A summer of wax

At the end of the term there is usually cause for celebration or grief. Some students take drugs, some drink—I buy records. Here are some of my new picks to ring in the summer:

"Four Enclosed Walls," the opening cut, is downright chilling as Lydon wails "Ali-lah, Allah... destroy the infidel" over a driving Arabian-sounding background. "Flowers of Romance" is similar in style, with acoustic lyrics, to boot: "I sent you flowers, you wanted chocolates instead... I'll take the furniture and start all over again." "Under the House" creates an atmosphere of gloom with its layered chanted vocals, while "Banging at the Door" shows Lydon at his most insistent—this cut is the album's best.

The rest is repetitions, annoying filler. Without the considerable talents of departed bassist Jah Wobble, PiL has been forced to rely on drums for solid foundation, and without Atkins, Lydon and Levene's founder. As a result, half of this album consists of load washing with dissonant accents, one cut indistinguishable from the next.

Some of the most important experiments are those that have failed, and The Flowers of Romance should be regarded as such only half successful, but important nonetheless.

"Change," the current dance hall hit, has received extensive airplay, but there are other gems to be found on the disc. "War," a look at the feelings of the unemployed, and "Cheeseburger," a satire of Americans through their eating habits, both received extensive airplay, but there are no mistaking the bouncy organ and rhythm tracks as anything but Gigantic. A Marbelous piece of vinyl.

Let the Power Fall. Robert Fripp on EG Records.

Let the Power Fall, the last release for Fripp's "Drive to 1981," is an album of ambient Frippertronics that continues the style of Guadalupe the Queen. The pieces (titled "1984" through "1999") are quiet, gradually evolving studies consisting of Fripp's overlaying short melodic ideas that run together to form light textures. This is an album that serves as ideal background music or something you can pay close attention to. In either case, Fripp's efforts work beautifully.

Testcard E.P. Young Marble Giants on Rough Trade Records.

Six instrumental in praise and celebration of mid-morning television—this is the last of the Giant's material, recorded by the Moxham brothers without vocalist Alison Statton. These tunes do sound like soundtracks for commercials, but there's no mistaking the bouncy organ and rhythm tracks as being anything but Gigantic. A Marbelous piece of vinyl.


This long-awaited release finds the Gang marking time—having decided that their first album was great, they decided to repeat its formula. The disc contains two tracks from the EP ("Outside the Trains Don't Run on Time" and "He's Sent in the Army"), and the single "What We All Want," but there's still enough good new material to make Solid Gold worthwhile but for the ardent fan. Of particular merit are "Paralyzed," a look at the feelings of the unemployed, and "Cheeseburger," a satire of Americans through their eating habits.

The problem with this record is that while a few tunes mesmerize, the rest transpire with a slower plodding style. Nothing on Solid Gold has the manic energy of "I Found That Essence Rare" from entertainment!, the first record, and because of this I recommend that the novice buy entertainment! instead.


The PIL Corp. has been pared down to three—John Lydon, Keith Levene, and Jeanette Lee (Would someone please tell me what the hell she does?), but they still remain iconoclastic as ever. On the new release, Lydon's attempts to "go beyond the music" succeed only half of the time. Without the considerable talents of those that have failed, and The Flowers of Romance should be regarded as such only half successful, but important nonetheless.

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