

Records

Prince For You Warner Bros

The genesis of his royal badness — the seminal first album from 1978, produced, arranged, composed and performed by Prince.

A case of self indulgence perhaps, but Prince's work is always a struggle between ego and id — it's what generates that edgy beat. In many ways *For You* is more interesting than *Purple Rain*. It's like a blueprint for his later work. The ballads show just how good a gospel voice he has (just as good as Little Richard) and they have a more soulful edge than the later stuff. The dance tracks like 'Just As Long As We're Together' prefigure bits off 'Dirty Mind' and 'Controversy' and 'I'm Yours' has the hard guitar sound of 'Let's Go Crazy'.

An historically important album, but also one that hasn't dated in any way. It still sounds fresh and exciting, which is more than most current releases can manage.
Kerry Buchanan

Dragon Body and the Beat Polydor

In the often mediocre world of rock 'n' roll there is only a fine line between the genuinely good stuff (Dragon) and the crap that people soon wake up to.

The fact that many wrote off Dragon some years ago has made their return all the more pleasing. Not that much has changed for them, they are still strutting down that fine line but they do it with such confidence and inspiration that they make rock 'n' roll sound fresh again. Of course they don't make any startling revelations but once again they prove it isn't what you say, it's the way you say it.

Dragon happen to say it very well, especially on the superb single 'Rain' (ignored in this country), the slow, soothing 'Cool Down' and the well constructed 'Magic'.

This release comes at the beginning of a world tour which will hopefully see Dragon succeed and Marc Hunter stay with the

band, because he has more chance with the band than he does by himself.

Especially with a world-class record to flaunt on the way, a record that defies the term "boring old rock music."

Alister Cain

Tim Buckley The Late Great Tim Buckley WEA

Tim Buckley was poised on the edge of being the next big thing. His second album, *Hello and Goodbye* (or the other way if you prefer), was in the Top 20 in 1969. But it never did happen.

Flirtations with avant-garde jazz (for want of another description; the intention remains) lost the audience, but he remained a cult figure. He died in 1975.

This compilation collects material from 1966 through 1974, although not all albums are represented. No doubt cultists will find reason to quibble with the selection, but the weight is towards his most widely known work, *Hello and Greetings From L.A.*

Years of Buckley albums in deletion bins and a faded reputation can't cancel out the good stuff here.

Ken Williams

Bruce Cockburn Stealing Fire Big Time

It may seem an odd comment to make about his 15th album but *Stealing Fire* suffers slightly from the follow-up syndrome. Cockburn's previous album, *The Trouble With Normal*, was replete with a variety of musical styles, memorable melodies, interesting arrangements and pungent lyrics. It was certainly his strongest album to reach these shores and, boosted by a personal performance tour, deservedly won Cockburn many listeners outside the Christian and folkie sets to which he'd been largely confined.

This time out his strengths are still present, his weakness for wordiness well controlled, but the musical peaks are not so high. In fact one or two of the tunes are only minimal vehicles for his words. All the songs rely heavily on the strong rhythms supplied by the five-piece band. Sometimes this means that lightness is lost. 'Peggy's Kitchen Wall' has ominous overtones, lacking the humour of its acoustic performance in concert. (Humour, in fact, is conspicuous in its absence from this album.)

In the best numbers however, the backing creates atmospheric

resonance to the lyrics. 'Nicaragua' and 'Dust And Diesel', both written from Cockburn's observations in Central America, sway gently on Latin-tinged rhythms. Yet strong as these songs are, neither is as masterful as 'Tropic Moon' on *The Trouble With Normal*.

Cockburn's political consciousness was evident in his live performances, a characteristic that disconcerted some of his more evangelical following. They will be even less happy here with the anger in 'If I Had A Rocket Launcher', as vehemently specific as the more spiritualistic 'Making Contact' and 'To Raise The Morning Star' are mystically vague. Still, if this album may slightly disappoint from certain perspectives, Bruce Cockburn is not one for compromise. *Stealing Fire* maintains his considerable integrity.

Peter Thomson

Iron Maiden Powerslave EMI

State of the art British heavy metal 1984. With the world's number one metal knob twiddler Martin Birch in control and a stable lineup for two consecutive albums this one hits the bullseye.

An album of furious riffing in which tunes and lyrics take a backseat to overall *sound*. Aside from the instant metal classic 'Two Minutes To Midnight' the standout track is the opus, 'Rime Of the Ancient Mariner', an extended workout that'll leave not just your eardrums but your speakers exhausted as well.

A full 52 minutes down no nonsense mindless metal — buy it for your mutha.

Chris Caddick

Sahara (featuring Martin Winch) RCA

Martin Winch is probably the most sought-after jazz-inclined guitarist in the country. His grounding, however, is in rock groups (like Sylvester Winchstyle in the early 70s) and his work ever since has maintained a distinctive attack. Here he performs 11 self-penned instrumentals (two with female scat vocalising) backed by a bunch of New Zealand's top jazz and session honchos. The musical styles vary, as does Winch's tone, but all fall within that hybrid category, jazz-rock fusion.

All of which means that Winch and co. are footing it in a league with such acclaimed 'heavy-weights' as John McLaughlin and Al Di Meola. No problem at all. And furthermore, although he's technically quite able, Winch doesn't stoop to such common Di Meola ploys as blustering through a lack of direction with blistering speed. All the riffs and solos here are intelligent and a good few are genuinely exciting. The basic guitars, bass, drums lineup is occasionally complemented by judicious touches of brass or synth. The album is crisply produced with the presence we expected from good overseas product. Guitar fanciers should check this one out.

Peter Thomson

Scott Walker Climate of Hunter Virgin

Scott Walker is a person who appreciates the value of scarcity. Since his Male Pop Vocal records in the sixties, he's used his talent sparingly and, arguably, tastefully. He was last heard of on the Walker Brothers' reformation album LP, *Nite Flights* released in 1978, but his name and earlier songs have been kept before the public by leading disciple Julian Cope.

Walker's voice disseminates cool, a man in charge of the cryptic and his approach and style implies a knowledge of the connection between the intellectual and emotional charge of rock'n'roll. This is something he's had since the early Walker Brothers' days when their pop hits hinted at something deeper and darker merely by the timbre of his voice.

Climate of Hunter is dictated by the purity and resonance of his voice but this time he's matched by a band of some old associates who use the shades and paces of the eighties to colour his music. So they empathise with his desolation on 'Dealer' and 'Sleep-walker's Woman', push his desperation on 'Track Three' and help him plunge into the pain of 'Track Five'.

As someone not completely bowled over by the Scott Walker vocal presence, I've got to concede that *Climate of Hunter* has an emotive power derived from a very rare soul.

George Kay

Various Artists That's The Way I Feel Now A&M

Subtitled *A Tribute To Thelonious Monk* and a case of the best intentions going astray. Thelonious Sphere Monk broke down barriers during his lifetime, a true eccentric genius of the keyboard and an inspired composer and arranger who influenced two generations of jazz musicians. Tributes have flowed freely since his death in 1982 — more, in fact, than he received in his whole lifetime. To describe Monk's music in words is a challenge in itself. "Quirky" would be an easy word for his melodies, yet they had a unique symmetry. The element of surprise was always there, but so was joy.

For this double album, producer Hal Willner has assembled a sometimes baffling variety of musicians to give their interpretations of Monk standards. Some, like Carla Bley, Steve Lacy and Bobby McFerrin, make sense, even though they add little to the originals. Others are just plain peculiar. Who the hell thought of getting Peter Dinklage and Chris Spedding to play 'Work'? Todd Rundgren smothers 'Four In One' unnecessarily in synthesizers, Donald Fagen does similar things to 'Reflections' and Was (Not Was) just make a mess of 'Ba-Lue-Bolivar'. Dr John plays 'Blue Monk' with love and Joe Jackson gets lost somewhere in a host of players on 'Round Midnight'.

The cover is also one of the messiest of the year and the whole package really can't be recommended to either aficionados or beginners. Buy the original works instead and do greater service to the man's memory.

Duncan Campbell

George Winston December Windham Hill Shadowfax Windham Hill

Windham Hill is a small, very select American label that presents its artists with loving care and quiet taste. Insofar as precise clarity of recording and the restrained sleeve designs are concerned Windham Hill begs comparison to Germany's ECM. And just as Keith Jarrett's solo work has provided ECM's greatest successes, so too does pianist George Winston support Windham Hill. But there all comparison ends.

Jarrett's eruptive and lyrical romanticism is predominantly improvised and occasionally spectacularly inspired. On the evidence of *December* however, George Winston's work is neither jazz-based nor exciting. Its essence is gentle simplicity and its sources are traditional (in this case carols) with a few original pieces of similar style. Certainly Winston has a beautiful touch, if over-heavy on the sustain pedal, but no more so than any decent graduate of Auckland's Janetta McStay. *December* verges on the pretty-pretty, the sort of ruminations with which a skilled pianist may indulge him/herself after making leisurely love on a balmy afternoon.

The band Shadowfax is misnamed. Its music definitely fits the pastoral fantasy of Tolkien's Middle Earth but in no way recalls the windswift gallop of Gandalf's stallion. Instead, this instrumental quartet's gentle, measured pace and blend of acoustic guitars, lyricon or soprano sax and various percussion would better suit after-dinner relaxation in the elven capital of Lothlorian.

On the evidence of these two releases Windham Hill is, despite appearances, quite unlike ECM. Where the latter label is exploring various aspects of European jazz, Windham Hill is packaging background MOR for those who hate muzak.

Peter Thomson

The Modern Jazz Quartet Reunion at Budokan 1981 (Atlantic)

After a 22 year career the MJQ disbanded in 1974 with a highly acclaimed *Last Concert*. This *Reunion* includes many of their most well-known pieces and thankfully concentrates on the swinging, often blues-based side of their repertoire rather than the baroque or third-stream experiments. While Lewis, Jackson, Heath and Kay have now either entered their 60s or are fast approaching them their particular brand of subdued excitement hasn't suffered. The digital recording quality is first rate. As all the MJQ classics are unavailable this album makes a worthy introduction for the newly interested.

PT

