

CDs REISSUE

by Bob Keelaghan Jeff Beck *Truth and Beck-Ola* (Epic Legacy)

The remastering of *Truth's* radical reinterpretations of blues tunes and *Beck-Ola's* loud-rock jam session has been a long time coming. At the time of their release—1968 and 1969, respectively—Beck was experimenting a lot with amp distortion; he was, in truth, just as pioneering in the heavy-rock scene as Jimi Hendrix or Eric Clapton with Cream. Another interesting fact: Rod Stewart didn't suck when he did these recordings. Almost every track here is essential listening, but the wah-wah breaks and buzzsaw riffs on Willie Dixon's "I Ain't Superstitious," from *Truth*, and the mad whammy-bar dive bombing and string pulling on both takes of "Jailhouse Rock" (the second an earlier version), from *Beck-Ola*, are truly nasty.

MOMENT OF TRUTH: "Sweet Little Angel," *Beck-Ola* (2:49-5:37) The formidable melding of flash and taste aside, Beck's blistering blues playing has a tone that stings like a genetically enhanced hornet. This studio outtake, included on the reissue, offers more of the same.



OPENING AXE

Earl Greyhound *Soft Targets* (Some)

This New York power trio, the latest descendent of Jeff Beck's fusion of funky blues and extreme volume, is fronted by guitarist Matt Whyte, who echoes more than a little Jimmy Page in his gargantuan, reverbed-out blues riffs (which are supported by Ricc Sheridan's Bonham-esque drumming). One minute Whyte is testing his digits' limits in an over-the-top blooze lead ("Monkey"); the next he's dishing out candy-coated pop full of big fat, crunchy open chords ("It's Over"), or cleverly inserting a fingerstyle intro or lyrical melody ("Good"). This is real rawk, cooked until well-done. Get some.

MOMENT OF TRUTH: "Fashion" (0:01-1:01) An irresistible modal power-chord riff slithers around the fretboard, more than making up for the song's corny, bilingual lyrics. Raise your hands and say "Yay-uh!"

Trey Anastasio *Bar 17* (Rubber Jungle)

Anastasio hits his stride as a solo artist with this effort, the follow-up to last year's *Shine*. In addition to his stellar six-string work—be it the frantic acoustic



fingerpicking of "Empty House," the stacks of jazzy harmonies and Hendrix-y bending of "Dragonfly," or the flying arpeggios of "Goodbye Head"—Anastasio's brand of art pop is not without intrigue. One marvels at his ability to balance the slightly dorky, childlike wonder of his lyrics (mentions of bicycling and starlight come to mind) with such mightily mature and ambitious compositions and arrangements. Check out the string section in the title track, for instance, or the cinematic jazz orchestration at the beginning of "Cincinnati."

MOMENT OF TRUTH: "Bar 17" (3:36-6:00) Anastasio gets skronky—and it works, thanks to his wise choice of notes and skill at pushing his red-hot lead tone into the realm of tastefully controlled feedback.

**Brian Setzer
13 (Surfdog)**
Woah! Stray Cats purists and pompadour lovers

are bound to be pissed off at the arty whole-tone intro to the otherwise straightforward rocker "Bad Bad Girl (in a Bad Bad World)." And so it goes on the rest of the disc, as Setzer and his Gretsch veer away from rockabilly and more toward a mixed bag of barroom boogie and roots music. Though his crooner's voice isn't quite suited to the hard-rock riffing of tunes like "Take a Chance on Love"—which contains some particularly notey and rolling riffs—Setzer's fingers always deliver the goods, especially during the Merle Travis-meets-metal licks of "Drugs and Alcohol (Bullet Holes)" or the Jimmy Bryant tribute "Mini Bar Blues."
MOMENT OF TRUTH: "When Hepcat Gets the Blues" (1:22-2:12) Turns out Setzer doesn't totally ditch the swingin' rockabilly for which he's best known. Here he airs out some jazz-tinged legato runs, fluid sweep picking, and brilliant pull-off moves.

DVDs by Bob Gulla

Muddy Waters *Classic Concerts (Hip-O/Chess)*

Ever wonder what it was like to see Muddy Waters live? Well, these performances from 1960 (Newport), 1968 (Copenhagen), and 1977 (Norway) tell a good part of the story. Short of seeing the man in the flesh, these rare gigs, spread out over a large portion of Waters's career, bring you as close to a peak Muddy in-concert experience as you're likely to get, offering prime examples of the immortal bluesman's work, both as a guitarist and a singer.

SCENE STEALER: Among the many reasons the Copenhagen show is exceptional is that the entire band is playing Guild guitars—including rhythm player Luther "Snake" Johnson, who's set up close enough to the vocal mic to get special attention here.

AC/DC *Back in Black: A Classic Album Under Review (Sexy Intellectual)*

Like other installments in the Classic Album Under Review series, this one serves up rapt storytelling for band enthusiasts, with close to two hours of detailed narrative from studio staff, critics, and musicians. This is as thorough a treatment as you'll see on the making of *Back in Black*, the band's classic 1980 farewell to their late original vocalist, Bon Scott (who was replaced by the equally leather-lunged Brian Johnson).

SCENE STEALER: Simon Davies and Paul Sticca—as "Malcolm" and "Angus" of the London-based AC/DC cover band Dirty DC—provide authoritative commentary on the band's hit riff-making.

Porcupine Tree *Arriving Somewhere (Snapper)*

Guitarist and studio whiz Steve Wilson has hit on a blissful sound that appeals equally to head and heart: heavy doses of sinewy power chords, merged with gentle melodies and haunting lyrical motifs, more than a little reminiscent of vintage Pink Floyd. This two-disc video, recorded during last year's *Deadwing* tour, rewards the patient and open-minded with snap-tight musicianship and first-rate, post-Genesis prog arrangements.

SCENE STEALER: Wilson's work is bolstered onstage by second guitarist John Wesley, who adds backing vocals, a backbone of riffing, and even a few sweet solos.

