

Reel Music

AUSTIN POWERS: THE SPY WHO SHAGGED ME (MAVERICK) **1/2

The temptation to say "Yeak, baby" is great, but suffice to say this soundtrack is pretty top drawer, with highlights including Madonna's rifty new single "Beautiful Stranger" and R.E.M. ambling through "Draggin' the Line."

It all has an appropriately Sixties vibe, with Burt Bacharach & Elvis Costello crooning "I'll Never Fall in Love Again," Lenny Kravitz adding some menace to "American Woman," and Quincy Jones doing the "Soul Bossa Nova."

There are a few forgettable tracks, especially the song by Melanie G (aka Scary Spice), which makes you wonder anew why she jumped the gravy train of Girl Power when it was about to run its course anyway.

IN YOUR EAR (HYBRID) **1/2

The Independent Film Channel has done a real service by rescuing songs written for some of the best indie movies in memory. Songs like these - appearing briefly in a scene or during the end credits - can be lost for good, since small films like *Manny & Lo* and *Spanking the Monkey* rarely have soundtrack tie-ins. Not every one is a gem: "Welcome to the Dollhouse" from the movie of the same name sounds tamer than the version played in the film and "Love" by Victoria Williams for *Gas Food Lodging* could probably have benefited from her obsessive rerecording. But as key elements in important films, they're welcome. And gems like "Raised on Promises" by Sam Phillips (for *Ruby in Paradise*) and the majestic "Good Old World" by Tom Waits (for *Night On Earth*) are genuine finds.

HAPPY TRAILS: THE ROY ROGERS COLLECTION (RHINO) ****

The King of the Cowboys appeared in more than 100 Westerns (not counting shorts and the odd cartoon). Only a few of them were more than your typical oater and perhaps none are real classics by the standards of the two Johns, Ford and Wayne. But one constant held true: in most every film, good guy Roy would be riding along or sitting by a campfire and by golly he'd break into song. An amiable screen presence, Rogers was a far better singer, nailing new numbers like "I've Sold My Saddle for an Old Guitar" and old classics like "Home on the Range" as deftly as his screen counterpart drew a gun. This four CD compilation from Rhino is up to its usual exacting standards, with a typically thorough 62 page booklet that contains family reminiscences, memorabilia information, and track-by-track rundowns. During the Last Roundup, Rhino can ride tall in the saddle for doing right by Roy, only a no-good varmint could find fault with this collection.

LIMBO (COLUMBIA) ***

John Sayles' typically enigmatic film has one great plus: showcasing the heretofore unknown singing talents of Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio. She plays a talented, journeyman singer stuck in a little dive in Alaska - pouring her heart into great songs like "You Never Can Tell aka C'est La Vie" and pouring out another drink to hide her disappointment. Sayles uses music brilliantly here: any fool can see how Mastrantonio's character is opening up when she progresses from singing the bitter "Better Off Without You" to the haunting Richard Thompson paean to devotion "Dimming of the Day." Like the film, the soundtrack is rather idiosyncratic, throwing in all of her numbers, selections from the score and—for good measure—a terrific, tender new song by Bruce Springsteen called "Lift Me Up." It—along with Mastrantonio—make this an essential buy.

By Michael Giltz