



BUZZCOCKS
All Set
(I.R.S./EMI)

Formed in Manchester, England in 1976 by Peter Shelley and Howard Devoto, The Buzzcocks have always been mentioned in the same breath as The Sex Pistols and The Clash when one talks about the early punk scene. The band has always been known for it's fast and loud music with an emphasis on a hard driving guitar. When they began they were heavily influenced by The Beatles but wanted the increased energy that was found in such bands as Detroit's infamous MC5 and New York City's living legends The Ramones.

With their latest release *All Set*, The Buzzcocks have no trouble sticking to their guns and doing what they do best; writing fast paced pop songs. The acceptance of such forms of music today in the mainstream may be just what The Buzzcocks have been looking for in terms of commercial success. Despite the fact that their name is dropped by many important alternative bands of the past 10 years, from Husker Du to Nirvana, they have never been able to receive huge success.

The power pop songs such as "Totally From The Heart", "Give It To Me" and "Point Of No Return" all hold the common 3 chord formula ever present in modern day punk bands, but their sugar sweet vocals add to make it a little more tolerable. The songs may be good, but they are not great; although putting together 13 good songs is better than 2 great songs and 10 terrible songs for an album.

One thing that is certainly missing from the mix that could have helped this album is the lyrics, they leave a lot to be desired as they are just a step up from the "Baby! Baby!" stuff that makes most people sick today. The recording could also be changed. If The Buzzcocks gave their guitar sound a little more punch from the low end it may have made the album less predictable and less monotonic.

With very few changes and variations during this entire album the listener may be tempted not to want listen anymore. Certainly Buzzcock fans will not be disappointed as it remains very much the same Buzzcock sound that most fans are familiar with. Not a great album, but still a good effort from a band which is better referred to as a punk institution. With The Sex Pistols touring again, we may see some other punk bands deciding to try to cash in on the fact that punk has finally broke into the mainstream. The Buzzcocks deserve some credit for the length of time that they have been around though, so don't hold timing against them.

Various Artists

Basquiat: Original Soundtrack
Island

Although I have not seen the Miramax film of the same name, the original soundtrack to *Basquiat* gives a good idea of Jean-Michel's emotional turmoil. The story of the film sheds light on the life of the late up and coming artist, Jean-Michel Basquiat, who was befriended by Andy Warhol, and his tumultuous struggles. For a synopsis of the film, the audio recording offers track four, "Suicide Hotline" -- a dialogue and music montage that clocks in at just over two minutes. This track summarizes the atmosphere of the entire OST -- urgent, despondent and even desperate. The line up is a solid one, featuring such heavy weights of the industry as David Bowie (who plays Warhol in the film), GrandMaster Flash with Melle Mel, and Van Morrison. Stand-out status goes to PJ Harvey for her gloomy look at the frivolity of life on "Is that all there is?" A good selection of sounds for the gloomy, rainy day as you destroy an ex's photo.

Rating: ****

By Phunky Phoebe

The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion
Now I Got Worry
Matador/Capital

Listen to this on Loud. The screams at the beginning of the track one, "Skunk" can scarcely be appreciated without hearing it at full volume. This Blues Explosion is not the blues you have heard before. Judah Bauer (guitar, vocals), Russel Simins (drums) and Jon Spencer (vocals, guitar) do not just play the blues -- they blow them to smithereens. The Blues Explosion offers up 16 tracks of blues and chaos on *Now I Got Worry*, their fifth long-playing heavy since 1992. The sounds are quite comparable to the latest work by Beck, while remaining quite distinctive at the same time. The basics of true roots blues are easily detected, but the infusion of Spencer's punk roots creates something extraordinarily primal. "2Kindsa Love," the first single, and "Identify" are two examples of good, hard organized noise. Listen to this after you've finished midterms to rid yourself of burdens and get connected to your soul.

Rating: ****

By SuperPhunk

John Parish and Polly Jean Harvey
Dance Hall at Louse Point
Island

Somehow, Polly Jean Harvey never makes the auditioning of her work a light-hearted one. This album is no different. All words on this collection of 12 songs were written and sung by Polly Jean (with the exception of track 10), while all music was written and played by John Parish. PJ Harvey has never been one to present fluffy pop. Again, she uses her beautiful voice, which moves from powerful and dynamic to thin and frail, to create an atmosphere that transcends the lyrics. The music itself flies about the spectrum with lush orchestrations, stripped down, edgy guitar work, and funeralesque organs. "Taut" is like nothing I'd ever heard experienced before, conveying a complete and whole despair that disturbs, defying description. The final track, "Lost Fun Zone" is worthy of the repeat button, albeit the shortest song of the album. This LP is but another wonderful gift to listeners from a voice that which has no equal.

Rating: *****

