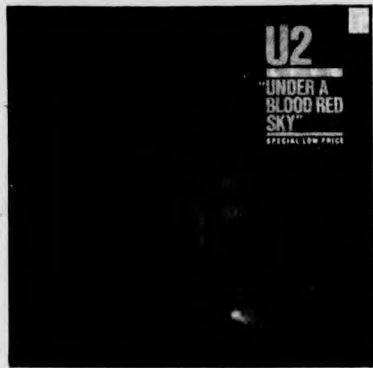


records

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Irish rockers aim to please

U2  
*Under a Blood Red Sky*  
 (Island)  
 ●●●½

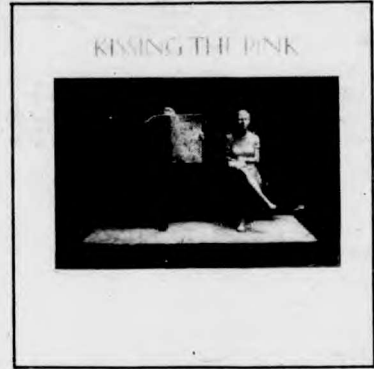
Not content with releasing what is perhaps the best pop album of the year (*War*), U2 has recently put out an eight-song mini-LP that ranks among the best live recordings of 1983. Long praised for their concert showmanship, the band has responded with *Under a Blood Red Sky* to cut down on unprecedented trade in bootleg tapes of the band's recent North American Tour. Ironically though, most of the best tracks were recorded in West Germany though "Gloria" and two songs previously unreleased to American audiences were recorded in Boston and Denver.

The two new songs "11 O'clock Tick Tock," and "Party Girl," both from their pre-*War* days, are marred by a comparatively poor audience response, and are the album's weakest efforts. On the other hand, the band's more familiar songs, including "New Year's Day" and "I Will Follow" are much stronger—the German audience driven into a frenzy by the energy of the music and the obvious enthusiasm of the players. They fall spontaneously into mass clapping or extra choruses in a way that can't help but add an infectious excitement to the record itself.

This is a record with a clear purpose in mind—to please U2 fans. Had the band wanted to use the record to stimulate sales of their previous albums they would certainly have made it longer and would not have opted for their big hits, nor the

two new songs. What's even more creditable is the efforts the band has made in keeping the album's price down—you can walk away with it for less than five bucks if you look around.

For those who still haven't caught on, *Under a Blood Red Sky* is an excellent introduction to what is, so far, the best new band of the '80s.  
 —KEVIN CONNOLLY



Pink is green but worthwhile

Kissing the Pink  
*Kissing the Pink* (EP)  
 (WEA)  
 ●●●

Kissing the Pink are a new British band with an unusual sound, whose debut album, *Naked*, has only recently begun to get FM airplay. Three of the five songs on this follow-up EP are from the first album, although the second side adds "Love Lasts Forever," and "We are your Family" to the band's vinyl repertoire.

Kissing the Pink are a mixture of synthesized vocals, reserved keyboards, and strong, insistent rhythms, but are at their strongest when they add some rather progressive horn solos to fill out their sparse sound. The result, while repetitious, is never monotonous, as the songs' often dark moods give them a haunting resonance.

One can hear obvious influences of other esoteric British ensembles, including the now defunct Japan and Joy Division. Though the lyrical content is by no means as powerful, *Kissing the Pink* still manages to capture the eerie impact of its critically-acclaimed predecessors.

At a time when techpop is

frequently marred by loathsome lyrics and electronic excess, the simplicity of the bands effects, including a merciful absence of drum machines, comes across as very tasteful indeed.

Though their rhythms would fit the mold, *Kissing the Pink* is an unlikely candidate for dance floor stardom, as their vocals play a secondary role, and their overall impression is too bizarre for mainstream audiences. Still, the band will probably become popular on their own ground, and though their early work is a little too derivative to achieve excellence, it makes for a particularly pleasant half hour of distraction.  
 —K.C.



Ottawa band yearn for fame

Breeding Ground  
*"Reunion" b/w "Slaughter"* (12")  
 (Fringe Product/Record Peddler)  
 ●●½

Breeding Ground is a four-man band, originally from Ottawa, who have been playing together in some form (with the exception of ex-Kinetic Ideals drummer Jonathan Davies) for over three years. The press kit that came with this single (a remarkably extensive one for nine minutes of music) informs us of the band's hope to "propel Breeding Ground up from Toronto's underground/art scene and into the national spotlight where they belong." But what for? This kind of music belongs in the "underground/art scene;" otherwise it tends to lose its *raison d'être* and becomes a money-making, fashion-getting venture.  
 At any rate, these are two power-

fully precise and stred resources), so you might want to check them out sometime.  
 —ADRIAN IWACHIW



Waits' warbles another winner

Tom Waits  
*Swordfishtrombones*  
 (Island/WEA)  
 ●●●●

Strange as it may seem, the title of this album isn't a bad description of what's found inside. The 15 songs that make up *Swordfishtrombone* vary considerably in texture and feeling, but they all fit snugly into the gutsy, beat poet-smoke-filled lounge world of Tom Waits, an image that he's been building for about a decade now.

The title calls to mind another firmly-rooted, unadulterated American poet-genius, Don van Vliet, a.k.a. Captain Beefheart. And the comparison is apt. Like Beefheart, Waits has a versatile voice that takes on different identities with ease: the burly, husky growls of "Underground" and "Down, Down, Down," the dry, throaty crooning of

"Soldier's Things" and the title cut, or the droll, Zappaesque rap of "Frankie's Wild Years."

And like Beefheart, the arrangements on this album are consistently interesting, though generally sparse, from the drum, marimba, and bass combination of "Swordfishtrombones" to the harmonium and synthesizer backing of "Town With No Cheer." There's also a fair share of hard-edged, raucous, bluesy band material (his band includes Fred Tackett on electric guitar, Larry Taylor playing mostly-acoustic bass, and drummer Stephen Taylor Arvizu Hodges), like the pounding "16 Shells from a 30.6."

Unlike Beefheart, however, Waits is, more often than not, somewhat restrained. He is the sad and lonely romantic crooner, the guy you'll see drinking down his grief over a piano and a gin, reciting poetry or singing about washed-out old soldiers, urban desperadoes and outsiders, or bemoaning the loss of the local canteen. "Well it's hotter'n blazes and all the long faces/there'll be no oasis for a dry local grazier . . . the train smokes down the xylophone/there'll be no stopping here/all ya can be is thirsty in a town with no cheer" ("Town With No Cheer").

A song like "Shore Leave" exemplifies Waits at his best: sparse drums and marimbas provide a subtle, low drive, while Waits sings in a low, husky semi-whisper about a lonely marine in the Philippines writing a letter to his wife back home in Illinois. Pointed and elusive guitar darts around, interspersed by menacing bursts of gruff trombone, banjo and "chair."

This is an album of well-crafted songs by a unique and original poetic stylist. Recommended.  
 —A.I.

The winning story in the *Excalibur*/Calumet Fiction Contest will be published in the paper in two weeks. We apologize to the entrants for the delay.

*Excalibur*, innovative newspaper as it is, has come up with a movie contest you can really sink your teeth into. The first twenty participants to come to our offices at 111 Central<sup>2</sup> and tell us how to make a Reuben sandwich—a real Reuben sandwich—will each be awarded a double pass to see 20th Century Fox's newest release, *Reuben, Reuben* next Thursday night. Remember: we want the real thing. And no substitutions.

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"I don't even know what street Canada's on."  
 —Al Capone

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