

## Prawns on Stun ★

### Demo (Leete Studios)

Cassette EP from a Gloucester-based three-piece, whose main claim to fame is that Baby Doc used to be in a band with one of them. Contact: Frankie Prawn, 65 Park Road, Gloucester.

RB: 'Sweet Therese' bounds along in an appealing fashion, rather like the Cure's 'Days Like These', and its dub counterpart has its moments. Generally though, this is typical 'Modern Rock From Gloucester'; they have a sense of fun, are probably entertaining live, but are destined to stay right where they are.

CS: The actual songs are rather good, but the backing is twee, sometimes sloppily played, and lacks any enthusiasm. There's an embarrassing dub break in 'Sweet Therese' and Prawns on Stun don't know where they're going.

RA: So they don't know where they're going and they're going to stay right where they are, which is just as well really because this is offensively feeble pop drivel. If Prawns on Stun dumped their terrible jaunty songs and concentrated on the more atmospheric keyboard stuff, they would sound a lot more comfortable. On the plus side, there were echoes of Kevin Ayers on some of the vocals, which means they can't be all bad.

BD: Now you know why I gave up my promising musical career, lads...

## Claytown Troupe ★ ★ 1/2

### Demo (Foxhole)

Five-piece Bristol rock outfit, now gigging regularly here and in London.

RB: Claytown Troupe have a big sound and lots of commercial potential with singer Christian displaying all the brashy self-confidence and swagger of a Jim Kerr. Unfortunately, the sound is just too big for the studio in which they have recorded it; the sound is cluttered, there is too much going on in the available space. Although this in fact improves as the tape goes on, the songs appear to brim with energy but lack application. Other notable features include some nice chord changes, effective acoustic guitar work and a great bass break in 'Heaven's Gate'. My advice... a decent 16-track demo and a producer will almost certainly get them a deal.

CS: A confident and energetic sound with more than a passing resemblance to the epic dream of Simple Minds, FGTH, et al. Some of the sounds, notably the brass effect on the keyboards, have been done to death before, but their vitality just about sees them through. The songs all clock in at around five minutes and don't need to be of that length. As stadium pop doesn't seem likely to go out of fashion, they've probably got a good chance of getting a deal. But I wouldn't sign 'em.

RA: This is better than most of the new stadium rock dross we get to hear. Even so, the only slightly interesting and vaguely original track was 'Nothing Ever Stays the Same' - and that was only because its melody and loping bass line lifted it above the identikit, chant-along histrionics. Claytown Troupe could well become really popular, but I fear that won't stop them

being really boring.

BD: It's an epic, sprawling, messy sound, at times a dramatisation of nothing in particular. It's neither commercial enough nor arty enough and lacks the distinctive edge that would catapult them into the first division. Great for people who can't afford to go and see Simple Minds.

## Skeleton Crew ★ 1/2

### Demo (Shrewd)

Four track demo by a five-piece band. No further info supplied.

RA: This is a horribly schizophrenic recording, featuring different styles plundered from all over the place and thrown together seemingly at random. I suppose this is the sort of thing the NME calls 'eclectic', and everyone else describes as a mess.

CS: Incredibly eclectic, or to put it another way, very disjointed. The Skeleton Crew sound intermittently like the Cocteau Twins, the Pop Group, Talking Heads, but they always sound nowhere near as good. The female vocals are OK, but the rhythm section is scrappy. There's a lot of work needed on this.

BD: I'd go along with that. It's odd, in that none of the vocals, which incidentally are quite good, actually match the music, which is cluttered with unnecessary notes. A lot more thought about what they're actually trying to do is needed, and perhaps a bit less desperation.

RB: To me, it sounds like a band who have recorded a demo after one rehearsal. It's incongruous and formless with precious few ideas.

## Frogspawn 1/2

### Demo (X-Ray Studios)

Midsomer Norton based five-piece. Copies of this five track tape, titled 'Songs From the Pond', are available from Paul Towler, The Spawning Ground, 31 Parkway, Midsomer Norton BA3 2HD, price £2.

RA: Frogspawn are a shambling suburban pop group who overstretch their minimal talents in an embarrassing fashion. They've obviously got plenty of ambition, though, so if someone kisses these frogs maybe they'll turn into Prince!

CS: Everyone connected with this charmless offering should be arrested and charged with impersonating a life form. It's almost dead and characterless enough to be a Chris de Burgh record.

BD: A very bad group. The best track was the ballad, 'She's Leaving', but only because it offered some relief from the mindnumbing boredom of the old-time rock 'n' roll riffs that permeate all the other songs. Sloppy, amateur, and quite dreadful.

RB: I haven't got much time for all the silly frog stuff, or the grungy Cramps sound, but the ballad 'She's Leaving' is fine enough. They're obviously young and not too professional - try us again in a couple of years.

## Street Legal ★ ★ ★

### Demo

Bradford-on-Avon four-piece rock group who are building a strong following in the Bristol area. Contact Martin: (02216) 5912 (evenings); Nick (022122) 3411 (days).

BD: Despite naff titles like 'Flight to Kashmir' and 'Last Chance (for Rock and