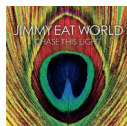


Albums

typically flawless, but the super-smooth production and delivery renders it strictly MOR. Good in the car, but one CD of 14 tracks would have done.

Standout tracks: Long Road Out Of Eden, Center Of The Universe
For fans of: Jackson Browne, Crosby, Stills & Nash, The Eagles! [MT]

Jimmy Eat World
 Chase This Light
 ★★★★★ Polydor



Guardians of 'real' emo continue to keep the make-up clad hoarders at bay

Before emo became the modern incarnation of the hairspray rock we all thought grunge had killed; when melodies, honesty and intricate guitar playing were still the benchmarks by which such bands were measured, rather than haircuts and make-up, Jimmy Eat World were royalty. Ask any indie-kid with a satchel to name his 10 favourite albums and you won't wait long for Clarity to get a mention. Since that 1999 landmark the band have initially embraced and then retreated from the heart of more mainstream power pop, and with 2004's Futures they married their early intricacy with pop hooks to produce a breathtaking album. Here they have followed the same

template, while introducing diversity via songs such as the almost disco-influenced Here It Goes. Jimmy Eat World might have made better albums than this, but very few of their contemporaries have.

Standout tracks: Like She'll Always Be, Here It Goes, Chase This Light
For fans of: Weezer, The Get Up Kids [PR]

Stanley Clarke
 The Toys Of Men
 ★★★★★ Heads Up



Never argue with a bass player who uses a vibrato

This latest album from the amazing Stanley Clarke is seriously intense, full of stunning playing, fantastic rhythms and very freeform construction. Like an escapee from the eighties, it's musically lush and rewarding throughout as Clarke shifts effortlessly from bass guitar to acoustic and upright, employing his usual vast range of techniques including the vibrato arm. The title track is actually a very cool suite. Jerusalem is a slow moving piece and offers a vast contrast to the slapped Bad Asses. Obviously this will appeal mostly to bass players but there's a lot here and anyone whose ears and brain are a little more open will find plenty of musical ideas to enjoy.

Standout tracks: The Toys Of Men, Jerusalem, Bad Asses
For fans of: Mahavishnu Orchestra, Bruford, Jeff Berlin [RN]

Ian Siegal
 Swagger
 ★★★ Nugene Records



UK bluesman invigorates the scene

Too many blues records these days either fail to translate the excitement of a band's live performance – an age-old problem – or else they lack adventure in the studio, sticking to a palette of trusted sounds and familiar arrangements. Luckily, Ian Siegal is a breath of fresh air in this regard. The UK bluesman's latest rootsy outing offers new twists on recognisable blues song structures, chord progressions and motifs, and exploits the mix to preserve space and play to his strengths, namely the mileage in his voice and his dextrous slide playing. Taking us through a repertoire of slow and folk blues all the way through big band and barrelhouse punch-up stompers, and reworked covers, Siegal and his no-nonsense band deliver it all with style.

Standout tracks: Swagger, Catch 22, Stranger Than A Green Dog
For fans of: Ry Cooder, Michael Messer [OB]

Also out:

Jonas Hellborg
 Art Metal
 ★★★ Bardo Records
 A solo offering from sometime Mahavishnu Orchestra bassist Jonas Hellborg. Why should you care? Well, the meandering fretless lines are underpinned by the unmistakable guitar of Freak Kitchen mainman and all-round nice guy Matthias IA Eklundh. This is chunky stuff that's worth a spin if only to capture a litany of IA's wonderful licks and a crushing tone. Nice...[SB]

Ana Popovic
 Still Making History
 ★★★ Eclecto Groove
 Blues-rock guitarists usually wear their influences on their sleeve, yet Serbian Ana Popovic isn't easy to classify; her playing is a melting pot in the best sense, combining jazzy inflections, rockier stylings, fluent runs and muscular string bends to impressive effect. Her material is less infectious and more stylised than her playing, unfortunately, but expertly done nonetheless. [OB]

King Creosote
 Bombshell
 ★★★ WEA/679
 Fife folkster and kinglypin of the Fence collective shows increasing commercial savvy on this fourth release: contrasting the effortless wispy heartstring pulling of his ballads with a sortie into up-tempo indie-pop (the Cluedo-themed You've No Clue Do You would make Midlake proud). Endearing and lo-fi, ramshackle and romantic, this is varied and enjoyable stuff. [OB]

Jon Spencer Blues Explosion
 Jukebox Explosion
 ★★★ In the Red
 This compilation of singles from the punkier end of the Spencer vaults bowls you over from the beginning with its uninhibited, fuzz-faced fun. Spencer's demonic undead Elvis vocals sneer brilliantly throughout, and if sleazy, speed-fuelled riffing and song titles like Ghetto Mom and Dig My Shit sound like your bag, then buy it now. [OB]

DVDs

AC/DC
 Plug Me In
 ★★★ Sony/BMG



This two-disc set offers a career-spanning hotchpotch of live and TV performances, split, as ever, between the Bon Scott and Brian Johnson periods. The interface, based around various coin-op video games, is confusing and, frankly, difficult to use but it's certainly worth persevering as there are all sorts of gems to unearth. There are interviews with Scott and Angus Young, footage shot on Super 8 from the audience, patronising TV features and more, not to mention as much concert footage as your ears can deal with.

As the gigs become more contemporary, so the media quality increases and, as ever, it's cool to compare – again – the merits of both singers. Many believe that Bon is AC/DC, while Johnson has been a member for far longer, and as for Angus and that mythical rhythm section... wow.

Whether you'd sit and watch the entire thing in one go is doubtful as, with over five hours of footage, we reckon that fans would be better served dipping in and out, a practice that would certainly raise a smile on Bon's craggy features...
Extras: Jukebox, random and song selection functions, numerous interviews and bonus features [SB]

Queen
 Rock Montreal & Live Aid
 ★★★★★ Eagle Rock



This Montreal gig from 1981 was issued on creaky VHS under the We Will Rock You banner three years later, and this DVD sees the same show polished and remastered. It provides a very close experience to a proper Queen show, with

DTS surround sound and eye-searing visuals in full effect: all that's missing is a tall bloke in the way and a fat guy stood on your toes.

If the vastly improved footage wasn't enough, there's a brand new yak track from Brian May and Roger Taylor that offers all sorts of insights into the Queen touring machine and, hot from their recent sojourn to South America, the band is truly fired up and playing out of their skins.

The disc is available on its own or as a double that also features the band's career-saving stint at Live Aid, plus fascinating rehearsal and interview footage from the time. Sir Bob wasn't wrong when he subsequently said that Queen were the best band of the day.
Extras: New Montreal commentary, 1982 US TV news feature, Live Aid rehearsal and interview footage [SB]