

ARTS

The gospel according to Tackhead

by Peter Stathis

Tackhead
Friendly As A Hand Grenade
 TVT Records

Tackhead's latest offering is a gracious slab of creative nihilism on the otherwise gangrenous

sandwich that is modern music. Although toned-down from their last release with Gary Clail, *Tackhead Sound System, Friendly As A Hand Grenade* still succeeds in mixing the profit dance with critical chants. Bernie Fowler replaces Clail as lead orator in

a short sample trip around the microcosm that typifies the 20th century vision.

"Airborne Ranger" apes the famous training jingle: "I wanna be an airborne ranger/ I wanna live a life of danger/ I wanna go to Iran . . . / Kill/ Kill. The sample is set to crunching guitar, funk-up bass, and the obligatory military snare.

What about religious extortion? The televangelists' gospel according to Tackhead comes in a song aptly named "Stealing." "Yunno, music goes good with preachin' . . . I'm not a stealer/ I'm a healer/ . . . I take donations from all denominations/ big or small/ any currency."

With Adrian Sherwood's slick mixing and Keith Leblanc's superior drum programming as the pillars of creation, this album draws more heavily on Skip McDonald's guitar riffs and Fowler's soulful vocal melodies for its rasping texture. In contrast to Gary Clail's medicinally-smooth project, *End of the Century Party*, the rest of the Tackhead stormtroopers have gone on with a modified sound in a modified age of

treason.

As the veneer of street credibility starts to fade . . . so, too,

music exalts its own complicity in the narcotics-cartel that is the record industry.



Bloodletting best Blonde album yet

by Herschel Marshall

Concrete Blonde
Bloodletting
 IRS Records

Concrete Blonde is sanguine and sultry. Johnette Napolitano's alternately raspy/wispy vocals throw even the most jaded listener back to a time of romantic innocence, only to crack the mirror of passion. With love/hate imagery built around vampires, blood, fire, poison, alcohol, red roses, and twilight affairs, *Bloodletting* is beguiling, but, even more, dispiriting.

Napolitano is appealing at a profoundly personal level. Wary of the invitation to intrigue, always with the undercurrent of eventual sorrow and the fear of a lover's reprisal, her songs on *Bloodletting* are a vibrant presentation on the sour-sweet pangs of desire.

In the most disturbing moment

of the album, a track called "Beast," Napolitano sings, "Love is the ghost haunting your head/ Love is the killer you thought was your friend/ Love is the creature who lives in the dark/ Sneaks up, will stick you and painfully pick you apart." Malevolence that shatters innocence.

Between the three of them, Napolitano on bass and voice, Paul Thompson on drums and James Mankey on guitars, Concrete Blonde fill their songs with a rich, yet subtle, texture that gives *Bloodletting* a truly seductive quality. Compared to previous albums, the material is ostensibly less angry. Nevertheless, the music reaches deeper and endures longer than anything the Blondes have done before.

Bloodletting is unquestionably their finest achievement to date. Recommended as therapy/torture for your next break-up.

Songs For Drella is very moving

by Howard Kaman

Lou Reed and John Cale
Songs For Drella
 Sire/Warner Bros.

When pop artist Andy Warhol died in 1987, his life was shrouded in mystery. Few people knew him well enough in his lifetime to talk about him honestly and, frankly, Warhol seemed to prefer it that way.

Enter *Songs For Drella*. This album, a tribute by ex-Velvet Underground leaders Lou Reed and John Cale, is probably as close as we will ever get to knowing the real Warhol. The artist served as manager and mentor for the Velvets, and had a deep influence on Reed, in particular.

On his 1989 album, *New York*, Reed sang an elegy to Warhol with "Dime Store Mystery," a song which eloquently pondered the "duality of nature," and the ambiguity in Warhol's life. This song has been fleshed out on *Songs For Drella*, an album which creates a fuller picture of who Warhol was.

The work, which was commissioned by The Brooklyn Academy of Music and the Arts, takes its title from Reed and Cale's nickname for Warhol; Drella is a contraction of Cinderella and Dracula.

The duality of Warhol's life is well represented. *Songs For Drella* presents a picture of a man whose ideals were formed with religion, but explored through art. While religion gave him a rigid work ethic, as described in "Work," his art allowed him to explore the limits of his own freedom. He was constantly caught between the demands of the graphic art industry (in which he worked to supplement his income) and the freedom of his own imagination.

Of course, what made Warhol's work different was his preoccupation with repetitive imagery. As Reed notes on the record's opening track, "Smalltown," Warhol always preferred the city. "There's only one good use for a small town," he sings, "You hate it and you know you'll have to leave." This preference for cos-

mopolitan life led to an obsession with industrial repetition, as documented on "Images."

It was his emphasis on repetition that people found odd. Warhol made creative something that

and other objects, he perfectly represented his view of the world.

Reed and Cale have paid homage to Warhol, not only in the lyrical content, but also with the music. The repetitive riffs of



was previously thought of as mundane. Whereas previously, the term "art" brought to mind a one-of-a-kind masterpiece, Warhol interpreted it to mean the redundant repetitions of ordinary life. With his prints of soup cans

"Work," along with the playful simplicity of songs like "Smalltown," bring Warhol's artistic visions to mind. While the record may be harder to grasp than Reed's breakthrough *New York*, it is also quite moving.

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