

**Karla Bonoff**  
**CBS**

Hot on the heels of Libby Titus, another new songwriter from C.B.S.. This is Karla Bonoff — ex-back-room-girl for Linda Ronstadt, everyone's favourite Girl Guide. Bonoff's first album is produced by her own husband, Kenny Edwards who just happens to be Linda Ronstadt's bass player...

Ronstadt fans will like the Bonoff album, although mercifully, she abstains from attempting the Buddy Holly revival that Ronstadt seems to be always forcing on her audiences. This is a rather gentle and reflective album, which I think will grow in my estimation the more that I play it. Perhaps I was lucky to start by listening to "Isn't It Always Love" the rather catchy little opener to Side 2, by far the better half of the disc.

Lyricaly the songs seem to treat, if not indeed harp upon, the problems of love. This is something of a danger when you have an album being basically written by one person, because it can become pretty unvarying. True, Ronstadt also favours love songs but different writers give the albums the variety they need. In fact the two non-Bonoff songs, Craig Safan's "Faces in the Wind" and Steve Ferguson's "Flying High" really stand out which may be taken as some criticism of Bonoff's own songs.

Let's face it, you're brave if you write and sing words like

*I'm not telling you lies now*

*I need you*

*You know how*

*I think I can see how to let you grow*

*I've got to let you go*

unless you're Andy Pratt.

Session musicians like Waddy Wachtel, Russell Kunkel, Leland Sklar, Andrew Gold, Wendy Waldman etc. etc. etc. make it all smoothsville, but I suspect it does lack a little bit of variety as an album.

**William Dart**

**Isotope**  
**The Best of**  
**Gull**  
**Tangerine Dream**  
**Cyclone**  
**Gong**  
**Expresso II**  
**Virgin**

Tangerine Dream is one of the few groups to survive the early 1970's interest in experimenting with strange electronic sounds.

It is no longer trendy to venture into the avant-garde but this group is still pursuing the unknown.

The group's latest *Cyclone* takes these musicians a step further. Tangerine Dream has always been among the most subtle and accomplished of the groups trying to create electronic masterpieces. Many such works have been rejected because of their cold distant approach and their overdose of synthesizers. They'd play with the new toy and forget about trying to create good music in the process.

Early Tangerine Dream used an impressive lineup of keyboards plus the occasional guitar. The group borrowed ideas from leaders in the 20th century classical electronic field like Stockhausen and Ligeti (whose works were included in the film *2001*). They sought to help create the music of the future.

Vocals feature on *Cyclone* perhaps not as successfully as one may have hoped. It inevitably draws comparisons with the Alan Parsons project or even Pink Floyd. Possibly this album will make the group more accepted by a wider rock audience.

Gong has had a more unstable career. It was founded by poet-guitarist David Allen who also founded Soft Machine. At one time it achieved cult status in France but has gone through many line-up changes. This album includes Mick Taylor.



**Eddie and the Hot Rods**  
**Life on the Line**  
**Island**

Eddie and the Hot Rods play fast. Very fast.

On Side One of *Life on the Line* they burn through five songs at a high velocity. A wall-to-wall adrenalin rush that speeds in on the best song on the album, the great single "Do Anything You Wanna Do", and exits at much the same speed sixteen minutes later.

In fact that's the problem here. The songs are mostly so fast that there's no room for dynamics. The same buzz-saw guitar solo recurs and little apparent variation is achieved in the flat-out format. So you get several rewrites of the same style which range from the classic ("Do Anything") to the

good ("Telephone Girl") to the dire ("Don't Believe Your Eyes").

Thus, although only half of this album is a total success, the Rods have solved the where-do-we-go-from-here problem. They arrived as a tough R&B based guitar band. A precursor to punk they became swamped in the flood of the New Wave.

The addition of guitarist Graeme Douglas from the Kursaal Flyers has moved the band in the direction of what's currently termed powerpop. The Rods have got power aplenty and with a little more concentration on the material and pacing, the next album should see them safe and well away from having to put their lives on the line.

**Alastair Dougal**

*Expresso II* is late night meditation. If you enjoyed Michael Oldfield's *Tubular Bells* this is your sort of music. The soothing experiments involve a wide range of instruments including vibes, congas, violins, tubular bells and even a glockenspiel.

At times it becomes bland and drifts too much into supermarket background noise. One track is even called "Boring." At its best it is pleasantly refreshing — soft unobtrusive jazz, at the end of a hard day.

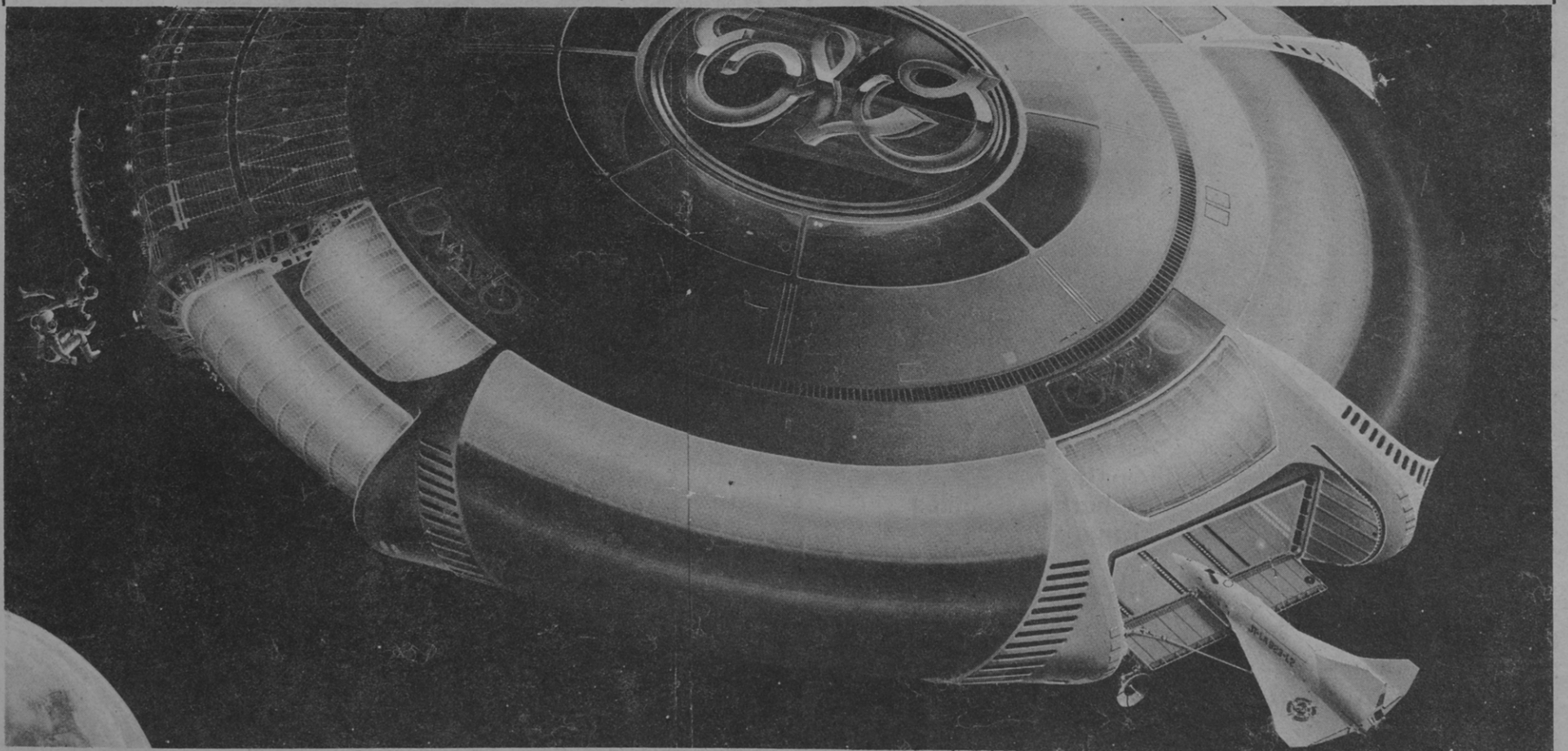
*The Best of Isotope* is an easily accessible and interesting compilation of musical experimentation from a group formed by India-born Gary Boyle, ex Julie Driscoll-Brian Augur Trinity.

Isotope's works are often described as

jazz-rock — one of those horribly meaningless tags often put on groups which can't make up their mind where they want to head. Whereas Tangerine Dream has at times mixed starkness with emotion and made it work, both Gong and Isotope seek a simple rhythmic pulse which often fails to jump out and involve the listener. Trying to add some art and colour to hackneyed rock chord changes is not enough. At times Isotope do not appear to understand where their ideas are heading but this best of compilation provides an interesting variety of their attempts to achieve credible results in this difficult sphere.

**Nigel Horrocks**

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