

MICK MERCER

VARIOUS ARTISTS

STROBELIGHTS 3

Strobelight

The great thing about truly cool compilations like this isn't just the mixture and the devil-may-care approach of putting quality before sellability, whereby they simply have faith people will be tasteful enough to want it, but also the discoveries you make and everybody will make several here.

AND ALSO THE TREES arrow hard splinters of guitar through the mindful maelstrom that's 'So This Is Silence', LENINGRAD SANDWICH offer a droning dark punk feel through the radioactive quilt of 'Deadline' and XMAL DEUTSCHLAND just thrash the air like gigantic marble geese on a mission in 'Begrab Mein Herz.'

FIELDS OF THE NEPHILIM are bracing and thickly enticing during in 'Trees Come Down (Live '88)' which bowls along, howling lightly and allowing the guitar to scamper as if a ghostly squid was fondling the melody. STRANGE BOUTIQUE have equally good guitar in a scalding 'The Kindest Worlds' but also wonderfully buttressing bass keeping both instruments level and pouring out brackish goodness. AUTUMN are contrite, florid Goths with the more contrite guitar rolling at hip level while high female vocals curl around them in 'How It Came To Be This Way', winking coyly at the industrious drums, then all are swept aside by fabulously juicy bass. A torrential triumph!

MARQUEE MOON jangle an enormously brash guitar sound in a bloodshot 'Prince Of Darkness' waddling around with intentionally laboured vocals until the sounds spread out somewhat akin to a graceful Creaming Jesus. A groaning glory!

If the Inca Babies had ever modelled themselves on 'Bela Lugosi's Dead' they might have made something like what the fascinating THE LUSTKILLERS achieve with 'Swamp Love' which has deep character, a well basted bass, springy guitar and deadpan vocal wrangling. It's exciting and unusually conventional! When you expect it to take a foul twist it gets quite chirpy and you'll rejoice at the consistently stunning bass.

RED TEMPLE SPIRITS flounce and pounce upon their poppy 'Dark Spirits', making the fey post-punk grey and chunky. SIEKIERA fidget like mental cases through the battering 'Juzblisko' which has interestingly mellow vocals and really taut guitar which is held back behind a light-sounding but insidious synth. NEVA scream at 'Louchald' like an Industrialised Sex Gang and it gives them plenty of cheek back. SYSTEM 56 have a wonky pop approach to the epileptic beat-buoyed 'You're Only Dreaming' like a gay Russian military tattoo

JAD WIO take that one stage further in their flighty 'Cellar Dance' with a cocky melody and a crafty clattering rhythm. SIGLO XX sound like Joy Division inside a washing machine, which makes 'Answer' the oddest inclusion. PARTY DAY are typically restrained in 'Atoms' and the sound just emanates like a visible aura and this is sensational modesty. (Do they have a compilation CD out?)

The trembling of the speakers lay testament to the blatant power of FOR AGAINST in 'December' which is like a torrid form of ethereal with its simple, neutral charms, and it's CANCER BARRACK who finish with a frosty, gibbering 'Letztes Gebet', although that left me fairly cold, as they generally have

Overall, a definite thing of beauty. Cheap, too!