

Unbearable sounds

SPEC RECORDS

'No Cowboys' (Spec reSPECt 1)* *

AS I set out across the difficult terrain that involves a review of an anonymous creation called 'No Cowboys' by a band(?) called Spec Records or pragVEC (equally anonymous, however one looks at it), I notice that this album was actually available on October 17th — two months ago in fact. This shows the extent to which a journalist has to build him/herself up in order to face writing about such music.

As one of Girls At Our Best! so accurately pointed out, one of the least endearing facts about Rough Trade bands is the manner in which almost all of them feel it compulsory to sport a 'Rough Trade sound'. In the case of pragVEC or Spec Records or whatever else they're calling themselves this week, the problem is terminal — in general, the 'Rough Trade sound' is not a pleasant one; on 'No

Cowboys', it's quite unbearable.

Apart from the overall amateur-hour production, the robot-like chanting of singer, Susan Gogan (OK, so I admit I was never much of a one for pragVEC) and the incomprehensible lyrics which tend to refer to such rivetting subjects as the purchase of washing machines(!), the songs have a tendency to begin and end on a whim. The album, therefore, sounds as if it were a fine excuse to have a muck around in a recording studio. Great fun to do; purgatory to listen to.

But easily the most depressing point about this new wave of British fusion music is the way in which it is carefully considered and sometimes revered as Important and Enlightening when it's starkly obvious to anyone with half an ear that pragVEC are merely horsing around with a couple of drums, a Wasp synth and a guitar or two — bugger all to get serious about.

'No Cowboys' is a great excuse for buying and enjoying 'Super Trouper'. No more.

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