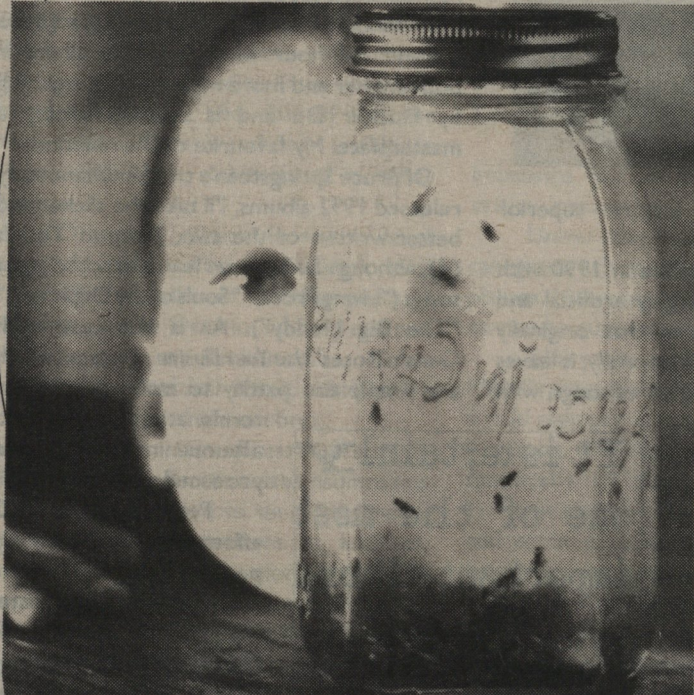


sound salvation

reviews by kirby
ferguson unless
otherwise noted

Jar of Flies
Alice in Chains
(Sony)

Alice in Chains' new e.p., *Jar of Flies* (4), is a remarkably credible experiment in styles: the band adds strings, harmonicas, violas and some strange instrumental treatments to their sound, all of which coalesce



seamlessly into their sound. The band also shows a surprisingly soft touch on ballads like "Nutshell" and "Don't Follow," and plays country-tinged melodic numbers like "No Excuses" with assurance. The old maniacal touches do surface, though, as on "I Stay Away" and "Swing on This." *Jar of Flies* is never forced or indulgent and the band's stylistic swings never seem superficial. While quite restrained by

this band's standards, *Jar of Flies'* title is apt, reflecting the desperation and frustration beneath its smooth, muffled surface. The sign of true greatness, Alice in Chains have transcended volume, expanding the emotional range of their music, while maintaining the sheer rage that defined them.

Antenna
ZZ Top
(BMG)

ZZ Top is back with their latest release *Antenna*. It features more of the distinctive sound that has made them famous over the last decade. With *Antenna*, ZZ Top has remained loyal to the powerful blues sound that has made them famous as evident in the first single, 'Pincushion'. Having the patent on the distinctive 'bearded look' it is difficult not to recognise ZZ Top's look and sound.

Though *Antenna*, has no surprises, it's classic rock and roll and still worth a rating of 3.

—Dana Dennis

The Sign
Ace of Base
(BMG)

With their first North American release, *The Sign*, Ace of Base have become the major feature of contemporary dance music. Ace of Base is an experienced foursome of French musicians who over the last half a dozen years have developed a very loyal following in many European countries. After 'All That She Wants' proved to be a North American success the decision to concentrate on the North American dance scene was made. I was surprised to find that *The Sign*, unlike many other dance albums contains eleven quality tracks. *The Sign*, rates as a 3.5 and is recommended for all club goers.

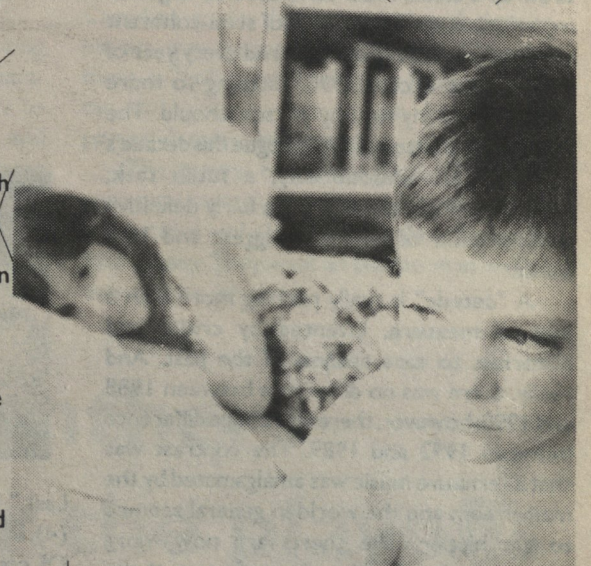
—Dana Dennis

Acid Eaters
Ramones
(MCA)

The only punk band still in existence, the Ramones still sound the exact same, which could either indicate true integrity or just a lack of talent and imagination. The band's latest, *Acid Eaters* (3), is a collection of covers, which could either indicate a return to roots and a reclarification of goals, or artistic confusion and retrenchment. The band reinterprets the likes of Dylan, the Amboy Dukes, the Who (with a cameo by Pete Townshend himself), Jan and Dean, the Stones, CCR and a load more, doing exactly what you'd expect: making them all sound like Ramones songs. It'll all undoubtedly be a lot more enjoyable to you if you've never heard the Ramones or the original songs. The album clocks in at a half-hour, which could either indicate reverence to rock'n'roll's original attention span or just a rip-off. Joey Ramone may not be a good singer, but I'll take him over this new CJ Ramone guy, a generic and, um, competent singer who pops up on three tracks. The energy level on *Acid Eaters* is reasonably high, but the production is flat and mushy. I don't think there's anything out there that sounds more retro than the Ramones; the thrill is gone. I give *Acid Eaters* one of the most marginal thumbs up I've ever given.

Dogman
King's X
(Warner)

King's X have discovered a killer formula and they're sticking with it. The band's latest, *Dogman* (3.5), is more of the usual: Beatle-esque vocal harmonies offset by bulldozer guitar riffs. I find both the flawless harmonies and immense guitar a little sterile, but the band has a firm grasp of rock dynamics and they execute with enormous potency.



Gentlemen
The Afghan Wigs
(Warner)

I don't know about you, but the long nights and indoor life of winter make me more introspective and moody. *Gentlemen* (3.5) is the perfect winter album: monumentally self-absorbed, icy and desolate. Unlike many other alternative bands, the Afghan Wigs sound isn't one huge wall of distortion—it's clear, precise and jarring. Without sacrificing the clarity of their sound, the Afghan Wigs generate a malicious momentum. *Gentlemen* would be even more compelling if the band were as interested in melody as they are in mood; nonetheless, it is an addictive listen.