

SLADE: Merry Christmas Everybody (Polydor)

THE METAL GURUS: (alias THE MISH featuring NME's TEL STAUNTON, produced by NODDY HOLDER, all proceeds to Childline) Merry Christmas Everybody (Phonogram)

Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas without Noddy and his chums dusting down their star-shaped guitars for yet another TOTP's rendition of a track as essential to the British Yuletide Season as worried turkeys, sex with distant relatives ("My, my cousin Egbert... how you've GROWN!") and getting so drunk you projectile-vomit half-masticated crystallized fruits at the telly during the Queen's Commonwealth Speech.

Slade only return from the dead once a year so you know where you can stuff your puffy dance-mixes. For these guys it's always been groin-strain or bust, with the last one to dislocate his jaw yelling out the chorus getting the first round in. But what of The Mish's verish? The boy Staunton sounds stunning, but does Hussey manage to out-Noddy Noddy?

M: No, sorry. Slade's version has more of a rousing party-feel to it.

S: I'm a big Slade fan and if I hadn't heard this 17,000 times already I'd think it was brilliant.

THE TELESCOPES: Ever So (Creation)

I was escorted to the lavatory at this point, but when I return Lush tell me its upmarket Indie-pop with a twist and an A plus for effort. I see no reason to disbelieve them.

E: I thought that was very good. The Telescopes are one of those bands who just seem to get better and better.

S: And more original. There was lots more happening in that record than there's been in their previous stuff. I liked it a lot.

BEAT CLUB: Security (Rob's Records)

One of the best dance-tracks around a bit ago, but this version with New Order's Barney producing and helping out on vocals has extracted the menace from the original, replacing it with an upbeat pop feel. Still top, say us girls, but then, every intelligent woman under 45 on this planet has got a soft spot for Barney.

E: It just sounds very sub-New Order. It's quite good but it's full of crap little riffs whereas New Order have got good little riffs.

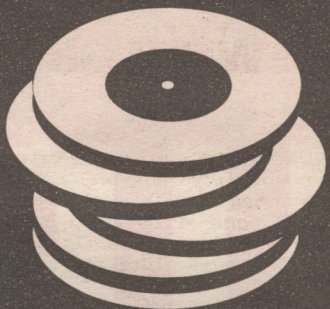
M: I can't think. I'm away. I'm too busy fantasising about Barney. I stood next to him at the crepe stand at Glastonbury... "Spinach and cheese please"... AAAH. That isn't the fantasy by the way, it really happened.

S: Well... I'd never listen to that by choice in a million years.

SWERVEDRIVER: Rave Down (Creation)

The best (ie: the only) LA Grunge-Metal ass-kickers to come out of Oxford sound decidedly promising at first. There's even a cute New Order refrain to clutch on to. Then a terrible growl from the depths of Hell tries to pass itself off as vocals and Swervedriver's SOTW dreams lie in tatters. Game for a bath, anybody?

S: AWFUL! They bill themselves as having nothing to prove, because they're one of the 'noisiest rock acts around' but



SINGLES



PICTURE: JAYNE HOUGHTON

Reviewed by Emma, Steve and Miki out of LUSH

Your host: BARBARA ELLEN

that's all they are really. A noise. Just being noisy isn't enough anymore.

M: I thought it would be better as an instrumental.

E: Well, I quite liked his voice and even though there's lots of shit noise stuff around I think this record has more to it than that. I could listen to it again.

TAIRRIE B: Murder She Wrote (ACR mix) (MCA)

Tairrie B hasn't let the fact that she's white, female and a dead ringer for Cyndi Lauper stop her from kicking ass in the rap world. Unfortunately, neither has it stopped her from making an essentially pedestrian rap record. Lush assure me that there exists another mix that is far more explicit (!) and powerful.

M: I get a bit rude with rap records anyway. I never know whether to treat the voice as a rhythm or try to listen to the lyrics. I can't do both at once. We heard it on Juke Box Jury first and it sounded much better then, really good.

E: Yeah, I quite like her.

Though, whenever I see her on TV she looks like a plump Madonna.

THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH: My Book (Go! Discs)

That Number One they had recently was wonderful wasn't it? The memory of that cabbage-patch temptress snarling "Doncha, DONCHA?" and "Wuncha, WUNCH!" on TOTP still makes me laugh at funny hours of the day or night. This one is less enjoyable. Ample ammunition for those who think The Housemartins becoming The Beautiful South was as insane a metamorphosis as The Jam becoming The Style Council.

S: It's really strange and jazzy. Like Animal Nightlife or Matt Bianco. It'd probably be impossible to get out of your head after three listens.

M: But we're not going to give it that chance.

E: Music for students if you ask me.

UB40: Impossible Love (Virgin)

'Who Kept Voting The Tories In?' and 'Who Kept Buying UB40 Records?' will be the only questions asked by confused future generations when they look back at the '80s. Here, the only millionaire fat Brummies in existence to still think it's 'street' to roll your own ("Oi, this baccy koips falling out of this foiver!") continue in their quest to 'popularise' (ie: rip off and dilute) reggae music. Frankly darlings, if this is the sound of Jamaica I'll eat Enoch Powell's Rasta hat.

S: It's amazing that they're still going after ten years bringing out the same record in different sleeves. They're really awful aren't they? It's enough to put you off reggae for life.

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK: This One's For The Children (EMI)

New Kids have the trots (vinyl-wise) yet again with a record that proves beyond doubt that some teenies cannot tell shit from sugar to save their cornflakes. The sleeve pic reveals that the boys have promising careers as village idiots in front of them if nothing else.

E: That's the drossiest pile of shit I've heard in ages. It wouldn't even get played on Radio 2.

M: And look at them, they're hideous. I wouldn't touch them with a Lech Walesa (six foot Pole).

S: What's on the 'Tough Ones' T-shirt? ... 'Drugs Suck' or 'Suck Drugs', I can't make it out.

INNOCENCE: A Matter Of Fact (Chrysalis)

Great voice, and it's a shame she's climbed straight into the proffered record company straight-jacket and produced such low-rent Diana Ross limp soul. Still, has some good moments.

E: It's nowhere near as good as their first single.

S: And that sax solo was a bit clichéd.

M: Perhaps it should have been an instrumental. Not that there's anything wrong with her voice but some bits on their own sounded really mellow.

PHIL COLLINS: Do You Remember (Virgin)

ELTON JOHN: Easier To Walk Away (Phonogram)

Phil and Elton have got a lot in common. Both are music-biz lifers having committed dreadful crimes against good taste in the real world, both have written excellent songs in the past, and both have just blown their chances of walking away with the coveted 'Best Western Artist With No Hair' award by releasing the vinyl equivalent of liver-spots just as votes are being cast.

On the sleeve pics, a certain devil-may-care recklessness—or indeed a secret love of hip-hop—could be read into Elton's adoption of the perennially popular Baseball Cap On Sideways look. But Phil blows it completely by being photographed with his dome bent over a Grand Piano live onstage at a venue that is probably not The Marquee.

M: Both are just crap. Fair enough—Elton's is a charity record and all that, but still...

S: Yeah, yeah, yeah... a few bob goes to charity but then again it plugs his new album and makes millions for him eventually. It's just a cynical business move.

E: I quite like Phil Collins as a person. I've got one of his records at home.

M: She used to sample it for her dirty tapes. (bursts into song)

... "I can feel it coming in the air tonight... I can feel it coming, coming, COMING!"

E: I've still got that actually.

M: Have you really? I've lost mine.

We'll, that's quite enough of your sex lives. What did you think of the records?

S: Dreary. And so complacent too. They probably put more effort into farting than they do into producing music like that.

CLIFF RICHARD: Saviour's Day (EMI)

Another Christmas record to pelt your baubles at. It's a God Eat God world out there and



PICTURE: JOE STEVENS

And Noddy's verdict is...



PICTURE: TIM JARVIS

Get a life Phil, get a hat

SINGLE OF THE WEEK ONE

JAMES: Lose Control (Fontana)

Good singles are not just thin on the ground this week. They're positively skeletal. James are one of the few bands who come through and save Lush from the embarrassment of having to choose a fat Christmas charity turkey as their SOTW. 'Lose Control' is a stubbornly peculiar masterpiece. The vocals veer from Marc Almond—no bad thing—to Howard Devoto in a friendly mood—even better. The music is the type of noble dream Johnny Marr is prone to having. Morrissey will be so jealous when he hears this he'll probably wet the bed for weeks.

Steve: It's got the Magazine feel too. I prefer James's older stuff but this is still good.
Miki: I was really getting into it, swaying along towards the end. Mind you, I do want to go to the toilet.

SINGLE OF THE WEEK TWO

ALISON LIMERICK: Where Love Is (Arista)

An energetic dancefloor smash that would sound merely like Adeva in a strop were it not for the accompanying music's unusual and compelling rhythmic contortions. Judging by the sleeve pic, Alison has the same Android Lost In Lewisham dress-sense as Grace Jones but Lush do not allow this faux-pas to influence them unduly.

Emma: She was on the second This Mortal Coil album. Not that this sounds anything like that. The bass-line is brilliant.

M: It's very upbeat. I like it. I had a bit of a squirm in my seat to it actually.

Cliff doesn't help with a dirge that would have made Little Baby Jesus jump out of his crib and plead to be crucified prematurely. Interestingly, on his sleeve pic the discreetly greying Cliff looks like an 'After' photograph for a hair transplant advert Phil and Elton might look at.

M: It's too easy to take the piss out of Cliff Richard but that was crap.

S: I liked the way he used the title 'Saviour's Day' instead of 'Christmas Day'. After 105 singles to be still taking risks like that is quite amazing really. Would it get the all-important Granny vote?

E: My granny wouldn't like it. Mind you she's dead.

M: It's not even a charity record.

S: Not unless you count Cliff as a charity case.

BARK PSYCHOSIS: Nothing Feels (Cheree)

Astral rockers make good-ish with a record so mesmerically inoffensive it would be perfect for those moments when you

just want to climb into your Deprivation Tank and forget the cruel world.

E: I saw them live and I thought they had a really good sound and really good guitars. Their singles have never done justice to them.

S: There was a percussion bit in there that sounded like somebody was randomly shoving a chair around the studio... but it was alright, I liked.

COSSI: (They Long To Be) Close To You (Swanyard)

Cossi is Sonia (hmmm, perhaps)... Or maybe she's Tiffany (could be!)... No she's not, she's The Carpenters (WRONG!). This record is so soulless that tragic anorexic Karen Carpenter must be turning in her grave like an ox on a spit. (Oops) Sorry Kags, wherever you are. Didn't mean to mention food. Don't go barfing all over your wings now, will you?

E: Cossi is dreary, but the song is

so good it will always sound alright. It's like Candy Flip and 'Strawberry Fields' all over again really.

THE AFROS: Feel It (CBS)

The slightly surreal Haircut 100 revival continues apace as chunky rap pranksters The Afros endeavour to lighten up their chosen genre. It backfires because the mix is so bad you can't hear whether their gags are any good or not. Listening out for their vocals is like trying to spot a child's sock through the window of a full washing machine (Steady Babs—Ed). I hate comedy rap anyway. De La Soul have got a lot to answer for.

M: I'm definitely not into whacky records.

The sleeve is great, very 'Provincial Record Fairs 1972' don't you think?

M: Yeah, it's the sort of thing you see down at the Record And Tape Exchange... lots of them in the same rack going for 20p a time. In fact, I'll just take this copy down there now.



James take a dip in Morrissey's bedroom