

IN OUR SYSTEMS

CDs by Bob Keelaghan

Flaming Lips At War With the Mystics (Warner Bros.)

Scathing social criticism never felt so good! The Lips have always been masterly arrangers, and the band's latest extends their legacy as the reigning gods of psychedelia. Layer upon layer of instruments, effects, and voices turn what are at their core basic pop songs into aural sculptures that require repeated listens before being fully absorbed. Of particular interest are Wayne Coyne's guitar tracks, which at times blend into the wall of sound but are nevertheless in full force throughout. Refer, for instance, to the subtly effective lead in "My Cosmic Autumn Rebellion," or to the multiple contrasting acoustic and electric tracks on "The Sound of Failure/ It's Dark... Is It Always This Dark??"

MOMENT OF TRUTH: "The W.A.N.D." (0:14-0:43) The album's standout electric-guitar cut is based on Coyne's catchy modal hammer-on/pull-off riff. For some reason, this particular distortion sound, a throwback to psychedelic garage recordings from the '60s, conjures images of insects—and big ones at that.



Glenn Tipton Baptism of Fire (Rhino)

REISSUE

The Judas Priest axe grinder rereleases his 1997 solo debut with an all-star cast that includes Billy Sheehan, Robert Trujillo, John Entwistle, and Cozy Powell—and the result comes across like a more thoughtful Priest. Not surprisingly, Tipton's lead vocals are hit and miss, but he carries the day when he steps ever so slightly out of his Priest duds—first, paying tribute to his disciples on the Pantera-esque "Enter the Storm," which features some cool time-signature trickery in the middle section's main riff, and then revisiting the classic British pub sound on "Left for Dead."

MOMENT OF TRUTH "Baptism of Fire" (0:41-1:18) Instru-metal time. Tipton stands as one of the few metal players who have successfully refined their technique over the years. Here, he trades licks with Sheehan, starting his solo with some screaming sustain and building to a speed-picking/arpeggio workout.

Protest the Hero Kezia (Vagrant)

Prepare to have your ears pinned back. Protest the Hero make stunningly melodic



crossover thrash metal of the most technical and skilled nature. Guitarists Tim Millar and Luke Hoskin construct some gruelingly complex song structures on *Kezia*, leaving the listener wondering where the harmonized solos end and where the rhythm parts begin. Once the shock wears off, the album's glaring drawback is that, save for a couple of acoustic interludes, the formula doesn't change much from song to song (not to mention that all the instrumental complexity renders the singer's dramatic sesquipedalianism almost redundant). But again, that's only once the shock wears off.

MOMENT OF TRUTH "No Stars Over Bethlehem" (0:13-1:38) The Canadian quintet comes out swinging with more harmonized riffs, syncopated power chords, and hammered-on lead fills in one verse and chorus than many metal bands can muster in an entire album.

Dennis Chambers, Jeff Berlin, Dave Fiuczynski, T Lavitz Boston T Party (Tone Center)

Jazz Is Dead/ex-Dixie Dregs keysman T Lavitz leads a cast of fusion cats that's mean as it gets. Of course, all guitarists' ears will be on Fiuczynski's six-string trickery, and in his solos, the Big F steps up huge with vocal-like phrasing, effortless speed, and pleasantly outside note choices. Fuze's manipulation of the whammy bar and various effects on "Around About Way" and "All Thought Out" elaborate on the foundations Jeff Beck laid down some 30 years ago—and drive those foundations further.

MOMENT OF TRUTH "All Thought Out" (3:49-5:25) Fiuczynski's fretless guitar introduces unthinkable quarter-tone intervals to the six-string in this truly captivating lead. Add speed and distortion and it sounds as if he's playing an overdriven oud or something.

DVDs by Bob Gulla

Syd Barrett Under Review (Chrome Dreams)

While his former bandmates have become global superstars, Pink Floyd's founding guitarist and creative guru Syd Barrett has fallen off the face of the earth. Not literally, of course; last we checked, he was still a resident of this planet (Cambridge, England, to be precise, where he celebrated his 60th birthday in January). But mental illness exacerbated by heavy acid intake in the 1960s has, tragically, made him a musical non-presence for more than 30 years. This installment of the U.K.'s *Under Review* music-geek series provides a fine insider's look at Barrett's significant contribution to Floyd and his subsequent unhinging.

SCENE STEALER Barrett's playing on the space-rock classic "Interstellar Overdrive," caught on vintage video here, lies at the crucible of U.K. psychedelia and was the launchpad for Floyd's commercial flight.

Iron Maiden Death on the Road (Sanctuary)

You've got to hand it to Maiden—there's a timeless quality to the band's muscle-bound sound that has enabled them to stay far more relevant than nearly all of their '80s contemporaries. *Death*, a three-DVD set filmed during Maiden's 2003 Dance of Death tour, features two versions of the 17-song gig, plus over two hours of bonus goodies, from full-length tour docs and promo videos to crazy-ass fan interviews.

SCENE STEALER The band's three-guitar lineup is the main reason why the Maiden still sound fresh today, and on several numbers here, Janick Gers, Dave Murray, and Adrian Smith put on a metal clinic.

Bad Religion Live at the Palladium (Epitaph)

Talky and intelligent, visceral and drum-tight, Bad Religion have been serving up a punk-rock blueprint since the early '80s, and fans of sugarcoated post-Green Day junk should check out the real, raw deal. Taken from a 10-camera shoot at the Hollywood Palladium in 2005, the disc functions not only as a raging video of a punk-rock show but also as a career retrospective of a band that's done more to advance the art form than any other act before or since.

SCENE STEALER Guitarists Greg Hetson, Brett Gurewicz, and Brian Baker together issue the best and loudest guitar sound in punk, especially on blast-off riff riots like "No Control" and "Recipe for Hate."



OPENING
AXE