

CD reviews

Little Beirut
High Dive
(www.littlebeirut.com)

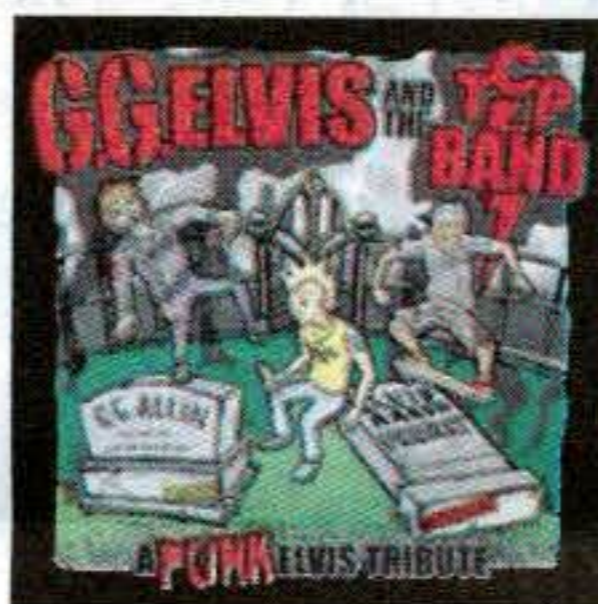
Owing as much to 60s bubble gum and as anything listed in their influences, unsigned Portland act, Little Beirut, weave together a sound on



High Dive that is very much in its time, yet harkens back to these more naïve forms. Lush, orchestral pop hooks, phantasmagoric backing vocals, and layered textures all fill out the musical space on this record, creating a sense of being carried out to sea on a bubble of modern guitar and synth pop. Out of the gate, "She's a Martyr," probably the best produced song on the album, assaults the senses as each instrument screams out in muted desperation, spilling its musical banks like a low raging torrent. But thereafter, this tension is traded for a softer, slicker, more radio-friendly vibe. Outside the opening track, the band and their restful sound seem to work best on the ballads "Love During Wartime," a tongue-in-cheek love song to Condoleezza Rice that somehow manages to be touching even though the thought of touching her is beyond abhorrent, and the title track "High Dive." Here, the delayed guitars and atmospheric synths make sense in their muted tranquility. We find the production doing its job and couching the listener in an emotional cushion befitting the tranquil sentiment. Ultimately, however, and maybe this sense would disappear after more listens, the soul of the more upbeat songs, the razor's edge of those shrieking guitar lines, the constant, unresolved dissonance found in the album's opening track, all seem buried beneath a thin layer of fog created by too slick a production and too much mind for perfection in the balance between instruments. When everyone is in the pocket, no one sticks out, and the music seems to lack excitement...lack sincerity. There are a few moments of this on the record. Still, Dive has some truly impressive moments that bear revisiting - a nice independent release.

-Brad Linzy / Rating: 3

G.G. Elvis and the TCP Band
Back From The Dead CD/DVD
(Mental Records)



What do you get when you get a bunch of veteran California punk rock stars together to pay irreverent tributes to both Elvis AND punk slimester G.G.

Allin? Your answer is right here. These 'nardcore' buffoons, eh, liven up these old Elvis songs and do 'em up in grand three-chord punk rock style. 'Blue Suede Shoes' is punk-a-billy to the nth degree, and really pretty fun. I can imagine the old days slam dancing at local punk shows with some rowdy and shady characters. Ah, the good old days! 'Viva Las Vegas' was already done years back by Jello and his Dead Kennedys, but here it's even harder and heavier. 'My Way' is in the drunken sloppy spirit of Sid's infamous rendition, whereas 'Devil In Disguise' is mean and peppy, with Bad Samaritans' Eric Lara (aka GG Elvis) performing gruffy vox. The rest of the band, consisting of members of Ill Repute, Stalag 13, NOFX, and Jughead's Revenge, takes it up a notch with some great classic-style 3-chord punk, with little inner-song tribs to the Ramones, Black Flag, and Sex Pistols, which is nice. Overall, a fun if inessential album, though their live shows would own, I'd bet. The accompanying bonus DVD is full of some indulgent clips and assorted silliness, really pretty insubstantial.

- Rob Wickett / Rating: 2

Iron Maiden and the New Wave of British Heavy Metal
[DVD]
(Chrome Dreams)

A fascinating and historically accurate documentary portrayal of the bands, writers, and fans that helped give rise to the New Wave of British Heavy Metal (NWOBHM). Featuring expertly delivered commentary by a host of musicians and writers who were there during the scene's unlikely and spontaneous explosion after 1976, this DVD gives viewers a glimpse into a post-punk time and place in a jolly land called England,

where young men clad in leather and denim would learn a few chords and start their own bands...but bigger, faster, and more powerful than what

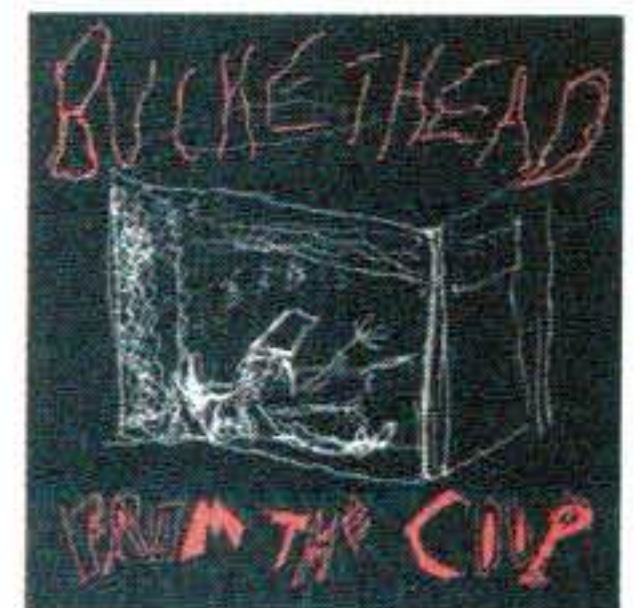


had come before. With performance clips from bands like Saxon, Samson, Tygers of Pan Tang, Diamondhead, Def Leppard, and, of course, Iron Maiden, this documentary explores the rare footage and little known facts about the movement, and sheds new light on its significance to modern heavy metal music. Clocking in at 2 hours 37 minutes, this DVD is more than a history lesson; it's an exhaustive course in NWOBHM 101, and a must-see for any self-respecting metal enthusiast.

-Brad Linzy / Rating: 3.5

Buckethead
From The Coop
(Avabella Productions)

Long before his wicked guitar-maniac solo releases and his work in groups like Praxis and Cobra Strike, and before his publicized alliance



(and exodus) from Guns 'N Roses, Brian Carroll (a.k.a. Buck) produced this demo tape way back in 1988. It's admittedly pretty rough stuff - mastered from a lo-fi cassette, and with musical backing from only a primitive drum machine. But even from this old demo, the warped mind (and persona) of Buckethead was already well-developed, and these songs range from bluesy ('Hog Bitch Stomp') to wild stadium-style solos and wicked sci-fi interludes. Buckethead is perhaps the foremost guitar-shredder of his time, and though this lo-fi collection is probably best kept to the hardcore fans, it's certainly nothing to sneeze at, either. Pretty impressive stuff, but if you're unfamiliar with the man(?) they call Buckethead, investigate his recent work before diving into this one.

- Rob Wickett / Rating: 2

Clark Snyder
A Complicated Cake
(Pugetropolis)

Part Waylon Jennings, part Gordon Lightfoot. Part John Prine, part Tom