

Reduction, three albums of co-writes, with most instruments played by Banks himself.

The dozen tracks of *Instinct* range from hints of Steve Hackett (All Points South) and Joe Satriani (Code Blue), to the pure Beck-isms of Swamp Report, taking in pulsating blues-rock, disco-funk, lounge and Latin rock, as well as the occasional welter of sound effects, from snatches of spoken-word to synth gizmo experimentation.

That goes double for *Self-Contained*, studio jiggery-pokery that evidently amused himself including More Foreplay and the layered-guitar Massive Trouser Clearance, while Tell Me When adopts an 80s Clapton drum machine-base sensibility, while there are Eastern flavours on The Great Dionysia and Oriental Bent. The 21-track pot-boiler even throws in a calypso lilt.

Reduction is more focused (11 tracks), throwing in dance beats on Tone Down and the fusion-leaning As Ever. There's also measured virtuosity in the likes of electro-acoustic closer, Rosa Nova, but overall, less could've been more, as Jeff demonstrates only too well. *Tim Jones*

Courtney Barnett

Tell Me How You Really Feel

★★★★
Marathon Artists MA 0122 (CD/LP/MC)
Straight talkin' songwriter's second album

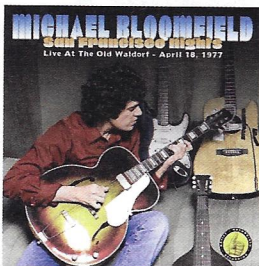
Even when early EPs marked her out as one to watch, nobody expected Melbourne singer-songwriter Courtney Barnett to become a breakout international success. Yet her 2015 debut album *Sometimes I Sit and Think, And Sometimes I Just Sit* – slacker-grunge blues full of whip-smart, deadpan observations – resonated worldwide, earning award nominations and a devoted fanbase.

After a slightly underwhelming collaborative album with fellow traveller Kurt Vile, *Tell Me How You Really Feel* sees Barnett navigating the potential pitfalls of that difficult second album by doubling down on the sound of her first.

Songs still take their cue from the US alternative scene of the early 90s – terrific, slow-burning opener Hopelessness recalls Weezer's Undone (The Sweater Song), the Kim and Kelley Deal-featuring Crippling Self-Doubt And A General Lack of Confidence sounds like, funnily enough, The

Breeders – but the hooks are catchier (see Charity) and the musicianship more muscular (I'm Not Your Mother, I'm Not Your Bitch).

Her wry gaze now tends to look outward at the world. "I could eat a bowl of alphabet soup and spit out better words than you" she scoffs on the misogyny-bashing, Gen X anthem Nameless, Faceless, quoting a genuine comment left by one of the internet's many Mr Angrys. Like the rest of the album, it's carried out with the assurance of a songwriter on top of their game. *Shaun Curran*



Michael Bloomfield

San Francisco Nights: Live At The Old Waldorf, April 18, 1977

★★★★
Rock Beat ROC 3403 (CD)
Old Waldorf blues salad
There were eerie parallels between the early careers of former Butterfield-Electric Flag guitarist Michael Bloomfield and his British counterpart Eric Clapton. Both rose in startlingly innovative outfits that took electric blues to amplified extremes, embarked on solo careers that floundered thanks to the influence of hard drugs then returned lower-key with booze in hand. Obviously, Clapton fought back but Bloomfield wasn't so lucky and fatally overdosed in 1981.

He spent his last years playing Bay Area niteries while releasing albums on John Fahey's Takoma label, though no songs from 1977's *Analline* bother this set recorded by Norman Dayron that April during Bloomfield's six-month run at San Francisco's Old Waldorf. He plays his first five songs on acoustic, starting with the Fahey-like poignant gospel instrumental Greatest Gifts From Heaven before the blues take over with quiet virtuosity and languorous vocals, raising titters on I'm Glad I'm Jewish.

Bloomfield then plugs in with a band probably including old muckers Barry Goldberg, Nick Gravenites and Mark Naftalin (liner notes are scant). He rollicks through foot-jiggling bar blues and gets transcendent on Between A Hard Place And The Ground, though Goldberg's piano wins

Chuck Berry's Wee Wee Hours as Bloomfield's battered chops struggle into life. His followers will love it. *Kris Needs*

Henry Caravan

A Shrine To A Radiator

★★★★
Death Is Not The End 024 (MC)
Louis Johnstone deals the anti-Delta domestic blues
Audio anthropologists Death Is Not The End, specialising in archival finds of overlooked gospel, folk and blues (see Label Of Love, page 138), broke their duck on contemporary releases with the issue of sides by Toronto-based siblings East Of The Valley Blues, a duo heavily indebted to the evocative primitivism of Robbie Basho and John Fahey.

Here the label goes native, teasing out a batch of homespun recordings from West Yorkshire, where an evening bedsit session dissolved into a one-man lo-fi folk ritual, courtesy Louis Johnstone, alias Henry Caravan. The tape format perfectly suits these austere detuned acoustic guitars and gruffly muttered utterances, the whirr of cassette spools providing rhythm tracks for the oddball improvisations and phantom songs.

Death Is Not The End are selling this with a "think Jandek exiled to Huddersfield" punchline, and that's pretty accurate, but others might also get hints of Vincent Gallo cranked on cough-syrup with serious undertones of Derek Bailey's obdurate, spidery free music jive. *Spencer Grady*

Josienne Clarke & Ben Walker

Seedlings All

★★★★
Rough Trade RTRAD 898 (CD/LP)
Forlorn folkies find their feet again

After a period of soul-searching and sharpening of tools, the Britfolk duo return with a fourth album that delivers on the promise and expectations that arguably derailed their upward trajectory. Their last offering, 2016's *Overnight*, was greeted by rave reviews and awards nominations, but sales were lower than anticipated; thankfully, Rough Trade stuck with them and the label has been rewarded with a contender for folk album of the year.

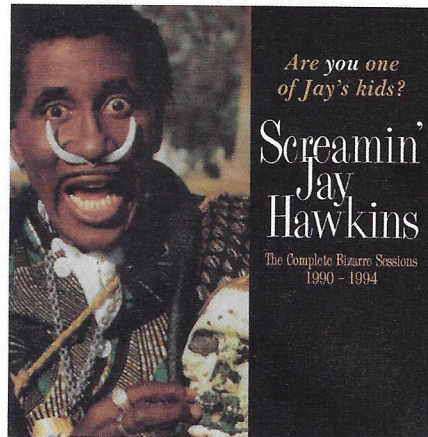
A high-profile support slot with Richard Thompson last year helped raise their spirits after poorly-attended headlining shows, and Clarke's writing has consequently developed added weight. The lead track

NOW ON



SCREAMIN' JAY HAWKINS

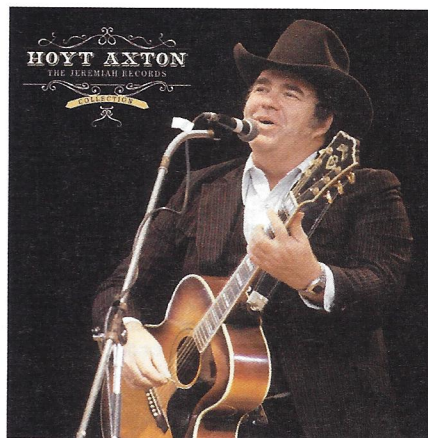
ARE YOU ONE OF JAY'S KIDS?
THE COMPLETE BIZARRE SESSIONS 1990 – 1994
[2 CD DIGIPAK]



This release contains the three fabulous albums the legendary Screamin' Jay made for the Bizarre label between 1990 and 1994: "Black Music For White People", "Stone Crazy" and "Somethin' Funny Goin' On". Also included are seven previously unreleased recordings from the original album sessions. The booklet features the full story of how the albums came about. Aside from a 'Dance Version' of his own "I Put A Spell On You", this set features Jay's version of Tom Waits' "Heartattack And Vine" which was used for a Levi's ad and charted. Also included is "I Am The Cool", the soundtrack to the current Thomas Cook ad in the UK.

HOYT AXTON

THE JEREMIAH RECORDS COLLECTION
THE COMPLETE BIZARRE SESSIONS 1990 – 1994
[5 CD CLAMSHELL BOX SET]



This box set features all five albums that Axton recorded for his own Jeremiah Records label in facsimile wallets, with a 32 page booklet featuring the lyrics, musician credits, and annotation. Axton's musical guests across the albums include Dr John, Stephen Stills, James Burton, Glenn D. Hardin, Jeff Baxter, Garth Hudson, and many more. Includes 'Della And The Dealer', a hit in both the US and the UK, as well as live versions of 'No No Song', 'Lion In The Winter', 'Never Been To Spain' and his best-known song 'Joy To The World'.

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