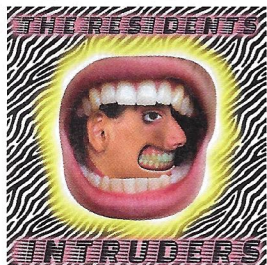


Gary Richrath's power chords on *REO/TWO*, most dramatically on epic-length protest song Golden Country. Mike Murphy replaced Cronin for the more diverse *Ridin' The Storm Out* (bonus tracks include Cronin's version of the hard-rocking title track), *Lost In A Dream* and *This Time We Mean It*, his R&B influences adding real flavour to the proceedings, though Richrath still cranks out sterling riffs on gems like *Down By The Damn* and *Candalera*. Cronin returned for *REO* in 1976, which opens with a stone-cold classic in *Keep Pushin'* and doesn't let up. *Live: You Get What You Play For* is a must-hear for fans of Thin Lizzy's *Live And Dangerous* and UFO's *Strangers In The Night*, offering a similar best-of set hotwired with raw live energy. *Rich Davenport*



## The Residents Intruders

★★★★

Cherry Red CDBRED 731 (CD/LP)

**Still creative, half a century in**

Rather than sink them, the departure of long-serving musical director Chuck aka Hardy Fox in 2015 (who sadly died in October 2018) actually energised San Francisco's weirdest band. Lead singer Randy Rose drafted in Eric Drew Feldman to fill the gap onstage and in the studio. With long-serving guitarist Nolan Cook also contributing to the songwriting mix, The Residents are now a band again.

Those used to weird scenes inside the musical goldmine will be surprised how direct this set of 11 songs themed around the dark corners of the subconscious are. Voodoo Doll is a direct corkscrew blues, whereas Frank's Lament and Missing take a time machine back to *Duck Stab/Buster & Glen* with some lovely musical hooks. At the other end of the scale, Carla Fabrizio haunts rather than sings on Bobbie's Burning Blues. Still Needy sounds as though it emerged from a live jam, Cook's guitar powering over rising waves of percussion and orchestral ballast as it thunders along with vocals only emerging

halfway through. The song leads into a coda sounding like a variation on The Beta Band's *It's Not Too Beautiful*. The rest of the LP is of an equally high standard. *Ian Shirley*

## Robyn Honey

★★★★

Cherry Red CDBRED 731 (CD/LP)

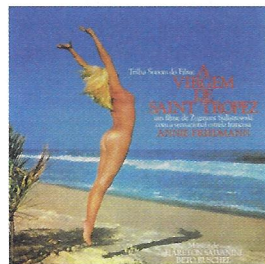
**Still creative, half a century in**

It may be eight years since the peerless *Body Talk*, but you can hear Robyn's influence everywhere. Cock an ear at the output of Taylor Swift, Rhianna, Carly-Rae Jepsen or Lorde, and you'll realise pretty much every purveyor of modern pop with a desire for emotional depth to counterpoint the epiphanies of the dancefloor has looked at Robyn's swag and said, "I'll have me some of that."

Lead single *Missing U* is an anthem for the broken-hearted, all 3am loneliness set to a post-club Morodor pulse, while *Baby Forgive Me* pulls in new age and ambient sounds to complement the heartache. Electro, disco, house, synth... All are here as you'd expect from a proudly pop album, but all with the accent on the downbeat that gives *Honey* the depth you'd expect.

The purer pop fan may be a little underwhelmed. No matter how closely you listen or how much you want it, there's no *Dancing On My Own* here. Potential floor-fillers do lurk – see *Because It's In The Music or Ever Again* – but the Top 10 just isn't Robyn's aim any more. *Honey* is aimed more at the head than the heart, representing a progression for Robyn as an artist if not a pop star.

*Honey* is sophisticated music that encapsulates the rave-up and the comedown – and it comes on white vinyl if you're quick about it. Try some now. *Mike Goldsmith*



## Hareton Salvani A Virgin De Saint Tropez

★★★★

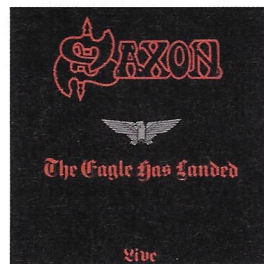
Vinilissimo MRSSS 559 (LP)

**Salvani's cult 70s erotica soundtrack reissued**

The 1973 soft-porn film by Polish director Zygmunt Sulistrowski, for which this

soundtrack was made, is – by all accounts – a bit of a dud. Exotic locales and a cast of beautiful young men and women couldn't save it from itself, nor even the leg-up of this fantastic soundtrack by Brazilian writer and arranger Hareton Salvani.

Best-known for his elegiac debut album *SP 73*, Salvani delivers an appositely sultry selection of funky exotica and dreamy bossa nova themes. Soft flute lines, sweeping violins, subtle washes of Hammond Rhodes and luscious Brazilian harmonies mark Espairenco out as a highlight, while Saint Tropez mixes funky wah-wah guitars with brass bursts to evoke 70s cop shows. *Quarto De Hotel* heats things up with the seediest saxophones this side of Bernard Herrman's *Taxi Driver* score. Elsewhere, dancefloor-ready funk bombs like *Copacabana* mix with dreamy instrumental themes (*Does E O Mar*) and Latin percussion-fests (*Persuigao and Seios*) to deliver a soundtrack that marks its creator out as one of his country's most talented arrangers. *Paul Bowler*



## Saxon The Eagle Has Landed

★★★★

Union Square/BMG, cat no TBC (CD)

**Landmark live LP expanded**

In the early 80s, metal bands had a penchant for spectacular lighting rigs. Motörhead's Bomber strafed stages from 1979 onwards, and tourmates Saxon soon followed suit with an eagle-shaped rig (christened "Biff's Budgie" by roadies), hence the name of their first in-concert offering, a Top 5 hit in 1982.

Nostalgia aside, Saxon are widely regarded in headbanging circles as having achieved a hat-trick of classics with *Wheels Of Steel* (1980), *Strong Arm Of The Law* (1980) and *Denim And Leather* (1981), the highlights of which were mostly present on the original 10-song *...Eagle...* (1982), with a few glaring omissions. This reissue rectifies matters with bonus tracks including *And The Bands Played On* and *Dallas 1pm*, their self-titled debut album also represented with *Frozen Rainbow*, on which then-new drummer Nigel



**A big hand for Jon Spencer as he goes solo**

Glockler lets rip impressively.

By the *Denim...* tour, on which everything here was recorded, heavy touring had sharpened Saxon into a formidable live act, ably demonstrated as they hammer out *Motorcycle Man*, *747* (*Strangers In The Night*), and *Princess Of The Night* in succession, and segue headlong from *Fire In The Sky* into *Machine Gun*. A vibrant document of their NWOBHM years, available on splattered vinyl and Mediabook CD. *Rich Davenport*

## SOPHIE

**Oil of Every Pearl's Un-Insides**

★★★★

Transgressive TRANS 368 X (2LP)

**New auteur on the block's debut comes to vinyl!**

In direct contradiction with her own ever-mutating strain of android avant-pop, it was becoming a touch too easy to pin SOPHIE down. A synth squiggle here, a bubblegum burp there... Yes, all very clever clever and with the pop chops to attract the attentions of Charli XCX, Lady Gaga and SOPHIE's long-time idol Madonna (see *Bitch I'm Madonna* from 2015's *Rebel Heart*) but, well, what used to sound like nothing else now sounded a bit like nothing new.

And so all change. Yes, the noises on show are still wonderfully all over the gaff – drone, vaporwave and a lot of 90s R&B among others join SOPHIE's chipmunk rave-up – but not many would have predicted the sheer beauty on show here. We should've guessed with opening single *It's Okay To Cry* – all tinkling celestial dream-pop, with swathes of synth complementing the first time the transgender singer had used her own image and

vocals on a release. Equal parts sensual to gorgeous, it's joined by the likes of *Is It Cold In The Water?*, *Infatuation* and ambient/noise closer *Pretend World* in trying to up SOPHIE's collective game. It might not always succeed but the ambition is huge.

PC Music ravers will still go giddy for the like of *Ponyboy*, *Faceshopping* and the digi-house banger *Immaterial* but here is a considered even – whisper it – *mature* step forward for SOPHIE. True, it's inevitably not as fun as her debut releases (see astonishing early singles *Bipp* and *Lemonade*), but it's certainly just as disorienting. What next? "I can be anything I want" replies SOPHIE. Indeed. *Mike Goldsmith*

## Jon Spencer

**Spencer Sings The Hits!**

★★★★

In The Red ITR 329 (CD/LP)

**Blues X man goes solo**

This album is billed as Jon Spencer's "debut solo album", which seems astonishing. He's always had a supporting cast around him despite being the force behind *Blues Explosion*, *Pussy Galore*, *Boss Hog* – pick your favourite, basically. But now he's going it alone – albeit with help from Sam Coomes of Quasi. The result is one of his angriest records, full of diatribes against rock wannabes, imposters, bad fashion – there's a lot to be angry about in the world at the moment, and Spencer takes issue with it all. The sound is reminiscent of 1998's *Acme*, if you're looking for an approximate *Blues Explosion* comparison, with drums high in the mix and songs crisscrossing back and forth through their component parts. Better still, that Elvis croon returns. Oh, and slightly