



The Big Takeover #52 was published in June of 2003. 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. I strongly recommend subscribing, which you can do at www.bigtakeover.com.

the alohas

get leid with the alohas

(off the hip)

Poor Dick Dale. He spends a lifetime of inspiration dreaming up his trademark surf instrumental style and then a bunch of whippersnappers come in and reproduce the stuff like cheap Taiwanese knockoffs that are nearly indistinguishable from the real thing. These whippersnappers happen to be Australians, and the 10 tracks here are as stylistically dead on as it gets – like the Rutles with wetsuits. What more can be said? (www.offthehip.com.au)

bad machine

rip your heart

(dead beat)

The smell of burning rubber from Sweden seems to have wafted across the Baltic and infected their Finnish brethren, whose medical history has long included susceptibility to full on rock and roll. Bad Machine may look like Lynyrd Skynyrd, but they blast out a relentless wall of Hellcopters/Lazy

Cowgirls riffage. Lyrically their songs about rock and roll, loose women, and rock and roll are no threat to Bob Dylan. But for a half hour of head banging manic energy you could do a lot worse. (badmachine@mail.com)

the bellrays

raw collection

(upper cut)

The Bellrays seemed to be flavor of the month for a while a couple years ago – after all, since the sixties, who's ever heard of a band with hard edged rock backing fronted by a soul-wailing black woman? But attentions have drifted away, and now the band isn't given the credit they deserve for having both a brilliantly original sound and a passion and intensity that few other groups can rival. This album is a collection of singles and compilation tracks, and despite a few second choice moments it mostly delivers a punch that can knock down walls. Singer Lisa Kekaula can do justice equally to a firestorm performance of The Saints "Nights In Venice" or to a soulful crooner like "Mind's Eye". The Bellrays deserve to be thought of as a lot more than this week's model – they're one of the significant American bands of the past five years, and this record is just one more piece of evidence. (www.uppercutrecords.com)

bombshell rocks

from here and on

(burning heart/epitaph)

Their CD *City Rats and Alleycats* from 2000 was terrific, stirring stuff in the vein of Leatherface or Stiff Little Fingers. But this new one doesn't measure up so well – after a promising start with the slamming "Begging For Mercy" and similarly blasting third track "Warpath" a lot of the rest of it starts to feel like generic commercial punk. While the vocals on that earlier CD were raw and live sounding, here it's too overly emotive to be believable. That world weary crack of the voice in the quiet part of "On My Eye" or that bit in "My Own War" that goes "Well I never felt like hiding / No that's not my style, I always stand and fight" – those moments feel manufactured here. Live these songs probably sound great, but they've had the life wrung out of them in the studio. (www.epitaph.com)

booster valves

"together all the time" 7" single

deezleteens

"on the road" 7" single

(half a cow)

Featuring Boston legend Jeff "Monoman" Conolly and Australia's Nic Dalton (ex-Plunderers and boss

of Half A Cow Records), the Booster Valves single feels like it coulda been a knockout but instead settles for OK. Both tracks have great garage rock organ like some of the best records Conolly did with his band the Lyres, but the vocals could use a little extra juice. Given that both these guys have a proven track record of singing with character and passion, it borders on incredible that they could team up for such an uninspired effort.

The Deezleteens is another Dalton collaboration – on the A side pulling in help from the Posies Ken Stringfellow and Jon Auer to make a very nice power pop tune out of Dalton's "On The Road" – some neat driving guitar on this one. Pleased enough with that, they then play both sides of the first Replacements single acoustically, and, simultaneously. On the flip, the Posies go home and ex-Eastern Dark bassist Bill Gibson steps in to help out on a homey cover of Teenage Fanclub's "Star Sign". (www.halfacow.com.au, haclabel@mpx.com.au)

caesars

39 minutes of bliss (in an otherwise meaningless world)

(virgin)

It's all quite confusing with Sweden's Caesars. They began life as The Twelve Caesars and released a terrific new wave/power pop CD called Youth Is Wasted On The Young on the US label Minty Fresh. The original band name apparently tread on someone's trademark, so they changed to the seemingly even more problematic Caesars Palace, reissued their debut in Sweden, and followed up with two more great discs loaded with irresistibly cheesy pop songs. Typical line "I am what I am in the back of beyond/A knife and fork in a world of soup". Now they're ready to re-try the US, and they've shortened the name to Caesars (number unlisted) and issued an album composed of the best songs from their 3 previous releases, including a heavy dose of the debut. Given that those records stood pretty well on their own without any editing, you'd expect this compilation to be great, and it sure is. Sardonic vocals with smart-ass lyrics front reverbed 60s trash rock organ and a rhythm section with superb feel to make these songs sound intensely fresh and original. (www.virgin.se)

channel 3

ch3

(doctor strange)

Channel 3 made two of my favorite SoCal punk songs of the 80s in "I've Got A Gun" and "Manzanar", but since those days they've been all

over the map musically, so there was little clue what to expect this time. The answer is that it's pretty decent punk in a style not that dissimilar from what they used to do – not quite as frantic a pace, but still with strong, anthemic guitars and shout along vocals. The bad news is that the production falls a bit flat, leaving the recording feeling a little mechanical and harsh. Coupled with the lack of any obvious standout tracks, this leaves an album that doesn't really demand return listens, much as I'd like it to. (www.drstrange.com)

the charms

charmed, i'm sure

(red car)

I've got mixed emotions about this Boston area group. The backing group sounds great – after all, who can resist a musical ethic that leads to that "Stepping Stone" style riff driving "Tragic"? But singer Ellie Vee sounds like she may have ended up in this band only because she overslept the day they did the casting for the movie Legally Blonde. Just a little too cute. Regardless, the crunchy guitar and farfisa behind her are just fine, and there's no complaint with the catchy teenage power pop songs. (www.thecharms.net)

the chronics

it's too late

(demolition derby)

A different band of Chronics – these folks are Italians, though their lp is on a Dutch label. The schtick for this lot is a more basic style of punk rock based on fast rhythm playing, pop hooks, and lots of nice frosting guitar leads tastefully done. The singer sounds like Stiv Bators' (Dead Boys) kid brother – slightly less outrageous and less talented, but kinda young, loud and snotty. I could imagine that if this record was made at a slightly more sympathetic studio it coulda been fabulous. As it is, some edges have been blunted a bit and it leaves some potential unfulfilled. But if they get a second chance and learn from this one, the result could be terrific. (www.demderby.com)

the chronics

make you move

(bad afro)

Like their labelmates the Royal Beat Conspiracy, Sweden's Chronics play soul influenced garage rock, but the Chronics pump theirs with even more energy. The title track of this is a complete monster, with time-to-testify vocals racing against some of the hottest bass lines of the year. What I really like about this (and a lot of the other recent Swedish garage records) is that the band puts the effort into adding production touches that lend

distinction – backing vocals, handclaps, tambourine, maracas and shakers – these little touches make a difference. “Feel Alright” sets up a romping groove and lays pumping chords over it in the chorus. Elsewhere the slinky bounce of “Rewind” and the gospel review backing that drive “Soulshaker” are just part of the feast. (www.badafro.dk, badafro@badafro.dk)

jeff dahl

street fighting reptile

(steel cage)

I’m always hoping that Mr. Dahl will pop up with another classic CD in the vein of past greats like Wicked, Scratch Up Some Action, or Vomit Wet Kiss. Those were albums that brimmed with trash punk greatness in the vein of the Dead Boys or Johnny Thunders. But these days Dahl records as a one man show, playing all the instruments on most of the tracks. He’s always been a first rate guitar player, so no problems there. But he has an unusual preference in drum sounds, almost eliminating the kick and making the snare so thin that there not much rhythmic punch left. Perhaps the biggest problem is that the songs he’s writing just don’t have the fire of the old days. Whatever the reason, this one just doesn’t come together. (www.steelcage.com)

demons

stockholm slump

(gearhead)

Their Come Busting Out CD of two years back didn’t impress me much (since then there’s another CD called Riot Salvation), but this one is a fair step forward. It’s still high energy metallic Detroit punk, but now the tunes are catchier and the musical backing is more engaging. That’s the plus side. The down side is that the lyrics are pretty stupid. Not that a PhD is needed for good words, but songs like “The Devil In Me” or “Hot Runnin’ Blood” offer little more than verbal filler. Still, I really like the feel of the stuttered choruses on “Degeneration Hotel” and the guitar arpeggios on “Sparkle” are a treat. “...Come A Day” is one of the slower songs here, but it drops the lyric bravado and is the most believable track on the record as a result. (www.gearheadrecords.com, lavella@gearheadmagazine.com)

division of laura lee

black city

(epitaph/burning heart)

Here’s another Swedish outfit that’s deserving of Hives-like status. Black City has something of the atmosphere of the Buzzcock’s A Different Kind of Tension – not that singer Per Stalberg would ever

be mistaken for Pete Shelley, and the songs aren’t as fast, but the drums have that John Maher sort of crack, and the chord changes fit the description. This disc is loaded with memorable and varied songs – “Need To Get Some”, “Number One”, “Access Identity” and especially “Black City” are flagship tracks of a quality high enough that normally you’d be tickled to get just one of them on an album. Each creates a “build tension/release tension” musical interplay between verse and chorus, and the abstract words feel important and a little disturbing even when you haven’t quite grasped the whole point. If this is the new rock and roll, I’m for it. (www.epitaph.com)

donavan's brain

the great leap forward

(career)

I sure hope one of my friends is good enough to stop me before I go out for hair plugs. I mean, I must be going through a mid-life crisis or something, because here’s an album of trippy psychedelia and not only do I think it’s great, but my favorite song on it, “Crystal Palace”, is a repetitive far eastern chant that had me on Ebay trying to buy a Neru jacket and some love beads. I’m not supposed to like this stuff – it’s in the punk rock rule book! Of course, given the leadership of long time (and we’re talking 35 years) psych maniac Ron Sanchez and guest appearances by such luminaries as Deniz Tek you’d be foolish not to expect some sort of quality, but even so it’s an impressive result. High marks go to Colter Langan’s “All Fall Down”, which 2/3 of the way through crystalizes into a gorgeous descending riff that carries the song home so effectively that you’ll forget how it started. High marks also go to the swooping “Loving Indifference”, the Bowie-like “All Over The World” and the cozy “The Known Sea”. (www.careerrecords.com)

the drowners

muted to a whisper

(morphine lane)

From the northernmost reaches of Sweden, the Drowners are now on their fourth album. Their last CD, 2000’s Is There Something On Your Mind, was recorded and released in the US, but for this one they’re back to their own country on a label partly run by an ex-member of pop masters This Perfect Day. The Drowners fit right into that sort of thing, which is to say, they play lush power pop with impeccable harmony vocals and a generally melancholy tone both lyrically and musically. On first listen they might seem a little short on power, but play ‘em loud and often and soon you’re likely to be impressed by the persistence these tracks

have. As a guy who always goes for energy, I'm partial to the catchy and rocking tracks "Jennifer" and "On The Radio", the latter of which features one of those choruses that feels like it'll lift the house off the foundation. But there's not much to complain about anywhere. (www.morphinelane.com, info@morphinelane.com)

emmerhoff and the melancholy babies

loosebox

(bauta)

This sounds like one of those projects where the band goes into the studio at dusk and finishes the whole project by the time the sun comes up. Of course when you're from Norway that can take months, so Loosebox is lavished with production care that most bands would kill for. Emmerhoff and Co. could be Pink Floyd with more guitars and less flying pigs. There's a heavy prog rock element here and a lot of songs that would still be mid-tempo even if you doubled their pace. But there's also a nice atmosphere in cuts like the languid "Baby Sinister" or "This Summer's Done", which use the extra room created by the dawdling rhythm section to good advantage. A nice one. (bauta@tubarec.com)

extras

ugly american

(last vestige)

This is a 20 years late album by a pretty obscure three piece Albany, NY punk rock band. Recorded in 8 hours a couple days before singer/bassist/songwriter Mike DeForge was sent to prison for getting caught in a drug sting operation, the 17 Killed By Death styled songs here were captured knowing that it was probably the band's last chance ever. It's certainly not a great set, but there's a handful that make me quite happy to have this. The title track in particular is one of those repetitive songs with minimalist lyrics that works because drummer George Lipscomb lays down such a compellingly rock solid rhythm that he'd be worth listening to unaccompanied. Lipscomb generally carries things on the rest of the tracks, too. The guitar by contrast is pretty ordinary buzzsaw stuff, though with only one guitar in the lineup and no time for overdubs, it's unfair to expect a lot of flashy leads. A plus is the lyrics, which say a lot more than 95% of what's out there today. (www.lastvestige.com, extras@lastvestige.com)

fm knives

"estrogen" 7" ep

(smart guy)

Rumor has it that this Sacramento group began their existence as an Undertones cover band, and true or not, the contents of this 4 track ep make it seem at least plausible. Think of every late 70s punk band with pop tendencies and there's some shared DNA here – from the Suicide Commandos to the Buzzcocks. The vocals even have Howard Devoto's whine sung in Pete Shelley's register. Production is rough and loose, with a rather floppy drum sound, but the guitars are edgy and raw and when they go racing off on some hundred mph punk solo (as they do very often) things feel VERY right. (www.smartguyrecords.com)

fm knives

useless and modern

(broken)

If the prospect of just an ep was insufficient, here's a full length lp of FM Knives. And it just reinforces everything the ep suggested – that this group is a classic case of neurotic punk catharsis. Oh sure, the songs race along with raw energy, but underneath are lyrics like "DOA – it's what the tag will say / Never meant no harm with the ashtray arm / Now I'm moving on" or "Praying for your toothbrush by mine / Leaving every healthy thought behind". This band's got issues, and they're talking about them. But if it makes you uncomfortable, that's OK – you can just bash about the parlor to snappy tunes like "Down The Street", "16 DOA" or "20/20" and everything will probably work out fine. For you. (www.brokenrekids.com)

the gloryholes

want a divorce

(dirtnap)

The Gloryholes appear to be another punk rock outfit with great sounding equipment and access to a good studio but with fairly little to offer in the way of new song ideas. I've listened to this thing about 8 times now and there's nothing that tells me that anyone other than the band's friends ought to buy it. If you're drunk and want to bang your head a bit, and there's no other CD you can lay your hand on...nah, who's that desperate? (www.dirtnaprecs.com)

hands of time

i am a hideous monster

(off the hip)

This is the second lp by this mob of retro garage bangers from Melbourne. They've combed the second hand shops for all the vintage 60s gear they could find, and they know how to use it! Singer/bassist Ian Wettenhall and drummer Stewart Tabert have been playing this sort of thing

since they launched their mid 80s band The Philisteins, and Voxx guitars and Farfisa organs are nothing new to them. They cover The Golliwogs Nuggets classic "Fight Fire", The Litters Pebbles track "Action Woman", and the ultra obscure We The People B-side "In The Past" like they wrote 'em, and their own originals like the superb, jangling "Another Fork In The Road" or "The Fish Song" can stand with the covers, too. If you want neo-garage, it doesn't get much better than this. (www.offthehip.com.au)

the hellcopters

cream of the crap!

(gearhead)

In the past my opinion of Sweden's Hellcopters has vacillated from enthusiasm to tolerance and back again depending on which of their many and varied rock action influences is on display in the song they're playing. But this compilation of singles and other miscellaneous tracks is short on flaws and long on everything else: yammering, full bodied guitar rock with generous sides of Keith Moon drumming. The opening round of bombardment delivered by "Thanks For Nothing", "Crimson Ballroom" "Makes It Alright" and a tasteful cover of The Victims 1979 Perth classic "Television Addict" soften up even the staunchest resistance, and a few songs later when the band charges over the top with fixed bayonets on "1995", "Heart Of The Matter", "Down Right Blue" and killer renditions of the Rolling Stones' "Gimme Shelter" and Iggy Pop's "I Got A Right", well, what can a poor boy do except lay down arms and surrender? (www.gearheadrecords.com)

henry fiat's open sore

adulterer oriented rock

(coldfront/sin city)

This delightfully named Swedish combo actually has two new albums on Coldfront, one of new material and this one that's a compilation of 47 tracks previously released on singles. The high song count eliminates any thoughts of fitting in a cover of "Tales From Topographic Oceans", that's for sure. Anyway, the four Sores bash away like the Dwarves once did – furious drooling energy with shouted lyrics, thrash-punk tempos, and song titles like "Brit Pop Sucks", "England, That's A Place To Hate" and "American Death Ray". It might seem like a dubious proposition, but for some reason it works for me. There's something about being this totally over the top that hits my funny bone. Just keep 'em away from my house. (www.coldfrontrecords.com)

icecream hands

"why'd you have to leave me this way?" cd single

(rubber)

Here's another one of Charles Jenkins' power pop wonders – a comfortable and well crafted song of the sort that would make someone like Mitch Easter proud. Jenkin's rich voice feels like Elvis Costello after a puff of decongestant, and when he sings a song that's as catchy as the A side here, the result can't be resisted. The other three would make decent album tracks but don't hit the heights of "This Way". (www.rubberrecords.com.au)

international noise conspiracy

your choice live series

(cargo records)

This is a limited edition German import of a 2001 live set by these Swedish politico-punks. A New Morning, Changing Weather was one of my favorite CDs of last year with its intriguing blend of garage music, politics and art rock, and most of the setlist for the show captured here is from that disc. The production and sound are better than most club recordings, but the songs were a little better served by the extra sharpness their studio versions have. Singer Dennis Lyxzen has a style that combines throat ripping screams with subtle passages in the studio, but after 5 songs his voice is a bit mangled and he loses some of his range. Still, this album shows the band to be a powerful stage presence and something well worth getting out to see if you get a chance. (www.cargo-records.de)

the jewws

the now sound explosion

(demolition derby)

There's nothing new here – just fifteen high energy tracks of slop styled punk rock the way bands like the Devil Dogs have practiced the art for the last 25 years. Greasy, double timed Chuck Berry riffs spill out every where, and the snot-quotient in the vocal department is pretty high up there. Lots of catchy songs, hook filled and brimming with attitude and musical ideas that were already well worn in 1958. But recycled as it is, when this kind of music is done well, it's a hoot, and this is done well. (www.demderby.com)

johnny thursday and the friday knights

promo use only

(cada)

The four tracks on this CD (which is probably not even available on the market) wobble back and forth between a late 70s style of punk and AC/DC hard rock. The opening "Earthquaker" is maybe a

little too much of the latter. "You Gonna Get It" does better with a good cracking track for three minutes – then blows a pointless fourth minute on wanky soloing. "Love's Little Conspiracies" at its core is approximately of equal quality, but when the place for a solo comes up, they quickly cut it off and finish sub 3 minutes. Which is a good thing, because the one big weakness of this band is that the guitarist can't play leads. (www.jtandthefk.com)

kevin k

sealed works

(laughing outlaw)

from the delta to the bowery

(13th street entertainment)

For a guy who lives in Florida, Mr. K sure sings a lot of songs about New York. But I'd rather that than the reverse, so I'm not complaining. Anyway, neither of these two new CDs measures up to the superb 13th Street (reviewed last issue), but they both are pretty fun slabs of NYC styled trash rock. Sealed Works has a full electric band with lots of stolen Johnny Thunders licks and songs about being down and depressed. From The Delta is mostly acoustic guitar backing with no rhythm section, yet it still hits pretty well with a good rich sound and a stronger set of songs. K's singing is perhaps more expressive than on previous efforts – he's got a good voice that's warm and just a little nasal, perhaps like the Only Ones' Peter Perrett with less whining. The eulogistic "Countdown For A Doll" is really nice, and covers of The Replacements "If Only You Were Lonely" and Neil Young's "The Needle And The Damage Done" sound compelling. (www.laughingoutlaw.com.au, www.13th-street.com)

the kirby grips

rotations

(sympathy)

This 3 piece outfit of Bay Area women play low fi pop with heavily fuzzed out guitar and vocals something like the gals in the Fastbacks. They've been going since the mid 90s but still have that amateur-hour sort of quality to their sound. Which sometimes helps, sometimes hurts. "Slambook" is a strong contender with an intriguing lyric and a neat sense of dynamics between verse and chorus. "Trawling For Sinners" sounds like a serenade at a Mexican restaurant. "Pity Party" has a way with words that a young Elvis Costello would've approved, and its music is endearingly quirky. In other places this drags a bit, though – the murky instrumentation lacks many high spots. (www.sympathyrecords.com)

the lambs

random radio

(devil doll)

Every now and then when the aspiring rock critic listens to a new CD whilst perusing the press sheet he finds himself faced with the inescapable question: just what in holy tarnation are they talking about? Finland's Lambs are touted as "the new school of extreme rock and roll" – well, sorry, but this stuff was on *Headbanger's Ball* on MTV every time I surfed through it in the latter half of the 80s. It takes more than re-cycled metal riffs and a singer who sounds like an escapee from a Satan-impersonator camp to blaze a new trail. Ugh. (www.devildollrecords.com)

the lime spiders

nine miles high (1983-1990)

(raven)

For a span of a couple years, the Lime Spiders were the international toast of the Australian indie scene. They began with a four track 7" ep that displayed their worship of 60s Nuggets-styled bands. But their second single "Slave Girl" single was one of the three or four best records that came out of the 80s garage band revival, adding fresh ingredients to the 60s sound to make something new and vital. The follow up "Out Of Control" was no less than one of the most incredibly smashing full-on rock songs of the decade. Their wave cresting, the band signed to Virgin Records and began to rot. Slowly at first – the "Weirdo Libido" single was fine, and the lp *The Cave Comes Alive* was good pop-rock even if it did largely abandon their earlier modern garage sound. But then the band accelerated downward into hard rock nothingness. This excellent compilation retraces the whole story – all the early greats are here, and the first 16 songs still sound wonderful. The last ten are OK but nothing essential. Nevertheless, if you've missed this band before now, you've gotta get this. (www.ravenrecords.com.au)

the loch ness mouse

key west

(happy birthday to me)

Kinda fishy naming your CD after warm Caribbean islands and then having a picture of what looks suspiciously like the chilly waters of the Oslofjord on the cover. Regardless, LNM play breezy pop/rock with lots of soft and lush harmony vocals that bring to mind 60s efforts like the Lovin' Spoonful or the Fifth Dimension. Except those bands never did a song about narrow gauge railways or used a pun as atrocious as the title "Ceylon Sailor". By and large, it's all a bit mellow for this scribe, but people who hang around in hip

coffee shops always seem to be listening to this sort of thing. You know who you are. (www.hhbtm.com, hhbtm@aol.com)

loose

rock the fuck on

(loose rock)

While it's well known as a good place for rocking indie bands to tour, Italy really hasn't produced the kind of bands that usually come out of such a strong fan base. Loose aim to change that – they wear their Stooges and MC5 influences on their sleeve and are damn proud of it. And unlike a lot of Detroit influenced bands, they seem to really understand what it's all about. Covers of "Kick Out The Jams", "Looking At You" and especially "TV Eye" are first rate, but it's their own material that really made me sit up and pay attention. Their "Here Comes My Fire" is just brilliant, loaded with hot chord changes and a ripping jazzy sort of feel that would've done the 5 proud. "Emotional Farts" (OK, English word craft may not be their strongest suit) reminds me of France's great City Kids both for its piano and for the baritone vocals. "Son Of Dirt", "Second Wind" and "I Get Bored" are all intense and gripping. The blend of keyboards with guitar works great and gives them their own feel. Barring the New Christs' We Got This, it's the best CD of its type I've heard in the past year. (sonicclymax@libero.it, www.loose-rock.com)

the maggots

this condition is incurable

(bad afro)

OK, so the "All Day and All Of The Night" Kinks thieving on "I Wanna Be Your Maggot" probably doesn't produce a result destined for the top ten love songs of all time. Well so what? The rest of this is romping stomping garage brilliance, something that might be expected with two former members of The Wylde Mammoths in the nest. "It Is Time" kicks off with some first lp Who type rattle and roar, while "Leave Me Alone" brings down shimmering layers of reverbed guitar and along with "Bring Me Down" recalls old Yardbirds records. Mans Manson represents some sort of state-of-the-art in snotty vocalists. Stripped to 3 pieces, the Maggots still manage a remarkably full sound on disc, with an emphasis on songs built around catchy guitar riffs and high energy drum bashing reinforced by melodic bass lines. (www.badafro.dk, badafro@badafro.dk)

danny mcdonald

on the beach at first light

"rock and roll records" 7" single

(pop the balloon)

Australia's Danny McDonald is one of those guys who appears out of nowhere and before you even have a chance to go "where'd he come from", he's got his name on about ten different outstanding records. He's made great power pop with P76 and great garage rock with the Stoneage Hearts, but now he's roped in a couple of friends and made this four track CDEP and single under his own name. He's got the perfect voice for power pop – strong, melodic and heartfelt – and he plays a ringing big guitar that reminds me of nothing more than DM3. "Friday Night" is the ace track here with the sort of huge sound that makes the best power pop records go. "Soaking Up The Sunshine" and "This House Was Once Our Home" are both really solid rockers, and the closing "When The Money Comes My Way" is a nice acoustic ballad. The single has no overlap with the EP – why they aren't combined on one release escapes me. But the songs are more of the same. The A side is a full band production with a big power pop sound, while the flip is a nifty surfing ballad with McDonald and his acoustic alone. (www.geocities.com/dannymcdonaldonline, manueal.campos@wanadoo.fr)

media whores

master of pop hits

(screaming apple)

Despite being a grab bag collection of single sides, compilation cuts and unreleased numbers, this record beats most power pop efforts fairly handily. It's not going to rival something like the Yum Yum's Singles and Stuff, but any record with a song that crackles with pop-punch like "Feel It" can't be ignored. Love that line in "After You" that goes "Gotta start coming to my senses / Before my senses start coming for me" and their slamming cover of Badfinger's "No Matter What You Are" is irresistible for both its Keith Moon drum moments and its blazing compressed guitar. Coulda done without ten minutes of badly worn jokes at the end of regulation, but the bonus live Who covers that follow are tops, even if they sound like they were recorded on a dictation machine. (breakuprecords@yahoo.com, www.screaming-apple-records.de)

melody club

music machine

(virgin)

The Detroit Rock Police are going to be knocking on my door after this review, and all I'll be able to tell them is, I'm sorry officer, I normally don't go for the Euro-disco thing, but this here Melody Club CD is just so damned catchy and enthusiastic sounding that I couldn't help myself. Even the

most dogmatic of listeners can't honestly deny having felt just a little lift from new wave hits like OMD's "Enola Gay", Modern English's "Melt" or Blondie's "Call Me". Now imagine a (Swedish) band that takes the general feel in those songs, adds a hefty dollop of Abba, pumps the songs with rock energy, and maintains the same high standard dance hit-quotient for every single track on a full length CD. The only problem for the A&R guy confronted by this record is where to get songs for B sides! I mean, I still do wanna be your dog, but can I come over and do it tomorrow? I'm putting up my new mirror ball tonight. (www.melodyclub.nu)

monopot

optipess

(smalltown supersound)

Named for a Norwegian brand of contact lens cleanser (just kidding!), this CD of space rock ambience oozes along at the pace of icicles melting in February. It's mostly instrumental, and what vocals there are have been tucked far back in the mix to allow the musicians space (and we're talking the final frontier here) to sprawl out and make the kind of sounds that one might imagine would be whistling through one's ears on a flight to Mars. Pass the bong and pop this in instead of that Pink Floyd CD. (scott@bubblecore.com, www.bubblecore.com)

the moodists

two fisted art (1980-1986)

(w. minc)

In the early eighties, the common wisdom was that Sydney was where to go for bands that rocked, and Melbourne was where to go for art. The Moodists were a significant source of Melbourne's reputation (even though they themselves were transplants from a little town halfway to Adelaide). Singer Dave Graney always reminded me of Echo and the Bunnymen's Ian McCulloch, but the Moodists music goes somewhere else entirely – repetitive, angular post punk with grindingly heavy bass and sharp, abrasive guitar. The Moodists tend to sound like a horrible mess on first listen, and 35 tracks over two discs might overwhelm listeners who haven't had the chance to be exposed single by single over many years. But the band is worth investing time to acquire a taste for. Disc one of this retrospective captures the studio story, while disc two has parts of three different live shows, with material on both CDs spanning their beginnings in Australia and their later period as starving transplants in London. (www.wminc.com.au)

moral crux

pop culture assassins

(panic button)

One of the Pacific Northwest's best kept secrets, Moral Crux have been around something like 15 years now. I fondly recall opening a San Diego gig for them in 1990 or so and being knocked sideways at how tight and catchy they were. And if anything, they've only gotten better. Pop Culture Assassins is arguably their best album yet. The opening "Window Shopping" is irresistible high energy power pop and in its call to action hook "I'm going window shopping with a brick!" features a line that with any fairness would get quoted as much as your favorite Clash lyric. From there on it's one racing amphetamine punk blast after another, with pop singing spreading social consciousness like butter on toast. In an age where most bands have nothing at all to say lyrically, it's perhaps a poor gripe to complain about someone who has too much on his mind, but the lyrics here are a little too heavy on the manifesto language – simpler appeals tend to work better. That's a very small downside for a stirring CD, though. (www.panicbuttonrecords.com)

motorpsycho

trust us

(stickman)

Norway's Motorpsycho are veterans of over a decade's playing and have released a pile of records – now here's a double CD (also available as a two and a half lp box set) of sprawling prog rock. This stuff allegedly tops the major label charts in their home country – not just in the charts, but at the #1 spot. Kind of amazing, given that these songs tend to be long and contorted and with the exception of the wonderful power pop basher "Hey Jane" require a fair amount of listening to reveal their strengths. And even that song runs past five minutes. Lots of interesting guitar textures, good dynamics, and the kind of thing to play when you're doing something else and want some cool background. (www.stickman-records.de)

my so-called band

always something there to destroy us

(suicide watch)

I'm a sucker for self-deprecation, but that's only good for a foot in the door and then there's gotta be more. This lot play metallic punk rock with dark chord changes and vocals delivered in a fairly characterless drone. "Good Intention", "Please Delete Me" and "Fire Extinguisher" are the best moments, the latter with a particularly cool set of

chord changes and leads. But much of the rest is unremarkable. (www.mysocalledband.com)

the new christs

these rags

(citadel)

The usual trick – band changes labels and releases an acclaimed new album, and old label pops out with a reissue to make trade on the buzz. Sure, *We Got This* was the album of the year for 2002, but this package shows that that's not the first time Rob Younger's Aussie wrecking crew could've coaxed a ten from an East German skating judge. Combining what used to be the *Pedestal* ep with the mid-90s mini-lp *Woe Betide* and some spare pocket change to pay for a re-mix that really wasn't necessary, this is a good excuse for the experienced to have a re-listen and the uninitiated to find out what they missed. The usual: a guitar rock blitzkrieg musically and searing, unfailingly real passion vocally. (www.citadel-records.com)

the nomads

showdown 2 – the 90s

(sympathy)

Sweden's best band ever, the Nomads have been around long enough and released enough quality material to more than justify having not one but two double-CD retrospectives in their discography. This one picks up at their stone brilliant *Sonically Speaking* lp, which was released only in Sweden in 1991 after their somewhat mis-directed *All Wrecked Up* lp had bombed and cost them much of their western hemisphere fan base. Nine tracks from *Sonically Speaking* make it here, all well deserving, and all a treat for anyone who never heard the original lp. Classic songs like "The Goodbye Look", "Primordial Ooze", "Wasn't Born To Work" – just terrific. From there disc one rolls on through equally compelling tracks lifted from the more obtainable albums *Powerstrip* and *The Cold Hard Facts Of Life*. Disc 2 collects up singles and compilation cuts – many of them tasteful covers spanning the Boys, Suicide, Cult Figures, Damned and more. The topper is 5 live tracks with the Nomads backing The Saints' frontman Chris Bailey for a raveup "I'm Stranded", The Dead Kennedies' Jello Biafra on "Let's Lynch The Landlord", The Dictators' Handsome Dick on "Minnesota Strip", and finally, The MC5's Wayne Kramer for a smashing "Kick Out The Jams". The Nomads get called a garage band, and for a time in the 1980's they certainly were, but they've been way beyond that for 15 years now. Whether VH1 ever profiles them or not, the Nomads don't require typecasting. They're simply one of the best rock and roll bands

of all time. (nomads@telia.com, <http://go.to/nomads>)

puffball

solid state (eight track) 10" vinyl

(deadbeat)

Sweden's Puffball play full on head down on assault rock. On first listen one might be inclined to think of them as almost a speed metal band, but after a few plays their kinship to groups like the Dwarves starts to come out. "Midnight Frolics" has a bass line taken directly from the Stooges "1970" but played twice as fast, and while unoriginal, the song comes up a winner. "Street Dominator" has a killer guitar lick that IS original, and it's the best track here. "Demolition Boys" also has a naggingly repetitive Stooges-styled guitar lick that drives it – another solid song. The vocals hold it back a bit – adequate shout along sort of stuff. But its energy and guitar pizzazz win this a thumbs up regardless. (puffball@malarnet.com, www.burningheart.com)

punk lurex ok

aika vapaa

(hiljaiset levyt)

Finland's Punk Lurex OK are never going to be a household name in America, but if you want to go out on a limb for something with a slightly exotic feel, this might do it. The music is punk, ok, but the two women who handle the singing come across like the Bangles with perhaps slightly less vocal richness. The Finnish lyrics and the slightly melancholy chord changes convey a feeling that, even though it's rock and roll, this is a glimpse into a different culture altogether. My favorite is "Mari", which is fully comprehensible from a musical perspective even when you can't fathom a syllable. And those Pete Shelley flavored leads sprinkled throughout are an added bonus! (www.hiljaiset.sci.fi)

the pulses

s/t

(dirtnap)

Seattle's Dirtnap label is fast becoming a favorite of mine with their roster of off-kilter punk bands. The Pulses are maybe more art and post-punk than Dirtnap groups like the Briefs or the Distraction, but they do their thing in great style. Heavy nods to Gang Of Four guitar chop and Mission of Burma chord changes litter a concise landscape where 15 songs require under half an hour. "Clone Song" has a nifty lyric bite and I swear "Leisure Pleasure" is an outtake from Go4's Entertainment. But my favorite moment is the shift from the choppy verse to the fluid, driving chorus of

“Superboy”. Well done. (mail@dirtnaprecs.com, www.dirtnaprecs.com)

ramblin' bomber

singapur

(little records)

This Swiss band plays dreamy psych pop that's got moments but needs a major tummy tuck to get rid of some flab. One song starts with a minute-long intro of the sound of a rural road. The next song has two voices whispering in French for nearly a minute, and then after twenty seconds of atonal burps and blats, they come back again. Where there is music, it's either ambient stuff or space jazz. Ultimately, this is the kind of music is the sort of thing that's best listened to when you aren't paying attention to it, and what kind of compliment is that? (littlerecords@hotmail.com)

rehtorit

hiliaa!

(hiljaiset levyt)

Formed after the breakup of an absolutely dynamite Ramones-inspired Finnish combo called Ne Luumaet about a decade ago, Rhetorit for my tastes don't have quite the magic of their predecessor – while they trade in the same incredibly catchy punk hooks, they tend to commercialize the proceedings a little too much in places. There's really no problem with the songs or the playing, but the singer is too good – that is, if you're measuring on a commercial yardstick. He's just polished to a shine. But being worse than Ne Luumaet is like being shorter than Kareem Abdul Jabbar – so what? And I sure get a kick out of songs like “Aikaa On Todella Vahan” or the racing “Liekhtivat Pulisongit” – buzzing guitars, huge production, and terrific melodies. (www.hiljaiset.sci.fi)

the reilly express

dizzy

(luftwaffel)

The Reilly Express are arguably Norway's answer to the Hives. Certainly they approach music the same way – turn the key, put it in drive, and press the throttle to the floorboards. Lyrics come in torrents, guitars slash and stab, and the drums feel like the wraith of Keith Moon has been summoned and fed a Costco sized bottle of No Doze. “Not Dead Yet” is a mind blowing drum work out with a whiplash stop-start 3 note guitar lick. “It Pays Off” is as clever as it comes, with a wonderful chiming guitar part adding a jangly feel to a song that otherwise threatens to break down walls. “The Price” is another stormer. Another first rate entry

in the Scandinavian rock sweeps. (www.luftwaffel.com)

the royal beat conspiracy

dig it!

(bad afro)

The tag “sixties rock” gets applied to a lot of bands, but it's only when you think about how many styles of music were played in that decade that you realize how much more needs to be said to convey anything meaningful. But there's no question that Dig It! would have been at home in that decade, especially around 1969. Swirling, soulful, psychedelic and rocking, the Royal Beat Conspiracy come across like the Spencer Davis Group on acid. It starts with a powerhouse singer who sounds every bit like a young Stevie Winwood, then overlays a heavy dose of Hammond organ and finally drives the underbelly with pumping bass lines and rocking drums. Mix these ingredients with songs as good as “Try Me”, “Can You Dig It?” or “Soulshake”, and you've really got something. The pounding “Super Sweet” sounds like they've copped the riff to DMZ's “Mighty Idy”, but it's no complaint – these guys are the goods. (www.badafro.com, badafro@badafro.com)

the ruiners

how's that grab ya?

(disaster)

This Detroit band sure has a lot of folks raving, but the packaging made me suspect that this was going to be another drunk-punk record. And it is, but in a fairly different sort of way from what I had dreaded. There's quite a bit of variety in styles along with some funny tracks like “Punk Son” or “M'Girl Left With You”. There's even a walking-bass disco track and a harmonicas 'round the campfire tune. Still doesn't mean I'm getting on any bandwagons. (www.disasterrecords.com)

salem lights

insect wings

(flapping jet)

Oakland's Salem Lights don't sound like a Bay Area band. They sound like one of those Australian groups like the Bamboos or the Bo-Weevils who were weaned on classic 60s garage rock records with a country edge. Or maybe closer to home, paisley underground groups like Green On Red. Singer Cory Lindstrom has a voice that would make a Cler Channel programming director's skin crawl but despite the fact that he seems to sing in about six different keys at once, it somehow works. The songs are oddly constructed things – rarely taking the turn you expect them to

and loaded with surprise chord changes. Their cover of Roky Erikson's "You're Gonna Miss Me" may be one of hundreds, but it fits, and their own "Dropout" is a fine piece of tormented neurotica with cool guitar leads that feel like Died Pretty's Brett Myers. (www.flappingjet.com)

the savages

long live you

(half a cow)

It's hard to believe that this Swedish group had to ship their demo all the way to Australia before someone saw fit to sign them. This isn't the demo that won over Half A Cow, though – the band were so excited to get an offer that they recorded this new set of 5 songs, leaving me trying to figure out how to get to hear that original set. Cos if it's anything like the slashing, off kilter shoot 'em up going on here, it's got to be worth searching for. The opening signature track "Long Live You" jerks along in spasms that at times make it feel like the band is going to fall apart, but just when you think they're done for, they gather into a full on assault that leaves you gasping. The guitar and harmonies in "Who On The Bayou" remind me of Big Star's "The Ballad of El Goodo" and the closing "Detroit" is just a monster chunk of rock mayhem. This band has the potential to be something special. (haclabel@mpx.com.au, www.halfacow.com.au)

the sewergraves

revelation time

(low impact)

Between singles, compilation tracks and CDs, Sweden's Sewergraves have a discography longer than a sermon on a sunny May morning. All I've heard have been first rate, but this marvelous disc tops the list. The band seem to be honing in on a swinging, almost jazzy brand of Detroit rock that at times brings to mind the feel Radio Birdman got on songs like "Man With The Golden Helmet", though they generally power more like a "New Race". Their own songs like "Anything For You", "Five Times More", "Hey Sister" or the riff-heavy "All I've Got To Say" convey rocking energy, but they also get across emotion and feeling that's missing from a lot of other full throttle bands. (www.lowimpact.nu, info@lowimpact.nu)

the skreppers

hedonist hellcats

(low impact)

Yet another Swedish garage outfit – this is the second album by the Skreppers, and it's a whole lot of fun. Lyrically things are little above the level of yuk-yuk jokes - for example I suppose that song

titles like "Dog I Wanna Be Your Bone" and "TV Ass" are supposed to demonstrate a Stooges influence. But the music on this is captivatingly catchy with plenty of cheeseball organ, fuzztone guitar, snappy drumwork, and a singer who sounds more than a little like Jello Biafra. The killer harmony interplay on "She's Not Mine" makes it the standout, but the Cramps-theme action of "Udai Rock" and that "Dog" song are attention grabbers, too. (www.lowimpact.nu, info@lowimpact.nu)

sleepy township

all these records – singles and rarities 1994-2000

(foxy boy)

Perth's Sleepy Township plays lo-fi pop in the vein of Beat Happening. This recording is the sort of thing where the production values (or more properly, the total lack thereof) are so in-your-face that it takes a major effort to get past that and focus on the songs. Assuming you can do it, you'll find some quality moments and a fair amount of music that just sounds amateurish. I'm partial to "Sleepy Township Song", which has a rocking Flying Nun vibe. "One Horse Town" has a nice keyboard feel but the mix seems almost deliberately out of whack and hurts the result badly. "Leave It Out" has a romping drum kick and but it's mixed even worse. In all, one is left feeling that this record would have made a good practice tape for band members to rehearse to at home, but having learned the songs, they shoulda made a proper album at a real studio. (ara@foxyboy.biz)

stork

99% fact free

(self released)

Stork are a high energy three piece out of Melbourne playing a kind of music that could only come from down under – a sound that shows a definite affinity for Detroit rock ideas, but blended with a sort of post-punk (or maybe Captain Beefheart-ish) adventurousness that takes things in other directions. It doesn't always work, and the lean production hurts things a bit, too, but there's something about this that recalls the heydays of the mid 80s when there were hundreds of bands trying new directions. "Abattoir" is certainly the oddest fish in this pool, which is saying something when a record also has a song about washing a cat. If you don't like singers with unusual voices, you might stay away from this, but otherwise it's a rocking and humorous effort. (www.stork.2ya.com)

the strollers

captain of my ship

(low impact)

They've split up now, but the second CD by Sweden's Strollers deserves to be recognized for the terrific piece of garage music it is. Mathias Lilja is a genuinely gifted rock singer with a tough and soulful voice – a real powerhouse. The band behind him plays pounding garage rock with fuzzed out guitar, electric piano and organ prominently mixed together. I'd compare these guys to the Chesterfield Kings or the Cynics, except I think the Strollers were actually better than those bands – catchier songs, more interesting production, and better singing. "She Ain't Nobody", "I'll Be Gone", "There Ain't No Cheating" – these are just some of the terrific tracks here. Invoking the name of the Yardbirds is tempting. Check their Falling Right Down CD, too – it might even be better than this one. (www.lowimpact.nu, info@lowimpact.nu)

sweatmaster

sharp cut

(bad afro)

Since it came out in late 2003, this has been one of the more talked about releases among followers of Scandinavian (in this case, Finnish) rock, and it's easy to see why. Sharp Cuts is tough and driving guitar oriented garage rock, but the guitarist has the rare (for today) knack of saying more by not playing for a moment than he could by bashing out another 8 bar chords. There's enough stop and go whiplash riffage here that the disc ought to come with an insert recommending a chiropractor and a personal injury attorney. Topping it off with a soulful singer whose voice has some genuine character doesn't hurt a bit. Best of the lot are "Well Connected", "I Am A Demon And I Love Rock'n'Roll" and the opening "Hold It!". Frantic! (www.badafro.com, badafro@badafro.com)

deniz tek and the golden breed

glass eye world

(career)

Tek has moved backed to Australia and is making plans for Radio Birdman tours in Europe this summer, but before leaving Montana he took the time to make this album with his friends Art and Steve Godoy. If you count this as a Tek solo album it's the best since Outside, which is going back a ways. "2 Pam Chloride", "What It's For" and "Let's Go" are the choice tracks, the last one being notable for a feel that's much more UK 77 punk than something from a Detroit rock legacy. As has been the case on many of his other solo efforts, Tek's singing sometimes detracts from his songwriting and guitar playing skills, but it's always

worth following what he's doing regardless. (www.careerrecords.com)

ten heads high

from here to tupelo

(pile on)

New York's 10 Heads High serve up a professional sounding modern rock album that blends power pop and grunge in about equal doses. The album leads strongly with a crunching hookfest in "Evolution Queen", and third track "Stepchild Of A Genius" is pretty tasty, too. But after those the song ideas tend to falter a bit and things are pretty unexceptional until the very last track. They've got a good sound, now they just need better songs. (www.10headshigh.com)

thirddimension

protect us from what we want

(telegram/warner music)

This is the kind of pop record we've come to expect out of Sweden – blend a few mid-tempo tracks that have the sort of lyric and melodic interplay to keep the savage heart still ("Never In A Lifetime") or the two Chills-like tunes "Lonely Road" and "If This World Could Only See"), load up on introspective ballads for those offended by loud noises ("The Games You Play", "Until It Breaks" or "Just Like You"), and top it with an irresistible top ten smash caliber rocker like the staggering "Other Side Of Town". I'd prefer they risk offending me more often, but there are some real standouts mixed in here. (www.massiverecordcompany.com)

the vacancies

gutpunch

(smog veil)

This Cleveland band throws up a wall of guitars and snotty punk vocals that's plenty energetic but ultimately comes up short on memorable moments. They'd like to claim heredity from pioneers like the Dead Boys and Rocket From The Tombs, but this is 25 years later and about a million bands have strip mined this high elbow action vein to a point that's well below the ground water level. Like an ersatz Electric Frankenstein, the Vacancies might give a good thrashabout as an opening band, but there are too many groups that do this so much better. (www.smogveil.com)

vermishus

suburban parallax

(half a cow)

This Aussie group has the downer rock thing pretty well wired. The six tracks here are moody and at times intense, with the typical approach being to build from a soft passage into a loud chorus and

then fall back to do it again. The vocals alternate between Liz Eylander and Jacinta Perram, but male or female, the effect is similar – a vulnerable sort of feel. There are no jaw-droppers here, but it's consistently good throughout. (www.halfacow.com.au, haclabel@mpx.com.au)

sonny vincent

the good the bad the ugly

(acetate)

There seems to be no punk rock god who hasn't appeared on a Sonny Vincent record, and this one doesn't change that pattern. Having Stooges drummer Scott Asheton and Damned guitarist Captain Sensible on bass to go with his own guitar playing, Vincent would seem to have an adequate line up to shake some star-power action. But somehow that wasn't enough, so Vincent burned through all the long distance minutes on his phone card to rope in Wayne Kramer, Walter Lure, Brian James, Thurston Moore, Richard Lloyd, Scott Morgan, Greg Ginn, Don Fleming and about two dozen other brand names for cameos. This keeps up and someone's going to put a salary cap in place. But the geetars DO sound fab in this orgy. And Vincent's singing isn't the weakness it used to be – he's found a rough edged approach that works pretty well. (www.acetate.com)

you am i

deliverance

(bmg)

Australia's You Am I are back with another record full of Tim Rogers' warm songs. This one begins with a string of five tracks that make a very strong follow up to Dress Me Slowly, which is arguably the best thing they've done. After that, things relax a little too much, with a string of mostly acoustic ballads that are heartfelt and sincere but ultimately unsatisfying to us hyperactive types. But those opening songs like "Ribbons and Bows" or "Who Put The Devil In You" highlight what You Am I do best – mid tempo rockers with cool lyrics about girls and the boys who want them. (todd@youami.com, www.youami.com.au)

various

behind the banana curtain 1975-2000

(4zzz)

On the heels of the terrific Do The Pop and Born Out Of Time compilations of 70s/80s Aussie underground music, here comes another wonderful double disc set (also keep an eye out for a new one called Tales From The Australian Underground – the onslaught of Oz reissues is in play!). Taking its title from the Queensland state government's propensity for operating like a

Central American dictatorship, Banana Curtain focuses on Brisbane bands. It begins its chronological waltz through the past 25 years with The Saints obvious classic "(I'm) Stranded" and blazing on through a stream of acknowledged greats like The Fun Things' "Savage", Razar's "Task Force", The Screaming Tribesmen's "Igloo" or The Go-Between's "Karen". But the best news is that even for relatively dedicated followers of Aussie fashion (myself included) there are loads of previously unheard bands here, and many of them are also fabulous. Post No Bills hit with the buzzing punk of "Winter Moving In", Hotel Breslin storms with "Death Row Road", The Parameters deliver an angry "Pigs Moving In", and Chu Dikka Dikka's gets their message across in fine amateurish style on "Cyclone Hits Expo" just to name a few among the 22 bands on disc one. Disc 2 picks up as the 80s expire and quickly moves into a period when Aussie music became more commercially focused with less room for whimsy. But there are still heaps of good songs from groups like the Purple Avengers, Creatures Downstairs, Acid World, Custard, Wishing Chair, The Melniks and Regurgitator. Escape Form Toytown win the award for best song title with the riotous (and politically pointed) "Fish and Chip Bitch from Ipswich". Complaints? It's hard to imagine a Brisbane compilation that ignores critical bands like The Survivors, The End, or The 31st – bands that had a substantial effect in the rest of the country. But given how many great songs have been rescued from oblivion by this collection, that oversight can be forgiven. (www.4zzzfm.org.au)

various

dirtnap across the northwest

(dirtnap)

I'm a fan of the sort of skewed 70s style punk that Dirtnap bands tend to have, so a sampler seems like a great idea to me. Of course, I shoulda figured that just because you can find 5 bands that do a good job with this style to do albums with doesn't automatically mean you can find 26 more for a compilation. Most of this slots in to a slightly above average category with a few stand outs like The Exploding Hearts "Sniffing Glue", The Rotten Apples "Outta Mind", Midnight Thunder Express "Better Off Alone", The Flip Tops 1:25 romp on "The One" and The Earaches "23 Screwtop Wine". These are all catchy and snotty blasts that get in and out in a hurry. Good fun. (www.dirtnaprecs.com)

various

lookout freakout vol. 3

(lookout)

These Lookout compilations are always good value for the money – this one has 20 bands all in a punk to pop vein. I like most of this, but the standouts are the cool rhythm guitar romp by The Oranges Band, the big chorus and driving beat of the The Smugglers and Moral Crux's great "Window Shopping". There's also solid but not spectacular tracks by The Queens, Mr. T Experience, Ben Weasel, Ted Leo, Bratmobile and American Steel. (www.lookoutrecords.com)

various

who will buy these wonderful evils?

(dolores)

Aside from the fact that it features the new bone-headed anti-copying technology that prevents the disc from playing on 3 of the five CD players I own (and which I circumvented by playing the disc onto my hard drive through my soundcard's analog input and dubbing a perfectly fine CDR that WILL play everywhere), this is a fabulous compilation. Disc one is current Swedish groups – no disrespect intended for the fine bands Caesar's Palace, The Soundtrack Of Our Lives, Broder Daniel, and International Noise Conspiracy, but if there was no disc two, then this would only be an adequate compilation. But the second CD has 17 Swedish bands from the sixties that most of us would never hear anywhere else, and if you can't get enough of that British invasion sound, this is for you. The Wizards smash it up like The Who circa "Anyway Anyhow Anywhere" on "See You Tonight". The Jackpots echo the heavy production pop of the Move. The Tages recall The Beatles of "Strawberry Fields Forever". Outsiders' "Inside Of Me" is heavy Hendrix-flavored psych. Fabulous Four do a great cover of the Rolling Stones instrumental "438 S. Michigan Avenue" with classic explosion effects produced by kicking their amp with the spring reverb turned on – a noise that will confuse children of the digital age no end. T-Boones' 1967 smash "I Want You" sounds like the record that inspired the Stooges. Ola And The Janglers could've fit their song "I Can Wait" right next to "I Can't Reach You" on The Who Sell Out. And Hansson and Karlsson's "Tax Free" features muscle-bound Hammond organ and a feel like Paul Revere and the Raiders doing "Indian Reservation". An impressive array of hitherto unknown bands, with great liner notes to boot. (www.doloresrecordings.com)