

B-52's bounce back with 'Cosmic Thing'

The mailman has brought a few surprises the past couple weeks, namely, a few summer record releases. Before you rush out to buy the latest Richard Marx attempt, read on.

The B-52's — *Cosmic Thing* (Reprise)

The B-52's faced a tough feat when they released *Cosmic Thing*. In a just world (and maybe even this one), these Athens dinosaurs would go down in history as the forefathers of American new wave. After five pithy slices of unadulterated pop (let's disregard *Mesopotamia*, shall we?), the death of drummer Ricky Wilson left the band's future up in the cosmos. *Cosmic Thing* could have seen the band wallowing in self pity. Instead, it shows the group maturing and exploring the melodic terrain begun on 1986's *Bouncing off the Satellites*.

Start to finish, the album bounces. Now, even the unadventurous can feel at home dancing to the B-52's. "Channel Z" forcefeeds dancefloor groovin' while it reflects the band's strong environmental convictions. The members have always supported charities through benefit concerts and outside work while keeping politics to a minimum within their music. Environmental concerns trace back to "Private Idaho" and "Juicy Jungle," perhaps the first song to address the

Carrie McLaren Albums

rain forest crisis. Yet the patented humor remains intact. "Deadbeat Club" identifies an infectious social segment. On "Junebug," Fred Schneider sings, "Let's glide bind a wall of vegetation; no prying eyes on a love celebration." Chronically happy, *Cosmic Thing* escapes a current rut of Morrissey-things that wallow in self pity. One of 1989's best.

The BoDeans — *Home* (Slash)

Yep, the BoDeans are back doing their countrified roots-rock thing. No major musical innovations have transcended this Milwaukee quartet since their debut. On past albums, producers T-Bone Burnett and Jerry Harrison turned out a few gems amidst AOR murk. While *Home* invites yet another producer, Jim Scott, the songs remain the same: tuneful albeit shiny tales for urban America. The only difference between John Cougar Mellencamp and the BoDeans is that commercial radio sees fit to play Mellencamp and not the BoDeans. (WXYC plays 'em both.)

True to form, no lyrical intricacies hide within *Home's* contents. Singers Kurt Neumann and Sam Lla-

nas weave modest yarns of hometown life and love. Song titles show the land these guys call home: "Beautiful Rain," "Good Work" and "Red River." Drinking is also a major motif. Nasty romances send these Bo's straight to the bar. "Far Far Away From My Heart" is the song every drunk *thinks* he could write after a spat with his beloved. But like other cuts, a neat melody would sound ever better without heavy-handed production. The BoDeans know where to find home. Now, if only they could ditch the studio.

The The — *Mind Bomb* (Epic)

Mind Bomb could not be more appropriately titled. Matt Johnson (a.k.a The The) has been writing cerebral social commentary since his 1981 debut, *Burning Blue Soul*. On his fourth release, Johnson brings his cynical world view to the forefront. *Mind Bomb* explodes American imperialism, world corruption and a self-absorbed society. Remnants of human limitation and spirituality appear throughout. The The pulls no punches. Slandering religion is nothing new, but, for once, a band thinks before it writes: "The world is on its hand and knees/It's forgotten the message and worships the creeds." The The even takes a solemn look at relationships. Sinead O'Connor joins Johnson for a bitter dialogue on



The B-52's are back in action with their new album

"Kingdom of Rain."

Johnson sets his poetry to predominantly synthesized accompaniment. Scattered harmonica appears throughout. Thanks to the addition of ex-Smiths guitarist Johnny Marr, *Mind Bomb* carries a melody more successfully than 1986's *Infected*. It still

doesn't approach 1983's catchy *Soul Mining*. "Armageddon Days" and "The Beat(en) Generation" may incite a few hips to shake, but Johnson isn't so much boogie-bound as he is determined to convey a message. *Mind Bomb's* more fun than a week's worth of editorial pages.

Museum features mix of abstract, grass-roots art

By ELIZABETH MURRAY

Staff Writer

Works from one of the leading artists of abstract expressionism in this country will be on display at the North Carolina Museum of Art from July 15 through October 22 in an exhibition titled "Mark Rothko."

The works are on loan to the museum from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and one of the canvases will remain on extended loan to the Museum for exhibition in its Twentieth Century galleries.

Rothko was a leading figure in the Abstract Expressionist movement which developed in the 1940s in America and remained a dominant artistic movement for two decades.

Two of the four canvases on view, "Number 11" and "Number 8," are transitional works executed in 1949 that reveal much about the way in which the artist resolved questions of form and content.

"In the multiforms, as Rothko re-

ferred to these traditional works, he initiated the use of large, domineering rectangles, accompanied by markings to activate the surface of the painting said assistant curator Huston Paschal, who organized the exhibition for the museum.

The other two canvases represent the artist's mature style: "Untitled" from 1961 and "Sketch for Mural H." from 1962. Paschal said that Rothko's paintings are not color studies, even though the artist's application of color created a glowing effect.

"Rothko was concerned with expressing a higher metaphysical truth through abstract form, and for him and other artists with the same con-

cern, color was the key to the realm of the spiritual," she said. Rothko's devotion was toward portraying humanist values in his paintings.

The four paintings were a gift to the National Gallery from the Mark Rothko Foundation and the exhibition is supported by the Business Friends of Art. "Number 8" will remain on view at the museum on extended loan.

The "Mark Rothko" exhibition is not the only one going on this summer at the Museum, however. Starting this Saturday there will be a showing of works from 19 grass-roots artists from North Carolina. The exhibition, "Signs and Wonders: Outsider Art Inside North Carolina" includes

"fun, uninhibited art made by people who just wanted to make things," said Upchurch. "It's creative, wild and zany stuff that college students would get a real kick out of."

Among the works will be some of Clyde Jones' critters. Does the name Clyde Jones register? If not, do the critters on top of and around Crook's Corner in Carrboro register? They are the creations of Jones, who does not sell his work.

"Creations by the 19 grass roots

artists from North Carolina have themes ranging from patriotic to pop culture, from earth to extraterrestrial and from nature to the supernatural," Upchurch said.

She said the art is called "outsider art" because some of these artists can't even keep up with the demands for their work.

The museum is open Friday nights until 9 p.m. and has a cafe which is open until 10 p.m.

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