

# SINGLES

REVIEWED BY SIMON REYNOLDS

## SINGLE OF THE WEEK METALLICA

### ONE (Vertigo)

IN Dalton Trumbo's "Johnny Got His Gun" Metallica have found an ultimate metaphor for oppression. It's the story of a First World War casualty, a soldier left limbless, blind, deaf and dumb, who painstakingly learns to communicate by tapping out messages with a charred stump, only to be rebuffed by the military authorities who would rather forget him and keep this living indictment locked safely out of sight of the public.

The sting of this ultimate, further injustice heaped on top of utter deprivation has stung Metallica into producing what may well be their masterpiece. In "One", their vision is as total, apocalyptic and medieval as ever ("Master Of Puppets", "Harvester Of Sorrow"); they gaze upon the world and see only carnage and ruin, wasted lives and cackling overlords.

Their version of the soldier's interior agony, his end without end, is accordingly a little blunt — "Hold my breath/As I wish for death . . . tied to machines that make me be . . . I cannot live/I cannot die/Trapped in myself/Body my holding cell" — but the song works because its musical treatment is so understated. "One" is a lyrical ballad, a plangent, pastoral *lay* in which guitars are made to sound more like lutes and psalteries than HM's axe-wielding berserker mayhem.

As such, it's infinitely more affecting than speedmetal's usual coarse

## THE HOUSE OF LOVE

### NEVER (Fontana)

"NEVER" is a substantial disappointment. Big and empty where it could have been expansive and overloaded, it sees The House Of Love already verging on the hollow triumphalism of major league, major chord stadium rock. For House Of Love to have already reached the Americanophile rockist aggrandisement of the Bunnymen's dotage is some bitter blow this early in '89. Terry Bickers surges, but is never allowed to *flare*, all their old effervescence seems to have turned to cement, and where every mote of their sound seemed infused and effused with light, now it just feels like *production*.

But maybe we can blame this on producer Tim Palmer, for the B-side tracks see the band *using* a big budget rather than being used by it. Chadwick may still be reshuffling his 12-word vocabulary of BIG-sounding words ("fire", "Jesus", "glow", "love", "pray", "Lord", "true", etc) but is at least swamped in some truly *devout* textures. The self-produced "Soft As Fire" has a riff that leaves a trail of luminous, multiple after-images in its wake, while "Safe" (the lost Creation single produced by Daniel Miller) is as blanched and refulgent as their best moments. Colossal without being epic, it's a mind furnace of sound, that leaves the listener slumped and glazed, brainburned and blasted with wonder. And unlike "Never", Chadwick sounds borne-under rather than overbearing, prostrated rather than proud of his love.

"Safe" trails off into a crystal cacophony of ice-floe fractures and shattered stalactites worth of A R Kane, and indicates The House of Love may well have a future after all.