

# albums

## MIKEY DREAD Best Sellers (Rykodisc)

A concise and exciting collection of classic and near classic material from 1970 to 1990, from Michael Campbell aka Mikey Dread.

First famous for his popular and innovative radio show, a mixture of roots music and weird sound effects that led to his own recordings. The earliest track here is 'Barber — Saloon — Haircut', a full dread at the controls onslaught 00 in a Dr Alimautade style. He finds his own way in the early eighties with the albums *World War III*, *S.W.A.L.K.* and the influential 'African Anthem'. On this collection are 'Break Down The Walls', a mixture of lovers and hardcore rasta — a personal favourite — the title track from *S.W.A.L.K.* and 'Industrial Spy', a fun dub from the album used and abused by everybody for samples. Like 'Coldcut' for the Eric B and Rakim remix, 'Public Enemy' and every northern bleep house track. Check out the source, for the reason why so many use it.

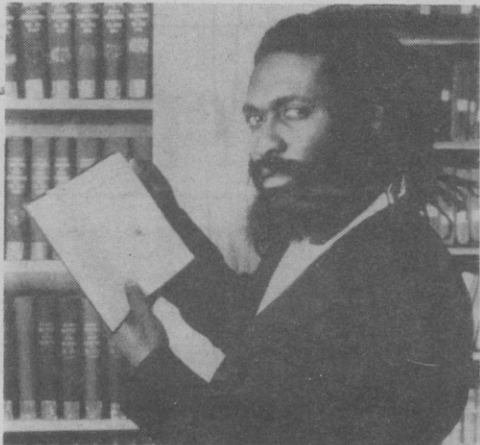
Sixteen tracks to satisfy any jaded reggae palate, not only the established favourites but unreleased stuff like 'Choose Me' (1989) and a live 'Me Religion' (1991).

Since most of his work is now unavailable, this is a valuable and enjoyable addition to your reggae collection.

KERRY BUCHANAN

## MIND FUNK Mind Funk (Epic)

"Heavy Metal" is pretty much an obsolete term now, gone are the days of metal being the exclusive domain of pimply boys, petrolheads and a few hard chicks. The music has been turned into pop by Guns 'N' Roses and their army of clones on one side, while a more intelligent approach has been taken by a range of bands from the Chili Peppers to the Black Crowes who are busy blending what was once metal with blues, funk, jazz, punk and anything else you'd care to name to create a whole new thing. Falling somewhere in the middle of all this are Mind Funk, a much hyped new outfit, self proclaimed saviours of rock. Most of the hype is actually justified as these boys have one of the most serious hard rock pedigrees ever. John Monte and Louis Svitek are from M.O.D., Jason Coppola from hardcoresters Chemical Waste and Reed St. Mark from the Swiss techno-doom masters Celtic Frost. This gives the band a superb range of talent and style to draw from, then add ex-Uniform Choice skinhead screamer Pat Dubar, (*Staring at the Sun* was a great hardcore moment) and the stage is set for some very cool music. The outcome



Mikey Dread



Mind Funk

is actually not far removed from what I had expected, and believe me I expected a lot. This band sound huge, even through our dud office tapedeck. Terms like searing, crunching, monstrous and so on all spring to mind, but are all a bit lame to do this justice. Let's just say they know how to play, and loud. There's enough of the punk background seeping through to keep things controlled, no classic metal excesses here. This is most apparent in Dubar's voice, which I'm used to hearing howling Straight Edge sentiments, but now he turns himself nicely to the rock trip, keeping all the emotion and power, but with a lot more control. *Mind Funk* doesn't lead us into a whole new rock territory despite the huge amount of talent here, but it does help make the old one seem a lot less idiotic. The single 'Big House Burning' is alone more powerful and believable than the majority of 'metal' I've heard in a long while. The band say the name Mind Funk has nothing to do with funk music, but is a polite variant of original choice Mind Fuck. Well, there's certainly no white boy funk here, but Mind Funk comes pretty close to being the perfect description.

KIRK GEE

## JUNKYARD Sixes, Sevens and Nines (Geffen)

These hard rockin' Texans had a tough job to try and follow up their kick ass debut but they're still doing fairly well with *Sixes, Sevens and Nines*. For

sure there are some good songs to be found on this album even if a couple in between are a bit too nice and clean. 'Back On The Streets' is an explosive opening track much like 'Blooze' was last time and another cookin' one is 'Give The Devil His Due' which reminds you that this band would be ace to see playing at your local bar. Good ol' boy Steve Earle lends his vocal support on three tunes which is natural enough since some of Junkyard's music is quite comparable to Earle's recent rockier stuff. There's great lines in the lyrics too like 'Had a drink just to wallow in my troubles, when you came around my drinks turned into doubles'. So while maybe not being essential, *Sixes, Sevens and Nines* is still worth a gamble.

GEOFF DUNN

## TERMINATOR X The Valley of the Jeep Beets (Columbia)

Hip hop designed to take your car speakers to seventh heaven and back, slamin' beats that can snap necks at a hundred paces. Traditional hip hop the way you like it, none of this new age introspection, just another big bang theory to muse over.

Thirteen cuts of various artists, most of which are unknown, held together by Terminator's steady hand on the beat projector, and the Bomb Squad polishing on the production desk.

A very varied set, with all the bases covered. The Compton Thang of the Juvenile Delinquintz, Chuck D and Sister Souljah telling us what we should

know, Celo of the Casino Brothers taking a chance at the dance, all that sort of thing.

Best bits are the reggae of Dubmaster with samples from Mikey Dread's African anthem and Yellowman 'Nobody Move, Nobody Get Hurt', a ballad in Section 8's 'No Further' and the unusual 'The Blues' from Andreas 13.

The Terminator gets his turntables spinning non stop, there's just no let up between songs, like a radio show from your best dreams, it just pumps hot jam after hot jam.

Bass for your face.

KERRY BUCHANAN

## KOFI Black With Sugar MACKA B B-Plus INNER CIRCLE One Way (Jayrem)

After a long absence, Jayrem Records has returned to reggae with a series of compilations, to be released on its own Fari label through Festival, and these three cassettes. The Kofi and Macka B releases are from London's Ariwa label, founded by studio ace Neil Fraser, aka The Mad Professor. Ariwa has been a big mover and shaker in UK reggae with its distinctive synthesised rhythms and highly polished production, plus Fraser's wicked dub mixes.

The Kofi album is an outstanding example of Lovers Rock, the ultra-sweet soul-influenced sound

pioneered in Britain. Though a little too light for some tastes, most people should find Kofi a happy compromise. Her mellow style avoids the saccharine excess that characterises a lot of Lovers Rock, and songs like 'Curious', 'Special Nation' and 'Reggae Starship' have Quality stamped all over them. With the volume cranked up it's top-flight dancefloor fodder as well.

Macka B, the gentle giant from Wolverhampton, is a righteous social commentator with a sharp line in patter. His toasting is fluent and funny, but always with a sting in the tail. He touches on subjects ranging from unemployment to alcoholism, racism to ecology, and evangelism to nutrition. He never trivialises serious subjects and thus merits attention. *B-Plus* is a selection of tracks from five albums and should be compulsory listening for those with unfocused attitudes.

Inner Circle have drifted about since the death of charismatic frontman Jacob Miller and *One Way* shows their dilemma is similar to that of the Wailers without Bob Marley: a body without a head. Mainstays Ian and Roger Lewis are augmented by singer Carlton Coffie and session keyboards player Touter Harvey on this set, which has produced a hit in 'Bad Boys', the theme for the TV series *Cops*. Even when Miller was alive, Inner Circle were forced to play the cabaret circuit, and their survival ethic is reflected in this competent but ultimately anonymous collection of songs. *One Way* is available on CD and cassette, the other two on cassette only.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL

## DANGEROUS TOYS Hellacious Acres (Sony)

Dangerous Toys are fronted by ex-Watchtower vocalist Jason McMasters but they are far removed from that progressive vein or metal. Instead, they follow the glam rock trail with just a touch of Texas boogie-woogie to give some freshness. Dangerous Toys are apparently big news in America but one might stop and ask why. The songs are well rehearsed and emotional but lack any real substance. The track that redeems them is the excellent 'Best Of Friends' where the Toys stray from the repetitive with pleasing results. One is always left apologising for opinions so there is no need for me to fuel that fire. If this is your cup of tea then get down to *Hellacious Acres* and rock out.

LUKE CASEY

## REBEL MC Black Meaning Good (Desire)

Flashback to the Rebel in 1990 drinking from the rivers of mainstream success, two pop hits 'Just Keep Rockin' and 'Street Tuff' led him to the pages of *Smash Hits* and hanging around with society types like glamour queen Maria Whitaker.

The more the glow of stardom brightened, the darker his soul became. Rebel MC — Mike West —

turned his back on such things. Coming back strong on the rhyme and reason, hard beats with hard politics. It was a conscious decision, like he says "chat like that your tracks won't get played/stick to the formula you had before/fame and money and ah whole lot more".

A move towards the underground sound of modern reggae led to his salvation.

Opening with the title track, a hard edged rap over old school beats on the subject of semantic black exploitation leading to the violence of institutional racism. Powerful, but not preachy. As is 'No Man Is An Island' with guest vocals from Dennis Brown, his great vocal style adding credence to the Rebel's vision.

It's the use of older, well known voices and songs put in the context of the new sound that is of great interest. He uses Marley on 'Soul Rebel', Jimmy Cliff's 'Many Rivers To Cross' on 'Culture' and Barrington Levy crooning "broader than Broadway" on 'Tribal Base'. In contrast to the sweetness of these great 'lovers' voices, the Rebel has a hard edged ragga feel, with the bass and bleeps up full. Like the intensely beat crazy 'The Wickedest Sound' with Tenor Fly and Frighy, that moves like a pit bull in a scratch, vicious but beautiful.

The four strong singles are backed up by tracks like 'Test The Champion' with a nifty ska feel, 'Soul Sister' using the Labelle sample and Frighy in full steam with 'Live Good'.

Like I've stressed, it's a hardcore vision that may well scare the more un-adventurous, but that's your problem.

Best heard in tandem with the Ragga Twins album *Reggae Owes Me Money*, it has a similar feel and the same ability to kick your butt around the room a while. Rebel MC — no half steppin'.

KERRY BUCHANAN

## LEMONHEADS Lovey (WEA)

The Lemonheads are the Boston band who gained much local kudos by once recording a cover of Proud Scum's 'I Am A Rabbit'. In fact, inspired covers seem to be something of a Lemonheads' specialty, coz on this (their fifth vinyl outing) the standout track has to be their version of Gram Parson's 'Brass Buttons', a an acoustic sad song that stands out like a beacon in a battlefield. The other really good track is 'The Door', a sub-Zeppelinesque gonzo guitar workout well worth the wait to the end of the album. Otherwise much of *Lovey* comes over like a poor man's Dinosaur Jnr., fast paced guitar sludge with feedback aplenty but nothing overly distinctive going on.

DONNA YUZWALK

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