



Corin Ashley -- Songs From The Brill Bedroom (Murray Hill): Ashley was a guitarist and songwriter in the brash mod/power pop band The Pills, a real rocking outfit. If you listened to their stuff, you'd never have guessed that Ashley had the heart of soft-popper lurking underneath. Well, maybe you could find clues in his swell writing for *Big Takeover* magazine (he's an ace reviewer). Still, even though I knew he had a Nilsson jones (and covers Harry on this platter), I never could have imagined how splendidly he could make music that come pretty darn close to the quality of heroes such as Nilsson and Paul McCartney, who are the two best reference points for this terrific solo record. Not only are the songs strong, but they get better as the album goes on. Moreover, Ashley has paid a lot of attention to the arrangements and the sounds -- listen to the second track, "Gin & Panic", where the various instruments are given just the right amount of sonic space, especially the George Harrison-style slide guitar leads that embellish the song. Even better, Ashley kills me with his voice -- he really pulls off this material exceptionally well, including the genuflecting "For Roy Orbison", the best musical homage to the shaded balladeer since Electric Light Orchestra's "Endless Lies". Another strong vocal performance comes on the passionate piano piece "Hill School 1978". Then there are songs that have sublime melodic twists and chord changes, like the languid extended piece "Her Mercury Smile/Foggy Meltin Breakdown". It moves from power pop with a John Lennon slant in the verses, to a soulful bridge, culminating in a feathery smooth interlude coming out of the chorus. There's even more to enjoy, but that alone is more than enough. This is an extremely accomplished work that fans of classic early '70s pop should buy, no questions asked. corinashley.com