

## Wire Chairs Missing Harvest

Wire's first album *Pink Flag*, released at the tail end of 1977, certainly surprised and impressed; twenty-one songs, snippets/fragments of spartan three piece instrumentation overlaid with Colin Newman's brainwashed vocals. This was Music For Police States.

*Chairs Missing*, I hoped, was going to be a development of the more interesting aspects of *Pink Flag*, but in reality far too much of it is a disappointing half-hearted attempt at progression on the discordant and repetitive features of the first album. The jarring over-long assaults of "Practice Make Perfect", "Mercy" and others like it tend to dominate the album.

That's bad news, and the good comes in the shape of songs like "Marooned" and "Used To" which successfully use the dreamy Syd Barrett pop sensibility in a 1980's context. They have also experimented and as a result produced some shuddering sound textures on "Being Sucked In Again" and "I Am the Fly", the latter being one of last year's most adventurous singles.

*Chairs Missing* gives the impression as being an album of tentative experimentation. Wire, not quite sure of which road to take so they seem a little cautious, giving rise to an inconsistent album. But I'll lay odds that their third album will be one of the year's best.

George Kay



Night Planet

## John Hall Power CBS

Some of us know John Hall as co-writer of such numbers as Janis Joplin's "Half Moon", Bonnie Raitt's "Good Enough" and Linda Ronstadt's "Give one heart" and others recognise him as the hirsute chap in the middle of a beefcake Orleans poster a few years ago.

This is Hall's second album since he left the group Orleans and is a pretty strong offering all-round. To borrow a phrase from the Woolie's ad there is indeed something for

everyone. James Taylor and Carly Simon joining Hall on the title track, a smooth little piece about the dangers of nuclear power and a number like "Run Away With Me" reflects its origins as an Orleans number.

It is a musicianly album — the opening track "Home at last" has the same harmonic strength and bass lines that characterised the best of the Band, and certainly Hall sees the record as a return to a career as a guitarist after years of being primarily a songwriter.

Finally, a word for "Cocaine Drain", a fairly ordinary song transformed into something rather lovely by the skill of Hall and his musicians.

William Dart

## Night Planet Tycoon Arista

Both these units feature top session musicians and both are debut albums, but further connections are truly nebulous.

Night features two NZ'ers, vocalist Chris Thompson (of Manfred Mann's Earthband) and bassist Billy Kristian (ex Max Merritt and the Meteors), plus drummer Rick Marotta, vocalist Stevie Lange, guitarist Robbie McIntosh and on keyboards — Nicky Hopkins.

They play soul-based material, though the phrasing owes more to rock and the sound tends towards the orthodox California cruise music. The first side is devoted to covers, which aside from the catchy single "Hot Summer Nights" and the eerie ballad "Cold Wind Across My Heart" is a largely redundant exercise as they in no way upstage the originals. Side two is primarily original material, but revealingly the only cover "Shocked" is the standout track, along with Thompson's own raunchy "Come Around (If You Want Me)".

Nothing to write home about, but a welcome change from the standard session musician MOR still-born 'product'.

Tycoon, on the other hand, are a faceless New York sextet with impeccable credentials — members served their apprenticeship with, among others, Lou Reed, Johnny Winter, and even an ex-Beatle (3 guesses) — but the music on their album amazingly resembles Uriah Heep (semi heavy metal bubblegum music) and Grand Funk Railroad (beefy, dumb harmony vocals). They have of course ditched the half-baked concepts and presentation, exchanging it for a slick, radio-orientated homogenised sound.

Tycoon are 1970-75 encapsulated, with an added sense of economy, and ability to write naggingly familiar tunes, as can be sampled on "Such A Woman", "Count On Me", or "Cry No More". Tailored to please, thoroughly calculated.

And they said disco was dangerous.

Gary Steel

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