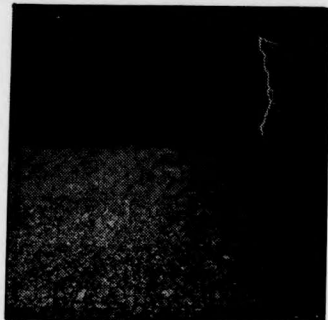


## Arts cont'd



### nothing special from midnight oil



by Brian Tait

Midnight Oil  
Blue Sky Mining  
Columbia Records

Once a band that verged on the cutting edge of the alternative music scene, Midnight Oil has been through some changes in recent years. The hard hitting straight-ahead sound of *10, 9, 8, 7...* was replaced by the more mainstream sound of *Diesel And Dust* (1988).

*Blue Sky Mining* takes the progression one step further. This latest release is rather downbeat and subdued. Although the music lacks the power that propelled last year's singles, "Beds are Burning" and "The Dead Heart" to commercial success, the lyrical focus of this Australian quintet still shows compassion and concern for ecological problems and people's neglect of them. The band's concern is underscored by their choice of recycled paper for the album's sleeve.

Not a spectacular album by any means, but songs such as "River Runs Red," "Bedlam Bridge" and the title track lift the album above mundaneness. Nothing special, but the blue vinyl is nice.

### nice michael penn



by Valerie Hochschild

Michael Penn  
March  
BMG Records

Michael Penn, elder brother of Sean and Chris, but known to the world as the silent lab tech on *St. Elsewhere*, has a surprising little hit on his hands with his first single "No Myth." No

## platter chatter

one knows why people like it so much: it's just a nice, thoughtful song with a fantastic groove. But it's also an example of some very strong composing, which is the hallmark of the album.

With his buddy Patrick Warren, Penn has put together an intimate record featuring sprightly acoustic guitar and course-through-your-veins percussion. The voice is somewhere between Lennon and Harrison, hardly powerful but not annoying. The music also has a Beatles base to it, but more in melodic construction than the straight instrumental ripoff that we've heard more than enough of.

The lyrical content is the usual folk-romantic-melancholy-amidst-the-social-ruins stuff. It is a miracle that it's not

pretentious. There are just enough twists and turns (California boogie on "Brave New World," slide guitars like drops of honey on "Invisible") to keep the album from becoming boring in its nobility.

And just when I thought I had the guy pegged, he finishes side two with "Evenfall," a perky, good-time rock 'n roll tune. A pleasant surprise of an ending.

You may have noticed this positive review is punctuated by words like "nice" and "little" and "pleasant." If you hate records described by words like these, don't mess with *March*. Penn hardly displays his famous brother's aggression, burying it, instead, in contemplation and covering it with a fresh-scrubbed look of concern. If you can handle that, you'll like this album.

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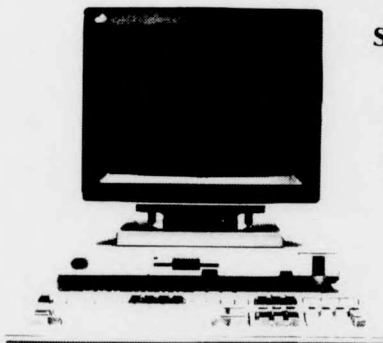
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