

N.W.A.'s Greatest Hits
N.W.A.
Priority Records

Considering America's fascination with violence it's not surprising that gangsta rap spends so much time in the headlines. From would-be legislation prohibiting the music to Snoop Doggy Dogg's murder trial to Tupac Shakur's recent untimely death, gangsta rap continues to be headline material. Furthermore, despite an immense void of creativity in the genre, gangsta rap continues to be a highly profitable business. It is in this setting that N.W.A., who began the hype nearly a decade ago, release their greatest hits CD.

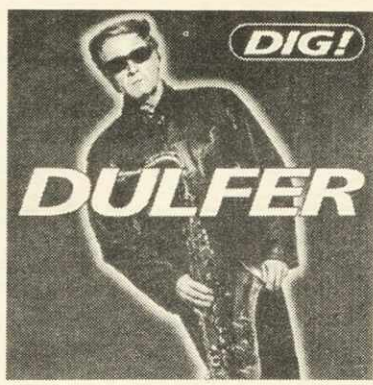
N.W.A.'s *Greatest Hits* is extraordinary in that it manages to successfully capture everything good and bad about the band and their music in an hour.

There is the shockingly bold, violent nature of the rap, as expressed by MC Ren on the hit song "Always Into Something": "If I'm not into nothing I don't feel right/ So I grab the nine and the clip and go and murder motherfuckers at night." Most offensive is the blatant misogyny of songs such as "Just Don't Bite It" — which consists of crude tales concerning oral sex — and "A Bitch Iz A Bitch", where Ice Cube notes that "Now the title 'bitch' don't apply to all women/But all women have a little bitch in 'em."

Conversely, this CD displays the rapping styles that allowed N.W.A. to gain credibility among all hip-hop fans. Ice Cube in particular developed a following and he displays his lyrical prowess best on N.W.A.'s first hit "Straight Outta Compton". One can also trace the evolution of West Coast production over the course of *Greatest Hits*. The songs move from high-powered, fast-paced beats to the slower, simpler, more laid back beats that would eventually evolve into Dr. Dre's oft-mimicked 'G-Funk' production style.

N.W.A.'s *Greatest Hits* is not for the sensitive or the politically correct. But its humour value and the excitement element will not be lost on fans with memories of "the world's most dangerous group."

SOHRAB FARID



Dig
Dulfer
Monster of Jazz

When I picked up this CD I had little idea that I would be reviewing a jazz album. Not any normal jazz album at that, because Dulfer's *Dig* is very different, having a very heavy dance element to it. Actually I am unsure whether this record would be classified as jazz or dance music — probably a bit of both.

Dulfer, from Holland, is a man with a saxophone stuck in his mouth. He also manages to put together an interesting selection of songs.

Mostly instrumental, *Dig* is a fast moving album full of sax, horns, and keyboard, with the listener finding out what Dulfer means by the title *Dig*. On a couple of tunes like "Moby Dig" and "Distortion" we even have some rap. The best moments of the album are the upbeat "Streetfire" and "Grand Slam" — I couldn't really help myself from tapping along to these songs. It is not all fast going, with the pleasant and mellow "Red Moon" fitting in nicely.

At times, *Dig* may become a bit too monotonous, with a saxophone blowing into your face. But if you want some original music, or something to pick up a party which is beginning to die, then this is your album.

STUART MCMILLAN



Sublime
Sublime
Gasoline Alley/MCA

When was the last time you heard some punk reggae? If you thought that such a genre didn't exist, think again.

With today's alternative music consisting mostly of wussy Brit-pop, a band like Long Beach, California's Sublime can generate a lot of attention. Their self-titled release may be just the thing for music fans looking for something different. Their sound is very simple, but is quite difficult to describe: it's solid beats, sometimes almost rap-like, behind groovy basslines and nifty ska/reggae-type guitars. There is a definite heavy reggae influence. This might seem odd for a three-piece California punk band, but they can really lay it down.

The ability that Sublime have to switch between styles is quite good. For example, in the song "Seed", they change from smokin' punk to slow reggae to quick-tempoed ska all in about 5 seconds. Other cool things include the absence of a drum programmer, and the acoustic guitar work at several points throughout the album — it works surprisingly well with the heavy beats.

On the negative side, when Sublime tries to do a song without mixing styles, well, let's just say that it falls a little short of the rest of the album. They attempt a rap song, a reggae-only song and a punk-only song, all three of which are pretty damn bad. Also, they use a turntable to occasionally add a lovely 80's scratching record sound, but it is thankfully limited to mostly the aforementioned crappy rap and reggae songs. You skip them anyway.

Sublime have come up with an impressively smooth, groovin' album. With the recent success of bands such as Rancid, they can only get more popular. Scratching turntables aside.



ERIC HEMPHILL

Beautiful Freak
Eels
Dreamworks SKG

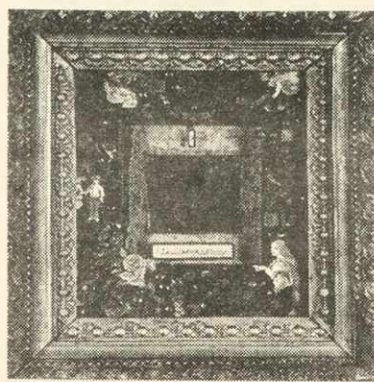
My immediate reaction to *Eels* after listening to *Beautiful Freak* is that they sound like a cross between Veruca Salt on valium and Beck with a bit of Supersuckers thrown in.

On some songs they use drum loops ("Novocaine for the Soul", "Your Lucky Day in Hell") and the singer sounds very much like Beck. Yet on most of the other songs, the band's sound is really laid back. And while their instrumentation is quite sparse, during the refrains they can leap into a driven, poppy sound that just gets your foot a-tappin'. Once in a while there's even a hint of some Dick Dale-brand surf guitar.

For some reason, many of the songs on *Beautiful Freak* remind me of those that I might hear Mr. Rogers sing. This is not a bad thing. The songs are very catchy and I found myself enjoying this album even though it's not the type of thing that I usually like. All that being said, though, this is probably not a CD that one would play at a party; it's more of a relaxing-by-yourself-kind-of-flake-out album.

I would recommend *Eels* to everyone — not so much because it is really good (don't get me wrong, it isn't bad), but because it's probably a departure from whatever you listen to now. *Eels* have a sound unto themselves and a good one at that.

STEVE DINN



Melting in The Dark
Steve Wynn
Zero Hour Recording Co.

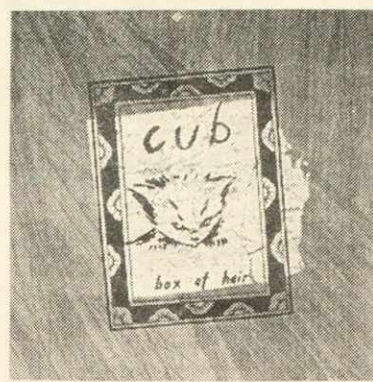
Before I listened to this CD I had never heard of Steve Wynn. Funny enough, I still have not heard him after reviewing this album. This is because Wynn is the lyricist and arranger for the group that bears his name. The album is titled *Melting in The Dark* and its musicians are as follows: Chris Brokaw on lead vocals and guitar, Thaila Zedek also on vocals and guitar, Sean O'Brien on bass, and finally Arthur Johnson on drums.

The band sings songs about heartache and superficiality — the kind associated with a bad breakup. Unto itself, I suppose heartache is the most used theme in pop music. On a track like "What we call love", the band feeds us Boltunesque lines like, "Here in this palace of broken glass/ Nothing is promised so nothing is asked." Similarly, the group portrays the image of a lover who is ice cold when dumping his or her significant other. Verses on the track "Smooth" read like a Harlequin romance: "You never had to fight/ Because you've never been attacked... Never leave a calling card/ Never leave a trace." Fortunately the album more than makes up for these lines with the variety of ways in which these two themes are played out musically.

You can hear Roger Waters, formerly of Pink Floyd, in Brokaw's voice on the fourth track "Drizzle." Conversely, on the next track, "The Angels", Zedek's background vocals combine nicely with Brokaw's to give the band a more upbeat sound similar to that of the group Cracker. If you are a Neil Young fan, listen to "Epilogue". Brokaw, like Young, uses hollow guitar sounds to convey hurt and loneliness. On bass, O'Brien sounds a lot like Flea of The Red Hot Chili Peppers. Combine these influences and you have a fairly distinct sound.

This CD was a nice surprise. For someone who is often skeptical of finding anything entertaining outside of the blues and blues rock, I think this album shows a lot of innovation. At its worst it's an assemblage of worn out lines used often in songs of the past. At its best, however, the originality with which the band approaches the two themes of heartache and cold superficiality is superb. The usage of older as well as more recent influences on this album help contribute to this approach and make it a worthwhile listening experience.

MATT BURNS



Box of Hair
Cub
Mint Records

When I popped *Box of Hair* into the CD player, I expected to hear the familiar pop songs of previous Cub albums. While this one has its fair share of those songs — tracks like "Magic 8 ball" and "Main and Broadway" — there were other, unexpected songs as well.

What I wasn't expecting was some real knock-down, drag-out rockers like "One last kiss" and the live track "Not what you think." There's not many comparisons that I can make here. Cub have gone from a sound all their own to a different, harder-edged sound that is...still all their own.

These three women from Vancouver play quite well together now, and they have great vocal harmonies, but the album as a whole leaves me somewhat unsatisfied. If this is the next stage in the evolution of Cub, I like where they're headed but I also hope they keep going.

STEVE DINN

Pancake Day
Victor DeLorenzo
ALM Sound

If you're one of those people who likes collecting CDs that no one else has, or ever wants to have, check out Victor DeLorenzo's *Pancake Day*.

Attempting to play hard rock, futuristic, folk and funk music, DeLorenzo creates a schizophrenic image of himself.

The first song on the album, "Peach", is a loud, screaming rock song with the inspiring lyrics, "Pretty little thing that I like to eat, it's kinda like a ball and it's really sweet." My cat left her favorite perch to escape the sounds of DeLorenzo before he made it through the first verse of this number.

The CD improves a little after the first song, "Blind". "Only God Knows" and "Picture Her Blue" are more melodic. "Picture Her Blue" has nice harmonization, but again, the lyrics ("Do you like the picture I have painted in your room, it's the color of the sky and it's blue") and overall style leave more to be desired.

"Gossip" is a poor attempt at funk. DeLorenzo is no Sly and should not have included this painful number on the album.

The album's title track is clearly the best song on the album. The use of an acoustic guitar and classic folk harmony work well.

The rest of the album is a self-indulgent plunge into the world of UFOs and space aliens.

This album is one to pass on, unless of course you're attempting to contact aliens through your stereo.

GINA STACK