



Big Takeover #45 was printed at the end of 1999. The reviews below were all written for this issue, but not all appeared in it, and some were shortened because of space constraints...

22 Jacks going north

(side 1 dummy)

The third CD by this nifty punk/pop band featuring veterans of **WAX**, **THE ADOLESCENTS** and **AGENT ORANGE** is by far their best. Their debut *Uncle Bob* was a good effort, but the sophomore *Overserved* didn't seem to hang together very well despite a few strong songs...partly due to the inclusion of several live tracks, a de-focusing guest appearance by **JOEY RAMONE** and too many covers. But this CD they make totally their own, and as themselves they are quite something. Despite the non-stop energy, to call this music punk would be way too confining. The best song here would be "Slipping Down", which veers off into a high powered Stax/Volt taste including a full horn section that's gradually brought up in the mix as the song progresses so that you hardly notice what's been happening before this soul monster is in your lap. And as for the rest, well, it's so catchy and well played that there's little that couldn't be an A side candidate. Woah! (side1@aol.com)

30 lincoln

avanti

(johan's face)

To call the music made by this Cleveland band punk would be a woefully inadequate description...they certainly have the requisite guitar fueled energy and the sneering vocal style, but these songs have a burning intensity that goes a long way past simple three chord rock. The opening "East Of Motor City" starts with a keyboard riff that makes you think a cover of the Yardbird's "For Your Love" is coming, but then it kicks into hyperdrive and that initial impression is quickly gone. The singer reminds me of a less pretentious Richard Hell (especially on the funky "I Think We Need A Doctor In Here"), but he spits out 50 words in the bat of an eyelash. The band knows how to weave variety into songs to make them stick...that keyboard bridge in "Pop Radio" is just one great example. Only the East German judge prevents a perfect 6.0 score. (PO Box 479164)

anti-flag

a new kind of army

(go kart)

Here in the comfort of the new millenium it's a lot harder to make compelling political rock than it was at the height of the cold war era when there were clear cut issues everywhere. Not that things are totally great now, but most of today's issues don't lend themselves to taking positions in 3 minute songs as easily as in 1977. No worries for Anti-Flag; they give it a go anyway and the result is an impressively stirring slab of punk rock. For a band with a message, this is the kind of framework to pack it in...rousing anthemic tunes that are catchy as malaria and loaded with shout-along backing vocal bits. My fave is "Got The Numbers", which just rips with its chorus "We don't need more time to talk over a solution/We know what we need, we need a fucking revolution!". There's loads more like that here, too. (PO Box 20, Prince St. Station, NYC, NY 10012)

badtown boys

another fine day

(new red archives)

It's been a long time between drinks for this LA area punk/pop band, and we'd be justified in asking if it's even the same group...after all, only one original member remains. The brothers **CHRIS** and **GREG KEITH** are both gone, and their vocal work was a lot of what made early smashes like "Borrowed Time" so terrific. In those days (late 80s and early 90s) the Badtown Boys were one of the first bands to take hardcore punk tempos and blend in the poppy feel of the Ramones...nothing new today but fairly novel then. This time out

about half of the material works...when they go poppy as on "Please Stay With Me Baby" or "Always Fighting", the old magic is there, but when they go more to old school hardcore they sound a little generic. (gizzlazlo@webtv.net, <http://www.newredarchives.com>)

the backsliders

bend or stand

(self released)

Not to be confused with the US band of the same name, these Backsliders are French and have been going since the early part of the decade. Frontman **FRANCOIS LEBAS** goes back even further, as he previously led one of France's best bands of the 80s, the soulful **FIXED UP**. Money being scarce for recording in France, this is only the third Backsliders album, but the wait between records means that there's plenty of time for the group to hone the quality of the material. The Backsliders play a tough brand of guitar rock that's heavily influenced by the Stooges and Aussies like Radio Birdman and the Celibate Rifles (with perhaps a little more soulful feeling), and they load their songs with lyrics of alienation and anger against an overly regimented hi-tech world. Best of the batch is "It's All Fucked", which has real burning guitar fury to go with lines like "Walking down the streets by hundreds of mental cripples/Ready to suck up, ready for the reward". (62 rue Casimir Delavigne, 76600 Le Havre, France)

tim best

promising boyfriend

(parasol)

Every once in a while, some band that can barely play, sing or write songs makes a low budget record that by all objective standards is utter rubbish, but somehow works its dysfunctional components into sheer magic. It's wonderful when that happens, but unfortunately it encourages a significant segment of the population to see if it can happen for them, too. Australian Tim Best is one of these people. His singing is vulnerably unconfident and at times wanders off pitch. While his vocals aren't great, the musical backing (primarily simple acoustic strumming, piano, and some filler string washes) isn't interesting enough to carry songs with the words mixed so low that you can't understand them easily. I did enjoy the brief Spanish sounding horn charts in "Casino", but it's not enough. (905 South Lynn St., Urbana, IL 61801)

brother brick

a portable altamont

(hellfire)

This French release compiles a batch of 1995-1997 single sides from Sydney's Brother Brick into a powerhouse set of rock and roll of the sort that Australians have been specializing in since Radio Birdman roamed the earth in the late 70s. I'd bought their first single years ago and been underwhelmed, but the best tracks on this disc have completely knocked the dog snot out of me. Frontman **STEWART CUNNINGHAM** (also in the superb **CHALLENGER 7**) has an odd, throaty singing style that one friend succinctly stated proves him to be a guitar player who does the singing and not the other way around. He's adequate to the task at the mike, but he's overwhelming on the frets, where he unleashes a blizzard of crunching gut level rhythm playing and then frosts the proceedings with tasteful, blues flavored leads. My favorite track is the rollicking "Chokito Bar", but choosing that one over "Rock'n'Roll Marie" or the adrenalin rush of "Feel Strung Out" is a hard call. Rock action like it was meant to be! (hellfireclub@wanadoo.fr)

the celibate rifles

wonderful life

(tronador)

The likelihood that any but the most diehard of Rifles fans (*you know so much but you don't know nothing*) will hunt down this Brazilian collection of some of the best tracks released by this crucial Australian band is small (*cholesterol is low, expectations are high*), but its presence gives one more opportunity to point out that this unassuming Australian group has been one of the finest bands in the world for nearly 17 years now (*born under a mushroom cloud, irrelevant generation*) whether anyone is paying attention or not. Between the fireball twin guitar attack of **KENT STEEDMAN** and **DAVE MORRIS** (*the truth must be entertaining*) and the deadpan, socially conscious lyrics of **DAMIEN LOVELOCK** (*you call it pessimism, we call it reality*), the Rifles have a knack of putting a cynical finger (*I never seen a hearse with a luggage rack*) on hypocrisy where ever it might occur (*the more bread you give, the more god you get*). And lest you falsely assume that this is some preachy, screaming, unlistenable hardcore outfit (*pain and suffering on S'n'MTV*), you should know that these guys have terrific and varied tunes that owe the Stooges, the Ramones, the Saints, and especially Radio Birdman, but contribute much of their own. Steedman (*live via satellite, Jesus on TV*) can play rings around even non-slouching guitarists like the Screaming Trees' Gary Lee Connor...this guy wages war on his guitar

whenever he picks it up (*the bars are on the inside, too*). So the bottom line is this: you may not find this particular Celibate Rifles disc at your local shop (*freedom of choice, but who picks the choices?*), but if you see anything else with their name on it, to lunge wouldn't be inappropriate. (*lyrics without permission...*) (CP 3383 Centro, cep: 01060-970, Sao Paulo, SP Brasil)

challenger 7/rollercoaster

"payola"/"kylie" split 7"

chevelles

"mesmerized" 7"

the crusaders

"she wants more" 7"

dm3

"just like nancy" 7"

pyramidiacs

"i can't hide" 7"

the early hours

evolution 2x7"

(hellfire)

It's lean pickings on the 7" single front these days, but France's Hellfire Records is here to show us how to do it right, the way it used to be done. French may be the label, but Australian (with a special dose of Perth) are all the bands, which is no surprise if you've had any inkling how much the French rock and roll scene has been influenced by Australiana since the early 80s, Rainbow Warrior or no. Each of these discs has at least 4 songs on it (the Early Hours package is a full lp on two singles), and the sound is a little flat in places from cramming too many grooves in too little space, but the music is almost all great. Leading off is Challenger 7, led by ex-KRYPTONICS frontman/guitarist **IAN UNDERWOOD** and complemented by **BROTHER BRICK** axeman **STEWART CUNNINGHAM**. You get what you'd expect with those two...potent Detroit-y rock that's smoothed by a dose of power pop...two terrific tracks of guitar greatness. (Track down their ace *Great Slump Forward* ep for more of the same!) Perth pickup group Rollercoaster (includes the Chevelle's **DUANE SMITH** and former **STEMS** drummer **DAVID SHAW**) cop the flip, and they don't concede an inch to the A-side material. The Chevelles used to feature ex-Stems guitarist **RICHARD LANE** and still do include **JEFF HALLEY**, another Kryptonics connection. Lane's gone now, but the Chevelles persevere with four cuts of tough and tasty power pop of their own...a lot heavier and edgier than their earlier records. Special kudos go out for their gutty "Outta My Mind". Sydney's Crusaders have generated applause both down under and up over, but despite an ace song title in "I Was A Teenaged Adult" their lo-fi garage slop is uninspiring to this

listener. Perth's DM3 (another Stems connection) present 4 power pop tracks that are average by their standards, but excellent by anyone else's. The Pyramidiacs deal out their four rocking pop tracks and come up all aces with soft vocal harmonies backed by huge walls of ringing guitar. And finally, the Early Hours repackage their second CD onto 7"...a passel of wonderful beat pop tracks that brought raves when they toured Europe earlier this year. Be the first on your block to collect the whole set, you'll be glad you did. (hellfireclub@wanadoo.fr)

citizen fish

active ingredients

(lookout)

Citizen Fish are like a time machine that brings me back to the early 80s, when punk rock bands from the UK sang about social and political topics in heavy Cockney accents and tossed heavy doses of reggae and ska into the blend. But while they may be a little imitative, in today's dumbed-down climate it's sheer pleasure to hear a set of songs that, while having as much energy as anything out there, also are chock-a-block with musical variety and thinking man's lyrics. Even on a topic like the pro-veggie "Sacred Cows" (which talks about the threat of mad cow disease among other things), where I'm not in full agreement with the viewpoint, they have such an endearing way of expressing themselves that I can't help but get a chuckle when they conclude with "We all suggest that you go vegetarian/Then all these problems are all sorted out!". And the opening title track with its catch-phrase about a "recipe for disaster" is a classic. Highly recommended. (PO Box 11374, Berkeley, CA 94712)

flamin groovies

absolutely the best

(fuel)

Absolutely Some Of The Best is more like it. How can it be that the definitive retrospective of this influential band, *Groovies Greatest Grooves*, is long out of print, but a record company can issue a CD like this, making it seem like the Groovies didn't even have enough good tracks to fill a normal length CD without the help of a pile of covers (even if they did smoke 'em)! Yeah, it's great to have an excuse to play garage rock classics like "Teenage Head", "Shake Some Action" or "Slow Death" again, but those are just the obvious gems lying on the surface. Dig boys, dig! This *coulda* been it, but hell's bells, a single sheet of paper for a booklet, not even big enough to fold in half once! Cheap label company bastards, do it right next time! (10 University Plaza, Universal City, CA 91608)

frenzal rhomb
a man's not a camel

(fat)

A terrific Melbourne band called I Spit On Your Gravy once did a hilarious song with the same title as this CD. Can't tell if their fellow townsmen Frenzal Rhomb got the idea from them or not, but they share a love of joke-cracking punk rock. Frenzal Rhomb have obviously been listening to their Green Day and NOFX CDs, and if you are unconcerned about originality, they do a decent job. Their vocal harmonies are probably their best strength, and on songs like "I Don't Need Your Loving" things come together nicely. Other tracks sound good while playing but are a little too generic to be memorable. (PO Box 193690, SF, CA 94119)

gluecifer
head to head boredom

(devil doll)

For those whose mental picture of Norway is one of blonde maidens quietly milking goats and making cheese in some pastoral mountain scene overlooking a deep fjord, we bring you Oslo's Gluecifer, whose slogan (printed on the CD booklet) is "Hard Rock Gets You Laid". This is a band that released a single whose pic-sleeve was a photo of the singer bent over on stage with a lit stick of dynamite protruding from of his singularly unattractive naked posterior. It's probably unnecessary to say much beyond this. These guys are like a low budget porn version of the Dwarves or New Bomb Turks, but whereas those bands offer the odd spark of humor to go with the amphetamine fueled punk rock, Gluecifer just sound obnoxious. (PO Box 30727, Long Beach, CA 90853)

goober patrol
the unbearable lightness of being drunk

(fat)

Can't judge a book by its cover dept: It would be very easy to look at the name of this band, the title of the CD, the pictures of the band clowning around in the booklet photos, and song titles like "1000th Beer" and assume that here's another useless slab of drunk punk. But the fact is that far from being a glorification of alcoholic stupor, these songs actually show a pretty strong sense of social consciousness. Not to say that this lot don't have a way to go to be able to express themselves as well as, say, countrymen Citizen Fish, but this is no lyrical wasteland. The songs themselves are energetic, tuneful, and played with conviction and skill. The strangled vocals are nearly unintelligible even when followed along on the lyric sheet...kind of like a cross between Leatherface's Frankie Stubbs and "Sorry Ma..." era Replacements. Not

the best CD of the issue, but nothing to be ashamed of, either. (PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119)

hey! charger
klods half time rentals

(pink tone-ale)

Hey! Charger bassist and singer **BILL GIBSON** played in the brilliant mid 80s Aussie punk/Detroit/power pop group the **EASTERN DARK**, who recorded one immortal single and one immortal mini-lp before their frontman/guitar player **JAMES DARROCH** was killed in a car wreck on the Hume Highway. (A less than immortal double lp retrospective of gig tapes and demos followed...) Gibson subsequently played in the Residents inspired **SMELLY TONGUES**, and it seemed like his days of playing amphetamine pop were over, but not so! Complimented by the solid guitar work and songwriting of **ALAN CREED**, he makes every one of these six songs count. Crunchy guitars, big hooks, nice but edgy harmonies, the package. (PO Box 392, Leichhardt 2040, NSW Australia)

holy curse
living with a head

(explicit sound)

There's a core of French rock and roll fans that are absolutely flipped out over Detroit punk bands like the Stooges, MC5, Radio Birdman, the New Christs and Jeff Dahl. As usual with rabid music fans, they soon start their own bands to play the style they love, and over the years France has had far more first rate bands playing this field than most Anglophiles would ever expect. Holy Curse are a fine example of this phenomenon. They're not too good at English, so they load up their songs with phrases copped from their heroes but sung with that slightly slurred French accent that gives it a unique feel. Guitar these guys DO speak, and they hit with one riff-mongering tune after another. The opening "Night Zoo" rips, and even when they slow it down for a moody number like "Destruction World" the tension burns through. (BP 215, 75865 Paris, Cedex 18, France)

hot rod honeys
hungry and horny

(man's ruin)

Subtlety goes flying out the window on this 17 track CD of rave-up punk slop. With three songs under a minute long and 10 under two there's no time for complexity...just one bashing greasy punk tune after another. The vocalist sounds like some late 70s dole queue Brit punk, but the band has been listening to stuff like the Dwarves or Hellacopters. Mindless, directionless energy, but a lot of fun. (610 22nd Street #302, SF, CA 94107)

the hunchbacks
can't help feeling

(magic island)

Australia seems to have a unique lock on this kind of rock and roll that fuses elements of punk rock, Detroit metal, and something of *Exile On Main Street* - era Rolling Stones into a hard rocking blend that can't really be called metal, punk, or grunge. The New Christs might be the prototype, but other examples include Hoss, Asteroid B-612, the Freeloaders, Bored, God, the Fools. On this CD, Sydney's Hunchbacks do it with the best of them, and in terms of consistency, out do most of them. They've loaded this disc with tired, smokey vocals and blues influenced rock guitar, and where others of this type can't seem to resist a couple of tracks of meandering guitar wanking, the Hunchbacks stick to making one punishing tune after another. From highlights like "The Dog" (their own slant on the Stooges' "Now I Wanna Be Your Dog") to "Nobody's Fool" to any of half a dozen other tracks, this one's a great, tough CD. (PO Box 396, Crows Nest, Sydney NSW 2065, Australia)

hundred million martians
mars bars

(hiljaiset levyt)

This is the second full length CD by this outstanding Finnish buzzsaw pop band, and thought it doesn't hit the jawdropping highs of 1997's *Martian Arts*, it maintains a consistently superb quality throughout. These guys have the same sense of tunefulness that Mega City Four used to display, but they've got tougher and louder guitars, and for my money, better songs. A sense of youthful optimism infiltrates into everything, even when everything is going to hell in the lyrics...much the same spirit as the first Undertones lp. When a band can sing about how a girl's no good because she's not interested in the fact that some great new album is coming out, you know they've got the right priorities. And check that "Daytripper" riff on "Whistles In The Bag", which sounds like a punked up Bangles song. A real treat. (hiljaiset@hiljaiset.sci.fi)

ice cream hands
"yellow and blue" CD single

(rubber)

From their beginnings as a low key coffee house sort of acoustic pop group, Melbourne's Ice Cream Hands seem to keep growing closer to the spirit of their ancestor band **THE MAD TURKS** by turning up the power in their pop. This time out the 15+ year partnership of **CHARLES JENKINS** and **DOM LARIZZA** is finally broken with the latter's departure, but bassist **DOUG ROBERTSON** steps up in a big way, writing and singing the very

Beatles flavored title track, a number that rocks in the best Mersey-beat tradition and is a strong taster for their forthcoming third lp. The second track here is a spacey effects-riddled tossaway written by the drummer and the third is an acoustic guitar and singer-only ballad by Jenkins showcasing his usual gift with a lyric. (info@rubberrecords.com.au)

mr. t experience
alcatraz

(lookout)

dr. frank

show business is my life

(lookout)

They've been around forever and have a tendency to be overlooked now, but this is a terrific band and their releases are still well worth watching for. On first listen, MTX sound like a tuneful punk/pop band with a vocalist who is stretching to stay on pitch. But spend a little more time with them and soon you will find that this singer, who goes by the sobriquet **DR. FRANK**, can spin a lyric with the best of them. A master of biting sarcasm and the double entendre, Dr. Frank shows off his wordsmithing on song after song, starting right away with the critic bashing "I Wrote A Book About Rock'n'Roll" (hey, is he talking about plutocrats like *me?*). In another era, Dr. Frank might have written tunes for Broadway musicals...there's very few of the tired cliches that pass for lyrics with far too many other bands. What you get is something new on every track.

Not satisfied with a new CD with his long time band, Dr. Frank provides himself with some competition with a solo effort. Exactly what it is about these songs that made them ineligible for MTX is unclear, since the result sounds like nothing more than another MTX release...maybe a little more subtlety here and there, but by and large a load of bashing pop tunes with more neat wordplay. (PO Box 11374, Berkeley, CA 94712-2374)

the montgomery cliffs
millenium/a pop opera

(rpm)

This is something I've been expecting to see for many years now...a band taking on the old rock opera concept from the sixties. On their second full length release, Long Island's Montgomery Cliffs do a pretty smashing job of it, too. The theme is a little goofy - basically that humans were dumped here at the time of Christ for being buttheads on another planet (believable), and that in the year 2,000 their dumpers are coming back to see if anything is worth retrieving (not believable). But to put things in perspective, there's no

hearing/seeing/speaking impaired pinball players ruling them all, although there are several musical references to *Tommy* sprinkled around. Ignoring all that, as a piece of music this works wonderfully...the re-use of bits of songs in multiple places and the little sub-minute segues between more significant songs make this a CD in which the whole is definitely more than the sum of the parts. And with individual tunes like "Average Man", "1964" or the Elvis Costello-like "The Big Event", there's lots to enjoy. (link@sun-link.com)

the mopos
accident waiting to happen
(lookout)

Consisting as they do of members of such masters of punk/pop as **SCREECHING WEASEL** and the **QUEERS** (among others), the Mopos could be expected to spin out a decent release. But pickup supergroups are infamous for surprise disasters, so it was by no means guaranteed that this combo would work as spectacularly as it has. This CD is loaded with the sort of Ramones-influenced rock and roll that I've always flipped for...gutt guitar, solid backbeat heavy drumming, and killer vocals backed up with tons of woah-oh harmonies. The Mopos aren't above some heavy borrowing: "I Don't Know How To Say Goodbye" recalls 70s Brit faves the Boys ace track "Terminal Love" while "1850" sounds like a remake of Johnny Thunders' version of "Pipeline" with a different lead guitar chart. But with influences like that, who's gonna complain? (<http://www.lookoutrecords.com>)

the mullens
go where the action is
(get hip)

Dallas trash punks the Mullens deliver their second CD of simplistic and raw rock and roll. Recreating the days before there were punk rock bands with serious musicians in them, the Mullens at their best make some really catchy and energetic tunes with a sixties touch, like the terrific "Lost That Feelin'". At other times the singing lets them down a bit...**TIM STILE** can sound like David Johansen (check "Miserable Party") or a pre-1965 Mick Jagger at one moment and then sound like the most out of tune drunken punk mediocrity the next, so a lot of what you get depends on which level he's operating on. Instrumentally, this band has much greater consistency and generally delivers the goods. (gethip@gethip.com)

the nitwitz
dark side of the spoon
(get hip)

Guitarist **TONY LEEUWENBURGH** has been a fixture in the Holland underground rock scene for more years than he probably wants to

count...since 1978 or so when the original version of this band was launched when Tony was 16. Between then and now he's been in the hardcore band **BGK** and led the more Detroit-metal style **LOVESLUG**, a first rate band that put out several lps. The singer for this version of the Nitwitz takes a little getting used to with his occasional heavy metal histrionics, but when Tony lets fly with his tasty guitar leads all ills are cured. Definitely a CD to listen to without a lyric sheet, the strength of this is tough and inventive instrumental backing...and on that level it's fabulous gut level rock and roll that leaves competition like Gluecifer or Turbonegro in the dust. (gethip@gethip.com)

the nomads
big sound 2000
(estrus)

The Nomads are the world's best garage band, and the rest of the competition isn't even close. On the occasions I've been fortunate to see them play live, I've always come away thinking that all those other bands I've been going to see really can't play worth a damn. The Nomads don't rely on speed to generate energy; not that they can't put the pedal down, but they've got lots of other tools that can make a song shake you to your toenails without just playing fast. First, there's **HANS OSTLUND's** guitar work. Early in the Nomad's career, I used to think he was as good as Johnny Thunders. Now that would be inadequate praise...he's far beyond that with loads of tasty licks tossed out with seeming ease (check those simple bits of frosting on "Worst Case Scenario" as just one example). Then there's **NICK VAHLBERG's** singing...technically wrong in every way as he almost talks through the words half the time, yet perfect for the music. And then the underpinning rhythm section of **JOAKIM ERICSON** and **BJORNE FROBERG** provides that same kind of locomotive power that the Pistols used to have. This isn't their best lp (that would be *Sonically Speaking*), but it's not far off the standard. (PO Box 2125, Bellingham, WA 98227)

the orange humble band
down in your dreams CDEP
(half a cow)

DARRYL MATHER steps out of the shadow of former **SOMELOVES** partner **DOM MARIANI** (now in the terrific Perth power pop band **DM3**) and organizes a band to showcase his own substantial power pop talents. The opening "Down In Your Dreams" is absolutely luscious rocking pop music, and the other four tracks all vary the idea..."All Wrapped Up" has a mild country twang, "Jet's Gone" is a melancholy ballad, and the closing "Step On The Gas" crunches out. Only "Telegram

For Cindy” has kind of a half finished, demo quality to it, but this is enough of a taster that I’m searching out the lp next for sure. (PO Box 1100 Strawberry Hills, NSW 2012, Australia)

the orange humble band
assorted creams

(half a cow)
You, reader, don’t get to see the almost mystical process by which these little prosaic appraisals are penned, but rest assured that it is now several months since I raved about *Down In Your Dreams* and here I am, as good as my word, to tell you about how much of a pleasure the full length CD really IS. Only the title song from the CDEP shows up here, and there’s a stack of other tracks as good, starting with the leadoff “Fanclub Requiem”, and continued by songs like “Sleeping In My Caravan”, “Katie Said So” and the Mariani partnership “It Doesn’t Matter”. Big surprise is Mather’s own version of the DM3 masterwork “Can’t Get What You Want”, which on the DM3 CD is credited as being co-authored by Mather and Mariani but here is Mather only – suggesting that Mariani only added a bridge to the original, and in turn implying that Mather deserves the bulk of the credit for this incredibly great power pop song. A first rate powerpop record by a master of the craft. (haclabel@mpx.com.au)

graham parker and the rumour
not if it pleases me

(hux)
Aside from the superb *Acid Bubblegum*, Parker’s work has been pretty spotty in the time since he was overtaken by Elvis Costello in the angry young singer songwriter sweeps. But this release, half of which comes from two Peel sessions and the other half from a 1977 concert, provides ample evidence of why Parker once was so highly regarded. Along with early Doctor Feelgood releases, Parker’s first three lps probably represent the apex of pub rock as a music form, and the tracks here include terrific versions of all the best from those records, played with an urgency and fire borne of knowing that there’s just one chance to get it right. The Peel sessions material is a little rougher than the original versions, but the engineering leaves them with more punch than Nick Lowe’s muddy production. The live material (especially a soulful, horn filled version of “Lady Doctor” and a rock’em sock’em run through “New York Shuffle”) made me contemplate a class action suit against Mercury Records for their shoddy release of *The Parkerilla*, a lifeless live album from 1978 that doesn’t hold a candle to the material here. This is a wonderful collection for long time fans and first timers alike. (PO Box 12647, London SE18 8ZF)

the phantom tones
phantastico

(hiljaiset levyt)
It really is staggering how many fine Finnish releases there seem to have been in the 90s. Here’s another band I’d never heard before with a four track CD boasting two stone killers. “You Didn’t Know Me” has one of those soaring choruses that lifts the entire song along with half your apartment right off its foundations...if there was any justice this sort of thing would be top 40 radio material worldwide. And the opening track “Tell Me” isn’t far behind. Their cover of “Hanging On The Telephone” made me laugh out loud when the phone at the beginning was one of those really cheesy cellular ringers. Unfortunately, the singing is a little stiff compared to the original, and it says something about the Phantom Tones’ songwriting that this is the weakest of the four tracks. (hiljaiset@hiljaiset.sci.fi)

the plimsouls
kool trash

(fuel)
Power pop’s reviving all over, and who better to make a comeback than the Plimsouls, a band who penned a batch of great songs in the late 70s but never got them recorded in a way that showed even a part of their promise...to get the goods you had to catch a gig (pick up their *One Night In America* live CD for a taste of that!). But now, 20 years later, they record a CD with production that does the songs justice...**PETER CASE**’s smokey vocals ride confidently over the top of instrumentation that has the right combination of crunching power and beauty. Adding ex-**BLONDIE** drummer **CLEM BURKE** certainly doesn’t hurt...one listen to his kit demolishing work on the rollicking opener “Playing With Jack” (a nod to Case’s ex-**NERVES** bandmate **JACK LEE**) will let you know Burke’s the man for the job. A few songs (“Pile Up” for one) plod a little, but it seems like there’s always a follow up like the wistful “12 O’Clock Midnight” to set things right. (10 Universal Plaza, Universal City, CA 91608)

otis rush
any place i’m going

(platinum)
I wish I was enough of a renaissance man to be able to claim to really know something about the blues, but in truth it’s just something I dabble in on those rare occasions that I’m looking for a change. I’d first heard Otis Rush doing the wonderful “Everyday I Have The Blues” on a compilation of Chicago blues masters, and subsequently tried and loved a couple CDs of his Eisenhower-era material. So when the chance came to review this

new one, I had to try. Rush has gotta be well into his 60s now, but he sings with conviction and soul that few people of any age can muster. The guy flat out rocks...this stuff is energetic and lively and there's none of those glacially paced songs so commonplace in blues. And setting the music aside, my goal is to have the energy to generate the kind of woman problems he's singing about when I match that age! Rush's guitar flows like a living thing, and it makes you wonder why the hell anyone buys Eric Clapton records when this stuff is lying around. The kind of slick and somewhat sterile production applied to too many 90s blues recordings bothers this a little, but that guitar and that voice burn through all of it. (<http://www.platinumed.com>)

the shambles
clouds all day

(snap!!)

San Diego's finest power pop band ever, the Shambles are headed by local stalwart Bart Mendoza, whose roots go back to the early 80s when lines of scooters could be found outside of clubs whenever his fine band Manual Scan was gigging. *Clouds All Day* is a Spanish reissue originally released on Bart's own Blindspot Records. It's an outstanding set of moddish power pop tracks that also nods to Nuggets type 60s rock and mid-period Beatles. "Original Tangent" recalls the Jam's "Dreams Of Children", while "I Can't Don't Want To" could ignite a Yardbirds revival. And songs like "Day and Maybes" or "Brilliant" are single A side caliber as well.. It's harder to find but much more cohesive than their Japanese *Reviving Spark* CD (which compiled sampler tracks and single sides from all over)...track it down! (PO Box 2303, 28080 Madrid, Spain)

v. spy v. spy
the early years

(tronador)

V. Spy V. Spy were an inner-Sydney pub favorite during the early 80s, a period during which Australian rock lay in dormant between the initial late 70s blast of Radio Birdman and the Saints and the brilliant mid to late 80s period. The recordings on this reissue compile their very earliest tracks taken from a couple singles and their first mini-lp. They show a band playing a kind of catchy new wave pop with a lot of spunk and innocence, but also with a clean guitar feel and a quirky songwriting style that sounds refreshing now because so few bands play like this anymore (it was a different story in 1983!). It's easy to see why crowds would latch onto a tune as memorable as "Do What You Say" or "That (Dead) Girl"...this is as good as 95% of the indie pop coming out of

Britain in the same time period. (tronador@uol.com.br)

sugarsmack
sugarsmack

(bombadier)

This is the kind of luscious power pop record that I've normally had to rely on overseas groups like the DM3 to provide...Americans just don't seem to do this sort of thing that well. The press sheet says that Milwaukee's Sugarsmack love Nick Lowe and Squeeze, but I didn't need to be told...it's totally obvious from one listen. What's more, on their debut, they've manage to just about equal anything either of these two bands ever released. Singer **NICK PIPITONE** frequently sounds like Paul Simon fronting a jangly band like Let's Active as they score three classics with "Wake Up!", "Perfection" and "Sassy Girl". Every other track here is no worse than a pleasure. (<http://www.bombco.com>)

the swingin' utters
brazen head ep

(fat)

The Swingin' Utters name is becoming something of a trademark of quality these days...it seems like everything they release is first rate. Clash comparisons are inevitable because of Johnny Bonnel's Strummer-like vocals and the heartfelt punk approach of the band, but there's more below the surface and this band has their own identity. The songs show considerably more craftsmanship than your typical ramalama beer drinking punks. Check that gorgeous guitar solo on "From The Observatory", the organ touches on the title track, and the accordion intro of "Smokestack Dreams", and watch for the neat harmony backing vocals scattered throughout. But this band also plays with guts and fire...skill doesn't mean that power is lost at all. (PO Box 193690, SF, CA 94119)

tilt
viewers like you

(fat)

Veterans of the Bay Area scene since 1992, Tilt merge a lot of the feel of early 80s British punk groups with 90s punk production. Much of this is due to the passionate style of singer **CINDER BLOCK**, whose rich, soulful powerhouse of a voice dominates all impressions of this band. While she can be overbearing at times, especially given the torrent of words that accompany every song, she's also the major strength that gives this band a uniqueness that might otherwise be hard to achieve. Things click particularly well in the stretch of songs from "War Room" through "Animated Corpse" and "Pontiac". On the other hand, although I agree with the politics I find "Mama's

Little Man" to be a major annoyance, and the vocal intensity on "Dog Collar" just seems out of proportion to the message. (mailbag@fatwreck.com)

various
we want the airwaves
(munster)

This first rate compilation of worldwide power pop bands will rock you like it's 1965 again. Most of these songs are very good, and there are four or five that many bands would consider a crowning achievement. It starts with two of these...the **SHAME IDOL's** crashing "Gone", and **MARTIN LUTHER LENNON's** "Nobody I Know". Both these songs are loaded with big guitar chords and great pop hooks. **THE SHARING PATROL's** "I Can Take You There" is beat-pop bliss, and **THE ROSWELL's** "Foul Weather Friend" has a neat lyric concept to go with a fine tune. **CHRIS VON SNEIDERN** may need work on his stage name, but there's nothing wrong with the Raspberries like blast of "Go On, Go On". That's just the highlights, but there's no chaff among these 12 tracks. Recommended without reservation. (Apdo 18107, 28080 Madrid, Spain)

various
se acabo la tregua
(munster)

If you're sending to Munster to get the "We Want The Airwaves" compilation reviewed above, you might ask them to give you one of these, too. It's not clear whether this is really commercially available or just a promo sampler, but it kicks off with some good tunes, starting with an opening salvo of "Glass Onion World" by **ROSS** through the **DM3** (Australia) chestnut "Lure", **ORANGE HUMBLE BAND**, **FASTBACKS**, and once again Chris Von Sneidern. After these tracks, quality plummets precipitously and never really recovers through an assortment of girl groups, surf, and garage bands and assorted no-hopers. The closer by long standing Spanish band **CEREBROS EXPRIMIDOS** recovers a little, but still, this is one that's best used to grab a few tracks for a mix tape.

various
surf monsters
(del-fi)

A rocking surf instrumental can be a wonderful thing, and here's twenty of them from yesterday and today to bring lots of cool water and the odd bit of kelp into your shorts. Benefiting as they do from better equipment and production, today's bands seem to be the clear winners in this competition, with the **COCKTAIL PREACHERS** coming away with the ribbon for the spy theme stylings of "Albatross Joe", but a close second is

the Dick Dale inspired "The Apes Of Wrath" from the **SPACE COSSACKS** with **POWERJIVE's** "Surf Session At Sunset" right behind. (info@del-fi.com)

viva malpache!
los greatest hits de viva malpeche
(grita!)

Critiquing this with knowledge of Spanish that cuts off at "Donde esta el bano, por favor?" is a challenge, but here goes. This CD is a sometimes interesting blend of Anglo guitar rock, more traditional Spanish music, and dashes of reggae. It rocks out with "Pan Con Mayonesa" (bread with mayonnaise?), but for the most part it's fairly tame, and ultimately the music isn't compelling enough to make the listener hang in there for lyrics that can't be understood. (PO Box 1216, NYC, NY 10156)

the wonderfools
kids in satanic service
(one way street)

In a fair world, I'd hack my way through the firewalls in the Big Takeover corporate data processing center, crack the password to Jack's account, and renumber his top forty so the number one spot is blank. Then I'd insert this review of the Wonderfools marvelous, awe inspiring masterwork in the place of honor.

But it wouldn't stop there. Oh, no! Next I'd replace the cover with a shot of these four Norwegian kids doing what they do best, which is *ripping the place to bits* with their hell bent for leather brand of rocket fueled punk rock. And of course, if they're on the cover, they have to be the lead feature, so there'd be an interview in which **TOMAS DAHL** would tell you how he played drums in great Norwegian bands like **THE BITTERSWEETS** and **THE YUM YUMS** before he'd even reached the age of 20, and how he'd switched to guitar so he could front his own band (because, he says, singing drummers are *so lame!*) and how they'd managed to create a debut CD that's one of the two or three very best of the entire 90s. (That's this one we're talking about right here!) Then he'd tell you how he had to go to Australia to get it released on a label named appropriately enough after a classic Saints song and run by John Needham, founder of the great Citadel Records, and Tim Pittman, manager and producer of several Sydney bands. And of course, YOU wouldn't believe that a band with song titles like "Teenage Fartbomb", "Night Of The Dateless Axeman", "Dogbreath Baby" or "The Story Of Mr. Brainache" could possibly be meaningful, so I'd have to float some song titles like "Orgasm Addict", "Gimme Gimme Shock Treatment", "Smash It Up" or "Do The Robot" to set your frame of reference.

This CD kicks like nothing you've heard in years. Like the Ramones when they first hit, the Wonderfools mix the fiercest guitar/drum slugfest south of the Arctic Circle with every pop trick in the book to give you a CD that's so damned appealing you can't stop listening to it. When the drums drop in and Dahl lets out a "Wooo!" to start "Teenage Fartbomb", the ride begins, and the band blasts through one instant classic after another without a pause for breath. Buzzing guitar like Ed Kuepper on "Nights In Venice" rips throughout (hell, "Dogbreath Baby" even quotes that nagging "Know Your Product" bass line). And if your jaw doesn't hit your belt buckle on the break in the middle of "Gimme Gimme Mickey Juice", well, you've just forgotten that rock'n'roll is about FUN as much as anything. I'm prepared to go on for another ten pages or so about this CD, but alas, my hacking skills don't match my enthusiasm. (citadel@ozemail.com.au)