



The Big Takeover #50 was published in June of 2001. I wrote the following reviews for publication in this issue; most did appear, although some may have been edited slightly or cut due to space limitations.

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### annalise

#### versus everything

(boss tuneage)

Sitting somewhere between China Drum and the Jam, Britain's Annalise play a powerhouse brand of punk/pop with touches of mod. They do a storming version of the **Chords'** classic debut single "Now It's Gone", and some of their own songs are almost as good. "Next Stop Nowhere" is riveting musically, although the lyric sheet betrays a mundane band-on-tour story. "Head Held High" provides equal excitement with much better words. "Too Much Music and Too Many Bands" cops the lick from Stiff Little Fingers' "Alternative Ulster" (if you're gonna steal, get the goods!) but seems to miss the irony. These guys need help on the lyrics, but sonically they're a treat. (www.bosst.freemove.co.uk, POB 74, Sandy Beds SG19 2WB UK)

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### atomic

#### the big issue

(atomic)

This German group plays an appealing brand of mid-tempo pop/punk. *The Big Issue* starts off with two of their heavier songs driven by incessantly buzzing rhythm guitar, but subsequently it lightens up with some poppier tunes. Singer **Thomas Marschel** sounds like the Buzzcock's Pete Shelley with heavy cold – very nasally, but not in an annoying way. Pick hits are "Black Angels", one of those two opening grinders, and "Face In Heaven", which has some terrific guitar leads and is an all round first rate piece of pop. (atomic-band@gmx.de, Jorg-Pfeil Str. 11, 93437 Furth u, Wald, Germany))

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### beat crusaders

#### all you can eat

(popkid)

Japan's Beat Crusaders certainly do play some nifty crunching power pop. Their lyric sheet is a riot to read, with most everything being fractured nonsense. But coming out of the speakers it all fits together. The words don't have to mean that much - they sound great in concert with the music. "Sad Symphony" is a fine example...a brilliant song that really touches a chord, but the lyrics total only about three sentences, none of which convey anything to me. "Attention Please" is another...what a great pumping riff! A wonderful record, loaded with songs that ought to be AM radio hits. (www.popkid.com, 41 watchung place pmb 182, montclair, nj 07042)

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### the bellrays

#### in the light of the sun

(in music we trust)

This is actually the FIRST Bellrays album, initially recorded in 1992 and released only on cassette, but it's interesting what it says about the progression this band has been going through. It's by far the most "professionally" produced recording they've done, with instrumental backing that sounds more like a big time soul revue than the kind of rocking maelstrom their later records have. One could imagine the band going straight from this to big time mainstream radio rather than the direction they've actually taken. Those who like the raw sound of the later records might be put off, but if you ever liked 60s soul music, you can't go wrong with songs like the dynamic "Can I Make You Want Me?", the organ laced "He's Gone Wrong", the rocking "You'd Better Find A Way" or the horn fueled "Crazy Water". Nice. ([www.inmusicwetrust.com](http://www.inmusicwetrust.com), 15213 SE Bevington Ave., Portland, OR 97267-3355)

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the black widows

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**arocknaphobia**

(vital gesture)

Consisting of three fourths of **The Bellrays** along with a **Streetwalkin' Cheetah** and a **Gizmo**, The Black Widows present a fabulous disc of modern rock instrumentals. Although they state emphatically that they are not a surf band on the CD booklet, the feel is not that far off from recent releases by folks like Dick Dale or Davie Allan. That "Pipeline" vibe in "My Least Favorite Martian", the Ventures-flavored "Agent Double-O Swing" and "Space Ghost" give further evidence to contradict the surf-free claim. Of course, "Bop-a-Roo" sounds like "Sometimes The Good Guys Don't Wear White" without the words, and there's no kelp on that song. Arguments aside, there's 18 tracks here, each one snappy and to the point and a whole lot of fun. It's one of the most solid and invigorating instrumental albums I've heard in a long time. (vitalgesture@hotmail.com, PO Box 46100, LA, CA 90046)

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boss gremlin

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**beat up henry**

(Afum)

Boss Gremlin describe themselves self-deprecatingly as "punk light," but this disc is more substantial than you'd expect from that. Half the songs are under three minutes, and the conciseness really helps these energetic songs stick in your head. The three-note riff that climbs into a fractured guitar bit in the driving "Back and Forth" is a favorite moment, and "Luv B 4"—despite its hokey ersatz-Slade spelling—is another corker. At 1:31, the instrumental "Deep End" is a blazingly short blast that'd make somebody a good TV theme song. Neat. (www.bossgremlin.com)

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boss martians

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**move**

(Dionysis)

The first two songs of these garage/surf tunes are first-rate, even if "She's In, You're Gone" shamelessly steals the intro to The Creation's classic "Making Time." It's a catchy and powerful song regardless. Same goes for "I Want More"... dig those reverb springs snapping and pinging in authentic '60s style! But after that, things drop off a lot. "The Last Ride" is a Dick Dale imitation that's OK but too slavish, and after that it feels like there's a lot of filler—with the exception of the title track and the closing instrumental, "Pandilla en Motocicleta." (www.dionysusrecords.com)

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the braille drivers

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**"20 class a cigarette burns" ep**

(hey frankie)

What a bummer it must be to get your record pressed up on vinyl and have it come out sounding like it's been used for a frisbee at the beach by people who can't catch! West Virginia's Braille Drivers make a great brand of rocking indie pop with quirky and whimsical song topics, and their *White Dwarfs and Red Giants* CD (see issue #49) was a treat. That CD spawned 3 of the four tracks here, including the neatly titled "How I Got This Busted Receiver". The one new track, "Fingerprintz" would be well worth having if the pressing was more listenable – it pumps nicely. ([www.heyfrankie.com](http://www.heyfrankie.com), PO Box 090629, Brooklyn, NY 11209-0629)

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the briefs

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**"poor and weird" cd single**

(interscope)

Given that they're now signed to a major, I'm sure there will be a big promo push behind this Seattle punk band coming soon. These three songs were originally part of the band's fabulous *Hit After Hit* CD on the Seattle indie Dirtnap, and all are terrific even if everyone ultimately rejects The Briefs for blowing their street cred. The Briefs have the 70s punk ethos nailed. They get in, do it and get out, and no annoying parsley and lemon slices on the plate...this is just the meat and potatoes. Track down the lp for the brilliant "Silver Bullet", which advises you to "Kill Bob Seger right now!". Driving first lp Generation X – Damned – Dickies styled punk rock with all the tacky trappings of plastic sun glasses and skinny ties. It works for me. (www.thebriefs.com)

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brimstone

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**"going out" cdep**

(brimstone)

On a recent stop in Bergen, Norway I asked what were the good local records and this was the first recommendation I got. Top shelf! It's a 5 track ep and over far too soon...terrific psych-rock with swirling jangly guitars and a full bodied production with all sorts of great sounds wandering through the mix. The title track is driven by a fluid bass line and layered with luscious organ and farfisa, punctuated by bursts of power chords. "Hangover Sunday" builds a wall of tension through its intro and bursts into a huge chorus. "The Magic Dragon" has a similar feel with jangling piano and chiming guitar. Wonderful songs and a unique sound...what a mix. (brimstone\_surfers@yahoo.com)

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## burnouts

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### close to breakevil

(bad afro)

Well, they're not subtle. This Danish combo play full-contact, slobbering punk rock of the sort that's sweeping through the Hanseatic League territories like modern day bubonic plague. But there's something about these guys that puts them above the beer-swilling hordes. There's an "I Gotta Right"-era Iggy intensity to this that sounds almost believable. The keyboards in "Just Like You" give it a special touch that makes it the pick of the litter, but the cover of **The Ramones** "Carbana Not Glue" sounds almost unrecognizable. (www.badafro.dk)

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## the chevelles

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### "c'mon everybody" cd single

(zip)

The Chevelles are a Perth power pop outfit who've been around since the beginning of the 90s but haven't had many US releases over the years. The title track here is pleasant enough in a bubble-gummy kind of way but would be unlikely to gain them headway here in the states if it wasn't accompanied by tracks two and three, which are both hard hitting and irresistible slices of crunching rock'n'roll. "Angelina Jolie" is built around a brain-eating riff, coated with great harmonies, and lots of stop-start action. "Sleeper" steals the Lipstick Killer's ace riff from "Hindu Gods Of Love" for its intro, but it's a grab that most people won't notice and it works great. The best ideas in rock are all stolen anyway. (ziprecords@earthlink.net)

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## cinicyde

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### magnetic attraction hypnotic repulsion

(tremor)

Detroit's Cinicyde have never made a major name for themselves and their record releases are rare events, but they've managed to make a pretty vital sounding CD nearly a quarter century after their "Gutless Radio" 45 came out in 1977. Though today's version of the band looks more like aging software engineers than rock gods, that's all quickly forgotten when you spin up *Magnetic Attraction* and listen to that pumping bass and the scratchy, urgent guitar licks that recall bands like Mission of Burma, Gang of Four, or Television, but with a more consistently rocking backing. Refreshingly different in today's Marshalls-at-11 climate! **Gary Reichel's** lyrics are naggingly repetitive and they work much more effectively than might be suspected from a read through the lyric sheet. "Drive My Bug" is the ace example of this...the key line is repeated over and over and

over yet doesn't seem overused at all. (403 Forest, Royal Oak, MI 48067)

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## the dogs

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### short, fast and tight

(hacienda)

While little known outside their own country, within France the Dogs are widely recognized as one of the two or three most important rock bands in that country's rock'n'roll history. First appearing on record outside France on the 1978 Beggar's Banquet punk compilation *Streets*, the band had already been going three years earlier. That lone track was to be their sole record issued in the English speaking world, but it didn't stop the Dogs from building an impressive 20 year catalog in their own country. Classic late 1970s albums *Different* and *Walking Shadows* were powerful and punk influenced but with a clear debt to earlier generations of rock. Early 80s records like *Legendary Lovers* and *Too Much Class For The Neighborhood* were more of an amped up pub rock style. Later still the records became less essential, but this 2 disc live CD, which gathers performances from the late 1990s, is a great introduction since it includes first rate takes from their whole career, often with much more power than the studio versions. Like the Flamin Groovies with more fire, the Dogs are the real thing. (dominique.laboubee@wanadoo.fr)

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## the flies

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### waikiki beach refugees

own

(captain oi)

About time for these classic late 1970s lps to be reissued on CD! The Flies hit first with their 1977 ep *A Bunch Of Five* and subsequently released these two lps and a clutch of terrific singles over the next 3 years. Most of their single sides have been thoughtfully added to these two digital delights, extending each to 20 tracks. The Flies specialized in a kind of mod-flavored punk pop. Singer **Neil O'Connor** had a slightly affected vocal style, recalling Andy Partridge, David Byrne or Rik Ocasek, but with a strong British accent. The songs are catchy and guitar driven, with lots of variety – and about 75% of them feel like potential single A sides. The *Waikiki Beach Refugees* disc might be the stronger of the two by a slight margin...it's got great songs like "We Don't Mind The Rave", the pumping "Fun City", the rollicking, bass driven "Don't Moonlight On Me", the brilliant pop-hooks of "Saturday Sunrise" and the tour-de-force single "Love and A Molotov Cocktail". The mix on *Own* is a little murkier and the record doesn't feel as bright as *Waikiki*, but that's

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overcome easily by songs like “Energy Boy”, “Night Creatures”, “Living In The Sticks” and especially the powerhouse “16 Down”, whose chorus explodes out of a low key verse in a first rate display of how to write a dynamic song. My only complaint is the absence of “Me and My Buddies” from the *Bunch Of Five* ep...certainly that could have replaced the extra version of “Beverley”, which was one of their few weak moments. But there are so many great songs scattered across these two CDs that it’s hard to understand how the Flys are not regarded as among the principal bands of the era. For some reason they’re not. It’s not right. (www.captainoi.com, PO Box 501, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 8QA UK)

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the half empties

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**full bore**

(Out of Step)

Of the two kinds of sloppy—good sloppy and bad sloppy—this is the latter, with playing too loose to have punch. This Flagstaff band claims spiritual kinship to The Clash and Dead Kennedys in their bio, but I’m not hearing it. It’s standard thrasharama punk with mediocre songwriting. Wonder if they realized that there are two possible meanings for the disc title? My conclusion is that the one they didn’t intend is more apropos. (www.oosrecords.com)

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ice cream hands

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**rain hail shine ep**

(Rubber AUS)

**Charles Jenkins** just keeps on serving up power popsicles while no one pays any attention. His Adelaide band, **The Mad Turks**, made brilliant music and no money, and his newer band is doing the same. The state of affairs finally got to his long time partner in crime, **Dom Larizza**, who left a while back, but “Rain Hail Shine” shows no ill affects. It’s more introspective than the typical Jenkins A-side, but a memorable one no matter. There’s four other tracks, all recorded in unplugged home-studio style... nice but superfluous compared to the title number. (www.rubberrecords.com.au)

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brian james meets flatpig

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**new rose 2001 cdep**

(boss tuneage)

In which ex-**Damned** lead guitarist James attempts to pick up a little extra beer money by rolling out new versions of two of the all time great punk classics in “New Rose” and “Neat Neat Neat”. But you have to ask yourself, why bother? These versions are good enough fun, but the originals were absolute godhead and the chances of

improving on them are slim and none. James can’t compare to **Dave Vanian** as a vocalist, and although UK punk group Flatpig provide “New Rose” with backing faster than the original, they can’t match the sense of total chaos that **Rat Scabies** created on drums. Nobody could do that! So that leaves the third song “Nurse” to provide the interest...and it’s not bad. But not worth a lot of effort to find. (www.bosst.freeseerve.co.uk, PO Box 74, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2WB, UK)

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international noise conspiracy

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**changing weather**

(burning heart)

Like many of the current wave of Swedish bands, INC play a noisy, in-your-face combination of twisted garage and punk, but unlike almost all of their brethren, their lyric topics do not include cars, girls, alcohol, and rock’n’roll. Instead, this band is heavily political, something you can’t avoid if you read the manifesto-styled liner notes which suggest that you’re about to be lectured to in a big way. But the words actually set to music are much more subtle and crafty and if you missed the sleeve you could easily listen to this four or five times before you began to realize that there are strong statements behind songs like the organ and piano fueled psych garage of “Born Into A Mess” or the driving, spaghetti western flavored “Capitalism Stole My Virginity”. And aside from words worth listening to, this band is pretty interesting musically too – they rock like fiends but have lots of neat and fresh-feeling touches. (info@burningheart.com)

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katastrophy wife

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**gone away ep**

(Almafame U.K.)

A friend of mine sent me “Gone Away” on a mix CDR and I was pretty well blown away by the monster movie guitar riffs, punishing drums, and the totally intense, hair raising vocal performance from **Kat Bjelland** (ex-**Babes in Toyland**). This gal just lays it on the line in drop-dead convincing style. “Gone Away” smokes! “Happy Pick Up Truck” cops The Stooges’ “I Wanna Be Your Dog” riff, and while not bad, it doesn’t match the blistering emotion of the prime attraction. Track three is a substantially different mix of the first song and is interesting for a couple plays, but basically, once you’ve led with something that good, everything else seems to lack purpose. Great band name, too. (alfafame@aol.com)

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kosher

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**self control**

(BYO)

Kosher are about as mid-American as you can get, coming from a small town in western Missouri. But they serve up a pretty solid disc of street punk in the mode of Ann Beretta, American Steel, or Anti-Flag. Musically they're anthemic and powerful, and the singing sounds great. But lyrically, things are a bit of a mess—very hackneyed (and non-poetic) rehashing of usual punk themes of boredom, oppression, and busting out. Burn the lyric sheet and dig the music. ([www.byorecords.com](http://www.byorecords.com))

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lazy susan

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**long lost**

(lazy susan)

This self released CD is a very good slab of power pop in the vein of fellow Aussies the Ice Cream Hands. For the most part the songs are a little more subtle than what I normally go for, but they're so neatly done and the vocal performance is usually so good that lack of musical crunch doesn't hurt. "Skywriter" is great rocking song with a fine vocal performance reminding me of something Squeeze might've done. "(I'm) So Sorry Now" is a solid heart twister. And "Too Close For Comfort" has a memorable chorus and a gorgeous instrumental bridge. ([www.lazy-susan.com](http://www.lazy-susan.com))

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mensen

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**delusions of grandeur**

(gearhead)

Another top drawer smoking punk rock slugfest out of Norway, *Delusions Of Grandeur* is this year's pick of the litter from that country. This band's got an angle in having three gals leading the way, but it delivers substance, too, with stacks of crunching rhythm riffage from the Lazy Cowgirls' school, simple single note leads out of early Buzzcocks, vocals like a young Joan Jett, and incredibly catchy, concise tunes that rarely exceed 2 minutes in length. Picking favorites? Only problem's what to leave out... "Gotta Get Away" (not the Stiff Little Fingers tune) will blow your head off right from the start, but then there's "Twilight Zone", "Wembley", and that killer lead that sells "Superman". Wow! ([www.gearheadmagazine.com](http://www.gearheadmagazine.com))

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the monarchs

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**make yer own fun**

(Shock AUS)

**Brad Shephard** is best known here as the lead guitar player of **The Hoodoo Gurus**, but he's revered among the cognoscenti for appearing in about half the entries in any family tree of 1977-1982 Australian rock bands. When the Gurus split,

he could easily have been expected to do what so many other legends do late in life—disappoint—but instead he's bolted-together a fiery band including Perth legend **Greg Hitchcock** on guitar, *Big Takeover* favorite ex-**Glide** bassist **Andy Kelley**, and brother **Murray Shephard**, who played with Brad in primordial Brisbane outfits like **The Fun Things** and the **31St** and also on his own in **The Screaming Tribesmen**. And the bloodlines show through—this CD is a smashing success. It's hard-hitting power rock with great tunes from start to finish, the sort of thing that could inspire arena sized crowds and still have purists tapping their feet in embarrassment at the back. "One Night Only" ripples with fluid guitar lines and an irresistible chorus hook. Likewise "69 Monaro," with its female-backed chorus bits adding just the right sweetening to a meaty stew. Shephard's not cheap on the arrangements either: He's quite content to burn a guitar lick so cool that most bands would try to build a whole song around it, just to provide a little intro frosting, confident that he's got another one even better in his hip pocket. "We're itinerant preachers, converting people from the evil ways of DJs and Game Boys" is how Shephard describes the Monarchs. Amen, brother, amen! ([www.themonarchs.com.au](http://www.themonarchs.com.au))

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the new christs

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**distemper**

(citadel)

Australia in the late 1980s had an incredibly vital period, one that to my tastes equals the UK's 1977-1980 scene for diversity, inventiveness and sustained quality level, and the fact that Spin magazine is never going to publish their list of top records from the era doesn't diminish its value one bit. This CD is a reissue of one of the five best albums of that time and place...and its first time on disc other than a German release of ten years back. It's former **Radio Birdman** frontman **Rob Younger** at his riveting finest and probably the best band he ever had backing him, featuring ex-**Survivors** and **Barracudas** bassist **Jim Dickson**, multi-talented guitarist and keyboard player **Charlie Owen** and **Nick Fisher** on drums. The opening "No Way On Earth" is a searing, heart-stopping piece of raw anger laid to a punishing rock tune. "Another Sin" almost jangles musically, but Younger's intensity removes any possibility of light heartedness. "The Burning Of Rome" is an anthemic monster of a song with pounding piano and biting guitar leads. And "Circus Of Sour" features a towering riff that could devastate cities. The music alone is so expressive and played with such open fury that this would be a great lp without a word being sung. But Younger is one of the

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most expressively passionate and REAL singers we've had in the last 25 years, and when you put his effort on top of this, well, the result can only be one for the ages. No serious rock music fan can be without this. ([www.ozemail.com.au/~citadel](http://www.ozemail.com.au/~citadel))

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the newtown neurotics

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### the punk collection

(captain oi)

There's been a number of reissues of material by this terrific early 80s UK punk outfit over the past few years, but in my opinion this is the best. It captures everything the Neurotics released in the first part of their career, including all of the *Beggars Can Be Choosers* lp and all tracks from their first six singles. The debut 45 "Hypocrite" is admittedly clunky and amateurish, but "When The Oil Runs Out", "Kick Out The Tories" and "Mindless Violence" were all memorable. The 10 tracks from the lp itself are arguably the Neurotics best recorded work, combining exciting tunes with meaningful lyrics. "Agony", "The Mess" and their re-work of **The Members'** old classic into "Living With Unemployment" were three of my favorite songs of that period. It was a time when most other punk bands were losing the idea of tunes in favor of the most aggressive attack they could muster, so the Neurotics seemed like something special to hang on to. They still do seem very different from everything else. As an incentive, the packaging here is great, with lyrics and notes from songwriter **Steve Drewitt** for every song. ([www.captainoi.com](http://www.captainoi.com), PO Box 501, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 8QA UK)

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npb

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### highway ep

(Happy Rape)

These Norwegian hard-rocking types are sure an odd lot. NPB play with the velocity of hardcore punk bands and have that same dark feeling of countrymen like Turbonegro, but they've got much more controlled vocals and an almost machine-like precision. They feel like early '80s Orange County faves The Stepmothers on speed, with more than a hint of metal, but also traces of pop and a powerful dose of punk. There are four songs and each is a bone-crunching, riff heavy, ear punishing experience. That doesn't stop it from being a pleasant one, because there's also a good sense of tune and melody behind them all., especially the hook-filled "Hobson's Choice."  
([www.happyrape.com](http://www.happyrape.com))

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p76

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### into the sun

(zip)

The name is pretty unimposing, but this is one heckuva fine slab of power pop in the mold of **Dom Mariani's** great Perth bands, **The Stems**, **The Someloves** and **The DM3**. Small surprise to find Mariani aiding with mixing and engineering when the guitar has that same crunching texture he loves so well. And **Danny McDonald** has an incredibly similar vocal style to Mariani, too. But these Melbourne area guys have done it themselves, writing a powerful and rocking set of originals and then recording them to perfection. They blast off with the 1:49 corker "Me and Her, The Road and Our EJ" and follow this with "Headed Straight For The Sun", which lifts that staggering drum beat intro from the DM3's masterwork "Foolish". And I love that line from "Social Insecurity" that goes "I don't like waking up, it just confuses me / But I don't mind living it up on social security". Superb. ([www.ziprecords.com](http://www.ziprecords.com), 116 New Montgomery St, Suite 200, SF, CA 94015)

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angie pepper / passengers

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### it's just that i miss you

(citadel)

Named for the Iggy Pop song, the Passengers were a late 70s inner-city Sydney band fronted by **Angie Pepper** and including bassist **Jim Dickson** (ex-**Survivors** and later in the **Barracudas** and **New Christs**) as well as **Steve Harris**, who later played keyboards in **Deniz Tek's** post **Radio Birdman** group **The Visitors**. They only had one single (including the brilliant A-side girl-pop song "Face With No Name") and some compilation tracks before they split. A couple years later Pepper formed a second band under her own name, again including Harris and joined by future **Hoodoo Guru Clyde Bramley** and future husband Tek, but the only official release from this group was an early Citadel single. This retrospective CD compiles 8 tracks from the sessions that produced the Passengers single and another 5 from the sessions for the Angie Pepper Band single, and they show clearly that Pepper deserves to be heard on her own merits and not just because of the Birdman connection. On the Passengers keyboard-driven material she brings to mind a slightly less brassy and more approachable Debbie Harry, while on the Pepper tracks she sounds fuller and more confident. The Passengers' songwriting is mostly by guitarist **Jeff Sullivan**, and he gets off a classic tearjerker in the track that gave this CD its title. "Only One Way Out" is another great one. The presence of Harris ties the two sessions together sonically so that it feels like works of the

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same band recorded at two different times. There's a lot of history in this CD, but even without all that it's a great listen. ([www.citadel-records.com.au](http://www.citadel-records.com.au))

duane peters and the hunns

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**wayward bantams**

(disaster)

Musically this LA area band make a compelling style of street punk that's a logical descendent of Sham 69 or the Angelic Upstarts. But listening to the words is a strange experience – for example, Peters attempts to invest a song about skate boarding with the sort of urgent intensity that propelled "Anarchy In The UK". And how about the chorus that goes "In the War Of The Worlds – W. O. T. W."? That's catchy...NOT! Toss the lyric sheet – it's a bad influence on your spelling ability anyway – and listen to the tunes and you could end up liking this regardless, because it's not without some pretty exciting moments. But the bad here is really sad. ([www.disasterrecords.com](http://www.disasterrecords.com), PO Box 7112, Burbank, CA 91510)

poppets

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**window seat**

(tiger)

Although Poppets aren't quite in the very first echelon of great Norwegian pop/punk bands populated by the Wonderfools, Basement Brats, or Yum Yums, they're certainly hanging around the doorways. Probably the only significant demerit is that their singer sounds a little too Green Day influenced, but man, is this a solid set of catchy and memorable tunes! Brain infecting guitar licks and energetic pop tricks drive every one of these tracks. "All Those Old Times" is a terrific example...an introspective verse bursts into a huge chorus. The wistful "Angst" is another beauty where the guitar tells the tale of the title without a word voiced. But there's not a song here that doesn't have something to offer. ([www.tigernet.no](http://www.tigernet.no), Postboks 616, Sentrum N-0106, Oslo, Norway)

psychopunch

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**original scandinavian superdudes**

(white jazz)

Another fine example of Sweden's propensity for flame thrower rock and roll, Psychopunch deliver a knockout on the opening "Make Up Your Mind", a searing high energy rock'n'roll scorcher. And just because you're on the mat doesn't mean they're gonna stop hitting you on the subsequent tunes. The singer has that *Inflammable Material*-era Jake Burns kind of feel, but without the social concern. The music is crunching Ramones-styled rhythm guitar with great hooks and an overlay of ripping

leads. There's 6 studio tracks and 6 live numbers, but there's not that much sonic difference between the two – it sounds like Psychopunch are tight as hell live. ([hok@houseofkicks.se](mailto:hok@houseofkicks.se), textilvagen 7, s-120 30 stockholm, sweden)

sahara hotnights

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**jennie bomb**

(rca/bmg)

With the Hives recent ascendancy in the UK, hordes of Anglo A&R men are descending on Sweden's club scene, struggling to adjust to breakfasts of soft boiled eggs and pickled herring after hard nights in the clubs. BMG have what appears to be a natural moneymaker here...an all girl band with a hard-rocking MTV friendly style. And although it's not groundbreaking, the song writing on *Jennie Bomb* IS worthy of a listen. The murky production by **Chips K** (many recent Nomads records to his credit) has rounded off the edges from the drums and guitars in exchange for about a hundred tracks of vocals. Singer **Maria Andersson** has a stridency that's a little like Penetration's Pauline Murray, especially when she tries to push the volume. Best track here is "On Top Of Your World", with a clever verse guitar lick and a very cool vocal lead in to a huge chorus. ([www.saharahotnights.com](http://www.saharahotnights.com), PO Box 607, London, SW6 4YY UK)

satanic surfers

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**fragments and fractions**

(bad taste)

The marketing is all wrong on this Swedish band – the name and the Gutenberg press font style make it look like it's going to be some sort of death metal extravaganza, but instead it's high energy Bad Religion-styled punk rock. It has some good moments, but the band tries to play too fast and with too much drum flash...the drums and guitars are woefully out of lock in places, even though the production and engineering are always sharp. The lyrics are socially conscious stuff – a plus for anyone as tired of bands singing about getting drunk and laid as I am – but they're a little heavy handed at times, as on "No One Can Deny" which suggests a foreign affairs term paper set to music. This stuff is best when it's not so specific, such as "When Was The Last Time". Well intentioned, but a little generic. ([www.badtasterrecords.se](http://www.badtasterrecords.se), St. Sodergatan 38, 222 23 Lund, Sweden)

scarper

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**"wildcat strike" cdep**

(boss tuneage)

This is a four song teaser for a forthcoming lp, and it's got me sold. The band reminds me a lot of

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*Repercussions*-era Newtown Neurotics in the way they blend horns with melodic, early 80s styled punk (not at all ska, though), and the lyric topics only reinforce this comparison. The singing in spots has an endearing amateurish-ness to it, but the music is assured and strong. The opener "Blue Collar" is an ace. (www.bosst.freestore.co.uk, POB 74, Sandy, Beds SG19 2WB, UK)

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the scientists

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**the human jukebox (1984-1986)**

(citadel)

Citadel Records began the invaluable task of reissuing the Scientists with *Blood Red River* about a year ago, comprising their best tracks from 1982 to 1984. Here they tackle the following two years, a period in which the band had transplanted to London and was making a minor name for themselves among the goth crowd there, even though they were more musically aligned with the Cramps or the Gun Club than with Siouxsie or the Sisters of Mercy, both of whom they toured with. The band in this era were noisier and less compromising than ever, with klutzy, uncomfortable rhythms, buzzing, repetitive guitar lines, and vocals that no one was likely to ever sing along to. It sounds awful on paper, and it sounded awful the first time I heard it, but somehow many of these songs coalesce on repeated listens into something powerful and unique. "Hell Beach" is my favorite, using just two chords and one rarely used but stunningly effective lead line to deliver a knockout punch. Now if Citadel can only complete the picture by compiling the Perth era of the band! (www.ozemail.com.au/~citadel)

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superscope

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**"lizzie" cd single**

(zip)

Produced by **Ken Stringfellow**, this four track CD single leads off with its bouncy but unremarkable title track. Expectations drop a little, but then "Sail Away" provides a terrific power pop rush. Singer Kevin Borruso sounds like Stems/Someloves/DM3 frontman Dom Mariani, and "Reflection" feels like the Someloves at their finest. Meanwhile "Rubbernecking" provides a hard rocking blast like an early Stems track. This is a taster for an lp to come, and I'm on the waiting list. (ziprecords@earthlink.net)

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deniz tek

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**got live!**

(citadel)

This disc is a limited edition (750 made) CD of live recordings from an Australian tour supporting the *Equinox* CD in 1998. The 3 piece superstar band

features **Celibate Rifles** and **New Christs** drummer **Nik Reith** and ex-**Survivors/Barracudas/New Christs** bassist **Jim Dickson**. The performances are hot and energetic, and a lot of the songs feel less impenetrable than on Tek's solo studio discs, which ask a lot of the listener at times while Tek really stretches his frontiers. There's two **Radio Birdman** covers – "Hand Of Law" and "New Race", but while they feel comfortably familiar now, it's really the post-Birdman stuff that this disc is about. The closing threesome of "Outside" (arguably the best song of Tek's solo career), Birdman anthem "New Race" and Iggy's "I Got A Right", the latter two with inspired guest vocals from Tek's ex-Birdman pal **Rob Younger** bring things to a close with a rush. (www.ozemail.com.au/~citadel)

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the twigs

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**epicure**

(endearing)

Norway's Twigs shine on their third CD...the first two showed promise and some strong moments, but this one goes from strength to strength. Twigs songs are a study in dynamics...nothing complicated, but a great way of playing a chord sequence on the quiet and then bursting into a loud repetition of the same pattern, perhaps following that by yet another pass with heavy distortion layered on. Katy Penny's vocals sound very English to these ears, and she's able to slide from a vulnerable tone to a strong-willed, no nonsense style with grace. Pick hit is "Thalassa Bogey" – don't ask me what the title means, but the constant shift from quiet to roaring thunder and the distorted, intense vocals give this song a power that comes through without any need for fast tempos. (www.endearing.com)

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the vegetables

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**the vegetables**

(Kemil)

On this CD, The Vegetables are as all over the map as you can get. "It's Your Turn" is a solid power-pop tune, and if all else failed, would be one to be proud of. But then there's also long psychedelic-laced workouts such as "Let It Go," jangly rock in "Call You My Queen," or a funky effort in "Nothing's Ever Over, Nothing Ever Ends." The opening ballad version of "Damn That Clock" even makes a bid in the singer/songwriter stakes, and they reprise it later with a full band treatment (preceded by over a minute of pointless drumbeat (it's too simple to be called a solo). The mastering and recording are generally amateurish, and the band needs consistency. But this disc isn't without moments. (thevegetables@aol.com)

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les viperes and holy curse

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**rock 'n' roll ain't no solution**

(Small Budget)

A nice pairing of two five-track sets by these French bands. Les Viperes play a typically French-sounding brand of rock 'n' roll that's strongly New York Dolls-influenced but with an updated punk feel as well. The best songs are the ones that cop the heaviest Johnny Thunders-like pose: "La Premier Fois" and "Rechercher." Holy Curse are darker and more intense, and thus feel more substantial. The slow burn of "Too Much Paranoia" is the best track, and their cover of "City Kids" rips.

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junior wells

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**live around the world**

(Sony)

Even if it's only about one percent of what I listen to, I've got a soft spot for Stax/Volt soul and blues [*don't we all!—ed.*]. So given a chance to check out what the legendary Wells was doing now, I grabbed the chance. I have to say, it's pretty depressing. The backing group is incredibly proficient, but they have about as much soul as David Letterman's band. Most of these songs drag on way too long (most are over five minutes, and there are several clocking around nine) and totally wear out their welcome. Even the classic "Messin' With The Kid" sound like Wells is covering The Blues Brothers instead of reprising one of his own classics. Shame.

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adam west

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**right on!**

(telegraph)

One of the interesting things about Iggy Pop is the way his music logically leads to two musical schools of thought. One is the Radio Birdman-Sex Pistols sort of approach of using high powered rock music as an expression of real rebellion, and the other is the idea of using it as an expression of what a big drunken lout you can be. For today's lesson, we have a sterling example of the second variety. Singer **Jake Starr** truly is the sort of model American male that makes the rest of us want to move to New Zealand – usually you can only hear lyrical inspiration like this at a construction site. Don't believe it? Here's some song titles: "Sultry Motherfucker", "Piece Of Ass", "Fire In My Bones", "C'Mon and Bludgeon Me", "Flower Fist and Bestial Wail". Support your local rock critic – we listen so you don't have to.

(www.thetelegraphcompany.com)

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johnny winter

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**the best of johnny winter**

(sony legacy)

Johnny Winter was one of a legion of white guys playing blues influenced rock in the late 60s, but he was perhaps a little less inclined to try to mold it into something different (and not always better) the way peers like Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page or Duane Allman did. This collection's a solid introduction, although leading with the overplayed classic rock staple "Rock'n'Roll Hoochie Koo" doesn't help things. But further in there are some less known but more interesting pieces, like "Rollin' and Tumblin'", a romping cover of "Highway 61", the laugh-inducing "Mother In Law Blues", and the rock-em-sock-em "Meantown Blues" (covered very credibly by Deniz Tek on his *Got Live!* CD reviewed above). Most of these tracks have the sort of fire and vigor that makes the best blues work well. I probably would've decided to hate this in 1977, but it sounds pretty good today! (460 West 54<sup>th</sup> St, NYC, NY 10019)

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gary wilson

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**you think you really know me**

(motel)

Gary Wilson will forever have a place in my rock'n'roll memory for being the incredibly horrible opening act for one of the best shows I ever saw...the Tom Robinson Band at the Roxy in San Diego in 1979. TRB were fabulous, but Wilson's outfit was almost enough to send me retching home before the headliners appeared, coming out dusted with flour and playing under dim blue lights. This disc is reissued material from that era...the group sounds like Bill Murray imitating Gary Numan in front of one of those wedding bands where the backing is just two keyboards and drums. Wilson himself recalls that old performer gag: "I've suffered for my art, now it's your turn". With the sort of suave charisma normally found in pre-owned car sales associates, he hiccups his way through his neurotic odes with a tenderness that makes you feel the need to wipe down with isopropyl alcohol afterwards. Triumphantly awful. (www.girlieaction.com, 270 Lafayette St., Ste 1302, NYC, NY 10012)

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various

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**norwegian nihilism volume 1**

(happy rape)

This compilation presents 21 tracks by 7 different bands from small towns around Norway. The general flavor is metallic punk, and for my tastes about half of it falls too far into the metal side. On the other hand, there are enough solid songs to keep me coming back, including the Stooges-like

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“The Healer” and psychobilly “I Wanna Get Off” from **The Reilly Express**, the racing “Kom igjen!” and pumping “Sla” from **NullSkatteSnylterne**, the riff-monster “More” from **Kalashnikov**, and the slamming “To Be Me” from **NPB**. ([www.happyrape.com](http://www.happyrape.com))

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### another year on the streets volume 2

(Vagrant)

The label sampler concept deserves a fair degree of skepticism—loaded as they often are with marginally interesting, previously unreleased tracks (after all, most bands don’t leave their best songs off their own releases!). But this one defies that tradition. It’s loaded with cuts I’m going to have to lift for this year’s mix CDRs. The first two songs by **Hot Rod Circuit** and **Audio Learning Center** set the tone: tight, hard-rocking, and catchy. Things soften for about four tracks, but just when you think those first two were a false dawn, **Hey Mercedes** kick off a brilliant run of nine different killers by nine different bands. Best of these are **Rocket From The Crypt**’s previously unreleased (but brilliant nonetheless) horn driven “Alone,” which recalls the spirit of The Saints second LP masterpiece, “Know Your Product.” Terrific! Also in this wondrous stretch are **Alkaline Trio**, **Face to Face**, **No Motiv**, **The Get Up Kids**, and **Viva Death**—each with a song worthy of heavy rotation airplay in a world where radio was worth a damn. Rocking songs, powerhouse performances, great hooks, and interesting lyrics. Nice work! ([www.vagrant.com](http://www.vagrant.com))

various

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### better than a kick in the head, it’s...punch drunk III

(TKO)

This is a good issue for compilations. Here’s another punk sampler that delivers the goods with about three of every four bands really shining through and almost nothing that’s not at least acceptable. **The Beltones** lead with the song that gave this disc its name—very Stiff Little Fingers-sounding. After that there’s a parade of solid street punk bands, groups that play with fire but can put together a catchy and memorable tune, such as **The Generators**, **Reducers SF**, **US Bombs**, **Partisans**, **Sixers**, **Bodies**, **Stitches**, **Guitar Gangsters**, **Class Assassins**, **Those Unknown**, and lots more. Stylistically, this is incredibly coherent, and I guess it could be taken to suggest that these bands are plowing a bit of a rut. But they do it so well that the complaint is pretty weak. I’ve picked a long list of bands to try out on LP releases, and that’s what it’s all about. ([www.tkorecords.com](http://www.tkorecords.com))

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various

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### boot to head records sampler 2

(Boot to Head)

Here’s a compilation of punk bands where not a one has a business plan for mass market success. That’s kind of refreshing in this age, but purity of intent only carries you so far, and then you need something more. Like songs. And singers to sing them. There’s a surfeit here of guys with elbows cocked high and blood vessels bulging from their foreheads. I had high hopes for **Shorthanded**’s “Sorry I’m So Apologetic”—great title, but that’s the whole story. 16 bands, 28 songs, and not one I’d like to hear again. ([www.boottohead.com](http://www.boottohead.com))

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### can’t stop it (australian post-punk 1978-82)

(Chapter AUS)

From the perspective of the non-Australian music consumer, that country’s underground produced a flurry of greatness in 1976-1979 and then withered away until the later ’80s. But the hidden fact is that there were tons of bands in the wake of punk—although the scene fractured severely with some following the harder rocking style pioneered by The Saints and Radio Birdman, while others pursued art-rock with the same fervor as their U.K. brethren. Melbourne developed a reputation for the latter style, and that city provides most of the music here. The bulk of it sounds wildly dated: There is only one period in music that could produce this kind of noise in any significant quantity, and that’s the one this disc documents. There’s lots of electronic noises, a general distaste for melody and hooks, and affected singing where the women all want to sound like Siouxsie and the guys want to sound like Talking Heads’ David Byrne. Most people will have heard of few of these groups, such as **The Moodists**, **Apartments**, **Makers of The Dead Travel Fast**, or **Primitive Calculators**. Amateurish, adventurous and pretentious, it’s an interesting compilation but not necessarily essential. ([chapter@corduroy.com.au](mailto:chapter@corduroy.com.au))

various

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### honest don’s dirty dishes

(Honest Don’s)

17 more punk bands grace this disc, a few too many of them featuring that generic commercial pop/punk vein. I mean, who’s fooling who when punk bands have tighter four part harmonies than Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young? Still, there’s a few worth mentioning. For one, the female-fronted **Flipsides** nail it with “The Best Of Times”—standard chunky verse bursting into loud chorus stuff. **Citizen Fish** reprise their strong “Choice Of Viewing” from *Life Size* (see review, issue #49).

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**Real McKenzies** are Scotsmen singing about ancient grudges with nifty chorus work. Elsewhere even old stalwarts **J Church** seem to succumb to the malaise. A great package for those who admire competence above all else. (www.honestdons.com)

various

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### hopeless records' 50th release double-cd

(Hopeless)

A two-disc retrospective of the output of Hopeless to date, this one definitely requires some weeding. Predominantly thrashy or ska punk in the early going, the quality of the releases improve in proportion to catalog number—which is easy to see, as the songs appear chronologically. The first half of disc one is generic, low-budget punk-by-numbers, but then some good tracks start to appear. But the good never really comes to dominate. **Dillinger Four**, **Against All Authority**, and **Samian** are probably best, but there's too much of the rest for them to overcome. (www.hopelessrecords.com)

various

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### lookout! freakout episode 2

(Lookout!)

Another tradition-bucking label comp., this one is loaded with great tracks. You expect punk from Lookout! and you get it. The opening four-song salvo is flat out terrific guitar rock—**American Steel** with their Clash-like punk, **Black Cat Music** sounding like The Celibate Rifles with a different vocalist, **The Donnas** making like Joan Jett in front of The Lazy Cowgirls, and **The Gaza Strippers** sounding like their usual insane selves. After those, things really don't drop off much and there are some big surprises, because what you don't expect from Lookout! is one of the best power-pop songs you'll hear all year, **Ted Leo's** "Under The Hedge." It's got a gorgeous vocal performance that's half Eric Carmen (Raspberries) and half George Harrison fronting a rocking modern band in The Vandalias vein. What a song! Even if everything else was crap, "Under The Hedge" would make the disc a must have. But lots of the rest is terrific, too. (3264 Adeline St., Berkeley, CA 94703; www.lookoutrecords.com)

various

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### lost weekend

(Tomboy AUS)

With the 25-year legacy of Detroit rock-influenced Aussie bands surfing the original wake of Radio Birdman, it's easy to lose track of the fact that the Aussies also do power-pop about as well as anybody. And if someone's going to pick sides for

a compilation, there's no one I'd rather have involved than **Challenger 7** frontman and Tomboy boss **Ian Underwood**. He's a guy who cut his teeth in the Perth scene and has made his own share of great rocking pop records, including the CH7 contribution to this disc, "Rock 'n' Roll Sound." Underwood loves pop with crunch, so it's no surprise that bands such as **Superscope**, **The Scruffs**, **Lazy Susan**, **Dreamdayers**, and **P76** make strong showings. There's a few who trade in softer tunes, too, but for the most part this is sure to appeal to fans of power-pop with power and melody. (www.tomboyrecords.com.au)

various

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### meet the scene

(Rhythm Barrel FIN)

This is a really nice collection of Finnish power pop bands—perhaps a touch less crunching than I normally would seek in that genre, but still a first-rate set. The highlight without a doubt is the magnificent **Mental Market** track, "Shameless and Shallow." This band formed from the wreckage of **The Refreshments** (not to be confused, etc.), who had one of the best power-pop tunes of the early '90s in "Mighty Moses." This one's even better! Beyond that, there are solid tracks by **Kevin** (jangly), **Puny** (rocking and emotive), **Ben's Diapers** (huge choruses a specialty), **Cheerleaders United** and **Elliott Scale** (both big guitar pop proponents), and **Hundred Million Martians** (revered veterans returning from personnel shuffles). There's some patchiness, but the highs make the bumps easy to endure. (rhythmbarrel@yahoo.com)

various

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### rafr volume 3

(RAFR)

Here we have a mixed bag of sub-Neanderthal drunk and porn punk with a few standouts, but you've got to hang in there until the middle of the disc to hit the good moments. **The Bellrays** are always intense, **Libertine** sound like The Clash with Joe Strummer singing, and **Gentleman Jack Grisham (T.S.O.L.)** sound like them with Mick Jones at the mike. **True Love's** "Heartache To Come" is great rocking pop with killer harmony vocals, and **Bellvue** make neat work of **The Rolling Stones' Goats Head Soup** single, "Heartbreaker," turning the chorus into a Nirvana-styled slugfest. But most of this is summed up by the lead-in to the live track by **Furious George**, where singer **George Tabb** steps to the mic amid a wall of squealing feedback, and says, "Let's hear it for U.S.!" Earn it first, George. (www.rafr.com)