

GENRECIDES

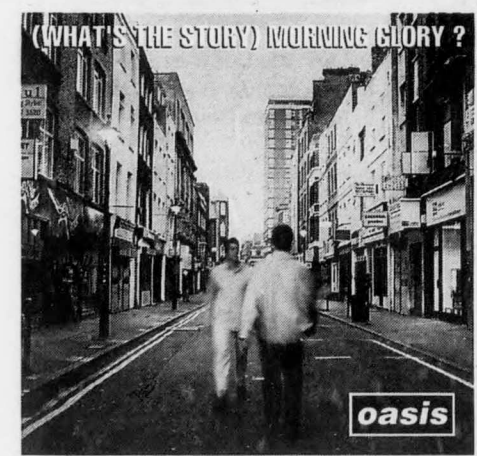
MICHAEL EDWARDS

Well, as promised this week we are going to have a look at the new albums from Blur and Oasis. Both bands put out rather wonderful albums last year, so the amount of attention given to the releases is not completely unexpected. Except for one thing - most of the press has been concentrating on the supposed



ongoing feud between the two bands. Magazines have been filled with quotes by each band about the other, and the whole thing has gotten a little childish. Oasis Quo indeed. But instead of getting caught up in that whole scene, I decided to take a different approach. I'm going to write about the music. Quite the novel approach I realise, but that's the way that we do things at *The Brunswickan*.

First up Blur. *Parklife* was very much their crowning glory - it was such an incredible album that it was always going to be a hard act to follow. And on *The Great Escape*, they do a pretty good job. It isn't as immediate an album as *Parklife*, without the potential of a huge hit like 'Girls and Boys', but its subtlety is something that really does work to its advantage. I got fed up with some of *Parklife* very quickly, and that doesn't seem to be happening this time. Not yet anyway. They are still mining the same vein that they did before, namely working their way through various styles from British pop music over the past 30 years or so. No new ground there. But the sound on the new album is less eclectic than the last, and they have also gotten their loutish element under control (the thing that lost them the Mercury Music Prize last year) - they seem to be



turning into the new Madness which isn't such a bad thing. The main problem with *The Great Escape* is that it doesn't offer anything really new - the continuing maturity of the songwriting is the thing that helps to make it just as interesting as its predecessor. Another wonderful album, but not a great surprise.

And what about Oasis? When their first album came out, I predicted that the band would more or less self destruct very quickly, and we probably wouldn't hear from them again. So I'm wrong. I still do think that the Brothers Gallagher will piss each other off and never talk to each other again, but fortunately for us that hasn't happened yet. Maybe next year. And in the meantime they have returned with (*What's the Story*) *Morning Glory*, their second album. I liked the first album an awful lot, and I like this one too just as much. Maybe even more so. The majestic single 'Some Might Say' is here just in case you didn't pick up the single (but if you didn't you should as there are three more wonderful songs on that EP...), and there are a whole bunch of other great songs too. Liam's voice is just as whiny as it ever was, but Noel does get to sing on a couple of the slower songs which makes a nice change as his deeper, richer voice works well with such material. And the other thing which deserves a real mention is the guitar playing which is surely the finest committed disc since those glory days of Morrissey and Marr. Or maybe of Anderson and Butler. Whatever - it is so expressive that every single note counts. Every single one. So I like this one, and it has the slight edge over Blur's *The Great Escape* just because it is so much easier to sing along to.

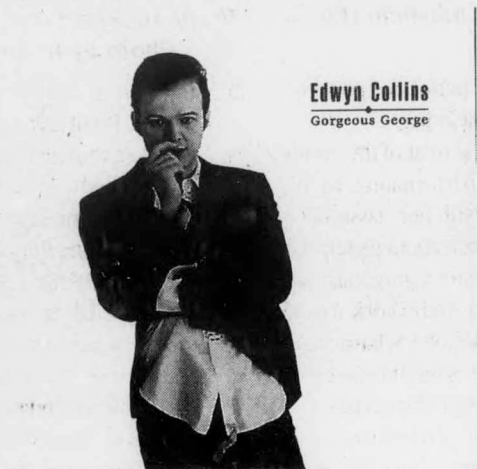


But Blur and Oasis seem to have more in common than either band would like to admit - they have both taken a year off to record new albums which merely coast along in the same ways as their last. Fortunately both of them manage to recreate the sheer aural delight that they did last year - they just don't do anything to elevate themselves. Are they lazy or have they just peaked. Sigh. I don't think I want to know.

And what else is new and exciting from the most United of Kingdoms? Well, David Bowie has come back with one of those concept albums that were so beloved by him during the 1970's. *Outside* also sees him reunited with Brian Eno, and some of the other musicians that worked with him back in his glory days. It is also his best album for quite a few years; the best one since *Let's Dance* to be perfectly honest. Eno works the same sort of magic that he has with U2 and James, and even makes Bowie sound more than a little Reznor-ish at times. The concept of the album is a rather bizarre tale of Nathan Adler, and his investigation of an art-ritual murder; it is a wee bit hard to follow at times, but is interesting enough to make you come back a few times. Anyway, the music is much more important, and Bowie seems to have rediscovered his muse in that regard. It seems like Tin Machine has gone

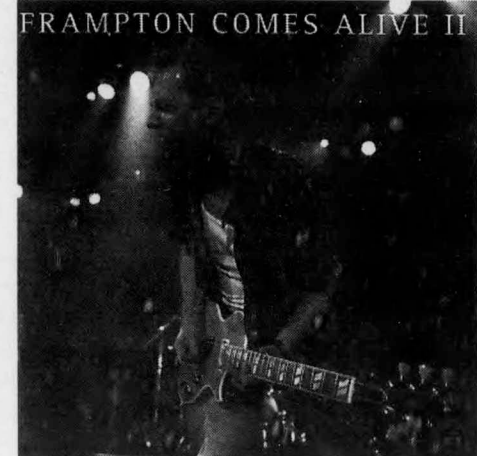
for good and the Thin White Duke has returned; I for one am very happy about that.

Edwyn Collins new album *Gorgeous George* has been out for quite a while now, but it deserves a mention as the bestest song on it, namely 'A Girl Like You', has finally been picked



up by the more powerful music channels (I shall mention no names...) so perhaps fame is just around the corner for him. Just in case you haven't heard 'A Girl Like You' by now, here's a quick taste of what to expect - the collision of Motown, Northern Soul and indie rock in the most delicious way. It even manages to rhyme 'metaphorically' and 'allegorically' in the most effortless way. Quite spectacular, and very probably the song of the year. The rest of the album covers all kinds of territory from acoustic ballads ('North Of Heaven') to scathing attacks of the music industry ('The Campaign For Real Rock'). It is quite simply the best thing that he has done since his days with the godlike Orange Juice, and it should be one of the more compulsory purchases of the year so far. And to think it took a number one song in Belgium before the rest of the world recognised his genius.

And as I have been promising for the past couple of weeks, Peter Frampton has come alive again on the very imaginatively titled *Frampton Comes Alive II*. So why did he bother? I really wish I could answer that question as for the life of me I can't think of a reason. Except for the fact that his last few albums didn't sell all that well, but he still manages to pack in crowds of



people for his live shows who all really want to hear 'Show Me The Way'. And after this seventy-five minute disc, I really wanted to hear 'Show Me The Way' too as it would be so much better than any of the other middle-of-the-road rubbish that he passes as music these days. The Seventies are over - move on. Please.

Great Big Sea sail into town

by Jethelo E. Cabilete
Brunswickan Entertainment

Great Big Sea were in town for a CD and video release party and concert at The Dock on Tuesday night, and judging by the energy and fun-loving attitude of the band members (not to mention the audience's enthusiastic response), Great Big Sea certainly delivered a fresh and entertaining concert. Band members Alan Doyle, Sean McCann, Darrell Power and Bob Hallett founded Great Big Sea in 1991, and the group's stylish blend of Newfoundland folk, rock and roll and Celtic influences have given their music an expressive quality.

I spoke with Sean McCann and then the rest of the band, at the concert on Tuesday. Needless to say, they do enjoy playing their music, as well as chatting it up with people.

Bruns: It's been a while since the band has been in Fredericton. How does it feel to be back with a new release?

Sean: We're very happy. The last time we were here, we thought we would have it, and we didn't because it was a bit delayed from the record company. So we promised we'd come back, and that's exactly what we're doing here today. The CD is called *Up* and we're just coming through with our promises, you know.

Bruns: What, if anything, is different with the new release?

Sean: Well, we have a whole lot more money (laughs). No there's a couple more things...we do have a budget from Warner to go make this. Before, we had no budget and, you know it was a frugal experience. We did it (their debut album *Great Big Sea*) all in one weekend. This album was recorded over a month in St. John's with a real producer, Danny Greenspoon, who helped produce early Spirit of the West and the Bourbon Tabernacle Choir. So now we have the luxury of having that kind of support and funding behind us, and actually take the time and do it as best as we can. It enabled us to play our best and so the sound, as a result, is a lot better.

Bruns: What influences have helped shape Great Big Sea, aside from folk and Celtic music?

Sean: I would say heavier grooves, heavy rock and roll like The Clash...The Pogues certainly and country to a certain extent. But our live shows are more rock and roll, with a presentation that we usually use and call "aggressive folk". But there's definitely a rock influence.

Bruns: Are the lyrics written by certain members or is the whole band involved?

Sean: We all tend to write certain songs together. Our happy songs are written together, and our sad songs are written apart. We all come in with researched material, from old folks' memorized music or original material, and we'll pretty much dump on each other 'til we wind up with pieces that are perfect and arranged.

Bruns: There is an assortment of genres in the band's musical content, ranging from old favourites to original scores. What do you look for when creating a recording?

Sean: For this CD, we originally had thirty songs, recorded twenty and kept fifteen. Basically, Great Big Sea is a traditional band, drawing from original and well known music, and we had a job choosing songs. We didn't want to lose either part of that, so we always try to accommodate both things. We're proud of that, so we keep it that way. The actual selection of tunes is decided after many, many days of arm-wrestling to pick out which are the best tunes...should we use this one or this one, 'cause there's a big demographic to think about too.

Bruns: Some bands have moved from a non-mainstream field of music to mainstream. What

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