



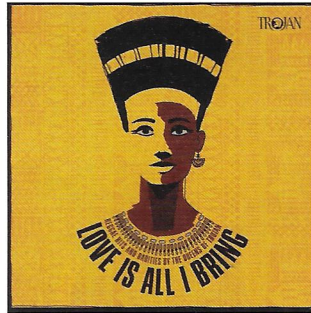
VARIOUS ARTISTS

HOPE & ANCHOR FRONT ROW FESTIVAL

(Rhino)

The sounds of 1977, live, hot 'n' sweaty.
8/10

The Hope & Anchor pub and music venue in Islington played a vital part in the development of punk, pub rock, rhythm and blues and other musical forms from the mid-'70s, under Albion Management and Agency and landlord John Eichler. With the pub under threat of closure, Eichler hosted several fund-raising events, including the Front Row Festival, which ran from 22 November to 15 December 1977. This bumper double album of live recordings from the event was originally released by Warner Bros. in 1978 and reached No.28 on the national album chart. This classy vinyl reissue has much to savour, including a kicking, keyboards-drenched 'Straighten Out' by the Stranglers, a spiky 'Quite Disappointed from 999, the Tyla Gang's stuttering, swaggering 'Styrofoam', Suburban Studs' pounding, old-school punk beauty 'I Hate School', and The Saints' typically frantic 'Demolition Girl'.
Shane Baldwin



VARIOUS ARTISTS

REGGAE HITS & RARITIES BY THE QUEENS OF TROJAN: LOVE IS ALL I BRING

(Trojan)

Windrush reggae classics from vital female musicians.
9/10

With the mighty 'Uptown Top Ranking' by Alethea and Donna up first, this album celebrates women of the Windrush generation across two killer discs. The reggae revelling LP holds no punches, including a host of original top tunes: 'Steppin' Out of Babylon' – Marcia Griffiths, 'I'm Still In Love With You' – Marcia Aitken and 'Honey Hush' – Millie Small are a few examples. This double disc release displays the Trojan logo proudly next to a collage of pictures of Paula Clarke, Lorna Bennett, Sonya Spence, Sophia George and Marcia Aitken. A six-page booklet continues with pictures of more of the genre's most vital female talents plus sleeve notes from The Bodysnatchers' Rhoda Dakar. With Trojan recently celebrating 50 years, this is an essential collection, proudly underlining these superb songs for a new generation.
Paula Frost

NEKROMANTIX

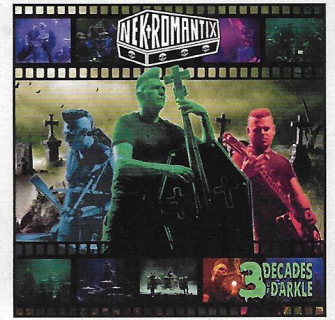
3 DECADES OF DARKLE

(Cleopatra)

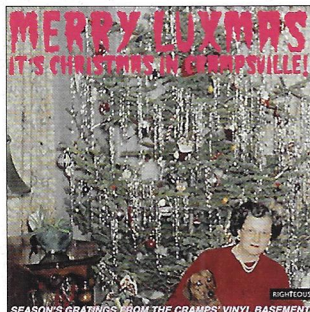
Danish psychobilly trio's career spanning live recording.
7/10

Beam anyone who was grimly hanging on to the corpse of the UK psychobilly scene in the 1990's into 2020 and they'd be stunned to see what has become of the Nekromantix. The Danish trio were always on the darker side of the movement, Kim Nekroman's coffin bass their visual unique selling point and musically they were always pushing boundaries, their second full-length 'Curse of the Coffin' was highly acclaimed back in 1991 but few people were still listening. Fast forward to the turn of the millennium and Kim and Co, still complete with coffin bass, were on Hellcat compilations with the likes of Rancid and the toast of Californian youth. Nobody would suggest they didn't deserve the success, but it seemed an unlikely fit for the band that always something unhealthy and slightly sinister about them.

The history lesson ends here but carries on with this 19-track multimedia comp, on DVD, Blu-Ray and CD. Recorded in Santa Ana the current line-up Nekromantix belt through their back catalogue from Nervous Records days from the frantic 'Alice in Psycholand' to their Hellcat 'hits' 'Subcultural Girl' and 'Who Killed The Cheerleader' where the band proved that they could come up with catchy, commercial, psychobilly that wasn't alienating existing fans of the genre. The gig is suitably dimly lit with a decent, if mostly circle,



pit pummelling along. Sound and visual quality is top notch, as is the band's performance, a very professionally done package showcasing an excellent snapshot of a lengthy career.
Simon Nott



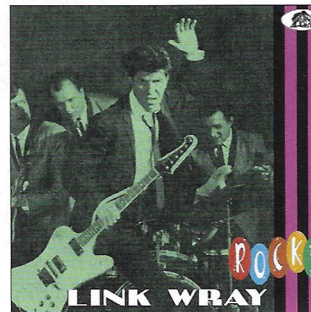
VARIOUS ARTISTS

MERRY LUXMAS

(Cherry Red)

It's Christmas in Crampsville.
5/10

The latest in a series of compilations supposedly gleaned from the basement vinyl crates of Lux and Ivy of The Cramps. (They must have had a bloody big basement considering the rate these compilations keep coming out!) As on previous collections, it's another quirky trip back to '50s and '60s taking in blues, jazz and rock 'n' roll, all with a Christmas theme (as you might have guessed.) There aren't many traditional songs on here, apart from two renditions of 'Rudolph' by The Mellodeers and The Cadillacs but some downright odd offerings like 'I Want Hippopotamus for Christmas' by Gayal Peevey or 'O Christmas Tree' by Spike Jones and His City Slickers. Seems a little odd reviewing a Christmas compilation immediately after the event but maybe someone might be looking for a stocking filler for the next one.
Lee Cotterell



LINK WRAY

ROCKS

(Bear Family)

The pioneering axeman's rocking.
8/10

Anyone who has a penchant for music of the '50s and '60s will almost certainly have some of guitarist Link Wray's tunes in their collection, that's going to include 'Rumble' which hit the top 20 in the USA and UK in 1958. If urban myth turns out to be true, the record was banned from many radio stations for supposedly inciting violence, some achievement for an instrumental. You have to wait until the 34th and final track for the hit. What you'll learn listening while getting that far is the rich musical legacy this hugely influential guitarist left. This collection includes tracks from 1958 to 1966 spanning several labels including some lesser known gems including 'Big City After Dark' backing his brother Ray and two rare vocal tracks by Link. This is a fascinating collection easily illustrates why artists diverse as Neil Young, Pete Townshend and the Cramps were besotted.
Simon Nott

THE FLYS

TODAY BELONGS TO ME: THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS 1977-1980

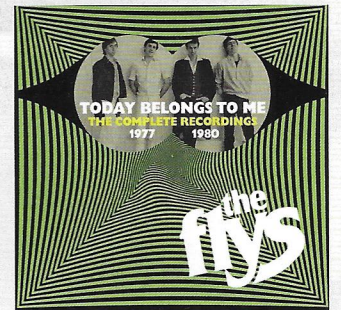
(Cherry Red)

Do we miss you? Yes, we do!
8/10

The reputation of Coventry new wave band The Flys teeters largely on 1978 single 'Love And A Molotov Cocktail', its tale of suburban familial dysfunction and catchy chorus chiming down through the decades. This and the vast majority of the band's repertoire sprang from the pen of guitarist/singer Neil O'Connor (brother of Hazel) who, together with guitarist David Freeman, bassist Joe Hughes and a string of drummers would morph from the proggy Midnight Circus into The Flys at the dawn of punk.

A five-track EP (included here) recorded at the legendary Pathway Studio spawned '...Molotov Cocktail', earning them an EMI deal leading to debut album 'Waikiki Beach Refugees'. Stabs of fresh power pop like 'Fun City' and 'We Don't Mind The Rave' mingling with the brooding art-punk of 'Some Kind Of Girl' and 'I Don't Know', it was a good but slightly clumsy collection yielding mixed reviews. It has, however, worn rather well.

By the time second album 'Own' saw the light of day in the autumn of '79, the UK had turned on to the emerging Coventry sound of 2Tone, and few had time for The Flys. It's a shame as it's a superb album. With O'Connor now



sharing the writing with Freeman, their futuristic art-punk tendencies had taken hold with increased use of synths and detached robotic vocals, and tracks like 'Fascinate Me', '16 Down' and 'Frenzy Is 23' compare well with near contemporaries The Cure, The Church and Psychedelic Furs. A wealth of bonus material completes this excellent set.
Gerry Ranson