

A Drop O' the Irish



Horslips
The Man Who Built America
DJM
Thin Lizzy
Black Rose
Vertigo

Celtic music in the seventies has undergone somewhat of a revival. In France Alan Stivell has blended rock with the traditional and his particular political vision of a Celtic nation. In Ireland the Chieftains, Planxty and Horslips have led a renewed interest in a music that was hitherto damned as 'folk' to predominantly rock audiences.

Are-we-not-rockers Horslips, unlike the pure folk style of the Chieftains and Planxty, have become increasingly more rock oriented over the duration of their seven albums, so much so, that their eighth *The Man Who Built America*, contains little that could be described as traditional.

Their previous album, *Aliens*, concerned the emigration of the Irish to America, and *America*, as a logical development on that theme, describes the problems of life there in poignant rock style almost devoid of any Celtic touches. The songs are firm and aggressive and generally well executed (particularly "Loneliness" and "If It Takes All Night") but Horslips have far too much flair and exhilaration to be content with their current devolution into being just another good rock'n'roll band. They're good, but they have been brilliant.

Thin Lizzy also have, it seems, their best behind them. Three years ago they were the future of rock'n'roll with the incomparable bravado of *Jailbreak* and the excellent first side of *Johnny the Fox*. Since then Lizzy have failed to cut it with their accustomed sass and braggadocio (*Bad Reputation* was too subtle for them), so *Black Rose* is not only a signpost for future adventures, but an important attempt at conjuring up the magic of *Jailbreak*. It fails, just, on both counts.

Lynott has tried to recapture the tough street powersurge that he put across so well on

Jailbreak, but *Black Rose* sounds like he's predictable and we all know now that he's a lover not a fighter. Be that as it may, returned guitarist Gary Moore and the dependable Scott Gorham keep the band to the fore as the most exciting HM instrumental line-up as "Waiting For An Alibi" easily illustrates.

So *Black Rose* fails in its efforts to regain lost ground, but the title track, Lynott's return to his roots, is at least an interesting departure from the Lizzy norm. Lynott has occasionally flirted with his Celtic heritage ("Whisky in the Jar" and later "Emerald") but on the new album he used the Legend of Cuchulain (the basis for Horslips' legendary *The Tain*) as a vehicle for Gorham and Moore's exchanges of old Irish melodies and refrains.

Both Horslips and Lizzy have a lot of music left in them yet, but at the moment they seem incapable of recalling their best. Here's hoping.
George Kay

Cheap Trick CBS

Strangely enough, a band is better off producing a dud album now and then. Otherwise their fans can begin to take consistent quality for granted and expect something more. Cheap Trick are in this tricky position at the moment. By making it seem so easy they lead some people into thinking it actually is easy, and therefore in some way inferior.

Don't be fooled though. *Cheap Trick*, their previously unreleased debut album set the standard that its worthy successors lived up to. By now it should come as no surprise to note that it's their seductive blend of pop melodies and heavy metal delivery. Certainly its a tried-and-true formula but it will never pall as long as it's paired with strong melodies as it is here.

Highlights of the set are "He's A Whore" and "The Ballad Of T.V. Violence" on Side One and "Elo Kiddies" and "Taxman" on Side Two. There is also an appealing boogie ballad, "Cry" which provides a pleasant contrast with the hard rock which is the core of their repertoire.

I don't want to drop the hammer on anyone so I'm naming no names, but none of this year's sensations are anywhere near the class of Cheap Trick. No one who has come out lately is worth buying ahead of an old album by The Ramones, Elvis Costello or more to the point, Cheap Trick. Old favourites are still a good investment.

Dominic Free

Spyro Gyra Morning Dance Infinity

The market for light, melodic, jazz-tinged music in this country is extensive, as George Benson's bank manager will tell you.

Morning Dance is the next logical step to take when you've worn out your copy of *Breezin'*, and perhaps want to progress a little.

Spyro Gyra hail from Buffalo, New York. Led by alto sax man and chief composer Jay Beckenstein, their shifting nucleus of personnel includes such notables as the Brecker Brothers.

All are young, university-trained musicians, whose technical skills are beyond question, but who perhaps need to live a little and experience more of life's snags and pitfalls.

In the meantime, they're producing immaculate cocktail music with a strong latin flavour that can hardly fail to please a wide audience. Purists may yawn, but they don't pay the rent.

Duncan Campbell

Ron Wood Gimme Some Neck CBS

When Rod Stewart and the Faces played Western Springs a few years back, Ron Wood had a lengthy solo spot. The rest of the Faces left the stage to Woody while he ran around like a loon playing up a storm on his slide guitar. It was a tour-de-force in energy if not musicality. When Stewart rejoined his mate on-stage his comment was, "Ronald Wood, isn't he a larf on his own?"

And he is. Ron Wood is about having a good time. He doesn't make art, but he makes good noise.

Gimme Some Neck is Woody's first solo album for four years and the first on which he is firmly under the spotlight. On his two previous outings under his own name Wood's own contribution was perhaps obscured by the presence of various famous mates (Stewart, Jagger, Richards, Bobby Womack et al).

While *Gimme Some Neck* has some famous names in the credits it's inarguably a Ron Wood album. Woody takes all lead vocals and plays most of the guitars. As a singer he's a good guitar player but he does a workmanlike job, even sounding absurdly like Dylan on "Seven Days", which the Zim gave to Ronald. Ron's own songs aren't likely to send a

shiver through Tin Pan Alley. Mostly, they're an excuse to rock and roll. At the helm of the rhythm section on most tracks is one Charlie Watts, rock and roll skinman par excellence.

If you have enjoyed Woody's work with Jeff Beck, Rod Stewart, the Faces, and the Stones you will find plenty to like about *Gimme Some Neck*. If you see him as a chimp with a guitar I doubt if you will have read this far.

Ken Williams

Toots and the Maytals Pass the Pipe Island

It's three years since Toots and the Maytals' last album, *Reggae Got Soul*, was released and since that date a whole new generation of reggae stars has emerged. Yet while *Pass the Pipe* is unlikely to be heralded as the second coming, it is a solid set that puts Toots back where he belongs — in the forefront of the movement of Jah people.

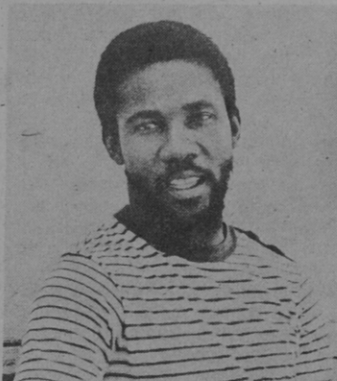
While the intervening years seem to have removed the harsh edge from Toots Hibberts' voice, it's been replaced by a soulful mellowness that more than ever suggests Otis Redding in the recordings he made shortly before his death. Similarly, the mix on *Pass the Pipe* is more rounded and full than previously and the pace of most of the songs is slower with less emphasis placed on the Maytals' backing vocals.

Toots may never again attain the crazed evangelical edge of earlier recordings, but this set shows an ability to move towards the wider audience Bob Marley has found without sacrificing the factors that made Toots so special in the first place.

Alastair Dougal

Dolly Parton Great Balls of fire RCA

On this album Dolly is carrying on from where the lovely *Heartbreaker* left us a year or



Toots



Ron Wood

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