

to account for this situation: Are the later albums all that poor; were too many printed; or does the reason lie in the habits of her average record buyer? Probably a little of all three, but, in fairness, we should credit Joe Average with more taste than simply buying up *Love at the Greek*. He has recognised Ms King's artistic decline; that with odd exceptions, such as the stunning "Jazz Man", she has pursued the same musical approach that gave her the success of *Tapestry*, but with ever-diminishing returns.

There are (says the reviewer, fingers crossed), a couple of songs on *Simple Things* which show glimmerings of a new direction for Carole King. Both numbers concerned are co-written by one Rick Evers, who, I assume, is the gent in the cover photo and possibly Carole's new love. It just could be the lady has found another song-writing cum inspirational partner... and, yes I do miss the Goffin-King combination. Of the three joint efforts "Hold On" is perhaps the best, being both laid-back and powerful, centred around Carole's strong rhythm guitar — a bit like David Crosby but with guts. "To Know That I Love You" initially threatens 3½ minutes of wimpy slush, yet with a good arrangement develops into a strong and memorable song. This one also features Evers in vocal harmonies. The title track sounds too carefully formulated, almost as if she wants it covered by the Carpenters.

Of the songs she wrote alone, only the gentle paean "In the Name of Love" and her single "Hard Rock Cafe" really succeed, the latter largely due to its punchy brass arrangement. The other five songs are various hackneyed reruns of old themes — you've heard them before and probably in fresher form. (Her muscular chord-pounding piano is also beginning to wear thin.)

Ms King's lyrics have been ever sweet and sentimental, whether dealing with boy-girl relationships or simple friendship and loyalty. Most of her songs have been addressed to someone, but now the 'You' is becoming generalised, and not always with success. When her direct audience is extended within strict limits, such as the city-dwelling workers in "Hard Rock Cafe", she can still write intelligent lines, but in addressing herself to the whole cosmic condition she flounders in mystical banality.

Romantic phrases come to me
Whenever I see injustice being done
or

He is one
She is one
Tree is one... etcetera ad nauseam

However I don't wish to end on a sour note; but to restress what, hopefully, are the beginnings of a new musical partnership. Have a listen to "Hold On".
Peter Thomson

Dr Feelgood Sneaking Suspicion United Artists

Somewhere between the British rhythm and blues revival of Graham Parker and the Rumour and the uncompromising rawness of Johnny Rotten lies the music of Dr Feelgood. In all fairness though Dr Feelgood predates both Parker and the punks as champions of hard nosed, no nonsense rock 'n' roll and as such have a deserved following amongst British audiences.

By listening to the Feelgood's classic live album *Stupidity*, we dismembered limbs of the rock market, stuck here on t'other-side-o-th' world can at least applaud by proxy the indignation of Dr Feelgood who ignore the super clean studio sound required by today's pop and soul market. What's more a few listenings suffice to have us believe that this is a band who know what they want to play, and play it tightly and fiercely.

Sneaking Suspicion, Dr Feelgood's most recent studio recording is made in much the same tradition as earlier material. Real Feelgood aficionados may note that this studio material is a little less gusty than their live recording, some may feel that with only 10 songs, compared with 13 on *Stupidity*, the band is stretching itself thinner, but in essence Dr Feelgood remains the same.

On *Sneaking Suspicion* several blues oldies are covered including Willie Dixon's "You'll Be Mine", but in terms of treatment oldies and originals sound much the same — that is punchy, basic, and to the point. The one feature that does emerge from this album is a greater use of singer Lee Brilleaux's slide playing. As a slide player Brilleaux has a snarlingly dirty sound and a sense of what is effective. Matched with Wilko Johnson's driving rhythm style the slide part makes "Sneaking Suspicion" itself an A-one rocker. The remainder of the record never really recaptures the excitement of the title track but nevertheless does an honest half hour or more's work.
Bruce Belsham

Amazing . . .

The Amazing Rhythm Aces Toucan Do It Too. ABC

The Amazing Rhythm Aces are essentially a studio band, and for my money they are one of the tastiest units around. Their first album, *Stacked Deck*, was a vinyl masterpiece of evocative songs, restrained playing, and fine harmonies. They play rhythm'n'blues with strong overtones of country music, and their lead singer and songwriter, Russell Smith, has one of the best voices in popular music.

Toucan Do It Too is their third album, following the superb *Too Stuffed to Jump*, and it maintains their high standards. The songs are simple and direct, although there are maybe a few too many "pain of love" lyrics for my taste. Barry Burton's guitar and steel are consistently good. James

Hooker's Piano is the other virtuoso instrument, providing fills and lead breaks with understated brilliance.

The emphasis on this album has shifted slightly from country and R'n' B to more rhythmic stuff. There is reggae and calypso influence, but they always sound like the ARA, and not some cheap copy of a Jamaican band. Butch McDade's drumming retains the light touch of the earlier material and copes well with the less rigid styles required on tracks like "Never Been to the Islands". Other Standout tracks are "Two Can Do It Too" and "Never Been Hurt".

Southern Bands certainly aren't all they were reputed to be a couple of years ago, but there seems to be tradition evolving from the meeting of country and R'n'B in the South. The Amazing Rhythm Aces are one of the finest bands in that tradition.
John Malloy

Tasteful Elkie Brooks

Elkie Brooks Two Days Away A & M

Any singer who doesn't write her own material or who doesn't have a strong vocal personality, has got problems. Many solo singers flounder by failing to ever establish an identity for themselves.

Elkie Brooks has suffered from this very problem. Once the wild-haired lady at the front of hard-rocking British band, Vinegar Joe, but since their break-up, she's seemed a little confused about quite which direction to take. She directed her first album in a hard rock direction, as she admits: "I tried to make a commercial album for the media and the punters, not for jazz fans or rock fans." On this, her second solo album, she's trying to be a sultry jazz-blues singer. And it works.

Together with 'producers historic', Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, she's put together a superbly tasteful album that features her talents set in varied styles, in all of which

she is uniformly successful. In fact, I'd call this a classic pop album, if I didn't think that would turn off more people than it would convince. For there are at least two great pop performances: Ellie Greenwich's "Sunshine After the Rain" and Elkie's song, written with her husband, "Spiritland". But the album covers several musical styles, including two great gospel influenced songs: "Mojo Hannah" and "Do Right Woman". The remaining tracks offer a variety of Elkie Brooks' musical mainstays: blues, rock'n'roll and jazz-influenced songs.

I mean, her version of "Do Right Woman" may not improve on Aretha's classic, but it comes bloody close. There are very few female singers today who can match that kind of power and Leiber and Stoller's production consistently finds the right setting for each song. A productive partnership then, that one can only hope will be continued. There can never be too many singers around with this kind of quality.

Alastair Dougal.



Your Feet Not Your Head

The Crusaders Those South Knights Blue Thumb

You could say that the Crusaders are experienced musicians: four members have been together for twenty-five years, while all six have appeared, either individually or in various combinations, as session men on well over 150 albums. (Joni Mitchell's *Hissing Summer Lawns* and Al Jarreau's *Glow* are two that come to mind.) Their own albums number nearly thirty and they play, as the blurb-sheet states, "an engagingly smooth blend of R & B, jazz and contemporary funk."

Die-hard jazz purists tended to write them off for diluting the True Art to suit mass consumption and, while it is true the Crusaders have never forged new musical pathways, criticism on this account is irrelevant. They have no aspirations to join the avant-garde, being quite content to rework more familiar ground — which they do very well indeed.

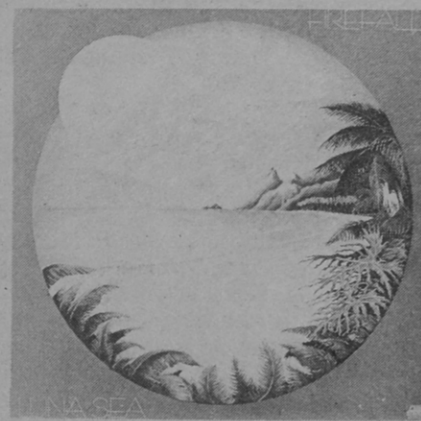
If, like me, you enjoy dancing (around the lounge or whatever), but remain unmoved by 95% of disco because you suspect it was

produced by a computer, than take heart. This band can get down and strut with the best. Not only do your feet move to the impeccable rhythm section but there are some meaty solos to keep your mind happy. Five of the seven numbers are danceable; in fact their very structure makes them most enjoyable this way. Although not quite a 'Let's find a groove and take turns to blow' approach, the pieces do tend to rely on arranged, simple riff-type themes and extended soloing. Over a whole album it can begin to pall if one simply sits and listens; even exemplary musicianship needs a varied format. Of the two slower numbers, however, guitarist Larry Carlton's "till the Sun Shines" impresses with its brooding controlled dynamics.

The Crusaders' chief asset is their sheer instrumental talent and wealth of experience. Their only drawback is a certain thinness of basic material and, perhaps, a tendency to play it safe — no-one is venturing anywhere near his edge on this record — but, as I've been saying, this music is aimed primarily at your feet, not your head. I play it all the time.

Peter Thomson

THREE GREAT WAYS TO START AN EARLY SUMMER



Luna Sea. Firefall.

A new LP from the band that's set to take on the Eagles.



Benny & Us.

Average White Band & Ben E King. A legendary artist meets the current high-flyers.



Natural Progression.

Bernie Leadon & Michael Georgiades. Ex-Eagle Bernie Leadon's fine first album with his long-time friend.



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