



RECORDS

Continued from page 11

able country-rock voice and the effortless professionalism of his cohorts make it hard to point to any part of this record and say that it could have been done better. What is at issue is more deep-seated than that.

Basically, I find it difficult to know exactly why this record was made. There are a batch of love songs that don't seem to express much more than pleasant contentment, a funk instrumental by the band, a country song by the pedal-steel player, a cover version of "Happy Days are Here Again", and a couple of songs about what Grindlay knows best — being an underemployed, dissatisfied musician. Grindlay has little to say, but says it winningly.

Unfortunately, Rick Steele's record has a lot less going for it. I found it really upsetting to listen to this record and think of some of the people who could have been using the studio time that went into it. In England a small, new, record company built around a studio — like Stiff Records — is free to produce a different, and energetic kind of output. Here, Mandrill Records, an offshoot of Glyn Tucker and Dave Hurley's Parnell recording studio, opens its catalogue with a record which could have been rejected any time in the last five years.

The same musicians, in the main, who perform on Murray Grindlay appear on *Take it or Leave it*. They contribute perfunctory backings to such numbers as "Bloody Daggaville", "Hangover Blues", "Numb Bum Blues", and "Life Gets Tedious", pack up, and go home. The worst of it is that they have probably done the songs justice.

As a final blow, Rick Steele pitches into the autobiographical Jackson Browne song, "Ready or Not". It is as well that Browne, who reportedly acts with anger every time the song (about his dead wife) is requested, will never hear this version. I'm sure that he would be less than pleased to hear a simple statement like, "Next thing I remember, she was all moved in", turned into, "Next thing I remember, she was on the pill." That kind of mistake, and there are a number of others in the same song, speaks volumes for the degree of commitment that went into this record.

It is really a shame to have to criticise these records, and if there were no signs of anything better on the horizon, the decision would be doubly difficult. However, the Mark Williams album, the Hello Sailor single, even the Malcolm McCallum do-it-yourself album, show that while there is no reason for shame about the New Zealand record industry, there is no excuse for shoddiness.

Francis Stark

Marcia Hines Shining Miracle

Sultry she looks on the front cover, cutesy on the back. She's American and she's black and she works in Sydney. Apart from that what is there to tell about Marcia Hines? Unfortunately, not a helluva lot. In her fact *Shining* is a frustrating record because it is a completely unsatisfactory measure of

how much talent Marcia Hines does, or does not possess.

Throwing proverbial caution to proverbial winds, I'm inclined to believe she might really be quite good. True, her voice is schizophrenic — it too vacillates between the culty and the cutesy — true, in her worst moments, she sounds like Millie Small trying a hand at Philadelphia soul, but just sometimes she shows off a flexibility and power that may one day be exploited.

Whatever her promise, Marcia Hines is at present in the doldrums. Or rather, she seems to be in the clutches of one Robie G Porter, her Australian producer. Porter writes songs, helps arrange, and produces on *Shining*, and more undistinguished song writing, arranging, and producing one could go a long way to find. No, it's not incompetent, it's just boring. And if Porter was responsible for the choice of other songs covered I wouldn't be at all surprised. All good MOR stuff, fit to have you begging for Joan Armatrading — even for Eddie and the Hotrods.

Believe me I do not indulge in anti-Australian rhetoric — I'll even mention that the best treatment on the album is of a song called "Love is the Key" by Australian songwriter Rick Springfield — but if Marcia Hines is determined to record in the Antipodes, she would do a lot better to seek out Alan Galbraith. Mark Williams' new one, aimed at roughly the same market shows its heels to this uninspired piece of plastic.

Bruce Belsham

KINGSLEY SMITH for top band gear

26 Customs St. Auck. Telephone: 360-354



CREATIVE MUSIC SCHOOL



Music Education for the Seventies

Courses in: 1. Rudiments in music theory. 2. Jazz/Rock theory and improvisation. 3. Use of sound and electronic equipment in modern music. For details write to: 6-396 Sandringham Road, Auckland 3 or phone 864 938 or 71 773.

Colin Hemmingsen's Column

Now that it is rumoured that pubs are going disco, what are young rock groups going to do to make a living? Of course there is an opening in the cabaret scene, but, unfortunately, most rock musicians are unable to read floor show charts. How then, can the rock musician be made to see that he needs to be able to read, or for that matter, that he needs a musical education at all, beyond learning the technique of his instrument.

When I was younger, I would ask older, more experienced musicians what they did, how they played those things I wanted to play. More often than not, I would be told, "just blow man". Soon after arriving in the States, that myth was exploded. Here were high schools, colleges and universities which taught answers to those questions I had been asking. Although I had gained a Diploma of Music at Auckland University, I was assessed and then placed in the first semester at Berklee. This showed me how inadequate my high school and university training was in New Zealand, in relation to the idiom in which I wanted to express myself as a musician — jazz.

After four years of studying, teaching and playing in the States, I returned to New Zealand, and after taking a workshop at the Wellington Jazz Festival, realised how much I now took for granted, and how little the average musician knew of the tools to his "trade". I took a series of classes in Wellington, then moved to Auckland to start a school. I found as I was taking these courses, that it was difficult for some students to grasp the theoretical concepts of improvisation, when they couldn't even read music. Now the subject has been scaled down to the point where the course begins with a rudimentary reading course.

Of course there have been many problems running a school, including lack of financial support from the Arts Council and many other bodies and business houses to which I have applied, but the most unexpected and disappointing problem, has been the lack of support from the musicians themselves. They admire the musical achievements of their counterparts in the States, and yet at the same time deny the amount of time, effort and study which has gone in to make that musical experience so good. A young rock guitarist shook his

head in disbelief when I said "of course John McLaughlin knows what he is doing, of course he could write it down". He had to concede the point when, a year later, a book containing the full scores of some of the tunes off Mahavishnu albums, started appearing in music shops.

Common myths regarding a musical education are: but if I learn too much theory I will become mechanical, or, theory will inhibit my creativity. Naturally theory alone or without practical application would tend towards a mechanical attitude, but at some stage a musician must pass through that mechanical stage. It's after the mechanics have been taken care of that a musician can become truly innovative. That is not to say that there are not many talented musicians around playing some good original music, but with the quality of talent there is, the standard should be much better.

An American musician and university educator, Jerry Coker, who has written three excellent books on jazz (translate jazz as meaning improved music), said in a letter of support for the music school, "so long as our schools and universities spend 95% of our monies on a musical style which supports only 6% of the working population, then they are not serving us properly". For New Zealand, that would translate as nearly 100% of our monies. That means of course, that musicians not only get an unfair deal educationally and supportively, but they get no deal at all. This reverts back to the musicians themselves, who through lack of knowledge (we are at least 15 years behind America in music education), or apathy (the old New Zealand "she'll be right" attitude or "it's a great idea — maybe later") or pride (how can I admit after playing all these years that I don't know everything).

Aside from not being able to handle simple floor show charts, musicians are unwittingly missing out on the satisfactions to be gained from not only playing, but also being to understand what they are playing.

This article has been written to improve the understanding and shake the wide spread apathy which is now preventing young musicians from gaining a firm foundation and a secure future in their chosen profession — modern music.

Foxy Lady

BOUTIQUE

INVITES YOU TO COME
AND VISIT HER



Theatre Lane
Ph. 371-863