



"What a great world/What a great time to be here", Dave Couse, spikily despondent frontman of Dublin's A House, sang on 1988 single 'Call Me Blue'. A somewhat spectacular statement of optimism, in hindsight. A House were the, ahem, house band of an earlier version of Dublin, wherein rehearsal studios were derelict rooms connected by sodden carpets and sagging staircases, and a "benefit" gig was where you petitioned the venue manager to set a different door price for people on the dole. Released in conjunction with their (not included here) 2002 football anthem, the rejigged 'Here Come The Good Times' (a somewhat ironic choice, given that the original lyric ran "Here come the good times/For a change"), this best-of/rarities collection shows us, hearteningly, that the songwriting-style and sentiment at the core of this most beloved of lost Dublin bands may have gone out of fashion, but hasn't diminished in style.

At its best, Couse's pointed caterwaul was the sound of the suitor who knew it was going to end badly before it began, who was planning the getaway even as he approached ('Kick Me Again Jesus'; 'Why Me'). As songwriters, A House were exemplary at bedding euphoric melodicism with the kind of bluntly-spoken home truths about disappointment, heartache, and how shit the world is, that, if you held them up to the stereo, would slit your wrists for you. As merciless as Couse was at tearing strips off himself however, he was, conversely, equally gentle toward those more underdogish, more fragile, than himself ('Spinster', 'Our Love Is Good Enough'). Thus, A House were essentially relentless optimists. They were never cynical or distant or "cool". They'd be eaten alive today.

A lot of the turns of phrase display a quasi-Joke Song artlessness peculiar to the time: viz 'The Comedy Is Over', or list songs like 'Small Talk' and the literally deathless 'Endless Art'. But as befits a band whose albums rarely had a duff track on them, this collection is a delight from start to finish, gorgeous proof of how good they really were. Nearly-forgotten highlights include the gentle, glittering 'Just Because' (1996), of whose bittersweet falsettos and elegiac swells Brian Wilson would be proud, and great lost list song 'I Love You', featuring the selfsame phrase repeated over a sample from 'Lust For Life', counterpointed by a chorus that gaily singsongs (with typical A House pessimism) "Do you mean/do you mean/do you mean it?"

So who woulda thought it: several years and movements and Celtic wotsits later, A House's gift for sweet-and-sour melody and optimistic pessimism stand up. Thus the underdog triumphs in the end, after a fashion - or, as the liner notes have it, "Play this loudly, because we all know what it's like to write a letter to God and get no reply."

+ the vinyl frontier

this issue's vinyl releases

from audio resident, shane slattery

Tiefschwarz RAL 9005 (Classic)



Classic, one of the most consistent labels of late take things to the next level and release their first artist album. Having released two amazing singles on Classic, "Thru A Little Window" and "Hello Again", Tiefschwarz release their debut album: "Ral9005" on Derrick Carter and Luke Solomon's excellent London imprint. The unique, intricate and powerful production techniques of Tiefschwarz are clearly evident while listening to the album, but it was their first two singles on Classic that initially blew people away. "On Up", featured on the first EP "Thru A Little Window", proved to be a benchmark record for Classic and one of the records of 2001. The album combines elements of house, jazz, soul and garage in an array of sounds and grooves presented for your listening pleasure. "Ral9005" has it all...from the chunky funky house tracks like On Up and No More Trouble to soulful deep house tracks (You, Never, City Sounds and Music), through more adventurous Nu-jazz and break beat sounds this is an amazingly well put together album from artists who continue to deliver quality. Tiefschwarz are here to stay and with tracks like these, thank god for that.

Audiowhores Feat. Asia House Music All Night (Celebrity Records)



Audiowhores are Adam Unsworth and Graham Lord, the latest producers and remixers to come out of Manchester with a string of releases on quality labels. This time the duo team up with Minneapolis' Celebrity imprint to deliver another slice of quality deep house goodness. A real feel good hands in the air summertime anthem with a deep throbbing bass line, nice percussion and Asia's soulful vocal makes this an essential club track. Two mixes are featured, the main mix which includes the oh so soulful vocal and the aptly titled instrumental mix. Worth checking.

Homegrown: In the last issue we mentioned the quality Irish releases that are making waves both at home and abroad. Here are two tracks we received with a more local slant. (Keep those demos coming)

Headgear This comes to Pass/When a star is born (MarthaDigsMusic)



This double A side 7" comes from Limerick's own Darragh Dukes and, although not a dance track, is well worthy of a mention. Released on his own MarthaDigsMusic, (based in Castleconnel no less!) these tracks are causing quite a stir. With both male and female vocals featured in a haunting downbeat groove, the production is very well executed. Rumours of major label interest abound so get your copy now...(available at Blackspot records with more info available from www.marthadigsmusic.com). Respect is always due to people getting up and doing what others just talk about.

K.J Bee Dread don't get Weary (CDR)



Better known as one half of Nu Killa Kru's Code and Bee DJ combo, this unreleased track from Bee is quality all the way. Honing his production skills over the last few years, Bee delivers a unique sounding fusion of breaks, reggae vibes and spacey swooshy synth sounds. With a fine percussion line, groovy bass riff and an excellent change of mood towards the end, this really deserves to get released. Think Nightmares on Wax meets King Tubby meets the summer sunshine. Not available to buy yet but if you get yourself down to any Nu Killa Kru session and ask nicely I'm sure you might force a copy out of the man. With a talent producing everything from mad electronic noodly ditties to drum and bass monsters this is one local to keep your ears peeled for. (Check DJ Profile for more info.)