

roots music, Baaba and Mansour's acoustic guitars tangled and glistening against electric guitar and shifting percussion, as Baaba's plaintive, undulating voice follows the wind. One of the marvels of all the current unravelling of African sounds in the World Music Story - the musical version of Disney's "Fantasia" - is the way American roots music is getting explained; on "Djam Leelii", the country blues sounds like the crying of it's first breath. People keep telling me there is substandard African music at large, but I've yet to confront it. Never stop. Meanwhile, carry your prayer mat when you hear this record.

**MA**

## **THROWING MUSES:**

**Hunkpapa (4AD CAD901)**

"I'm two-headed, one free, one sticky..." Yup, time for the new Throwing Muses album. Now some folks decided that after 1986's startling shock-of-the-new debut album - Kristen Hersh and her mother-in-blue-hair storyboard etc - The Muses had regressed, especially in the light of the Pixies' full-frontalisms. The Muses seemed to go the other way, sanding down their violent edges, but the navigation through the rather less startling, more considered "The Fat Skier" and "House Tornado" was The Muses' own head tornado, trying to navigate the way to "Hunkpapa"'s startling discovery, whereby Kristen's confession that she had songs The Bangles would kill for but she tried to avoid writing 'straightforward' has given way to how "Hunkpapa" really is strident and accessible without sacrificing the group's uncanny and unique disorientation. The nervous chopping of tempos, the crush of their haunting folk-hoedown melody rushes, and Kristen's fearing voice meet - boring to relate, Thesaurus fans - much stronger ensemble playing and production, especially the range and sharpness of guitars. Everything meshes, i.e each "Hunkpapa" song Meets Every Situation Head On. In fact, never have Throwing Muses been more Throwing Muses.

First and foremost there's "Dizzy", a beatific beat-pop shimmy disc which The Bangles should kill for, not that they'd really know what to do with lyrics like "I need your dark skin". Funny, as The Muses get more confident, so Kristen's lyrics get more dif-

fused and fragmented. Aside from "Dizzy"'s real dizzy riff'n'chorus and MTV video imagery, "Fall Down" and rhythm guitarist Tanya Donnelly's swooning "Angel" are the other spell-binding crossovers; "Bea", "Mania" and "I'm Alive" the frazzle-rock that folks probably expect most from The Muses; then for added variety, the soulfull "Devil's Roof" (like "Colder" from "Tornado", the sharpest of intros), "Take"'s exhilarating, claustrophobic brass swing, the relaxed and irreverent rockabilly humour of "The Burrow" and finally "Dragonhead", the album's most 'most' moment, by Tanya, a two-parter very much in the mood of the first album's "Soul Soldier" (by Kirsten though) that unravels like in a confused dream with strings and keeps reminding me of Hot Chocolate's "You Sexy Thing". Would you believe, startling.

If it's strange to talk about album-of-the-year in January, then it's hard to imagine a record in '89 that will startle like "Hunkpapa". So Kirsten's hair is now auburn, the Pixies are startling too, and Throwing Muses are the Goddesses - and drumming God - that their name originally implied.

Persist with "Hunkpapa" and you might find you'll agree with this infatuation.

Mop me up, Papa.

**MA**

## **RED HARVEST: Strange (Aftermath AFT005)**

"Strange" is actually far from it. The spirit of late '70s/early '80s new wave pop is resurrected, if that is, it was ever laid to rest. Three minute slices of three chord bounce, move up a fifth to the chorus and hook, drop in a middle eight and maybe a solo and you're there. Not quite so simple anymore, though some would have us believe otherwise. However, Red Harvest have nearly got it. "Heaven" is a catchy grand guitar piece that has producer Pete Shelley's pop sensibility stamped all over it. Elsewhere it is sadly lacking, although "Feeling Young" and "Be There Soon" stand out from the rest and make you want to like them. They succeed in the most part.

A maturing process should now begin. To really shine Red Harvest will have to come up with more material like "Heaven" and less filler - they set their own standards.

**NC**