

REVIEWS & SPEWS

*It's Great When You're Straight... Yeah*  
Black Grape  
(MCA)

In the late 80s, The Happy Mondays, aka Shaun and Bez, were mainly famous for doing ridiculous amounts of drugs and occasionally putting out good records that were called stupid things like *Melon*. And all of Europe loved them 'cause they were "real" and not the industry's puppets, like The Stone Roses.

In fact, they were so "real" that in 1992 they went to Barbados to record the next LP, *Yes Please!*, and ended up on fifty rocks of crack a day. The result? One album of coked-up rubbish that sold no copies, one career down the toilet, one death of a record label (Factory Records), and rehab all round.

So then what happened? Well, Shaun went public with his drug/rehab stories, then they started doing more drugs, recruited Shaun's ex-dealer and member of Manchester's Ruthless Rap Assassins, Kermit (yes, Kermit, and no, he's big and black, not small and green), and re-invented themselves as Black Grape.

Not much has changed in the Shaun and Bez camp. They are still the biggest couple of intellectual idiots in the business. They still have mouths like sewers and a similar disposition. Their cranial content still resembles brain-dead mush. They still make about as much sense as talking to bread mould. And they still do what they do best apart from getting stoned — making funky, feel-good music about nothing.

The CD kicks off with "Reverend Black Grape" and Kermit enthusiastically shouting "Bullshit!" Their energy is fresh and much needed in the world of Stompin' Tom and The Tragically Hip ("tragic" being the key word here).

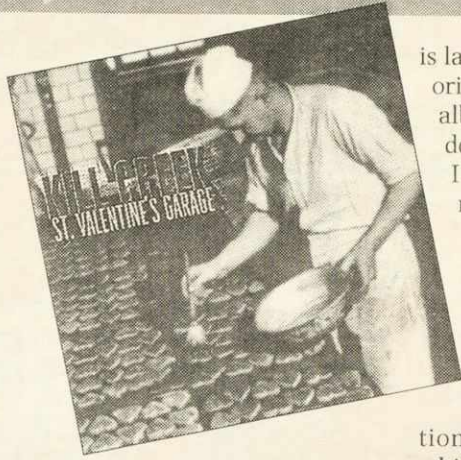
MuchMusic favourite "In The Name Of The Father" is also included, as well as "Tramazi Parti" (with the timeless lyric "I got my boots on my head"), the surprisingly rocky "Kelly's Heroes," the imaginatively-titled "Yeah Yeah Yeah" and the very funky "A Big Day In The North."

The last four tracks on the CD are in true Mondays style. "Shake Well Before Opening," "Submarine," "Shake Your Money," and "Little Bob" are there for you to lay back to, chill out to, and wig out to! Unlike earlier efforts, however, their semi-state of sub-existence is no longer apparent and that's why *It's Great...* is so good.

Britain's *Sky* magazine calls *It's Great...* "a cauldron of filth-funk-hip-hop-rock" and that's about right. Kermit's occasional ragga, backing vocals from a variety of strange people, and the bit inclusion of unconventional pop instruments such as harmonica and sitar all come together to form one brilliant CD.

What's especially good is that this is something that will brighten up your day and you don't even have to be stoned to listen to it. Thank goodness Shaun and Bez are back. I don't care what anyone says — the Mondays are back and alive and kicking (barely).

EUGENIA BAYADA



*St. Valentine's Garage*  
Killcreek  
Mammoth/Attic

This CD came into the *Gazette* a couple of months ago, just before Killcreek was due to play at the Birdland. Since then, I have played it more than any other CD. Their performance at the Birdland wasn't that great — they all had colds — but the band shines on *St. Valentine's Garage* with a recording that showcases original songwriting and intense, energetic performances.

Killcreek is from Lawrence, Kansas, a university town, that's about an hour from Kansas City. Their music scene is apparently quite vibrant and the band cut its teeth in a fairly supportive scene. At a gig one night, a fan named Ed Rose came up to Scott, Ron, Pat, and Chuck and told them how much he enjoyed their music. Its now a few years later and Ed is the producer of their album.

It is the production that has a large effect on how the band sounds on *St. Valentine's Garage*. Normally I dislike an upfront kick-drum, but drummer Chuck Sharpe keeps an interesting and exciting rhythm which, combined with the sound Ed gives it, goes beyond acceptance (for me) such that I think the staccato pounding rocks the band along. Ed must have also had a hand in the way lead singer Scott Born sounds on the album. He backs himself with some anarchistic harmonies that are almost completely unique among artists I've heard. Part of the sound is because Born is straining to get the notes — but it works. This might be the other reason that I was dissatisfied with the onstage show. Bassist Patrick Grassy just doesn't provide the songs with the searing vocal power of the discordant backing Borns. At that same time, however, Born's single clear vocal shines on such quiet tracks as "Mother's Friends" and "The Funeral," the latter of which I enjoy so much that I can put it on repeat and listen to it over and over again, getting shivers every time.

Most of the rest of the songs simply rock hard, going from soft and razor thin to full throttle in a moment's notice. The first half of the album stands out in my mind with songs like "Cosmetic Surgery," "Busted," "Gett On," and "Kelly's Dead." The second half

is lacking some of the power and originality of the first, but on an album like this that is a tall order. Maybe the next 600 listens I give this CD will change my mind about the second half songs.

I have to mention the liner notes of the album. In them, Scott (aided by other band members) shares some of his thoughts about each of the songs, their inspiration, creation, recording, etc. while Ed adds some of his more production-related comments. Lately, people have been going with a minimalistic approach to liner notes but the explanations help a great deal in understanding the songs and are of great entertainment value, too. Ed's tally of who's winning the war of recording style's — the "kids" (the record buyers) or the purists (Born, mainly), makes me smile every time.

It's hard for me to describe exactly how excited I am about this album or how disappointed I was by the band's live performance. It's also hard for me to say exactly what it is that makes their music so enjoyable. The only way you could possibly understand what I'm trying to say is by buying *St. Valentine's Garage*; that's as good advice as I've ever given.

TIM COVERT



*Anthology 1*  
The Beatles  
EMI/Capitol/Apple

Well, the Beatles hype has died down a little and it's time to look objectively at the only truly interesting Beatles product being offered — the *Anthology* collection itself.

The anthology begins with the new single "Free as a Bird," the John-Lennon-Back-From-The-Dead tune. This song belongs to a different era than the rest of the material on the double CD album. The only reason that I can see for putting the song in this package is marketing — the release of the album was timed to coincide with the release of the new song.

I personally prefer to skip over to the second track on the first disk — a very scratchy recording of the pre-Beatles The Quarrymen covering Buddy Holly's "That'll Be The Day." This is The Beatles at their recorded worst. But remember, they're only teenagers — great bands are not born, they're made. From here we hear The Beatles doing mostly cover versions of American rock/rhythm and blues songs with the occasional original

thrown in. There's recordings from rehearsals, demo tapes, and outtakes from the EMI recording sessions which produced their first single, "Please Please Me." There's even a session at a Swedish radio station. The Beatles' sound had not really developed in many of these recordings and they, for the most part, sound like the artists they're trying to imitate.

The Beatles' sound really starts to show itself on the second disk, which begins with three of four songs from their set at the 1963 Royal Command Performance. They, by this time, are a huge hit in Britain and are starting to crack into North America. The second CD has some slightly different versions of their hits from this period and a host of other rare and unreleased tunes. The disk ends up with an outtake of the medley "Kansas City/Hey-Hey-Hey-Hey!" which was recorded in the final session for their 1964 album *Beatles For Sale*.

This particular compilation is an illuminating portrait of The Beatles' rise from half-decent cover band to rock and roll's hottest act. Aside from the songs, there are a number of telling interview clips and entertaining snippets of television shows that The Beatles were on including The Ed Sullivan Show, Sunday Night at the London Palladium, and The Morecambe and Wise Show. There's also some multitrack tracks on the disk that serve to illustrate just how songs evolved into their released form.

The material on these two CDs is enough to catch your interest and hold it — to notice the subtle differences in different takes and to actually be able to hear the band having fun and growing more skilled by the day. The liner novella included with the CD is well written and researched, and puts every song into context. I actually enjoyed the CD more after having found out the significance of the material to which I was listening.

*Anthology 1* will appeal mostly to those listeners who like to read liner notes and who will take the time to listen to the music and to see how The Beatles evolved as a band. If you liked *Live at the BBC* then you will love this CD. However, for those who would prefer to hear the Beatles songs as they've always heard them, and who don't wish to break the bank buying this double CD, than a cheaper greatest hits package is what you're looking for.

TIM COVERT

*Haunted*  
Six Feet Under  
Metalblade Records/Attic

Six Feet Under's *Haunted* starts off with "The Enemy Inside" which then unceremoniously blends into the rest of the CD.

Six Feet Under's dark metal is nothing new. Chug-chug go the guitars and bass, bang-bang-boom-ching go the drums. Oh, and Chris Barnes growls the vocals through his bum and a muffler. If the Sisters Of Mercy played their instruments with their hair and Andrew Eldritch got laryngitis and smoked five packs of Marlboros a day, this is what it would sound like.

If you like your music repetitive, depressing, and with disjointed lyrics about blood, death, werewolves and the like, then this is the CD for you. If you're looking for a backing track to slash your wrists to, then your search



is finally over. If you're sick and tired of all the Eurotrash techno and American megahappy, megaslushy pop songs, then your prayers have been answered.

Tracks like "Human Target," "Lycanthropy," "Silent Violence," and "Suffering In Ecstasy" should go down well with every budding psychopath. A classic if ever there was one, these people make Ozzy, Slayer et. al. seem about as threatening as a Cabbage Patch Kid. Now, if only they could come up with a different 'tune'...

What is comforting, however, is the thought that there are people out there who are more screwed up than you or I could ever be. The frightening thing is that they're getting paid to stay this way.

EUGENIA BAYADA



*Sinatra 80th: All The Best*  
Frank Sinatra  
Capitol

Living in a house where the Smashing Pumpkins are the group du jour, it was a welcome sound to have Old Blue Eyes belting out some tunes. I grew up listening to Frank Sinatra along with other parental influences. His Christmas album (and also Elvis') was playing constantly at this time of the year. Sinatra is one of those influences that have stayed with me.

This double-disc contains forty of Sinatra's classics from 1953-62, or as they are more commonly referred to, the capitol years. There's "Love and Marriage," "Witchcraft," "The Lady is a Tramp," and "I've Got You Under My Skin" (sans Bono). Some duets are included with Bing Crosby and Nat King Cole. I can't forget to mention that cute song about the ant and the rubber tree plant. Since the album only deals with that one decade, there are some other classics that are dearly missed. "My Way" and "Strangers in the Night" are two for examples.

We have to face facts here — the Chairman of the Board is on his way out. Greatest hits packages are about all we're going to get. *All The Best* is one of the better compilations that have saturated the market over the years. If you like Frank's older stuff, then take a look at this one. If you're looking for an overall mix of hits, then look for a different compilation.

I missed my chance to see Frank when I was in Las Vegas. Being the foolish lad that I was, I choose a six-pack and a basketball game. I doubt that I would make the same choice again. Sinatra albums will be around forever but his live concerts won't.

ANDY DREIFELDS