



REVIEWS by Steve Baltin



■ PETER GABRIEL: *Secret World Live* (Geffen 24722)

Peter Gabriel is one of those select artists who deserves to have everything he does listened to. Thus, a best-of, or in this case live, collection almost has to be brilliant. It is. Comprised primarily of material from *So* and *Us*, this two-disc package offers vastly reworked interpretations of Gabriel's signature hits including "Sledgehammer," "Digging In The Dirt" and an eleven-minute-plus version of "In Your Eyes" that closes the album. The new life fused into these songs stems from the world-beat flavor that Gabriel has used increasingly with each tour. The best of the

best include "Across The River," previously unavailable in the States, "Don't Give Up," which gives vocalist Paula Cole a chance to shine singing Kate Bush's original part, and "Come Talk To Me," the opening number.

■ THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS: *John Henry* (Elektra 61654)

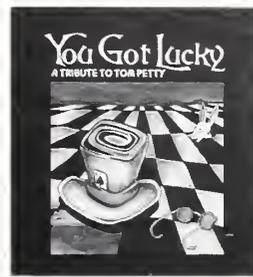
The sixth full-length album from this quirky duo finds them straying so far off the beaten path, they actually find their way back to the highway. Aided for the first time in the studio by the percussion section they introduced live in 1992, the result is a fuller sound than ever before, but no less eccentric. Though the 20 songs on the album sometimes veer to the poppy, the quote from Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* that opens "I Should Be Allowed To Think" proves this is the same They Might Be Giants collegians have loved for years.



■ MOE TUCKER: *Dogs Under Stress* (Sky 3103)

Somehow, even with the Velvet Underground reunion tour going on last year, the Velvet's drummer found time to record a new album. The effect of hanging with her old bandmates is in evidence on this album, which is steeped in the classic Velvet's sound. In other words, if you love the Velvet Underground (and these days, who doesn't?), you'll definitely groove on this. Plus, this is a chance for all

those new Velvet fans who slighted the band the first time around to redeem themselves by not ignoring this one. "I've Seen Into Your Soul" especially stands out.



■ VARIOUS ARTISTS: *You Got Lucky: A Tribute To Tom Petty* (Backyard 75450)

Yes, it's true...another one. Fortunately, Tom Petty has some damn good songs and there are adventuresome takes here, rather than the boring tried-and-true route. Made up of largely underground or unsigned bands, this compilation marks the debut of Scotti Brothers' new alternative label. Fittingly, the winning band, Nectarine, does a version of "Even The Losers." They end the song with a smoldering distortion fest. Also of note is "Southern Accents" from Dexter Methoropham.

A nice alternative to the mainstream tribute records.

■ LIGHTNING SEEDS: *Jollification* (Trauma 71008)

Here's some pleasant techno-driven pop that screams summer, ice cream and any other happy thought you can think of (though it probably won't make you fly). There's an early '80s feel to this English band's sound that brings to mind O.M.D., among others, which is certainly not a bad thing. Among the standout tunes are "Lucky You" (the first single), the aptly-titled opener "Perfect" and the infectious "Feeling Lazy."

■ BLOODLINE: *Bloodline* (EMI Records 30060)

Bloodline is an appropriate title for this quintet, who have relations to Robby Krieger of the Doors and Miles Davis, among others. However, the heart of this band's authentic blues/rock sound is lead guitarist "Smokin' Joe" Bonamassa, who lives up to his moniker at the tender age of 17. A touch of funk and an abundance of Southern rock find their way into these 12 songs, but it's the opening blues-guitar riff of "Stone Cold Hearted" that sets the tone for this album.

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■ ERIC CLAPTON: *From The Cradle* (Duck/Reprise 45735)

What is there to say? It's Eric Clapton playing the blues. The guitar guru follows-up his massive *Unplugged* success with an all-blues collection of covers that pays tribute to Clapton's heroes, including Muddy Waters, Robert Johnson and Lowell Fulson. There are no overdubs, no pop tunes, no ballads...just Clapton being true to what made him a living legend. Can you ask for anything more? After one listen to this blistering record, I think you'll agree the answer is 'no.'



■ SINEAD O'CONNOR: *Universal Mother* (Ensign/Chrysalis 30549)



Put aside all the distractions and think back to the first time you heard "Nothing Compares To U." And that was but a mere footnote to the greatness that was *I Do Not Want What I Have Not Got*. In an era of pop from computers and Wonder Bread punk, any release from O'Connor should be viewed as a blessing. She brings passion and ambition to her work, two qualities music desperately needs. Granted, sometimes she misfires, like with the pseudo-rap number "Famine" about the supposed falseness of the Irish famine. But when she hits, which she does more often than not on this 13-song collection, few artists ring as true. Her best moments here come from the more personal confessionals, such as the hushed whisper of "My Darling Child" and the stunning conclusion, "Thank You For Hearing Me." The inspired use of string instruments furthers the emotional impact. Also of note, a cover of Nirvana's "All Apologies" and the first single, "Fire On Babylon."