

incongruously onto the end, come two pre-existing bonus tracks by BB King and Pat Travers, whose reputations considerably overshadow the likes of Doug Doppler, Carlo Fragnito and Randy Coven. Real names, one assumes...

The tracks range from Mayall-era Clapton (Hideaway by Martin Winch), through Cream (Sunshine Of Your Love by Brian Tarquin) to solo, though quite why we have two versions of the title track isn't explained. Neither is the fact that BB King's bonus, a 1963 performance of How Blue Can You Get, isn't even a song Eric is associated with – unlike Pat Travers' Politician.

Apart from the bonus tracks, this is totally instrumental. From that point of view, Hideaway – already vocal-free – works best, but there's nothing added to the other songs by substituting guitar for voice, and not enough happening overall to prevent this sounding like background music. All in all, it's not hard to see why Clapton's eyes are closed on the extraordinarily unflattering cover sleeve. *Michael Heatley*

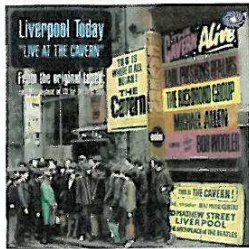


The Laurie Records Story Vol 3: Girls & Girl Groups

★★★
Ace CDCHD 1231
New York goils head for heartbreak

Laurie and its various subsidiary labels were very much of their time, in that they churned out a vast number of releases in the hope that some had a fair chance of survival – or even decent sales. These 24 tracks are mostly from the 60s, with a handful of later ones that maintain the girl-group pop formula.

Laurie's big act was The Chiffons, represented here with four strong tracks. Beyond them, however, they quickly became relatively anonymous, even when delivering strong records. Beverly Warren's Let Me Get Next To You, Marie Antoinette's Spectorish He's My Dream Boy and The Del-Rons' Your Big Mistake are all highly enjoyable, whilst Reperata sound as if they're singing in an uncomfortable key on Your Life Is Gone. Elsewhere, tracks from Brenda Lee Jones and The Chammers draw very heavily from The Four Tops' Reach Out and The Exciters' Tell Him respectively, with The Summits' He's An Angel being somewhat of a doo wop throwback. If you don't already have them, this is certainly worth getting for The Chiffons' tracks. *Kingsley Abbott*



Liverpool Today "Live At The Cavern"

★★★
Fantastic Voyage FVCD 015
A ferryload of Merseybeat from the Fabs' favourite venue
Faux-live albums, recorded in studios and topped off with overdubbed applause, were commonplace in the 60s, but this 1965 LP was unusual in that it aimed to cash in on a venue's fame, rather than that of the bands involved. By that time The Cavern's legendary status had grown to the point where it had its own studio, Cavern Sound, where this showcase was recorded.

Despite the fakeness of the album, the three acts presented here capture The Cavern's almost mythical atmosphere. None of them broke out from the local scene, but there's still plenty to enjoy in their performances. Earl Preston's Realm serve up raw, jangly pop that should have found a larger audience at the time. Next up is Michael Allen, a 17-year-old with a huge, mature voice, which he shows off on Burt Bacharach's Trains & Boats & Planes. The stars of the show are the six-piece Richmond Group, who played loud and rhythmic, and let their two lead singers scream their lungs out on Bo Diddley's I'm All Right.

This reissue occasionally suffers from poor sound, but the album's ambience (complete with quaint introductions from the resident DJ) makes up for it, while RC contributor and Merseybeat expert Spencer Leigh supplies the sleeve notes. *Mat Croft*

The London American Label Year By Year: 1960

★★★
Ace CDCHD 1237
Collectors' paradise in bite-sized pieces
For decades, the London American output has been high on collectors' lists, thanks to its representation of the heartbeat and diversity of major and small label releases from 60s America. Ace are planning to release a compilation every six



months or so, with a minimum of 20 of the tracks being new to their catalogue, each release focusing on a specific year in London American's history, and all presented in their original mono mixes.

Starting the series with 1960, this disc sets the template for what's to come: a mixture of the known and obscure, featuring hits from The Drifters, Eddie Cochran, Johnny & The Hurricanes, The Ventures and The Everly Brothers sitting alongside The Clovers' Lovey, Vernon Taylor's Mystery Train and Donnie Brooks' Doll House.

Representing nearly 12 per cent of that year's output, the tracklisting is well thought-out, saving oblique gems the likes of Lee Hazlewood's Girl On Death Row and Sonny Burgess' Sadie's Back In Town to right the end. Happily, we can expect at least 15 of these overviews, though not necessarily in chronological order, which is enough to whet many appetites. *Kingsley Abbott*

R&B Spotlight 58

★★★★
Future Noise FVCD 016 (2-CD)
The devil's music rides again
It was a mixed year. The Iranian government banned rock'n'roll, claiming it was both inimical to Islam and bad for the hips; Little Richard proclaimed it to be the devil's music; Phil Spector started recording, and the Billboard R&B chart was extended from 20 to 30 hits – which is essentially what's commemorated here.

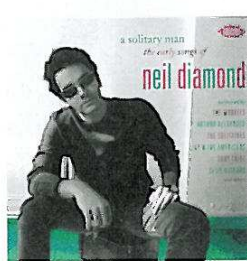
The Future Noise guys are only seven months old, but they've already churned out some pretty good collections, with a handful more planned before the end of the year. They're doing a fine job, and this set is no exception.

Think more yelping and wooing than tobacco and whiskey; more high school dance than deals with the devil; more melancholy than irony. It's balanced well between the dance numbers and laments, the Chuck Berrys and Sam Cookes. You've heard them all before: Johnny B Goode, Yakety Yak, Good Golly, Miss Molly, Do You Want To Dance... Nothing sub-classic here.

RC's own Mike Atherton has submitted his thoughts in the sleeve notes too, so you can be guaranteed an edifying read, if nothing else. It's impossible not to recommend a collection like this. Future Noise are certainly a label worth keeping an eye on. *Laith Al-Kaisy*

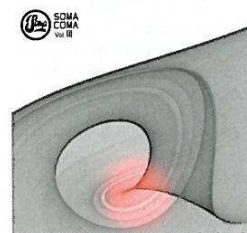
A Solitary Man: The Early Songs of Neil Diamond

★★★★
Ace CDCHD 1235
Cherry-cherry-picking from Neil's early catalogue
Ace continue their splendid songwriter series with a delve into the very pop-orientated mid-60s selection of Diamond material, taken from around the



time Jeff Barry & Ellie Greenwich had recognised his talent and taken him under their wing. The US hits came quickly, with The Monkees and Jay & The Americans' Sunday & Me, while many UK acts mined Diamond's songs – including Lulu with The Boat That I Row, Cliff on Just Another Guy, Billy Fury asking Where Do You Run, and Billie Davis offering Love To Love.

Diamond's songs always seemed to come with plenty of instant, catchy hooks, and he quickly achieved an attractive pop vibe with his song constructions. Rare cuts here include Tony Tribe's Red Red Wine, Arthur Alexander's Glory Road and Jan Tanzy's intensely Brill Building-styled That New Boy In Town. It's also striking how Diamond's songs managed to cross musical genres, with artists as diverse as BJ Thomas, Junior Walker, The Music Machine and The Four Tops also finding space here. Full sleeve notes complete a fine package. *Kingsley Abbott*



Soma Coma Part 3

★★★★
Soma CD 079
Horizontal-friendly electronic beauty from the archives
Glasgow's esteemed Soma label, now one of the UK's longest-running independent dance music labels, has built a formidable reputation for roof-raising, relentlessly innovative electronic house and techno in its 18-year history. That said, honchos Slam and the constantly-evolving roster have always kept in mind that, after the club's over, front rooms and back bars beckon, requiring a more chilled soundtrack. The Soma Coma series has proved such a success that it's into its third volume, this time delving into more reflective, emotional stratas, producing a set of often dark, timeless beauty, with tracks plucked from albums and B-sides from the last 15 years.

Alex Smoke, one of the label's major 21st Century discoveries, sets the scene for a succession of pastoral beauties from Slam, Vector Lovers, the

spine-chilling Black Dog, sublime Silicone Soul spinoff Mirror Music, Skintrade (gorgeous 1994 B-side Psalm), Octogen, Percy X versus Andrew Weatherall (the latter trading as Bloodsugar), closing with the bollocksed waft of Slam's Stuart McMillan and David Holmes' Total Toxic Tranquility. That could say it all, except the realms chartered here stretch much further than post-whoopee comedown soundtrack, transcending ambient to brush anything from cinematic sweep to modern classical. Lie back and enjoy. *Kris Needs*

Tell Me: Ember Beat Vol 1

★★★★
Future Noise Music FVCD 014
When one label burned the brightest

Every so often the little man makes a stand. In the midst of intimidation and faced with formidability, he rises and conquers. The biblical precedent is David and Goliath; the musical one is Jeff Kruger and the big five record labels which dominated the late 50s British music scene. So we have Ember: the label that defied normality, straddling genres like a mid-20th Century heretic. Future Noise Music deal with neither future nor noise. Their quest is strictly regenerative; a renaissance of the noiseless – the artists that pioneered and defined genres and sub-genres. This one deals with the beat scene, which may have been hijacked by The Beatles and Dylan, but was far better appropriated by the artists found on this collection.

Unless you're well-up the genre, you may never have come across some of these; but that only works in this disc's favour. There are roughly two songs from each of the artists featured, including The Sunsets, The John Barry Seven, Ray Singer, A Band of Angels and Chad & Jeremy. Each one is a true definition of the genre, evoking the sentiments that characterised the rather paradoxical beat music scene. It's supposedly rock'n'roll, R&B and soul, but let's not kid ourselves: this is out-and-out great pop. *Laith Al-Kaisy*



Ten Years Cocoon Ibiza: Dubfire & Loco Dice In The Mix

★★★★
Cocoon CORMIX 024 (2-CD)
The other side of the Island
Ibiza is too often represented by TV-advertised compilations of