

been dancing hard in the madfields of her mind, and, poof!, out popped her fairy dust record. And Björk knows fairy dust.

Where do we start? Jesus. Have you ever imagined (I'll bet you haven't) how well Gregorian chanting would go with doo-wop? The opening track, "Pleasure Is All Mine," actually provides the answer. And the pleasure isn't all hers, for it is a startlingly captivating piece of musical capriciousness. When she follows with an a cappella plea to "Show Me Forgiveness," it's patience she should possibly be asking for. The chanters make a spooky return on the stark, medieval "Vokuro," and you suddenly realize what a radical leap our Icelandic goddess has made here. Björk, whether intentional or not, was always a modernist...okay, postmodernist. But much of *Medulla* ostensibly draws on decidedly ancient, and fiercely European traditions. (Björk's been watching *Lord Of The Rings*, perhaps?)

There are a couple of familiar Björk beat workouts, namely "Who Is It" and "Oceania," but that's about all the familiar you're going to get. By the opening moments of "Piano II" (where's "Piano I"?—an exercise in visceral wailing and arrested breathing over a spare, mournful piano accompaniment—you just accept that this is like nothing your comparatively dull, quotidian mind could have ever even imagined—and that it's going to take a bit of devotion on your part.

At one point Björk queries, "...where is the line?," but of course, only she knows the answer to that. *Medulla*, though, is doubtless the closest she'll ever come to letting you dance in the madfields of her mind with her. You'd be daft not to go with utter abandon in your soul, and with the romance of possibility in your heart. But of course, be mindful of the mines.

KEN SCRUDATO



#### THE PRODIGY

***Always Outnumbered Never Outgunned***  
Maverick Records

**86%**

Some people (the evil detractors) are claiming to be disappointed by the Prodigy's new LP. Obviously the swine aren't listening to it loud enough. The album's lead-off hitter, "Spit Fire," is a "Firestarter"/Fat of the Land throwback which, while it won't blow you off the toilet, will get your attention...and perhaps cause a partial erection. The album nearly faints at least twice, getting a little too simple and robotically "soulful" for its own good. But "Hot Ride," the revisitation of Jimmy Webb's 1968 "Up, Up and Away" will have you sniffing your female co-workers in fiercely sensual arousal. It's feral! Metaphorically it could be looked at as a violent throttling administered by a very sexy woman armed with a tackhammer. Very punk. To be honest, this is nowhere near a bad album, it's quality, but "Hot Ride" is so good I don't want to listen to the rest of it. Liam's attempts to incorporate elements of hip-hop fail in the large (tracks 2, 4 & 6). Period. HOWEVER, AONO wins the day with its many resplendent examples of heavy-on-the-riding-crop electronic cavalry charges. It's what they're good at.

MARK VON PFEIFFER



#### THE BLACK KEYS

***Rubber Factory***  
Epitaph

**88%**

Down home on the ol' plantation in northern Ohio, the Black Keys haven't switched up too much on their third album. With all the bands that have spilled off the garage rock assembly line recently, The Black Keys were able to distinguish themselves from the mass of product by getting off the conveyor belt before the machines could beat the raw and dirty blues out of them. On *Rubber Factory*, more of the same meaty riffs meet familiar sweaty rhythms to take you down to the Midwestern delta one more time. These guys are blues-rock purists who don't give a shit 'bout no gott-dang fanciness. The standouts "10 A.M. Automatic" and "All Hands Against His Own" are jook-joint rockers, while the Kinks cover "Act Nice and Gentle" and the blues classic "Grown So Ugly" (written by Robert Pete Williams and made popular by Cap'n Beefheart) add a bit of homage. Leave your fancy pants at home, these boys done come to sang and sweat the truth.

PAT MCGUIRE



#### BADLY DRAWN BOY

***One Plus One is One***  
Astralwerks

**85%**

It's hard not to like Badly Drawn Boy, but it's equally difficult to imagine loving one of his records. No matter how many times I

**Tom Waits**

**Real Gone**

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