

SINGLES

REM: The Sidewinder Sleeps Tonite (WEA)
What use are fax machines, computers, typewriters and telephones when the distance between people still remains? The third single from the often mournful but ultimately uplifting 'Automatic For The People' LP finds REM mixing

pathos and joy by juxtaposing an acknowledged lift from 'The Lion Sleeps Tonight' with "a boogie-woogie groove" (read upbeat folk) and rubbing a tale of communication breakdown against Michael Stipe's character's preference for "a can of beans, some black-eyed peas, some Nescafé with ice".

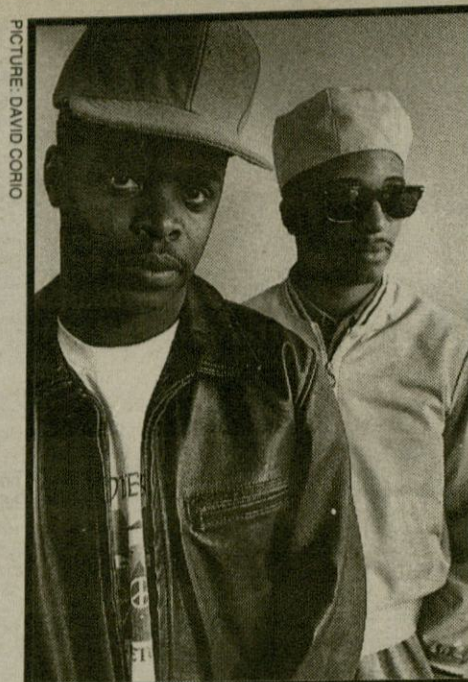
REVIEWED BY DELE FADELE



If you in the grunge corner are wondering why REM are so liked when they just play rock and witter some nonsense over it, grab an earful of this. Better yet, wait for 'Everybody Hurts' to be released as the next single when this drops out of the charts.

TREY LORENZ: Photograph Of Mary (Epic)

Present-day soul doesn't come any more smooth and salacious than this effort from one of the many black teen slickers you don't often get to hear about because they're not misogynistic and they don't carry guns. Trey Lorenz's voice drips with heartbreak over carefully programmed, *tres*-catchy clatter. He keeps her picture by his bed and every time he looks at it... he just can't go on. This is universal stuff of the type



PICTURE: DAVID CORNO
Dodge City Productions: on a promise

unsung indie acts like The Field Mice used to purvey, translated to urban America and ready to steam up - not in that sense, dirty mind - the radio, given an inkling of a chance.

DODGE CITY PRODUCTIONS: As Long As We're Around (4th & Broadway)

The thriving but still underground London soul scene makes a brief foray into the wider arena of commerce and what wonderful promise it shows. The Dodge City Productions crew stitch elements of soul, R&B, funk and hip-hop together in a mellow way and, instead of roping in a rapper, decide to enlist Ghida De Palma and her rich and creamy vocals.

This song of affirmation and retaining self-worth is as exciting as anything by Ice Cube but doesn't use profanity to get by. I'm sure the times will eventually catch up with music this calming yet heart-stopping.



PICTURE: STEFAN DE BAISLER
The Cranberries' storm-less Dolores

If Junior (of 'Mama Used to Say' fame) could get his hit, so can Dodge City Productions, eventually.

MOOSE: Liquid Make-Up EP (Cool Badge)

Boxing ring logic goes: if you get knocked down, you get back up again. And Moose have come back out of their corner ready to punch the industry that spurned them. These pugilists' first release on their own label is a modest gem, tinged with melancholy but retaining a love of guitars.

'I Wanted To See You To See If I Wanted You' is the lead-off track and is informed by ten years of British independent music and more. Moose hardly get funky, but they don't turn country music into an instrument of torture either, with Russell Moose containing regret in his understated yet deepening baritone and sketching a story that carries you away with it before you know it.

seemingly a distant relation of Einar Sugarcube) and he's taking over The B-52's. Actually this ridiculous and silly, camp yet uncynical, good-time song is what pop is all about. A nicely dressed-down dance beat, an insistent but unobtrusive guitar *scraaang*, widdly keyboard stabs and two voices on the verge of hysteria over hotpots. Pop can be agitational and polemic, but it can also be this carefree, light and frothy - a fantasy in three movements.

ROD STEWART: Ruby Tuesday (WEA)

People of a certain age can't forgive Rod The Voice for torturing them incessantly with his many 'classics' in public houses across the land. And here he comes with another one, this time a supposedly slinky and moody update of the Jagger/Richards 'chestnut' that is so supremely melodramatic you want to barf. Trevor Horn orchestrates and produces as if he doesn't know better.

It's getting to be a cliché, but won't someone please stop the proliferation of cover versions before every single decent song from the past three decades is dragged through the mincer. Failing that, why state the completely obvious, why not drag out obscurities like David Bowie used to and, erm, 'adapt 'em?

WENDY JAMES: The Nameless One (MCA)

There should really be no need to delve into an artist's private musings and motivations beyond what he/she proffers to the public on vinyl, live, or in interviews. Gossip is idle. So, get this straight upfront, not below-the-belt: Wendy James' comeback single in a solo guise is a formless, directionless load of tosh dressed up as something modern. Even the sometimes mighty pen of Elvis Costello and a quite chilling central guitar figure can't rescue a semi-song that's been overtly swathed in



PICTURE: GEOFF SWANE
Keep it shut, Wendy

echo and left to hang in the ether. The Ladbroke Grove diva affects three different voices, none of them hers, from heavy breathing to a snarl, and gets lost in the clouds.

BOYZ II MEN: In The Still Of The Night (I'll Remember) (Motown)

Not as genre-busting as the genuinely startling 'Motownphilly' and less syrupy than 'End Of The Road', this

releases the pressure by being an *capella* doo-wop work-out with some excellent singing and absolutely no instrumentation.

Somehow, Boyz II Men have managed to be both nostalgic and timeless, and it's hard to see why as many people like them as hate them. There's nothing to hate here, unless you think love songs are insincere or you're an unreconstructed rocker with no vision beyond what you know.

STEREO MC'S: Ground Level (4th & Broadway)
Re-invention of oneself is an acceptable way of survival in pop's fashion-hungry world, but it can also lead to one's demise. Luckily for Stereo MC's, once they decided to retain only the smallest traces of rap in their music in a quest for something more organic, the public finally sat up and took notice of their world-wise stew, their *pot-pouri* mosaic.

'Ground Level' should be the

SINGLE OF THE WEEK



PICTURE: ED SHIRAS
Bearing up: the Huggies are revolting!

HUGGY BEAR: Her Jazz (Catcall/Wiiiija)

Perfectly fulfilling the rock 'n' roll essence of capturing a moment in time, Huggy Bear have stormed in with the sharpest, sassiest four-minute song this week. There are various reasons why this shouldn't be possible under normal circumstances - the distance between their manifestoes and their music, erratic-to-abysmal live form and the fact that they can barely play their instruments 'properly' - yet 'Her Jazz' is sufficiently removed from one's expectations and totally exciting to boot.

Over a stop/start rhythm that's more assured than the usual Sonic Youth cast-offs, the London-based mixed-gender group tell some guy(s) to piss off in no uncertain manner before the chorus - there is a chorus - demands "boy/girl revolution now!", unlike Arrested Development's revolution which doesn't seem to include everybody. Mind you, they are ageist ("face it, you're old and out of touch") but wisdom seldom comes to the young early enough.

There are ideas here that suggest Huggy Bear won't be so easily dismissed as punky upstarts trying to kick-start a revival, rather, there is every sign of them eventually blossoming into something that gives more processed, muso-ish styles something to think about. And that'll do nicely. For now.

THE CRANBERRIES: Linger (Island)

Funny how signing to a major label somehow makes you less credible when - if you're Ireland's Cranberries - you haven't really changed at the core, just grown older and wiser. 'Linger' does not reach the parts the most recent single reached and is too immaculately tailored for my liking. There are strings in *excess* and the song's slow pace - while initially attractive - seems to grate as it goes on. You keep expecting a storm to break, but it never does.

MEDICINE: Come Here To Drink Milk EP (Creation)

Is there still mileage left in burying the fragments of a pop song under waves of feedback and various unidentifiable howling noises? Medicine seem to think so, soldering their Californian psychedelic roots to the kind of sounds that all manner of industrial refuseniks used to peddle. Problem is, there's no way in for the listener unless you enjoy being scared out of your wits. And after you notice the drums ticking away in a world of their own while all manner of havoc reigns around them and the singers harmonise nonsense, you just don't want to continue. Is this really what passes for the cutting edge these days?

BLEED: Ladykiller Laureate (Bleed/Pinnacle)

Strike one blow for the empowerment of women!

Chances are that if you live in London and read graffiti or posters you would have come across some stark couplets signed by Bleed relating to the value society places on women. For their second single, however, they've decided to aim invective at Ted Hughes and commemorate the 30th anniversary of Sylvia Plath's death. The lyrical content is blunt but well-observed and gives a voice to people who've been silent for too long, yet one must take exception to the pleasant but pretty much standard indie music.

MEAT BEAT MANIFESTO: Mindstream (Play It Again Sam)

Save for Jack Dangers' extra-curricular production work with Consolidated and the still-mighty 'Radio Babylon', the output of Meat Beat Manifesto has been hard to admire, so you can imagine my surprise when this came rattling through the door with a great pop hook, more than passable vocals and an optimistic lyric. I wish dance stations would cotton on to this the same way I wish indie DJs - bar a few notable exceptions - would give the best soul/dance/rap a chance. Really, that's not a sick thought when you indulge in the buffeting beats MBM drop from a great height before tempering them with cool synth melodies. This 'Stream Of

Consciousness' mix is technoppo served up the right way, not migraine-inducing tedium.

ESKIMOS & EGYPT: Fall From Grace (EEF)

An interesting hybrid that suggests we should listen up to the rumblings in the techno arena for a heady dose of innovation. Eskimos & Egypt put their unwieldy monicker behind them and merge together a synth pulse, some gospelly vocal samples, heavy beats and a stabbing guitar. The resulting song is almost schizophrenic in the way the arrangement introduces you to each element, lets it ride for a while, then drops it out. Pressure-cooked stuff.

TASMIN ARCHER: In Your Care (EMI)

"*Sonofabitch you broke my heart*" is hardly a line guaranteed to endear Tasmin to the masses who were drawn in by the wistful catchiness of her debut single, but here it is, sticking out in a low-key rock ballad seemingly aimed at the Castle Donington hordes. While it would be great if the ploy worked, these notoriously reactionary people will probably find it hard to deal with the lack of excessive guitar solos, Viking features, etc. And it will be a real pity if the curse of being a one-hit wonder hits someone who has dared to go beyond the limited career options offered to black women by the moribund biz.



PICTURE: HARRY BORDEN
Eskimos & Egypt: graceful in single but not in name

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