

XTC

Nonsuch (*Virgin/All formats*)

ANDY PARTRIDGE has an unique way of calibrating the success of XTC. Not for him the pie charts and sales curves of The Man, he judges how well he's doing by what he can afford for his leafy Wiltshire abode.

His last big hit was 'Senses Working Overtime' ten years ago, which enabled him to build a kitchen extension. When XTC were last with us in 1990, Andy was hoping the 'Mayor Of Simpleton' single would get him a new stair-carpet. Sadly, the record fell just short of the Top 40 and he had to make do with "a generous round of drinks".

Andy will no doubt be highly chuffed with the success of 'The Disappointed', the first single from 'Nonsuch', and if the rest of the album is anything to go by he'll soon be fitting luxurious shagpiles in every room of *Chez Partridge*.

There's nothing particularly exciting or ground-breaking about 'Nonsuch', it's just another extremely good XTC album with the usual fractured guitar melodies coupled with cute and curious lyrics about what a nice place England is. Oddly enough, it's the Americans who buy most of this stuff.

Partridge strolls through familiar territory of misfits and miscreants, orchards and omnibuses. Colin Moulding offers similar on his four songs, only in a slightly less bumpkinesque voice. Andy sang about his son Harry on 1990's 'Oranges And Lemons' album, this time he offers 'Holly Up On Poppy' about his daughter and her rocking horse. In some people's hands this would be twee rubbish, but what's endearing about Partridge is his resolute "couldn't give a f—" attitude to it all.

XTC left the rock 'n' roll rat-race years ago and chart their own course with total disregard for the usual trappings of pop stardom. 'Nonsuch' is the sound of Andy Partridge making home improvements, and this album would be an improvement to anyone's record shelf. (7)

Terry Staunton