

Somebody send this girl for a long, cold shower

POP

Soul Kiss Olivia Newton-John

MCA 6151

Following in the footsteps of Sheena Easton, Olivia Newton-John has clearly decided to shed her medicinal Doris Day image to show that she's the sort of woman who isn't ashamed to stand in front of the mirror with a riding crop across her backside (her pose on the back of the album cover). Yes folks, it's the other side of Miss Neutron-Bomb.

Musically, that means a transition to plastic soul, the most winning example of which is the title tune — a sort of deep-breathing exercise on Olivia's part, featuring some ultra-crisp, Toto-style musicianship. Otherwise, her rather desperate attempts to sound black fail. Most interesting attempt to sound hip includes Culture Shock, which asks the age-old question, "Why can't the three of us live together?" Somebody send this girl for a long, cold shower.

Dog Eat Dog Joni Mitchell

Geffen XGHS 24074

Although much ballyhooed as her "political" album, Dog Eat Dog represents a creative low-point for Mitchell — more in the Carly Simon camp than something you'd expect from the best woman songwriter of her generation.

Nothing really works very well: the synthesizer atmospherics of Thomas Dolby, the bottom-heavy bass and drum sound created by Mitchell's husband and collaborator Larry Klein, and Mitchell's wandering melody lines seem to have little to do with each other. What particularly doesn't work is Mitchell's songwriting: it's melodically mediocre, with preachy lyrics that are devoid of anything but sophomoric insights. This is perhaps the only

Joni Mitchell album it's impossible to imagine anyone wanting to listen to in five years time.

Rain Dogs Tom Waits

Island ISL-1065

This is being called the album of Wait's career — for good reason, not the least of which is that you get 19 songs on one album. The burbling echoes of Louis Armstrong, doomed romantic lyrics, fragments of nursery rhymes, deadbeat poetry and razor-sharp vignettes of freaks and losers on the lam is about as complete statement of the after-the-carnival world of Tom Waits as you can find. Musically, Rain Dogs is also his most wide-ranging effort, touching the edges of most of the American popular music styles of the last 100 years, from minstrel songs, to ragtime, to jazz and work songs (you can hear guest guitarist Keith Richards grinding it out).



INSIDE
THE SLEEVE



MARK MILLER

Olivia Newton-John (left):
shedding her medicinal image;
Uzob: a step forward, a step back.

Sure, when Waits sings he sounds as if he's throwing up, but no other vocal style seems quite suited to his lyrics and his typical "alcoholocaust" themes.

Certainly, Waits' timing couldn't be better. The current creative vacuum at the centre of pop music makes his solidly left-field presence more important than ever, and he exposes such upstarts as Nick Cave, Clint Ruin and Lydia Lunch as the semi-talented poseurs they are.

Power Windows Rush

Anthem ANR-1-1049

It may sound odd to say that a band of more than 10 years experience and world-wide popularity sounds as though it's maturing, but that's exactly the impression Power Windows leaves. Whether you like Rush songs or not, Neil Peart's lyrics

are thoughtful and concerned with the world. On a musical level, the elaborate mesh of guitar, synthesizer and emphatic drumming, has never sounded more orchestral and cohesive

Liam Lacey