



Father John Misty:
the mighty louche

The recent revelation that Fugazi still jam together but only in private has been irksome to those who'd sell their grandmother to have the seminal DC post-hardcore band perform in concert again. Such folk are advised to consider the publicly active magic of E. Though its own beast, the trio's pugnaciously spindly guitar interplay, shared vocals and agitated quasi-funk rhythms certainly recall the spirit of Washington's finest. E even nail all that without the need for a bassist. Not even Fugazi managed that.

If anything, *Negative Work's* energy is even tenser than the debut's. It threatens to explode at any moment like that strange bottle of stuff your eccentric chemistry teacher always kept hidden away. *JR Moores*

Echo Ladies

Pink Noise

★★★★

Sonic Cathedral SCR 135 (CD/LP)

Delay ladies lay

Pink Noise buzzes into life with a short instrumental that's equal parts early 80s Depeche Mode and indie rock, but it's with the perfectly-

named *Almost Happy* that Swedish trio Echo Ladies really set out their stall.

With its clattering drum machine, shimmering guitars, chord progression reminiscent of The Cure's *A Forest* and Matilda Bogren's despondent, reverb-swathed vocals at its heart, it's both tempestuous and soothing. It's also a sound that could be described as derivative. But it works.

Though the feel is very much shoegaze/dreampop, Echo Ladies' self-consciously 80s sound is actually closer to fellow nostalgists such as Electric Youth. In fact, *Pink Noise* is a perfectly realised collage of 80s/early 90s music for the *Stranger Things* generation; a distillation of the wistful synth-pop of New Order, the melancholy soundscapes of the Cocteau Twins and The Cure and the shimmer of Ride and Lush.

What that describes, though, is a *sound*; and while it definitely sounds great, *Pink Noise* is foremost a collection of catchy, memorable songs, nostalgic in the best sense; a poignant and affecting blend of happy-sad sonics as

immersive as the gloom of your most lovelorn teenage years.

Will Pinfold

The Electric Flag Live From California 1967-1968

★★★★

Rockbeat ROC3408 (2CD)

Raising Flag questions

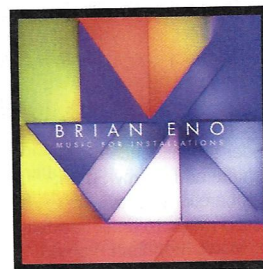
There's already been controversy over this supposed live document of Mike Bloomfield's short-lived The Electric Flag playing LA's Whisky A Go-Go in 1967 and San Francisco's Carousel Ballroom the following May. When Rockbeat released it on double vinyl last year, Flag boffins pointed out the first nine tracks were really out-takes from 1974's reunion *The Band Kept Playing* that were first released on 2000's *Small Town Blues* by Columbia (the Bloomfield-credited *I Should Have Left Her is actually Howlin' Wolf's Killing Floor*, as on 1968 debut *A Long Time Comin'*).

Trade descriptions notwithstanding, it's still a fine set, dominated by gospel and blues ballads like *It's Not The*

Spotlight but obviously lacking the original line-up's sense of breaking new ground by showcasing brass sections in psychedelic blues-rock.

The remainder comes from the Carousel Ballroom shows, including two versions of signature showcase *Soul Searchin'*, Bloomfield combusting on slow blues outings such as *Milk Cow Blues* and Buddy Miles emerging as the elemental fatback drummer about to woo Hendrix. Live authenticity is proved after Bloomfield goes wildly out of tune on a brooding *Hey Joe*, perhaps predicting his departure from the band the following month.

Kris Needs



Brian Eno

Music For Installations

★★★★

UMC 617772 (6CD/9LP)

Pop art

For someone so obviously a product of the British art school system, we don't hear that much about Brian Eno's visual work. Dating from 1986 onwards, the music on this sprawling box set was created to accompany various pieces of his own (sometimes imagined) installation art, as exhibited all over the world.

Little of it has been cheaply available of late. Indeed, a cynic might suggest that the extortionately expensive super deluxe edition won't help in that respect. While some has been issued on DVD before, and a similar approach might have helped here, this is more than made up for by a weighty booklet.

For those too self-conscious to lounge around in galleries to listen to all this, *Music For Installations* works on its own, throwing light on Eno's work that doesn't exactly jostle with his Coldplay and U2 productions on the high street.

Anyone acquainted with his ambient works will be delighted with such a motherlode. The resonant, swooping, ringing and, at times, transcendent pieces vary in tone, but the overall atmosphere is as at one with itself as Eno himself always appears to be. He's an artist in every sense: entirely self-assured, yet lacking the bombast of some of his frequent collaborators.

Phil Smith

Father John Misty

God's Favourite Customer

★★★★

Bella Union BELLA 770 (CD/LP)

Father dear Father

When we left Josh Tillman this time last year, it's fair to say the sheen had worn off a little. Yes, he was still the grandiose lothario who'd steal your missus while you tried to score him mushrooms, but while the cute narcissism that fuelled all this lovely nonsense was still omnipresent, it had swapped the lolz for lulls along the way. Downbeat, introspective... Still wonderfully smart, for sure, but just not as much, well, you know, *fun*.

And you would be rightly excused if you assumed *God's Favourite Customer* would be more of *Pure Comedy's* self-obsession, especially with a swift 12-month turnaround. The trademark sweeping "whoa-oh"s of opener *Hangman At The Gallows*, a song called *The Songwriter*, another song actually called *Mr Tillman*... Not exactly a trucker's shift on from the smugness of the past, right? True – but try as you might to write Tillman and his persona off, it's simply not possible. Listen to *Dumb Enough To Try* – a huge, sweeping love song that ditches the over-thinking for (whisper it) actual emotion, it ends up being one of his best songs ever. Same again with the genuinely heartfelt *Please Don't Die* and the gloriously tender title track – here we have a definite way forward for FJM, as personal and gloriously sad as you'd like, and minus the schtick. Well, almost.

Yes, there's possibly too much nonsense (the aforementioned Mr Tillman should be beneath him now; *Date Night* sounds like the Dandy bloody Warhols; the incongruous glam racket of *Disappointing Diamonds Are The Rarest Of Them All*), but, as its absolute core, *God's Favourite Customer* leaves the over-wrought and possibly over-thought days of *Pure Comedy* in its slipstream in return for something just that bit purer. True, the fun days of *I Love You, Honeybear* et al may be gone, but what a sacrifice if this is what we get in return. *Mike Goldsmith*

Svein Finnerud Trio

Plastic Sun

★★★★

ODIN ODIN 9558 (CD/LP)

Scando-jazz classic reissued

The Svein Finnerud Trio were at the centre of a new wave of Norwegian jazz music that sprang forth in the late 60s. Their second album, 1970's