



The Big Takeover #47 was published in December of 2000. The following reviews were all written for publication in this issue; most did appear, although some may have been edited slightly or cut due to space limitations.

8 litre urn

harmonic balancer

(self released)

You expect authentic reggae bands to come from Jamaica and Merseybeat groups to come from England, and when it comes to guitar overdosed Detroit-punk, you go to Australia. Because that's where you find bands like 8 Litre Urn...bands that burn up the boards with layers of roaring, smoking fury. This CD isn't perfect. The vocals are buried in the mix and with his gravelly growl the singer doesn't sound like he's good enough to warrant unburying. But on the other hand, the instruments more than compensate with a full-on assault of rhythm guitars, bass and drums, and the tasty guitar leads don't go over the top. Best of all, each time I play this it seems to get better. Hard to find, but worth looking. (155 Lindsay Rd., Buderim 4556, Australia)

asteroid b-612

readin' between the lines

(fulltoss)

During the long drought the Aussie music scene suffered through the first 8 years of this decade,

Sydney's Asteroid B-612 were the one band you could count on to release raving Detroit rock records that followed their country's tradition of bands like Radio Birdman, the Saints and the Celibate Rifles. So it seems a little unfair that while things down under seem to be recovering lately, the Asteroids have struggled with line up changes and record labels of late. Off this CD it's not affecting their music one bit, though. Leading with a smoldering cover of "On The Way Down" (also covered to great effect by Sydney's **LOUIS TILLET** on his under-appreciated *Ego Tripping At The Gates Of Hell* lp), this disc mixes blistering rockers and slow, scorching blues workouts better than AB612 has ever done it before. My fave is "Easy The Hard Way", which features a simple repetitive riff that just grinds on you and a dry deadpan vocal like the Rifles' Damien Lovelock just wandered into the studio. But rating this over the rock'n'roll blast of "Gimme Little Something" is a tough call. Yeah-hup! (www.fulltossrecords.com.au)

bangs

sweet revenge

(kill rock stars)

First impression of the second release by this northwest three piece is of just another lightweight high-energy high-school girl punk outfit. That assessment would be dead wrong. After a few listens attention shifts from the vocals (think of the early Fastbacks or Go-Gos) to the instruments and tunes. That guitar playing is something else – instead of just straight three chord riffage, the bass holds down the rhythm job and the guitar runs off to some tasty blues flavored bit. This gal **SARAH UTTER** can play some nasty licks! And when they do slow down on the brilliant "Undo Everything", it's only to put together a breaking up song that'll rip your guts out. If you actually ARE splitting up when you listen to this, I'd suggest you have the number for your local suicide hotline handy. Production is a little murky, but overall, this one's a treat. (www.killrockstars.com)

brother brick

"see you tonight" 7"

(bang)

Under a ghastly sleeve lurks another superb slab of rocking splendor. Brother Brick are one of the prime exponents of Sydney-styled rock these days, and frontman **STEWART CUNNINGHAM** appears to have taken some of the pop queues from his moonlighting job with **CHALLENGER 7** and applied them here. The A side of this could easily be mistaken for a DM3 power pop tune until Cunningham's vocals come in. It's a first rate track, and if proof is needed, it easily overwhelms the solid covers of **PAUL WESTERBERG'S** "Color

Me Impressed” and **THE WIPERS** “Mystery” on the flip. Ex –**EASTERN DARK** bassist **BILL GIBSON** deserves more than a little credit for terrific backing vocals that make the pop sizzle. (bang@clientes.euskaltel.es)

matt bruno

punch and beauty

(parasol)

This collection of power pop tracks by Seattle’s Matt Bruno originally appeared a year ago as a self released effort, but has been repackaged by Parasol to add a couple of extra tracks and better distribution. “On Top Of The World” is a fairly ponderous leadoff cut, but after that the music becomes lighter and airier and sounds like it would make great radio fodder in a world where radio had an interest in anything other than demographics and market research. You can’t go wrong with a song like “I Wanna Be Beautiful” with lines like “I won’t eat a thing for a week / I’ll buy lots of stuff from Clinique / And I’ll use a big fan where ever I stand / Blow back my hair while I suck in my cheeks”. At one moment sounding like Oasis, then like the Beatles, and even like Eric Carmen on one of his big-presentation ballads, Bruno has this kind of soft-core power pop wired. Fans of lush vocal harmonies and smooth hooks should be queuing up around the block for this. (parasol@parasol.com)

candysnatchers

“survival of the fittest” 7”

(coldfront)

No surprise on the A side...the Candysnatchers continue to play their sub-Didjits brand of glam trash punk. They still haven’t got to where they are able to match the Didjits in either songwriting or overall sound, but they’re not miles away. The flip is more of a surprise...a romp through **DAVID BOWIE**’s “Suffragette City” that features strong instrumental backing but suffers from fairly flat timing in the vocal department, including a “wham-bam-thank-you-mam” that comes in so early it feels like the band is trying to figure out whether to laugh or play. (www.coldfrontrecords.com)

johnny casino

twice as good as you

(kadillac)

Johnny Casino is the *nomme de guerre* for **ASTEROID B-612** frontman **JOHN SPITTLES** in a solo incarnation. This 6 track CD was recorded during a trip Spittles took to Philadelphia a year and a half back and it features players from American bands **LIMECELL**, **SAVAGE 3-D** and **RANCID VAT**. Simply put, it smokes, and it might even smoke more than anything Spittles has done with his main band. Things start strongly with a

cranking version of the **FLAMIN’ GROOVIES** anthem “Teenage Head” and they positively explode with the instrumental jam “Shuffling The Deck”, a feedback laced, brain damaging slab of Detroit punk that’s jaw-droppingly intense. Following this it wisely down shifts to the acoustic ballad “You Smile Has Gone Away”, but then it’s back to the usual antics with a brawling version of **RAY CHARLES**’ “What I Say”. Finally, the **STOOGES** “Little Doll” closes things up. Point made. (4365 Cresson St., Philadelphia, PA 19127)

challenger 7

payola

(tomboy)

Challenger 7 frontman **IAN UNDERWOOD** has been playing the traps in Australia since the mid 80s and never released a duff record, yet this is amazingly enough his very first full length album. And he’s made it count. Like his earlier group **THE KRYPTONICS**, Challenger 7 combine tough, Detroit punk flavored guitar with a fabulous sense of power pop hooks and melody to make an irresistible brew. And it hasn’t hurt at all that the lineup has been augmented by former **ASTEROID B-612** and current **BROTHER BRICK** lead guitarist **STEWART CUNNINGHAM**. Between the two of them, they make for an onslaught of guitar rock the likes of which is rarely heard in these troubled times. The variety of guitar sounds alone is impressive...the leadoff “Rats In A Maze” features textures that haven’t been heard since the Professionals (the post-Pistols effort of Steve Cook and Paul Jones). The title track is loaded with racey licks copped from the Johnny Thunders’ chordbook. “Rock’n’Roll Sound”, a paeon to the soul-healing properties of music, seems like a corny idea on paper but is so tuneful and so heartfelt that it proves to be a major winner. “Skip The Beat” derives its wistful feel from ringing, clean chords. Cunningham’s acoustic “Can’t Get Enough” has an almost Jonathan Richman type of unplugged feel to it, but then “Candalabra” returns to full on power rock. And let’s not overlook the terrific rhythm section in all this axe-buzz...these songs are built on a muscular, rock solid foundation. This is a terrific and varied CD loaded with memorable tracks, and it’s gonna be in my top five for the year for sure. (http://www.tomboyrecords.com.au).

the chords

so far away

(captain mod)

This was my favorite lp of 1980 (I know because I used to make lists of these things), and it’s about time it’s been reissued on CD. Moreover, the

original 12 album cuts have been augmented by 11 more single A and B sides, many of which are as good as the original lp tracks. The Chords were almost certainly the best of the mod-revival bands of their day (despite the greater hype around Ian Page's Secret Affair), but it says a lot about the shelf life of the scene that the very first Chords single paired songs called "Now It's Gone" with "Don't Look Back". It seemed as though half of their output (and most of their best songs) dealt with the mod scene...anthemic tracks like "Maybe Tomorrow", "Something's Missing", "So Far Away", "What Are We Gonna Do Now" and "Breaks My Heart". What saves the Chords from sounding dated is that the lyrics are vague enough to apply to all sorts of situations, so the original intent isn't really that important. And the songs are terrific...powered by drummer **BUDDY ASCOTT**'s Keith Moon pretensions and a roar of Jam-influenced guitar playing, this is a set of songs that calls you to action! The Chords were ultimately driven out of business by a Mod-hostile UK rock press, and listening to this makes me swear I'll never forget it. What I'd give to have heard this band have a full career! (<http://www.captainoi.com>)

paul collins

"let's go"/"she says she loves me" 7"

(pop the balloon)

PAUL COLLINS and his brilliant power pop band **THE BEAT** debuted with their terrific, self titled lp over 20 years ago now. After a splashy campaign by CBS failed to bring in the required dosh, and their name was taken by the UK ska outfit to increase confusion, Collins issued two more superb but ignored records and then faded quickly to the background, continuing to issue the odd record now and then and shifting to a more Buddy Holly sort of sound. The two new songs on this lovingly packaged single out of France feature an old style power pop basher on the A side (with Norwegian studs **THE YUM YUMS** providing Ramones-like backing), and a taste of his more recent style on the flip. Not quite the songwriting of his early days, but still better than most bands can muster. (manuel.campos@wanadoo.fr)

the concretes

boyoubetterunow

(up)

Concrete are a Swedish ensemble that plays a unique brand of art/pop. The one sonic constant in this is the vulnerable female vocals, which are sort of casually on key and sung in a flat and dispassionate timbre. Behind the voice, there's a mish mosh of percussion, horns, clean sounding guitars, bass and drums...supposedly in live

performance they sometimes include as many as 18 players! But unique though it is, it's far too melancholy and laid back for a personality like my own. (info@uprecords.com)

daycare swindlers

testosterosa

(vilebeat)

Despite sharp playing, sometimes furious energy, and songs with an occasional socio-political bent, the Daycare Swindlers never the less come up short on real feeling on this CD. The mix of punk, ska, metal and rap seems formulaic, and none of these tunes really makes a lasting impression. It's also hard to reconcile the presence of tracks like "Eggs Revenge", which condemns racists, fascists and bigots, with the cheery exploitation of women in the cover art and the closing 900 number bit. If you're gonna talk the talk, you'd better walk the walk. (noiseadikt@aol.com)

the deadlines

the death and life of...

(tooth and nail)

I've got mixed feelings about this one. On one side, there's the music, which is really driving garage/punk with a terrific keyboard sound lending a novelty that's missing from so many of today's 2 guitar, bass, drums line-ups. On the other side, the shelf life of the horror-theme lyrics is so short that the songs seem to go bad while you're listening to them. If it wasn't for that, this CD would have a strong appeal. First, it's got a feel like Ohio's 80's garage aces the Boys From Nowhere with a hot guitar sound and organ licks that complement perfectly. Second, the tunes are loaded with catchy hooks and good variety. But how many songs about vampires can you stand on one CD? (www.toothandnail.com)

the dells

the best of the dells – the millenium collection

(mca)

This Millenium Collection series seemed like a good idea until I saw that one of them features Night Ranger. Oh, well. Anyway, the Dells were a doo-wop and soul band that performed over a span of four decades starting in the 50s. In spite of that longevity, this CD includes only songs released from 1968 to 1970 (which probably says more about what MCA owns rights to than it does about what were the band's best songs). It's a little heavy with schmaltzy ballads for my tastes, but there are a few good rocking soul burners like "There Is" and "I Miss You" which both have a real Four Tops vibe to them. I suspect that if there was any object in this series other than making money for MCA, they might have found more than 11 tracks worthy of inclusion, too.

demonics

demons on wheels

(man's ruin)

Pretty strange how this stuff goes in cycles...Swedish bands like the Hellcopters and Backyard Babies work like dogs to produce an American sound based on the Stooges, NY Dolls and Kiss, and then THEY inspire a bunch of American bands to try to get that "Swedish" sound. The Demonics lack the psychiatric ward ICU escapee-styled vocals of many of their brethren playing this field, giving them a somewhat more pop feel, but their buzzing guitars and 3 chord rocking tunes will bring a smile. There's no pretense at anything intellectual here...this stuff is meant to be consumed with beer, burgers and gasoline. If you like napkins, stay away. (mansruin@sirius.com)

dozer

in the tail of a comet

(man's ruin)

The maximally fuzzed out grunge on this CD sounds like something that got swept out of a file cabinet that's been locked up since 1988 in the basement of Sub Pop Records. But Dozer are from Sweden and this CD isn't archival material. For my tastes they stray too far into heavy metal territory and lack anything resembling a pop touch to rescue it. (mansruin@sirius.com)

earthlings?

s/t

human beans

(man's ruin)

Defying modern marketing wisdom, Earthlings? release two full length CDs in a span of 3 months. Featuring a number of name brand musicians, including ex-NIRVANA/FOO-FIGHTERS drummer **DAVE GROHL**, this band plays an entertaining blend of psychedelia and rock that has me thinking of the spirit of early Swell Maps records, except with less primitive production. This is especially true on a track like "Piano Falls And Kills", which is as close as you can get to the Maps' "Full Moon" without actually covering it. Most of the time records with this kind of dreamy feeling lack tension and work best as background that you really don't pay close attention to. But Earthlings? draw you in and make you want to listen more carefully, preferably lying on a couch in the dark with headphones on. (mansruin@sirius.com)

the eastern dark

where are all the single girls?

(half a cow)

Years in the making (and for fans, in the waiting), this CD compiles all nine studio tracks and a bunch of live

material that never got formally recorded by this brilliant mid-80s Sydney band. The Eastern Dark's all-too-brief career was snuffed out when a car wreck on the Hume Highway killed frontman and driving force **JAMES DARROCH**. For all of the studio tracks it's their first appearance on CD, and there's not a better synthesis of power pop, punk and Detroit rock than this band achieved on songs like "Julie Is A Junkie", "Walking", "Over Now" and "I Don't Need The Reasons". The live material has been available on the *Girls On The Beach (With Cars)* CD and is not as essential, but I can't speak highly enough of the studio tracks here...some of THE classic mid 80s Aussie songs. Lovingly packaged with a 48 page booklet covering the band's entire history. (haclabel@mpx.com.au)

element 101

future plans undecided

(tooth and nail)

Sometimes when people spend a lot of time wondering why bad things happen to them the answer is that they spend a lot of time wondering why bad things happen to them. Lyrically I think we've got a case of that here. The crunchy, compressed guitar sound that blasts forth at 00:01 of the first track of this CD is immediately appealing, but over the long haul the energy and tightness of the band doesn't quite overcome the inward looking neurosis of the songs. Lead singer **CHRISSE VERHAGEN** has a pretty and vulnerable voice, but following along on the lyric sheet I get the impression she's a load, and I can't blame all those guys for splitting. To paraphrase the Knack, the little girls understand, but the boys don't wanna know. (www.toothandnail.com)

euroboys

long days flight 'till tomorrow

"1999 man" cdep

(man's ruin)

Norway's Euroboys are back with two more fine releases stuffed with their unique power-lounge instrumentals. Superficially this sounds like muzak made by a bunch of career studio players and cooked up as backing for some B movie. More careful listening shows that the playing has a passion and spark that betrays the background of the players, who've been in bands like **TURBONEGRO** and **THE ABUSERS**. The layered arrangements and wide variety of sounds on the pseudo-spy theme songs of these CDs is really impressive. My fave track is "Sex Kabin", which has a guitar riff remarkably like Ed Kuepper's brilliant "Electrical Storm", but that cool guitar on "Transatlantic Phonecall" is a tough contender, too. Different AND good...what a rare thing! (mansruin@sirius.com)

the forty fives

get it together

(ng)

When I think about garage rock, this is EXACTLY what comes to my mind. Roaring and catchy tunes that are fueled by organ as much as guitar and with smokey vocals blasting over the top of it all. No low-fi recording for the Forty Fives, either – this thing has the kind of tough, modern sound that bands like the Chesterfield Kings, Cynics or Swinging Neckbreakers have used on their best records. In fact, take those three and mix 50-50 with the sound of the Fluid (especially the drummer and singer) on their first couple records and you've got this band pretty well pegged. The opening "Get Out" is a headbanging *tour de force* and with the exception of a couple of changeups in the middle of the disc there's no let up from there. "All Now" has a restrained verse gliding into one of those choruses that just lifts off. In 1966 this would have been a number one hit for sure – what a terrific, soulful tune. And what about that slinky, sleazy verse on "Don't Wanna Be The One"? (www.ngrecords.com)

the fun things

fun things ep 7"

(penniman)

monarchs

"2001" 7"

(Ivy League)

Kind of neat bookend pairing with these two singles...The Fun Things ep from is an official reissue of one of the legendary Australian punk artifacts of 1980. From Brisbane, the Fun Things included future **HOODOO GURU**, **BRAD SHEPHERD**, his brother **MURRAY**, and **JOHN HARTLEY**. The latter two also appeared in early lineups of the **SCREAMING TRIBESMEN** (before they went MTV). Of the four songs here, two are brilliant slabs of Aussie punk: the obvious tribute song "When The Birdman Fly" and the handclap-driven "Time Enough For Love". For years Shepherd disavowed this single because of its sometimes over-the-top macho lyric pose, but the music captures a period perfectly and it seems he's come to terms with it.

On the other end of the time spectrum, the Monarchs are the new band he's gigging around Sydney with now that the Gurus have hung it up. And whaddya know, it seems like he's into the hard stuff again, because both these tracks are gummy rockers, tougher than any Gurus number by a long shot, but without losing sight of the need for a tune. (Penniman, POB 32142, 08080 Barcelona, Spain and www.themonarchs.com)

garage fuzz

turn the page...the season is changing

(one foot)

This is the second US release for this hot Brazilian band, and before you start thinking salsa music, be informed that this is intensely melodic punk rock fueled with emotion and fireball guitar playing. The press kit fingers Bad Religion and Samiam as reference points, but for me I hear more Husker Du and echoes of the brilliant but sadly unknown Finnish band Hitmen 3. Their superb track "Pitiable", which appeared on the Brazil-only *Comfortable Dimensions* ep of a couple years ago, is reprised here for American consumption. Soaring leads and hyperactive drumming make it smoke in either hemisphere. And the same can be said for the rest of these ringing, anthemic tracks. You can tell from the lyrics that English is a second language, but you can also see that there's a lot of care and thought going into them. I love the line from "A Bitter Taste" that goes: "A kid asked me "Why don't you start a fight?" / My answer was "Why don't you try something new?". A terrific disc. (www.devildollrecords.com)

the hunchbacks

rocking chair

(magic island)

The third CD from Sydney's Hunchbacks is their best yet. It's loaded with bluesy Keith Richards' guitar licks, hard edged rocking songs, and distinctive stoner vocals. The production on this stands above a lot of others of the type as well...they manage to make the lyrics fully audible without losing a thing in instrumental attack. Some of the best moments are that see-sawing guitar riff on "Drowning Time", the more subtle keyboard bits on "Signal To The Stars", and the straight on rock-punch of "Can't Help Feeling", but there's really no duff moments here at all. (shipwrecked@magicisland.com.au)

the hydromatics

parts unknown

(white jazz)

Can a band be a supergroup if most people have never heard of the musicians? The Hydromatics include **SONICS RENDEVOUS BAND** singer/guitarist **SCOTT MORGAN** and Dutch legend **TONY SLUG (NITWITZ, LOVESLUG)**, and with the Hydromatics they generate about the sort of noise you'd hope for...over the top guitar excess in Detroit punk style. Morgan's voice gets that blues-influenced heavy metal warble a little more than I'd like, and he seems a bit disdainful about trivialities like hitting the right note. These guys don't always write the most brilliant lyrics around, either. But the backing music is just a murderous

guitar onslaught that fans of the Stooges, Dictators, Radio Birdman and the MC5 will slurp up without pausing for breath. The songs are loaded with hot chord changes and sprinkled with lots of great and tasteful lead playing. Best of all, it seems to improve the more you listen. (hok@houseofkicks.se)

the hypnomen

trip with satan

(gearhead)

Those whacky Finns...what in the HELL do they think they're doin' exhuming this Hammond organ driven sixties spy movie instrumental theme stuff? Do they miss girls in turtlenecks and hip hugger jeans with belts as wide as a roll of Saran Wrap? Do they miss frosty pink lipstick? Lava lamps? Maxwell Smart? So it would seem. This disc has a lot in common with the Norway's Euroboys, except the arrangements aren't as complicated and the production hits a bit harder. The only voices on the 8 songs are the "Na na na nah" bits on the cover of the old **DEEP PURPLE** hit "Hush", a song that works better in this context than might have been guessed. An economical 8 tunes (with 6 under three minutes long) makes this a CD that works well as a change of pace without overstaying its welcome. (gearheaditor@hotmail.com)

the jack saints

rock and roll holocaust

(scooch pooch)

Jack Saints bassist **NICK NEVA** is a huge fan of Australia/Detroit punk, and there's a strong flavor of that sort of thing on this low-fi thrasharama extravaganza. But this is a whole lot dirtier than the records by a lot of Nick's heroes and sounds closer to bands like Gluecifer or Turbonegro to these ears. *Rock and Roll Holocaust* is a record of a band that's musically almost completely out of control. Each song feels like there's a tornado about to hit and the band is trying to finish in time to get into the storm cellar. Despite the rock'n'roll mantra that wild is good, this ain't necessarily so. A little less speed would allow some of these tasty guitar licks a chance to stick to the brain instead of splatting off the walls. (www.subpop.com/scoochpooch)

kaleidoscope

private eyes

(spinning top)

In the second half of the 80s sleepy little Adelaide suddenly exploded with a brilliant music scene featuring bands as diverse and great as the Spikes, the Lizard Train, the Screaming Believers, Exploding White Mice, Madd Turks, Philisteins and Twenty Second Sect. The label that fostered this

scene, Greasy Pop, founded in the early 90s and the scene quickly disappeared. But here's a 3 piece band that does the city's legacy proud. The six songs here are all compelling...driven with tough and tense instrumental backing and fronted by **KYLIE COWLING's** expressive vocals, which simultaneously recall Chrissie Hynde and Divinyl's chanteuse Christine Amphlett. It's obvious from the rhythm heavy guitars and the erotic-neurotic lyrics that these guys have heard a Seattle band or two. But this impression doesn't dominate...the tunes and the lyrics are both too good to make this seem like a simple copy. A strong one. (mds@mushroom.com.au)

dom mariani

"real friend"/"jenny" 7"

(pop the balloon)

Through his bands **THE STEMS**, **THE SOMELOVES** and the **DM3**, Dom Mariani has proven himself capable of writing some of the most magical and rocking power pop of the last 15 years. Here he steps out under his own name for the first time with two mid-tempo tracks of boy/girl pop that are solid enough but not the primo material he's taught us to expect. Despite some pleasant guitar work, "Real Friend" has a chorus rhyme that doesn't seem to work that well. The flip has a nice bouncy feel to it and is the stronger song. Good enough to keep fans happy, but newcomers should try the earlier bands first. (manuel.campos@wanadoo.fr)

midnight oil

the real thing

(cbs)

This is an odd release and to some extent an exercise in treading water. It's a two disc set, but there's only four new songs on it. The rest of the space is taken up with what the disc calls "live and unplugged" version of older tracks (these are really more "browned out" than unplugged anyway) and a bunch of interview and multimedia material. The live stuff is good for a couple plays but then runs thin, and the interviews aren't good for even that except for major fans. That leaves the four new songs, which fortunately are very solid...slotting somewhere between the hard edge of their last superb CD *Redneck Wonderland* and the softer, more melodic *Earth and Sun and Moon*.

moral crux

the side effects of thinking

(panic button)

Moral Crux were pretty well lost in the crumbling wreckage of hardcore punk and the advent of grunge at the end of the 80s, but that's no fault of theirs. The band was a rocking powerhouse live, and they made some great political punk heavily

influenced by the Clash, Stiff Little Fingers and Generation X. This CD reissue of a 1990 lp is a real hidden treasure and marks what I think was the band's high point. The in-your-face political words are a real shock in today's say-nothing lyrical atmosphere, but Moral Crux had that Clash-like ability to make tunes so compelling that people who didn't come for the message would still stay to listen. (PO Box 148010, Chicago, IL 60614-8010)

nikki and the corvettes

s/t

(bomp!)

Seeing as they couldn't come up with a title for this nifty little compilation, I'll suggest one: *Wrong Time, Wrong Place*. I remember the records that make up this CD from when they were originally released around 1980. I hated them. Too soft for a punk fan, too bubblegummy for a post-punk fan, too inconsequential for politicized music followers, the only bin they fell into was the cut-out bin. So what a difference 20 years make...this sounds perfectly fine today. From Detroit, Nikki and the Corvettes played high speed bubblegum power pop. The band sound is a little thin but it's energetic and alive, and the three girl singer lineup sounds like the Shangri-Las might have had they heard the Ramones. Nothing heavy here, just good time rock'n'roll. (www.bomp.com)

nocturnal projections

"worldview" 7"

(raw power)

"Worldview" is 4 track ep featuring material recorded by this New Zealand combo (who later spawned **THIS KIND OF PUNISHMENT**) in 1981. It's raw, edgy and primitive, but it has that sort of Killed By Death spunk and liveliness that makes it pretty compelling to listen to. I could easily have imagined this band fitting in at the Masque or Madame Wongs in LA around 1978. They wouldn't have been a rival to bands like X, but they'd have been good enough for a Dangerhouse single or two. (crawl@ihug.co.nz)

the pirates

nasty brutish and short

(declaration)

Not to be confused with the Johnny Kidd/Mick Green outfit from the UK, these Pirates trade in politicized punk that musically feels about 15 years late. Song titles like "Hey America", "Building Better Bombs", "Foreign Policy", and especially "Bourgeoisie You Make Me Puke" give some idea where they're coming from lyrically. The instrumental backing is roughly played and recorded...better production might've made some of these songs stand out more. Includes an interesting cover of the **CLASH** oldie "Bankrobber"

in which the rhythm section plays frantically at double time, but the overall song actually proceeds about the same pace as the original. The Pirates have their heart in the right place, and I can see them doing something great in the future. This is too soon, though. (www.stop.at/declaration)

the plus ones

on the list

(coldfront)

Pretty much what you'd expect with drummer **DANNY SULLIVAN** of **SCREECHING WEASEL** and the **QUEERS** joining up with ex-**MR. T EXPERIENCE** bassist **JOEL READER**...snappy punk pop tunes. This CDEP is short and to the point. "She's My Sister" sounds just like an MTX outtake right down to the lyrics. "Now You Know I Do" has a Beatles ballad feel to it. "A-M-Y" is a little too obvious for me, but the opening "You Been Had" makes the package worthwhile. Enjoyable. (plusones@hotmail.com)

psychotic youth

steroids

(bomp!)

Don't make the mistake of assuming that this is just another Swedish band trying to capitalize on the success of the Hellcopters or Backyard Babies. Psychotic Youth have been playing the traps for over ten years now and had a US record as far back as the 80s. With an intriguing blend of Detroit punk crossed with power pop, they've never failed to deliver an appealing record, and they maintain that here. Bashing covers of **CHEAP TRICK'S** "Surrender" and **THE BEAT'S** "How Long Will It Take" should give you some feel for the direction. They start with the hard-edged "Ain't Got No Dough" with tough distorted vocals...the hardest thing they've done yet. Then "Keeps You Runnin'" blasts into their more usual style and from there on it's a great and rocking ride...catchy tunes, racy guitars, superb backing vocals, first rate playing and the full package, topped off with five bonus live tracks that show that these guys can do it on stage, too. One of my faves this year. (http://www.bomp.com)

resolve

my stars

(born and over)

From Albany but based in Boston, Resolve play something that's half punk and half indie rock. On the opening "Garden" they sound like J Church, but that sensation fades out as the disc moves a long, unfolding into a set of tasty, heartfelt songs with solid lyrics, straining to stay on key vocals, solid, punchy drumming and lo-flash but solid guitar playing. "Devil's Clowns" is the best of these, with a lyric tale of a boy who grows up and

joins a skinhead gang in Detroit preying on solitary blacks when he finds them until one day when he's alone, he gets his. It's nothing strident, but it still feels powerful. "Stay True" has more great words: "We get run through the paces / Wind up in bad places / The dirt of luck leaves lines on our faces / But we clean up OK I guess / We stay the same more or less". A lot of the rest could be accused of being a little droney and non-descript, but it's a good disc for an introspective half hour on the couch reading the lyric sheet. (resolve@soupmultimedia.com)

riff randells

"riff randells theme" 7"

(mint)

Although this Canadian outfit was beaten to their name by a San Diego band a couple years ago, they win on charm. But barely. This is really stupid 3 chord Gibson SG punk rock with a guy singer and female high school chick backing. And that's not saying stupid is bad...this is pretty good stupidity, but it doesn't quite achieve the levels of moronic Vancouver-styled brilliance of something like "Hawaii" by the Young Canadians or "Teen City" by the Modernettes. That call and response "I'm 37...we're 14" between the male singer and the nubile backers is definitely a unique moment, though. (mint@mintrecords.com)

sixer

busted knuckles and heartbreak

(tko)

Snappy and to-the-point with only five songs, this CD gets in and out and does the business while it's there. It's hot sounding sing-along anthemic punk with gravelly Clash/Rancid styled vocals and lots of "woah-oh" harmonies to go with ringing guitar. That "She said..." stop on "Fallen Angel" even reminds me of Strummer going "They said...release Remote Control" on the ace Clash track "Complete Control". Nothing new in this day and age, but really well done with no filler. I'm in line for the full length CD. (www.tkorecords.com)

starmarket

four hours light

(deep elm)

This Swedish outfit certainly has variety going for it on their American debut...songs that start with mellow alterna-pop suddenly burst into heavy grinding noise-rock. But it falls flat because the transitions generally feel purposeless. There's seldom a sense that a song has reached a point where it needs to make a sudden turn...it just does. It's too bad, because it feels like this band could do a good job of making some wistful power pop if they gave up the desire to flex muscles they don't really have. (info@deepelm.com)

stratford mercenaries

sense of solitude

(southern)

Not all music has to be fun, but this disc struggles under the burden of a chip on the shoulder the size of a boulder. Fronted by ex-**CRASS** mainman **STEVE IGNORANT** and backed by **DIRT** guitarist **GAGSY** and second coming **BUZZCOCKS'** drummer **PHIL BARKER**, the Stratford Mercenaries play dry, humorless industrial/punk rock that has some interesting moments, but by and large is too focused on misery to get anywhere. Even the most minute details of daily existence seem unacceptable: "The one thing missing from your quiet life / Is a bit of bloody atmosphere", goes one song. Maybe I'm getting tolerant in my old age, but it seems that if people want quiet and they can get it, then there's no reason to attack them about it.

(www.southern.com/southern/band/STRAT)

the upsets

it's just a state of mind

(self released)

The four track ep has always been a favorite format of up and coming Aussie bands, and here's another great one. The Upsets feature tough but well phrased lead vocals with lots of soft "ooh-ooh" backing, ringing clean guitar over the top of dirty Marshal amped rhythm, and a hard rocking backbeat. Combined with distinctive songwriting, the package provides most of the things I like in rock music all at the same time. Friends who've seen them live say they have much more and even better material to pick from, so here's hoping for an lp.

sonny vincent

parallax in wonderland

(devil doll)

Sonny seems to have called in all his old debts here, since he's managed to secure the services of such luminaries as **WAYNE KRAMER** (ex-**MC5**), **CAPTAIN SENSIBLE** (**DAMNED**), and **RON** and **SCOTT ASHETON** (**STOOGES**, etc). The result is probably the best of the Vincent records I've heard, including his old **TESTORS** material. Vincent's singing style verges on bellowing a little too often, but he can be OK when he doesn't try to overdo it, like on the slower "Lost Again". Despite the presence of a couple klunkers and the odd metal predilection, songs like "I Don't Care Anymore", "1,2,3 Boom", "Dedication" and "Signed In Blood" will give fans of Detroit punk a good fix and the tuneful energy is enough to make the negatives seem relatively minor.

you am I

undress me slow

(rca)

Drummer **RUSSELL HOPKINSON** says this is the best You Am I CD yet, and I'm not going to disagree with him. The warm and heartfelt pop rock that graces this disc end to end provides a little of everything and holds up wonderfully to repeated plays. Already masters of the unexpected chord change, the band have added a fourth member to beef up the guitar sound. He pays immediate dividends on the rocking "Here Comes The Judge", which is loaded with tasty guitar that would have fit great on the Jam's *All Mod Cons*. "Get Up" has a great lift-off, shout-along chorus. "Bring Some Sun Back With You" has another irresistibly catchy rocking hook. But the measure of this disc is that with **TIM RODGERS'** strong and smoky vocals, You Am I can also cut a compelling slow song, and even when they put three of them back to back, the interest level doesn't sag.

the yo-yo's

uppers and downers

(sub pop)

More than one punk fan has told me that they don't like this CD one bit. I don't get it. To me it's like the backlash against Rancid; these guys have written a string of songs so terrifically catchy, and they play with such power and punch that I can only explain the sniping as dogmatic incredulity that a band of ex-metal heads and junkies could make a record this good. Yeah, maybe it feels a little formulaic at times, but what a formula! There's almost nothing on this that doesn't sound like a potential single A side (in a world where good singles still got airplay, that is). Maybe it's the tempos that the punk fans don't like; the songs don't use 100 mph speed to make an impact, but instead take the Sex Pistols approach of creating power through solid, spot on tightness. Slamming drums, loud guitars, raspy Joe Strummer-like vocals and unstoppable pop hooks rule from end to end. Superb! (www.subpop.com)

various

the five fingers of dr. x

(triple x)

This is a label sampler meant to convince critics that we've made a mistake ignoring Triple X bands in the past. And on some fronts it does a good job. The **STREETWALKING CHEETAHS'** 5 tracks are more focused and driving than anything else I've heard by them, especially the tough "Dollhouse". **TRICKYWOO** are rote metal and of little interest. **GAZA STRIPPERS** clear the air with three songs of glam-punk glory from their new CD. **ADZ** includes Triple X honcho **BRUCE DUFF** but are

just run-of-the-mill punk. **THE BLACK HALOS** finish up with four nice but unspectacular songs. A few good tracks for mix tapes/CDRs. (www.triple-x.com)

various

go-kart vs the corporate giant

(go-kart)

To my tastes, Go-Kart is one of the more intriguing indie labels around, so a sampler from them is worth more than most. This one leads with the SLF-styled punk rock of **ANTI-FLAG** on "Captain Anarchy" and continues on through 25 tracks of mostly pumping, high energy punk and rock tracks. Any compilation with the **BUZZCOCKS** on it ("Runaround") has to get merit points right away, and tracks by bands like the **CANDYSNATCHERS** (their ace cut "No Time To Waste" is here), **LUNACHICKS**, **PARASITES**, and **BORIS THE SPRINKLER** can generally be counted on to provide at least some value. (info@gokartrecords.com)

various

runnin' on fumes

(gearhead)

This compilation features bands favored by the cars-bars-and-guitars crowd that Gearhead magazine is geared towards. All were released on singles that were included with copies of the magazine as far back as the early 90s. Much of it is car oriented as you might expect, but is there some meaning in the fact that the thing leads with two Rezillos standards? Picks of the litter: **THE MONOMEN** knocking the snot out of the **MC5** anthem "Kick Out The Jams", **CLAWHAMMER's** half strangled vocal on "Car Down Again", **THE DONNAS** punked up bubblegum on "Wig Wam Bam", **DAVIE ALLAN's** psycho surf instrumental workout on "Encounter" and last and best, the **HELLACOPTERS** guitar OD on "Crimson Ballroom". Overall the filler content on this is pretty high, though. (www.gearheadmagazine.com)

Book reviews

will birch

no sleep till canvey island

(virgin)

Well known as the drummer for the superb power pop band **THE RECORDS** and for his writing on music for a variety of publications, Will Birch began his career in the public eye as drummer for pub rock band **THE KURSAAL FLYERS**. In this book, he draws on his experiences and acquaintances from those years to make the first attempt at painting a coherent picture of the messy and disjointed musical genre called pub rock. The pub

rock scene could be viewed in retrospect as the minor league proving grounds for a lot of people who subsequently became very key figures, though it never generated much heat on its own. The cast of characters includes **JAKE RIVIERA**, co-founder of Stiff and Radar Records, **ELVIS COSTELLO**, **GRAHAM PARKER**, **IAN DURY**, and **JOE STRUMMER** (whose first band, **THE 101ERS**, left a full length lp as a legacy). The story starts in the late 1960s with the tale of **BRINSLEY SCHWARZ**, a band fronted by **NICK LOWE** and managed by future Stiff Records mogul **DAVE ROBINSON**. The first third of the book is devoted to their bungling and hilarious launch, a saga that would have done Malcolm McLaren proud even if the Brinsleys did sound more like the Band than any punk outfit. After unfolding this story, Birch goes into a headlong rush to describe the fortunes of other pub acts like **BEES MAKE HONEY**, **DUCKS DELUXE**, **CHILLI WILLI**, **DR. FEELGOOD** and **KILBURN AND THE HIGH ROADS**. Having given so much ink to the Brinsleys early on, the book tends to shortchange these other bands, and it almost ignores later period groups like the **COUNT BISHOPS**, **GORILLAS** and **EDDIE AND THE HOTRODS**. In fairness, a thorough documenting of all these outfits would require a book approaching 1,000 pages, so Birch has done about as well as could be expected.

mark perry

sniffin' glue – the essential punk rock accessory

(sanctuary)

It may not have been the world's very first fanzine, but Mark Perry's **SNIFFIN' GLUE** is the one that made fanzines a critical part of the music world for the last 20 years. This book collects up every page of every issue in its original size and adds another hundred plus pages filled with photos and memories from a variety of contemporaries. I'd rate it flat out essential for anyone who's a fan of late 70s punk rock. It's a kick to see the growth in Perry's seminal magazine as he takes unconfident steps on his first few issues but then hits his stride and becomes a key voice for the scene. An even greater delight is the glimpses into the very earliest gigs of some of the big name bands of the next few years. The legendary 100 Club Punk Rock Festival? A gig by Violent Luck, the band Mick Jones was kicked out of before forming the Clash? The Jam's gig in the middle of Carnaby Street that got them the recognition they needed to get signed? A Chelsea gig with Billy Idol on guitar, Tony James on bass and John Towe on drums? Perry was there and reviews them all in SG. Packed with interviews of bands like the Jam,

Pistols, Clash, and Damned before they recorded their first records, these back issues are an incredible treat. (www.sanctuary-publishing.com)

kevin sampson

powder

(vintage)

This novel about the rise of a fictitious band called the Grams filled the window displays of every bookseller in London when I was there in June, so I had to buy it to see what all the fuss was about. From Liverpool, the Grams are fronted by a charismatic and complex singer/songwriter with the hard-to-swallow name of Keva McCluskey and his coke-snorting, paraplegic screwing, empty-headed guitar god sidekick who's hard-to-swallow in his own special way, and backed by a dullard rhythm section with characteristically limited ability, brains, and looks. Desperate for cash, they play a gig at a wedding and are discovered by a 22 year old wunderkind record exec who has just bounced out of rehab and has decided to found his own label so he can do what's right by bands. From there on it's a rocket to the stars for the Grams, who screw and snort their way to the top of the heap, at which point McCluskey turns 30 (shock, horror!) and like all old people immediately forgets how to share, forcing the band's contracts to be re-written so he gets most of the dosh, sacking his one time friend, the asthmatic band manager Wheezer, and taking special flights from gig to gig while his subhuman bandmates ride in the bus. The book is split into two halves, the first "Getting There" and the second "Losing It". With the second half title one might expect the band to end in drug overdose or at least the cut out bins, but the worst that seems to happen is that the band becomes a job for all involved (actually a pretty horrific prospect). In fairness, it's a pretty entertaining book, but it's important to remember that it's all VERY heavily stereotyped fiction. (www.randomhouse.com.uk)