

Karla Bonoff



Karla Bonoff
Restless Nights
CBS

J.D. Souther
You're Only Lonely
CBS

Souther has been making a name for himself as a songwriter over the past few years, "New Kid in Town" for the Eagles and "Simple Man, Simple Dreams" for Linda Ronstadt being two latterday standards which he has penned. However, his first two Asylum albums never really took off, and perhaps this new one on a new label will make some impression. The only well-known track is "White Rhythm and Blues". Souther's immaculately crafted version of this song typifies his relaxed style.

Using a bevy of illustrious names behind and beside him (Jackson Browne, Phil Everly, Glenn Frey, Don Henley, John Sebastian and Waddy Wachtel are just a few) Souther achieves a fair range of styles, witness the reggae flavour to "If You Don't Want My Love" or the rock-orientated "Til the Bars Burn Down". A thoughtful and rewarding album.

Perhaps it is significant that the highlight of Karla Bonoff's album is her reading of the traditional ballad "The Water Is Wide" which, although it goes on a little too long, has a very agreeable line in guitar accompaniments. She too has tried to get some variety into her style, and provides a cover of Jackie De Shannon's "When You Walk In The Room" which is every bit as good as if Linda Ronstadt had done it.

This brings the issue to a head. Bonoff, whose own songs were given such definitive readings by Ronstadt, comes across sounding like a copy of everybody's favorite roller skating songstress. There are strong ones such as the opening "Trouble Again" but also weak ones like "The Letter", a sentimental effort which is not helped by a backing built around a wavery organ sound. A pity, because there are some lovely things here — as I write this I am listening to the beautiful "Only a Fool". However, Karla Bonoff is going to have to make a more conscious effort to free herself from this sub-Ronstadt image.

William Dart

Stanley Clarke
I Wanna Play for You
Epic

Various Artists
Havana Jam
CBS

In March this year American and Cuban musicians participated in three nights of music at Havana's Karl Marx Theatre. It is appropriate that the universal language of music should make the heat for the tentative thaw in the 20-year freeze between Cuba and its giant North American neighbour.

This double album represents a cross-section of the performances, with the emphasis on jazz and Latin rhythms. At its often magnificent best the music *seethes*. There is outstanding work from Weather Report, the CBS Jazz All-Stars (Getz, Hutcherson, Shaw etc), the Cuban jazz group Irakere, and, especially, the one-off grouping of John McLaughlin, Jaco Pastorius and Tony Williams. There is talk of recording the so-called Trio of Doom; it should be done.

Inevitably, in a 'sampler' situation like this the scope of performance can exceed the limits of even the most catholic taste — for example, I climb walls to the screech of Sara Gonzales (dubbed in the liner notes "the Cuban Joan Baez") — but all in all this is a most satisfying account of a musical marriage between cultures which, politically, remain mutually suspicious.

A sampler of a different kind is Stanley Clarke's *I Wanna Play for You*, a double album which casts the awesomely gifted bass player in different moods and different company, including the likes of Stan Getz, Jeff Beck, George Duke and Freddie Hubbard.

There is a more or less equal balance between studio and live cuts and it's necessary listening for those who can see that jazz didn't die with its 'late greats'.

Initially, essentially track-by-track personnel information was omitted from the New Zealand release. It is pleasing that CBS is taking steps to rectify a regrettable lapse.

Ken Williams

Human League
Reproduction
Virgin

I'm pretty suspicious of synthesiser playing art rock bands. Not because there isn't a place for them in rock'n'roll but because their 'intellectual' stance seems inevitably to discredit traditional rock values like fun and danceability. Nevertheless Human League do seem to have avoided most of the pitfalls inherent in synthesiser music.

Behind their success is a deliberate policy of avoiding the usual indulgent doodling. The band aims to produce conventional pop music through unconventional means. Supporting the vocals are three synthesisers instead of the usual guitar, bass and drums. The tracks are all neatly structured, the best quickly become ad-

dictive listening and all fall within the 3-4 minute time limit.

It is in the lyrical department that The Human League become a trifle too weighty. Titles like "Circus Of Death", "Austerity" and "Zero As A Limit" give you a good idea what to expect.

Human League have a considerable cult following in England (including David Bowie). So if you like the experimental wing of new wave, such as Magazine and Wire, you should lend an ear to this lot. Undoubtedly an impressive debut, even though it's not much fun and you can't dance to it.

Dominic Free

Joan Armatrading
Steppin' Out
A&M

Joan Armatrading's four previous albums have all been studio recordings; all but the very first were made under the direction of producer Glyn Johns. By all accounts the combination has always served her well. This live album — recorded on tour in the United States — only proves that Armatrading needs some direction to strike that oh so happy medium of her studio work.

For *Steppin' Out* is not just a re-hash of her other albums from up on the stage. The treatment is most often quite new — there are even two previously unrecorded songs — and mostly not so good.

Take the title song "Steppin' Out", for example. It comes from *Back To The Night* where it is a smooth, up-tempo tune with soaring vocals and full backing. On *Steppin' Out*, the singing is over-emotive, the only accompaniment, a thrashing acoustic guitar.

Or "You Rope You Tie Me" from *Show Some Emotion* where it is an intense but subtle song. The live recording drags it out — through bass and flute duos of no particular consequence — to cover about one third of a side.

In all, this is not an essential Armatrading album. It lacks a certain control and, for all the excellent musicianship etc, it does little justice to the songs laid down on previous studio albums. They'd be the better buy.

Louise Chunn

IN BRIEF: BY GEORGE KAY, KEN WILLIAMS, ALASTAIR DOUGAL.

AC/DC, Highway to Hell (Atlantic)

AC/DC have joined forces with noted producer, Robert John Lange (B. Rats, Thin Lizzy etc) on this, their fifth Atlantic album and the collaboration of metal and brain has paid dividends. Lange has added spit and polish to the band's unrelenting rave-ups, and if you can forgive them for nicking Peter Green's "Oh Well" riff for "Beating Around the Bush" then you're left with the best heavy metal album of the year. No question.

From Scratch, Rhythm Works (EMI)

From Scratch is an Auckland extension of the London Scratch Orchestra, a collection of musicians and non-musicians who, in 1970, formed themselves into a loosely integrated unit for the purpose of creating music from the basics, from scratch.

Focussing mainly on percussion, From Scratch present four segments of communal, entirely off-the-cuff endeavour suitable for enthusiasts only.

Streethand, London (Logo)

Sons of the street who fall somewhere between Squeeze and the Tourists, Streethand have too many loose ends to tidy up to make the required impact with this, their first album. It's crisp with a smattering of good songs and Dury's ex-right hand man Chaz Jankel helping out, but their sound is still in the formative, nondescript stages. Promising though.

Michael Jackson, Off the Wall (Epic)

If the presence of the full-length version of the great single "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough" is not enough to lure you into buying this album, then the fact that this is a superbly crafted and consistently enjoyable set of pop-soul and disco tunes ought to. It has the highest overall standard of a disco inspired album since Sister Sledge's *We Are Family*. Recommended.

Tom Johnston, Everything You've Heard is True (Warner Bros)

At the helm of the early 70s Doobie Brothers, Tom Johnston made some great, jangly dance music, before health problems forced him to give it away. Now a decidedly robust Johnston is back with a solo project — and making more great, jangly dance music.

He retains an individual voice while employ-

ing a late 70s dance beat. Backings by the Best of the West (Coast) are precise and propulsive, with Johnston's remake of Joe Tex's classic "Show Me" an object lesson in drive.

Johnston seems immune to the malaise that afflicts the Doobie Brothers today.

The Sandford/Townsend Band, Nail Me To The Wall (WB)

How far can a band go on one song? Sandford/Townsend had "Smoke from a Distant Fire" two albums ago and they're still running variations on it. They don't have the songs and their pedestrian version of "Southern Fried Boogie" is stupefyingly ordinary. The Doobie Brothers did this sort of thing so much better eons ago.

Moon Martin, Escape From Domination (Capitol)

Best known as the writer "Bad Case of Loving You" for Robert Palmer and "Cadillac Walk" and "Rolene" for Mink de Ville, Moon Martin on his second album proves himself to be a competent if undistinguished rocker. The fast songs seem too restrained and the lightness of his voice proves more effective on the 60s pop style of the slower songs. Martin seems destined to remain a writer of other people's hits.

Various Artists, Rare Stuff (Harvest)

A damned fine album of Bits and Pieces released at the give away RRP of \$6.99. EMI have roped in interesting fragments of the Saints, the Flys, the Banned (all contribute four songs each), two mandatory songs by Wire (their single "Dot Dash" and flip "Options R") and a minor masterpiece in the shape of "Only Arsenic" from the Rich Kids written by Glen Matlock.

The album even though it is a compilation, hangs together nicely and Wire and the Rich Kids make it worth the price alone.

Bob Welch, The Other One (Capitol)

Welch's new album seems to show a move away from the saccharine pop of his earlier outings to a tougher more rock oriented approach. It's still West Coast style but it's a far more appealing formula. Not all the ideas are perfectly realised but there are enough of them to make *The Other One* enjoyable and to suggest there may be better to come.

Get Ready for Petty

TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

Their Long Awaited New Album

"Damn the Torpedoes"

Produced by Tom Petty and Jimmy Iovine