

Records

Bruce Cockburn World of Wonders MCA

A label change has meant no fall off in quality for Canadian singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn, who delivers a wonderful album of highly politicised songs, in keeping with his 1984 release *Stealing Fire*.

Like pages from a diary, Cockburn shifts the landscape from South America to Europe in a series of songs filled with rage and indignation, tempered with compassion, for the victims of forces beyond control. 'Call it Democracy', which opens the album, lambastes the IMF for its policies, which inevitably lead to chains for the impecunious. But he sees light at the end of the tunnel in the 'Santiago Dawn': "Santiago sunrise / see them marching home / see them rising like grass through cement / in the Santiago dawn."

'Dancing in Paradise' chronicles the absurdity of reality to those who dance to escape, for that is their only exit from the humdrum. The chilling intensity of 'Berlin Tonight' contrasts with the tranquility of 'Down Here Tonight (in Tobago)'; 'See How I Miss You' uses a lighthearted steel band rhythm (strains of Van Dyke Parks) and 'Lily of the Midnight', with its solemn reading, building to a majestic climax, is a lyrical masterpiece.

Unlike so many singer/songwriters Cockburn has avoided the traps of repetition and has continued to grow with no compromise to artistic integrity. The pity is that he is not appreciated by a larger audience. An unqualified recommendation for this album, and if you missed *Stealing Fire*, check that out as well.

David Perkins

Style Council Home and Abroad Polydor

After the Style Council's live appearances in *Live Aid*, the Japan special, *The Tube* and their recent live EP, this album comes at the least as a bit of a puzzle. Why does an act with so much live public exposure and one that has obviously



Style
Council

proved that it can cut it onstage, go and release a whole LP worth of the stuff? Well questions like these aren't made for mere mortals, so let's just check out where the New Breed's at now.

In keeping with Council policy *Home and Abroad* is a cool, well thought out manifesto of funky jazz-tinged soul-pop (got that, label fiends?) that pulls few surprises and disappointments only through the Council not always realizing the strengths of their nature. Prime Crime? The absence of Mick Talbot's soaring Hammond spiritual instrumentals.

Live (I mean flesh), the Style Council's sound can be quite a powerful thing, but when it's the "live!" that comes in vinyl form, well sadly justice can't be fully done to the "orchestra" of vocals, horns, keyboards, percussion, woodwinds and strings ... (breathe out now).

But moans and complaints aside, it's still a wonderfully punchy collection of positive music which at times reaches moments of pure excitement and beauty. (Dig it, these are rare qualities in a pop world dominated by the inheritors of the Duran-influenced Tory musical blandness. Any band with the guts to tell you, "You don't have to take this crap, you don't have to sit back and Relax, you can actually try changing it," and can still make you dance, deserves your support!)

Home and Abroad might not be an essential Style Council disc 'cause the studio versions do

come across better on record, but if you're a non-mug I hope that you'll check that it leaves a lot of the "competition" in the makeup room.

Troy Shanks

SOS Band Sands of Time Tabu

Modern American soul music has many sounds: the earlier gospel shouts of Stax, the smoother city beats of Motown, the coolness of Chicago, and the modern dance of Philly. Each has an emphasis on the relationship between performer and producer.

Top modern soul producers include Luther Vandross, Paul Lawrence plus Jam and Lewis, who at the moment have six songs in the American soul Top 10. The duo have a knack of making a smooth seamless groove that just floats. That's their secret, keeping things uncomplicated, real nice and loose. Whereas a lot of producers like to clutter a mix, Jam and Lewis like plenty of space.

Sands of Time is the SOS Band's best album ever, it takes a few listens, but when the groove clicks it's real magic. Mary Davis's voice has never sounded better; on tracks like 'The Finest' and 'Even When You Sleep' Jam and Lewis pull away the music to emphasise her voice, and then start the groove again. The ballads are the best things here, but up-tempo wor-

kouts like 'Borrowed Love' still work. The more you listen to it, the more little details start appearing, like the Jimmy Smith-sounding organ on 'The Finest' and the fast bass rhythm on 'Do You Still Want Me To?'

Add this one to the collection and place it right next to Alexander O'Neal — sophisticated soul for discerning people.

Kerry Buchanan

The Monkees Monkeemania Arista

I have a friend who frequently jeopardises that standing with loud, self-righteous proclamations that the Beatles were never as good as the Monkees, that when it came to ol' fashion W.I.M.P (Wholesome, Infectious, Melodic Pop) the flab four simply didn't get a look-in. Ignorance is bliss and this friend is jollier than most.

Never mind that the Monkees were the 85 minutes of *A Hard Day's Night* thinly stretched over three years by conniving boardroom planners — a fact that neither the later self-effacement of the carefully "wiggled out" *Head*, nor Mike Nesmith's eventual climb to credibility, could wipe out.

I suspect this year's reformation of the band (chortle) has some connection with the re-release of *Monkeemania* with its 40 tracks providing a fairly comprehensive guide to the Monkee

tale.

The strength of the material churned out by the TV moguls' hired pros makes at least a third of their 21 singles undeniable gems. All on show here, and all heavily contrived, which with weaker material makes for some pretty insipid stuff. Monkee drop-pings indeed.

And, on a shamelessly selfish note, what's this with a "special rare extended version" of 'The Porpoise Song'. An essentially great song dragged on at least two minutes too long. *Shameful*.

But, nah, sorry Ken — with the Beatles and the Monkees it was the latter doing the aping, always too soft, cute'n'cuddly to test the true Kings of the Jungle.

Shayne Carter

Jimmy Buffett Floridays MCA

Jimmy Buffett has been responsible for making some great albums — *A White Sports Coat* and a *Pink Crustacean*; *Changes in Attitudes*, *Changes in Latitudes*; and *Son of a Son of a Sailor* to name a few — utilising his talent for quirky, off the wall lyrics. 'Why Don't We Just Get Drunk and Screw', 'Margaritaville', and 'Last Mango in Paris', for example, coupled with a musical style which encompasses reggae, bossa nova, calypso and more, which portrays his life of the old rum-drinking 'sea salt sashaying his way round the Carribean and Florida having a mighty old time, not taking too much too seriously at all.

Floridays follows the general pattern of his previous works and will appeal to Parrotheads (ardent Buffet fans), but without any of the real killer tracks of the aforementioned albums. To the uninitiated, try *Songs You Know By Heart*, an excellent compilation of the man's best ditties.

Greg Cobb

Smokey Robinson Smoke Signals Motown

The last time Smokey Robinson and Stevie Wonder wrote a song together the result was a gem and it opened the second side of what is still Robinson's greatest album since the Miracles: 1980's *Warm*

Thoughts. Since then Robinson's settled into a groove of smoothly soulful MOR, becoming sort of a hip Johnny Mathis.

Consequently it's not surprising his new collaboration with Wonder is agreeable but undemanding, lacking the excitement or buoyancy of 1980's 'Melody Man'. (The new song still leads off side two of the album though.) Another point of comparison is that, whereas on *Warm Thoughts* only one track lacked Robinson's writing credit, here fully half of them do.

But let's not get gloomy. The five new tracks he has written are the album's best and together they comprise as strong a set as any on his five albums since *Warm Thoughts*. So while *Smoke Signals* remains pretty much an album for the faithful, it also serves notice of something we all learned years ago — never write off Smokey Robinson.

Peter Thomson

Gary Moore Rockin' Every Night 10

Although recorded in January '83, this album for reasons unknown to me, has not been released outside Japan, a blight on the record industry, as it's a gem, an essential album for any metal fan worth his/her salt.

I've stated before young Gal is the best HM guitarist around in terms of dynamics, power, energy, style, innovation, whatever (this is a personal point of view and open to argument), but put him up against Malsteen, Van Halen, Blackmore, whoever, this guy leave's 'em all for dead as far as I'm concerned.

With the very capable assistance of Ian Paice (drums), Neil Murray (bass), Don Avery (keyboards) and great vocals from John Sloman (ex-Lone Star and Uriah Heep — what's happened to him now?) Gal powers through a set of monumental proportions — from the gut-rock 'Wishing Well', 'Nuclear Attack', 'Rockin' and Rollin' to the poignant 'Sunset', the closing track, leaving these ears well satisfied. Nice line on the back cover too — "Heroin is a life sentence". You better believe it! Do yourself a favour, go buy it now!

Greg Cobb



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