

FLIPPER

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Water Records does the world a favor by reissuing the albums of influential San Francisco post-hardcore band Flipper! Flipper stood out from the crop of better-known Cali punk and hardcore groups like Black Flag, Dead Kennedys, and the Germs from the beginning -- they consistently remained slower, bleaker, heavier, and artier than their contemporaries, yet managed to contain the tumult and chaos into surprisingly catchy songs with heavy doses of humor. Their initial incarnation recorded two studio albums and two albums' worth of live recordings; if you're new to Flipper, definitely start with either *Album - Generic* or the follow-up, *Gone Fishin'*. *Album - Generic* is without question a punk rock essential, up there with Gang of Four's *Entertainment*, Black Flag's *Damaged*, and PiL's *Metal Box* as a definitive document of punk's power to effectively personify through music the disturbing depths of the human psyche. *Gone Fishin'* is a close second; it's somewhat less bleak but no less intense. *Sex Bomb Baby* compiles 7" single tracks, live cuts, and assorted other odds 'n' sods, while *Public Flipper Limited* is a double live CD compiling concert recordings from 1980 to 1985. These guys are definitely the sort of band you don't dip into casually -- their vibe either grabs you or it doesn't, and if you start with one, you'll most likely end up collecting them all. It's a blessing to have these records back on the shelves again, and Water comes through as usual with a stellar package including liner notes from the likes of Nirvana's Krist Novoselic (who is now Flipper's bassist, incidentally) and King Buzzo of the Melvins. Often imitated, never duplicated, Flipper's records remain some of the truest documents of the essence of what "punk" aesthetics really stood for -- true, uncompromising individuality with a hefty dose of accidental innovation. Highest recommendation! [IQ]