



Laibach: fans of PhoneShop?

US players? *Plays Bach?* Martial Solal's amusing repartee and solos frisque? How about Jef Gilson, precision pianist who didn't bother with the limits and spent the 60s pulling African, Arabian, Latin and any-old-merde-he-liked into his music?

Chansons De Jazz, a beautifully retro flipbacked 10" compilation, finds him with a selection of singers, some of whom have mislaid their names. No such problem for Celia, who wafts like a negligee over refrigerant-filled organ and percussion. Beatrice Amy's *J'en Ai Assez*, with twangy guitar chasing stuttering baritone sax, is the era incarnate. *Dans La Neige Et Le Vent* is in *My Favourite Things* jazz waltz-time and will have gentlemen of a certain age sighing. It's common to call stuff like this "evocative" – meaningless unless you say of what. OK, it's evocative of a Gallic passion Brits will never know. Only one track is weak; you could live without this record, but why should you?

The Archives is unissued stuff; from the hesitant snippet of *Bis Indicatif* to the irresistible *Cubano Chant Inca*, it takes you through the gamut of musical emotions – and that's just the first two tracks (of 19). Live stuff, rehearsals, outtakes; it's like being there, not that I knew there was a "there" before I heard this. Alluring and fascinating, it's a long meal, a philosophical argument et un fucue with the mistress. Superlatif. *Ian McCann*

Peter Hammill/ Gary Lucas

Other World

★★★★★

Esoteric EANTCD 1026

Appetising art-rock alliance

From an initial meeting in 1973, it took 39 years for Peter Hammill and Gary Lucas to work together. In the interim, Hammill voyaged as the cult artist's cult artist, while Lucas went on to play in the final incarnation of

Captain Beefheart's Magic Band and gained a reputation as one of the world's most innovative guitarists.

Those expecting something completely leftfield with *Other World* may be a little disappointed. Built out of loops and atmospheres, the result is surprisingly linear and listenable, possibly the most direct Hammill has sounded on record in recent years. If a reference point is needed, 1981's *Sitting Targets* springs to mind – in fact *Some Kind Of Fracas* recalls that album's title track; Lucas adds subtle guitar to the tracks, more in terms of sound washes than wailing solos.

Of *Kith & Kin* and *Spinning Coins* are beautiful and reflective, while it's lovely to hear Hammill set against Lucas' jaunty fingerpicking on *This Is Showbiz*; the instrumental passage in *Built From Scratch* is a dreamy, unsettling reverie. Elsewhere, *Altar Of Roses* and *Glass* are contemplative instrumentals that punctuate the songs.

Hammill describes the album as having "some of the characteristics of a warped folk music... from another world", and Lucas has said in interviews that Hammill is up there with Beefheart and Jeff Buckley, two of his most famous collaborators. On this evidence, it's hard to disagree. *Daryl Easlea*

John Harle & Marc Almond

The Tyburn Tree

★★★★★

Sospiro Noir, cat no tbc (CD / 2LP)

A capital notion

Among saxophonist/composer John Harle's panoply of achievements, last year's lambent *Art Music* bears a special significance – not least because it introduced Harle to a simpatico and invaluable collaborator in Marc Almond. It's hard to imagine a better-qualified and more ardent master of ceremonies than this erstwhile Mamba and Soft Cellmate for

The Tyburn Tree, a "Dark London" song cycle, which sifts with grim relish through some of the capital city's bleakest historical episodes.

A high-minded undertaking, enlivened nevertheless with a spirited sense of the low-caste cackling of the feckless hoi polloi in the stalls, *The Tyburn Tree* transcends the visceral allure of its horror-show subject matter thanks to the emotional breadth of Almond's compelling, immersive performances. Even at his most vaudevillian, theatrical remove (as in *My Fair Lady* or the hanging matter of *Poor Henry*, a macabre fairground waltz from a carnival of souls), Almond puts you at the scene and into the mindset of protagonists and victims alike.

Harle's musical settings, meanwhile, are consistently expansive and imaginative. *Dark Angel* verges on transfigured *Sprechstimme* (courtesy of guest soprano, Sarah Leonard), *Spring Heeled Jack* is proggy, choppy and suffocating, and the sumptuous, cinematic swoon of *The Vampire Of Highgate* casts the witlessness of contemporary big-budget musical theatre into stark relief. *Oregano Rathbone*

Tubby Hayes Quartet

Seven Steps To Heaven:

Live At The Hopbine 1972

★★★★★

Gearbox GB 1523 (LP)

Time running out, spirit running hot

What's Tubby Hayes last legacy? That of a wrecked old man out of time, ruined by heroin, staggering along after heart disease and a potentially lethal infection, literally with no future?

Think again. Recorded in May 1972, when the free-flowing reeds genius had little more than a year to live, this may not be hi-fi, as the (vaguely misleading; it was captured on a Revox reel-to-reel) cassette on the sleeve suggests, but it finds Tubby

loud, clear and in fierce form on three standards in the company of Mike Pyne's lyrical piano, Daryl Runswick's beefy bass (despite an understandably thin "mix") and the mighty Tony Oxley's drums.

Simon Spillett's sleeve notes state that The Hopbine's host asked Tubby to take it easy. But his fire still burned, and even if there's a cry in his lines in some of the 14-minute-plus *Alone Together*, there's no shortage of energy and force, as the free-form finale suggests. Someday *My Prince Will Come* finds our hero on a humming flute, spitting, bright and punchy; you'd never know the troubles he'd seen. *Seven Steps To Heaven*, set at a challenging tempo, is phenomenally precise and powerful, re-emphasising that this was the greatest British tenorman of his day, even then. This is music with edge, still questing; if he had nowhere left to go, others on the domestic scene were stuck in a similar cul-de-sac. For Tubby there would be no jazz-funk boom, no disco solos by numbers. Hear this and be glad. *Ian McCann*



Helloween

The Dark Ride:

Special Edition

★★★★

Nuclear Blast NB 2364-0

Rabbit Don't Come Easy

★★★★

Nuclear Blast NB 3279-0

All hands to the pumpkins for power metal revival

After a triumphant decade that saw them charting across Europe, German power metal legends Helloween faltered in the 90s. It wasn't just changing fashions that did for them; reshuffles saw the group lose both virtuoso guitarist Kai Hansen and Michael Kiske, one of the metal vocalists of the 80s.

After Kiske's 1993 swansong (career nadir/anomaly *Chameleon*), there was a gradual improvement as the Andi Deris-fronted Helloween found its feet. By 2000's *The Dark Ride*, the new configuration had outlasted the classic line-up, and the album was touted as a new, "darker" Helloween. But though it eschews the "wackiness" of yore, it's

basically straightforward power metal, with moments of Queensryche-esque drama; sturdy, rather than classic. 2003's *Rabbit Don't Come Easy* revisits the band's lighter side (cartoon pumpkins abound) and adds a little of the near-classical ebullience and power of the 80s.

The "special" nature of these editions comes in the form of three bonus tracks apiece and, though they're nicely packaged, sleeve notes would have been welcome. For the uninitiated it's all a bit frothy and unmemorable; the 80s remains the starting point. *William Pinfold*

Laibach Spectre

★★★★★

Mute STUMM 358 (CD / LP)

Got liver if you want it!

Like REM, Nick Cave and countless other artists that started as outsiders and were slowly welcomed by the mainstream, Laibach were way out in their own field before coming to the attention of a wider listening public. In the last five years they've become impossible to ignore as they turn their attention to matters of statehood, oppression, and liberty. It might sound daunting, but the collective make compelling anthems out of such topics.

From the opening refrain of *Whistleblowers*, *Spectre* is an astounding work. Blending dance, rock, vocal choir, folk – and even 80s guitar rock on one occasion – they work in the echoes of *Nightwish* one minute, and kick open the doors to the electro palace the next. *Eat Liver!* even finds room for some humour while clipping along like Yello, exhorting all to eat the nutritional offal in question.

Mid-way through, a track called *Eurovision* uses Massive Attack's trip-hop for a source, while addressing Europe's threat of instability from border control, flaccid political leadership and religious indifference: "In the absence of God we will pray to police." The electro bludgeon of *Resistance Is Futile* demands that listeners fall at the group's feet. "We are Laibach and you will be assimilated." Along with the liver, no doubt... *Ian Shirley*

Little Feat

Hellzapoppin': The 1975

Halloween Broadcast

★★★★★

Let Them Eat Vinyl LETV 113 LP (2LP)

Tight but slack; outshines Feat's official live LP

Seventies jam band supreme, Little Feat were responsible for some outstanding vinyl bootlegs. Now here's another