

have been brutal to her, and she incorporates their gloomy dreariness rather effectively with frank candor. Drawing on love, sex and doubt, the dark side escalates continuously with intriguing, poetic lyrics. Personal and haunting, the actual words are what make *My Secret Life* so stark and real. With Angelo Badalamenti serving as composer, conductor and orchestrator, the end result is a professionally mixed product (he is best known for orchestrating the music from *Twin Peaks*).

Faithfull takes center stage, raspy singing and occasionally speaking her message in a calm tone. Her voice has become much fuller, richer and more intense with the passing of time; at times her vocal style is a dead ringer for Patti Page. She is accompanied by a wide array of strings and woodwinds, all timeless and masterfully interwoven with her voice. "The Wedding" is a complex look at life's realistic twists and often futile relationships. On the other hand, "Sleep" and "She" reflect loneliness and desperation of adulthood, yet convey a strong need for survival. Lastly, "Love In the Afternoon" stands as anything but romantic, while "Bored By Dreams" is a good reality check.

In a dreary mood on a dreary day, as I penned this review, the truthful words and the murky sound suited me just fine; I could readily identify with the dramatic "Prologue" taken from the *Divina Commedia* by Dante Alighieri, and the even more apt "Epilogue" from *The Tempest* by good old Will Shakespeare. The lines "We're all spirits and are melted into air, into thin air," solidify the mood rather well as does "We are such stuff, as dreams are made of." Cati Leigh

THE FLAT DUO JETS

Introducing... (Norton Records)



Dexter Romweber and Crow, the dynamic rockabilly duo from North Carolina, put out more energy, more musical effort and noise, and more hard-core rock-n-roll than most bands with twice as many members do — they are America's wildest two-man band.

Romweber is the front man, doing the singing, playing the guitar and piano, and writing most of the material; Crow backs up Dexter on the drums. And while they are torn between touring, writing songs, and playing rock-n-roll, Dexter says, (in *Pulse's* Aug. 1993 Harold DeMair interview) "I want to keep playing rock-n-roll no matter what, even if we're considered dorks or crazy or whatever."

Well, on their sixth release, *Introducing...*, the crazy dorks of rock deliver with a combination of covers and original, rock and ballads. They cover Jim Carroll's "That's The Way I Love" — though it was Carroll, after doing a poetry reading before one of the Jets gigs, who told Dexter that he should write and perform only originals. Dexter spouted, "I've had so much torture with women that I ought to be able to write some great songs about them."

Introducing the Flat Duo Jets is some of the best of Dex and Crow's crude rock-n-roll and its a good place to meet the twin dynamos. You can hear that they have little regard for things like second takes and overdubs — they like doing things directly into the mics, thus giving the whole album a wild and untamed feel. Nevertheless, they do slow down the pace at times with

songs like "Golden Strings" written by Chopin/ F.L. Wray and their cover of Otis Redding's "I've Been Loving You Too Long." All in all, *Introducing the Flat Duo Jets* is a nice twenty-track project to get your ears wet in the Jets song pool. Ed Shimborske Jr.

FOETUS

Gash (Columbia)



Foetus has always been just good, fun listening, and *Gash* is no exception. Likewise, J. G. Thirlwell's post-Punk, post-Industrial project has always existed in a unique niche consisting of pounding rhythms, bright synthetic horns, and tongue-in-cheek lyrics that no one else has been able to imitate. *Gash* is a prime example of this prime music making.

The album opens with "Mortgage," an Industrial exploration into musical schizophrenia that quickly sets the pace for a very thrilling trip through the hard and straight ("Verklemmt" and "Mighty Whity"), the hard but not-so-straight ("Downfall" and "See-Ya Later") and the all-together fucked-up ("Take It Outside Godboy" and "Slung"). "Verklemmt" works well as single material, carrying a quick and easily accessible pace, leaving the rest of the album open to explore material which couldn't make the Top-40 charts if there were no other band in existence. The album moves well this way, going from the easier-listening material to drawn-out cut-ups.

Gash is full of variety, and is a welcome addition to Foetus' musical history. Fans shouldn't let this one pass by, and those who welcome the challenge of some radical, intelligent, and exciting music in this post-modernist society of ours should check it out as well

Alexander Clarkson

FORBIDDEN

Distortion (Massacre)



Looming riffs stomp, Russ Anderson screams, the intensity doesn't let up. Sonically dense, as polished as ever, immensely chunky and unabashedly thrashy... Forbidden have been on the inactive list for six long years, and judging by the unrelenting nature of *Distortion*, they aren't real happy about that. Any time vocalist Anderson (still hitting them opera registers, by the way) lets up his searing delivery, guitarists Tim Calvert and Craig Locicero and bassist Matt Camacho more than make up for it with throbbing, snarling wall-of-sound riffs. Newbie drummer Steve Jacobs fills in any possible blank space with wicked fills. By the time side-one-ender "Feed the Hand" lets up for a mel-lower interlude, the listener needs the rest! If you remember enjoying *Twisted Into Form* back in the day, you'll be happy to know that the band has pushed that formula of pummeling, vibrant thrash to the *nth* degree and infused a little groove now and then to move things along. I found "Mind's I" and "Undertaker" to be a bit soggy and sluggish despite nice vocal work... but with "Wake Up," "Distortion" and "Hypnotized By the Rhythm" (nice title!), on board, you won't hear me complaining! Good to have ya back, fellas; don't make us wait till 2000 for the next album! Keith Bergman

HANNAH CRANNA

Better Lonely Days (Big Deal)



Hannah Cranna has been reincarnated from the annals of historical New England, as this New Haven, Connecticut foursome derives its name from the 1660 Monroe County witch who poisoned her seafaring spouse and put an evil whammy on many a neighbor!

Thus and so, I expected higher-pitched female artistry. Upon listening, I was startled to discover that the record is a male-oriented conglomeration of Americana folk and bluesy ballads. Songwriters Rocco Villavicencio (vocals and bass) and Stephen Bunovsky (vocals and guitar) are responsible for most of the cuts, producing a sound which can best be categorized as a cross between the Kinks, the Byrds and Steely Dan. The brut of the material is definitely uncomplicated easy listening matter, which early on, anesthetized me with its slow-moving and repetitive style. The lyrics are simplistic and banal, and charismatic with dreamy acoustical riffs — simply put, Hannah Cranna needs a shot of adrenaline or at least a jump-start to instill some life into their product!

"Mystic" proved to be the most genuine offering — more orchestrated, with a little meat between the slices of philosophy employed. Its acoustical intro and melodic harmonization added life, as did the bluesy guitar contributions. The five-minute collaboration came across as sincere and sensitive, unlike the majority of the selections. Of note also is Ray Davies's "Waterloo Sunset," which was covered with reasonable taste (the ending faded out superbly).

Better Lonely Days is a valid title for this CD — the unidimensional result of a musical throwback that lacks depth and fire. I felt aloof and dissatisfied as I finished the tracks; the lack of tempo variations and the lethargic slowness weighed heavily on my mind. It may be best to put a dead witch to rest and escape to a new and daring, faster-paced genre of vibration and pitch.

Cati Leigh

ICED EARTH

Burnt Offerings (Century Media)



Low-selling even for Century Media, Iced Earth ekes out another album of power metal so hopelessly dated by America-circa-1995 standards that one would likely place this band somewhere in Scandinavia, four tawny, muscular louts with a lot of double-k's in their last names. But no, they're the leather oasis in Florida's death metal desert, and they've apparently learned to eat indifference for breakfast and spit out ever-more-refined riffs. It's the third histrionic vocalist in as many albums; the bloke manages to do a decent job portraying a sweaty hybrid of Paul Stanley and King Diamond! The star of Iced Earth's unwatched extravaganza, of course, is guitarist Jon Schaffer, who incidentally happens to be a friggin' brilliant riffmeister. But why, oh why, does he insist on contributing vocals? And where did he get that disconcerting habit of welding riffs together with no regard whatsoever for flow or continuity?