

DREAM THEATER

A Change of Seasons

Dream Theater are one of those bands that all my friends who are better guitar players than I am are always insisting I should listen to. Like Phish, Miles Davis, or Sun Ra, they insist that to listen to them would be good for me, like jogging, or eating raisins, or having an enema. Keeping this in mind, *A Change of Seasons*, is the equivalent of buying a lifetime health club membership. It is a showcase for the title track, which, at 23 minute, takes up the entire side of a cassette. The other side of this cassette is live covers of songs by Led Zeppelin, Kansas, Queen, and Genesis.

I must give the band credit where credit is due. These are some of the best musicians I have heard in a while. They have obviously studied those old Yes and Rush records, and practiced their instruments scrupulously, while their friends were out doing whip-it's in the high school parking lot. I must also give them credit for avoiding any solo showcasing, as well as for managing to get through the entire thing and only boring me a couple of times as yet another on-a-dime tempo change was employed to underscore the dramatic tension inherent in the twelfth Moog solo.

I highly recommend this to fans of utterly technical chops music. But if you are just getting interested in this band, I would suggest trying out one of their regular albums first (with songs which are a mere 12 to 15 minutes in length), as this one is basically a fan-tailored curiosity. (*EastWest Records*)

-Daniel Bukszpan

DROPOUTS

"Bye Bye Baby" b/w "Bad Luck Cat"

Christ, the sound quality is so low on this single that you have to put the stereo on 11 to hear it. Lo-fi at its finest! It seems that The Cynics (Pittsburgh's finest garage boys), have given birth to four men who call themselves the Dropouts. "Bye Bye Baby," if full of scratchy vocals and raging harmonica solos, ala Michael Kastelich. If you don't care about sound quality and originality (*so what does that leave? -jb*) you'll definitely dig this single. (*Unclean Records, PO Box 49737, Austin, TX 78765*)

-Spook

11:59

Freeman

This lightweight hip hop act finds its own in its melodic chorus parts, which may, or may not, have been lifted from somewhere else, probably the Caribbean, judging by the more Anglo influences. The subject matter of "Freeman" is fairly cred, as mandated by the genre, but the soundtrack impresses, with subtlety and a natural, nearly digital free, feel—the wah-wah 70's guitar dispel every last trace of Dr. Dre's influence. You'll be amused to read that Lemmy of Motorhead's son Paul plays guitar on this. "Witness" continues in a similar mood, but with a nice sax solo at the end. The hardcore ambient instrumental version thereof also hits a spot. (*Ticking Time Records/China*)

-Gecko

ELSEWHERE

4 Song Cassette

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Elsewhere describe themselves as a "progressive punk trio" from the Western suburbs of Boston. I would say that was kind of accurate. The guitarist of this band has a decent sense of dynamics, balancing a dirty three chord sensibility with some cleaner breaks. Pop Music #101—when you write pop, the object is to grab the listener by the nads with your hook, cut them out as soon as possible and feed it to their skulls. Sometimes, Elsewhere's hooks hang on a little longer. God knows what it is they are waiting for. The second cut, "Signs of Life," had the vocalist shift gears to more of a quirky David Byrinish sensibility, coloring the songs more in their framework. Sometimes, throughout these tunes, the vocals remind me more of when Lee Renaldo gets to sing on a Sonic Youth record. "Another Day, Another Loss," an instrumental, brought to mind the Breeders instrumental track off of "Last Splash," surfy pop songwise. Basically, they've combined all the snap, crackle and pop that sells bulk in these here nineties. Alas three chords and a manic depressive stance do not a great band make, but, Elsewhere really aren't all bad.

-Vivian Manning