



# ENTERTAINMENT

**KRATCH**

Your guide to some happenin' vinyl.

**JOAN JETT & THE BLACKHEARTS**  
**"Up Your Alley"**  
 (Blackheart/CBS)

Joan Jett is great because she puts her heart, soul, and guts into everything she does. From her beginnings with The Runaways, to her more recent stint as a Barbuster in "Light of Day", she kicks life into even the most dour material.

Which is not to say that "Up Your Alley" is dour; it's anything but. Actually, it's not a whole lot different from any of her other albums with The Blackhearts. Everything is simple, straightforward and fun, and songs like "Ridin' With James Dean" rank up there with her best stuff.

There was a time when the highpoints of a Joan Jett album were her renditions of other people's songs (look at "I Love Rock 'N' Roll"), but that's changed. She's still doing covers and still doing them well, but her own material stands up more easily on its own now. In fact, as much as I like her version of Iggy's "I Wanna Be Your Dog", I prefer her own "I Hate Myself For Loving You".

Despite her improved writing skills, Joan hasn't really changed, and "Up Your Alley" probably won't convert the uninitiated. For loyal fans though, there will always be room for her on our turntables and in our (black) hearts.

**TOM STILLWELL**

**the sugar cubes**

"Life's Too Good"  
 (ELEKTRA)

**PRIMITIVES**

"Lovely"  
 (RCA)

The Primitives and The Sugarcubes are two of the best new bands around. Both play pop music, but with radically different slants.

The Primitives are the more straightforward of the two. Someone once described them to me as "Blondie meets The Jesus and Mary Chain", which is not too far off the mark. Then again, neither is "The Go-Gos meet The Buzzcocks", or half a dozen such comparisons. Most of all, they sound like The Primitives, and that sound is just fine.

The Sugarcubes make music that exists on a different plane: they've redefined the boundaries of pop music to fit their own reality. "Life's Too Good" is difficult to digest after just one sitting, and most descriptions probably wouldn't do it justice, but after a couple of listens, it's easy to be drawn into their world.

Both of these bands are extremely popular in their homelands (England and Iceland). It's safe to say that neither will make a dent over here. Too bad.

**TOM STILLWELL**



Bjork's the young lady. Einar, Siggy and Thor are the chaps although we're not sure what order they're in.



Tracey Tracey of the Primitives in "Tell Me I Look Like Debbie Harry and You're Slugmeat Buster" pose.

**THE LEON THOMAS BLUES BAND**  
 (CBS Records)

With the rise in popularity of blues music over the last few years, former blues performers have had chances to make comebacks. There have been many such appearances in the independent music scene, including the fabulous record for Delos Music by Joe Williams, called *Nothin' But the Blues*, which showed the jazz singer to still have powerful chops.

The portrait label, distributed by CBS Records, has just released an album by another jazz singer - Leon Thomas. Thomas was born in East St. Louis in 1937, and made his most notable moves in the sixties, when he replaced Joe Williams in the Count Basie Orchestra. He also has a unique jazz yodel, based on his study of Pygmy tribes. Thomas has appeared on many labels, including Verve.

His new LP, *The Leon Thomas Blues Band*, features a tight group which includes tenor and baritone saxophones and a co-vocalist, Donald Smith. Both he and Smith make good use of their jazz background, especially on the songs *Flip Flop Fly* (that's right, the old Joe Turner standard); *The Blues is the Blues*, *is the Blues*; and *Next Time You See Me* - which is wrongly attributed to Thomas rather than the real lyricists Forest and Harvey. The band is allowed ample room to stretch their legs on all the songs, which include two instrumentations: *Memphis Slims' Everyday I Have the Blues* and the classic Ellington tune, *Duke's Place*. The band is supervised by Thomas, and he keeps everything sounding very crisp and clear. The tenor sax does all the horn solos except for a brief stint in *Duke's Place* where the baritone sax takes a walk. The guitar and piano also make strong solo appearances, as well as providing superb backing for the horns and vocalists.

*The Leon Thomas Blues Band* may not make as striking a mark as Joe Williams did a couple of years ago, but it is nonetheless a very good performance. If you're interested in jazz-infused blues buy this album, since it is the most accessible of that particular style in Fredericton record stores. If you want to find out more about the blues and other similar "black" music forms, tune into my show: *I Think I Got The Blues* on CHSR-FM 97.9, Tuesdays 1:30 - 3:00 pm (taped) and Wednesdays 7:30 - 9:00 pm (live).

**SCOTT DUNHAM**