

cd Reviews

The Cardigans
Gran Turismo
(Stockholm Records)



Gran Turismo is Swedish pop quintet The Cardigan's third album release, and their first since "Lovefool", from their second album, became an international hit after it was included on the *Romeo and Juliet* movie soundtrack. "Lovefool" propelled The Cardigans to international stardom, and raised questions about

whether or not they could keep up the expectations of the fans on their third album. *Gran Turismo* definitely proves that they can.

The previous albums of The Cardigans were heavily influenced by everything from lounge music to pure pop, leading some critics to mistakenly

describe themselves as. *Gran Turismo* takes its cue from some of the darker trip-hop pioneered in the British underground seen by Tricky and Massive Attack. Nina Persson's soft, plaintive vocals drift over immaculate instrumentals as The Cardigans perform their patented

The cynical "My Favourite Game" is the stand-out track on this album, and "Erase/Rewind" and "Explode" are also high-quality, but the last two tracks drag on.

On the whole, *Gran Turismo* is a very good album; aficionados of (good) Scandinavian pop music should get it.

- Randy McDonald

U2
The Best of 1980-1990
(Island)



U2 has rightfully gained a reputation as one of the best of the major rock combos of the 1980's and 1990's. *The Best of 1980-1990* assembles their most memorable album tracks from U2's first

decade of existence, including "Pride (In the Name of Love)", "With or Without You", "I Will Follow", and the band's collaboration with B.B. King on the *Rattle and Hum* track "Angel of Harlem". An added bo-

nus is a remixed version of "Sweetest Thing", a B-side from the 1987 single "Where the Streets Have No Name".

Although the tracks on *The Best of 1980-1990* sound a bit out of joint, this album is

an excellent introduction to U2 for aspiring fans. Me, I'm beginning to look forward to *The Best of 1990-2000*, which is supposed to come out before the new millennium.

- Randy McDonald

Barking Monkey
evolver
(Spinning Weasel)



This is a very interesting CD of Celtic rock. Barking Monkey is a five member band based out of Seattle, and from the sound of this CD, they'd be right at home in the East Coast music scene. Included on this album are several finely done instrumental pieces, featuring instruments such as the fiddle, mandolin

and guitar, all kept in place by a driving bass and drumbeat. Vocal duties are shared by bassist Tara Hovel and Bear, who plays mandolin and guitar. At times the vocals come across as a little rough, but this always fits the musical atmosphere. Other members of the band are fiddler Jan Strolle, drummer Ian Martindale, and

Jan Martindale—who plays a number of different instruments such as fiddle, flute, keyboards, and who also stepdances.

Top tracks include "The Ballad of Ned Kelly," a song about an Australian folk hero similar to Jesse James; "Morrison's Morning Dew," a

rocking instrumental; and "Drunk Since Ever," featuring the gruff vocals of Bear.

Entertaining and enjoyable—what else can one ask for? Barking Monkey definitely delivers on this album.

Website: <http://members.home.net/barkingmonkey>

Bret Michaels
A Letter From Death Row
— *The Album*
(Poorboy)

If you recognize the name, odds are that you're a fan of the "glam slam kings of noise," Poison. Bret is the lead singer of this 80's

sensation who put out such tunes as "Every Rose Has It's Thorn," "Your Mama Don't Dance," and "Unskinny Bop," and this is the first album featuring Bret's vocals since 1993's *Native Tongue*. On this album, Bret is reunited with guitarist C.C. Deville on the opening track, "Party

Rock Band"—a song that takes you back to Poison's heyday. Another top track is "Steel Bar Blues," proving once again that Bret can sing some mean blues.

This is the official soundtrack for the oft-delayed movie Bret made. I'm not sure if the movie has been

released to date, although last word had it that it was scheduled for release on November 10.

Whether or not you'll enjoy this album depends on whether or not you're a fan of Michaels' previous work. If you've never liked his work before, don't bother with the

album. However, if you're a fan of his Poison days (especially the material put out by the original Dall/Deville/Michaels/Rockett lineup), you'll find this album's 13 tracks enjoyable enough to warrant buying.

www.bretmichaels.com

The Punters
said she couldn't dance...
(Loggerhead)



She said she couldn't dance is an enjoyable release from The Punters, a Newfoundland band that combines the sounds of Newfoundland and Celtic traditional music with their own brand of garage rock. The result is an enjoyable blend, a blend that is shown-

off well on his album.

This album features 14 tracks, including several instrumentals which show off how talented the band really is. When these guys get out their instruments and do a rocked-up version of an old traditional tune, they manage to do so in good taste

(something their fellow Newfoundlanders, Great Big Sea, should take a lesson in).

There is plenty of fine fiddling provided by Patrick Morna, and lead vocalist Larry Foley adds a nice touch on the mandolin. The band is rounded out by bassist Brian Kenny and drummer Bob

Hiscock, who provide the catchy beat.

Top tracks include "Reena"—the video for which can be occasionally seen on MuchMusic, and "Polka! Polka! Polka!," which despite a somewhat cheesy name is a stunning instrumental.

www.eu.nf.ca/punters