

A & E continued...la musica

Music Reviews

The Misfits
American Psycho
(Geffen)

I was prepared to hate this disc before I played it. Seeing a Goth-metal band, complete with black leather and make-up playing songs like "Hate the Living, Love the Dead" and "From Hell They Came" immediately gave me bad flashbacks to my high school death-metal phase. But after the first few tracks, I was completely sold on this CD. The best way to describe it is to say the Misfits would make the perfect house band for the Hilarious House of Frigtenstein or Ghoul Theatre or some other cheesy celebration of B-grade horror icons. The songs themselves are short - roughly two and a half minutes on average - and have a heavy, melodic quality to them (think of it as the Ramones meet Megadeth). Lyrically, most songs are influenced by bad sci-fi/horror movies (the ones which could be remotely disturbing like *American Psycho* and the Haunting are rendered harmless by the catchy melodies), and feature plenty of sing-a-long choruses - lots of "whoa-oh-oh!!" type stuff. This disc is the perfect consolation prize for those nights when someone beat you to the last copy of *Re-Animator*. With Halloween coming up, it would also make a fantastic party disc. 4/5

Ric Ocasek
Troublizing
(Columbia)

Following the breakup of The Cars in the mid-1980s, Ric Ocasek seemed to disappear, producing artists but seemingly never recording himself. A true shame as, anyone familiar with the Cars knows, Ocasek has a strong talent for writing catchy pop tunes. With the release of *Troublizing*, Ocasek proves he's lost nothing. For fans of his previous work there's plenty to enjoy here, with a wealth of simple, unpretentious, infectious songs. However, there is a twist - on top of the easy bounciness, Ocasek has added a healthy dose of guitar distortion and his lyrics have ventured into darker territory than in years past, giving a 90's feel to some retro-80's tunes. Songs like *Crashland Consequence*, *Asia Minor* and the title track are examples of this. You can definitely hear the influence of Billy Corgan - who produces four tracks on this disc, as well as performing on six - on this disc. Well worth checking out.

3.7/5

Various Artists
We Will Fall: an Iggy Pop Tribute
(Attic)

Let me confess something right off the bat: I HATE tribute albums! I think they're half-assed attempts to squeeze a few more nickels out of the record-buying public, and could best be used in lieu of skeet pigeons for target practice. So naturally, I was a bit leery of *We Will Fall*, particularly since I'm not very familiar with Iggy's work. As far as the music goes, it's standard for a tribute disc - a few half-decent songs (Sugar Ray's version of "Cold Metal", Adolph's Dog covering "Ordinary Bummer"), some very well done versions (Monster Magnet's rendition of "Gimme Danger", Red Hot Chili Peppers' "Search and Destroy"), and a whole lot of songs which are just plain awful (NY Loose doing "Lust For Life" comes to mind, while Joan Jett's cover of "Real Wild Child" is so bad it's almost criminal). But I have to qualify this critique: as I've heard very little of Iggy Pop's stuff, I can't honestly say if the songs on this disc are faithful renditions of the originals. I can realistically say that *We Will Fall* has made me more curious about hearing Pop's originals. This is what this tribute does best. Otherwise, it isn't worth the effort. 2/5

Various Artists
Live from 6A: Great Musical Performances from Late Night with Conan O'Brien
(Mercury)

The battle for highest ratings on the late night talk show circuit is often won with high-profile musical guests. This compilation offers a taste of what Conan O'Brien offers on his nocturnal drug. Such diverse industrial heavy-weights as Ani DiFranco, David Bowie, and Elvis Costello present live versions of previously released material. Drawing from a variety of stylings and attitudes, *Live from 6A...* samples a cross-section of popular music. This disc, while nice in theory, seems to miss the mark a bit. It appeals to fans of today's trendy compilation albums, but loses a great deal of the live feel to the harshness of studio production. Bjork's rendition of "Human Behaviour" is much like the original found on *Debut*, but still stands out as one of the strongest tracks. The winner of Most Laughable Contribution to this compilation goes to Cake with their take on "The Distance." While the thought was there, *Live from 6A...* comes across more as a sales pitch for Conan O'Brien than a live experience.

Mary Coughlan
After The Fall
(Big Cat/BMG)

This disc is a difficult one to pigeonhole: Coughlan has drawn from many different influences - jazz, country, blues, to name but a few - to put this disc together, with the result being a disc which takes you in any which direction. Lyrically, there's stuff ranging from depressing slices of life - *Poison Words*, about an abusive marriage - to humorous stories - *Sunburn*, about a one night stand in Turkey which leaves the protagonist with nothing (literally!) but a U2 tape. In addition to the strong lyrics, other songs, like *Run Away Teddy* and *John Fell Off the Work-Around*, use different musical elements to convey a mood to the listener - at times you *feel* this CD as well as hear it. Coughlan's husky voice and thick Irish accent add further texture to the disc. Not a disc to play at your next drinking party, but definitely an enjoyable one. 3.5/5

BethNielsen Chapman
Sand and Water

Sand and Water is a special album for Beth, who lost her husband Ernest to cancer in 1994, a year after his diagnosis. There are all different styles of music, from ballads ("The Color of Roses") to soft rock ("All the Time in the World"). There are guest appearances by Michael McDonald ("Seven Shades of Blue") and Bonnie Raitt ("Heads up for the Wrecking Ball").

In my opinion, the most meaningful song is the title track. It tells of all the loneliness she felt after her husband died, how his death was like a complete shock. She had to keep living with a smile, though, because she knew she should concentrate her energy on her son. His resemblance to his father in his smile helped her to realize that Ernest was still living, in her heart.

This is a wonderful album for someone who has lost someone meaningful in his or her life. The music on this album with the lyrics makes one feel at one with the singer in terms of her struggle with the meaning of death. The songs show her stages of coping with the fact that Ernest was really gone. She sums up the act of coping with these words, "There is no way around grief- there is only through to the other side."

by Suzanne Williams