



Sound Opinions

by Mike Beagan

Howdy there folks. I have returned from the *Panther Prints*' musical vaults (The pile of discs nobody else wanted) with a few heavily guitar driven alternative gems. Some more precious than others, of course.

Seven Mary Three *American Standard* (Attic/Mammoth) was a very fortuitous find. I was a little put off by the fact that vocalist J. Ross is an Eddie Vedder sound-a-like, but he pulls off the shimmering-scream singing style beautifully. The songs are very infectious and are bound to get stuck in your head for hours. Well-played layers of fuzzy guitar, and a solid rhythm section round out the sound. If you like your rock heavy, but smooth, *American Standard* is for you.

A little less smooth, but equally pleasing is **Eve's Plum** *Cherry Alive* (550/Epic). Heavy bass and guitars are the background for Colleen Fitzpatrick's rusted angel vocals. The songs are not complicated; they consist mainly of a few chords with very easy changes, but they are too good to be called simple. I prefer to call them "uncluttered". With titles like "Want You Bad", "Loved By You", and "Lipstuck", you can't expect any startling revelations from these songs, but they are very infectious. As ear candy goes, *Cherry Alive* is pretty tasty.

Louder and less polished is **Ape Hangers** *Ultrasounds* (A&M). This collection of modern pop-punk has all of the usual elements. Loud and discordant, the music on this disc is anything but well played. It is very honest, and manages to capture a sense of spontaneity that is missing from most of today's slickly overproduced records. The vocals are mediocre but not completely unlikeable

as dissonant screams do seem appropriate for punked up pop. *Ultrasounds* is not a real winner, but it is not a complete waste of plastic either.

Victoria Williams: *This Moment in Toronto with the Loose Band* (Attic/Mammoth/CBC) was recorded live on March 29, 1995 at the Bathurst Street Theatre. The Loose Band is aptly named, as they barely seem to follow Victoria while she spews her imaginative, storybook lyrics. Her high, childlike voice is often difficult to hear, as the disc seems to have been recorded at a very low volume. "Crazy Mary", and the David Williams duet "Can't Cry Hard Enough" are high points; however, the poor sound and overall poor background performance provide lows throughout the album. Victoria's imaginative poetry is wonderful, but you might want to wait for a future release which better displays her talent.

Water Nipple (MCA) is a release which languished long in the *Panther Prints* reject pile, which is a shame, as it is not a bad album. Although not what I would call particularly original, Nipple is well played, and pleasing to listen to. The music is pretty generic fuzzy light rock a la Toad The Wet Sprocket or R.E.M., and the lyrics are intelligent and thoughtful. Despite this, the album has few hooks. It flows over the listener instead, and is easily forgotten when the record is over. If you are a fan of the bands mentioned above, then this could be the band for you.

Well, that's all that I have on line for this week (it's only a five disc changer), so I will bid you all farewell. Until next time, Peace and Love.

Synthetics

by Steve Ellis

Almost since their invention, computers have had an influence in music. As never before, the music industry of the mid-nineties uses digital power to create new sounds and even new genres of popular music. In the next few paragraphs some recent releases which make use of synthetic sound will be reviewed.

The Human League
Greatest Hits
(Virgin Canada)

Philip Oakey, Susan Sulley and Joanne Catherall, The Human League, have been fans of synthesized sounds since they began recording in the late seventies. This compilation of their latest and greatest would be excellent for an eighties-retro night. "Don't You Want Me" and "Human" will make those of us in our late teens and early twenties yearn for the simpler times of elementary school. Sigh.

Earthling
Radar
(EMI/Cooltempo)

This two-man rap team makes use of both real and digitally produced sounds. Though their lyrics are thoroughly uninspiring, they do have some interesting new musical ideas. Pick this up if you are a fan of cutting-edge rap.

Various Artists
Feed Your Head
(Attic/Mammoth)

The compilers of this collection of interesting tunes from Britain claim that their recording features "Pieces of music created to reach the braincells that some others just cannot reach." I must admit that listening to some of the tracks seemed to alter my sense of reality. I entered a tribal trance and took a journey through avant-garde psychedelia, all while cleaning my bedroom.

Club 69
Adults Only
(EMI)

Whew! Reviewing this disc was an experience. I guess this release would be best described as a queer dance collection. With pictures of mostly-naked men splayed all over the cover, and song titles like "Diva", "Let Me Be Your Underwear", and "Sugar Pie Guy", I assumed that the target audience was probably gay males. Some of the music was garbage, but there were a few excellent dance tracks on the latter part of the CD.

Eat Static
Abduction
(Attic)

Anyone wanna rave? Featured on the *Feed Your Head* compilation reviewed earlier, Eat Static have an uncanny sense of how to combine sounds and a good beat to create a superb dance song. Listening to this CD inspired me to buy a pair of Simple sneak's and some really baggy pants and to do a repetitive, hula-esque dance. Don't ask. It's a rave thing.

Muzik Review

Foundation *One Shirt*
(Island Jamaica)

Foundation's third release manages to mix serious social commentary with smooth, funky reggae sounds -- not an easy accomplishment. Often social commentary music is hard driving, loud, and in-your-face, and sometimes it's whiny and irritating. But *One Shirt* discusses issues like poverty, racism, unrest, and freedom without preaching or yelling at the audience. And they do it so well. Despite the serious message, this is a very enjoyable disc to listen to, with Jamaican sounds ranging between light and moderately upbeat. Anyone who has the slightest liking for reggae should give this disc a try.

-- Marko Peric