



Uplifting anthems from B-52s

ESCAPE FROM THE SUMMER OF THE DISCO VAMPIRES

by Adam Block

Finally — it's leaf-kicking season again, with its smoky crunch of summer laid to rest. I hope this friendly sneeze in the air will put an end to the whining I've been suffering of late from the congenitally optimistic DJ at the Stud, Larry LaRue, that the new releases are "bo-o-o-oring." The poor lad is just in cover-shock after a summer when remade oldies nearly ruled the dance floors. The **Rolling Stones** revived **Bob and Earl's** '69 hit, "Harlem Shuffle." **Art of Noise's** techno-warp of **Duane Eddy's** 25-year-old instrumental "Peter Gunn" was followed by **Sylvester's** torchy take on **Stevie Wonder's** 1973 classic "Living for the City." Then **Run DMC's** rap-remake of **Aerosmith's** 10-year-old cock-rock anthem "Walk This Way" became unavoidable — supplanted only by **Bananarama's** torque through the 15-year-old **Shocking Blue** hit that my friend Don insists on calling "I'm Your Penis, I'm Your Fire."

Now, don't get me wrong: This trend isn't about to end suddenly, but LaRue can get the hang of it. He'd better. At summer's end the limey ravers **Doc & the Medics** were threatening to repeat their successful assault on the #1 spot in the U.K. over here with **Norman Greenbaum's** still execrable '69 hit "Spirit in the Sky" (IRS). If we're spared that indignity, it should be a pleasure to welcome the cut that knocked it off the charts, **The Communards'** version of **Thelma Houston's** 10-year-old disco classic "Don't Leave Me This Way" (Polygram). **Gwen Guthrie's** tough, innovative, self-produced LP **Good to Go Lover** (Polydor) has already yielded the smash "Ain't Nothin' Goin' On But the Rent," and the follow-up is her unlikely "go-go" treatment of **The Carpenters'** 1970 chart-topper "Close To You." Europeans have discovered conceptual artist **Winston Tong's** *Theoretically Chinese* (Crepuscle), with a lush cover of **Marianne Faithful's** '79 hit "Broken English" that's due for a remix and a place on this roster. **Aretha Franklin** joined forces with guitarist **Keith Richards** for a rather pointless remake of "Jumpin' Jack Flash" (Arista), and **Lou Reed** has been in the studio with **Sam Moore** of the original **Sam & Dave** to recut their 1967 landmark "Soul Man" (A&M). The disco-thunder trio **Until December** is featuring a remake of the **Moroder/Blondie** smash "Call Me" (from the 1980 film *American Gigolo*) on their debut LP, and a tribute to **Bauhaus**,

with a live lube job of "Bella Lugosi's Dead" (415/CBS) as the B-side to their next 12".

All of these garage-sale Halloween antics ought to be enough to keep LaRue well boggled, but I hope they won't distract him from some terrific albums that have been stacking up like cordwood in stoke-the-hearth weather and promise to set any stereo aglow. Unfortunately, **Tina Turner's** *Break Every Rule* (Capitol) isn't one of them. It's not terrible. In fact, since it follows all the rules, it is eminently presentable. But there is none of the incendiary coincidence that made *Private Dancer* a triumph. Everyone is trying so hard to keep the flame alive that the result is a serviceable set of Presto Logs. At its beat, on "Afterglow," we get a fake Al Green song that pales beside the cover of "Let's Stay Together," which launched Turner's 1984 comeback. More painful still is **Mark Knopfler's** contribution, "Overnight Sensation," an awkward attempt at ironic autobiography, with the rhythm track crudely lifted from Tina's old confessional, "Nuthin' City Limits." She has made it clear of late how desperately she yearns to be respectable. She has made an album that is just that, and not much fun. Even LaRue could tell you to stash your cash instead on the indubitably funky **Cameo** cut "Word Up" (Atlanta Artists), with the terminally camp command, "Put Your Hands in the Air and Act Like You Don't Care!" Bring on the gasoline.

1) *Eye of the Zombie*, **John Fogerty** (Warner Bros.): Face it — *Centerfield* was just a demo for a comeback album, a winning basement hootenanny after a

10-year absence. Here the thunderhead behind **Creedence** stretches out and hurls some bolts. From the shimmering tear of the opening instrumental, through deep swamp, a klieg light on the business of violence, some friendly carnality, a Prince-perfect tattoo on singers selling "Soda Pop," to the utopian sign-off, Fogerty lights up a lot of territory and kicks some butt. It makes Jagger sound tired.

2) *Greetings From, Timbuk 3* (IRS): This is the first band out of Austin with a record to match all the hype. This married duo leans toward acoustic instruments, boast gorgeously tawny harmonies and ever-crafty lyrics, but their Afro-Appalachian quirks, and their songs that recall (while constantly bettering) T-Bone Burnett, make for a terrific roadside chautauqua mounted by a pair with as much chemistry as John Doe and Exene. Check out the campfire love song "Friction," their white-trash rap "Shame On You," and the raw-boned lament "I Love You in the Strangest Way," and tell me what better new band you've heard this year. I can't think of one.

3) *Baby the Stars Shine Bright, Everything but the Girl* (Sire): Another couple click. Ben Watt does the Big Band arrangements. Tracy Thorne shows off the finest female voice in British pop (after Alison Moyet) on this package of enchanting, torchy pop melodramas. This should please fans of Bernadette Peters and Elvis Costello. Check out the last cut for a touch of Fassbinder in this widescreen, kitchen sink production.

4) *Graceland*, **Paul Simon** (Warner Bros.): Three years after the dud that was

Hearts & Bones, and after a sojourn in the South African townships, Simon summons up the most challenging and rewarding LP of his solo career. The singing is still determinedly dorky, and he makes little attempt (to his credit) to go native, but these collaborations with native musicians are as ebullient and intriguing as they were chancy for Simon to risk. The contradictions chafe, and the music embraces them.

5) *Real Stories, Talking Heads* (Sire): David Byrne's voyage out to redeem the ordinary on film resulted in this ram-bunctious, friendly collection. It's sort of a downtown answer to *A Prairie Home Companion*. Standout cut: "People Like Us."

6) *Bouncing Off Satellites, B-52s*, (Warner Bros.): These cuts were recorded a year ago but held up by the sad and untimely death of gay-blade guitarist Ricky Wilson. These guys are a Pee Wee Herman fantasy of a southern truck stop dance band. Tony Mansfield's spacious production does them proud, and the wacky wonders shine on cuts like the current dance fave "Summer of Love," their version of Aretha's "Respect," and on "Housework," which insists, "Don't want a man to treat me mean./I need a man to help me clean." The uplifting anthem "Wig" should open every drag show. This may be their last LP. Don't miss it.

7) *Daring Adventures, Richard Thompson* (Polydor): The Celtic Sufi is a dark, stunning craftsman who invented nearly everything that Dire Straits has pirated and cashed in on — except their homophobia. He's got some chill bones to rattle about the betrayals of love, and he can range rather dyspeptically towards the ladies. But this third and best of his solo albums shivers with a real purchase on pride, pain and glory. Plus, he plays some monster guitar.

8) *Brotherhood, New Order* (Qwest): The underground wonders of synth-pop fooled everyone when they signed up with Quincy Jones and started racking up hits last year with *Low Life*. This entry is more quirky and magnificent. Lots of Depêche-Mode-move-over taut tracks with stacked harmonies, ricocheting chords and allusive lyrics. They stay true to their school on the last cut: a lovely Velvets on Valium ballad ("Every Little Counts") where Hook sings "I think you are a pig./You should be in a zoo." He cracks up at his own kindergarten humor, sinks into the hypnotic mix, which continues till the needle seems to scurry, leap and scratch off the disc. Highly recommended, you skeptical guys.

9) *Legend, Buddy Holly* (MCA): Two records, 20 cuts from the boy wonder who died at age 22 just 27 years ago. His influence can hardly be overestimated,

but — more important — these performances still ring as bright and true as a ride in a cherry convertible right after your first shave. Digitally remastered from the original tapes. Well, all right!

10) "No Sex," **Alex Chilton** (Big Time): A dose of salutary black humor for the plague years, from the ravaged Memphian: to the tune of, "Louie, Louie." He recalls the days of easy lays, the arrival of a retro-virus, and choruses, "No Sex. This is the '80s/Hey baby! Fuck me and die." Talk about signaling fearless through the flames.

A final note of cheering new: **Phranc**, my favorite flat-top lesbian, has been signed to 415 Records (distributed by CBS). Plans for her upcoming album call for a duet with **Morrissey**, and backup on various tracks from members of **X**, **The Blasters**, **Husker Dü** and the **Violent Femmes**, with a possible release this winter.

LaRue, still bored? Can I get a witness? Right. Go sink your savings into vinyl. Don't let Alex Chilton go to bed hungry.