

shinkansen

RECORDINGS

Er, yeah, hello... um, you're picking this up thanks to the nice folk behind Scalarama, who've kindly let me snaffle a corner of their table for my pile... though obviously, due to current space-time constraints (my Super-Indie-Being special powers having been temporarily withdrawn after that stupid business with the so-called "magic" elephants), I'm having to write this prior to Scalarama, so I'm guessing about the table, and if you've come across this someplace else that'll be because (a) I overestimated the number of people at Scalarama and had loads left after or (b) I left the whole lot on the No.63 and you're now going through the bins at Peckham Bus Garage (Daddy!) or (c) the folk at Scalarama weren't quite as nice as I'd thought and chased me from the building with sharpened theramins or (d) the whole event was so state-of-the-art avant-garde that they didn't actually have tables, just backlit distressed concrete tubs topped by stainless steel domes and my pile kept sliding off. (Sorry, I've not been to the Scala since it was revamped... I'm imagining a cross between the Hacienda in '88 and going to see Father Christmas in Selfridges, only with more elves, but I'm prepared to be disappointed...)

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Anyway, I was in WH Smith's the other day, thoughtfully stroking my bear as I flicked through a copy of *Melody Maker*, thinking how sad it was that their writers aren't allowed to use long words any more, and wondering if I'd ever be old enough for NME, when I had a small epiphany: *I must seize control of my own destiny!* Which is why I'm hijacking Scalarama to tell you about recent activities at Shinkansen, on the grounds that you might like some of it, because I like some of you. Basically, I'm going to try describing some records in an effort to make you give me money for them. So why not just play along, and make it easier for both of us, huh? Give all the tears and *I told you so's* a miss for once. (It's only a small bear... very affectionate...)

Actually, before I begin, some of you may be asking yourselves *what is this Shinkansen of which he speaks so eloquently and enticingly?* so... I shall briefly tell you that it's a small, perfectly formed but often suspiciously bruised record label currently in hiding under a false nose in a small flat just off Lambeth Walk, it believes that Baxendale's *Top Deck* should be sung loudly every morning in assembly and that Mogwai are a bunch of rather stupid totally evil middle-class prog-rock hippies who *must be dealt with very soon*, and it releases records like:

trembling
blue
stars

doo-wop music
now that there's nothing in the way

TREMBLING BLUE STARS' *Doo-Wop Music*, which came out in August on lovely transparent blue vinyl, the a-side being a trip-hoppy doo-woopy dubby affair with Bob on lead vocals, and the b-side being not at all like that and sung by Annemari. Bob and Annemari, for those of you who don't know, previously having been two spinning blades inside the Moulinex of pop that was The Field Mice. *I hear those voices and I see us dancing close and slow - the music always takes me where I know I shouldn't go - a last waltz round a haunted ballroom, throat prickling in the smoke of burning timbers; curtains waft apart, billowed by a warm summer breeze that's thick with the scent of jasmine; a small penguin watches damp-eyed from behind a crumbling, flower-less urn, and sighs. Hey, come on, you know you've been there - we all have. Indeed, you probably saw*

me, standing behind the aspidistra - tall, blonde... stovepipe hat and whiskers... wooden leg (not my own)...

And next month there'll be a new TBS EP, featuring: *Dark Eyes* (a 3½ minute pop-classic: choruses, harmonies, middle-eights, garishly costumed phalanxes of tap-dancing hippos sobbing their way through a rousing finale of *I Will Survive* -); *A Slender Wrist* (one of Bob's occasional vaguely mystifying attempts to rewrite the Beatles' *Revolver* album - a slender wrist, hair in her eyes, falling in her eyes - sorry, I keep singing, don't I? Feel free to hit me if I do it again.); *Her World Beneath The Waves* (one of Bob's occasional attempts to write a song about Norfolk - grey sky, grey sea, rough clumps of bleached grass tangled with windblown sand; beyond the dunes, the Cocteau Twins toy languidly with shrimp-nets and reverb among the rock-pools); *Half In Love With Leaving* (slow and brooding, a drawn-out wash of noise, a melancholy roar - brrrrrr... is it cold in here, or is it you?).

And a whole new album, *Broken By Whispers*, will follow after Christmas and, curiously, will be released in the USA by Sub Pop. I know, it surprised us too. But apparently they're no longer like that.