



# Indie - review

**C**olin Hamilton and Jimmy Blackburn survey a bumper crop of Albums, and singles including the much waited new album from the Foo Fighters and a World exclusive on Shaun Ryder's new group Black Grape

## Album Reviews.

**BLACK GRAPE:**  
Its Great when We're  
Straight...Yeah  
(Radioactive)

This is a review of a dodgy copy of the fantastic Black Grape album, from Shaun Ryders new band, which lots of people keep hinting at the genius of, but no one is being kind enough to review. So here goes.

The single *Rev. Black Grape* you'll have heard already if you're interested, but not like this unneutered for radio play version. Even a second generation tape blasts out the toughest bass drum around. *In the Name of the Father* keeps up the cod religious theme, in fact its got virtu-



ally the same tune, but so what. Its got sitars and a nice eastern feel to it. And a bit of ribbit-ribbit toasting. Nice. Next is the already infamous *Tamazi Parti*, notorious for its advocacy of the abuse of Tamazepam, aka 'jellies', and wholly successful in its evocation of the kind of party where people set fire to themselves without noticing. It sounds like the record that Primal Scream should have made if they

weren't taking so many jellies, allegedly. Great stuff, especially the horn lines. *Shake Well Before Opening* is a G Mex stab at G Funk with a monstrous bass line. It's pretty sexy, if you can stomach the idea of sex with Shaun Ryder or Bez. Many can. It also has a chant of 'Come and have a go if you think you're hard enough.' which, I swear sounds like Little Frank Sidebottom. *Kelly's Heroes* is a rocker that neatly combines two all time New York classics, Lou Reed's *Rock'n'Roll* and Talking Heads *Life During Wartime* to a truly stomping beat. Very good indeed. *Oh Brother* is an early stirring of the baggy revival, and doesn't sound too complementary to some people who may have been in a band with Ryder.

*Big Day in the North* features the sounds of Ryder singing in French no less, which goes to show what love can do for you, as it lopes leisurely along. *Submarine* will sound familiar to anyone who remembers Primal Scream's *Loaded* except it mentions Planet Reebok and smoking steroids. *Shake Your Money* is simply the best of the Clash's *London Calling* album rolled into one song, and only the excessive swearing could stop it being a massive hit. Organ parts entwine with some top guitar work. Did he really used to be in the Paris Angels? Theres hope for us all. There's also a sample from the famous *Troggs tapes*, a sign of good taste. The closer on this tape is *Little Bob*, more of the great





organ sound, and some top chanting along over a mean funk bassline.

Well, that's it. When it comes out titles and running order may change, but this really is top stuff. The Mondays were only this good at their peak, and everything from Dr. Dre to the Clash via Funkadelic seems to have had an influence. There's plenty jazz style horns here too, so let's hope they can get it out in time for the summer. Now what were those expressions again. Top, banging, nish et cetera...

(JB)

**FOO FIGHTERS:**  
**Foo Fighters**  
**(Roswell)**



Imagine that 'Grunge' had never happened, that there had never been an explosion of scruffy rockers from the North West of America taking the punk rock music they liked back to the Heavy Metal roots, ie the first things they ever learned on the guitar. Imagine that Nirvana were just one of many back to basics bands that were putting out a fine blend of punk, pop and metal to a gradually increasing cult audience. Nothing dramatic, but impressive nonetheless. Then imagine hearing a record like this...



Of course that's irrelevant. Dave Grohl, who sings and plays every instrument (well) on this album, was the drummer of Nirvana, and he didn't learn to write songs by listening to a couple of Stone Temple Pilots records, he learnt in the same room as one of the finest songwriters that rock has produced. But this record really does sound like something from the days before so-called grunge became a major phenomenon, It's recently become something of a cliché to throw the Beatles name into a review at the first sign of backwards guitar or string arrangements, but here it's for a good reason. A lot of the album is as tuneful and well structured as those great moments circa 1965,

especially the wonderful *For All the Cows*, which certainly uses what McCartney used to call 'the pretty chord', and the driving *Good Grief*. And if Cobain was our generations Lennon, as some would claim, then Grohl's barking vocals are certainly a friendlier alternative. But the band I'm most reminded of is America's own Punk Rock Beatles, Husker Du, whose members may have met some solo success, but have never matched the worth of what they recorded together. Certainly *Oh George* could have come from *Flip Your Wig* with its lovely

wistful melody, though Bob Mould never played such a cheesy FM radio solo and tracks like the droning X Static and the thundering fuzzed out closer Exhausted are certainly reminiscent of a time before plaid shirts became a fashion item, rather than being the workwear of 90% of male Americans, and when you had to make an effort to hear music like this.

What more can I say? The out and out punk tracks like *Weenie Beenie* and *Alone* and *Easy Target* are better than late Nirvana thrashes like Milk It and *Radio Friendly Unit Shifter*, the pop songs sound like my all time favourite US band, only better played and recorded, and even the token countrified number, *Big Me*, beats anything the Lemonheads have ever managed. Imagine if grunge had never happened... Well, hardly anyone would have ever got to hear this wonderful set, for a start. This really is a dream record. It sounds like the record Grohl wanted to make at twenty but didn't know how to, and, after all, what can be better than youthful dreams fulfilled?

(JB)

**Supergrass**  
**I Should Coco**  
**Parlophone**

The first thing that strikes you when you hear *I Should Coco* is its maturity, Supergrass are still a young band despite having been members of the

underachieving Jennifers. For a debut album from anyone this would be a masterpiece but from a band with such little history it is a truly magnificent achievement. *I Should Coco* is a collection of classic pop songs sung and played with the vibrant energy and urgency expected of a band so young, yet each of the songs is also a well crafted masterpiece with an air of maturity.

It starts at a hundred miles an hour with *I'd like to know* then moves straight on to *Caught by the fuzz*, an old single about being caught smoking dope at the age of fifteen. From then on the range of influences is endless, there's Bolan, the Beatles even a bit of Blur. But they are only influences this is not the complete plagiarism that many new groups go in for these days. But

this is not another seventies revival *I Should Coco* is an album for 1995 and beyond. People often say that pop music is a disposable commodity, buy



it, play it, throw it away and in general it's true. With *I Should Coco* though, Supergrass have made an album that you'll want to play to your children. Most bands would be happy to make something half as good five albums into their career. Which leads to the question How good will Supergrass be five albums down the line? Let's hope they stay together long enough so that we can find out.

(CH)

### Nine Inch Nails Further Down The Spiral Halo Ten

How does a band maintain a high profile when they haven't got any good new songs and they can't be bothered to tour? There are a number of options. First off they could make a b sides and rarities album. Alternatively they could put out a live album maybe with a video to go with it. Another option is to form a splinter band and release some not so good songs. No one loses faith because, hey, it's not 'the' group that released it. Nine Inch Nails have gone for the an option that takes far less effort, the remix album. Hand over the master tapes to some other people, wait a couple of weeks then release the results. Trent Resnor, the singer/songwriter of Nine Inch Nails, has had his last album, *The Downward Spiral*, remixed by people as diverse as Foetus and The Aphex Twin.

So what does *Further down the Spiral*

offer at budget price? Half the tracks are still the same splintered noise barrages that Nine Inch Nails are famous for. The other half though are ..erm.. post-industrial, they're slow and quiet not in the same area at all, they're not even in the same country. Which direction Nine Inch Nails will follow with their next 'real' album remains to be seen but, if you really need your Nine Inch Nails fix now this will have to do.

(CH)

### Sharks Patrol These Waters and Wasted Volume

Those wonderful people at Volume have come up with two best of collections. Volume, for those of you who don't know, create essential compilations which include both established groups and the up and coming. They package the CD together with a 192 page CD sized book which features the artists as well as album reviews, competitions and a whole host of other amusing stuff. If you haven't acquired any of the previous Volumes these two double CDs are a fine place to start. *Sharks Patrol These Waters* is the indie collection featuring forty four tracks from different groups including old favourites such as The Fall, Cocteau Twins and James. It also has the then up and coming Tindersticks, Gallon Drunk and St Etienne. Most of the forty four tracks are unavailable elsewhere, (apart from previous

Volumes of course), which makes Volume an essential buy for all the 'completists' who need to own everything by their favourite band. On a less trainspotter mode it's also a cheaper way to hear a large number of new groups without spending the four quid a single costs these days. At £15 it works out at less than 10p per minute of music with the book for free.

*Wasted* is the dance compilation of previous Volumes. Because dance tracks tend to be longer it only has 30 tracks on it but there is still 120 minutes of music on it. Among those featured are The Orb, Bjork, Sabres Of Paradise, Orbital and Moby. The booklet is witty featuring an article on each group and a Life Since Volume section.

Volume is 'the' indispensable compilation and I heartily recommend it to you.  
(CH)

**Morphine**  
**Yes**  
**Rycodisc**

Despite having no guitars Morphine manage to produce a smooth listenable sound. This is achieved with singer, Mark Sandman's, two string slide bass and Billy Conway's drums producing an irresistible rhythm. Dave Colley provides the colour



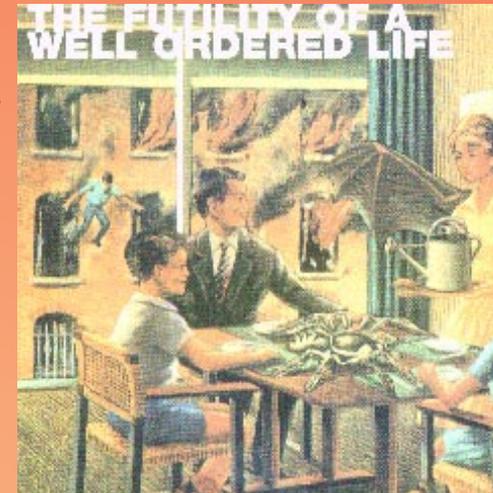
with a tenor sax, sometimes playing two at the same time. (It's well worth seeing them live just to watch him perform this feat.) Even though this may sound like a limiting formation, Morphine have produced three engaging albums so far and are showing no signs of stopping yet.

The first two, *Good and Cure for Pain*, both sold over 250,000 copies in the United States. Yes, the third album, refines the Morphine style further, the high points being the sublime *Supersex* and edgy *Sharks*. Unlike most of today's popular bands,

Morphine are pioneering a sound all of their own, and long may they continue to do this.

**The Futility Of A Well Ordered Life**  
**Various Artists**  
**Alternative Tentacles**

This is the label formed by Jello Biafra, the ex singer of the Dead Kennedys. Since these relatively halcyon days he has moved on to form Lard, a very noisy band indeed. It's Lard that start this compilation with a song entitled *Porkboy*, a typically fast and loud Biafra track. It's followed by D.O.A who's *Already Dead* is also fast and noisy. Next up it's the Hansen



Brothers who's *Jack Off* sounds rather unsurprisingly fast and ..erm noisy. The next ten tracks, bar the odd talking bit, all pound out noise very quickly. Jello Biafra seems to

have formed a record label which has a large number of punk bands that all sound the same. If this is your bag you'll be in noise heaven. If it's not then you'll have to wait right at the end of the album before a 'nonpunk' track appears.

*The Futility Of A Well Ordered Life* retails at the price of a CD single and as there are only really four different tracks on it this seems pretty reasonable.

(CH)

**MERCURY REV:**  
**See You On The Other Side**  
**(Beggars Banquet)**

Mercury Rev used to be a rambling neo-psychedelic outfit with a frontman who looked genuinely deranged, though it transpires that he was merely obnoxious, apparently. He's gone, and



the rest have carried on to produce their finest work yet. *See you on the Other Side* is something of a rarity, a wholly self contained record that creates its own environment and takes you in for the forty minutes or so that it lasts. Pastoral, without being drippy, it really is the most perfect collision of jazz, hard rock and psychedelia. Imagine Talk Talk with a bit of life, and none of the 'we are True Artists' posturing and you'll be close. *Young Mans Stride* is truly kicking (What? - Ed), and if the year sees a better segue than that between the lovely *Racing the Tide* and *Close Encounters of the Third Grade* (great title!) I'll be amazed. This is an outstanding record and where else will you hear the Tettix Wave Accumulator? Nowhere, that's where. This will take you to the other side. Recommended.

(JB)

**LOTION:**  
**Nobody's Cool (Big Cat)**

New Yorkers Lotion looked like real contenders for a week or two last year with a couple of incendiary live shows and a fine, if overlooked, debut album *Full Isaac*. Their follow up is hardly eagerly awaited, especially with something of a backlash against American music at the moment, but their strengths of approaching the epic without seeming clumsy should see them through. *Juggernaut*



veers towards straightforward Rock, and the jerky but catchy *The New Timmy* demonstrates their skill. But the highlight here is surely the wonderful ten minute ramble of *Precious Tiny* which just piles it on, like Mercury Rev doing *Sympathy for the Devil*. Yep, that good. Whether anyone will notice is a moot point, but if people need a Big Rock Sound that doesn't scream 'Look at me. Aren't I wonderful?' this could be the one.

(JB)

**MUFFS:**  
**Blonder and Blonder (Reprise)**

Los Angeles' Muffs may feature Roy McDonald of long time triers Redd Kross on drums but their Unique Selling Point is undoubtedly the extraordinary voice of singer/ guitarist/ songwriter Kim Shattuck, who gives this amiably mindless collection of songs its unifying theme as she hollers like a bubblegum Courtney Love. Basically when Shattuck screams the Muffs rock, especially on the frantic opener *Agony* ('Now you're living in aaaaar-gonnnee') and the excellently dumb *Red Eyed Troll*. A lot of the rest is anonymous sub Bangles girlie pop, and Shattuck can't really hold a tune when there's actually one there, but it's certainly a laugh if you like this sort of

thing. They sound like a Good Night Out to me.

(JB)

**KENDRA SMITH:**  
**Five Ways of Disappearing (4 AD)**



Kendra Smith was once half of Oval, the band that invented the swinging country cum folksy sound which Mazzy Star have made lucrative. While her erstwhile bandmate David Roback formed them and took the cash and kudos, Smith moved up to the woods of Northern California

and listened to a few old Nico records. Yes, if the sound of the pump organ is your thing, then this rather ridiculous record is your thing. One M. Ali Yassemi plays some interesting drum patterns, the sleeve is typically tasteful from 4 AD, the words are New Age hippy tosh. I guess you can get away with this kind of stuff if you're a mysterious ice maiden from 'mitteleuropa'. It's harder for a Californian earth momma with nice teeth and a 'gee-wow' accent. Could you love an album with tracks called *Bohemian Zebulon*, *Space Unadorned* and



*Maggots.* Very bizarre.

'Rilly' weird,even.

(JB)

**YOUNG GODS:**

**Only Heaven**

**(Play it again Sam)**

If the Young Gods were the sound of the future in 1987, with their line up of singer, drummer and sampler, what does that make them eight years on, now that Sega is old hat , man, and we've all got a multimedia PC in the spare room which makes noises that scare granny and delight the pets.

Because the finest band ever to come out of Switzerland (apart from female punks Liliput, recently 'sampled' in a way by Elastica.) are just the same as they ever were. Breathly, strongly accented vocals, now in English, pounding programmed drums and lots of crunching guitar samples and keyboard sequences. Sometimes it works. *Donnez Les Esprits* is nicely atmospheric despite the sub Cult lyrics. Most of the time it doesn't cut it anymore, and a once innovative sound is now old hat. Ain't nothing sadder than an out of date vision of the future. It's still a great name though.

(JB)

**YO LA TENGO:**

**Electr-O-Pura (City Slang)**



It's a long time ago since New Jersey's Yo La Tengo were the

new new Velvet Underground, a term that bands in their field get labelled with as often as Manchester United wingers get labelled the 'new George Best', but their muse is still intact.

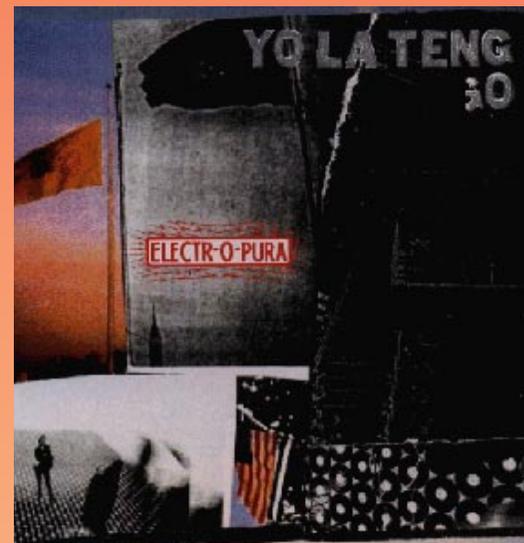
This time , to avoid categorization, the sleeve claims that all the tracks are between two and four minutes long, a strategy that worked perfectly when a populist New York FM station found itself playing a nine minute workout recently. It's more of the same really, fine guitar workouts interspersed with some gentler, after hours moments. Ira Kaplan really is an underrated guitarist and the organ sounds freakishly powerful when used. Standouts include *Flying Lesson* , like *Sister* - era Sonic Youth (praise comes no higher) and the wonderful *Paul Is Dead* which will instantly evoke New York City to anyone familiar with the place. Why aren't they better known? Why is sixties actress Eleanor Bron mentioned on this record ? (well why is she ? we're all waiting ? - Ed)

(JB)

**THE HIGH LLAMAS:**

**Gideon Gaye (Alpaca Park)**

Last years second High Llamas album gets a deserved reissue through Sony



as more people pick up on the singular vision of ex Microdisney mainstay and oft time Stereolab collaborator Sean O'Hagan. Gideon Gaye (ho ho) represents the little area of the brain where the Beach Boys and Steely Dan reside next to each other, usually only possessed by musos and jaded hacks, but this often lovely

record holds wider appeal than that. O'Hagan and crew aren't averse to recycling an idea if it's already been shown to work. *The Goat Looks On* , a lament for the death of Dulwich Hamlet football ground (My Favourite team !! by this record now - Ed) appears about five times in various forms, and that's not the only track to get reworked. But even the instrumentals are great, and *Checking In* *Checking Out* deserves to be the hit he's waited over a decade for. Recommended.

(JB)

**POND:**

**The Practice of Joy before Death (SubPop)**

Hmm, there really are some things that America just does better than Britain. Big budget movies, hamburgers, the reflective anomie of disaffected youth



wondering whether it ought to stake a claim in society or not... I think it's the basic fact that the way you speak gives away very little beyond your geographical origins, and often not even that. You'd hardly guess that Richard Linklater's movies are set in Texas for instance. Portland's Pond are fairly unhappy, if unspecified. They're good at it though. I like this record for lines like 'Money makes you forget now, contented as a pregnant cow' and 'anarchists clean my house, smoke flowing from their beards' and its Beatlesque backing. I usually get confused by the plethora of US bands with one word names, but I'll try to remember Pond. A good if undramatic album. I wonder if their moms nag them to get a real job. (JB)

**SMOG:**  
**Wild Love (City Slang)**

Smog is basically one Bill Callahan, a man who gets annoyed when the term 'lo-fi' is mentioned in connection with his work. Oops. This is his fourth proper album, and often sounds like the work of an easily distracted teenager fooling about on a home keyboard. It's just as often witty, melodic and downright touching, and frequently played in time too. Opener *Bathysphere* is particularly good, hanging on a limited if relentless drum pattern which



forces restraint and increases the tension, *It's Rough* is a classic two chord whine with some hilarious lyrics and *Prince Alone in the Studio* marries early New Order to a sense of humour. Not everyone will get this distinctly unrocking approach, but stick in there. This man is well worth investigating. Best line 'You look like you need a drink...I don't know why you ever gave it up.' How about a wry whiskey? (JB)

**Single Reviews**

**Foo Fighters**  
**This is a call**  
**Roswell**

Since David Grohl, Nirvana's ex-drummer, announced that he was putting a band together most of the world's population have been waiting

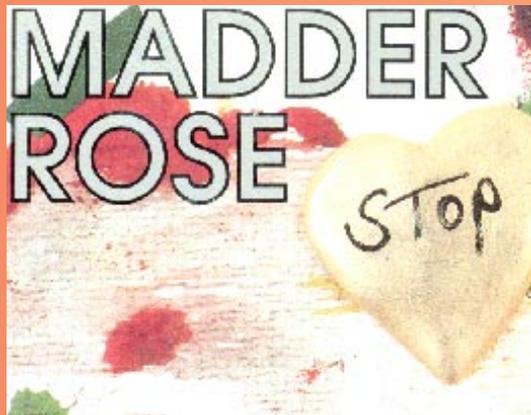
to find out what they were going to sound like. Grohl has tried to play a low-key game in order to help the band find it's feet before the media have the chance to reach conclusions based on a couple of early outings. This, of course, only served to heighten the anticipation. Were they so bad that they wanted to avoid publicity or were they so good that they could afford not to court it? Well judgement day has arrived with the release of their first 'difficult' single, *This Is A Call*. Grohl has promoted himself from drumming to another person's tune from songwriter, singer and ..erm.. playing all the instruments himself. And it is a transition which seems to have worked. Despite some rather weak lyrics the tune is catchy and shows plenty of promise for the future. Not yet in the Nirvana league but then how many people are?

*The Foo Fighters debut album is reviewed in this edition of RAGE as is their first live show in this country.*  
CH

**Edwin Collins**  
**A girl like you - Sentana**

There's an old cliché in popular music which says what Belgium does today the rest of the world will do tomorrow. This record was number one in Belgium on it's first release. Having broken the difficult Belgian market Edwin Collins knows that now is the time to re-release the sublime *A girl*

like you in Britain. Now Britain has the chance to catch up. It will be difficult to stop it on the back of the momentum gained from our European partner. On top of this all those people who took holidays in Belgium over the winter will buy it to remind them of the good times that they had there. A little clever marketing, a bit of research and now Edwin has a top five hit on his hands.



Probably. (I think you've been on the Belgian beer again Colin - Ed)

CH

**Madder Rose**  
**The Love You Save - Seed**

If a list was made of what popular music needs towards the bottom of it would be more Smiths albums reissued on a slightly different format, the person formally known as Prince working a little faster and



more releases from supermodels. Slightly higher, in about 560th place, would be the need for another St Etienne. No more, Madder Rose have taken on the arduous task of making lightweight records that have little substance and magnificently struck another item from the popular music needs list. A revised list will include Madder Rose returning to what they do well, which is not this.  
CH

**U2**  
**Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me, Kill Me.**  
**Island**

This is the theme tune to the motion picture Batman Forever. If Batman needed a leg up from U2 or U2 are being pushed via Batman is unclear but musically it's an evocative tune with Bono's typical underplayed lyrics. The song's bound to be a huge hit, the film will be massive and all Batman and U2 fans can sleep easily.  
CH

**The Bluetones**  
**Are You Blue Or Are You Blind?**  
**Quality Recording**

The Bluetones are a modest band with a lot to be modest about. Their music

is very similar to the Teenage Fanclub's apart from the fact that it's not very good. *Are You Blue Or Are You Blind* has far too many producers tricks and far too little musical appeal. Even moving the guitars from the left



speaker to the right one does not camouflage their lack of creation. Avoid

CH.

**Swervedriver**  
**Last Day On Earth**  
**Creation**

Swervedriver return with the slower self consciously epic *Last Day On Earth*. Having fallen from the Oxford bandwagon, Swervedriver need to reinvent themselves quickly before a new generation of indie fans appear on



the scene who've never heard of them. Writing some good songs would be a start. They used to

**18 Wheeler**  
**Steel Guitars - Creation**

Steel Guitars is the best track on 18 Wheeler's second album *Formica* (see RAGE2 for the review) Falling somewhere near The Byrds, The Beach Boys and The Monkeys, 18 Wheeler write catchy tunes which linger in the memory. Sadly no one will play them so no one buys their records. It would be a real shame if they split up because they thought that nobody cared. So why don't you give them a helping hand and buy a couple of copies for your friends and family?

CH

**Skunk Anansie**  
**I can Dream**  
**One Little Indian**

Skunk Anansie's energetic live shows have left them tipped to be the 'next big thing'. *I Can Dream* is a rather straight forward song which is unlikely to capture the nation by storm but should not slow down the Skunk Anansie band wagon either. I'd wait for the album if I was you.

CH

**Whale**  
**Pay For Me - Hut**



Whale come from Sweden and used to have jobs in children's television. They pump out a mighty sound, a simple beat with thunderous chords played over it. Their last single was given endless promotion on MTV as they exploited their TV background with a cheap but cheerful video. However, it didn't sell any copies. *Pay For Me* is not as good as the first one but cannot fail to do better, can it?

CH

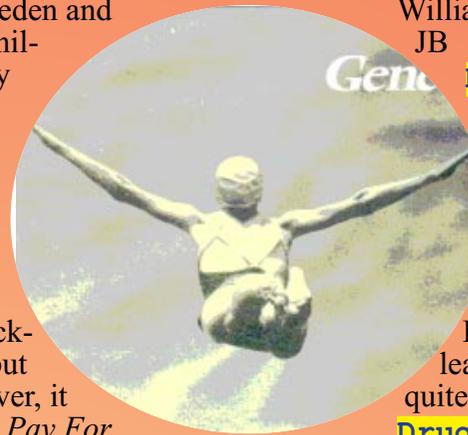
**Gene**  
**Olympian - Costermonger**

Olympian is the title track from Gene's debut album ..erm.. Olympian (see RAGE1 for the review). Is it me or do Gene sound a bit like The Smiths during their early days. The bonus track is The Beatles' *Don't Let Me Down*, which sounds eerily like The Smiths covering The Beatles.

CH

**Sebadoh**  
**Not Too Amused - Domino**

Anyone who fancies buying Sebadohs new single will probably own it already, seeing as it's from their *Bakesale* LP which came out last year. They probably won't fancy bassist, Jason, who seems to have put on a lot of weight on the sleeve photo. Hank



Williams is a new track. It's arse.  
JB

**Menswear**  
**Daydreamer - Laurel**

Britain's ..erm.. finest young band rifle through Elastica's record collection for this exact copy of Wire's *Lowdown*.

Eternal purgatory awaits, or at least driving a minicab. Maybe not quite yet though.. CH

**Drugstore**  
**Fader - Honey records**

Drugstore continue their unflinching homage to the Jesus and Mary chain with *Fader*, a tune packed with fuzzy guitars, excessive reverb and droning lyrics. It's worth not buying this just to avoid the dire version of Sugar Sugar.

CH

**Anita Lane**  
**The Worlds A Girl**  
**Mute**

Wow! A Bad Seed colaberation that sounds more like the Tindersticks, mainly due to the lovely violin. Anita's fetching speech impediment could charm the pants of a monk. Her former paramour Nick Cave appears in covers of Peter Cook and Dudley Moore's *Bedazzled* and an extraordinary stab at *Je t'aime, moi non plus*. You can smell the singed hotel room sheets from