

The Top Five

velop their own personality. Of course, they pull it all off with panache, but the songs are lacking.

The clunker of the season has to be Joe Cocker's latest phlegm-fest, *Night Calls* (1), an ersatz collection of his usual bluesy reworkings of material ranging from Elton John's "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" to Blind Faith's "Can't Find My Way Home." The soft and smooth is gone from Joe's voice, so when he lets one of those RRRAAAAGH's go you'd best duck. Horrible stuff.

"He's the object of adoration by a subculture dying for a genius--unfortunately, this ain't one."

Widely hailed as his best work since *The Queen is Dead*, Morrissey's *Your Arsenal* (7) presents his most muscular and accessible music since the days of who-do-ya-call-em. It's a surprisingly memorable set of songs, from the jaunty guitar chords of "Certain People I Know" to the touching balladry of "I Know It's Gonna Happen Some Day." Morrissey is the object of adoration by a subculture dying for a genius--unfortunately, this ain't one. But *Your Arsenal* hits its modest mark and should be latched onto by his fans like a cozy security blanket.

The new *Singles* soundtrack (7) spotlights the current sound du jour: the Seattle metal scene. The sound, as I'll call it, can hit like a fucking hammer, but the lack of variation and ponderous tempos can test the endurance. Still, their shit (especially Pearl Jam's) is sometimes brilliantly arranged, and unlike most metal, they do rock. *Singles* presents us with nice small doses of a genre that's best experienced in small amounts. Adding variation to the soundtrack are two good new songs from former Replacements singer/songwriter, Paul Westerberg, and, less logically, a carbon copy of Led Zep's "Battle of Evermore" and straight offa *Are You Experienced*, "May This Be Love."

Burning Questions Graham Parker

The follow-up to last year's exceptional *Struck by Lightning*, Graham Parker's latest, *Burning Questions*, continues in much the same vein with his usual brand of fork-tongued love songs and compulsive wordplay. Warm, punchy pop, kind of like a rootsy Attractions, *Questions* is also one of his more varied albums, as heard in the lovely strings of "Long Stem Rose." His best album since *Squeezing Out Sparks*.

(8)

Angel Dust Faith No More

Faith No More's latest, *Angel Dust*, realizes the ideas presented on their sometimes interesting but so-so 1989 effort, *The Real Thing*. A powerful hybrid of funk, metal, rap and soaring pop harmonies, the album climaxes with the trio of "Small Victory," "Crack Hitler" and "Jizzlobber," each song more furiously intense than the one before. Potent stuff.

(8)

Kiko Los Lobos

Yes indeed, the summer's top offering comes from what I like to refer to as the Chicano R&B version of the Band, as heard in the warmth, subtlety and emotional resonance of *Kiko*. Los Lobos' latest is actually, believe it or not, rap influenced, if only in the everchanging sonic surfaces and peek-a-boo instrumental cameos. The oddly shaped compositions combine with a unique melodic sensibility (blessed with David Hidalgo's effortless tenor) to make this pretty visionary stuff. It's only rival for Album of the Year: Springsteen's *Lucky Town*.

(9)

5

Dirty Sonic Youth

Topping its formidable predecessor, *Goo*, Sonic Youth's latest, *Dirty*, is their most purposeful juggernaut of wounded guitars yet. Essentially sounds like a war zone with rhythm (but not much). The guitar album of the year.

(8)

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3

Check Your Head Beastie Boys

Back to reestablish your belief that rap is a fresh, vital musical form are the Beastie Boys with *Check Your Head*, the best rap album since *Fear of a Black Planet*. A thrilling listening experience, it's essentially a formless ride through the Beasties' favourite sounds, including lots of high-hat, funky bass and big, hard Zep beats. Call me nuts but I think this is super. Dynamics!

(9)

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