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Metal gods, singers, songwriters and Stooges

They're new to me

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This week, I'm reviewing new releases by bands and artists I'm not familiar with. The first CD is the latest offering from Midwestern rocker Michael Stanley; the next is the newest solo album from King's X leader Dug Pinnick. After that, a double-sized package from England's Blow Monkeys and a bizarre but funky offering comes from the tightly wrapped Here Come The Mummies.

'The Ride,' Michael Stanley (Line Level Music/MVDAudio, HHH)

This May 7 CD with a gloriously wrecked car on front is singer/songwriter/bandleader Michael Stanley's 24th release. It follows last year's "The Hang," which Stanley has called the "darkest" album of his career. Despite the cover wreck, vocalist/guitarist/songwriter Stanley and cohorts (vocalist Jennifer Lee, guitarists Danny Powers & Marc Lee Shannon, piano/organist Bob Pelander, drummer Tommy Dobeck, bassist Eroc Sosinski, percussionist Rodney Psyka and saxophonist Paul Christensen) have crafted a mostly joyful bunch of songs here.

Unfortunately, once I got a few songs in, the "good album" became a "good EP."

Highlights include the horn-driven "Shiny Things" and "Shining Through," the mid-tempo title tune, "Take That Ride" and the sour-sounding "Making Beds (In a Burning House)."

This is music similar to that played by bar bands of my youth, with a broader palette of instruments. Those who dig that scene will enjoy it.

'Naked,' Dug Pinnick (RockArmy Records, HHHH)

This May 7 issue is the latest solo album from Dug Pinnick, the leader of legendary hard rockers King's X. It was recorded at his dUgTone Studio, and is very primal in nature, from the molasses-tempo grooves to the sludgy vocals. However, Dug isn't imitating the Cookie Monster, so the singing is at least marginally melodic. Credits for who plays what are mostly absent, so I assume Pinnick does most of it.

Highlights of this multi-layered album include the brutal opener "Whatcha Gonna Do?" the tempo-shifting "Speeding Love," the slinky "Ain't That the Truth" and the almost vertigo-inducing "I'm Not Gonna Freak Out."

This one isn't my personal preference, but fans of extremely heavy guitar will enjoy it greatly.

'Feels Like A New Morning,' The Blow Monkeys (Cherry Red/MVDAudio, HHH)

This May 7 double CD follows Cherry Red's reissues of the first two albums by The Blow Monkeys. This one contains 10 new songs, plus the bonus disc with acoustic versions of The Blow Monkeys' "big hits."

Your reviewer hasn't heard much about The Blow Monkeys. They're a British band that formed in 1981, had several hits including "Digging Your Scene" (No. 12 UK, No. 14 U.S. in 1986) and disbanded at the beginning of the 1990s. They reunited in 2007.

Band lineup is "Dr. Robert" Howard/vocals, guitars, piano and pump organ; Neville Henry/tenor and soprano saxophones plus melodica; Mick Anker/bass guitar; and Tony Kiley/drums and percussion. Nigel Hopkins adds keyboards plus "strings and things and Magic Dust."

CD 1 is highlighted by the slow-burning "Icarus in Flames" and the short "Hold Everything Dear;" the other tunes sound too Euro-dancy for me. The bonus CD features Dr. Robert playing the hits acoustically, highlighted by the aforementioned "Digging Your Scene."

Those who enjoy slightly disco-ish British pop will enjoy this one.

'Cryptic,' Here Come The Mummies (Sphinxter, HHHH)

This May 14 release comes from a band whose members have names like Eddie Mummy, K.W. Tut, Mummy Cass and more. They have released five independent albums, and there are rumors some of the Mummies may be reincarnated Grammy winners. The "Mummy" stuff is certainly original as gimmicks go, and the music is funky in the old-school sense with a tight, Earth Wind & Fire-like horn section. They're not quite as funky as vintage James Brown, but are serving a funk-flavored buffet spread over musical genres.

Highlights include the reggae-flavored "Cruel Old Sun," which refers to long-ago hot workdays for the vocalist; the ska-ish "Petting Zoo;" the up-tempo title song and the song it segues into, "Come Alive," which is a zombie-like mission statement.

Funk fans and those with a dark sense of humor will dig this album. I hope HCTM will make an appearance close enough to drive to.

Local independent record store and upcoming columns

I received an email notification about Maynard's Music at 2209 Government St. in Ocean Springs from a reader who saw the column a few weeks back bemoaning the absence of local stores of that type. I haven't checked it out yet, but will pretty soon. The next few columns will feature new releases from Kermit Ruffins, Davell Crawford, Tom Keifer and more.

Ricky Flake, a former punk rocker and current music fan, lives in Biloxi. Reach him at rickyflake@bellsouth.net.

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