

out of the window for a few hours. If proof of the pudding wasn't available in **I WANT A DOG** then you'll get it in **'I'M NOT SCARED'**. IT'S LURULEY.

Even **'Always On My Mind'** a song I was determined to hate when it was at number one last year when it was at number one last year when I was home in Blighty, catches me with a stiff kick to the bottom and says 'look here matey I'm rather tasty'. It's right too.

Gets into my top ten for 1988 so castly, it's scary.

STEVE  
GRIFFITHS  
SKRATCH

★  
**MEAT**  
★

SKRATCH

MARC ALMOND  
The Stars We Are  
(Capitol)

Marc Almond is a former member of Soft Cell and his recently released album's title song speaks for all those "stars" of life who have managed to maintain the wonder and joy in their lives that they

had as children.

...I'll set myself free/escape from situations/Houdini would be proud of me/I'll lie around like Byron/and write verses to the moon/.../and the moon is in my head... (from *Bitter Sweet*) reveal Almond's aspirations to be a poet. Now being a poet isn't difficult - you just do it and if your good enough you can make a living at it. And Almond is good enough. He has written or co-written nine or the album's ten songs and they can stand on their merits as poetry.

Are they good songs? Yes... but too often they are wrapped in lush strings and a padding drumbeat and accompanied by Almond's voice which, like the "moon in his head" keeps a cool, detached relationship above the lyrics. This sort of approach helped the Righteous Brothers sell millions of records. The songs *Bitter Sweet* and *The Very Last Pearl*, similarly benefit from this treatment (though they do have a punchier beat than the rest of the album to

propel them musically) and are deserving of airplay. Unfortunately, Almond's breathless vocals, though pleasant enough and appropriate for the lyrics, just can't sustain an entire album. There isn't enough stylistic range to convince the listener that the aural landscape consists of more than gently rolling foothills.

The reliance on strings (not a guitar to be heard) to carry the melodies places a burden on instruments not often forgiving to excessive use; they won't keep you from catching the lyrics clearly, but just as likely they won't have you listening to the last songs on either side.

It's too bad that an album with so many good songs that evoke so much of the beauty and wonder of life has to sink in its own excesses. Hopefully, Almond will continue to produce the same well written songs but clothe them in a more varied wardrobe.

In short, a collection of fine songs best listened to in small doses.

PETER FERGUSON

LLOYD HANSON  
The Great Debate  
(DTK Records)

"Yeah! I love that Lloyd Hanson, dude!" the young man at the party says. "Super jazzy stuff!"

But suddenly... "Whooargh!" An apparently enraged Hanson bursts through the wall, grabs the enthusiast and, taking a fork out of the trifle, tattoos the following on his forehead - THIS IS NOT MAINSTREAM JAZZ NOR IS IT TYPICAL FUSION. IT ENCOMPASSES ELEMENTS OF BEBOP, FUNK, ROCK, LATIN, AMBIENT AND THE AVANT GARDE.

His mission accomplished, the stout crusader plunges back out through the side of the house with another scream, pausing momentarily to tap out a whirlwind of solo "salt peanuts" on some partially empty beer bottles.

Thank God there is someone out there making sure that we don't get our musical terminology confused!

That said, *The Great Debate* is certainly a real dog's dinner of influences, squished together by the admittedly very talented Mr. Hanson. There is no common trend to the album so, left up in the air, I decide to make an observation on each particular track.

**UNDER MY THUMB** - Lalo Schifrin meets *A Certain Ratio* for a piece of incidental car chase music that brings back violent memories of Starsky and Hutch. Cool.

**YEAH RIGHT** - This being the first instance when it becomes recognisable that *Jaco Pastorius* is dead but not forgotten amongst the faithful. This is one of those Jazzy ("Whopargh!") swings through a daguerrotype facsimile of any sweaty birdland. Tippy-toeing percussion eventually joins in the fun by pursuing the muscular horn section and gliding strings all over the damn shop. Recommended.

**CLOUDS** - This tune, Lloyd paints huge swaths of synth over a burbling bass motif. In principle, its of the New-Age mentality, allowing the recipient to melt like cheddar at a Roman orgy.

**THE OTHER PLANET** - is a goofball B-movie deal with tacky sputnik sound effects providing an introduction to the best Jeff Beck impersonation I've heard for a long time. Suddenly, somebody throws some itching powder on the works and the guitarist goes a bit mental, causing the song to take an early bath.

**AFRICAN RIVER AT DAWN** - As the name suggests, this one's a musical travelogue with goose-pumpkin blasts of stentorian keyboard heralding an ethnic zylophone arrangement (that hits some really bad bum-notes Lloyd!). Unfortunately the latter effect gets stuck in some pretty thick custard, merely allowing the guitars and what-might-be-congas to push each other around in a drunken squabble in the background. The keyboard blasts a few more times but it has the same effect as our mum poking her head around the door and saying 'Now you boys stop that!' but having no effect whatsoever.

**THE GREAT DEBATE** - If there was a pinch of the itchy business at the end of *'The Other Planet'*, then there's a ton of the blasted stuff in this monstrosity. Here, horn players, strings, percussion and uncle Tom Cobby and all are poked and prodded into a frenzy of gratuitous musical masturbation that made me do little else except wonder what Dante could have produced if he had had a mouth organ.

Almost setting a trend now, Hanson opens up side 2 with a widely accessible but rather minimalist bit of early Level 42 tupe genuflecture. This is called **'MUSIC FOR THE BLACK CAT'** and is likely to be the OTHER really popular section from the album. Real dukey.

2 + 2 = 1.5 - Bereft of the

ability to give any real appreciation to bass guitar proficiency, I cannot really give my blessing to this track either since it sounds like the artiste is wandering around the house looking for a lost sack. Mumbling in confusion, he discovers some horns and a guitar player in a box under the stairs. Together they all stumble out into the garden having failed to accomplish anything except a large collection of bruises.

**LONG DRIVE HOME** - After the last bit of pointless shambling about, this track comes as a blessed relief. A sense of calm and glowing satisfaction settles on the listener as she/he can almost imagine being taken home on the back of a swaying tractor with the sun going down behind the sardine factory.

**SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR** - Sounds just like something our old guitarist used to play in the basement when he'd had a row with his missus. Certainly nice to get a descent twinge of nostalgia, but rather disappointing to hear such a loosely arranged herbent on a studio album.

In all it is quite obvious to me that soon, the Lloyd Hanson will be at the helm of a real bitchin' ensemble or be in great demand for his wealth of experience and ability in the studio. For now, though, one might scribble 'spreading yourself too thin' or 'too many cooks...' on a chewing gum wrapper and hide for a few months. Ideas there are, but too many of them are milked for all their worth, starved of a few herbs and spices that would surely have made many of these concoctions far more palatable. Rather than separating out the various styles, wouldn't I have been a happy boy if *The Great Debate* contained a lively particle of ideas rather than categorization into 'single compositions'? Well, yes actually - how about it Lloyd?

STEVE GRIFFITHS

# HUBCAPS N' RAW LIVER

By Nic

STRANGE GOINGS ON IN QUEENSTREET



Good God! The floors are crawling with ants! Dresden '45 share a chuckle at the state of the Venue.

I've been in Fredericton for five months now and still this city never fails to astonish me. Take last Saturday for example; four bands sharing the same bill - **ph. Dresden 45, The Druids, and Phycus** - all for \$5. I'm still in shock! What should have been wall to wall attendance, was what a cafe scene would call intimate. I knew Fredericton was a little behind but I never knew they all stayed home Saturday night. The opening act... **Dresden** took the stage next. This two member arrangement, **Steve** on keyboard and **James** on guitar, keys, hubcaps and vocals, has a sound that should be heard to be fully understood. Reflective lyrics and a forceful, almost angry at times, delivery of vocals and guitar are carried upon a deeply intonate, alternating sea. Although their set was plagued by technical difficulties (Who tripped over the cord?), their performance did not live up to the quality of their studio work, but still offered a welcome deviation from the multitudes of clean-cut, commercial formula fed sound-a-likes and 'shad-clad' metalmania that impoverishes Fredericton.



"Look out now they're on the frets! EGAAD!!" The Druids in insect psychofrenzy (- says here).

Presenting a set composed almost entirely of new material, **The Druids** delivered that driving guitar, borderline psychedelia sound that is characteristically theirs. You'll be able to catch them again in February - also be on the watch for a new studio release in early March.

To grind (literally) the evening to an end, Halifax based **Phycus**, who supports Canada's heaviest percussion section, stood as an example of the other side (of what I'm not yet sure). Opening with "Won't You Be My Neighbour" and featuring such titles as "Good Morning Garbage Chute", "Locked Out Of My House" and a personalized version of "Don't Worry, Be Happy", **Phycus** are the kind of guys you would love to have at a party (provided it's at someone else's house). 'Garbage Music' was the venue, and playing anything from coil springs to I-beams to two pounds of raw meat (the band would like to thank **Victory Meats**), **Phycus** was an experience.

C'est tant pis if you missed this concert - you can make up for it next month - just keep your eyes open and we'll put the posters up.

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