



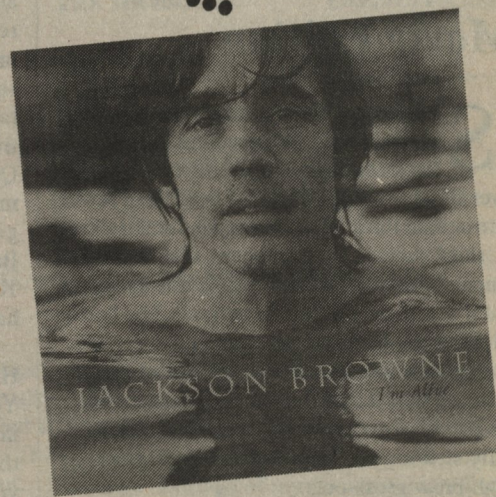
4-Track Demos
PJ Harvey
(A & M)

The highly prolific PJ Harvey continues to shoot 'em out. This one's self-explanatory, a solo-performed bunch of demos from *Rid of Me*, plus some unreleased stuff. Who needs it? Serious PJ fans, I guess, but the album does clarify the *Rid of Me* songs, which Steve Albini muted. With the impending break-up of Polly Harvey's trio, this may be the last you hear of this style. *4-Track Demos* is for completists, but it's also an interesting fly-on-the-wall glimpse at one of rock's more compelling artists.



Some Fantastic Place
Squeeze
(A & M)

You can always count on Squeeze for a pleasant, if disposable, listen. They were a lot more interesting in the early eighties, when they were quirkier and punchier. Since they broke up and got back together Squeeze haven't been quite the same, consistently grinding out tuneful trifles like *Babylon and On* and *Frank*. Their last album, *Play*, was at least ambitious and it sounds like *Abbey Road* compared to the new one, *Some Fantastic Place*. Things looked promising: Paul Carrack -- who was a member of the band for their best album, *East Side Story*, then left to record a series of wonderful and definitely not contrived solo albums, as well as sing for Mike and the Mechanics (there's no doubt about it, the man's goin' to hell) -- along with ex-Attraction Pete Thomas have entered the fold, but Squeeze still lacks spark. Perhaps stylistic variety is supposed to liven things up: the band tries its hand at r&b, gospel and country, but it all sounds phoney. Still, melody for its own sake is a rare thing nowadays, so perhaps Squeeze fills a niche. You'd be better off starting with *East Side Story* or the singles compilation; only miniaturists need venture this far into this decidedly minor band's canon.



I'm Alive
Jackson Browne
(Warner)

Jackson Browne, one of the seventies' finest songwriters, has returned to the personal sphere after a trilogy of bland protest albums; but despite the change of perspective, the song remains pretty much the same -- and it sounds a lot like James Taylor. Browne attempts to experiment, tackling r&b and even reggae on "Everywhere I Go," which, quite astoundingly, isn't a total white-guy fiasco, but it's all stiff and white-bread. *I'm Alive* is the kind of adult contemporary poo that might appeal to those who fell for, say, Billy Joel's last one. Weak stuff.

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RATINGS:

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Holy tweedle-dee!

••••

My my my... my

•••

Not bad

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Not good

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Real bad