



Jeff Berlin – *Low Standards*

Yes, I know that **Jeff Berlin** was once asked to join **Van Halen**. Now, *why* this was, I have no idea. He's far too talented and innovative a bass player to have sat around playing those **Michael Anthony** basslines; they could have gotten **Dee Dee Ramone**. Anyway, Berlin's impressive chops are on display in the proper context on his new solo album *Low Standards*. This is eight tracks of instrumental jazz, much of it in hard bop style. The playing is thrilling and rooted in pop-accessibility; it's sure to please both jazz fans and those who are generally musically open-minded.



The Blow Monkeys – *Feels Like a New Morning*

Quite big in their native UK, **The Blow Monkeys** scored fewer hits stateside. Inactive for 17 years, the Dr. Robert-led group picked back up six years ago. *Feels Like a New Morning* is tuneful, warm and fringedly, a bit like Squeeze without their level of wordplay and humor. With a high style approach that recalls both **Roxy Music** and **The Style Council**, The Blow Monkeys are less distinctive than either, but still far better than their modest success in the US charts would suggest. The album includes a bonus disc full of Dr. Robert's solo acoustic readings of band favorites.