

And why can't they write legibly?

T'PAU: I don't know why

T'Pau
T'Pau
Virgin

review by Mike Spindloe

There are some very strange things about this album that beg for explanation. For instance, are the people pictured on the cover the band? If so, why is everyone out of focus except for the well-coiffed young woman in the center?

Why do the credits thank a whole bunch of people but do not name the people in the band?

Why are the lyrics printed in alternating (between words and phrases — very confus-

ing) typetapes on the innersleeve? Why are they so insipid? In fact, why were they printed at all?

Why is it that after listening to this record twice, I can't remember a single note of it, except for "Heart and Soul", which is on the radio?

Why did Roy Thomas Baker, a producer of some renown (The Cars, Queen, etc.) ask to produce this album?

Why do radio stations playlist this stuff?

Who was responsible for giving these people a recording contract?

Why did Virgin Records, a label which has often shown intelligence in its signing of acts, release this drek?

I don't know. Do you?

R.E.M.: as unique as ever

R.E.M.
Dead Letter Office
I.R.S.

review by Mike Spindloe

Yes, we know that this one has been out for a few months, but just in case YOU hadn't heard... *Dead Letter Office* is a compilation of R.E.M.'s B-sides and studio outtakes. They are, according to the band's guitarist, Peter Buck, "failed experiments, badly written songs, drunken jokes and occasionally a worthwhile song that doesn't fit the feel of an album. This collection contains at least one song from each category."

Well, Peter might be just a little hard on his compatriots and himself, but the categories he sets out are more or less accurate. That leaves it up to you to decide how many of the album's fifteen tracks belong in each.

I won't attempt to perform that highly subjective task for you, except to say that if you are already a R.E.M. fan, you'll find many that fit in the last category. There are three obvious standouts, however, which are the cover versions of "There She Goes Again",

"Pale Blue Eyes" and "Femme Fatale", all originally by the Velvet Underground. R.E.M.'s versions are closely faithful to the spirit of the originals, partly perhaps because, like the originals, they were all recorded live in the studio and thus remain free from excess premeditation. Those tracks alone may be worth the price of admission.

Cynics may point to *Dead Letter Office* as a crass money grab from a band that has managed to garner an impressive amount of respect from both critics and the public without really saying anything. But for those of us who appreciate R.E.M.'s unique approach, this disc will save a lot of effort tracking down obscure singles which, ironically, have become some of the most collectable of the 1980s by sheer dint of their consistent commercial failure.

Peter Buck, being an avid record collector himself, has apparently recognized that fact, and so, presto, here is a complete R.E.M. collection within easy reach of everyone. For CD fans, the entire "Chronic Town" EP is included on that configuration.

P.S. — Watch this space in the near future for a review of the new R.E.M. studio LP *Document*.



All their obscure singles but no smile for the camera

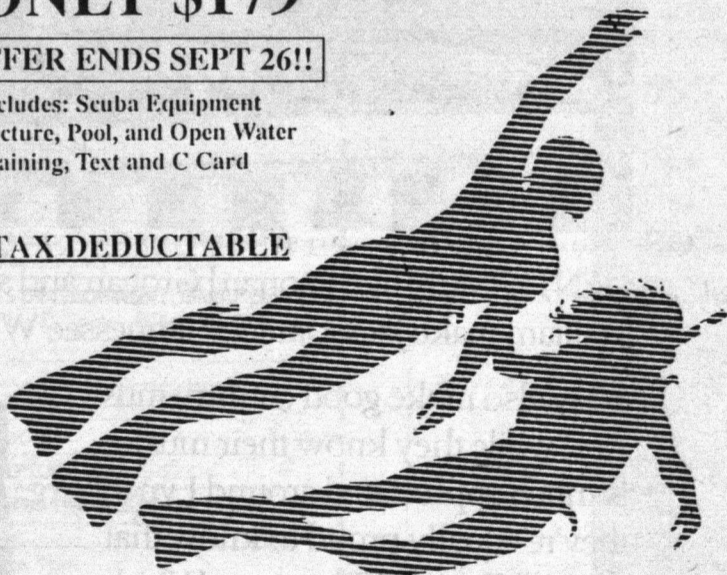
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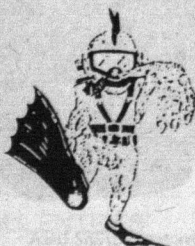
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