

effective, it gives it a fair crack. And then it's on to the post-rock oblique guitar noise with 'Five 4', which unsurprisingly sounds a wee bit like Slint in places and at others like the CD is skipping. Oh, it actually is skipping. It suits them.

JUNKIE BRUSH

Junkie Brush's demo comes accompanied by a copy of their recent Nightshift live review which hails them as proper punk rock. And are they? Well, we don't know since they've neglected to put a CD in the case. Which in it's own sweet way is about as a punk rock as you can get.

R-R-ROOSTER BAND

Stuttering blues silliness from Skittle Alley promoter Nigel Meehan and former Shrinkwrap chum Innes. It starts off promisingly enough with the Beefheart / Muddy Waters-styled 'Cows', an odd little dirge about cattle getting high on magic mushrooms, based on a slide guitar motif, but it quickly degenerates into a bit of a private joke, innocuous campfire blues and a lopsided Leadbelly ram jam pastiche that's at least tolerably good humoured, but letting themselves down badly with the final track, 'Hard On', which, arf, arf, is all about – oh our aching sides – is about taking too many drugs and not being able to get it up. Knowing Nigel to be an all-round good bloke, may we simply suggest he tries different drugs in future.

SEVENTH LEVEL

Aagh! Shit! No! Jazz-funk! Get it out! No! Remember our duty to The Kids! Keep it on! We must fully understand evil before we can expose it and defeat it! But they sound like they should have been first on to The Blow Monkeys back in 1985! But, oh, oh, oh, what's this? It's getting better! Sucking us in! Scratchy production and spidery guitars. A man shouting rather than singing, a guitarist who only knows one riff and some ill-advised skat at the end of one song. Out goes the jazz-funk, to be replaced by an awkward indie-funk lurch. Scrap what we said earlier: first on to Joseph K back in 1981. That's better.

TRUE RUMOUR

Now here's a fella, Mark Cobb, with a lot of time on his hands. Not only is he the singer in three different bands, he's sent us all their demos. Twice. Just so we absolutely, definitely know he exists. True Rumour finds Mark at his best, doing his country pop thing and letting his voice and the tune in hand breathe, which, as we shall discover

very soon, he doesn't always allow. 'Alligators' is a seductive, minimalist acoustic pop number, Mark's lispy voice leading it in a way that reminds us a little of Dominic Appleton, while musically it's close to Red House Painters. Stick a cello in there and they'd be flying. And hey, here's a violin, backing up the airy gothic folk of 'Different World, Same Planet', sounding like it's been lost in the early-80s indie wilderness all this time, again Mark's voice working with the song rather than against it. Quite what the hell is going on the final track on the demo, 'Beekeeper #2', is anyone's guess, but same band, different time zone might be a more appropriate title.

TRANSMISSION

So here's Mr Cobb again, here in his rock incarnation. Claiming, correctly it appears, to be influenced by Arabic music, Transmission initially promise plenty with the epic 'Kings', part way between the soundtrack to *Lawrence of Arabia* and one of Kula Shaker's more ostentatious efforts. They hold it together long enough for 'Circles' to touch bases with both Muse – notable Mark's increasingly operatic vocalisation – and A Perfect Circle, but by 'Go' they're getting formulaic and overblown, while the backing vocals seem to have accidentally leaked in from an adjoining studio. 'Tammanrasset', meanwhile, is a stadium-sized folk-rock power ballad and thus must be hunted down with dogs and slaughtered mercilessly if only to save future generations from pain and embarrassment.

THE DEMO DUMPER

TSUNAMI

And here's Mark one last time, this time promising a more Neil Young-influenced take on the country rock beast. By now Mark is starting to sound seriously desperate if not deranged, elongating every line as if he's fading in and out of a dodgy radio transmission. At first the washes of organ and wah wah guitar are not unpleasant, unremarkable though they are, and appear content to go absolutely nowhere with any great haste. By the time Tsunami have repeated the idea twice more, wandering into a sea of semi-epic, self-contemplating soft rock indulgence, coupled with a recording quality that seems to have sucked dry what little life existed in the songs in the first place, and it's all we can do to ask the music vet to put them gently to sleep and not stab them repeatedly with a screwdriver until their eyeballs pop like small jelly-filled eastern delicacies.

Hey, stoopid people, read this bit before you send a demo in!

Send demos for review to: Nightshift, PO Box 312, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1ZU.

IMPORTANT: no review without a contact address and phone number (no email or mobile-only). No more than four tracks on a demo. If you can't handle criticism, please don't send us your demo. Go and have a cry instead.

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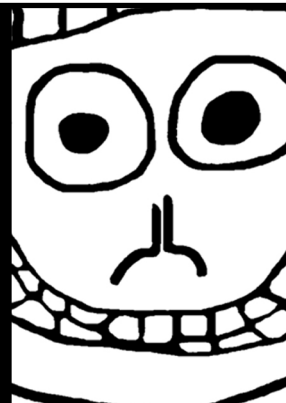
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