

SINGLES

Reviewer:

CHRIS BOHN



(IF) A MASTERPIECE IS A BATTLE WON AGAINST DEATH . . .

PAUL HAIG: Running Away/Time (Twilight)
If Death appears to the living in whichever form they imagine her to be, then Paul Haig and his now dead group Josef K weren't so much tormented as tickled by her permanent poltergeist presence in their shadow. The Absurdity Of It All was a matter of amusement to Josef K and they converted their brave mockery into cool, disdainful asides that made us laugh, too. Until they lost sight of Death, that is, and she punished them by relieving them of the wit, thereby leaving them with a set of glib definitions and hollow phrases. Only after Josef K split has Paul Haig rediscovered the Meaning of Life — namely it doesn't matter a bit — and with the weight of existence removed he can easily breeze through Sly Stone's wonderful, wistful slip 'Running Away'. The song's a glimpse from the other side, from where the worrying and fretting appears doubly pointless, and Haig performs it as the genial taunt it is. 'Time' reminds just how great and affecting a singer Haig can be, and the way his voice leads the aching melody melts any doubts you might feel about the disruptive chorus.



MOUTH: Who's Hot? (Y)
You're not. Why not? Lip service to new jazz isn't a ready-made excuse for free-formlessness. Similarly . . .

THE STEVE MILLER BAND: Abracadabra (Mercury)
Vanish!

THE J GEILS BAND: Angel In Blue (EMI America)
The Blues Band of the American *Oui* generation. Softcore rock and roll.

MARINE: Same Beat (Crepuscule)
Most disappointing record of the week. A tired re-run of their seminal funk run 'Life In Reverse'.

THE FIXX: Red Skies (MCA)
This year's Fischer Z.

THE CARS: Since You're Gone (Elektra)
If The Cars were a girl/boy duo they'd be Dollar. If Roy Thomas Baker had a video he'd be Trevor Horn.



... NOW IS THE MOMENT TO LIVE A LITTLE

PALAIS SCHAUMBURG: Wir Bauen Eine Neue Stadt (Kamera)
THOMAS FEHLMANN/PETER GORDON: Westmusik (Zickzack 12" — German import)

The great pop architects of the moment, Palais Schaumburg embody the spirit and excitement of reconstruction, and, unlike less skilled practitioners, they have the audacity and knowledge to follow through their ambitious designs. How they manage to erect the new town of the title is nevertheless some feat, as it's founded upon an outrageously hinged rhythm consisting of frantic sideways scuttling drums that hurtle themselves at a bass figure solid enough to withstand the assault. The structure's buttressed/buffed by trumpet blasts and cemented by an extraordinarily tacky, yet endearing vocal. If you think



their new town looks funny, you should check out the 'Madonna' they describe on the b-side.

P.S. Trumpeter Fehlmann's extra-curricular record with N.Y.'s Love Of Life leader Peter Gordon is less visionary, but no less engaging. It's the soundtrack of a shakey Western alliance, scored for an as yet unmade *film noir* version of impending (nuclear) disaster. Hopefully the film will never get made, but that's no reason not to enjoy its excellent, suspenseful theme. (Contact: Postfach 29 41, 2000 Hamburg 20).

LIAISONS DANGEREUSES: Mystere Dans Le Brouillard/Los Ninos Del Parque (Mute)
Liaisons Dangereuses, you'll recall, are the precarious fusing of Impressionist electronics, courtesy former DAF scientist Chris Haas and Berliner Beate Bartel, and invigorating multi-lingual babble, courtesy Shri-Lankan Krishna Goineau. This their debut British single remixes two tracks from their enthralling German LP *Liaisons Dangereuses* so as to sharpen the tones. That doesn't mean to say points come through clearer — LD's coded messages are subliminally sunk in the fabulous chatter of rhythms and voices. 'Los Ninos' excitement moves like ripples across a crowd and 'Mystere . . .' recalls the atmosphere of a Victorian murder story but with the plot removed. Penny Dreadful of the week.

LEISURE PROCESS INTERNATIONAL: A Way You'll Never Be (Epic)
The LPI file on style defines it more as a leisurely gait than a dance, meaning it ain't so much a disco as a party whose line pursues pleasure — in the shape of an unimaginable beauty — without proscribing the form in which it should come. Admirably refusing to pressure sell itself, it nevertheless seduces you into its way of thinking through the lazily insistent Level 42 rhythm and the lush extravagance of Ross Middleton's besotted vocal. His tongue loosened by a few too many, he talks out of turn and lets a few secrets slip in the rap: "I was impressed/When you got undressed", but partner Bary Barnacle quickly covers for him with a sweet sax flourish. The 12" reprises the excellent, ignored 'Love Cascade'.

... A SERIES OF ACCIDENTS SUITABLE FOR DEMORALIZING COMFORT

FOETUS OVER FRISCO: Custom Built For Capitalism (Self Immolation)
As nobody else will touch



Foetus, no matter what disguise he comes in, I make no apologies for his regular place in the heart of the Bohn singles column. When Foetus first looked in the mirror he was undoubtedly as shocked as the rest of us by what he saw, but given time he'd grown proud of his ghastly face and isn't about to cosmetise it now. He's realised that in this warped world where the right appearance can be so easily approximated, his ugliness is the unique entity and he'd rather present it as a distorted reflection of preening pop than conform to its narrow set of standards. 'Custom Built For Capitalism' is a crude new form of beauty, one governed by a wholly different, though parallel aesthetic, far less rigid, but paradoxically far more rigorous.

It's a valuable one which, when applied to a selection of new releases — crushes the fragile butterfly prissiness of Dollar's Trevor Horn protected 'Videotheque' (WEA)! pisses in Bucks Fizz's pallid accapella cocktail 'Now Those Days Are Gone' (RCA)! brutally spikes Roxy Music's immaculately conceived nothing 'Avalon' (Polydor/EG)! continues to ignore Peter Godwin's anaemic 'Images Of Heaven' (Polydor)! pricks the ridiculous pomp of Gary Neuman's 'We Take Myserly (To Bed)' (Beggars Banquet)! and reserves its most contemptuous glare for Panorama's 'Dream Home' (Kamera) — the new Pete Petrol project from which something a touch more prickly than inferior electro pop might have been expected! In short, 'Custom Built For Capitalism' stamps pop pragmatism to death, destroys the mystique of MOR and boldly claims its place in the world.

KID MONTANA: Statistics Mean Nothing When You Get On The Wrong Plane (New D/Sandwich 12" Belgian import)

An illuminating view from abroad. Completely at a loss when it comes to Britain's recurring infatuation with the European mainland, perky Kid Montana puzzles "What's so romantic about Europe? / What's so fascinating?" to an askew soundtrack that somehow gets it right while doing it all wrong. Synth riffs stutter where they'd normally pop, pulling you up short in time to the uneven lyric (from 'The Last Cruise') which chooses to expose the shallowness of the interest in all things accented rather than



exploit it, a la *Mathematiques Modernes* or Jacno. *Tres brave, mon brave*. The other songs' invention, meanwhile, provide exactly the sort of things that reward such curiosity. (Contact: 5 Rue De L'Hospital, 2000 Bruxelles).

BLURT: Spill The Beans (Red 12")
Okay, you asked for it, so I'll come clean and sadly confess that the force of Ted Milton's farce is not what is used to be, its vitality sapped by the numbing repetition of a simple formula. The concentric guitar / drum figures now resemble the movement of a stubborn donkey with its tail nailed to the floor and Ted's zigzag saxing — plainly yelps at its hooves where it might have once run ahead.

ACTS OF VIOLENCE REASSURE THE POET AND GIVE HIM TENDERNESS



KILLING JOKE: Chop-Chop (EG / Malicious Damage)

THE INSANE: El Salvador (No Future)

CHARGE: Fashion (Kamera)

G.B.H.: Sick Boy (Clay)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: Total Noise Number One (Total Noise)

ANTI NOWHERE LEAGUE: Woman (WXYZ)

"Seriousness that asserts itself. Never believe in it. Never confuse it with gravity." Jean Cocteau said that. The Anti Nowhere League, of course, are not serious. They are nothing to get offended about.

NEWTOWN NEUROTICS: Mindness Violence / Kick Out The Tories (No Wonder)

In a rare (these days) moment of punk insight, the Neurotics bravely make the distinction between mindless and political violence — *Mindless violence what what does it prove? / It proves you don't know the people who're shitting on*



you!" — and go on to condemn the former, if they don't exactly explore the latter. I wait to hear more, despite the other side's plainer rant.

8-EYED SPY: Diddy Wah Diddy (Fetish)

Lydia Lunch's greatest (some would claim her only) asset is her lack of respect: for her sources, her public, herself. She's notoriously erratic, but the high points — notably her unlikely torch LP 'Queen Of Siam' — are worth waiting for. For all 8-Eyed Spy's spirited ineptness, this isn't one of them. Once you get over the joke of them pitching a blues standard at an uncommonly hysterical level, there's nothing left at all. Here, Lydia's violence hurts no one but herself.

A MAN WHO DOES NOT POSSESS A DROP OF LIGHT BLOOD WILL NEVER BE A POET

FASHION: Something In Your Picture (Arista)

ANIMAL MAGNET: Baby Clothes (EMI)

Emperor's new clothes more like. Fashion and relative newcomers Animal Magnet fall at the asshole end of the clothes maketh the group market. Fashion have been through so many changes, none of them worth documenting, so I'll only point out that in this area, too, perseverance appears to be enough to pull you through. Animal Magnet, on the other hand, went for the quick kill, hoping to knock 'em dead with their Eastern European refugee look and flopped badly. They've followed it up with a safer, more commonplace codpiece and leather cloddy get up, but the music remains resolutely stuck in contrived latin groove.

BOOMTOWN RATS: Charmed Lives (Mercury)

The evident strain that went into creating this undermines the intended whimsical appeal. Sweat is neither charming nor enchanting.

THE BLASTERS: So Long Baby Goodbye (F-Beat)

THE dB'S: Living A Lie (Albion)

THE SHAKING PYRAMIDS: Just A Memory (Cuba Libre / Virgin)

PAUL KENNERLEY: Take That Woman Away (A/M)

THE BLUES BAND: Take Me Home (Arista)

When pop starts talking traditional virtue you know it's time it forfeited its status as a unifying art force, but, not unnaturally, it's always unwilling to let go its grip. Such pop denies intuition to the evolution of forms, beats a retreat into mere scholarship and bleats about the classic shape of rock and roll! The Blasters are exempted from this class, because they've at least got the grace to play it untutored. The dB's don't live a lie so much as a gross conceit: pleasure's not pleasure unless it comes in a '60s package. Not even a Costello song will save The Shaking Pyramids from drowning — they went way out of their depth once they left buskin' for a steadier position. Kennerley's record is produced by Dave Edmunds, which is all you need to know about it. The only reason The Blues Band satisfy themselves with so little — being caretakers to British R'n'B — is because they've all got other trades to fall back on.

RANDY CALIFORNIA: Hand Gun (Toy Guns) (Beggars Banquet)

An acid insight to finish: 'Hand guns kill people / Hand guns must be banned.' Thank you Randy and good night.

Beauty secrets courtesy: JEAN COCTEAU

SUCH SWEET SICKNESS: SEVEN SYMPTOMS OF THE DISEASE

- Liebostod. Richard Wagner (Deutsche Grammophon — Karajan conducts)
- Sophisticated Cancer James White (Roir cassette — US import)
- Get Out Of My Face Cabaret Voltaire (Rough Trade)
- Tell Me, What Is The Bane Of Your Life
Philip And His Foetus Vibrations (Self Immolation)
- Poison Arrow ABC (Neutron)
- Kaltes Klares Wasser Malaria (Crepuscule)
- Competition And Sadism
Frieder Butzmann (Zensor — German import)

23 SKIDOO: Tearing Up The Plans (Fetish/Pineapple 12")

23 Skidoo haven't always been sure whether it's us or them who should be made to suffer in their pursuit of higher things, but with 'Tearing Up The Plans' — and most of their recent mini LP — they're fast reaching the best possible solution of involving us without insisting we look at the scars of creation. This means the new Skidoo don't embarrass with lapses into fanciful expressions of freedom (ie aimless, endless percussion flights) — they now soar more gracefully. Which isn't to say they're incapable of wounding. 'Just Like Everybody', a looped cross-cutting of defeated, defensive voices rising out of titanic wallows, is cutting in its compassion. Elsewhere they break e-motion down into the components of exoticism plus motion. The lengthy 'Gregouka' moves in all senses of the word — wind instruments blowing repetitive oriental phrases gnaw away at a great gaunt figure that sweeps across distant tom toms. 'Tearing Up The Plans' is the first brilliant 23 Skidoo record.

THEN COME DEATH AND CLAIM YOUR BOOTY! CASUALTY LIST:

THE CLASH: Rock The Casbah (CBS)
The Clash's faith in rock as (in this case corrupting) catalyst for social change is as unshakeable as the moslem faith they've inanelly chosen to mock. Clash-bah!

ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE ATTRACTIONS: You Little Fool (F Beat)

After country, Costello's latest stylistic leap has him bellyflopping badly in a maudlin syrup of McCartney/Squeeze mannerisms, only slightly soured by the odd Madness snigger. Never trust a record with a harpsichord.

THE ROLLING STONES: Going To A Go Go (Rolling Stones Records)

The trouble with the Rolling Stones is they never let go of anything. Despite their quite extraordinary ability to keep abreast (C.f. 'Start Me Up', 'Black And Blue' funk) they'll periodically trip themselves up by nostalgically invoking their past, thereby spoiling it.

COSMETIC: Cosmetics (Rough Trade 12")
Lip gloss to fusion music, as if it needs it.