

**Weather Report
Sportin' Life (CBS)**

After 15 years as the leading unit in electric jazz, Weather Report is to have a sabbatical while various members pursue individual projects. This means that *Sportin' Life* is to be the last group album for some time. As such it doesn't set out to make any grand statement or sum up past achievements. Instead it offers a bright, almost relaxed *au revoir*. For a band that's long been characterised by an intense progress-at-all-costs approach, Weather Report's lightheartedness here is refreshing.

On one hand there's a subdued interpretation of Marvin Gaye's 'What's Going On', while another number is characterised by simple acoustic guitar. On the other hand five of the eight tracks have vocals (though only one in the usual sense of singing a melody with words — and then they're in Spanish, courtesy of this year's resident percussionist). Most vocalising is led by Bobby McFerrin, the young lion of modern scat singing. McFerrin and cohorts bring exuberance and added cheer to an album that will ensure Weather Report a welcome return when they eventually reform. PT

**Jeffrey Osborne
Don't Stop (A&M)**

Mr O's third release and unfortunately not a patch on his first two. He's one of the masters when it comes to the soft ballad, but only 'Crazy Bout Cha' and 'Let Me Know' manage to hit the spot. Things begin to slide on 'The Power', a noisy rocker, and 'Live For Today' an attempt at gospel, with those well-known gospel singers, Pat Benatar and Kenny Loggins! Jeffrey's heading for disaster city if he stays on those rails. There are several tracks that could've been great R&B, like 'Don't Stop' and 'The Borderline', but got with producer George Duke making everything sound like mainstream radio noise. Certainly a disappointment coming from one of soul's best voices — better check out his 'Stay With Me Tonight' for essential Jeffrey. KB

**Marvin Gaye
Dream Of A Lifetime (CBS)**

Scrapings from the barrel. According to the sleeve notes half the tracks here represent material Gaye was working on before his tragic death last death. The rest are tracks "that he had done over the years and entrusted to his mother for safe-keeping." My guess is that it was because he was embarrassed by their mediocrity and occasionally blatant misogyny. None of the new work is worth much either and the title track is among the most embarrassing slop Marvin ever wallowed in. This album isn't an epitaph or even a half-decent collector's item, just sorry exploitation of a great talent after he's gone. PT

**Billie Holiday
16 Classic Tracks (MCA)**

All praise to WEA for their local release of the excellent MCA '50s Classics compilation series. This Billie Holiday collection is every bit as welcome as the recent Louis Jordan set. Not that the two artists have much in common except their, heretofore, local unavailability on record. Previously seekers after the light from Lady Day had to buy high-priced imports and the problem then involved picking out the vintage among the widely varying quality of her albums. Here MCA have gathered together 16 tracks that all justify their title as "classic". And while it's certainly not comprehensive — nor does it pretend to be — it makes a very fine introduction. And yes, 'That Old Devil Called Love' is included. PT

Snowy White (Towerbell)

Guitarist White follows up his 'Bird Of Paradise' hit with more pretentious cosmos-mythos claptrap. This drivel is unpalatable in the hands of the metal people (my ears). That White and his studio musician mates (Kuma Harada, Richard Bailey) play politely well makes this no more digestible. White resembles a guitar gunfighter who misread the bus timetable and arrived at the coral after the smoke had cleared.

**Peabo Bryson
Take No Prisoners (Elektra)**

Another album from the master of sveite soul. A voice like a case of Moet & Chandon, the Frank Sinatra of soul. Peabo is better known for his ballads and this album has some great ones. The whole of Side Two finds Peabo in fine romantic style, with 'Love Always Finds A Way' being particularly appealing.

Side One opens with a bit of a rocker in 'Take No Prisoners (In the Game of Love)' but things settle down into a funkier feel for my favourite track 'Let's Apologise', with Marcus Miller on bass. This is

his best work to date, great singing and inventive playing from people like Steve Ferrone on drums and Robbie Buchanan on keyboards, arranged beautifully by Arif Mardin. It's a pleasure to still find albums with this much style and class. KB

**Rose Tattoo
Southern Stars (Alberts)**

Angry's back — a dash of patriotism, a couple of protest songs (not as eloquent as Peter Garrett maybe, but the feeling's there) and an unabashed celebration of "pretty young girls, good smoking drugs and bourbon that's eight years old" make up another ace, essential Rose Tattoo album. There's at least two new Tatts classics herein: the title track with the trademark slide guitar and 'Freedom's Flame', a memorable medium-pacer. Buy it. Oh, and don't forget to watch out for Angry in *Mad Max 3*. CC

**Various Artists
Fuzz Dance (Sire)**

Giampiero and Giancarlo Bigazzi make you an offer you can't refuse. Four slices of Italian dance music. In those horrible days of white disco (yes, I know it still happens, I just pretend it doesn't) there was this beast called "Eurobeat", sort of James Last meets the drum machine. Now with *Fuzz Dance* this lost art has been revitalised. The whole thing sounds like background music for Remuera fashion shows — dumb to the max. KB

**The Church
Of Skins and Heart (EMI)
The Blurred Crusade (EMI)**

The first two Church albums, originally released here through the ill-fated Stunn Records and now reissued on EMI. Like most of the Church's releases, consistency is not their strong point, each distinguished by their best songs and let down by the mediocre ones. *Of Skins and Heart* is rockier in nature, with the neat single 'The Unguarded Moment' and 'Is This Where You Live' and 'Don't Open the Door To Strangers'. Steve Kilbey's lyric writing is typically dense and unconcise, but more obviously outward-looking. *The Blurred Crusade* on the other hand, is more yer soft acid dreams with lines like "Psychic angels spread on the top of her head," and a finer sense of melody; best is the encouraging 'Almost With You'. Both records, of course, feature those nice "intermeshing guitars" and Kilbey's remarkable low-register singing. The Church have probably reached the stage where they could put together a damn good *Greatest Hits*, but with these two albums, the choice is less clear. Anyway, it's yours. RB

**George Duke
Thief In the Night (Elektra)**

Like so many jazzers "slumming" in the realms of pop, George Duke has all the skills but little of the instinct. In over a decade of attempts he's never found that holy grail of a Top 20 hit. Still, this album is by no means as offensive in its trend worship as some he's made. Maybe it's because he's been working these electro-pop styles for long enough now to achieve a mark of originality. Nonetheless, despite the relative success of many tracks here, it's a new ballad by a real pop maestro, Stevie Wonder, that provides the album's main highlight. PT

**Twisted Sister
Under the Blade (Atlantic)**

This is actually Twisted Sister's first album, slightly tarted up (new cover photo, extra track added). To these ears they still sound pretty lightweight, but there's no denying their skill with a catchy teenmetal tune. If their other albums found a happy niche in your vinyl collection and you want more of the same, look no further. CC

**Saxon
Strong Arm Metal (RCA)**

Saxon were one of the better British metal bands to emerge during the late 70s. Due to various hiccups with the licensing of their label, Carrere, several of their mid-period (and best) albums failed to gain NZ release. *Strong Arm Metal* is a useful compilation, in that it contains the pick of the tracks from those albums and charts the band's development from raw recruits to the more FM-orientated sound of their recent albums. CC

**Nightranger
Seven Wishes (MCA)**

One's enough: I wish I didn't have to review this awful album. CC

**Hazell Dean
Heart First (Proto/EMI)**

So many songs, so little talent. Hi-Energy with less taste or sincerity than a Divine film. Hazell Dean gets as much soul onto this record as Miquel Brown gets good nights' sleep. Awful. But who cares? Certainly not the people who made this album, nor the people who dance to it. Save your energy. PG

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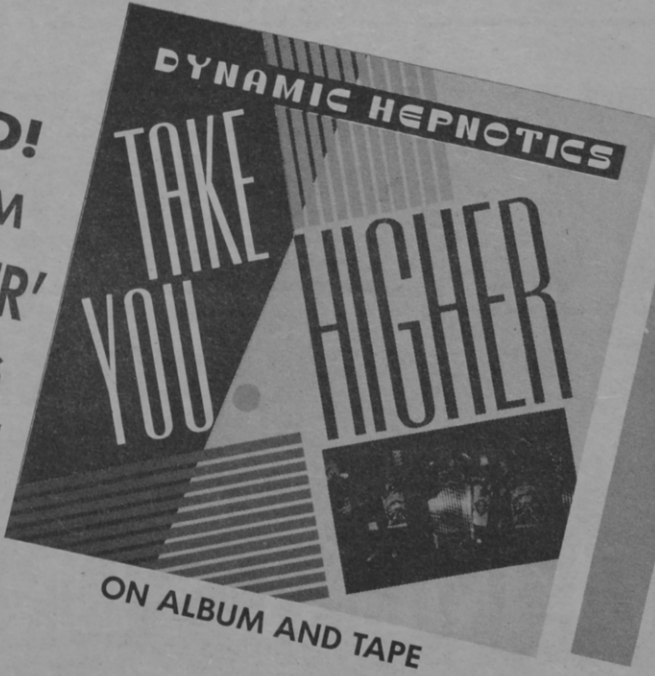
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