



TIMBUK 3
Edge of Allegiance
(IRS)

Husband and wife team proves that not everyone from the Lone Star State is a gunslingin', beerdrinkin', Honky-Tonk redneck. Actually this stereotype is unfair - as is any stereotype. Pat and Barbara MacDonald, are simply disaffected liberals in a place noted for its conservatism. The couple write and perform all the music themselves. This reveals their proficiency with a number of instruments since they don't rely on the beat up old acoustic guitar and tambourine kitsch. Their singing, however, would be considered a liability if it wasn't so appropriate to their message. Most protest musicians belt out the lyrics to incite some favourable public reaction and rally the troops. Timbuk3's twangy monotone satirizes the carefully rehearsed and read pronouncements of television newscasts. While vignettes of

"the world around" us, are flashed on the screen, the symptoms of distress are recited by some phony sounding doofis who has long been inured to all the powerful images being flashed on the screen. These guys have to be some of the best play-actors around. Timbuk3's monotone vocals can actually be quite expressive. It never ventures into the "woe-is-me" snivelling that has me turned off of all country music fodder. Rather it portrays semi-detached commentary on a number of social, political and ecological issues: momentary indignation never seems to bubble through the overlying apathy. I guess that makes them more honest than most people. The band's lyrics are laden with double-entendres that grab the attention. *Pass It On* and *Grand Old Party* especially rely on this vehicle as did their first hit of two years ago: *Future's So Bright (I Gotta Wear Shades)*. Whether *Grand Old Party* is about a house party or the Republican Party isn't quite clear. This opacity is atypical of most current bands where an overt storyline is a thin veil

over the intended meaning. This song also features perhaps the best line on the album: "If you are what you eat, I'm dead meat". If more people disavowed human automation, the cow-like consumerism portrayed in *Pass It On* wouldn't pack the herd into the local fast-grease outlets. *Count To Ten, Waves Of Grain, Dirty Dirty Rice, and Standard White Jesus* deal with, respectively, global annihilation, terrorism, the plight of the homeless in the US, and commercialized religion. Add the cynicism and hypocrisy of National Holiday and you've got a simmering stew of discontent. Gives the album title a little extra meaning, doesn't it?

Peter Ferguson

THE D.O.C
No One Can do It Better
(Ruthless)

So here they come. Its been ten years since the seminal rapper's delight by Grandmaster Flash and The Furious Five and now most major labels have their own big-time hip-hop gangsters. Up until recently the big three were D.M.C., L.L. COOL J and KOOL MOE DEE but now all the majors are bristling with hard-edged rap that will continue to characterize the beginning of the next ten years with some of the most exciting music available. Typical of this renaissance are artists like The D.O.C. that okay, perpetuate the boasting baggadocio of the street corner lout, but push the gidgets to the max with a grab-bag of stolen crystals taken from an entire galaxy of rock music. NO ONE CAN DO IT BETTER contains all the elements of a real whing-ding of a hip-hop parfait. Reggae toasting, scorching heavy-metal guitar, wicky-wak scratching and of course all your favorite sampled snare-drum effects. The D.O.C. certainly whallops along very nicely with an easy vocal style but the real muscle comes from a rather strong guest

appearance by the massed ranks of NWA currently the most influential combo on the street scene. In the late seventies the joke went that it was rather unwise to leave the recording studio open at night because, sometime during the early hours of the morning, several members of the Eagles would sneak in and turn up on the master tapes. So it is that NWA appear to be this era's Eagles, popping up on any number of releases from Cali to Chicago. Here however you'll have no complaints. In particular the excellent Dr Dre blows the roof off with *Lend An Ear*, a track so intense that Nike high-cuts smoke with anticipation. Despite the usual "I'm-a-big-bad-mutha" schtick that is currently unavoidable on any release of this ilk, its nice to see that The D.O.C. lets his mischievous humour spike this eclectic mix of patchwork construction. In certain places however one is little hard-pressed

to establish what on earth the crew are up to. After three compositions on side 1 for example THE D.O.C. decides to go and take a leak (too much eight-ball you'll understand). This gives Michel'le a chance to air her lungs by belting out a rap but surging it in torch-song Etta James style. This is quite breath-taking but rather spoilt by what sounds like several back-alley wines jabbering on in the background. Other highlights include the squealing fret-work of *Beautiful But Deadly* and the frantic miasma of *Tasmanian Devil* party-noise or *Whirlwind Pyramid* and *Portrait of A Masterpiece*. In summary, as a good example of the current status of East Coast Rap, I'll do the Gene Shallit and say "make an appointment with The D.O.C. - no one can do it better!" (ack.)

Steve Griffiths

ANIMAL LOGIC
ANIMAL LOGIC
(IRS RECORDS)

Here's one of those curious amalgamations of talent that really must have a very interesting story stapled on the side. Otherwise why would people such as bass impresario Stanley Clarke and percussive genius Stewart Copeland be associated with Deborah Holland? OK, OK, Deborah CAN sing but in a style that is remarkably uninteresting almost to the point of being generic, even K-Telish. Debs, you see, has a delivery that immediately reminds the listener of singers such as Elaine Page or Barbara Dickson, ladies that occasionally surface to national attention as a result of being fed a catchy snippet from one of those dreadful globe-trotting musicals like *Chess*, *Cats* or *Starlight Express*. The execution is always perfect but it leaves behind such a sterile void that one almost yearns for some slight point of interest, a rough-edge or at least something that enables the listener to identify with an interesting idiosyncrasy or nuance. This is rather a shame since the arrangement and production is just as pristine as one might expect coming from Copeland and Clarke. But even here there is a blatant lack of adventure and experimentation - an absence which is usually completely alien to any work that involves either of these gentlemen. Is Holland the Mephistopheles of Copeland and Clarke's Faust? Listening to the lyrics (her other creative input) which are similarly bereft of any sparks of imagination or exhilarating twists, this becomes a more and more likely possibility. Was it more than a coincidence that on a recent Letterman show it was only Holland that was smiling when Animal Logic played a live number? A nation should be told. In Britain the BBC has four nationally broadcast radio channels, one of these deals almost totally with the spoken word (documentaries, plays, etc.) whilst Radio 1 deals with the contemporary music spectrum and Radio 3 chooses to grace the airways with the Classics. In between these squats the mediocrity of the banal Radio 2; safe, smug, menopausal programming for those that don't like being challenged or threatened in any way possible. Yes, Animal Logic are Radio 2's type of band.

Steve Griffiths



The D.O.C. Cold Lampin' with the BIG J