

JACK

Pioneer Soundtracks

(Too Pure/CD/LP)

PEOPLE DRIVE very slowly past car crashes. In spite of ourselves, some of us are perversely entertained at the expense of others, with disturbing regularity. Similarly, when all's said and done, a trip inside the tawdry, indecent world of another human's sorry soul can be thrilling; but only if it lasts for a short time.

Jack are intimately aware of this. One song in and they're already heroically summing up the concept behind their debut LP.

"These are beautiful songs for ugly children", croons Anthony Reynolds. Oh yes, ...Of Lights' - an epic, string-smacked opener, roughly to London what Pulp's 'Sex City' is to Sheffield - transports us to a seedy "warehouse off the river" where "a daughter is raped". We have entered the Jack Zone - we will be degraded, but with style.

The obvious reference point is Scott Walker, for the overblown drama. The less obvious one is Dexy's - or the sense of multiple

HAYLEY MADDEN



Jack: beautiful songs for and, let's face it, by ugly children

band members posing as Victorian street children. But the reason that 'Pioneer Soundtracks' really conquers is that Jack, like Animals That Swim, render the tried and tested Tindersticks formula near-useless by making it that bit more obvious. Bolstered, in this case, by the deep, sophisticated swoops of their vocalist.

In an age where Noel Gallagher is slobbered over for something as banal as melding words with music a bit neatly (like, wow!), you could be tempted to call Anthony Reynolds 'ambitious'. But in an ideal world, more would spew

majestic lines like his, or, as is often the case, have the gumption to waste them in an arrogant mumble.

Conceptually, it could all be bollocks. But by the end of 'Pioneer Soundtracks', the tendency to give the slightest f— whether Jack are middle-class fakers or not has vanished; and their brutal honesty does nothing but impress. For anyone who's ever sat up through the night despairing at what a shit place this planet really is, yet longing to take themselves above it all - this band understand you soooo well. (8)

Tom Cox