

While You Were Gone: IRS Catches You Up

I.R.S. Greatest Hits Volume 2 & 3

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 IRS Greatest Hits Volume 2 & 3 on IRS Records

So you've got a copy of Blondie's Plastic Letters (that's one from before they sold out), and a copy of Mission of Burma's "Academy of Dance" single. You listen to Oedipus on WBCN, and occasionally catch the WMBR Late Riser's Club or WERS' Nite Klub. You think that this new wave stuff might be for you, but all the esoteric babble in The Tech is just too obscure. And, of course, you've already spent almost all your pocket money on condoms and zit cream and hippie drugs.

Well, you've come to the right place. Your friends at IRS (International Record Syndicate, that is) have put together a gorgeous, cheap, tasteful two-record set which features a blit of today's coolest bands. Also, they all happen to record for IRS, so, of course, your friends hope that you love these tunes as much as you'll run out and buy some real records.

They've done a good job. The IRS handles a reasonably diverse group of bands, so the album is a cross-section of modern new wave, except for the readily hardcore punk. A whole bunch of popular and important bands are here, and they're all very listenable and well-produced. A problem with some collections is that you find yourself turning the volume down when you hit the occasional shitty cut. That doesn't happen here, and this says a lot for the quality of IRS GH 2 & 3.

In case you were wondering, Volume One actually came out after 2. & 3. There's a handy coupon packed in with the record that you can mail in for a discounted copy of Volume Two.

The cuts on GH 2 & 3 are mostly from 1979 and 1980, so they don't display the magazine material from most of the bands. However, all cuts are representative of their makers, and so the album provides a good reference for saying, for example, "Wow, that Tom Robinson cut is real kool. I'd like to hear some more of his stuff."

My faves on the 'buni are cuts from the Fleshtones, Brian James, Alternative TV, Buzzcocks, and Fashion. But you shouldn't care—the whole point is to come up with your own faves.

Anyway, if you've finally had it up to HERE with those Bud Company and Rush albums you've been listening to since eighth grade, it's time to reform: go out and get IRS GH 2 & 3 and discover what the new music is all about. And you'll still have some cash left for safety pins and blue hair dye.

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