

GENREKILDE

MICHAEL EDWARDS

PICK O' THE SUMMER

Back for another year, and I can't think of a better way to start than with my favourite releases from during the summer months. Or some of them anyway as there have been so many that I will spend the next while clearing the backlog.

Brian Wilson described his masterpiece *Pet Sounds* as "Teenage Symphonies To God", and this title was stolen by Providence's Velvet Crush for their second album. And what an album it is too, with a style that fits quite snugly between the Byrds and Big Star - this should tell you that there are a great deal of chiming guitars and glorious vocal harmonies. It's a definite step forward from their first album which seemed to lack a certain amount of direction, but thanks to the production of Mitch Easter (who has joined the band for their live shows) the songs really do shine. And what glorious songs they are, without a single weak track among the twelve. The Byrds get a nod via a cover of the rather obscure Gene Clark song 'Why Not Your Baby', but the album peaks on 'Faster Days' which was co-written with Stephen Duffy (who seems to be kept busy these days, also writing with the Barenaked Ladies...). 'Faster Days' plays with a country influence, but yet still retains a happiness

that most country songs seem to lack. Then there is the swirly 'Time Wraps Around You'. Or the raucous 'Something's Gonna Give'. I could gush about this record for hours; quite simply one of the best albums I have heard all year.

Next is Blur's *Parklife*, an album I had no expectations for at all. You see, in the past I have not been a fan of Blur at all - their baggy,



Manchester sound left me cold, and the arrogance of their second album put me off too. So when this one landed in my hands, I was fearing the worst. Yet I am impressed. Incredibly impressed. This is an exceptional album as it takes you on a journey through the past thirty years or so of English music, plagiarising in the most spectacular way. Imagine taking a trip through London (complete with Cockney accents), moving from one area to another where every new place means a new style. One song may sound like the Kinks, then its Serge Gainsbourg

(Hmm, some French influences too I suppose), then the Small Faces and even David Bowie in his *Scary Monsters* phase. It almost becomes too clever by half by the end of it all, but there are enough moments to make this worth seeking out if only for the pleasant surprise that Blur can put together something this good.

Thirdly is the album for which the word 'gorgeous' was invented - *Unisex* by Blueboy. This is the latest release on Sarah Records, with the now usual co-release by Chicago's Widely Distributed. And as I said, this is a truly gorgeous record with lavish arrangements which could induce sighs from the coldest of hearts. The acoustic guitars are played so concisely that the strings ring like those of harps, and the string arrangements bring a lushness that was only hinted at on 1992's *If Wishes Were Horses*. The lyrics dwell in areas which are not unfamiliar to any Sarah fan - impossible love and the despair that comes with it, unrequited love, self-indulgence and loneliness with lyrics that are so direct - the heart's permanent place is on the sleeve. It doesn't sound too cheerful, but there always seems to be an air of optimism hiding at the back of it all. But there are even some upbeat songs nestling on here too; 'Imipramine' for instance where the guitars growl quite nicely as the

band sings of the joys of anti-depressants. Umm...that isn't too happy either is it? And what about a hymn of desire for River Phoenix? Well, I suppose this isn't an album to find joyful rapture, but if you need to dwell just a little bit to indulge yourself then you will find no better place than this.

Finally, just to show that I didn't spend my entire summer



without looking at the written word, I must sing the praises of Julian Cope's autobiography *Head On*. For the uninitiated, Julian Cope was the lead singer of The Teardrop Explodes, a band that came out of the Liverpool punk scene in 1979. The book covers the period from 1976 to 1982, and tells of his journey to Liverpool, the founding of the band and its subsequent demise. It describes the Liverpool scene in great detail with all the key players such as Ian McCulloch (from Echo & The

Bunnymen), Pete Wylie (from Wah!), Pete Burns (from Dead And Alive) and the infamous Bill Drummond (his manager of the time who ended up in the KLF). Anyone who has the slightest inkling of who these people are will find the book fascinating as it tells of how the bands began, the oneupmanship that went on between the Teardrops and the Bunnymen and also the in-band fighting which led to its collapse. And then there are the drug stories; Julian spent most of his time as a Teardrop stoned, high, on trips, or a combination of all three. And these 'out-of-body-experiences' are described in so minutely that it feels that you may have been there too. In fact, its incredible to think that any records came out of this mess, let alone such wonderful, timeless ones. A fascinating read even for non-fans, and essential for everyone else.

(*Unisex* can be obtained by writing to Widely Distributed Records, 1412 Touhy, Chicago, IL, 60626, USA. Details of *Head On* can be obtained by writing to K.A.K. Ltd., PO Box 3823, London, N8 8TQ, ENGLAND. Please enclose an IRC, and tell them who sent you)

Book Review: Planning For Seven Generations Guideposts for a Sustainable Future

Planning for Seven Generations: Guideposts for a Sustainable Future
by Mike Nickerson
Voyageur Publishing
\$4.95

Planning for Seven Generations is a short (141 pages including pictures) book being promoted as a guide to today's environmental problems and the solution offered by the concept of environmental sustainability. It gets its title from the tradition "within some societies, whenever decisions are being made, to consider the interests of the next seven generations." I almost gave up hope on page 12, where the author claims that in order for human life to survive for seven more generations, we must learn to distinguish between "basic human needs" and "luxuries." But Nickerson creates a very seductive image of what life could be like on earth if his readers would only adopt his simple "guideposts" to living in an environmentally sustainable way.

But before we can reach the environmentalist's utopia of peace, harmony and ecological cleanliness, there is work to be done. *Planning for Seven Generations* is basically a call to action and Nickerson emphasizes the need for everyone to coordinate efforts to clean up the environment, not to simply make adjustments to individual daily activities.

Fair enough, in theory. It's when Nickerson tries to offer practical suggestions for coordinating global efforts that his argument reveals some

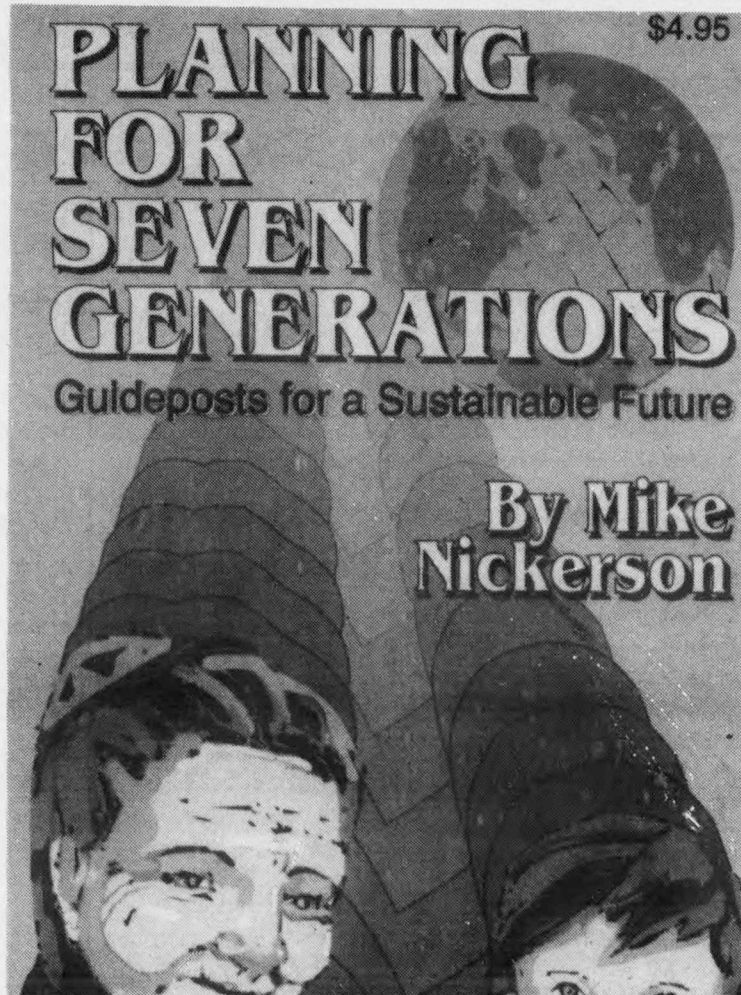
glaring oversights. His main innovation is the creation of a "Directory of Information on Sustainability," which would use the Internet to open up dialogue on environmental issues. Nickerson

goes as far as to provide a chart showing categories and branches of selected topics that would be indexed with such an electronic forum.

One of the topics in the directory chart that caught my attention is "Inequity," which branches out into "Domination and Exploitation of the Poor, Women, Aboriginal People and Other Groups." This branches off into "Degradation Through Desperation" and "Lack of Democracy." A nice thought to open up dialogue on the role of human exploitation in destroying the environment, but how are the billions of desperate and degraded human beings who lack democracy supposed to gain access to computers with modems (or the electricity to run them, for that matter) so that they can join this electronic forum, which, after all, directly concerns them? Nickerson does not seem to realize that the directory he is proposing would merely reinforce environmental imperialism by the rich, highly-industrialized "Western" societies.

Sarcasm aside, Nickerson's superficial understanding (or at least coverage) of the forces at work in industrializing countries, which are leading to great damage of the global ecology, undermines the rest of his book. He goes into great detail to provide a history of "Our Changing Relationship" with the earth. He discusses the bio-

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