POP REVIEWS

SINGLES

- MADONNA: "Hanky Panky" (Sire/Warner Brothers 9 21777-0)

When the woman protagonist in Pedro Almodovar’s misfired black comedy Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down asks her kidnapper-cum-heroine supplier to tie her to the bed while he goes out to take care of some loose ends (you know how those days go), the “comedy” flies out the window and the “black” swells to unmanageable proportions. Women, sex, bondage, domination… If your navigational skills aren’t just so, stay out of those turbulent waters. The choppy remix of “Hanky Panky” (imagine a slowed-down version of Adam Ant’s “Goody Two Shoes” married to the brassy sounds of the LP version of Madonna’s ditty) smacks and bruises in all the right places. Though it’s not really a dance song—there’s nothing to really latch onto from the dancefloor, here—it’s a fun bit of would-be naughtiness. Ms. Ciccone handles the tricky area of sex, bondage, et cetera, by demanding, not asking, to be tied up—she’s in control of the moment. It’s not just a matter of semantics. (Ernest Hardy)

ALBUMS

- THE BLUE HEARTS: The Blue Hearts (Juggler JTD-1)

Thank God for the Blue Hearts. Japan’s loopest pop/punk band, the Blue Hearts have finally released their much-anticipated (by me anyway) six-song debut EP in the States. (The group has released at least three full LPs back home.) Ever think rock and roll is turning into an old man’s game, that it’s growing stale and no fun? Heh, heh, heh. Trace a line from the Coasters to the Trashmen to the Ohio Express to the Ramones and on into eternity, and you’ll find the Blue Hearts right there, sawing away at their guitars, whacking at their drums, and generally jumping around the place like all this is supposed to be one hell of a lot of fun, or something. Whas-samathing? Don’t like “bubblegum music,” you say? Well, like the band says on “Dance Number,” “Anybody who laughs at you / Just say fall into tofu and drop dead.” Thank God for rock and roll. (Juggler Co. Ltd., 1101 SW Washington #134, Portland, OR 97206) (Keith Gorman)

- ROBERT OWENS: Rhythms in Me (4th & Broadway 444 022-2)

Hard rockin’ singer/guitarist Gary Moore takes us back to hard rock/metal’s roots with an album consisting primarily of blues-rock. While it may fall short of the splendor of Jimi Hendrix, the Yardbirds, Ten Years After, Cream and others who greatly influenced metal/hard rock with their ’60s blues-rock, Still Got the Blues is a ballyhoo, passionate work underscoring the debt headbangers owe to those ’60s rockers, as well as to their influences such as Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, Howlin’ Wolf and Albert King. (AH)

Owens, along with Frankie Knuckles and Satoshie Tomie, is responsible for some of the true classics of House. Whether as a trio or as one half of a duo with one of the two mentioned above, Owens has captured longing, desire and heartbreak in moody, dizzyingly beautiful grooves. It’s somewhat disappointing then that his solo debut, even after repeated listenings, fails to ignite. The same elements that have worked so well in the past, namely Knuckles and Tomie, are present. Owens demonstrates a workable, though not groundbreaking, voice that is more than capable of conveying great feeling. Yet, his Grooves disappoint. The fault lies with bland songs and uninspired grooves. You can have one or the other and still get by, but to have them simultaneously is fatal. Despite the sure hands of producers Frankie Knuckles and David Morales, the songwriting of Knuckles, Tomie, and Morales was done in the absence of their respective muses, and no studio wizardry can mask a lackluster base. (EH)

- GARY MOORE: Still Got the Blues (Charisma/Virgin 4-91369)

THE TIME: "Jerk Out" (Paisley Park/Reprise 9 21771-0)

After the sorry mess that was their last album, Ice Cream Castles, the Time disbanded so band members could reshape R&B (mega producers Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis), show extremely promise as Prince clones, then burn out (Jesse Johnson), squander talent on bad sitcoms and even worse records (Morris Day), share a painful film experience with Prince (Jerome in Under the Cherry Moon) and fade into oblivion (whatsisname and the other one). This first reunion single, "Jerk Out," may sound just like any one of the group’s Minneapolis funk/dance greats (“Wild and Loose,” “Cool,” “777-5317”) but that’s perfectly alright. Though much imitated, they’ve never been duplicated, and their brand of arrogant humor, sizzling funk, silly lyrics and act showmanship can never be dated or out of style. The rest of the album might not live up to the expectations set by this track, but "Jerk" shows the boys are back and taking no prisoners. (EH)