



Interview Big Oceans Virgin

Every now and then you run into a new band or soloist who has that indefinable, intuitive rock'n'roll appropriateness. So far this year Joe Jackson springs to mind as a talent in this mould and on the band scene interview look like taking on all-comers.

Formed in Bath two years ago they were courted early on in the piece by near neighbour Peter Gabriel who offered them a publishing deal. The band turned him down in favour of an eight album contract with Virgin and they concluded last year by supporting Gabriel at the Hammersmith Odeon. Recognition was building up, slowly.

Big Oceans then is their first album and it is one of flowing unerring maturity utilising basic rock styles and a hefty dose of sheer collective flair and instrumental dexterity that very rarely lapses. Vocalist Jeff Starrs has a penchant for hardened romanticism in his lyrics, guitarists Peter Allerhand and Alan Brain are responsible for the actual music and Phil Crowther (bass) and Manny Elias (drums) provide a gliding and often funky platform for the songs.

The album begins with the unrepresentative clean rining harmonies of their single "You Didn't Have to Lie To Me", crisp and catchy belying the intensity of Starr's self-annoyance: "I'm so sick and tired of my infatuation / I'll never get into another situation".

"Here Comes the Cavalry" demonstrates, in a Steely Dan vein, how the band can be both punchy and sophisticated, and, next up, "Feet Start Walking", a Gary "US" Bonds' song, is just so right, swinging gently with real class. Side One concludes with the band's live tour de force, "Fire Island", a haunting account of actor, Montgomery Clift's last days. What else?

The second side matches up and that's a tall order. "Blow Wind From Alesund" is unhurried, uncluttered funk with a nice guitar bridge followed by a leisurely, confident ballad "St. Jean Wires". But it's the aggressively eccentric "Hart Crane In Mexico" (the story of the suicide of homosexual poet Hart Crane, of course) and the no-nonsense head-on riff structured "Shipyard" that are the main talking points of the second side.

Interview do far more than merely eschewing the safe as milk rock clichés posing as angst. Also they've produced an album that, in some ways, is unmistakably derived from the Parker-Costello-Jackson mainliners, but interview have added so much that is refreshingly refined without losing the all-important inspired power. Brain and Allerhand have evolved a style that is not only distinctive but also subtle and imaginative when the occasion demands — qualities always in short supply.

Word has it that Virgin have pinned their hopes on Interview cracking the American market and, on the evidence of *Big Oceans*, alone, the band and the record company have reason to be confident.

One down, seven to go.

George Kay

Iggy & The Stooges Raw Power CBS

Rock and roll survives because right at its core — right down there at the nitty-gritty in amongst the hucklebuck is a truth that matters, and we keep on looking for it body and soul. There have been periods when rock & roll didn't look too healthy, when you even felt like giving up on it although you knew you never would, which was doubly depressing somehow.

But there is always, suddenly, an album or even a single that you stumble across that is so straight-from-the-core, so real and undeniable that it seems to make up for all the dross around just by being there. Sustaining your faith with the news that the secret isn't lost, yet. Back in '73 *Raw Power* by Iggy & The Stooges was that kind of record.

Now re-released in New Zealand, *Raw Power* was recorded in London during a prolonged and strange period in Iggy's career between the break-up of the original Stooges following *Fun House*, and his more recent and as yet unresolved game of tag with the rock mainstream. Surviving some dubious mixing by David Bowie, *Raw Power* still has the impact of an aural firestorm. Whipped into a frenzy by James Williamson's incendiary leads and fuelled by Iggy's sheer naked persona it sounds now like an expression of the most acute frustration, in a way that was so powerful it was cleansing not merely for the participants but for all who subsequently heard and felt the music. You are either in it or you're not in it, you feel it or you don't, it's the kind of great rock and roll which works at that extreme where a luke-warm response is no response. *Raw Power* is a touchstone — white hot if you need it.

Terence Hogan

Iggy Pop in *Raw Power* days.



Herman Brood and His Wild Romance Ariola

I figured this was just what I needed; a thirty-three-year-old Dutch rock singer with a voice sorta midway between Robert Palmer, Roger Chapman, and David Johanssen. Actually it's not bad at all.

Brood's band is a standard American guitar and piano outfit that rocks. You may have heard it before, but you haven't heard it done this good in a while. Most of the songs are written by Brood and various members of the band, and they are short, funky, and to the point. There's no kitschy art-pretensions Euro-rock on this album.

The band claims production credits, and for musicians, they did well. The mix is even, just obnoxious enough to be rock'n'roll without drowning his piano, and they even got some lady singers to beef up the chorus. What else could you want?

The themes are the standard rock'n'roll concerns, discernable from titles like "Saturday Night", "Rock'n'Roll Junkie" (dedicated to Paul Kossoff, by the way), and "Dope Sucks", the latter presumably the comment of one who knows. There's even a not bad version of Otis Redding's "Champagne and Wine".

Seven points. Great to dance to. It's only the proverbial rock music but that's all right with me.

John Malloy

J.J. Cale

5

Shelter

Cale is one of the few idiosyncratic performers making records today. Like Ry Cooder, another left-fielder, J.J. Cale has cut his niche with persistence and a determination to please himself. *Troubadour* received a fair slice of airplay thanks to the single, "Cocaine", and there's been a healthy pause since. Is the public ready?

5 sounds like a home made album, folksy as you can get. The mix is rough and irregular, and several tracks have been cut with just J.J. and a drum machine. The sound varies from track to track. It's crazy but it fits.

5 starts out slow and spreads the goodies over two sides; it's not programmed for FM airplay. Cale's songs have never been of great consequence, relying more on feel than on content or structure. The songs here are less than immediate — what with shapeless arrangements and Cale's vocals sitting right back in the mix — but "Katy Kool Lady" and "Lou Easy Ann" stand out early as high spots.

So if it contains no surprises, 5 at least hits you with a few more good songs than *Troubadour*, and a no-bullshit, low-rent production job that enhances rather than detracts from Cale's simple music. The way I see it, with summer coming, a change of pace could be in order. It may not be the peak of new wave chic, but then, nobody pogs in Baton Rouge. Bring on the long, hot, summer nights.

John Malloy.



The Sex Pistols Some Product Virgin

Another swindle by the Pistols? Not really, but definitely not an album for the casual fan after easy access to the band. Although hardly a collector's item, it is one for the hard core aficionado only.

The album consists of press, radio and television interviews conducted in the US and Britain, with banned radio ads — dividing them up. The only music on the album is that which backs the ads and like the entire recording, the sound quality is uneven, not to say rugged.

The interviews range from a few minutes with Johnny Rotten's mother to Sid Vicious being precious about the pogo and some serious chat on the power of record companies. All very interesting, but most of it over and out in one good listen.

The one exception to this is the end of side one, "Big Tits Over America", a totally tasteless, vulgar, ridiculously funny phone-in radio session in California.

But, for all its chaos and admirable honesty, this album is really only of sociological interest, and that only fleeting. But it is only \$5.99.

Louise Chunn



Bill Nelson's Red Noise Sound on Sound Harvest

Simple Minds Life In A Day Arista

Ever since the Jam's Paul Weller coined the phrase "the modern world" in a rock context, it has become a leading cliché in the hands of writers trying to describe what's happening/aspiring in British rock'n'roll. Bill Nelson's *Red Noise* and new band Simple Minds are both trying in different ways to come to terms with the pressures of being relevant in music's current hyper-activity.

Guitar hero Bill Nelson came to prominence some years back in Be Bop Deluxe when he used to write songs like "Sister Seagull" and "Music in Dreamland", but now with his new band, *Red Noise*, he has re-focused his abilities to keep in step with the discordance of the times. *Sound on Sound* proves that all he has managed to achieve is an assimilation of those various superficial trappings considered by him to be particularly characteristic of present trends. Nelson's songs are now purged of all romantic imagery replaced instead with harsh pictures of alienation and indifference, fashionable visions of the "real world", the only trouble being that he hasn't the insight or depth of intensity to convey such emotions as do the likes of Bowie or Devoto.

Too often, also, the music falls in the quirkiness for its own sake, staccato melodies and XTC cleverness, but when he lets a song settle down as in the case of "Furniture" or "Revolt Into Style", he can develop his music into something that is worthwhile independent of his present Music For Young Moderns. I wouldn't write him off just yet.

Simple Minds from Glasgow are indicative of the new open-minded bands that are emerging from 1977's clearing of the decks in that they not only embrace the belief of telling-it-how-it-is, but also believe (unlike many of '77's purist headbangers) that some degree of musical sophistication is not necessarily a bad thing or contrary to the unwritten primitivist rules of that year. The Sex Pistols stirred up the tired old men but the resulting back-to-the-roots rock'n'roll resulted in a temporary suspicion of anything that smacked of musical ambition or diversity. But now the dust has settled and some sort of equilibrium has been established wherein bands like Magazine, and now Simple Minds can borrow from pre-1977 "progressive" sources without feeling unfashionable or self-conscious.

John Leckie, who not only produced Magazine's two awesome albums and Nelson's *Sound on Sound* reviewed above, also does the honours on Simple Minds' debut, *Life In A Day*, and he has the knack of creating a very contemporary sound landscape. The band actually draw much of their inspiration from the hey-day of Sparks, *Tweeter in a Woofer's Clothing*, *Kimono My House* and *Propaganda*. Vocalist/songwriter Jim Kerr is a refreshing Mael brothers' protege but without the same falsetto range, and the band headed by guitarist/violinist Charles Burchill are accomplished in the Ron Mael-Adrian Fisher straight rock mould.

But there's a lot more to Simple Minds than come-back-Sparks-all-is-forgiven. *Life in a Day* is no holds barred anti-sentimentalism, harsh and often fierce modern stories, "Wasteland", "Murder Story" and "Chelsea Girl", harrowing and frantic, music not to be ignored.

Simple Minds can take their place with the present front-runners, and that's saying something.

George Kay

BRIEFLY

By George Kay and Ken Williams

Larry Carlton, Mr 335 Live in Japan (Warner Bros)

This is that rarity — an album with a former session man as leader that isn't weighted down by tedious technicality while being essentially devoid of personality. On the contrary, Larry Carlton soars. He has the rare ability to make music that is at once impeccable and fiery.

Carlton's guitar is the centrepiece and the pacesetter, but there's ample room for some sizzling playing by the rest of the quintet, especially keyboards man Greg Mathieson.

Mr 335 Live in Japan more than fulfils the promise of Carlton's immaculate, economical session work for as the Crusaders, Steely Dan, Michael Franks and Joni Mitchell. He also displays a pleasant singing voice (reminiscent of Elvin Bishop) on "I'm a Fool".

K.W.

Mallard, In A Different Climate (Virgin)

Mallard sprang from Captain Beefheart's legendary Magic Band when he left them for further musical liaisons with Frank Zappa in 1975. Bill Harkerload (guitar) and Mark Boston (bass) were in the Magic Band for six years and as you'd expect Mallard are high on instrumental attainment.

The album, originally released in Britain in 1976, is certainly an accomplished jazz tinged country-rock foray with the bonus, I suppose, of vocalist Sam Galpin sounding like a Joe Cocker understudy. Pick of the crop would be "Your Face On Someone Else" and "Mama Squeeze" where the band slip and slide in fine Little Feat fashion.

Old hat, but it has worn well.

GK

Gary Brooker, No More Fear of Flying (Chrysalis)

Procol Harum's old vocalist/song-writer and general all-round stalwart has gathered together a group of weathered session musicians (Renwick, Mattacks and Lynch) for this, his first of many threatened solo albums.

Brooker is now writing with ex-King Crimson lyricist, Pete Sinfield, who, thankfully, has lost most of his gauche lyrical excesses. Surrounded by such safe talent Brooker sounds satisfied, almost complacent but he has at least dropped the doomy melodrama that plagued much of his work with Procol in favour of a smoother more commercial style.

Carefully put together but the album founders on predictability and mediocrity.

GK

The Amazing Rhythm Aces, The Amazing Rhythm Aces (CBS)

If this album lacks the emotional depth of last year's *Burning the Ballroom Down* it more than compensates in warmth. The emotional crises that haunted *Ballroom* are not in evidence, replaced by a feeling of sunlit space.

New Aces member Duncan Cameron contributes an instant country classic in "Homestead in My Heart", which has a back-up vocal from Joan Baez, but the fulcrum of the group is Russell Smith. Few singers can inject a phrase with such heartbreak as Smith. He contributes fewer of his own songs this time around but his sensitive readings of Al Green's "Love and Happiness" and New Orleans singer Benny Spellman's "Lipstick Traces (on a Cigarette)" are worth the price of the album. Nobody since the early Band has created such an individual synthesis of the voices of the American heartland.

K.W.

The Pop Group, Y (Radar)

The Pop Group are from Bristol and they don't play pop music. Their name is a deliberate irony of the fact that their music is the absolute antithesis of what pop music is and stands for.

The Pop Group are post-holocaust stridency, pretentious dissonance of the ilk that characterised the too-clever-for-its-own-damngood Public Image album. Y plays with pain in a studio setting with the sound mixed to provide a hollow alien backdrop over which vocalist Mark Stewart screams "Don't Call Me Pain" and "We Are Time", the most accessible of the 'songs' therein. University anguish, can anyone feel this bad?

Like *Public Image*, this album has an air of self-importance. Too conceited by half.

GK

Bobby Darin, Sold Out (K-tel)

The career of Bobby Darin blew with the wind. Starting as America's answer to Lonnie Donegan, he went on to write and perform light rockers (notably "Splish Splash" and "Dream Lover") before becoming an ersatz Sinatra, later he modelled himself on Ray Charles and, later still, Tim Hardin before his early death in 1973.

This album covers Darin's middle period for the late '50s and early 60s. How 'great' these '20 greatest hits' were is open to conjecture, but despite Darin's image shifts there is a surprising continuity. Many of the songs are delivered in a dated, finger-snapping nightclub style, but at best it is an interesting, though not arresting, portrait of a pop craftsman.

K.W.

Fischer-Z, Word Salad (United Artists)

If Leo Sayer went new wave then odds on he'd sound like Fischer-Z on their debut album, *Word Salad*.

The band, a four piece with keyboards, sprung a couple of years ago from various places around England and are propelled chiefly by one John Watts, ex-choirboy (and he sounds like it) and psychology graduate who now writes Fischer-Z's inoffensive lightweight songs.

These guys are opportunists who have drawn nearly all of their ideas from other sources, particularly from XTC, but even then they have failed to produce anything of consequence. Their best song, and it is good, is the white reggae toy keyboards sound of "Remember Russia" but it is still too polite, too tame.

Pleasant but trivial.

GK

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