

GENRECIDE

MICHAEL EDWARDS

THE BUMPER CHRISTMAS ISSUE

Well, that time of year has come around again when I find myself staring at a huge pile of CDs and realising that there is only one issue of *The Bruns* to go before Christmas. I also realise that people buy an awful lot of music at this time of year, and it can be a little hard to separate the jewels from the junk. It also gives me the chance to reduce a band's creative output (that they have sweated over for the past year or so) to a couple of sentences. Oh the power. Anyway, hopefully the following will help you to find some wonderful new music for the Festive Season. And I'll be back in January with my review of the year that has just passed.



The Amps - Pacer: The head Breeder Kim Deal is back, and she has headed into the garage with her new band - it seems that the *Head To Toe* EP was just a taster of what was in store. She has also been hanging out with some other famous bands from Dayton, and that influence is equally obvious. How does it sound? Well, low-fi does jump to mind, with some nice sweet harmonies. And there is also a mangled surf-like guitar too, just to keep you off balance. It definitely isn't the Breeders, but the Amps are a worthy replacement.

The Vacant Lot - Shake Well: Happy, spiky pop music that could maybe be called punk if the wind was blowing in the right direction. They pack a whole bunch of good songs into thirty-five minutes, and have the best cover that I have seen in ages too.

Stereolab - Refried Ectoplasm (Switched On Volume II): Stereolab have an irritating habit of issuing singles on obscure labels in very limited quantities. Fortunately they have collected them all on this incredible compilation which is as good as any of their 'real' albums. Moogs aplenty, and the most hypnotic tunes in town. A must have.



Flowchart - Multi-personality Tabletop Vacation: The most blatant Stereolab rip-off that I have ever heard. And they do a pretty good job of it too. If you like one, you will like the other.

Menswear - Nuisance: Another band jumping on the "let's rip off Wire" bandwagon, not the mention the Cockney act that Pulp do so well. But if you can get past the incredibly irritating 'Daydreamer', there are some good songs (like the very Beatlesque 'Sleeping In'). But three or four good songs don't make an album...

Triple Scoop: This is a compilation that collects together twenty of the best bands on EMI at the moment, including Radiohead, Blur, D.O.A., 13 Engines and Supergrass. And with a budget price, it is a good place to start exploring the current music scene.

Shirley Eikhard - If I Had My Way: She might be more famous for writing songs for other people than performing them herself, but her sixth album might just bring her prominence. Some songs are a mite depressing, but the whole thing is worth persevering with. A real emotional rollercoaster.

The Human League - Greatest Hits: It turns out that they were a lot better than anyone remembered (as long as you ignore all the songs from after 1985). Frighteningly enjoyable.

Len - Superstar: Their demo tape has finally made the jump to CD, and it has thankfully kept its fluffy slipcase. A whole range of styles on here, with some working more successfully than others. The swirly 'Stray' is the song that first brought the band to my attention, and it still sounds as wonderful as it ever did. A band to keep an eye on.

the
sound
of
music
by
pizzicato five



Pizzicato Five - The Sound Of Music: Pizzicato Five's second US album doesn't offer anything that last year's *Made In The USA* didn't. But if, like me, you enjoy their carefree pop music then you will enjoy this. It is also a little bit more patchy than the last CD, but seeing it has such gems as 'Happy Sad' and 'Strawberry Sleighride', I won't be complaining at all.

Alice In Chains - Alice In Chains: They undo all the promising work of *Jar Of Flies* by returning to their old, cliched, grungy ways. Boring.

Jazz To The World: Another Christmas album, but this time from Blue Note Records. Or in other words, a jazz offering with the royalties going to the Special Olympics. A nice compilation.

Alt - Altitude: A band consisting of Andy White, Liam O'Maonlai and Tim Finn should have come up with a better album than this. Some good moments, but simply not enough to make it worth picking up.

Julian Cope - 20 Mothers: This is Julian's equivalent of *The White Album*, if only for the ground that it manages to cover. It

sprawls its way through four phases, and encompasses all kinds of styles from folk to Kraut rock to the kind of pop that he hasn't made since his days in The Teardrop Explodes. It is his most accessible album since *Peggy Suicide*, and probably his finest to date.



Boss Hog - Boss Hog: The irony that a band as bad as Pussy Galore could give rise to three rather good bands (Royal Trux, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion and Boss Hog) is enormous. Boss Hog have made the jump to major label successfully and produced their best album to date. You might mistake this for the Blues Explosion in places, but in others, things get far too cute for anyone to make that error. A good solid album that should establish Boss Hog as a force to be reckoned with.

The Rebirth Of Cool Phive: A wonderful compilation which rather neatly moves through what is fashionable in trip hop, rap and other dance music with such people as Portishead, Bomb The Bass, Tricky, Coldcut and the Beastie Boys. In addition to that, some rather normal artists get extensively remixed to increase their funkiness. Very cool indeed.

Alanis Morissette - Jagged Little Pill: As someone who was in the wrong continent for her previous brush with fame, I have no preconceived ideas about her. So I can say without any embarrassment that I really like it. A lot. A good album full of catchy, powerful pop songs.

Squirrel - Niagara: Some jolts of guitar-fuelled adrenaline, with the occasional slow moody song - a nice mixture from this Canadian band. A fitting tribute to their bass player who died not long after they finished recording this.

Tales From The Crypt - Have Yourself A Scary Little Christmas: A seasonal offering which is far more amusing that it should be. Conventional Christmas carols with the lyrics switched to be a little more macabre such as 'Deck The Halls With Parts Of Charlie'. Good for one listen anyway.

Filter - Short Bus: They gained notoriety for 'Hey Man Nice Shor' which was supposedly about Kurt Cobain, and have been picked to be the next big thing in the States. There is an obvious Nine Inch Nails influence (as one of the band used to play guitar with them), but the music isn't quite that memorable.

Lisa Loeb & Nine Stories - Tails: If ever there was a one song career, this is it. The rest of the album sounds the same except there is appallingly bad lyrics that feel the need to rhyme at any cost. Nice sparkly CD case though.

The Rolling Stones - Stripped: I can see the headlines now - "Stones make good album shock". They pull some obscure songs from their back catalogue and get all unplugged on us. And it really works. A very pleasant surprise.

The Meat Puppets - No Joke: Just like every other album they have ever done, *No Joke* is quite wonderful. They may not be as weird as they used to be, but their songs have never sounded stronger. This will be the one that makes them stars.

EBN - Telecommunication Breakdown: If you saw U2's Zoo TV, you will recognise the wall of images that adorn this album cover. In addition to the music on the CD, there is also all kinds of interactive software that will turn your computer into a media-unfriendly machine, and probably induce epilepsy too.

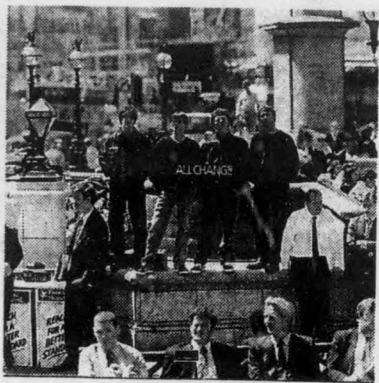


Black Grape - It's Great When You're Straight Yeab: Shaun Ryder returns with Happy Mondays Mark II. No big surprises on here as it sounds just like Happy Mondays did - the same bizarre, non-sensical lyrics and also production that throws everything in for good measure.

Goldie - Timeless: This year that has already brought us the best in dance music thanks to Portishead, Tricky and Massive Attack. But there is more. Goldie has put out an album that deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as Bristol's trinity as it could single-handedly be

responsible for taking jungle into the mainstream. He blends jungle beats with soothing vocals and some beautiful orchestration. The music scene in the UK has never looked healthier.

Cypress Hill - III (Temples Of Boom): Cypress Hill have realised that giving people what they want practically guarantees sales. So you get more of the same with almost every song having a "let's get stoned" theme, and those vaguely spooky themes that have made them famous. No real surprise.



Cast - All Change: Everyone knew the LA's for that one song - 'There She Goes'. Now bass player John Power has a new band that continues on in that spirit playing honest-to-goodness guitar pop that have tunes that are eminently whistlable. There might even be a slight Who influence in there too, and all the better for it.

Pere Ubu - Ray Gun Suitcase: It is hard to believe that this bunch are still around after all these years, but they are. And they have just put out their best album in years. Not that they are doing anything different - the same quirky, arty rock that they always did. But fortunately they no longer feel the compulsion to stick a couple of obvious singles on their CDs.

Dr. Atom & The Orbitals - Tungsten: Jon Bartlett (Fredericton's finest musician by far...) is back with a new demo that may be a bit mellow than *Steaming Toolie's*, but it is still as eclectic. He does owe a lot to his much beloved Guided By Voices, but he puts a whole new slant on things. You can pick this one up in any decent record store in town.

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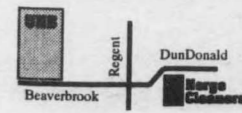
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