

# RECORDS

## Dave Edmunds Hot Tracks on Wax 4 Swan Song

Like the title says this is Dave Edmunds's fourth solo album proper and like its predecessors it shows how a Welshman has mastered the art of producing and performing the various facets of fifties rock 'n' roll without leaving the confines of his Monmouthshire Rockfield studios.

Nick (if it's worth listening to it's worth nicking) Lowe who wrote the classic "I Knew the Bride" for Edmunds's last album *Get It*, weighs in with the humorous "Television" and a superfluous yet-another-version of "Heart of the City" identical to the one on his *Jesus of Cool* album. Cheap trick, but all is forgiven on the two Lowe/Edmunds collaborations, "What Looks Best on You" a country ballad probably inspired by their involvement with Carlene Carter, and "Deborah" — full of teenage wetdream drama which begs to be a single. There's plenty of convincing Edmunds rockin' out, the best being guitarist Billy Bremner's "Trouble Boys" and Chuck Berry's "It's My Own Business". Not even Chuck Berry does Chuck Berry as well as Dave Edmunds.

Edmunds has held fast to the essence of rock 'n' roll ever since his breakthrough single in 1970 "I Hear You Knocking". You don't have to drag out your old fifties 45's or put up with unimaginative album compilations of that era when Edmunds can deliver the whole deal with so much verve and dedication. Bringing you the spirit of the fifties today.

George Kay

## Weather Report Mr Gone CBS

A friend of mine has this theory that every 3 or 4 albums Weather Report's music reaches a stylistic synthesis of the best ideas they'd previously picked up along the drive for progress. Thus *Sweetnighter* was the culmination of the early work and last year's *Heavy Weather* brought together the various strands of the prior three albums.

Accordingly *Mr Gone* should mark a new beginning, yet much of it seems familiar. The first track has those 'African tribal' influences that stem back through "Black Market" to "Nubian Sundance." Harmonically the album offers nothing new, although Zawinul generally employs harsher voicings than last time.

There are changes though. Latinized percussion has been forsaken for orthodox drumkit (courtesy of, among others, Tony Williams, Shorter's old colleague from the Miles Davis days.)

Perhaps there are a few hints of new directions. For example the beautiful "And Then" briefly utilizes guest vocalists Maurice White and Deniece Williams. Also the album is less tightly organised than its predecessor, allowing some blowing to stretch out.

But I guess it's too early to say if *Mr Gone* fits my friend's theory — suffice that, while everyone should own *Heavy Weather*, *Mr Gone* is more an album for devotees of the contemporary musical forecast.

Peter Thomson

## Rodger Fox Big Band Time Piece Ode Records

*Time Piece* is the band's third album and best

yet. As in the past, the scores are divided between the use of established big band charts, rearrangements of familiar tunes and original material. You don't have to be a jazz fan to appreciate the band's live performance; with fourteen brass instruments riffing, filling the room, the effect is exhilarating. However, without the magic of the moment to stun the senses, the flaws and limitations become apparent here.

The cuts themselves veer toward MOR and Fox tends to overuse the full ensemble, sometimes at the cost of individualism. Rodger's influences appear to be Ferguson, Herman, Rich and other white American band leaders; there's no trace of the Jones/Lewis and Bolan/Clarke bands who take a more adventurous approach to big band jazz.

These complaints aside, there's enough here to encourage the band to continue. The five-piece rhythm section ranks with any in the land and the brassmen have some great soloists, particularly Fox himself on trombone, Colin Hemmingsen, tenor, and Tony Noorts, alto.

The band wouldn't create any big ripples on the international scene but they do make a valuable contribution to NZ music and deserve the public's support.

John Dix

## Elton John A Single Man Phonogram

Well, Reggie Dwight's first album for a wee while, and a rather mixed bag, *As Rolling Stone* once commented about a James Taylor album, if it hadn't been by James Taylor, it wouldn't even cause a slight ripple in the New Records pool.

Elton has a new lyricist in Gary Osborne whose way with words is a little less intense

than Mr Taupin, but there is still a glimmer of the old Taupin Americana in "Georgia". And "Madness" is just a little embarrassing in its catch-penny apocalypics.

On the musical side, some of the songs dither a little. "Georgia" makes very little impact, "Song for Guy" is a trek back into "Funeral for a Friend" territory, and "Return to Paradise" is a sort of tame calypso number.

On the credit side, "I Don't Care" sounds like Norrie Paramor on speed but is burdened by sub-Hair rhetoric. "Shooting Star" has a relaxed jazzy feel, and "Big Dipper" is Elton's first overtly gay song about picking up sailors and eyeing big dippers.

William Dart

## Jethro Tull Bursting Out Chrysalis

I suppose it was inevitable that a band as long established as Anderson and employees should feel the necessity to join the ever-growing ranks of artists issuing double live albums. Ever since Frampton's ridiculously successful *Comes Alive* the double live album has become the commercially accepted means of conveying a live concert, yet very few acts can sustain interest over four sides of vinyl.

*Bursting Out* fails even to arouse interest and instead accentuates the redundancy of Jethro Tull in the current rock scenario. At best it captures Anderson's partially successful flirtations with folk-rock especially in "Hunting Girl", but "The Whistler" should have been included as an example of his best foray into this idiom. Old chestnuts "Sweet Dream" and "It's a New Day Yesterday" sound as good as they ever did and serve to remind us how original Anderson was before he became infatuated with concepts and rock music as art. The decline started on *Aqualung*, three tracks from which occupy the fourth side of *Bursting Out* and although they are well performed they have failed to survive as songs.

It's about time that Anderson realised that creatively he has reached an impasse and that Tull is nothing more than an anachronistic old warhorse. Too old to rock and roll, sure, too young to retire, never.

George Kay

## Frank Zappa Studio Tan Reprise

After twelve years Zappa is in danger of being institutionalised as rock's resident cult figure. A familiar name to rock fans, he has however failed to capture their mass support. Enjoying brief commercial success with a more accessible rock format in the early seventies, he has since returned to the elitist music forms (with influences ranging from Satie and Varese to Coleman and Dolphy) which his cult followers prefer.

Zappa has said that each of his albums forms part of the whole. *Studio Tan* supports this with familiar characters and musical passages popping up, strengthening the esoterica of his music. You either like the man or not — anyone with more than four of his albums is likely to own the complete 23 record set; thus appreciating the recurring themes.

This record has arrived with no info so one has to guess the sidemen. Recognisable is ex-Mother Roy Estrada amongst others; Ruth Underwood is present as always while Zappa himself plays as impeccably as ever. The trademarks are all here — rising arpeggios, polyrhythms and intricate time signatures. *Studio Tan* won't place Zappa back in the superstar bracket but the converted won't be disappointed.

John Dix

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