

CD Reviews



LENNI JABOUR
S/T

Does the name Lenni Jabour sound familiar? It didn't to me either. Now, however, I will never forget it. A soft, yet raw voice combined with an incredible piano talent ends up in a result somewhere between the dreaminess of Tori Amos and the harsh reality of Ani DeFranco. Ms Jabour, through songs written all on her own, explores all the levels of human emotion yet leaves you feeling incredibly at peace. The only complaint I have about this CD is that it is too short. With only nine tracks, it leaves me wanting more. Lenni Jabour and her self-titled CD are one more example of the vast talent of Canadian musicians. Everyone should own a copy of this CD. It is definitely my new favorite!

• JENN BROWN

musical talents found in Darden Smith. "Skin" and "Drowning Man" both show Smith's mellow, sophisticated side, while my personal favorite, "Hunger," the last track on the album, displays Smith's maturity as both a vocalist and songwriter.

Tracks like "Running Kind," "Silver and Gold" and "Different Train" all have a unique upbeat tone which allows the listener to really feel at ease while listening to Smith's album. There are no unexpected surprises, as the majority of Smith's music follows a familiar acoustic-based pattern.

Indeed, this album is meant for those who enjoy the acoustic side of music, and those who are looking for a relaxing unique experience should pick up Darden Smith's *Deep Fantastic Blue*.

• AARON MACEachern



LIQUID AMBER
BREED

A good release from an unknown band on an indie label. Not bad, considering what you might cynically expect from an indie label with a first-time band. The hidden prize in this album is Andrea Hector, the lead vocalist. In addition to all the music and lyrics, she also does bass, keyboards and extra percussion. Hers is a commanding voice which belies her diminutive stature. And she's not the only element which is unique to this North Vancouver band. Hector earned an associate to the Royal Conservatory in Toronto, culminating her career as a child piano prodigy which began when she was three.

The Liquid Amber sound is hard rock, with strong, lucid vocals which lend towards the blues. The lyrics are not only intelligible, but reveal Hector's intelligence. "I, Goodbye," which is also out on video, should not be missed.

All together, Liquid Amber shows a lot of promise for Hector. She has an enormous amount of talent, which should only serve her well in the future. It demonstrates her strength in vocals

and lyrics, but reveals her need of a little more work on the instrumentation. *Breed* suffers from a lack of originality.

That being said, Liquid Amber is not a great band, and certainly there are bands that are better, but they're not at all bad.

And a note about the tracks. There are 11, plus the extra track at the beginning. The first, though, is a real dog. Which isn't as negative as you may think, considering it's entitled "Dog's Howling" and it is just that.

• JOSEPH FITZPATRICK



SKINNY PUPPY
BRAP

Skinny Puppy's legacy lives on in *Brap*, a word they describe as a verb, meaning "to get together, hook up electronic instruments, get high and record." *Brap's* two discs, *Back* and *Forth*, give light to some songs that were trapped within the Skinny Puppy filing cabinets for years. The group recorded and mixed *Back* in 1983-85 in Cevin Key's apartment, generating sounds of jackhammers, spiralling synth sounds and samples of what sounds like video games gone horribly wrong. The listener is confronted with enough audio details to result in an information overload. *Forth* was recorded live from 1990-92, and the content just oozes eerie conjecture. Although dark and gritty, the traditional instruments illuminate the foreground more than *Back* does, and their vocal progression seems obvious. But the question of whether it's music or not arises. The answer is that it's experimentation, pure and simple. Skinny Puppy were leaders in the field, and *Brap* emphasizes that for those familiar with their work.

The multimedia portion of the discs is a descent into hell. Skinny Puppy's enhanced CDs are far from average, but they are in fact oddly (very oddly) refreshing. While visually attacked by amoeba-like beasts with demonic eyes in *Back*, swirling clouds within the eye

sockets of one apparition will take you to videos, while other bizarre shapes jump to bios and song lyrics. *Forth* lets you gaze upon a computer-drawn room, laden with light sources. Selecting each presents live footage from over the years. While interesting and disturbing all at once, one wonders how many times each user can muster up enough courage to brave the multimedia of Skinny Puppy.

• PETER J. CULLEN

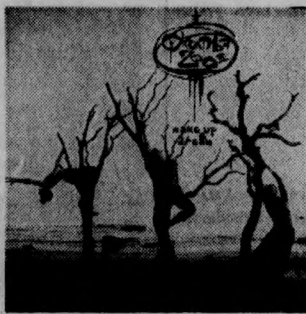


CHALK FARM
NOTWITHSTANDING

This album is similar in many ways to dear ol' Hootie. It is better of course, but it has many similar catches. The album itself flies around a lot, but it's cool. The band is really good, and the songs on the album are all consistent, as well as different. This is a great album for studying.

The top tracks are the first four ("live tomorrow," "lesson," "lie on lie" and "hey"), but the other nine tracks are close behind so it's cool.

• ANTHONY DAVIS



QKUMBA ZOO
WAKE UP & DREAM

Qkumba Zoo could probably be described as a combination between Whigfield and Deep Forest. Yeah I know it doesn't sound like an appetizing mix but surprisingly

• CHARLES TEED

enough they pull it off quite well. This is fluff so if you've just broken up with a boyfriend or girlfriend and you're looking for a CD full of angst don't bother with this one. However if you're currently enjoying life like me than you should enjoy this with ease. Qkumba Zoo consists of two women and one man. Respectively their names are Levannah, Tziki and Owl (cool, huh!). Vocals are done by Levannah, while Owl lends his musical expertise. Tziki provides the "Energy"?! Unfortunately, there isn't much variation in the music, so if you like the first song then you'll like the rest of the CD. There are not any standouts, but like I said the songs pretty much sound the same. However, I didn't stop boogie-ing until the CD ended. Between Levannah's vocals and Owl's synth sounds this CD is about as sweet as cotton candy and we could all use a little sweetness in our lives from time to time, couldn't we?

• DENNIS GERMAN



THE REVEREND HORTON HEAT
IT'S MARTINI TIME

This album plays like Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde. For the most part, it is very good, sounding like a mix between country and punk (punkabilly perhaps?). This Dr. Jeckyll portion includes tracks such as "Big Red Rocket of Love", "Slingshot", and "Time to Pray". In the middle of the album, however, Mr. Hyde rears his ugly head and creates humorous, but musically boring tracks which include "Crooked Cigarette," "Rock the Joint," and "Cowboy Love." Fortunately, the Reverend is able to exorcise these demons before they drag his album into Hades, and the album finishes off with a string of catchy tunes, including the best track on the album, "Slingshot." While not perfect, *It's Martini Time* is definitely worth giving a listen to.

• ANTHONY DAVIS



PLUTO
S/T

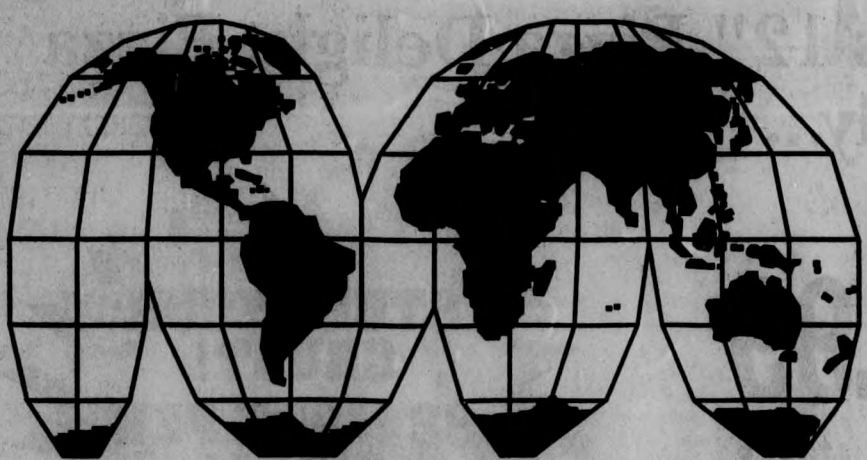
Vancouver's Pluto certainly have an edge to their sound; however, the energetic drive they manage to maintain throughout the album ultimately proves to be its only real problem. Relying heavily on their straight ahead power-pop guitar riffs and punkish power chord sound, the album is a treat to listen to at high decibels. Songs like "Failure," "Paste" and their hit "When She Was Happy" epitomize the band's talent — the tunes are fun and can definitely rival any fast-paced radio song out there. However, their debut doesn't have the range to make this album a complete success. In fact, you might be tricked into believing your CD player is on its 'repeat' setting once in a while. Although the album lacks in its diversity of sound, it makes up for it with more than a handful of catchy choruses and fully functional guitars.

• PETER J. CULLEN



ASEXUALS
ASEXUALS

Unfortunately, one of Canada's great power pop bands has blown it. A few years ago the Asexuals played a gig and I remember thinking, "These guys are out of energy!" They have gone through so much, and this album sounds like those of other ex-Asexuals (Doughboys, Rusty). Unfortunately, that means slow punk which translates into a sappy Asexuals album. Surprise, surprise, that's what we have.



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