

Records

George Jones
I Love Country
CBS
Charlie Rich
I Love Country
CBS
Johnny Cash
The Storyteller
CBS
Bobby Bare
I Love Country
CBS

Hot on the heels of the *I Love Jazz* series comes the country cuzzies, all with similarly tacky C&W sleeve design. One could be forgiven for thinking they were put together for hardware store budget bins, but then maybe they were. Firstly, appropriately enough, we have the "Crown Prince" of country music, George Jones, and a pretty fair collection from his recent albums it is too. Several of his early hits included here on the first side are re-recordings; although they may lack the bite of the origi-

nals, they are still well worth having in these slicker surroundings. These include his first ever hit 'Why Baby Why?' through 'The Window Up Above', 'White Lightning', 'The Race Is On' and the near-religious 'She Thinks I Still Care'. Side two contains the more up to date material, 'He Stopped Loving Her Today' and booze-drenched Jonesisms 'Tennessee Whiskey' and 'If Drinking Don't Kill Me (Her Memory Will)', plus the monumental 'I Always Get Lucky With You'. This is nowhere near comprehensive, but for beginners interested in sampling, essential.

Charlie Rich, "the Silver Fox," is one of those artists not represented by his hits, not on this label anyway. One of the original performers recording for the legendary Sun Studios, Rich's career has truly had its "little ups and downs," not finding any real success (though he recorded some classic sides not included here) until 1973 when he "crossed over" into MOR pop with such hits as 'Behind Closed Doors' and 'The Most Beautiful Girl'. He has never looked back since. They're all here, 'Rollin' With the Flow', 'On My Knees',

'My Elusive Dreams,' all sounding very much like adult radio, but the worst of it must surely be the abysmal 'Daddy Don't You Walk So Fast'. But also included is the magnificent 'Life Has Its Little Ups and Downs' and 'Since I Fell for You,' which go some way to redeeming this set.

Johnny Cash, the "Man in Black," weighs in with 16 yarns of high melodrama, some of which are hysterical and others add new dimensions to the word banal, 'No Charge' being a definite case in point. Side two is devoted entirely to stories of the mythical old west, while side one has the corn classic 'A Boy Named Sue' and Springsteen's 'Highway Patrolman.' Plenty to get your teeth into, though I defy anyone to listen to it all in one sitting.

Bobby Bare is an acquired taste, methinks. A piss-taker from way back, he's at his best when at his most irreverent ('Praise the Lord and Send the Money') or unashamedly sexist — 'I've Never Gone to Bed With an Ugly Woman (But I Sure Woke Up With a Few),' etc. Elsewhere, he's just plain silly. **Mark Kennedy**

Jimmy Nail

Take it or Leave it (Virgin)

Jimmy Nail wouldn't scratch his balls in public. Jimmy, better known as Oz in *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*, has produced a classy debut album which proves his country cameo during the TV series was no fluke. It gets off to a fine start with a rocky cover of Marvin Gaye's 'That's the Way Love is,' but goes downhill from there. Though he sings well, Nail's written most of the songs himself, and he has a tendency towards the bland not helped by the artificial sound to his Sting-like voice, the slick backing band or the tiring drum machine. Other highlights are a treatment of 'Love Don't Live Here Anymore' and his own anti-apartheid statement 'Ladies and Gentlemen of South Africa.' Next time, let's hope the session musos are ditched and his personality's allowed to break through. **CB**

Taranaki Sol
Live (Capture)

The cover warning "some material may offend humourless humans" is self-justifying nonsense — when jokes aren't funny it's not the fault of the audience.

A stoned and drunk imitation of a stoned and drunk Oz standup comic tells dumb jokes about being stoned and drunk to a stoned and drunk Gisborne crowd. Even stoned and drunk, the jokes still aren't funny. Produced with Arts Council financial assistance. **CB**

Eric Clapton
August (Warners Bros)

It's a pity the gracefully middle-aged cover is only a reflection of the conservatism inside. Phil Collins' excessive production has seen the singing guitar edged back and the inclusion of some out-of-place technical effects — with the familiar Collins' thump re-sounding throughout. Still, there are some good tracks, among them 'Miss You' has remnants of his old fire, and the duet with Tina Turner plenty of commercial appeal. Though missing the same thought and feeling of his last LP *Behind the Sun*, devotees will still find this a worthwhile addition to their Clapton collections. **LM**

Ratt
Dancing Undercover (WEA)

Third album from one of the best of new metal bands to spring from the LA scene. Not quite

matching *Out of the Cellar*, but this set of songs still rock along with a punchy continuity and catchy hard-edged sound. When you hear 'Dance,' 'Slip of the Lip' and 'Body Talk' you should be more than tempted to let Ratt infest your home. **GD**

Sammy Hagar
Looking Back (WEA)

Apart from helping fulfil his contract with Geffen, this compilation also demonstrates that Sammy had all the necessary talent way before he united with Van Halen. The best selections from the mid-stage of his career are covered, including 'I Can't Drive 55' and 'There's Only One Way to Rock.' **GD**

The Real Thing

The Best of ... (PRT)

This group of English soul boys had a hit in '76 and again in '86 with the melodious 'You to Me are Everything.' A fine song but alas the rest of this album fails to live up to the "best of" title, although the Mtume and Lucas production on 'She's a Groovy Freak' is nice, and a few have a nice groove. Still a second-rate act, no matter how many re-mixes. **KB**

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