

RECORDS



Left Split Enz. Little pix Clash. Right Chrissie Hyndes. With glasses Elvis Costello. Without glasses Jam.

FLYING COLOURS

SPLIT ENZ TRUE COLOURS MUSHROOM

In the last issue there was a picture of five long-haired earnest looking hippies who were Split Ends 1973. They have changed. In fact change is the operative word when talking about this band; transition, adaptation, keeping abreast of what's happening, and that's sensible. That's Split Enz.

Anyway over the last few years they have gradually honed their music down to the vigorous sixties angst of *True Colours*, an album whose closest relation is *Frenzy* not only in chronology but also in content and style. *Colours* has the advantage, however, of having been produced by David Tickle (previous experience: engineered Blondie) Enz's most suitable producer to date.

And so armed with a new producer and a batch of zestful songs the band waste no time in cutting the mustard. "Shark Attack" is a feverish opener and then their already classic "I Got You", a song plucked from the best traditions of British sixties rock singles and just loaded with presence. "What's the Matter With You" and "I Wouldn't Dream of It" are high grade itchy Enz numbers but the impetus of the first side is lessened slightly by Eddie Rayner's instrumental "Double Happy" and a needlessly schmaltzy "orchestrated" song from Tim Finn "I Hope I Never". Four out of six ain't bad though.

Side Two features three spirited typical Enz songs ("Nobody Takes Me Seriously", "Missing Person" and "How Can I Resist Her") a do-funky-Giorgio Moroder instrumental, ("The Choral Sea") and a haunting veritable pop masterpiece, "Poor Boy". A melody worth crying for, superbly arranged and produced, especially the counterpointing of the Green/Griggs rhythm section against Finn's vocal and Rayner's keyboards. That's the next single. That's an order.

Words like "showpiece" and "classic" aren't to be used lightly but *True Colours* offers both. The highs here are the highest they've been and I reckon they're still climbing.

A tonic from the troops.

George Kay

THE JAM SETTING SONS POLYDOR

How could The Jam improve upon *All Mod Cons*, their magnificent album of last year? But they have and incredibly it's not even a near thing. *Setting Sons* is streets ahead of its illustrious predecessor. Both musically and

lyrically Paul Weller has improved upon his past efforts, placing himself almost in a class of his own as far as British rock'n'roll is concerned.

From the Jam's debut album onwards, it was obvious that Weller was a master of Townsend-inspired, power-chord rock. But it was only with the band's third album, *All Mod Cons*, that he showed any consistent ability to produce real melodies. This time out Weller has penned a bunch of truly timeless melodies.

The effectiveness of the tunes is increased by a more adventurous approach to their arrangement. The most obvious example being the gorgeous strings on "Wasteland", "Burning Sky" and "Smithers Jones". Yet this development represents no softening on the part of the band. The core of their sound is still the tough jangle of Weller's Rickenbacker and the relentlessly propulsive rhythm work of Bruce Foxton (bass) and Rick Buckler (drums).

Prior to the release of the album, there were murmurings that it was to be a 'concept' album. Weller has stated that though certain themes do emerge from the lyrics taken as a whole, he did not deliberately write them around a 'concept'.

Lyrically, Weller has come a long way from his days as an angry young man capable of saying some very arrogant and foolish things. On *Setting Sons*, he writes with clear perception about the British social, political, military and commercial establishments. His vision is a grim one, but refreshingly, he doesn't start laying the blame on obvious scapegoats. With rare honesty he admits that he is as apathetic as everyone else when it comes to finding solutions to social problems.

There is no other word for it.

Setting Sons is simply a classic.

Dominic Free

THE CLASH LONDON CALLING CBS

Third album and they're still the Clash City Crusaders, rock'n'rollers who believe that what they are doing is an instrument of change, for the better. The Clash are still tenacious hard-headed idealists, the "Four Horsemen" of the fourth side of *London Calling*:

Four horsemen coming right through
Four horsemen and they're pissing by you.

Sitting comfortably? Not for long coz Side One is immediate wallop as the title track stomps and struts into greatness and straight away you realise that they've finally got the sound right, gutsier than the historic first but less streamlined than the metal of *Rope*. Next,

"Hateful" which is hard restless pop but it's "Rudie Can't Fail", knockabout ska, that ties with "London Calling" as the best of the first side.

Over, and Spanish lessons and sing-a-long choruses explode on "Spanish Bombs", enlist for the International Brigade or join the fascists in the jackbooted "Working For the Clamp-down" and "Guns In Brixton". There's no escapism here, you've gotta front up.

Side three offers no solace. "Death or Glory" is a physical blow at hypocrisy, "Koka Kola" takes a lunge at business and "The Card Cheat" is the Clash being metaphorical. You can handle it, you have to because the fourth side is next. And there's no let up.

"Four Horsemen" and "I'm Not Down" let you know just who is playing rock'n'roll. Wrong (Gordon) it's not Ted Nugent, try again, meanwhile visit Jamaica and do the "Revolution Rock". You can do it.

And all this for a paltry ten bucks, the price of a single album, and you get lyric splattered inner sleeves courtesy of Ray Lowry who chronicled the Clash's assault on America last year in NME. No room for complaints.

London Calling, eclectic, fiery and forceful. It takes risks and sometimes fails ("Jimmy Jazz", "Wrong 'Em Boyo" and "The Right Profile") but mostly succeeds, and how. So don't talk about the Clash selling punk to the highest bidder coz if you do you're only selling yourself and the best rock'n'roll a long ways short.

A few years ago NME's Pete Erskine said that if you didn't like Little Feat then you didn't like rock'n'roll. That goes double for the Clash.

George Kay

ELVIS COSTELLO AND THE ATTRACTIONS F-BEAT

Get Happy? What sort of title is that for an album from Angry Elvis? Well, he may not have got quite happy — a contented Costello is unthinkable — but the attitude of anger has been modified. Perhaps just as well. The posture was ultimately self-limiting. That is not to suggest for a moment that *Get Happy!* in any way lacks punch. It's a knockout blow. But infinite wrath is not within most of us (excluding genuine basket cases). How soon before Costello's fury became just another pop trademark?

I was among those who found Costello less than a miracle man at Sweetwaters. My presence there had been solely to enjoy E.C. in action. It was a rather unfocused set, the finest moments that night coming in two ballads, his own "Alison" and the C&W chestnut "He'll Have to Go", both of them songs of anger barely suppressed. Once and for all, Elvis proved — if proof was needed —

that above all he is a *singer*, and one of the best.

Some suggested that at Sweetwaters Costello "didn't get angry enough," that his music pivots on rage. Indeed it does. But after three albums as Angry Young Man, Elvis' bitter flame could have consumed him. Neatly, he has sidestepped the issue of destruction or decline with *Get Happy!* — 20 tracks that redefine Elvis Costello in terms of soul music. Perhaps more correctly, the album redefines soul music in terms of Elvis Costello.

The music is rooted in the Tamla and Stax recordings of the sixties, the music of the Mods. But don't be misled by labels. This is no saggy recreation of other people's past glories. Costello uses the form as the base for his new songs, the jumping off point for some hot rhythms.

Stoking the heat are the Attractions, pumping like a trans-Atlantic Booker T. and the MGs, or maybe the Detroit rhythm section of Motown's finest days.

The sound is cut to the bone. Just the Attractions, no flab, no solos (apart from a brief flash of guitar in the closing bars of "Five Gears in Reverse" and a snatch of harmonica on "I Stand Accused"). The band has shed the "pop song" approach of *Amred Forces* (no cheesy organ here) and in doing has gained muscle.

If such a tight little band can be said to have a fulcrum it is Bruce Thomas. His bass line on "Secondary Modern" throbs like a re-run of "Heard It Through the Grapevine."

Costello himself drops a little of the snarl, allowing himself the relaxation of singing as if it's all for fun. "I Can't Stand Up for Falling Down", one of the two non-originals on the album, is instant vintage. Elvis is a dab hand with a strong chorus and this one is a classic call-to-arms.

With 20 tracks (playing time a fraction over 47 minutes) on a single album it is clear that only repeated listening at leisure will reveal all. For the moment I rate very high indeed the aforementioned "Stand Up", "Opportunity", "Five Gears", "Temptation" (which is modelled on Booker T's "Time is Tight") and "Motel Matches" (he does a good ballad, our El). "Human Touch" with its rock steady beat seems to be a nod to the Specials, whose album Costello produced.

Costello is reported to be elated by the recording, which is again produced by Nick Lowe. He reckons the digitally-recorded album one of the best he has heard, and swears there is no loss of sound quality despite the 20 (as in "20 Golden Greats of...") tracks. The album sells for the normal price of a single album. It amounts to an economic miracle as well as an artistic triumph. Whether Costello will pursue the line of *Get Happy!* remains to be seen. Whether he does or not, it is a fine addition to an altogether magnificent body of work.

Ken Williams

THE PRETENDERS REAL

The Pretenders are one of the newest wave of British bands — frequently older musicians who draw on the energy ideas of the first wave and combine it with the melodic ideas of the 60's pop combos. While The Pretenders' singles so far — "Stop Your Sobbing", "Kid" and "Brass in Pocket" — have leaned heavily on the latter influence, their debut album concentrates more on full-throated chord crashers in the punk vein.

Indeed the *The Pretenders* at first seems to offer only reworkings of chord sequences we've all heard too many times before, but in every instance guitarists James Honeyman-Scott and Chrissie Hynde inject variations and counterpoints that make these old ideas over afresh.

Producer Chris Thomas has kept the sound clear, full and punchy — high fidelity rock'n'roll in the manner of the work he did for the Sex Pistols. And while Nick Lowe, on his production of their first single "Stop Your Sobbing", conceived of singer Chrissie Hynde as a little girl lost in a wall of sound, Chris Thomas has coaxed far more out of the lady — from sassy American streetwise on "Tattooed Love Boys" to an almost Stevie Nicks' softness on "Private Life" and "Lovers of Today".

Those who buy the Pretenders debut album on the strength of their pop single "Brass in Pocket" are in for a shock but with listening *The Pretenders* continues to reveal more and more hidden delights that will turn that initial shock into a very pleasant surprise.

Alastair Dougal

20 CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL



PROUD MARY
HEY TONIGHT
OOBY DOOBY
TRAVELLIN' BAND
WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN
LOOKIN' OUT MY BACK DOOR
SWEET HITCH-HIKER
BORN ON THE BAYOU
I PUT A SPELL ON YOU
I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

LODI
SUZI Q
GREEN RIVER
FORTUNATE SON
UP ROUND THE BEND
DOWN ON THE CORNER
BAD MOON RISING
RUN THROUGH THE JUNGLE
HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE RAIN
AS LONG AS I CAN SEE THE LIGHT