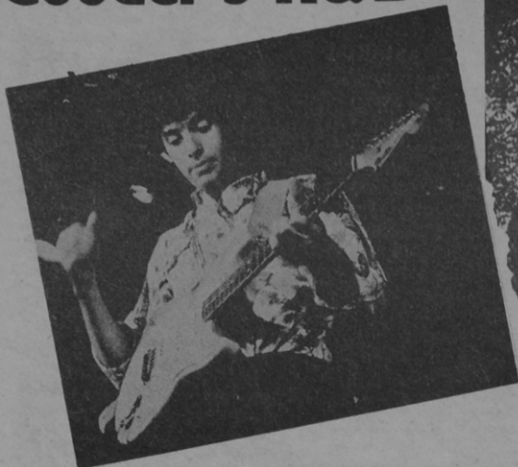


Cooder's R&B



Ry Cooder
Bop Till You Drop
Warner Bros

Ry Cooder is a fascinating chronicler and interpreter of American musical styles. A superlative guitarist and singer of quirky charm, he has run the gamut from blues to cowboy to patriotic songs of the Civil War in his seven previous albums.

His eclecticism has attracted a devoted following, but mass acceptance has eluded Cooder, who seems to be a self-effacing fellow with scant regard for the trappings of stardom. If there is any justice, *Bop Till You Drop* should make him a household name.

It's quite brilliant and probably Cooder's most readily accessible album. *Bop Till You Drop* is devoted to the fifties style of rhythm and blues, usually employing several voices singing harmony or counterpoint, which is virtually forgotten today.

It is Cooder's special gift to breathe new life into neglected styles and *Bop Till You Drop* may be his finest achievement. As ever, his choice of songs is excellent — not a clinker among them and none overexposed, or even well-known. Perhaps the most familiar is Ike and Tina Turner's "I Think It's Going to Work Out Fine" which is done as an instrumental with achingly beautiful slide guitar by Cooder.

All other tracks feature back-up vocalists and Chaka Khan is especially fine. Cooder's band of top session men plays with the push demanded by this street corner sermonising. Of special note is bass player Tim Drummond whose playing was a feature of some of James Brown's finest records.

The real surprise of the album is "Down In Hollywood", Cooder's first recorded song since his debut album. Co-written with Drummond, it's a funky, funny tale of the perils of Hollywood Boulevard. It even sounds like a hit. Hell, the whole album sounds like a hit.

Ken Williams

The Tourists



Tasty Tourists

The Tourists
Logo

If Punk failed to live up to its revolutionary promise in the long run, then it must be at least credited with giving the British music scene a much-needed enema.

Out of its ashes has risen a second wave of bands, much stronger on melody, but retaining the economical approach, and contempt of self-indulgence. If something can't be said in three minutes or less, then it's not worth saying.

In the forefront of this second wave are The Tourists. They formed in December 1977, but a variety of legal hassles prevented them from getting this, their debut album, onto vinyl for some 18 months.

A shame, but they used the time well, polishing their sound and constructing some wonderful melodies. All good things are worth waiting for, and *The Tourists* is a gem.

The nucleus of the band is from London, leading lady Ann Lennox is from Aberdeen, and bassist Eddie Chin is a British-naturalised Malaysian.

Their sound is difficult to pigeonhole, though its influences are unashamedly rooted in the 60's. Lennox and Peet Coombes sometimes harmonise like Balin and Slick, other times like Sandy Denny and Ian Matthews in the early Fairport days. On her own, Lennox varies from the passion of early Grace Slick to the wistfulness of Christine McVie. Photogenic she ain't, but the lady has one hell of a voice.

Those of you who've heard the single, "Blind Among The Flowers", will need no further inducement to buy. Coombes writes all the songs and his consistency is never in doubt. Ann is heartbreaking on "Fools Paradise", and riveting on "Deadly Kiss".

"Ain't No Room" handles reggae with respect and features some very spacey dub effects. "The Loneliest Man In The World" is my pick for the next single, being as close to perfection as any track I've heard all year.

And there's more, much more. The Tourists are a sinfully powerful band, no better demonstrated than on the closing "Just Like You", where Coombes and Dave Stewart trade some immaculate licks over Chin's earthquake bass and Jim "Do It" Toomey's no-mess drumming.

This is a very important new band, make no mistake about that.

Duncan Campbell

Grade-A Rave

Dr Feelgood
As It Happens
United Artists

Big name rock stars record their live albums at Tokyo's Budokan. Dr Feelgood record theirs at the Pavilion, Hemel Hempstead. But then they're the world's "most famous local band" so where more natural than a local hall. Except, perhaps a pub.

Singer Lee Brilleaux sees *As It Happens* as a parallel to *Stupidity*, the Feelgoods' earlier live set, recorded when guitarist Wilko Johnson was still in the fold. *Stupidity* captured Dr Feelgood in their true environment, pumping out R&B to a small, sweating crowd. That album summed up the progress of the band to that point and was by far the best of the early albums. *As It Happens* represents the group as it has developed since the departure of Wilko and his replacement by John Mayo. As such, it easily matches *Stupidity* in intention and in excitement.

The material is drawn from the last two albums, with the addition of a Charlie Musselwhite blues and Carl Perkins' "Matchbox". The songs are delivered with a pounding energy. Real bashers, the Feelgoods, but they do it so well.

Brilleaux regards live albums as "a record of a set" and there's no evidence of after-the-event editing. Even when the pace flags on "As Long as the Price is Right" (the only time it does, I might add) that's the way it appears on the record. Overall, these were good nights for Dr Feelgood. Lee is in good voice and his rhythm section is right on time.

The Feelgoods add little musically to their previously recorded versions of songs such as "Every Kind of Vice", "Baby Jane" and "Down At the Doctor's" (composer Micky Jupp considered the Feelgoods' version "a load of bloody rubbish," says Brilleaux, but, then, he calls Jupp "a miserable sod"). What they do is inject a palpable excitement.

The Feelgoods got together originally for fun. They still sound as if it's fun. *As It Happens* is a grade-A keepsake for those who raved to Dr Feelgood on their recent tour — and for those who, on hearing, wish they had been there.

Ken Williams

Mi-Sex's Best

Mi-Sex
Graffiti Crimes
CBS

Mi-Sex was one of the first New Zealand bands to pick up on the drift of the 1977 British revival and I can remember seeing them on *Ready to Roll* doing a cover of Costello's "I

Don't Want To Go to Chelsea" and thinking at the time that they sure acted and sounded the part but at the same time there was something not quite right, something out of place.

Steve Gilpin didn't help as he was already a successful MOR personality and his transformation into a credible punk somehow didn't wash, and the rest of the band looked too natty and groomed for the part. *Graffiti Crimes*, in many respects a damned fine first album, further clarifies this love of meticulous surfaces, of sounding the part.

Recorded in Sydney the album draws energy from the sound-of-today and manages, in most cases, to result in strong purposeful melodies propelled by Kevin Stanton's versatile guitar leads and punctuated by Murray Burns' intelligent keyboards' grafting. "A Loser" is particularly worth mentioning: up-tempo movin' out verses linked with a great *Abbey Road* guitar bridge. Clever.

So in many ways Mi-Sex are an excellent outfit musically speaking, but lyrically they're in trouble as too often they aim for the slick-sounding image which is really meaningless and affected:

*Lightning flash in the plate glass
The reflection spears a hole in the back of my eyes.*

Elsewhere "Camera Kazi" is a corny pun for the joys of the movie world and "21-20" is a needlessly melodramatic and silly view of the future as reflected in the past. Mi-Sex are over-extending themselves lyrically, they must lower their horizons or be rightfully accused of chic wordplay — it may read well but it doesn't count for anything.

On *Graffiti Crimes* Mi-Sex prove that they can easily hold their own instrumentally with the best on both sides of the Tasman, so they should become a little less preoccupied with themselves as a 'packaged image' and get on with the job of using their considerable musical talents without self-consciousness. Check them out.

George Kay



Gerry Rafferty
Night Owl
United Artists

Gerry Rafferty is one of those old timers who has managed to have two bites of the rock'n'roll cherry. One as Joe Egan's songwriting sidekick in Stealers Wheel and consequently co-responsible for their Beatles' sound-alike successes "Late Again" and "Stuck In the Middle With You", and the other last year with his second solo album *City to City* which was plundered for at least two of the year's better heavily-airplayed singles, "Baker St." and "Right Down the Line".

Actually, Rafferty originally attracted attention in the folk oriented Humblebums along with Billy Connolly, and this influence has persisted particularly in his slower more lilting ballads. *Night Owl* reflects this side of Rafferty's conservative, almost pedestrian, talents in "Family Tree" and "Why Won't You Talk to Me", smoothly-written carefully organized digestible songs. Even when he rocks out, Rafferty is polite and civilized, the perfect gent, dusky vocals and professionally sifted arrangements which tend to level the individual potential of each song. Rafferty seems reluctant, like say the Sutherland Brothers, to stray from his well-worn formula of tasteful rock-as-easy-listening and, as such, he has nothing new to offer.

That said, it would be an injustice to dismiss him out of hand as his cruising inoffensive music is certainly more palatable, and dare I say it, more honest than that which has been produced recently by some of his early seventies' contemporaries. You know them.

George Kay

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Mi-Sex (left to right) Richard Hodgekinson, Kevin Stanton, Don Martin, Steve Gilpin and Murray Burns.