

Entertainment

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It seems only fitting that Factory records have initiated their second coming with the release of the tenth album by the Durutti Column, *Sex and Death*. Even when

Factory was the epitome of all things Manchester (though probably not by choice), the Durutti Column were the epitome of all things Factory;

namely something enigmatic, slightly pretentious, but always far too interesting to ignore. *Sex and Death* continues in that great tradition by being the sort of album that is too difficult to describe, but yet one that has to be written about. Most importantly, there is Vini Reilly - he is the Durutti Column, and also one of the greatest guitarists of our generation. The delicacy and fragility of his guitar is so perfectly complimented by the swirling keyboards and occasional string. He composes all the material and performs the largest chunk of it himself with the help of some other musicians, including long time collaborator Bruce Mitchell on drums. The majority of the music is instrumental - something which has led to the Durutti Column being grouped in with other bands that seem happy to adopt the term 'ambient'. But Vini has always strived to move away from such labels; samples of middle Eastern music adorn some songs, and vocals are provided by several friends. All in all, it's a gor-

geous album - tracks like 'The Rest Of My Life' with its dual guitars circling around each other and the voice of Ruth Ann Boyle deserve to be heard by as many people as possible.

And only then will the Durutti Column get the reverence they deserve.

I was first introduced to

Mazzy Star back in 1990 when their first album *She Hangs Brightly* appeared. The copy that I picked up was a white label one and had no information about the band at all.

I never even knew the song titles. Even though I knew next to nothing about them, I was captivated - gentle acoustic guitars, ghostly slide guitars and, on top of all that, the voice of an angel. But now its five years later and *She Hangs Brightly* has been reissued because of the near-success of last year's *So Tonight That I Might See*, not to mention the ongoing fiery romance of Hope Sandoval and half of the Jesus And Mary Chain. And it still sounds as good as ever. Better than the follow-up even; every song works rather than only about half. And I finally know what the songs are called. It turns out that my favourite is 'Halah', in case you wondered.

The prospect of an album by the Blue Aeroplanes used to be one that would make me shiver in anticipation. I even shivered a little when I got my hands on *Rough Music*. But the problem is that thoughts of their perfect album *Swagger* are always nagging at the back of my mind when I listen to them now, and things seem really anticlimactic. The problem is that the Aeroplanes always did tread a thin line, what with their lead poet Gerard Langley's droll, spoken delivery, the fact that they had the nerve to list a dancer as part of the band, or even the number of guitarists that they had playing at one time (they list eighteen on *Rough Music*). And I get the feeling that they have finally crossed that line. Instead of all those guitarists complimenting each other, it becomes a clanging mess. Instead of Gerard's words flowing like a beat poem, they seem rather pretentious and clunk against each other. There are only a handful of songs on here that even begin to ap-

proach those glory days of old. One of those moments is 'Wond'ring Wild' which comes thanks to the more tuneful member of the band Rodney Allen who actually sings. Quite the novel idea. Not even the presence of the great Jazz Butcher can save them now. Maybe their previous work is just too good; they peaked too soon. The shiver has more or less gone. Sigh.

Does anyone remember the Go-Betweens? I would imagine that most people don't since when they were still together they were criminally ignored by everyone. When they broke up in 1990, their legacy was most impressive. But the two songwriters didn't rest on their laurels; Robert Forster has been busy recording his solo albums, and Grant McLennan has just released his third album *Horsebreaker Star*. It was originally

an epic 2 CD set of 24 songs in the UK, but it has been trimmed down to a 18 song disc on this side of the Atlantic. And even at over seventy minutes, there doesn't seem to be

much filler. Grant still has a certain knack for writing wonderfully melodic songs that tug at your heart strings, although some thanks must go

to Syd Straw's wondrous backing vocals. While his previous solo albums suffered from somewhat over-zealous production, a more delicate hand has been used this time around. Most of the songs are a bit on the mellow side, but are all the better for that as they are the type that he excels at - heartfelt lyrics, beautiful acoustic arrangements and always romantic. It's a record for people who remember how a real song can touch you deep inside. And it also makes me want to get out my old Go-Betweens records and give them one more listen.

And then there is the return of Siouxsie & The Banshees. They've have been away for four years now, but in the course of a 17 year, 14 album career it doesn't seem like such a long time. They have been here since the punk days, although they very quickly took a tangent all

of their own into the darker domain of Goth. The fourteenth is entitled *The Rapture*, and it has been getting pretty awful reviews from just about everyone. Why? I can't

say as it really isn't as bad as they make out. One of the primary complaints seems to be that it doesn't sound like their

older albums. Hmm - it doesn't sound like an album from over ten years ago? Who would have thought it? Rather than being stuck in the past, I thought I would listen to *The Rapture* on its own merits. One of the most interesting things about it is the involvement of The Velvet Underground's John Cale who produced half the album. His touch adds a certain pop sensibility to such songs as the first single 'O Baby'. That song is so very catchy that it seems hard to believe that this is the same band that gave us 'Hong Kong Garden'. There are also some darker moments the title track and 'The Double Life'. But the problem is that I can't see where this is going to fit in - the old goths are probably disappointed, and the kids want something with more guitars. Siouxsie now finds herself trapped in a hinterland that she never created intentionally; maybe she should have given the people what they wanted, but that could mean singing the same song forever. And forever is a very long time.

