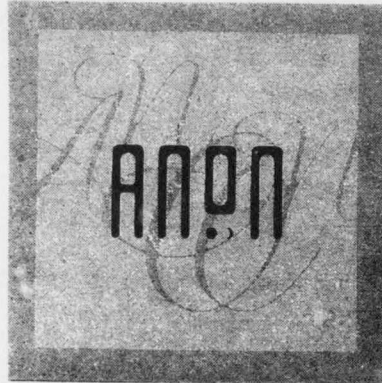


GENREKIDE

MICHAËL EDWARDS

WHY I HATE CDs (PART 15)

One of my main complaints about CDs has always been about how mundane they appear. If it isn't the little plastic teeth inside the box breaking off, it's the boring little booklets that never look as impressive as record jackets did. Sad. But times are changing - people are getting a lot more imaginative with CD packaging, and I like that. I like that a lot.



The finest one that I have seen lately is called *Anon*, a charity release from Boston's Castle von Buhler Records. In addition to the lavish and intricate packaging, *Anon* also comes with 30 artcards which illustrate the songs on this double CD compilation. Those cards are one of the most interesting aspects of *Anon*, maybe because of the novelty of it all. Nevertheless, it makes it all even more intriguing. The biggest names on *Anon* are Lisa Germano, Edsel and Toronto's An April March, with the majority of the bands coming from the Boston area. But even though the names might not be very familiar, the music is really rather good. It does cover a lot of ground though from ambient to gothic to ethereal to good ol' fashioned indie rock. Something for everything. So with a combination of gorgeous packaging, interesting artwork and enjoyable music, *Anon* seems like a good investment for the more adventurous among you.

Brian Eno is a very popular chap these days. He has been producing albums for all kinds of people, and doing the odd bit of writing with the likes of his buddy David

Bowie. And if all that wasn't enough, he has released a couple of albums lately too. First up is *Spinner* which he recorded along with Jah Wobble. The music on *Spinner* was recorded for director Derek Jarman's final film, and it sounds just like a soundtrack should - interesting, but unassuming enough that it will never be distracting. It benefits an awful lot from Wobble's bass which gives a dub feel to most tracks. Pleasant enough.

A more interesting release comes under the pseudonym of Passengers with their album *Original Soundtracks I*. This time Eno is joined by the members of U2, but make no mistake, this is very much a Brian Eno project. The only thing on here which is particularly U2 is the voice of Bono



which crops up from time to time (including a duet of sorts with Pavarotti). The music is supposedly from movies, some of which are fictional, and even those fictional ones have sleeve notes concerning the number of prizes they have won. Self indulgent? Hmm. Just a little bit, and that is the only real problem with this project - sometimes it does get far too precious, and gets pretty close to disappearing up its own backside. Still, that is a line that both U2 and Eno walk so well, and they manage to keep on the good side of it for the most part. This will do very nicely until U2 return later on this year.

Enya can be credited with being the originator of 'popular' new age music. I don't know if we should be shaking her

warmly by the hand or the neck for that, but she does deserve credit nevertheless. And due to the popularity of this type of music, she routinely sells millions of albums - she's quite a star. So she's back with a new album entitled *The Memory Of Trees*, and it is pretty much more of the same for Enya. Nothing new at all. But that isn't such a bad thing as she does make rather beautiful music that will serve incredibly well as background music. It's all very soothing, and if you tried listening to it too closely, you might just fall asleep. It is all so inoffensive. Nobody could find anything distasteful about this album. Nothing at all.

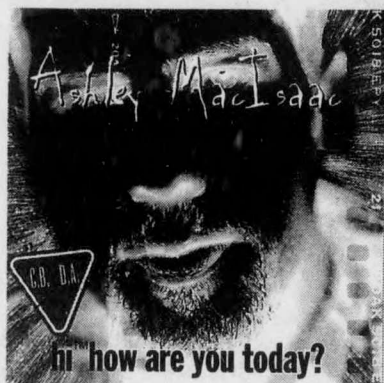
One of the most charming and delightful albums that I have heard in positively ages comes from Victoria Williams. *This Moment In Toronto* is a recording of a concert which was originally broadcast on CBC Radio. Her songs are as wonderful as they ever were; nothing new there. But the really delightful aspect of this album is the chat



between the songs as those are the moments where Williams' character really shines through. And when her dog comes out on stage, you can't help but feel all warm and fuzzy inside. This is a very precious album, and one that deserves a place in your collection.

I should be a little surprised about a punk fiddle player, but I'm not. I have already lived through the Nigel Kennedy

phenomena (classical violin rather than fiddle I suppose, but it has the same desired shock value) and so the appearance of Ashley McIsaac didn't startle me. It did leave me curious, but that was about it. When his new album, *Hi, How Are You Today?* arrived I wasn't too sure what to expect. Punk fiddler indeed. However, I had to put my cynicism to one side as this is a damned good album. Ashley takes traditional fiddle melodies from Cape Breton, and uses a full band to augment the lowly fiddle. He has managed to attract a few big names to help him out - Big Sugar's Gordie Johnson provides guitar on quite a few songs, and Jale provide the backing for Ashley's one attempt at singing. He sings too? Well, kind



of. Anyway, he gets my respect for managing to fuse traditional and rock music so effectively. A very good album.

One of my favourite albums of last year was *Gyral* by Scorn; it was sneaked out at the end of the year by Earache Records without much of a fanfare. And that's a

pity as it deserves a bit of a fanfare. A dark, eerie fanfare as the music contained on this disc is of that variety. Scorn's music could be described as ambient, but that tends to make people think of bands like the Orb, and nothing could be further from the truth. Mick Harris takes the kinds of beats that Portishead used (very slow and mellow), but does something



completely different with them. He adds strange keyboard noises that give it a spooky atmosphere - the soundtrack to some horror movie yet to be made perhaps. And like the best ambient music, it possesses a hypnotic quality that will have you under its spell very quickly. But it is the kind of spell that will keep you up at night staring at bare light bulbs for reasons that you will never fully understand.

(For more details on *Anon*, contact Castle von Buhler at 16 Ashford Street, Boston, MA, 02134, USA, or via e-mail at amb@world.std.com and please remember to tell them who sent you)

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