

platter chatter



UB40 back with reggae classics

by Brian T. Wright

UB40
Labour of Love II
Virgin Ltd.

The latest album by UB40 may disappoint the UB40 addict at first listen. But on further listening, it will surely bring smiles to their faces and provide them with hours of dancing pleasure. On this album of covers, the group of seven from Birmingham England pay tribute to reggae hits from the late '60s and early '70s that are now considered classics.

Loyal fans will be pleased to know that the UB40s have not lost their sound. And they are also able to adjust their style to fit the various trends influencing reggae music all over the world today. "Stick by Me," made popular by Dennis Brown almost 20 years ago, is no longer slow and cool, it sounds like the latest '45 by Johnny P or Foxy Brown. The wicked track, "Baby," was an anthem for lovers in the heat of parties some years ago. Bassist Earl Falconer handles vocals with a silky falsetto.

Tribute is paid to Bob Marley and the Wailers, Al Green, Al Brown and Skin, Flesh and Bones, as well as the Temptations (with an energetic rendition of "The Way You Do The Things You Do"). The legendary d.j. U Roy, who is remembered for his classic "Wear You to The Ball," is shown respect by the UBs; they have some fun doing the song their own way.

But more than anything this is an album that remembers lover's rock, a style of reggae music that is, as the name suggests, strictly for lovers. Their renditions of "Impossible Love," "Tears From My Eyes," "Homely Girl" (a hit for the soul group the Chi-lites) and "Kingston Town" are soothing to the heart and soul.

All these songs could be million seller singles but that is unlikely. People still believe that 'real reggae' comes only from the island of Jamaica, and UB40 should concentrate on original material. Strangely enough, people adore popular reggae singers like Sanchez, Foxy Brown and Wayne Wonder, who owe their success to numerous covers of Tracey Chapman songs.

The bottom line is that this album, by the 10-year-old reggae-pop band, is enjoyable. If you're having a party and can't afford a d.j., put this record on your turntable. Like their first cover album, it proves that, for UB40, reggae is truly a labour of love.

mayhem released

by Ron Howe

Skinny Puppy
Rabies
Nettwerk

Rabies, the latest mayhem unleashed by the dark, industrial trio from Vancouver known as Skinny Puppy, is a progression of technology meeting up with the needs of its artistic purposes. It is not only a great record on its own merits, but demonstrates a hopeful barometric reading of music to come in the '90s.

This is the first half of a much awaited musical (noise) union between industrial pioneers Skinny Puppy and the genre's godfather, Alain (Alien) Jorgunson. Jorgunson co-produced the album and appears on some cuts.

After the album was finished, Skinny Puppy head throat Ogre returned the favour by joining Jorgunson's awesome, progressive artistic project Ministry.

To actually categorize this music could be misleading. Various cuts on *Rabies* could be labelled speed metal, house music, hardcore punk, gothic, rap, etc. To view the work completely, including the cover and jacket sleeve with its collage-like pictures and prose/protest/poetry writings would yield one an abun-

dance of different interpretations.

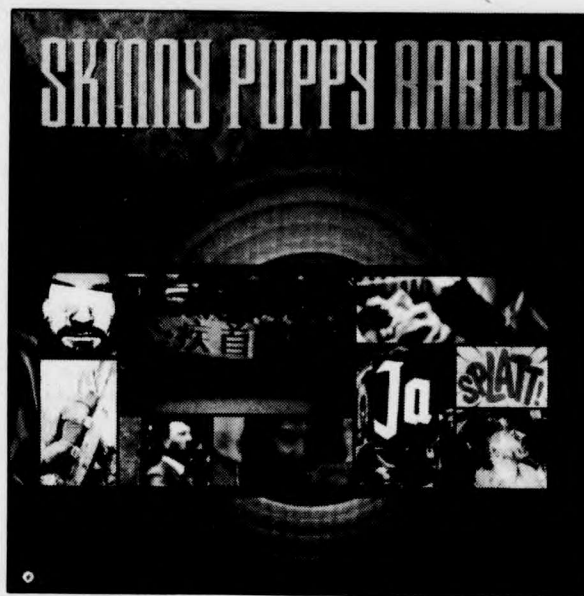
"Rodent" kicks off side one. Synths and drum machines hammer at you like a heart beat you can't escape. Mega-cool sampling, lots of voice-altering yelling, fudgepackin' bass drum, cool guitar licks thrown in for good measure, another Skinny Puppy classic. If this doesn't stimulate something inside you'd better just pull the plug on that life-support system. Skinny Puppy is about stirring people up.

What's happening is the artists are catching up to the technology and are figuring out how to use it in a highly artistic form. It adds a whole new dimension to music, allowing artists more effective forums to deliver their message.

The next stand out tune is an annihilating number called "Fascist Jock Itch." It isn't any coincidence it was recorded at Chicago's 'Wax Trax' Studios, which is Jorgunson's projects' headquarters as well as the name of one of the most progressive record labels in North America.

"Jock Itch" qualifies entry into the 'power music' echelons of alternative music. Sampled statements, protest angst screaming, machine gun drums faster than any human can play.

The song concludes with 'Brothers should be close, don't you think?' For some reason that idiotic catch phrase 'male bond-



ing' comes into my head via throbbing speakers.

"Worlock" starts side two a little slower, a song about 'self-confessed criminal' Charles Manson, complete with the Fathers sampled ranting and Helter Skelter guitar riffs and lyrics tossed into this side.

"Tin Omen" is the next outstanding track. This one was released as the single along with the album. It's an anti-war song pointing out the amnesia-like attitude society has towards today's imperialistic 'conquests.' This one has some really smokin' guitar hooks in it. About halfway through

they give up trying to get their message across in a civilized manner and turn it into a slam-danceable, all-out thrashin', double bass drum panic.

The album concludes with a couple of synthed-out, sampled tunes, like continuing chapters in a novel. You could probably listen to this album a hundred times and still keep getting more out of it, some unintentionally. Looking into the burgeoning decade, this music appears ready to take a bigger step into the world. This is part of it. Stop eating and start listening. And don't forget, these guys are Canadians, to boot.

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