

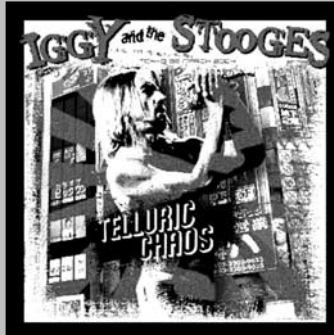
Resurrection Section

Legends At Large, Radical Reissues & Killer Compilations by Jim Kaz

Reissue Rundown

This month's installment shifts gears just a bit. Rather than focus on one band or artist of yore, I thought I'd shake things up a bit with a few recent reissues and compilations of note—things you should know about. The stuff in here this month runs the gamut of styles, genres, and scenes—but bear with me, there is a method to the madness. And, these releases do share the distinction of having some level of influence—directly or indirectly—on a lot of what's going on in music on today.

Iggy Pop. The name alone evokes images of chaos and destruction. In the early days, along with his band of merry pranksters The Stooges, Iggy's caustic repertoire crossed genres and helped fortify what would later become punk rock. In 2003, The Stooges reformed, playing a number of support slots at major festivals throughout the globe. *Telluric Chaos* (Skydog/Jungle Records) is the definitive live document of these historic shows. Sounding almost as nihilistic as three decades earlier when the band played its last show amidst an unruly crowd of bottle throwers and biker ball-busters (those shows were forever memorialized on the *Metallica KO* album), the album covers much of the material on the band's first two studio albums—the self-titled debut and *Funhouse*. Check out fresh versions of "I Wanna Be Your Dog" and "Little Doll," plus a new Stooges number, "My Idea Of Fun"—this shit's for real.



The Pretenders were a huge commercial success throughout most of the '80s. In general, I've found the band's work to be a bit uneven, ranging from amazing and innovative to trite and overtly commercial. But with all sincerity, the band's first album is unquestionably one of the greatest rock'n'roll debuts of all time. Rife with break-neck riffs, erratic timing shifts and Chrissie Hynde's cutting prose, the album was original-sounding, literate and unpredictable, and chock full of standout cuts like "Precious," "Tattooed Love Boys" and "The Phone Call." Rhino Records has just released *Pirate Radio*, a comprehensive box set featuring a complete overview of the band's 25-year run. Fortunately, this mammoth 5-disc set is heavy on material from the band's first two albums and EP, which is a very good thing. There are loads of unreleased tracks, many of which were culled from the vaults of the Pretenders' earliest days together, and live tracks that showcase the band's spontaneous side. And even some of the more commercial stuff doesn't sound half bad with fresh ears. The set also features a DVD with the band's videos and some live footage. To top it off, there's a color booklet with photos, and an essay by renowned rock journalist Ben Edmonds. Housed in a swanky box with cool inserts and the booklet, the packaging of the set is excellent, and is a prime example of Rhino's obvious affection for its catalog. Very nice.

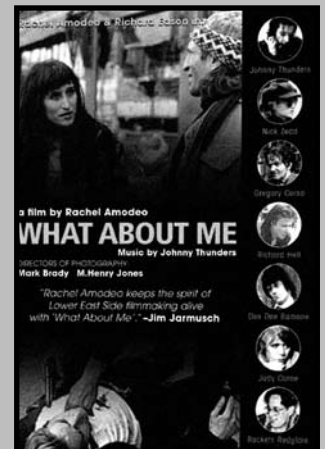
In spite of being the off-romanticized crowned prince of junkie rock, Johnny Thunders was a gifted guitarist and songwriter in his own



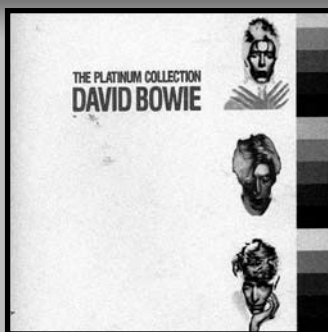
right. His work with the New York Dolls has been highly influential in the punk and glam arenas; his inexplicably twisted solos and signature backcombed hairstyle not withstanding. But with his subsequent band The Heartbreakers and as a solo artist, he still had enough juice left in him to crank out a few decent records, including the outstanding *L.A.M.F.* album. Jungle Records has put out the fabulous 3-disc set *Down To Kill*, which is comprised of previously unreleased Heartbreakers material. This is not another bargain-basement comp of rehashed monitor-mix recordings we've seen so much of from a few dubious labels looking for a quick cash-in. No Sir, Jungle has been at the forefront of punk from the get go, and the label's releases display an unsurpassed level of quality and value. And this release is no exception. The set features one disc of studio recordings that include recently unearthed 1976 sessions where the band was still finding its voice. The sessions provide an inside look into the raw material that would eventually surface on the *L.A.M.F.* record. There's also a track recorded with The Ramones, where Heartbreakers member Walter Lure sings the Rolling Stones' "Street Fighting Man" with the band as Joey skips out on practice. Disc two features the infamous Speakeasy gig from 1977 where Thunders abuses the audience with his drunken tirades and insults. The show has been meticulously remixed and gussied up perfectly for your iPod's consumption. There's also a DVD featuring 50 minutes of unseen footage including two concerts, a video clip for "Get Off The Phone," an acoustic recording session, plus sound checks and TV bits showcasing Thunders' troubles in Sweden. *Down To Kill* comes with a 24-page booklet and is housed in a full-color slipcase, all for a pittance—so there's no excuse not to snatch it up!

Speaking of Johnny Thunders, check out the DVD release of the lost punk film *What About Me* (MVD/Eclectic). This low-budget piece also features fellow punks Richard Hell, Joey Ramone and Dee Dee Ramone in a story revolving around the decline and fall of a young lady who's forced to live on the streets of New York's seedy Lower East Side. Thunders makes an appearance, but more notably provides much of the film's music. More of an urban drama than a music film, *What About Me* is a commentary of sorts on the homeless junkie culture of the City. Forget about scripts or acting, the main draw here is seeing so many old-school punk urchins in one place, and that's pretty cool.

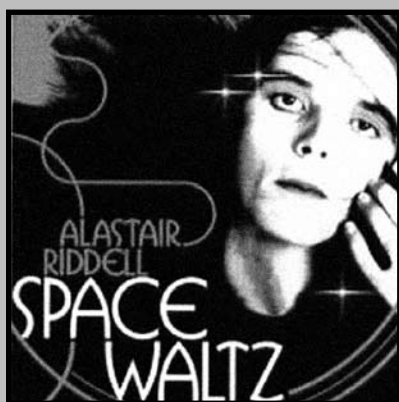
David Bowie is once again the proud father of yet another "Best Of" comp, *The Platinum Collection*. But this 3-disc set scores high marks as it



provides a near-complete overview of rock's supreme chameleon. Covering Bowie's most productive years (1969-1987), EMI has pulled out all the stops with this one. There's a heaping dose of glam ("The Jean Genie," "Rebel Rebel" and "Starman"), the white-soul stuff ("Young Americans" and "Fame"), his avant-dark, synth period ("Breaking Glass" and "Heroes"), the new romantics phase ("Ashes to Ashes") and finally, his mega-star era ("Modern Love" and "Let's Dance"). Although most of these tracks regularly appear on Bowie comps, there are a couple surprises in the form of "Sorrow" and "Underground," which are often ignored. The only downside is that many of the tracks are the singles versions, not the full-length album cuts. But for a fine sampling of Bowie's prolific-as-hell career, this is the genuine article. It's also smartly packaged in a slick slipcase.



Speaking of Bowie, he's also had his share of copycats. During the mid '70s, a little-known Bowie wannabe from New Zealand made a



minor splash with a dash of singles and one album. The pale-faced Alastair Riddell put out an album's worth of trippy-dippy sci-fi glam in the early-Bowie mold in 1975. Britain's RPM Records has lovingly reissued the album *Space Waltz* with bonus tracks. The material takes early Bowie in a more cosmic direction, relying heavily on synths and

spaced-out effects, although Riddell's textural guitar work is excellent throughout. The sound is dramatic and a tad pretentious—two common elements of early glam, and they work perfectly well here. Stand out tracks are "Fraulein Love" and "Out On The Street."

Another baby-Bowie band from the same period is the ultra-obscure Another Pretty Face. Fronted by the flamboyant T. Roth, these campy rollers were all the rage in the dingy clubs of the legendary NYC glam scene that spawned the Dolls and Kiss. Much flashier and gaudier than Bowie, yet more sophisticated and well-read than many of the pop-oriented British glam bands, APF's music incorporates theatrical, cabaret-style imagery and infuses its sound with Roth's quirky croon, cunning lyrics and loads of gay innuendo. While trying to score a record deal, the band recorded an album with producer Ed Stasium—who would later go on to work with the likes of the Ramones, Motörhead and the Misfits. The recent release of *21st Century Rock* (Bummer Tent Records) features that lost album, plus a bevy of bonus cuts. The band's aspirations of superstardom ultimately fell through, but this release is a colorful—and at times schmaltzy—snapshot of the early days of glam rock, and the sound quality is remarkably clean after all these years.



Of the mostly tacky array of Brit glam bands from the early-to-mid '70s, The Sweet rank among the very best. With a few exceptions British glam rock fell into two major camps: the arty side fashioned by Bowie and Roxy Music, and the more pop-oriented, singles-driven bands that followed T.Rex's lead. The Sweet fell into the latter category—but with a few major distinctions—churning out single after single of pure hard-pop bliss. At first, the band was heavily controlled by its producers and management, and recorded songs by the famed songwriting team

of Chapman and Chinn ("ChinniChap"), who fancied themselves as star makers. ChinniChap's unique, oddball pop songs combined with Sweet's stellar playing, tough-glam image, distinctive personalities and out-of-this-world vocal harmonies (the band's sound was Queen before Queen), made for an explosive combination. But underneath the sticky-pop finish lurked the heart of a hard rockin' combo, which would later surface with the band's first self-penned mega-hit "Fox On The Run." Before long, The Sweet's story turned tragic, and that's all explained in an excellent DVD documentary called *Glitz, Blitz & Hitz* (MVD). This stellar release tells the band's story through a series of music clips, and interviews with guitarist Andy Scott, Chinnichap and producer Phil Wainman. For a look



at one of the great bands of the era, this DVD is a must-see.

As I mentioned in the last paragraph, there were exceptions to the order of British glam bands, and Mott The Hoople epitomized the scene's grayer area. While not a proper glam band, Mott recorded one of the scene's most recognizable anthems, "All The Young Dudes." The

band started out as raunchy Rolling Stones fanatics with a penchant for witty, Dylan-esque lyrics courtesy of vocalist Ian Hunter. After a few lackluster releases, Mott was ready to call it quits when David Bowie stepped in and offered the band "Dudes" for its next single. The epic street ballad was a huge smash and the band found itself—somewhat unwittingly—in glam's spotlight. But aside from a slight flirtation with glam imagery and some theatrical lyrical themes, Mott the Hoople was just a straight-up rock band with a mastery of clever wordplay. Sony has just reissued the band's "most-glam" albums, *All The Young Dudes* and *Mott*. Of the two, *Mott* is the stronger offering. A concept album recounting a struggling rock band's quest for success, the disc features a number of ballsy rockers—the Stonies "All The Way From Memphis," glam fable "Whizz Kid" and the popish "Roll Away The Stone." Both of these reissues feature exquisite remastered sound, bonus tracks and expanded booklets.

Onto the hard stuff, let's start with the one and only...Venom. This

seamy trio of demon-cats is widely credited with launching the whole damn black metal movement, and many even site the band as the true pioneers of thrash. Led by the inimitable Cronos and his surly cohorts Mantas and Abaddon, the band played loud, unpolished hardcore metal with minimal-to-average ability and loads of DIY punk spirit. But the blasphemous sounds this little British trio conjured up were infectious, in a rusty-syringe sort of way—and the band's overt usage of sacrilegious imagery was well ahead of its time. Albums *Welcome To Hell* and the outstanding *Black Metal* are proven classics. But if you

really look at Venom from an objective standpoint, they were really just a thrashy rock band with lofty aspirations to be the next Kiss. Were they true Satanists? I highly doubt it. After all, some of the band's lyrics and over-the-top posturing are so friggin' blatant, that there had to have been a tongue planted firmly in cheek somewhere along the way.

Venom fans are rejoicing over the recent release of the *MMV* box set (Sanctuary). This sinister 4-disc set was compiled by Cronos himself, and features all the...uh, hits, plus B-sides, unreleased tracks and a massive booklet featuring flyers, photos and notes. One of the

major highlights of the set is the fourth disc featuring loud and dirty CD versions from the band's ultra-rare *Live Assault* vinyl series, which you'd be hard pressed to find in good condition, if at all in its original format. For fans of thrash, punk and even trashy rock'n'roll, this set is essential. Overall, what elevates Venom above the rest is the subtle, but undeniable comedic element in the presentation, and God bless 'em for it.

If Venom was partly inspired by hardcore punk and the theatrics of Kiss, one of the more obvious

influences also had to be Black Sabbath. To coincide with Sabbath's recent induction into the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame, Rhino records has released a nice little comp, focusing on the band's prime years with Ozzy. *Greatest Hits 1970-1978* has 16 tracks of classic Sabs, ranging from standards like "Paranoid" and "Iron Man" to the more pop-oriented "Never Say Die" and "Changes"—all remastered for optimal sound.

Rhino has also just released a pair of titles from Judas Priest founder and guitarist Glenn Tipton. When I first heard about these titles, I scratched my head in puzzlement. Although Judas Priest is a classic band, would anyone really want to buy this stuff? After giving the reissue of Tipton's 1997 solo album *Baptizm Of Fire* a fair listen, I started to see things differently. Tipton's songwriting, riffs and licks have always been a major part of Priest's sound, and that of course is the album's focus. There's even a somber cover of the Stones' "Paint It Black" that does tend to grow on you after a while. The other release *Edge Of The World* never saw the light of day until now. The sell on this album is its inclusion of all-star metal drummer Cozy Powell and bassist John Entwistle of The Who (the pair also make appearances on the *Baptizm* album). Although neither of these titles are necessarily essential, each provides a closer look at the activities



of a seasoned metal vet during a time when being associated with classic metal was anything but fashionable. Tipton shows he's a trooper on these releases, sticking to his guns in spite of a climate of scorn and indifference towards metal from the press and alternative music fans.

Australia's Aztec Music has been hard at work the past few months (the label launched in July, 2005) unearthing lost Aussie releases of the past few decades. From down-and-dirty bar-room hard rock (Buster Brown and Buffalo), to power pop (Young Modern), decadent funk (Skull Snaps) and

cosmic prog (Cybotron), each release comes with bonus tracks and superior packaging—a glossy, 6-panel digipack to be exact.

Buster Brown featured future AC/DC drummer Phil Rudd and Rose Tattoo front man, the gravel-throated Gary "Angry" Anderson. The pint-sized belter is a giant in the vocal department, possessing a colossal set of pipes. Releasing just one album, *Something To Say* in 1974, the band's career was short-lived, but would prove to be highly influential in the Aussie scene. This working-class, street band from Melbourne adapted bits from the London skinhead and mod scenes, molding a style that was bluesy biker rock with a healthy dash of what would be later referred to as punk (think ZZ Top with a bad attitude). Aztec's reissue of *Something To Say* features the entire album, including the excellent numbers "Rock and Roll Lady" and "Buster Brown," plus six bonus tracks, in exceptional remastered sound. For a quick glimpse at hard rock's early flirtation with punk aesthetics, this CD is a great place to start. For best results, play very loud!

I mentioned at the onset of this column that there's a method to my madness. Well, aside from the fact that many of these artists have had an influence on contemporary scenes, they can all be loosely connected in one way or another. Let's start with Iggy Pop. His band The Stooges had a direct impact on not just punk, but glam and hard rock as well, thus making him a pretty universal element for the most part here. But Iggy also had a close relationship with David Bowie, who remixed The Stooges' third album *Raw Power*. Bowie is also all over the place here, having been hugely influential on the original glam scene, and for his song recorded by Mott The Hoople. Johnny Thunders was, among other things, a notorious junkie. Aside from their punkish leanings, the original Pretenders lineup also featured two hopeless junkies (Pete Farndon, James Honeyman-Scott) who both passed away while the band was taking off. Like most of the other artists mentioned here, The Sweet's influence spans a number of different scenes. The band's songs have also been covered by several hard rock and metal bands like Raven, Def Leppard, Heathen, Krokus, Nuclear Assault and Saxon—many of which were contemporaries of early '80s metal bands like Judas Priest (featuring Glenn Tipton) and Venom—who were both influenced by Black Sabbath. And Buster Brown, well, they helped spawn two of Australia's best rock bands of all time, one of which—AC/DC—was also inducted into the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame.

So you see, there really is some twisted logic behind the inclusion of such a diverse batch in here. But on a serious note, I felt these releases warranted a closer look, and that's really the main reason for the coverage, plain and simple. For comments, questions or something you'd like to see in future installments, hit me up at Retrohead77@yahoo.com. On that note, I'll see you all next month. Cheers.—Jim Kaz