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eve's plum
I Want It All Alive
(Sony Music)

Well, the reviews are in. Everybody is raving about the new band Eve's Plum, frantically trying to classify them in the most complimentary fashion. And in case anyone missed this praise, you need look no further than the single page insert of this CD which contains nothing but five excited, exuberant comments from the media, ranging from the literary *Sassy* to *The Boston Herald*. Unfortunately, as is usually the case, the band doesn't live up to the reviews.

Don't get me wrong. Eve's Plum is not a bad group, and the five song CD is really quite enjoyable, if you give it a chance. But it's definitely not the breakthrough that critics claim it to be. It's old stuff, done up to look new. It's Concrete Blonde with a harder edge, Janis Joplin meets the nineties. Yep, nothing new here...

For what it is, though, it's pretty decent. The music is tight and well played, attested to by the four convincing live performances. There are some nice musical digressions, and each song is punctuated by a catchy melody. The lead singer carries us through the songs with a constant pattern. She invariably starts off sweet as candy and by the time she sings her way into the chorus she is screaming hysterically in anger, rage and hate. This technique keeps the excitement level high for about the first two songs, but then wears thin, especially since it seems almost faked. Like, hey, you're not *really* angry are you? Or maybe it's just that the music overshadows the vocals, so the lyrical content is quite weak. Nothing I'm tempted to quote, at least.

Okay, I'm being too critical. The album has some definite high points. The single "I Want It All" (on there twice, just in case we missed it the first time) is instantly likable, with a good beat and chorus. The vocals on 'Venus meets Pluto' are original, the tune is catchy, and the instrumentation dives into the experimental region for a brief swim. "I Will Survive" is more stripped down than the other songs and the vocals finally conquer the music; a nice change.

I'll sum up: Eve's Plum is good, not great. Let's just hope all the praise they were given so freely doesn't stunt their musical growth.

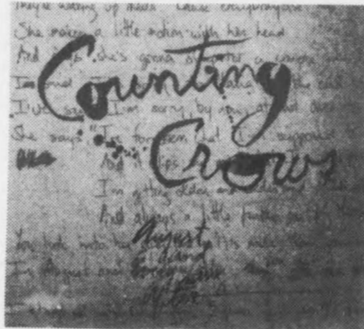
One note: all the reviews seem intent on calling them a "pop" band. Let me just say they're a far cry from Roxette...

—Stephen Mason

Counting Crows
August and Everything After
(Geffen)

When I first got my hands on the Counting Crows' debut album *August and Everything After*, I was admittedly im-

pressed with the catchy and ultra-popular "Mr. Jones" and hoped that the rest of the album proved to be as enjoyable as this catchy jag. Unfortunately, the album, for the most part, proved to be quite different from its first single. Many of the tracks on *August and Everything After* are tinged with more than a little bit of melancholy and seem to contra-



dict much that the bubbly, upbeat "Mr. Jones" stands for.

Lead vocalist Adam Duritz has been oft-compared to a Van Morrison sound-alike and while this comparison/criticism is not unfounded it seems a trifle harsh if the lead singer of Stone Temple Pilots can lead his group to success by mimicking Eddie Vedder's every vocal mannerism. Sure Duritz sounds a whole lot like Van Morrison, and also a fair bit like Sting, but his group's album should not live or die merely on the basis of his sounding similar to another established performer. But enough editorializing.

August and Everything After is, on its own merits, a fairly unspectacular debut album. The tunes are mostly laid back and laden with accordion, organ and mandolin accompaniment. The adjectives "boring" and "ho-hum" were of-

ten on my lips as I listened to the album's eleven tracks (some of which should have been left on the editing room floor). Despite the album's apparent fixation with melancholy and despair, it does have several bright points. "Rain King" is more upbeat and a nice change from the album's norm. Also "Time and Time Again" is a slow, yet likable, bass heavy tune. All in all, Counting Crows don't outright stink but their debut album is often tedious and repetitive. Cutting a few of the sound-alike slow songs would have made for a better album.

—Luke Peterson



Richard Marx
Paid Vacation
(Capitol/EMI)

I basically had to rescue this release from impending incineration at the Bruns. While many people think that Richard Marx is just another corporate music machine that spews out mood music for the masses; I thought that he, at the very least, deserved a

listen. Really though, there is something that sets Marx apart from the others. Richard wrote almost all the music and lyrics on this release, as well as arranging and producing the majority of the tracks. He even plays piano, keyboards and acoustic guitar on several of the songs.

Paid Vacation is actually a phrase Richard's wife uses to describe each time he enters the recording studio. On this outing, he has replaced most of the rock edge from his early years with mature songwriting and musical variety. Before, his music used to fit the "power ballad" category quite well. Now, it's a little harder to pin him down.

The songs range from the upbeat, bluesy sound of "The Way She Loves Me," the Huey Lewis sound of "What You Want," the Beatlesque vo-

cal melody of "Silent Scream" and the straight-ahead rock sound of both "One More Try" and "Nothing to Hide."

Marx ballad fans should enjoy, "Nothing Left Behind Us," "One Man" and the intimate acoustic feel of the single "Now and Forever." If you despise Richard Marx, you still will. If you already like his style, this is worth a listen.

—Jason Tremere

Sass Jordan
Rats
(Aquarius)

If you had the opportunity to catch Sass Jordan when she visited the Aitken Centre last October, you already know she's a powerful vocalist with a good number of hits under her belt. Her latest offer-

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