

made. Cringe-worthy lyrics only makes matters worse, leaving *The Orange Album* sounding more or less like a collage of everything that was wrong with music in the 1980s.

-MARK HORAN

System & Station

Here Is Now

Latest Flame

Says System & Station brain-trust Ryan FK Heise, his number one influence is "sunshine hitting you just right when you are about to jump off a bridge!" That pretty much sums up the power and glory of *Here Is Now*. Part prog, part pop, part punk, part jazz-rock fusion, S&S seems to have hit on the perfect mixture of instrumental prowess and accessibility that made the early 70s so much fun (and diverse). Frank Zappa would do "Follow Your Arrow" proud as the tune takes the listener on a challenging time signature changing magic carpet ride. The ballad "I'll See It When I Believe It" traverses the melodramatic; however Palmer Cloud's blotto avant-garde guitar work brings it all back to earth in the same manner David Gilmour made even the dullest of Pink Floyd cuts interesting. The title track is a romantic, inspirational cut that you'd expect from Bono by way of Eno if they were both twenty years younger. Sooner or later *Here Is Now* will captivate you.

-TOM SEMIOLI

Tahiti 80

Fosbury

Militia Group

With *Fosbury*, Tahiti 80 has none-too-discreetly embraced its inner Curtis Mayfield. Sleek funk beats, shimmering synths, dub effects and smooth grooves augment the band's sturdy songwriting, while Xavier Boyer's falsetto pays tribute to groundbreaking soul stirrers such as Gamble & Huff, The O'Jays, Eddie Kendricks and Eugene Record. In lesser hands, wearing your influences on your sleeve can be dangerous - or at the very least, wearisome - yet



somehow, these underrated French popsters make it all sound easy and natural. Working on their third full length with Neal Pogue and Serban Ghenea (Outkast and NERD), *Fosbury's* sound is clean but never antiseptic, highlighted by wide screen, hook-filled arrangements. One highlight among many is the guitar-heavy "Chinatown." Includes a limited edition bonus EP, featuring covers of songs by The Chi-Lites, Turtles and Epic Soundtracks.

-LARRY O. DEAN

This Day & Age

The Bell and The Hammer

One Eleven

The Bell and the Hammer, the sophomore effort from This Day & Age, is a strong accomplishment for the Buffalo, N.Y. quintet. Although the ubiquitous Brit-pop sound infuses the new album, TD&A individualizes its sound through the use of well arranged post-rock guitar and melodic piano. While singer Jeff Martin rarely alters his vocal delivery and the instrumental arrangements get a bit too monotonous at times, it's clear that this second effort is more an experiment to individualize their post-rock sound than to create a flawless album. Despite the obvious experimentation, TD&A is not adverse to pop songs. The drum and vocal intro in "Sara Poor Sara" works like any other traditional pop song, but uses Michael Carroll's distinct guitar-work to dramatic effect, allowing a standard emotional pop song to become a lush instrumental arrangement. TD&A balances their propulsive percussion and sonic guitar with pop-perfect melodies that will excite avid fans of The Autumns and The Fray.

-WES BARKER

The Tickets

The Tickets

Brewery Records

The Tickets released their lone long-player, *The Tickets Make a Record*, on cassette-only in tiny quantities in 1990. Those who were fortunate enough to hear it at the time were bowled over by the band's pop prowess; lead singer/songwriter Bryan Shaddix not only had the ability to vocally channel the playfulness and passion of Squeeze's Glenn Tilbrook, but he also wrote some damned catchy tunes. Shaddix also had a talented second-in-command in rhythm guitarist/vocalist Brian Martin (who sang lead on three of the album's 10 songs, although only a super-sleuth would be able to tell his voice apart from Shaddix's). The quartet plays the heck out of pure pop anthems that still sound swell 16 years later, such as the gorgeous "Dream About Me," the loping "I Don't Belong," the furious "Way Down Here," and the jangly treat "Heartland." Not a bad song in the bunch really, and Walter Clevenger's spiffy remixing and remastering job makes the whole shebang sound great. All in all, *The Tickets* is a simply splendid album, and a welcome addition to the "obscure power pop on CD" canon.

-JOHN M. BORACK

To Live and Shave in L.A.

Noon and Eternity

Mento Park

To Live and Shave in L.A.'s 2002 widespread release, *The Wigmaker in Eighteenth Century Williamsburg*, was a noisy punk excursion that had a good many critics likening it to a post-modern noise-rock version of Sun Ra. Heady praise indeed, but all in a day's work for a "band" that had already released ten recordings to that point, including 1995's *Vedder Vedder Bedwetter*, 1996's "Helen Butte" vs. *Masonna Pussy Badsmell* and 2000's *Peter Criss vs. Peter Christopherson*. The collective's 14th album, *Noon and Eternity*, took a mere five years to execute - a period that found the group battling an enormous storm of internal chaos and controversy

regarding spin-off bands featuring original members - and now sees the reunited core trio of Tom Smith, Rat Bastard and Ben Wolcott venturing into an avant-garde form of glam psychedelia and sound collage, like David Bowie and Tom Waits working on a Sun Ra version of "In-a-Gadda-Da-Vida." To accomplish *Noon and Eternity's* 4-song/67-minute space soundscape, TLASILA have recruited acclaimed guitarist/producer Don Fleming, metal wack-job Andrew W.K. and Sonic Youth guitarist Thurston Moore, who also provided the studio for TLASILA to explore the outer limits of punk musique concrete. Smith and TLASILA have long and consistently created a sonic universe and creative philosophy that are the very definition of challenging. Forewarned is forearmed with this mad, maddening delight.

-BRIAN BAKER



Tokyo Police Club

A Lesson in Crime EP

Paper Bag Records

These Toronto upstarts really work the whole brand recognition angle as David Monks shouts "Tokyo Police Club" over and over (most press photos display the name prominently, too). While singing your own band's name in song is as about as cool as making up your own nickname, TPC manages to make pop twitchier than a Parkinson's seizure and as sweetly infectious as the "kissing disease." Their bass lines thump and slap imperiously enough to make you forget the overdose of handclaps introducing "Nature of the Experiment," while the song just chugs along with docile, doom-laden lyrics and gracefully restrained keys. But from one song to the next, the CD seems only