

# KICK ASTEROID!!!



ILLUSTRATION: JON LANGFORD

## PIXIES

### Trompe Le Monde (4AD/All formats)

'TROMPE LE Monde' is a greasy slab of noise, devoid of the variety of previous Pixie works, and strapped with a desire to sound harder, grungier, and more love-less than ever before. The lyrics of Black Francis are not those of someone inspired by language, but someone obsessed by sci-fi, handing out vocals at a moment's notice, no thought for a rewrite, and too charmless to pass for more than drug-influenced ditties.

Though their eagerness to record fresh material every year has to be admired, the Pixies have suffocated their creative strengths and trampled dirt into their fairy dust. Those of you who like that grating surf guitar sound the Pixies have claimed for themselves will have to do battle with a production that's too up-tight to break out those frighteningly brilliant riffs of yore. This is music for mudslingers not gunslingers, too intense to take in one listen. Its only hope as an album is that live workings of the same material will snap its *rigor-mortis* and set the individual songs racing like meteorites – because half of them really deserve that freedom.

There's no doubting the Pixies' abilities, they create tensions and structures in their songwriting that set them leagues apart from the generation that used noise to hide lack of talent, but 'Trompe Le Monde' finds them stuck in the grease between two cogs.

Space, guns, construction, sound, acid and sex are the order of the day as Charles, Kim, Joey and David sweep through their new songs like lava down the mount. In all furnace the material never lets up, it's harsh and hellish from the off, waving a fist in the direction of hard rock riffs on 'Planet Of Sound' and 'Space (I Believe In)', and encouraging Black Francis to whine and mewl at will on 'U-Mass'. The structures of these new Pixie-songs, though, are blunt and gristly. In the past their music has chased the listener through a song, inspiring and entertaining as it goes, leaving you disappointed when they end. Here the songs are so raw they're frustrating. They've attempted to write 'Darklands' and come up with 'The Frenz Experiment' and left it choking on its own phlegm.

The cover of the Mary Chain's 'Head On' is bizarre. The Pixies have written some excellent songs here, 'Little Eiffel' and 'Bird Dream Of The Olympus Mons' we will come to, but to adopt a riff, a structure, a gasping lyric, a love so twisted and classic as 'Head On' is to highlight every dark rusty corner of 'Trompe Le Monde' for what it is. You just don't want to hear the Pixies arseing about in tortuous fashion elsewhere when you can hear them apply their characteristic paint-job to the Reid Brothers' very obvious talent.

If you're familiar with the darker moments of Nick Cave, The Fall and the Mary Chain, then it's perfectly clear where the Pixies are racing for, 'Lovely Day' in particular is jaunty and stylish enough to have escaped from the recorded works of the above.

'Motorway To Roswell' could have turned up late from the 'Doolittle' session. A track with space and charm, Charles' vocals don't sound like a pig on a skewer, on the hard-shoulder Joey's guitars chop and change with distinction, and the song builds – so few of these do. An atmosphere is created, the song ends with screaming feedback marking the memory, and sets the pace for the closing song 'The Navajo Know', the band's only attempt to recreate those humming guitar pieces that could have fallen from heaven or vintage cowboy and redskin flicks.

While 'Palace Of The Brine' offers a rich, glowing staple to 'Trompe Le Monde', its guitars and vocals crush grooved into one, the riff a respectable backbone of sound, the structure capturing the Pixies on top form, it's the third track 'Alec Eiffel' that will come to be as popular as 'Debaser' live. A two-minute thrash through the story of Alec 'Little' Eiffel and his Tower De Force that could have been scribbled on the back of a handkerchief, it's a song that cuts into the psyche like a knife, the guitars are regimented but insane, they slash, slice and stab freely whilst Charles and Kim get all intergalactic with their vocals.

Presented as tracks one to 15, with its garish cover, over-compensated production techniques, and ugly snarls, 'Trompe Le Monde' is a tedious beast, but climb inside it, rip it apart and explore the pockets of brilliance and you'll know the Pixies are still up there, they just need some secateurs. It's dark and dirty, and some of it's downright unbearable, but it will grow on you. They could have come to the party in a speedboat and instead they showed in a battleship. And I hardly even mentioned the studied beauty of 'Bird Dream...' (7)

James Brown