

MUSIC



HARRISON FUNK—SIPA SPECIAL FEATURES

Breathy sensuality and yowling passion: Aretha Franklin

A Roundup of Hot LP's

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas in record stores—with a flood of new releases in time for holiday giving. There's a lot of quality in the barrage. Here's a sample of what's new and good

Expressive: The songs in Chrissie Hynde's album, with the new Pretenders, fit her range like a glove



FABIO NOSOTTI—LGI

Aretha (Arista), Aretha Franklin. In a career that already spans 25 years and countless artistic triumphs, it may seem premature to say that "Aretha" will rank as one of Aretha Franklin's best albums. But these songs, in their strength and variety, allow Franklin to astonish us with the power and glory of her voice. "Jimmy Lee" is one of her strongest songs in years—she sings her way from breathy sensuality to unleashed, yowling passion. "Jumpin' Jack Flash," with production by Keith Richards, kicks butt in a straight-rock mode. And there's plenty of Franklin's trademark soulful pop, including duets with ex-Sly & the Family Stone bassist Larry Graham and Wham! vocalist George Michael. This woman has got spunk in her funk. Steam in her scream. Charisma in her melisma. "Aretha" is a classic. No home should be without it.

London O'Hull 4 (Elektra), The Housemartins. Imagine the diatribes of the New Testament prophets set to a Merseybeat, if you can, and you'll have a good idea of how The Housemartins make music. The springy melody of "Happy Hour," for example, gets your toe tapping, and then you realize that singer P.d. Heaton is ripping the superficiality of the bar scene. "Where they open all their wallets / And they close all their minds." On the rest of the album, The Housemartins take on a whole raft of social ills, from apathy to discrimination against the working class. All of the moralizing on this album might be obnoxious if guitarist Stan Cullimore, bassist Norman Cook and drummer Hugh Whitaker didn't keep the music light and snappy. "London O'Hull 4" is a very subversive, clever record.

This Father's Day (Island), Peter Himmelman. Independent recording artists, take heart. You can succeed on your own terms. This solo-album debut by folk-oriented Peter Himmelman was released last spring on Orange Records in New Jersey, and probably would have vanished immediately if Himmelman hadn't, miraculously, gotten a self-produced video onto MTV. But he did, and now this winning slice of pop romanticism is being distributed by a major label. Himmelman sings about love with unrestrained and unabashed feeling, even when it's bad. "11:30 Pacific Time" is as mushy as they come: "I want to kiss your face so bad, I'm crying." And on "This Father's Day," he gasps, "If I could, I'd run out into the world and tell every boy and girl / To love before love takes itself away." For Peter Himmelman, love is the answer, no matter what the question.

Get Close (Sire), The Pretenders. Chrissie Hynde is the only Pretender left from the original quartet, and this album sounds like a solo record masquerading as a group effort. Even though Hynde always has been the major creative force in the band, "Get Close" sounds even more like a showcase than earlier

Fresh reggae: Marley quartet

