

# GENREcide

By

Michael Edwards

The first label of the month is Bar/None Records, which is based in Hoboken, New Jersey. The first time I heard of Bar/None was when I encountered what must be their most famous alumni The Might Be Giants when their first album came out many years ago (I forget how many). These days TMBG have gone on to major labels but Bar/None continue to offer a splendid roster of bands, most of which will be unfamiliar to you. They include The Ordinaires, a band with nine members who did a majestic version of 'Kashmir' on their second album and also the great Scottish rock impresario of Bill Drummond, now half of the KLF but previously the manager of Julian Cope in his Teardrop Explodes days. Mr. Drummond's album includes the tale of how he tried to convince Julian to kill himself as a good career move when the Teardrop Explodes stopped enjoying commercial success. A very entertaining album which is well worth checking out. Their most recent releases show just how eclectic a label Bar None is, so we now present for your pleasure....

## Epic SoundTracks "Rise Above"

Imagine, if you can, an album full of real songs (remember those) which contains tunes, lyrics and vocals worthy of Carole King, Nick Drake and Lloyd Cole respectively (Which is a compliment incidentally). That album is "Rise Above" This is the first solo album from the co-founder of The Swell Maps and member of many other influential bands since the mid 70's, and it turns out to be one of the best of the year by a mile or two. Usually a drummer, he turns his hand to the piano and occasional guitar, using a star studded cast to fill in the gaps; members of Sonic Youth, Dinosaur Jr., The Bad Seeds, Primal Scream and The Waterboys turn up to sound like they have been laying together for years. The cast made me expect something to make my ears bleed, but instead it is a very melancholy, emotionally charged album set off by Mr. Soundtracks' fragile voice that wavers at all the appropriate moments. The songs conjure up images of urban misery and love affairs in ruins but yet it is dealt with in a way which is touching and almost uplifting in its grandeur. This is an album which will see you through the long autumnal evenings beautifully.

## Shrimp Boat "Cavale"

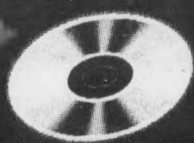
'Cavale' is a very subtle album; it sneaks up on you. After one listen you find yourself singing the songs for the rest of the day but yet you don't know why. Shrimp Boat, a band famous

for their four hour long concerts and improvised songs, have put together a collection that brings in a number of style from soul to jazz to bizarre folk from some central European country. Its a strange mix, but listening to the fifteen songs is never boring as you never know what to expect next. The highlight is 'What Do You Think Of Love' which is impossible to mention without bringing up Al Green, yet it doesn't quite cross the line that makes it a Stax rip-off. The tunes are sometimes strange and disorienting but that just holds your interest even longer; the warm horn section adorn the melodies, the real hero is the drummer Brad Wood, who keeps his contribution to the barest minimum, while holding the entire band together in a tribal celebration a really neat trick. 'Cavale' is a real unassuming joy.

## Chocolate USA "All Jets Are Gonna Fall Today"

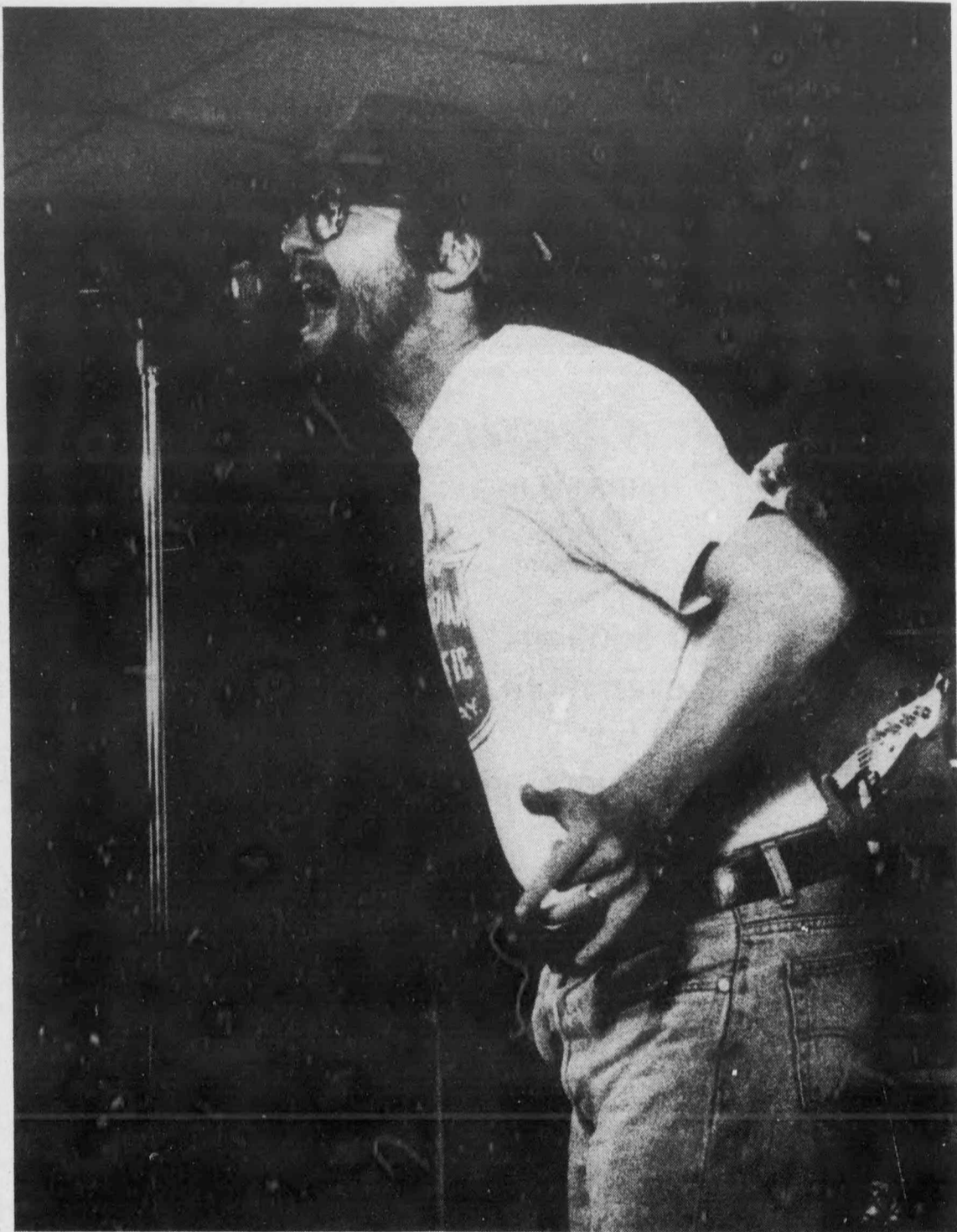
Its going to be hard to review this without even the slightest mention of They Might Be Giants, as both bands seem to sing 'quirky' (I bet they hate that word...) songs which are wonderfully appealing. But there is a real difference in the way that Chocolate USA traverse disco, squealing guitars, Doogie Howser and bring it all together with an interviewee that discusses her life (the grandmother of the lead singer I believe). It sounds bizarre, yet it is all so charming that it is impossible to resist. The 20 year old leader, Julian Koster, reaches past the normal material for songwriting and puts a new fresh perspective on things. It makes you laugh and then makes you wriggle uncomfortably as he makes crank calls asking people if they are lonely - sometime the 'jokes' seem to be changing the emphasis (as in Ween) but the real song make it all worthwhile. From Buzzing guitars of the title track to the despondent '100 Feet Tall' it is a fun album that is worth a listen. And anyway, who could resist a band that begin a song with the line "I've got two dogs and a bottle of Crazy Glue".

You can write to Bar/None at PO Box 1704, Hoboken, New Jersey, 07030, USA but make sure you include an International Reply coupon or some sort of monetary offering for them and make sure you mention where you heard about them (ie me!). If you send them a cheque for \$9 US then they will send you a 22 track compilation CD with all kinds of goodies on it.



# Entertainment

## Skydiggers and Waltons, One Sucked the Other has a Trakter.



Kevin G. Porter photo

The large turnout at the Skydiggers gig was mostly comprised of people who play songs over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over...

And I thought bipolar disorder was a psychology term. Last weekend the Waltons and the Skydiggers rolled their travelling college music show into the SUB Cafeteria with mixed results. While the Waltons rocked up a frenzy, the 'diggers rolled down the gutter. In 1990, the diggers arrived here shortly after the release of their first, self titled album and dug their way into the hearts of at least some UNBers. Three years and five visits later, their welcome has worn out. The fact that their present tour is in support of their weakest album didn't help matters but ultimately, it's just that the Skydiggers have been done to death. When they took the stage Friday night, they dug themselves six feet under. Their set featured songs from all three albums, and demonstrated the band's lack of progression. Singer Andy Maize's half strangled guttural drawl made me want to take his throat in my hands and finish the job. His spasmic dancing and useless, broken record intros had me searching for Farmer Walton's .44. The set opened with "Slow Burning Fire" and "It's Alright" their second album Restless then cheated the crowd into dancing with three songs from their first and most popu-

lar recording. However, I suspect their enthusiasm was won out of drunken ignorance than adulation. The following nine tunes, taken from all three of their releases, all sounded like the same song and it's becoming an annoying tune at that. The highlight of the set was a new verse to the 'diggers most annoying song "Monday Morning." And no, Andy, you'll never be Jim Morrison. The only constructive words that came out of Maize's mouth were "I was reading through the Brunswickan today..." The Skydiggers owed a penny more to the Waltons. They were the saving grace of what could have been a real waste of \$15. The Waltons champion Prairie culture with their hip blend of college country-rock, a fresh sound that captivated the 480 people on hand. Featured in the Kumbaya festival earlier in the month, the Waltons ran through a tight, polished set. The set moved smoothly through the songs featured on their only album Lik my Trakter and paused only to do a neat cover of "Sunshine" written by Montreal pop culture heroes fall Down to Boom. Bassist Keither Bunny voiced a perfect facsimile of the Boom's frontman Graham Powell that was very im-

pressive. The Waltons also performed a new song called Simple Brain which will appear on the soundtrack of the movie Naked In New York, due out in February. Singer/guitarist Jason Walton proved the bands vocal talents on a sweet ditty titled "Naked Rain" that showcased their writing talents as well. Finally, the set was topped by the radio friendly "Colder Than You". The band returned to play "Don't Let It Slide" for an encore and nearly had to come back again before the lights came on and quelled the crowd. As hard as it may be for me to admit, the Waltons and the Skydiggers are two very similar bands. However, the Waltons are only just beginning their trek into Canadian college music while the Skydiggers, with their third album, have ended theirs. I just hope the Walton's stay away long enough to record a worthy follow up to Lik My Trakter.

BY BRUCE DENIS