

ALBUMS



**MADONNA** - Pop  
Bedtime Stories  
Maverick/Sire-45767-P

When a great deal of your record sales is based on image, handling that image becomes as important a task as producing the music itself. When Madonna first hit the charts back in 1984 with *Holiday*, it was simply a matter of making good records and getting her name known. Of course, as the hits piled up, the focus shifted. At some point, the image and persona of Madonna become paramount, with the music simply along for the ride. By the time *Like A Prayer* came out, people were interested more in what she had to say, and what she was willing to reveal, that really made the music was all about. But beneath the image, the risqué videos, the daring live performances, the appearances on *Nightline* and at Parisian fashion shows... what people have forgotten is that Madonna is one of the great pop artists of the past quarter-century. Just go down the litany of her hits and you'll see that it's a tough point to argue. With this latest release, Madonna has once again done what few people give her credit for, namely crafting a solid pop album based on current trends in the business. With dance beats becoming the accepted norm at pop radio, Madonna went to some of the best producers and co-writers in that genre and fashioned an album that will once again score some big points at radio. The melody seems to have been circumvented by the beat, more so than in any previous Madonna album. Songs like 'I'd Rather Be Your Love' or 'Don't Stop' are dependent more on rhythm than a good hook. According to those in the know, this new album represents a kinder, gentler Madonna, and the music in many ways reflects that. The great thing about Madonna is, she knows just what buttons to push, and when to push them. -RR



**KERMIT UNPIGGED** - Pop  
Various Artists

Jim Henson Records/BMG Kidz-10004-N  
Oh, those crazy Muppet people! Just when you thought we'd heard the last of the unplugged craze, the folks at Jim Henson Productions have put together a compilation featuring some of the biggest names in pop, teamed up with Kermit and his Muppet friends. Hey, don't laugh, this thing will probably sell a ton. The children's music market has been much maligned and overlooked over the past decade, but record companies are finally starting to wake up to the fact that kids like music, and parents have some money, and spending \$10-20 on a tape or CD is an easy way to make a child happy for a few hours. The good thing about this release is that the parents will probably get as much enjoyment out of it as their

kids. About the only downside about this album is that the original Kermit, the late Jim Henson himself, is no longer with us, and the difference is fairly obvious. But the presence of some serious mainstream artists such as Vince Gill, Linda Ronstadt, Don Henley and (!!) Ozzy Osbourne will create a strong across-the-board appeal. Highlight tracks include Gill and Kermit on the Lovin' Spoonful hit *Daydream*, George Benson and various Muppets on his classic *On Broadway*, and Ozzy and Miss Piggy on *Born To Be Wild*. -RR

**JULIE MASSE** - Pop  
Circle Of One  
Select-714-H

Having recorded two highly successful French-language albums, both of which are still active, this Montreal singer makes that rare emotional connection in English that so many fail to do. Five of these songs were written specifically for her by Corey Hart, who also produced the album. Masse's vocals cuddle and add realism to the lyrics in a kittenish fashion. She has perfected the nuances with various mood swings to create very interesting highs and lows. One *More Moment*, taken as the first single, contains more



than a few of these mood swings. *I Will Be There*, written by Corey in memory of Masse's father, is another. The title track, also a Corey original, allows Masse the freedom to reveal her feelings about "ethnic diversity and solidarity toward cultural and sexual differences," a key track. Also key is *Devious Nature*, written by Lisa Dalbello. Guitarist Rik Emmett is heard on two tracks, *Wherever The Music Goes*, written by Jodie Davidson and Eddie Schwartz, and *Joanne Houlden's* penning of *You Left Your Kiss*. What could be a left-fielder is *Ice Cream*, written by Judith Henderson, Michel Corriveau, and Robert Marchand. Most tracks were recorded at Studio Morin Heights in Quebec and qualify as four-parties. A couple were recorded in New York and Los Angeles. Excellent front cover graphics. -WG

**POSITIVELY STOMPIN'** - Country  
Junk Drawer

Swamp Song/Vertigo-314-522-927-Q  
This is not just stompin' country, it's smokin' country. There's an eerie feeling of a spoof on country here. First of all, the album wasn't recorded in your usual country studio setting. It was recorded at Toronto's Metalworks, which in itself conveys a message. The band is heavy on wall-bangin' vocals and an equally heavy guitar backing. There's no doubt the listener is going to listen, as *Nashville Dreamin'*, the opener, sets the pace. The band, which comes out of "the backroads of Huron County, Ontario," is made up of Ted Treibner (vocals, guitar, mandolin), Chris Mittelholtz (guitars, banjo, backing vocals),



Murray Heywood (drums), and Jeph Mittelholtz (bass). The vocal approach is off the wall and the material is left-field, which makes for a very unique and charming fusion. This isn't an album recommended for a quiet night at home. It's a party-time production with country as the base, but with enough rock, honky-tonk, folk and even a touch of punk to satisfy the average country headbanger. *Junk Drawer* has been taken as the first single. *Man In Black* will get a giggle out of Johnny Cash fans, and *Honky Tonk Downstairs* will have a definite affect on linedancers. Also key is *Blacksheep*, but don't overlook *Little Bit Longer*, a dynamite closer for this package which was produced by the band and Ken Friesen. If these guys are serious, an aggressive promotion and tour dates will attract serious buyers. -WG

**ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS** - Pop  
The Very Best Of...1977-86  
Rykodisc-40283-Denon

One of the most underrated songwriters of the past couple of decades finally gets his due. In some ways, it's a pity he was named Elvis. After all, as soon as you get tabbed with a name like Elvis, you're bound to be looked at in an entirely different light. Maybe if he had a simple name like Bob or Jim or something, people might not veer away from him, saying "He took the name Elvis, he looks like Buddy Holly, he must be doing something weird." But that's just it, he's not weird. He's far from it. Songs like *Alison*, *Watching The Detectives* and *Everyday I Write The Book* are great mainstream pop songs. But people didn't know who this guy was. They heard critics raving about him, they heard something about how he did some work with Paul McCartney, they noticed they he sang with Tony Bennett on Bennett's *Unplugged* album. But to actually go out and buy his records, naaahh. Eleven albums later, Costello is still looking for mainstream recognition. Play this album for someone who doesn't know Costello's work, and they're bound to say, "hey, I know that one...who is this again?" -RR

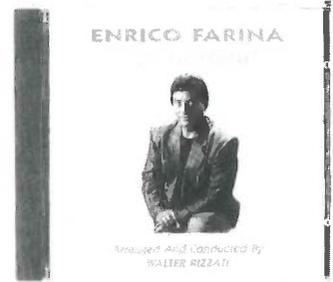


**VARIOUS ARTISTS** - Dance  
Dance Pool Vol. 3

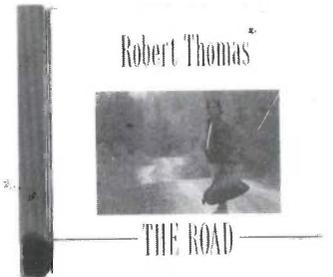
Sony Music Direct-81018-H  
Sony's manager of TV packaging, Randy Sharrard collaborated with Sony Music dance manager Kevin Unger to put together this Vol. 3 collection of dance tracks. Includes several #1 dance hits. More than 75 minutes of great dance music, including DJ Company's *Hey Everybody*, never available at retail before; *Culture Beat's World In Your Hands*, making its Canadian debut; *Ragga Ragga*, the international socca hit by Red Plastic Bag; the *Fire Island* mix of *Rozalla's Love Music*, unavailable in Canada until now; *Cosmic Dance Corp's The Visitors*; and the previously unavailable personal remixed version of *Jam & Spoon's Right In The Night*. Also contains the new hit single of *A Deeper Shade Of Love* by Camille. Heavy MuchMusic/Musique Plus and club promotion will bring this release into focus at retail. -WG

**ENRICO FARINA** - Pop  
My Darling  
EF Records-005

This Italian balladeer adds another chapter to his labour of love. His rich tenor voice edged with a romantic Latin accent, has immediate impact through his serene and gentle manner in lyric



interpretation and vocal projection. Farina blends his operatic and classically-trained voice with a folksy humbleness that creates the perfect popular music niche. He has vocally re-designed the '60s hit of *My Darling* to fit his own persona. Also included is *A Wonderful Lifetime*, a newly-arranged duet with Manuela Silvani. Some tracks were recorded in Rome, but the majority were recorded in Toronto. A very cohesive collection of standard love songs, including *My Melody Of Love*, *Feelings*, *Over The Rainbow*, *What I Did For Love*, and *I Love You So*. Also contains superbly written works by Canadian songwriters, including the Gino Salvador and William Jones penning of *Without You*, and *Carmen Bernardo's Still A Fool In Love With You*. Excellent background vocals supplied by The Laurie Bower Singers. *I Wish You'd Tell Me So*, an exceptional track, is being released in Europe through an Italian distributor. Produced by Farina and his son Luigi Gino. Brian Mitchell and Domenic Caputo take co-production credits. Arranged and conducted by Walter Rizzaati. Rick Wilkins arranged and conducted some tracks. -WG



**ROBERT THOMAS** - Pop  
The Road  
GAS-12

Thomas displays a unique vocal quality that creates a highly-sensitive and folksy approach to the contemporary world of music. His skill at storytelling is cushioned by his fresh, energetic delivery that is further enhanced by the simplification of instrumental backing. The session players are quietly and effectively respectful of the vocals, particularly Cam Bowman on keyboards, Clarence Deveau on guitars and mandolin, Barney Bentall on harmonica on *Older*, and *Spirit Of The West's* Geoffrey Kelly, with his flute insert on *Tabula Rosa*, whistle on *The Road*, and bodhran on *Bring Them Home*, all of which adds an air of definitive richness and one that hugs the listener's ear. *Older* has been taken as the first focus track and released as a CD single. Thomas wrote all but one of the songs with Clarence Deveau. It's interesting how they have interwoven so many moods that interact so completely on, not only those mentioned above, but on *Father's Son* and *Walking On The Arm*. Don't overlook *The Cradle*, which Thomas wrote with Jolene Richard. Produced by Colin Nairne and recorded at Vancouver's Crosstown Studios. Distributed through Atlantica Music in Halifax: 902-422-7000 or fax 902.422.2929. -WG

