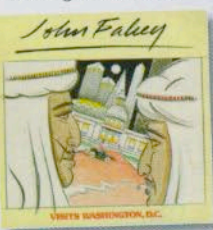


**JOHN FAHEY** [1979]  
**John Fahey Visits Washington DC**

ACE  
 ★★★★★

**Absorbing, nostalgic guitar musings**  
 Fahey's final album of the '70s - his first for five years - has a real feeling of nostalgia about it, which it even did when it came out. After the sale of his Takoma label to Chrysalis, and two LPs for Reprise which toyed unsuccessfully with vintage Dixieland, here he returned to the melodic simplicity and transcendental blues of his classic recordings. Accompanied on the opening Doc Watson/Bill Monroe medley by fellow-Takoma artist Richard Ruskin, he even covers "Death By Reputation" by acolyte Leo Kottke. Also re-working two earlier pieces, this remains one of his most pleasing post-'60s recordings. MICK HOUGHTON



**ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW** [ ]  
**The Low Rider: The Very Best Of...**

PROPER  
 ★★★★★

**Amen Corner hits and solo years together for the first time**  
 Over the past couple of

decades, Low has reinvented himself as guitarist to the stars, backing everyone from Harrison to Clapton. This untaxing collection spotlights his various earlier incarnations as an unlikely pop idol with a high and strangled but oddly appealing voice. Late-'60s Amen Corner smashes such as "(If Paradise Is) Half As Nice" and "Bend Me Shape Me" somehow sound less dated today than at the time of release. The '70s solo hits such as "Wide Eyed And Legless" exude a gentle period charm, too.

NIGEL WILLIAMSON

**THE FLYING LIZARDS**  
**The Flying Lizards** [1979]

EMI  
 ★★★★★  
**Fourth Wall** [1981]  
 EMI  
 ★★★★★

**Conceptual post-punk dates well**

England responded to Kraftwerk's robo-impassivity in peculiar ways, including The Flying Lizards' po-faced dissections of rock 'n' pop fare like "Summertime Blues", and their 1979 hit with Berry Gordy's "Money". But as these extended download-only reissues show, David Cunningham's immersion in dub, experimental music and the 'unnatural' reverb of Elvis' Sun Sessions turned ramshackle home productions into a box of impressive aural tricknology. Steve Beresford, David Toop, Vivien Goldman, This Heat's Charles Hayward

and The Pop Group's Bruce Smith all crop up on the debut; Robert Fripp, Michael Nyman, Patti Paladin and Peter Gordon help out on *Fourth Wall* (1981), but it's Deborah Evans' cut-glass, psycho-nanny vocals that lodge in the brain.

ROB YOUNG

**THE FRATELLI**  
**Here We Stand**

ISLAND  
 ★★★★★

**Scotland's biggest export since Tennents**

Looking back, The Fratellis' love of a boozy sing-a-long, Alberto Vargas pin-up girls and winding up the art-snob - the drummer is called "Mince" - should have instantly marked them as heirs to Oasis' booze-rock crown. A million sales of debut *Costello Music* on, their smash'n'grab approach to rock's past sees them shrug off "second album syndrome" with ease. "Mistress Mabel" and "Lupe Brown" are the glam-rock equivalents of a Glasgow kiss, all salty lyrics and stadium-shaking riffs, while piano-led knees-up "A Heady Tale" provides an unlikely bridgehead between Mud and The Charlatans. Not for everyone, but quite a party.

PAUL MOODY

**CHRIS GARNEAU**  
**Music For Tourists**

FARGO  
 ★★★★★

**Brooklyn piano-man's sweet debut**

By virtue of being gay and in possession of a piano, this

Brooklyn-based songwriter has been compared to Rufus Wainwright; a cruel punishment. As a writer, he has the deadpan playfulness of Bill Callahan and a delicate tenor voice that recalls Sufjan Stevens. The wistfulness masks beautiful melodies, not least on "So Far", in which a stale relationship is relayed in terms of the workings of a dishwasher, and the wan chorus, "we haven't missed a good day of television yet so far". There's a lovely cover of Elliott Smith's "Between The Bars", too.

ALASTAIR MCKAY

**GONZALES**  
**Soft Power**

MERCURY/FRANCE  
 ★★★★★

**Skilful Canadian pop prankster goes soft**

Since declaring himself "the greatest entertainer of the year" on 2000's amusing hip hop turn *The Entertainer*, Berlin-based Canadian "Chilly" Gonzales has done all he can to retain the title, turning a skilful hand to solo piano composition, collaborating with Peaches and Jamie Lidell, and producing Feist's Grammy-nominated *The Reminder*. On *Soft Power*, he's back in the showman's shoes, ivory-tinkling excursions fleshed out with irrepressibly jaunty '80s soft-pop songs like "Working Together" that flirt with kitsch, but thanks to the manic charisma of their delivery, turn out genuinely joyful.

LOUIS PATTISON



Superior, curiously English post-punk: Flying Lizards

KEY: [ ] COMPILATION [ ] YEAR REISSUE