



The Last List Of the Decade

The '80s are slamming shut amid a glut of holiday releases, so let's get right down to the ugly business of trying to salvage some pearls and rhinestones from the wreckage.

- **Immortal**, Sylvester (Megatone): The LP's cover finds the disco diva lying flat on his back in a flaming orange wig and rhinestone-studded jacket, kicking his high heels in the air. (This was Syl's response to being asked to "butch it up a little" for the cover of his first release on Warner Bros.) Judging from the cover design, it looks like Syl had the proverbial last laugh.

Thankfully, the disc unearths some cuts worthy of his memory and also breathes new life into some war-horses. The eight-cut LP features crafty acid-house remixes of "Do You Wanna Funk," "Rock the Box," and Patrick Cowley's anthem "Menenergy." The real treasure is a legendary, previously unreleased 1980 remix of "I Need You" by Robert Hewitt (which is also available in two versions on a white-vinyl 12-inch). The most fascinating cut is David Diebold's sparse, spooky setting of the previously unreleased 1983 vocal "I'm Not Ready (to Fall in Love Again)," a haunting harangue that sounds eerily like a transmission from beyond the grave.

Diebold's chatty history of the San Francisco dance-music scene, **Tribal Rites** (newly revised, complete with a discography), is available for \$13, postage included, from Megatone, 2261 Market St., #315, San Francisco, CA 94114.

- **Let's Start the Dance, Volumes 1 and 2** (Polygram): Out of the vaults and onto vinyl come 18 obscure disco tracks that collectors have been paying a pile for. They were largely forgotten discs rediscovered by deejays at clubs such as the Paradise

Garage, who used them as the building blocks for a new, blacker brand of dance mix. Critic Barry Walters's astute liner notes provide all the trashy, long-suppressed details.

- **Dance, Ya Know It**, Bobby Brown (MCA), and **You Wanna Dance with Me**, Jody Watley (MCA): Each package collects (and shaves a tad) from the 12-inch dance remixes of all the dance hits these two have scored in the past two years. Nurture, nostalgia, or torture? In any case, they're bah-gains.

- **Flying Cowboys**, Rickie Lee Jones (Geffen): Jones is still squirrely after all these years (although she seems to have finally dragged herself away from Tom Waits's booth at Barney's Beanery in West Hollywood to tool through the Southwest, with ex-Steely Dan dude Walter Becker producing). On her cover of "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying," she still manages to sound like a 9-year-old on Thorazine, but the title cut and at least half the disc finds her the equal in wit and wonder to Joni Mitchell and Laura Nyro in their glory days.

- **Freedom**, Neil Young (Reprise): After a decade featuring cracked rhetoric and perverse postures, Neil Young seemed hopeless to me. But this scary, poignant suite—as **enraged** as an ACT UP kamikaze and as wry and wistful as Mark Twain—ranks as the best rock LP of the year.

- **The Chess Box Set**, Muddy Waters (MCA): The most authoritative and bemused voice in the history of blues finally gets his due in a collection of 72 cuts from 1947 to 1972 (ten previously unreleased). The annotation as well as Robert Palmer's liner notes is superb. Muddy Waters's sen-

sibility is Shakespearean; his music, sublime.

- **To Kingdom Come**, The Band (Capitol): America's roots-music-renegades' career is finally on CD with 31 cuts (three previously unreleased live numbers) on two discs—but where is "Just Another Whistle-stop"?

- **The Singles Collection: The London Years**, The Rolling Stone (ABKCO): The Stones were agents provocateurs in the sexual revolution from the start. Mick Jagger—with his increasingly camp leers and pouted like a threat and a promise, giving lots of teenage boys confusing hard-ons. This collection of the band's 58 singles—from Chuck Berry's "Come On" in 1963 to "Sympathy for the Devil" in 1969—ranks as a pop prologue to the Stonewall Riots: one you can dance to.

- **Sound + Vision**, David Bowie (Rykodisc): Bowie's entire RCA catalog is out of print. He owns it. Ever the artful merchandiser, he took the lot to this small audiophile label and helped compile this daunting box set of three CDs and one CD-video disc. Bowie littered the anthology with rarities (an unreleased cover of Springsteen's "Saint in the City"; a medley of "1984" with "Dodo," from 1973), while leaving off crucial cuts like "Queen Bitch," "All the Young Dudes," "Fame," and "DJ." Though gems abound, it can be infuriating listening to this survey of his career. The obvious plan is to keep fans hungry for upcoming releases of the original LPs on CD with bonus tracks.

Bowie was the first major rock star to claim that he slept with other guys and to make it part of his act, his persona, and his music. These 50 cuts, from 1970 to 1980, chronicle a post-Stonewall pop flirtation

with faggotry: one that would lose its cute allure with the advent of AIDS.

- **Patsy Cline Live, Volume 2**, Patsy Cline (MCA): This is a collection of 12 songs—none her own hits—recorded for broadcast between 1956 and 1962, recently unearthed by the Country Music Foundation. They deserve a kiss. Any fan of Patsy's spunk and savvy deserves this disc.

- **I Wonder Do You Think of Me**, Keith Whitley (RCA): Whitley died at 34 of an alcohol OD, cheating country music of the most soulful, honky-tonk pipes since George Jones in his prime. Shortly before Whitley died, his third LP was released. Here's the legacy—with a tear.

- **Keys to the Highway**, Rodney Crowell (CBS): The plaintive voice of country pop (and spouse to Roseanne Cash) isn't blessed with brilliant pipes, but he is a brash craftsman who hits his stride at a canter on the disc's stunning second side.

- **Killing Time**, Clint Black (RCA): This smoldering 27-year-old singer-songwriter from Houston may be the boy to meet Randy Travis in a dark alley. Duet, dudes?

- **homocore hitparade tape**, Various (Hide): Publishers of Toronto's awesome X-rated gay punk fanzine *J.D.s*, G. B. Jones and Bruce La Bruce, have completed their first tape for misfits everywhere. The 14 selections were sent in by bands in England, New Zealand, New York, California, and New Jersey. Audio quality is uneven, so it's a good idea to order *J.D.s* Number 6, which gives background on all the cuts and artists.

My fave cut is "Male Call," by Nicki Parasite, a Buzzcocks-like pop rave-up in which Nicki sings his address in the last verse. But the whole gnarly shebang is cause for celebration and a solicitation for material for the next. Order the tape for \$6 (copies of *J.D.s* numbers 5 and 6 are \$4 each, postage included) by sending cash to *J.D.s*, P.O. Box 1110, Adelaide Street Station, Toronto, Canada M5C 2K5.

- **"Ouija Board," Morrissey (Sire)**: The poet laureate of the awkward, the outcasts, and the terminally sensitive graces us with a bargain-priced EP-CD, produced by Madness's faves, Langer and Winstanley. The B-side is actually richer, with an infectious, fey cover of Herman's Hermits' "East West" and a mournful, homoerotic plaint about a spurned pass and against Christian intolerance. Lovely, that.

As for this decade's end? I rather share the response of the dead girl whom Morrissey contacts on the EP's extravagant title cut: "Push off!"

Here's to better times.

—Adam Block