



Big Takeover #42 was printed in the summer of 1998. The reviews below were all written for this issue or for issue #41, but due to a foul up in layout, the reviews written for #41 didn't appear in that issue and so all either appeared in #42 or else were cut due to space limitations.

the basement brats

curse of the brats

(1+2)

The Ramones? Never heard of 'em. But this Norwegian outfit is a band well worth searching out, because they'll make you feel like the torch has been successfully passed. *Curse Of The Brats* is the more recent release of the two Basement Brats CDs, but it's the older material...a collection of Brats songs from various sources that hangs together remarkably well. Singer **OLE OLSEN** has a great voice that conveys teen angst like few singers can; it's great for these rocking tales of love gone bad (or now and then, love gone good). The guitar is loud and slashing, and the tunes have hooks as memorable as "Rockaway Beach" ever was. (Clean Nishi-shinjuku, Nishi-shinjuku 7-5-6, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan)

the basement brats

the bratbeat

(that's entertainment)

It's too bad that the tension of recording these songs eventually led to the departure of the

Basement Brats lead singer, since as good as *Curse Of The Brats* is, this CD is better. In fact, *The Bratbeat* is as good as the Ramones' *Road To Ruin* or the Undertones' first album, which for me is as good as it gets. The vocals are even better than on *Curse*, the songs are better, and the production and mix have attained some kind of magical balance. The rippling bass lines, crunching guitar, and the propulsive beat of the drums are just great. And what songs! From the all out attack of "Just Can't Help It" to the heart-rending "Can't Go On" (with a stop at covering **STIFF LITTLE FINGERS'** "Here We Are Nowhere") this is an unforgettable CD. (PO Box 6897, St. Olav's Pl., N-0130, Oslo, Norway)

beat angels

red badge of discouragement

(Epiphany)

The second lp from the Beat Angels and I'm still shaking my head in wonder that a band influenced by the New York Dolls glam/trash school of music could come from Phoenix, Arizona. Behind those power chording power pop backing tracks and the cheery lyric delivery lurk sordid tales of down and out desperate youth driven into the sleazy underbelly of city life. The production of this thing is commercial enough to make it on AM radio, but the tunes and lyrics are irresistible even for die hard punk rockers. (1303 W. 21st St., Tempe, AZ 85285)

the bittersweets

lesson one

(that's entertainment)

Another absolutely gobsmacking brilliant CD from Norway! The Bittersweets serve up one track after another of crackling punk pop anthems loaded with ringing guitars, Thunders-like leads, snappy drums, cool keyboards and woah-oh harmonies. They've got the best Ramones tribute I've ever heard in "I'm Gonna Miss The Ramones", a similar **ALICE COOPER** tribute, and a cover of the **SAINTS'** "Story Of Love". In between these they turn in 9 other tracks of their own that all pump and sparkle...that light touch of organ in the back and the panache with which they play makes all the difference. From singer **ARNE THELIN's** opening deadpan warning *Get ready to pay!* onwards, this CD is one kick in the backside. (PB 6897, St. Olavs Pl, 0130 Oslo, Norway)

blondie

picture this live

(emi capitol)

Irritating package and liner notes aside, this is a surprisingly strong CD. About half the tracks are from a 1980 show and the rest from 1978, and the feel of each is fairly raw and clubby instead of the

sort of bass heavy arena style usually favored on major label live records. The 1980 material is really good, with Debbie Harry singing at her sassy best and the band darning interesting new patches into songs that by then were as familiar as old socks. The vocals on the 1978 tracks tend to be distorted, which robs them a bit. For live Blondie I still prefer the bootleg *Live At The Starwood 1978*, but this is better than I'd have ever dreamed for an official release.

the bouncing souls
the bouncing souls

(epitaph)

On about half of their tunes this New Jersey band manages to sound like something out of Huntington Beach, 1981. Musically they rate highly; a blistering guitar assault with strong tunes, good hooks and really capable playing. There's variety, too, as the band plays the now-obligatory ska influenced track and a tasty organ powered instrumental. About half the songs are hardcore paced and the rest rock along smartly without the thrash. Lyrically is where the band falls short; this stuff is the musical equivalent of the Simpsons. For a few spins the Bouncing Souls are a lot of fun, but they wear out quickly. (2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA. 90026)

brickyard babies
knockouts

(mvg)

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Sweden's super tough Hellcopters should be feeling mighty well complimented by this 5 track CDEP from their fellow countrymen. The tunes here are all scorching hot, ripsaw punk rock of the nastiest flavor, made by people who sound like they eat babies for breakfast. Without milk or sugar. Or even de-boning. Chaotic, Stooges influenced, fast, furious and pop free, but never thrashing. A full length lp on the way. Can't wait. (Meantime Management, Malmgardsvagen 32A, 116 38 Stockholm, Sweden. meantime@bahnhof.se)

the creamers
"he needed killin'" 7"

(1+2)

I'll always miss seeing Lenny flying around the stage on bass and little Rosa trying to avoid getting smashed while playing rhythm guitar next to him, but this new Creamers lineup certainly doesn't have to concede a thing...after all, they've still got Leesa's big, soulful vocals, the same full on guitar crunch, and the same furious tempos. These two tracks are catchy as hell and different enough from the now nearly homogenized pop-punk sound that we're all overdosed on that they'll give you a big

lift. (Clean Nishi-shinjuku, Nishi-shinjuku 7-5-6, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160 Japan)

cub
mauler

(augogo)

The label that brought you world class bands like the Scientists, Harem Scarem and the Moodists now bring you...Cub. So much for consistency. On this CD Cub pull together a bunch of single sides, covers and compilation tracks that are played with energy and an innocent sense of spunk, but there's been enough of these cute all girl bands playing modern sock hop pop in the years since the Go-Gos first introduced us to the concept that it seems like the world can do without another one. (GPO Box 542D, Melbourne, Vic 3001 Australia)

jeff dahl
heart full of snot

(triple x)

Jeff Dahl has been a favorite of mine since his *Vomit Wet Kiss* lp back in 1988, and since then he's put out some brilliant albums in the tradition of the Dead Boys and Johnny Thunders, like *Scratch Up Some Action* and the great *Wicked*. So I always have high hopes for his releases, but sadly this one fails. In his press kit Jeff reviles modern punk production values, but his mix here renders what might be some good songs pretty unlistenable. This is especially true in the drums, which are all cymbals, no kick at all and a snare that sounds like an empty oatmeal box being hit with a pencil in the next room. Even Jeff's signature guitar doesn't have its normal bite. A shame. (PO Box 862529, Los Angeles, CA 90086-2529)

died pretty
deeper

(citadel)

Back on Citadel Records where they started, Died Pretty also have returned strongly to the form that made them one of Australia's finest bands of the late 80s. Maybe it's escaping from the smothering major label recording budgets and studios of Sony, but the four songs here have a feeling of life and conviction that hasn't been as strong on some of their big time releases. I miss the brilliant drumming of **CHRIS WELCH**, who departed a few releases back, but the interplay of **BRETT MYERS'** silky guitar and **JOHN HOEY's** keyboards are great, and **RON PENO's** singing is the best it's been for quite some time. (PO Box 316, Darlinghurst NSW 2010, Australia)

died pretty

sold

(cbs/sony)

Australia's Died Pretty have been around for over 12 years now, and they've done, what, 10 full length lps? The general approach in all that time is unchanged...mid-tempo songs that build a mood from quiet up to hammering loud and then ease back down again. A collection of their best material at this point would stand up to anyone. *Sold* isn't in the league of their classics *Free Dirt* or *Doughboy Hollow*, but it has its share of good moments and is one of their more consistent releases. The buzzing guitar and swirling keyboard of "Cutting Up Her Legs" are terrific, and "Which Way To Go" pretty much typifies their style.

dm3

road to rome

(citadel)

I thought their debut CD was damn close to power pop perfection, but they've gone and done it one better. Twelve songs of boy meets girl, boy flips for girl, girl dumps boy, boy dumps girl, and even though we've heard it a million times, there's not a boring moment here. Frontman **DOM MARIANI** (ex-**STEMS, SOMELOVES**) pulls out every trick in the pop book; stop/starts, ringing power chords, anthemic choruses, driving verses, great harmonies, you name it. Allegedly Bomp is releasing a compilation of the best tracks on this and the first CD...watch out for it! (PO Box 316, Darlinghurst NSW 2010, Australia)

dm3

dig it the most

(bomp!)

Let's cut to the chase. This is the best power pop band on the planet bar none. Might even be the best of all time. Raspberries, Big Star, Paul Collins Beat, Plimsouls, Records ...great bands all. None are better than **DOM MARIANI's** Perth 3 piece. And now Bomp has put together the best tracks from the first two Aussie only DM3 CDs, so the US finally gets to hear incredible tracks like "Foolish", "Can't Get What You Want", and "1 Time 2 Times Devastated". Huge guitars, crackling drums, killer harmonies and insanely catchy tunes. Everything that made me first love rock and roll is here and more. Brilliant. (PO Box 7112, Burbank, CA 91510)

dr. feelgood

looking back (boxed set)

(grand)

For a brief instant in 1975, Canvey Island's Dr. Feelgood were the future of rock and roll. Then punk hit and the Feelgood's high energy r'n'b seemed a little safe, so they fell from the spotlight.

But **LEE BRILLEAUX** was in it for the long run, and he kept at it until he died of cancer (the same night as Kurt Cobain). This 5 CD set is a wonderful compilation of over 100 tracks of the Feelgoods at their best. It's consistently excellent, and it's interesting to see how much better this music has aged than many of the punk records that pushed the band aside. Moreover, even in their years of slogging it out in unending small time tours, the Feelgoods continued to make great music, and there'll be surprises here even for old time fans. (107A High Street, Canvey Island, Essex SS8 7RF England)

driven

spirit

(stuntpram)

PAUL BERWICK, ex-frontman for Australia's **HAPPY HATE ME NOTS**, is back in action after a rough time that included the demise of that great group and the death by heroin overdose of bandmate **TIM MCKAY**. His new band, Driven, plays a similar brand of heartfelt rocking pop to the HHMNs (especially the earlier releases before they became more melancholy), but the production budget is a little lower so the sound is a bit rougher. Which works just fine. Berwick has a soulful voice that conveys tons of emotion, and the playing is sharp and enthusiastic to match the well crafted songs. Berwick is a guy with talents that deserve to be heard far more than once in 6 years...don't miss this chance. (PO Box 7, Alexandria 2015, Australia)

euro boys

jet age

(sympathy for the record industry)

For anyone thirsting for a different twist on music in this day of total punk rock overdose, Sympathy brings you Norway's Euro Boys, sounding like no one else playing the planet today. Their all instrumental CD consists of 15 tracks, each of which could have been the theme song for a 60s detective movie. The surf oriented concept avoids another of today's ruts by heavy and spirited use of horns, whose staccato blats add a great kick. And there's lots of tasty surf guitar played by guys who can really do it. This could've been really lounge-y sounding, but instead they've pulled off a big coup here.

even

less is more

(Rubber Records)

Australia's Even manage a vocal sound that'll remind you of Ziggy-era Bowie, the Kinks and the Beatles all at the same time, but with a rocking musical backdrop that would make Oasis jealous. While there's no question this is power pop, the

playing is intense...hard hitting drumming and loud, skillfully placed power chords provide a punishing delivery for this great batch of tunes. These guys have blended 60s pop-psych with 90s values to create something that's simultaneously familiar but fresh sounding. Best new band out of Australia this year. (59 Victoria Ave., Albert Park, 3206, Australia)

flatus
aural fixations

(black pumpkin)
I generally find the Epitaph type melodic punk of the last several years to be tasty while on the stereo but lacking in staying power. Flatus don't completely escape this problem, but they do rank in the first division of their field. Super tunes, great guitar sound and all round production values...the only real shortcoming is that the solemn, from-the-heart vocal stylings don't fit too well on the odd song about drinking beer or what bubblegum the band prefers. It works much better on tracks like "My Choice", where they bring back echoes of past punk greats. (PO Box 4377, River Edge, NJ 07661-4377)

the gaza strippers
"transistor" 7"

(bam bam)
RICK SIMS (ex-DIDJITS) steps out with a new band. No big change...Sims has always had a knack for playing guitar riffs that could strip the chrome off a Harley, and he doesn't let that talent go to waste here. Lyrically the guy is a certified nut...there's no knowing what these songs are about. But if you're a sucker for rampaging, hook happy power chords and razor sharp production, line up here. (3338 N. Oakley, Chicago, IL 60618)

the gee strings
the gee strings

(High Society)
This German group inspired me to dig out my Avengers lp for another spin; the singer is a dead ringer for Penelope Houston, and the band behind her plays a powerhouse brand of late 70s styled punk rock. The band makes great tunes even better by well chosen bits of guitar frosting and lots of shout-along backing vocals. The only down side is that the lyrics, while sung in English, seem to have been written by someone who barely knows the language, so the message fails to match the urgency and punch of the medium. If they did, this would be one for the ages; as it is, it's still one of the best punk records I've heard this year. (Ehrenbergstr. 51, D-22767 Hamburg, Germany)

guttermouth
musical monkey

(nitro)
Sort of a cheap hybrid of NOFX and the Descendants, Guttermouth go for the lowest level of frat humor lyrically and back it with rhythm guitar oriented punk rock. Even in the few places where the words actually are funny (like in "What If?" where the B-52's Fred Schneider is enlisted as the new Doors singer after Jim Morrison's death) they wear out as quickly as any spoken word comedy record. Since the music is no better than average melodic punk, it makes for a limited listening experience. And why it takes 6 people to play these songs, I don't know. (7071 Warner Ave., F-736, Huntington Beach, CA 92647)

hundred million martians
martian arts

(Hiljaiset Levyt Records)
Besides being an all-round good guy, Hiljaiset Levyt label boss Jukka Juntilla also has a knack for digging up some of the best bands Finland has to offer, and without being bound to any one style. This outfit plays Mega City Four styled punk/pop without the overproduction that plagued a lot of records by that UK band. The ace track "A Perfect Pop Song" from this CD pretty damn near lives up to its title...3 minutes of irresistibly catchy tunefulness and one of the best songs you'll hear all year. And there's no lack on 13 other tracks...they're all bursting with melody, harmony and energy. (PO Box 211, FL-33201 Tampere, Finland)

ice cream hands
memory lane traffic jam

(Not Lame)
In my book, Adelaide band **THE MAD TURKS** were one of the finest power pop bands ever to grace the planet. Their "Temper's Fire" is every bit a match for classics like the Plimsouls' "Million Miles Away", and they had several others as good. The Turks are gone now, but key members **CHARLES JENKINS** and **DOM LARIZZA** carry on with the Ice Cream Hands making more of the same great songs. One listen to the opening "Is It Your Electric Chair" with its dizzying key changes ought to quickly rope you in. Catchy tunes, great singing, punchy playing and a Costello-like knack with a lyric phrase make this a band well worth seeking out. (PO Box 9756, Denver, CO 80209)

jalla jalla
graverobber's handbook

(hiljaiset levyt)
They may be from north of the Artic Circle, but Finland's Jalla Jalla are a lot more than some geographic novelty act...they've got one of the

most unique pop/rock/punk styles in the business. This 7 track CDEP merely buys some time before their fourth lp of original material comes out...here you get a collection of covers done for various tribute comps. It starts with a kick-butt version of the **DAMNED's** "Love Song", and then hits on other less known groups like **HANOI ROCKS**, **THE PROTONES** and **ALIVALTIOSHITEERI**. The measure of Jalla Jalla's own quality is that while this is good fun, their own material is better by yards. (PO Box 211, 33201 Tampere, Finland)

the jam

direction, reaction, creation (boxed set)

(polydor)

The Jam were my favorite band from 1978 to 1982, so I snapped up this set right away. It's a well assembled group of 5 discs, although at this stage I could do with just the first three. These cover the era from the beginning of *In The City* to the end of the *Sound Affects* lp, a time where every Jam release was a major event. Those first 5 albums are rendered even more powerful by the addition of all the non-lp single tracks from the same era. But the fourth disc is mostly *Gift* era material which has aged poorly, and the fifth disc of outtakes and demos is uninspiring. There's quite a nice booklet, too, even if the liner notes make a big deal of apologizing for the *Modern World* lp, which I always thought was their best.

jon cougar concentration camp

'til niagara falls

(BYO)

This San Diego band is actually not as hokey as their name might make you think. Their music is mid-tempo gravelly voiced late 70s styled punk, with the requisite batch of reasonably catchy hooks. Would've been exceptional in 1987 but isn't really enough to set them apart much today. Lyrically they have a bit of an edge over a lot of the competition...there are some tracks here with a thing or two to say. "I've Got A Job" is the best example...love that line "my bills are paid and I didn't step on anybody". But too much of this is typical frat punk stuff that only floats dead even with the competition. (PO Box 67A64, Los Angeles, CA 90067)

jughead's revenge
heckle

parliament of whores split single

(hopeless/nitro)

Remember that Barracudas song "I Wish it Could Be 1985 Again?". Oh, what? That was "1965"? Never mind. Anyway, both these bands sound like they wish it was 1985 so they could be the opening act for the Adolescents, Agent Orange, Descendants, Channel 3, Social Distortion, Black

Flag, and all those LA area groups from that time. Off of these 4 tracks, that's as far as they'd get, since they lack the occasionally inventive songs of their predecessors and both bands have pretty generic styles. (7071 Warner Ave, Suite F-736, Huntington Beach, CA. 92647)

the magnolias

street date Tuesday

(trg)

It's been a long time since I heard anything out of this great Minneapolis outfit, which actually these days seems to be diminutive frontman **JOHN FREEMAN** and whatever 3 other guys he can pick up. But Freeman still has what made earlier lps *For Rent* and *Dime Store Dream* near classics...a great touch with a pop hook, a bratty punkish vocal delivery, and some good heartfelt lyrics about living day to day with only a few nickels in your pocket. Feels like he was never away. (2217 Nicollet Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55404)

glen matlock

who's he think he is when he's at home?

(creation)

GLEN MATLOCK is easily the least regarded former **SEX PISTOL**...many people seem to think that **SID VICIOUS** was their bass player for the entire history of the band (at least those who don't think Sid was actually the *singer*). But for those who know otherwise, Matlock is here to back their claims with what is quite arguably the best solo effort by any of the ex-Pistols; a CD loaded with catchy guitar rock that's a little too aggro to be called pop and a little too smooth to be called punk. Matlock shows a nifty touch with the best pop tricks...a well placed *_woah-oh_* here or a nice shift from chunky muted rhythm guitar to ringing power chords there. Twelve tracks, every one a kick. ((109X Regents Park Road, London NW1 8UR)

midnight oil

breathe

(sony)

A long time between releases for one of the only major label bands worth a damn. This one is a substantial shift from their last four or five...musically it's much sparser, more guitar oriented, and more roughly produced than anything they've done in a long time. The lyrics are also much less overtly political...there's still undertones of concern for the world at large, but it's very subtle and ambiguous. And there are no stirring anthems like "Beds Are Burning" or "Forgotten Years"; instead it's a more introspective set of tracks. Nevertheless, after a few listens this CD connects with your heart as the Oils always have in the past.

millencolin
for monkeys

(epitaph)

From Orebro in the center of Sweden, these guys play the Green Day punk/pop thing as though they were born in Berkeley. And their English is better than that of most Americans, so don't worry about understanding the words. I usually find this style of punk to lack staying power, and although this isn't a huge exception I've got to say that Millencolin have strong tunes and they play them with a hard punch. And it's such a relief to hear a punk band sing about something other than getting drunk these days that even though the lyrics here are pretty mundane, the good time cheer with which they sing has me won over. (2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026)

the motards
saturday night special ed

(empty records)

It seems a little unfair for such a big a fan of the early Damned as I am to dismiss a CD like this as a bunch of stupid drunk punk, but that's what I'm inclined to do. The Motards have pretty strong tunes in a 70s dole-queue punk sort of vein, propelled along by a really swinging rhythm section. The good melodies tend to be betrayed by the singer, who would be a pretty even replacement for the **ANTI-NOWHERE LEAGUE's** Animal...not a strong recommendation in my book. For those into mosh-pit action, this is a big *jah-gut!* while for those of us who have had enough of beer puke on our sneakers it's more of a *nyet!* (PO Box 12034, Seattle, WA 98102)

motherfucker 666
motherfucker 666

(get hip)

Seems like this CD ought to be a lot better than it is; it's got **ALLAN CLARK** and **KIETH TELLIGMAN**, who used to be the **LAZY COWGIRLS** rhythm section when they made some great records, and **JEFF DAHL**, today's pre-eminent evangelist for the legacy of the Stooges and Dolls. But it falls flat with awful covers of "Then He Kissed Me" and **THE KINKS'** "Celluloid Heroes" and some generic Detroit metal sounding originals. The best track on it is an instrumental. Dahl at least is way better than he shows here. (PO Box 666, Canonsburg, PA 15317)

the new christs
lower yourself

(citadel)

The New Christs are getting absolutely prolific these days, and if you ask me it couldn't have happened soon enough. Driving force **ROB YOUNGER** is about as good as anyone at painting

a picture in song of someone who is tortured by life's events to the point of breaking. The title track is a prime example...a buzzing, psychotic guitar lead and a slow, punishing drum beat with a single piano note played percussively in just the right spot, the image comes through without even trying to understand the lyrics. In a world full of transparently faked emotions, Rob Younger is one of the very few who can create a song that drags the listener into his own personal maelstrom of desire, anger, fear, hatred and pain and leave a feeling that every word was real. This is a great, great record and exceeds what were already very high expectations by leaps. (PO Box 316, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010, Australia)

the nomads
raw and rare

(estrus)

Now that they've done a couple US tours, Swedens' Nomads are getting known as just about the ultimate in Sonics-styled garage rock'n'roll...they play this stuff in a different league from the competition. This CD is 5 live ("raw") tracks from the 1983 cassette release *Stagger In The Snow* and 5 more ("rare") tracks from various early 80s records, most of which were actually released on US labels at the time, so they are hardly that impossible to get. All Nomads material is well worth having, but this one is only for those who need a complete collection...beginners should go for the "best of" double CD *Showdown!* (PO Box 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227)

the norma jeans
natural blonde killers

(High Society International)

This German band plays a stomping fun brand of energetic pogo punk. Excellent covers of **THE SAINTS** "Erotic Neurotic" and **DEAD BOYS** "What Love Is" give a clue where things are heading, but the band adds their own personal touch with a unique drumming style (the kick double timing it with a steady thump-thump-thump through every track) and tag team who-cares-if-we're-in-tune vocals. If this had come out in 1977, people would pay \$75 for a copy of it today. You are more fortunate than that. (Ehrenbergstrasse 51, D-22767, Hamburg, Germany)

graham parker
acid bubblegum

(razor and tie)

There was a time when I regarded Parker as one of the most important figures in rock and roll. His first 4 studio albums were all crucial, but it's been a long time since he's hit that standard. Now he's no longer on a major label, and the shortfall in recording budget has worked wonders. Parker's

singing and lyrics are right on...he's back to biting off those cutting words. Maybe it's just that there are so few bands these days that give a damn about what their words say that makes this seem so good, but it sure is easy to get wrapped up in songs like "Sharpening Axes" (*I don't appeal to the masses, and they don't appeal to me*) or a high tension piece of melodrama like "Impenetrable".

pray tv

westona

(The Hypnotized Label)

Another of Australia's hidden secrets, Pray TV have been around since the late 80s and have only a handful of lps and singles to show for it. But they've made the most of their opportunities; their recordings have been wonderful without exception, weaving dense and powerful trance-like guitar and occasional keyboards around **AIDAN HALLORAN's** tired and dusky vocals. Most of their songs sound huge and forceful without going beyond mid-tempo; the key to their strength is careful songwriting and solid execution. *Westona* is no exception; there's not a song on here that doesn't find a solid foothold after a few spins.

radio birdman

ritualism

(crying sun)

There's a small universe of us in the US who think that Radio Birdman was one of the most important bands of all time, and we all were amazed to find that after 18 years the band was getting together again...for me the significance of this matches Jack's happiness with the Buzzcocks' reunion. *Ritualism* is a lovingly packaged live CD from the first Australian tour of the re-united band. There are only two new songs on it, and for the most part fans will prefer to listen to the fabulously remixed/remastered CD versions of their two regulation lps that are now available, but *Ritualism* proves that in a live setting these guys still have the same intensity and freshness after all those years.

sitter

pastello

(koch)

This German band has a great ability to create songs that mix quiet melodic passages with bludgeoning crescendos that could hammer almost any modern punk band to the turf. The tunes here are unique and distinctive, with smooth poppy singing riding over grinding guitar, and also well thought out with lots of little touches that add flare and fire. While listening to this I've been reminded of bands as diverse as Superchunk, Radiohead, the Dead Kennedies, Modern English, and Mudhoney, often with several of them coming to

mind in one song. The result is a CD that's catchy and has staying power, and it doesn't sound like everybody else, either. (2 Tri-Harbor Ct., Port Washington, NY 11050)

the spent idols

spent city rockers

(1+2)

San Diego's Spent Idols are a a great time warp experience to see in a live show. They look like the Vibrators or the Damned circa 1977, and their gigs are wild pogo-fests. But on this CD they come out a little flat; the production is comparable to the Sex Pistols *Spunk* sessions, but the tunes are more like dole-queue styled punk. Best reference is their cover of the Art Attack's "Frankenstein's Heartbeat"...they fit it like a glove. But the punch level is generally a disappointment for anyone who has seen them live. (Clean Nishi-shinjuku, Nishi-shinjuku 7-5-6, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan)

splatterheads

joined at the head

(subway)

The Splatterheads have been going for about 8 years now and are still hardly known even within their home country of Australia. It's a damned shame, since they have come closer to perfecting what fellow Oz bands Bored, Hoss, God or the Powdermonkeys have tried to do than any of them. Passionate, smokey vocals ride over a heavy power rock backing that somehow avoids that grunge metal feel (occasionally running the speed up to hardcore tempos). On slower songs they could be said to sound like Nirvana, but when they crank it up for a track like "Shaken (Trouser Soup)", their own feel comes through strong.

streetwalkin' cheetahs

overdrive

(alive)

Gotta give 'em credit for an inspired name choice, and the CD isn't bad either, even if it can't live up to the heritage this LA band is aiming for. Most of the songs here are Detroit metal workouts of the kind Melbourne bands like Hoss, Bored or Asteroid B-612 specialize in, except the Cheetahs don't hit as many high spots as their Australian brethren. Oddly enough, the best tracks are "Peppermint", which drops the formula for a moment and replaces the swagger with Nirvana-styled vulnerability, and "Little Tokyo", which could've been a Humpers tune. (POB 7112, Burbank, CA 91510)

the suicide commandos
make a record

(mercury)

Having never been to Minneapolis, I can't really say how much impact this band had when they were active back in 1978, but if this reissue CD is any evidence it would be no surprise if all the great bands that came out of that city in the 80s owe everything to them. What baffles me is that long ago I bought the original of this on vinyl and wasn't impressed, but now on CD the Commandos have blown me away completely with a batch of irresistible punk/new wave songs played at such an energy level and with such obvious ability that I can't fathom how I could have overlooked them before. Me and 270 million other Americans, I guess.

trick babys
a fool and his money will be partying

(go kart)

I must confess that when former **VACANT LOT** guitarist **MITRO** sent me the first Trick Babys CD a couple years back I was disappointed. Sure the tunes and guitars were tasty slabs of 60s pop played punk style, but, man, those vocals! Yet half way through this new one, it magically clicked in for me and now I understand. The Trick Babys are a nineties reincarnation of the crazy but wonderful Rezillos, except that singer Lynn Von can do both Fay Fife and Eugene Reynolds unassisted and the sci-fi theme is replaced by low brow sleeze. Great fun for us in the tasteless masses. (PO Box 20, Prince Street Station, NYC, NY 10012)

u.s. bombs
war birth

(hellcat)

This lot regularly get slagged for slavishly copying the Pistols, and it's a fair rap, but why don't their critics go after the 10 billion Nirvana/Pearl Jam wannabees that still litter the music scene? At least US Bombs have a clear passion for the music of their role models, which few bands today can honestly claim. That said, despite having all their CDs I'm not as sold on this band as I'd like to be; they don't have the knack for hooks that the Pistols had, and I think the "We mean it, maan!" sneer works best when you don't use it on every line. Enjoyable, but falls a little short. (2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026)

various
go and do it - the aberrant compilations

(small axe)

One of the great small labels of the 80s was Australia's Aberrant Records, releasing brilliant records (sometimes in quantities of only a few hundred copies) by **FEEDTIME**, **POSITIVE**

HATRED, **EXAMPLEHEAD** and **WORLD WAR XXIV** to name just a few. Aberrant began their existence by releasing three compilation lps documenting Aussie punk bands from 1977 to 1985, perhaps the most interesting and well conceived compilation lps I've ever heard as they included the only recorded songs by several dozen bands that form the critical link between the Radio Birdman fueled scene of late 70s Sydney and the well documented mid 80s Aussie explosion. This two CD set includes all three lps plus a few more tracks, and no fan of Oz rock should be without it. There's minimalist blasts of feedtime and **X**, Clash inspired punk from Positive Hatred, **THE KELPIES**, the first recordings by the great **HAPPY HATE ME NOTS**, a more 80s hardcore punk sound from **THE HARD-ONS**, **ROCKS** and **EXSERTS**, and lots of other styles that defy labels. Aberrant label boss **BRUCE GRIFFITHS** told me in a 1988 interview that to him Aberrant meant "not what is expected", and that certainly applies here; there's a batch of different styles, yet the songs go together like they were meant to. Which, of course, they were. You rarely get a second chance in this life; don't miss this one. (PO Box A2155, Sydney South 2000, Australia)

various
those were different times

(scat)

This CD features a mix of live, rehearsal, and demo tracks by three different pioneering bands of the late 70s Cleveland scene...the Mirrors, the Styrenes, and the Electric Eels. In some quarters these bands will likely be hailed as critical founding fathers of punk; the reality is that all three were less hated than ignored outside of Cleveland in their heyday, and for good reason. The Mirrors are best with some good moments that recall early Chills (or the less known Human Hands), the Styrenes are unremarkable new wave, and the Eels are abysmal shouting and noise. (6226 Southwood #3e, St. Louis, MO 63105-3232)

the yum yums
sweet as candy

(1+2)

This band is fronted by **MORTEN HENRICKSEN**, who previously led the **COSMIC DROPOUTS**, Norway's best band ever. But where the Cosmic Dropouts were a garage powerhouse who could rival the Nomads punch for punch, the Yum Yums change styles to rocking power pop, which they approach in the same full throttle style that Henricksen brought to garage music. Huge, ringing guitars and wonderful pop harmonies fuel every cut. This stuff is played with conviction and guts, but it also soars like the best Raspberries

tunes ever did..."Back To Rosie" or "It's Hard" being perhaps the best. Great CD. (Clean Nishi-shinjuku, Nishi-shinjuku 7-5-6, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan)