

Tauntings from the underground

Beefeater, that D.C. pioneer of funk-fusion, has finally called it quits. The band was kind enough to leave us a 12-inch EP on Olive Tree Records, "Need A Job." *Beefeater* takes up where the Bad Brains left off and is even more versatile. While the Bad Brains fused hardcore, reggae and funk, *Beefeater* throws in bits of just about everything else — and lets you know it.

fifth column

by bryan peterson

All four band members share vocal and percussion duties on this release, produced by Kenny Dread, who handled studio chores on the thrash-reggae craziness of HR's (Bad Brains vocalist) solo LP. Most of the songs are fairly unstructured but hold together by the bandmembers' talent.

Bass notes jump all over, punctuating a distorted guitar sound. A flurry of percussion rains down, unleashing uncountable beats on unknown instruments. All this adds up to great backing for some well-crafted lyrics.

Beefeater is at its best during a free-lance jam session on "Apartheid," its best live song. The frustrated frenzy of "Laurel Grove" is no slouch either, as it tells the story of a relationship gone wrong.

"In America" explores the madness that spawned John Hinckley, the San Ysidro Massacre, a man threatening to blow up the Washington Monument and the arms race. Now you said *who* is crazy?

But relax, it's not all serious. Among others, just try "Better 'n' Me," which rocks with the best of current underground hits.

And do not despair over *Beefeater*'s demise: A followup to the band's earlier "Plays For Lovers" album on Dischord is almost upon us.

I first encountered *Chumbawamba* last summer at St. Albans, north of London, where the band was playing at an international youth fair under a Big Top tent. Quite a sight it was, with 12-inch Mohicans dancing with 14-year-old German girls in pigtails. Despite enormous cultural and lingual separation, crowd members united to enjoy *Chumbawamba*'s audio-visual presentation.

The members of *Chumbawamba* vary in number from about six to 10. Their varied talents are used to create visual and musical messages and slogans, mostly concerned with social or political themes. It's not *what* they say but how they say it that will keep most people's interest.

While the new album lacks *Chumbawamba*'s visual aspects, "Pictures of Starving Children Sell Records" backs up the title theme with vibrant, resilient songs. Horns, an accordion and a lilting keyboard back up more traditional instruments. Bouncing bass notes are dropped at just the right times, complementing a variety of guitar styles. And in between songs ironic commercials from the same giant corporations who simultaneously exploit Third World labor and contribute to Live Aid can be heard.

In keeping with the fashion for charity, not change/Here's our contribution: We've called it Slag Aid/For every pop star that we slag off today, a million pounds will be given away!"

The crowd cheers, and thus begins a vicious satire of the slew of Aid projects designed to feed the world's hungry. After

stars like Paul McCartney (whose "crocodile tears will irrigate the desert"), Freddie Mercury and David Bowie are denounced, *Chumbawamba* announces that Cliff Richard, that shining beacon of moral worth, will be crucified. Again, the crowd cheers.

It does make one wonder: Band Aid, Live Aid, and Sport Aid raised some \$100 million, an amount equal to that which "the world spends on arms every two hours, 40 minutes."

Chumbawamba is not against charity in and of itself. The band is, however, revolted by the maintenance of a global system that perpetuates poverty in an international scale — war and war preparation, the destruction of surplus food, unjust puppet governments kept in power by bigger countries in a pathetic game of global domination, greedy multinational companies who establish empires while paying a pittance in wages . . . the list is endless.

The band's solution? Feed the world, Starve the rich.

"And when the system starts to crack, we'll have to be ready to give it all back."

EMMA (M.A. Draje Records, De Konkurrent dist.)

This double longtime squat in the counter-cultural haven Amsterdam before being forcibly evicted last year. For quasi-legally occupying a vacant building, the folks at Emma did a great job. By the time of eviction they had constructed a bar, restaurant, recording studio and living quarters for many.

Emma became a stop for numerous "alternative" bands who toured Europe, as well as a regular venue for native "A'dam" bands. The 30 bands on this two-album set took advantage of Emma's recording studios, and the

result is a well-recorded, varied presentation of mostly European underground music.

Nineteen of the bands on this collection reside in the Netherlands and range in style from the supersonic speed of BGK's lengthy burst to the jazz-like improv of Zak In As. Aside from the American noise-mongers Sonic Youth, the bands originate in Western Europe.

One side is set aside mostly for industrial noise. Some of it is evocative and challenging, as in numbers by The Ex or If, both from the Netherlands. Sadly, some of it comes off as gooey, vacuous sludge.

Aside from industrial noise, the other major genre of underground music represented is good old punk rock. Here again there are both dull and exemplary contributions. Italy's Indigesti cranks out a good rocker, even if the lyrics are confusing. Combat Not Conform demonstrates the bet of current German thrash music. "Media Control" shines as a compulsory sing-along by CNC's fellow Germans Tu-Do Hospital.

The indescribable new-somethingness of the Morzalprunk track, whose only lyrics are 'MEEEP', felt out of place sandwiched between punk songs and left me yearning for more variety. Yet the compilers have released quite an amalgamation as it is. This is best realized in a song by the Gentry. The song itself is good, but the vocalist materialized a hideous Elton John apparition I thought I had safely hidden away in my subconscious.

The beauty of this compilation is its versatility combined with an effect of whetting the listener's appetite. I was left both satisfied and hungry for more. All in all, the Emma compilation is a great and an excellent representation of some of European underground music's most recent trails.

Review By Kevin Cowan
Staff Reporter

Plot spoils surprise in 'Blind Date'

Chalk up another canister of celluloid rubbish for the proverbial trash can of worthless commercialized film.

Blake Edwards' "Blind Date" is an ill-timed, innane attempt that belongs in no theater, commercial or otherwise.

Edwards, seemingly trying to copy the approach used in "After Hours," opens with a half-successful, yuppie dreg named Walter (Bruce Willis), who's in desperate need of a date for "the big business dinner." Walter's Kill-for-a buck car dealer/brother finds him

none other than the infamous Kim Basinger.

The previews tell you what happens next.

Bruce has specific orders not to get Kim drunk; he does. Kim gets unrealistically strung out and promptly destroys Walter's tragic yuppie existence.

The problem is that it's not funny. It's not entertaining and it's certainly not worth the money. It's not even worth seeing for free.

If Jimmy Swaggart and Jerry Falwell were to get together and make a film about the pros and cons of dating — of having a good time

— this would be the piece of garbage they would come up with.

But why? Why does Edwards offend me so with this rendering?

First, the comedy is non-existent. Edwards continually tried to build up to something funny, then destroys it by placing serious dialogue in place of the punch line; thus, the ill-timed comedy with an anti-climactic effect.

Secondly, the characters. Bruce Willis should have stayed with "Moonlighting." His dialogue, in particular, isn't that bad. But

Willis doesn't strike me as the yuppie type.

Basinger appears as a down south girl who wears too much makeup and has a serious drinking problem. Two or three sips of champagne and she's running amok, spouting blatantly unnatural monologue.

The whole film is the same, bogus, redundant and irrelevant attempts at a witty comedy. To the best of my knowledge, I have never been so provoked that I wanted to leave the theater.

My best advice is to wait for this to arrive in the video stores, rent it, and record over it. But don't waste the time to sit and be aggravated by this movie.

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