



The Replacements: how does this one go Paul? errrrrrrr

The boxed 3CD and 180g LP incorporates an alternate album *Raw Sessions*, notably unedited "Take 37,000" of WATC, a punk-informed run-through of Sheer Heart Attack, unaired take on All Dead, All Dead, wherein Freddie demonstratively replaces Brian's vocal, a sun-kissed Spread Your Wings, and Roger fronting a Fight From The Inside demo redolent of Mk Four Deep Purple. Get Down Make Love benefits from complementary instrumental fleshing-out, and a less florid Who Needs You is better for it.

The 19-track *Bonus Tracks* includes less essential instrumentals and a handful-plus of live versions, recorded 1977-82, but there's a trademark retro rock'n'roll number in the outtake, Feelings Feelings, WWRY with spoken-word intro and fiery guitar, and the piano decadence of Spread Your Wings, a *la* period John Miles. For those who missed the news first time round, time to play catch-up. *Tim Jones*

The Replacements

For Sale: Live At Maxwell's 1986

★★★★★
Sire/Rhino 081227934194 (2CD/2LP)
Will you dare?

While dedicated 'Mats heads will no doubt have had a ratty cassette of this filed next to the infamous likes of *The Shit Hits The Fans* and *Shit, Shower & Shave*, it's never sounded this good – their rambunctious charm perfectly preserved.

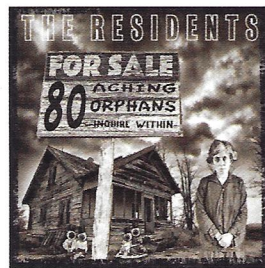
From opener *Hayday*, they manage the neat trick of sounding jet-propelled, yet utterly shambolic. That's the thing with the real deal – they make it look easy. Any number of bands can wear tennis shoes with holes in them, drink themselves stupid and look like they've been dragged

through their mum's hair salon backwards, but who can sound this assured while doing it? Only The Replacements.

The excitement is palpable as they careen through the 29-song set, helped along by an utter unpredictably. There's a seemingly unscheduled attempt at The Sweet's Fox On The Run that barely lasts a minute, because well, they don't know it... yet 30 seconds later they're a changed band, powering through a fearless version of Hold My Life.

Bob Stinson wouldn't see out the rest of the year as a Replacement as his damaging behaviour got the better of him, but he's on fire here, showboating around with utter joie de vivre – Color Me Impressed is a riot of total abandon, check his solo on a raucous Favorite Thing. The irritating sorts who witnessed The Replacements in their wild pomp will never tire of reminding you of the fact. This explains why.

Jamie Atkins



The Residents

80 Aching Orphans: 40 Years Of The Residents

★★★★★
Cherry Red NRTBOX 1 (4CD)
Fascinating questions with very few answers

It's rare for any band or musical project indelibly labelled "avant-garde" to achieve anything remotely approaching longevity, but San Francisco's, erm, resident

oddballs are still going strong after four decades. Avoiding even a smidgen of confidently accurate categorisation since day one, the enigmatic and always anonymous group (dig those eyeball helmets) continue to deconstruct popular music norms through multi-media experimentation and a wilful disregard of celebrity.

This box set serves to give an extended overview of their work, without succumbing to the need for explanation or analysis. In that regard it is, in itself, a characteristically baffling cornucopia of left-of-left-field ideas, intermittent glimpses of rock greatness, haphazard flights of fancy, and groundbreaking sonic daring that has both inspired and confounded followers and imitators alike.

To address any of the specific 80 recordings here would be to miss the point; even the detailed but deliciously cryptic track-by-track sleeve notes are short on clues to help paint a clear picture. Best we just wallow in the extremes of The Residents' tireless innovation, their refusal to follow any previously laid path or map one of their own, and to marvel at how this most idiosyncratic of outfits keeps on keeping on. *Terry Staunton*

John Sebastian

Stories We Could Tell: The Very Best Of

★★★★★
Varèse Vintage 3020674328 (CD)

A spoonful of sugar
It's easy to forget just how good The Lovin' Spoonful were. Their sublime folk pop isn't easily defined (the term "sublime folk pop" only covers about 13 per cent of their output) and the delightful John Sebastian hasn't been over to the UK for years. It's

a shame because while the soft, clear voice may have left some time ago, he is still an enchanting performer and majestic songwriter.

A lot of people won't have his solo albums and that's a crime. It would be hard to argue that any of his albums are lost classics (though in my humble opinion, *Tarzana Kid* comes pretty close) but they all contain some hidden treasures. This marvellous collection pulls together some of the best of these album tracks to make up a pretty convincing and darn near perfect album.

The tracks are centred beautifully around the sprawling and slightly ramshackle 16-minute epic The Four Of Us which takes us on a hazy trip across continents. And while everyone will probably be aware of Welcome Back, songs like Stories We Could Tell and Warm Baby may not be so familiar. The album is finished by four tracks from the delicious *Real Live* album and this is the only misstep on the record. They feel tagged on and just left me wanting to listen to the whole album. Overall though, this is a joy to own. The perfect Sunday afternoon LP. *Iain Lee*

Ranny Sinclair

Another Autumn

★★★★★
Modern Harmonic MH 8043 (CD/LP)

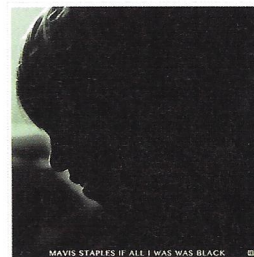
Fall favourites
Ranny Sinclair's back catalogue had, prior to this collection, been limited to four single releases. All of these songs (B-sides included) are collected on Modern Harmonic's retrospective, along with four previously unissued tracks: Sweet William, A Wonderful Guy, Barbara Allen and There Won't Be Trumpets and it is hard not

to feel like they've been bundled together, with the mix of styles revealing a disparity between the quality of tracks, rather than showcasing a variety of vocal skills.

With *Any Other Girl* tries too hard to be sexy, and is breathy in a "running dangerously out of breath" sort of way, while loud drums and organs make Ranny sound as though she's struggling to keep up. This is also a problem for *Bye Bye*, but its jazzier leanings make it more excusable.

Dave Brubeck's piano lifts both *Autumn In Our Town* and *Something To Sing About*, and they are the strongest tracks on the album, with warm, fleshed out production and intricate instrumental accompaniments for Sinclair's vocals to float over.

Whether you'll enjoy this album will likely be down to how whispery you like your jazz vocals. At times Ranny's delicate high-notes and gentle delivery winds its way around these songs nicely. At other times it is found lacking and a punchier vocal would've been welcome. *Hannah Vettese*



Mavis Staples

If All I Was Was Black

★★★★★
Anti 8714092755725 (CD/LP)

She goes high

Even on an album bursting with pride, stoicism and hard-fought wisdom, lines like, "When I say my life matters, you can say yours does too, but I betcha never have to remind anyone, to look it at from your point of view", delivered by a 78-year-old US-born black woman prove to be particularly loaded and powerful.

But not a surprise – the years may have rolled by, but the oppression and ignorance that made The Staple Singers' *Why? (Am I Treated So Bad)* or *Freedom Highway* so necessary hasn't gone away. And Staples remains uncowed; optimistic and graceful as ever in the face of intolerance. Her 13th solo album may not mince words, but crucially it has the tunes and the sound to match; thanks in no small part to a continued partnership with Wilco's Jeff Tweedy.

The cocksure blues of the opening *Little Bit* sets out her stall immediately; this doesn't sound self-consciously "retro",