



Second Time Round

Ry Cooder
Boomer's Story
Reprise
The Stooges
Funhouse
Elektra

With Ry Cooder booked for an Auckland concert in May it is particularly apt that WEA records have chosen to re-release various Cooder material.

This man's following, though perhaps cultist, is founded upon deserved respect for a brilliant musician's adaption of his surrounding culture. And it is a following that will be grateful for any Cooder repeats.

The re-issue of *Boomer's Story*, as an example, allows easier access to a superb album and affords a chance to re-state Ry Cooder's public service in bringing diverse and ethnic American music to a rock audience.

Boomer's Story, his third album recorded in 1972 is a characteristic collection of musical Americana, ranging from the traditional "Boomer's Story" to the wartime anthem "Comin' in on a Wing and a Prayer". The Cooder treatment includes those virtuoso, if shambling, picking and slide styles of his and of course his voice. The latter is a truly remarkable instrument, graced with a blend of cynicism and drunken reverence for the music of his birth-

place. Like personal friend Randy Newman, Cooder projects a laconic indulgence in his native America. And like Newman's his is likely to be a lasting contribution to a Yankee tradition. *Boomer's Story* is simply recommended as a fine exhibition of that achievement.

Apart from country of origin and roughly comparable vintage the Stooges' second album *Funhouse* bears no relation to Cooder's in any way at all. Why mention it here? Solely because it too is a re-release, emerging through the same distribution company.

Recorded in 1970, *Funhouse* claims historical merit as prefigured punk, a splash of the new wave much before its time. However Iggy Pop and friends pound through seven compositions, sadly obscuring in the process a reputation the Stooges have as a crunching guitar-riff outfit. At fault is an appalling production, all mush and middle, and some wildly irrelevant sax playing by Steven Mackay. *Funhouse* was recorded without Stooge guitarist James Williamson and will disappoint those who expect a driving new-wave anachronism. Only Iggy's voice, raucous and bluesy, really escapes the acid rock time warp in which the backing is enmeshed. Sadly *Funhouse* is as dated as *Boomer's Story* is timeless.

Bruce Belsham

London Town
Wings
Capitol

Well, blow me over with a bikie's b.o. McCartney manages to sound like everybody (including Abba, Fairport Convention, Elvis Presley and Peter, Paul & Mary) except himself. He seems to have deserted his excellent bass-playing and singing for old age. He still hasn't deserted his wife, alas. (OK, Fems, start moaning).

The songs on the album are fairly weak particularly in relation to his successful commercial stuff (eg "Let Em In", "Letting Go") and as well, the usual high standard of arranging has gone. Instead we have an acoustic bias in the strum-strum vein (a la Matamora on Saturday night) and Linda's keyboard work is particularly unadventurous.

Many of the tracks are co-written by

Denny Laine and lyrically they are quite insubstantial.

I know a tiny waterfall
A magic little place
Where we can play together
And watch the fishes race

As well as Laine on bits and pieces, guitarist, Jimmy McCulloch, and drummer Joe English, help out to a questionable extent. (Both have now left the group although it appears that English wants to re-join. Sap).

Overall however, it is the songwriting that really fails. Late last year McCartney was talking to old friend Tim Finn and he mentioned that he liked "Charlie".

Now if he could write songs like those boys, old *London Town* would be a great deal more interesting. As it stands though, I guess it's bye bye Macca.

Mike Chunn

Jefferson Starship
Earth
Grunt

Like the roofpaint, this band just keeps on keeping on. Can you credit, it's 12 years since it took off? Sure, things got a bit turbulent there for a while, what with pilot trouble and all, but now the Starship enterprise seems to be cruising more smoothly than the Airplane ever did.

It seems more popular too. Fancy getting a Grammy award. Has middle America embraced the revolution? Hardly. Flight plans became modified; that's all. The only sign of Kantner's old hippies-plumb-the-galaxy ethos on this album is the title and cover. The only whiff of politics is on one track "Show Yourself."

Many things, however, do remain the same. The music still has vestiges of that amateurism-made-good feeling which characterized so many 60's San Francisco bands. Often, ideas displayed in both song structure and performance seem dated. This is particularly evident in the guitar and keyboard soloing.

Yet there's also a positive side of the retaining of things past. Many tracks are redolent of that semi-structured, 'psychedelic' free-flow so appealing of the Airplane. (This is not to belie the tightness of the band; simply to emphasize that even though musicians may change, the sound remains defined by the three original copilots.)

But then, hasn't the whole flight-log itself become a bit of a bore by now? Surprisingly not. *Earth* is probably a better record than it's immediate predecessors. While it may not contain a single of the magnitude of, say, "Miracles", (though that remains to be seen) as an album it's far more unified and of higher overall quality. There's not that impression of a couple of good tracks standing out in an uneasy mixture containing too much filler.

The singing, too, is better, more assured. Although the odd strain still shows, Grace and Marty are sounding more comfortable now.

My initial reactions to *Earth* were largely negative. I was going to write about aging rockers who refuse to retire gracefully. But, dammit, they do still pack a wallop in their own, somewhat atavistic manner, and besides, the tunes have been hanging around my head for days.

Peter Thomson



KATE BUSH

A GIFT OF...
scarlet lilies
sundogs
smokey quartz
and a
new
album
FROM...



...the people who
gave you the dog
and the trumpet