Go' is another epic Chris Squire composition with intertwining vocal arrangements and following that is a light new age creation that features Rick Wakeman and a recital of Cambodian poetry!

*Union* is a most admirable effort from all involved and is also an accomplished monument to the fact that Yes are altogether in the nineties.

GEOFF DUNN

#### PAULA ABDUL Spellbound (Virgin)

##### TRIPLETS

##### Thicker Than Water (Mercury)

##### CHANTOOZIES

##### Gild The Lily (Mushroom)

##### SHEENA EASTON

##### What Comes Naturally (MCA)

##### (MCA)

Being the resident expert (?) on Bettie pop, it seemed only natural that this fine array of musical pulchritude be dealt with in a fair and unbiased manner but I couldn't be bothered doing that, so here we go anyway. First up was Paula Abdul, who I tend to view favourably. She's a cutie, that Paula, an ex-Laker girl and she's been remixed by the Bomb Squad so that's extra points. Not that she needed it really, *Spellbound* is actually really good. It's unadulterated pop, shameless and plastic, but it's high class pop, definitely a cut above most of the chart fodder you hear nowadays. That could be put down to the production team which is basically the Family Stand. *Spellbound* is very lush sounding, a big backdrop for Paula to do her pop/soul vocalising over. She's got a reasonable voice, as the mid-tempo stuff proves, especially tracks like the single 'Rush Rush'. That combined with such a killer team backing her up makes for a nice chunk of mindless but fun funky stuff. (Don Was also helps produce, just in case you're interested).

Even more shameless than Paula are the Triplets, basically they're Wilson Phillips Mark II. This is serious cash-in time, someone has found these three hot tamales languishing in obscurity and the dollar signs flashed. Done up in LA, C&W chic and given a few accordions to signify their Mexican heritage, the Triplets are ready to take on the beach girls. Now that's what I'd like to see, an all-in no holds barred wrestling match between Wilson Phillips and the Triplets, maybe even a little Jello... well, maybe not. Anyway, this isn't a bad version of Wilson Phillips, but I still prefer the Mamas and the Papas.

Now on to the Australian contingent, the Chantoozies. These girls are stylin'

hard, the record cover has more cleavage and leg than a David Lee Roth fantasy. That's where the styling stops though, as the record sounds like Bananarama being mature — it's a goodie for you SAW fans (real nice production sound too, the Australians are getting good at this).

Finally, Sheena, who is a real surprise longshot. She's been doing these adverts for a gym in the US which involve her chatting about being "serious about your body" then proving she is by waving some dumbbells around while pouting heavily on a flat bench and stretching her leotard as heavily as she stretches the credibility of those of us who remember '9 To 5'. Anyway, the cover of *What Comes Naturally* ties in with the TV ad so I was a little hesitant about actually listening to it but surprise, surprise, it's rather good. Again, we're dealing with unashamed pop and it's very LA in its sound. Lots of big beats and funky breaks and Sheena doesn't sound half bad, she's got over that Prince thing and is letting rip a bit. Definitely worth a listen if you're inclined towards that light funky stuff. The only thing that worries me about all this is that any one of these records will probably outsell something really awesome like Massive, which seems sort of unfair. Maybe those boys

should get some of those fake titties like the guy from Faith No More had. It's not a pretty thought, but it's not a fair business either.

KIRK GEE

#### YO YO

##### Make Way For The Mother lode (East/West)

Ex-south central LA bus driver Yolande Whitaker states the case for female rap rights, forming the Intelligent Black Woman's Coalition (IBWC) and standing face to face with the male rap ruling class. This is of course not new to black music, witness Millie Jackson, Betty Wright, Aretha Franklin, but at the same time it's not common.

Some might find it strange she decides to work with Ice Cube and the Lynch Mob, Ice Cube the man who rapped a 'Bitch Is A Bitch', but showed a strong sentimentally and emotion with 'Dead Homiez'. Whatever the pairing, the product is a strong and fighting one. Just listen to that monster single 'Stompin' To The 90s' and 'You Can't Play With My Yo-Yo', it's serious stuff.

As a rapper she has a tough style but combined with Ice Cube's production, it's a knock out, just proving that it wasn't all the Bomb Squad on Ice's

debut. Good and funky at all times. Submerged in the mix are quick James Brown, Stevie Wonder, Labelle, Willie Hutchinson, Chaka Khan and a very sneaky Beastie boys sample, very groovy, and to the point, sixteen tracks that just don't give up for anything.

KERRY BUCHANAN

#### VARIOUS ARTISTS

##### Deadedicated (Arista)

Alright, I'll admit it, I'm down with the Dead. For a long time I loathed them, they encapsulated everything I hate about rock. They were the ultimate drug cowards, too mellow for reality, they took some acid, mumbled about change and let the world pass them by. Then one day someone played me the *Dead/Live* album and what do you know, they were just a self-indulgent bar band after all and I can handle that happily. The ragas were balanced with Jerry Garcia's turned upside-down solos. Despite all this, 99% of the world still find the Dead an utter embarrassment, which is sort of reflected in this fine compilation.

All the artists steer far away from classic Dead style and just play the stuff as if it were their own. This is great if you like the artists in question but as with any compilation, it's unlikely you'll like them all (personally I think Costello,

Vega, Indigo Girls and Midnight Oil all suck tubesteak majorly so I'll ignore them).

Anyway, there's some interesting people here. The Cowboy Junkies, Lyle Lovett and Dr John all do their respective things with their usual style. Bruce Hornsby turns 'Jack Straw' into a surprisingly listenable MOR anthem, and the Harshed Mellows are okay but as they're a mix of the Georgia Satellites and Tom Petty's band they should rip totally. Special mention goes to Dwight Yokem, who turns 'Truckin' into the barroom stomper it should be, Burning Spear who busts out some superb 70s style roots reggae on 'Estimated Prophet' and Los Lobos who had me singing 'Bertha' for days. It just goes to show some melodies, a cheeseey two-finger Hammond organ sound and some sweet accordion lines can turn acid casualty into a thing of beauty. *Dedicated* probably would have been a lot cooler if everyone had wiggled out seriously but what the hell, just program out or skip over the stinkers and this is a fine little tribute. My only real complaint is that the tracks here average out at about five minutes apiece and that, kids, ain't even a true Dead intro.

KIRK GEE

# ALICE COOPER

Hey Stoopid

"PAY ATTENTION BECAUSE YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET THIS INFORMATION TWICE."