

BRIEFS

'BRIEFS' FROM PAGE 17  
best tracks on this blend of rock and jazz are 'Siam', 'Hot River' and 'I'm a Mineralist'. GD  
Any Trouble  
Wheels In Motion (Stiff)

Despite a couple of very fifty singles (which should've been hits), Clive Gregson remains saddled with an Elvis Costello problem. Any Trouble's sound and style is still close enough to Costello's to evoke the comparison, yet, while continuing to pen smart ditties, Gregson stays a league or two below the master. Nor has he as much discretion or discipline. Costello would keep these songs tight and peppy at under three minutes. Gregson sometimes allows them to sag at over four. PT

Foreigner 4 (Atlantic)

Foreigner continue in the same bland, predictable way. If they ever did a Best Of ... it'd be hard to tell a lot of tracks apart. Lou Gramm's vocals are still scratchy, Mick Jones guitar is still paunchy, and the lyrics dire to say the least. It's currently number four in the States, they're making themselves and the record company megabucks, and everyone's happy. Not

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me, mate. Do yourself a favour and buy ZZ Top instead. GC

Angelic Upstarts  
2 Million Voices (EMI)

The AU's have inherited the crown of political concern that once belonged to Pursey's Sham 69. With the Geordie gab of Mensi, and the Upstarts' traditional punk-fury approach, they romp around like dinosaurs refusing to call it a day. There are one or two likeable bows in the direction of melody - 'You're Nicked' and a soppy 'I Wish'. A cut above the Subs, sure, (who isn't?) but well below what's needed. And yeah, it's now 3 million voices. GK  
Joe Jackson's Jumpin' Jive (A & M)

Strictly speaking, there's no earthly reason why this should be reviewed in a rock mag. It's pure, unadulterated 1940's jump'n'jive'n' swing - no pop or new wave messing about at all. (And thanks be to Joe for that.) One wonders about its market, but then if Billy Field can hit why can't this? Joe Jackson's a lot more gutsy. PT  
Brian Knight  
A Dark Horse (PVK Records)

Brian Knight is a forgotten gent of the 60s, a man who used to play the blues with geezers like Charles Watts, Ian Stewart and Brian Jones. Like fellow blues artist Peter Green, he's been brought out of retirement to replay old R&B and blues licks, and on A Dark Horse, with a galaxy of old stalwarts, he plays neat if overly polite and passionless work-outs. Lacks bite but selectively enjoyable. Y'shouldn't be too hard on these old fellers. GK  
The Laughing Clowns  
Throne Of Blood/  
Reign Of Terror (Prince Melon)

Ed Kuepper, guitarist for the marvellous and unlucky Saints, has extended the brass side of

The Saints' second and third albums still further in his new band. This 8-track compilation follows up last year's promising EP, and has saxophone and trumpet right up front in almost bagpipe-like discordancy ('Collapse Board' and 'Ghost Beat'). But harrowing as they can sound, the horns provide ideal colouring for Kuepper's discomfiting songs. Not pretty, not easy, and definitely not, to be ignored. Write to Box 1014, Darlinghurst, Sydney, Australia. RC  
Eddie Grant  
Message Man (Ice)

The 1977 debut album from the 1981 hitmaker who first struck gold in 1967 with the Equals. At least half the songs on this album are really strong, his voice is at worst distinctive, and at best gorgeous. The do-it-yourself approach to instrumentation makes for solidarity and inventiveness. Likeable. CK  
Champaign  
How 'Bout Us (Epic)

The same clear, sweet funk that characterised the hit single carries through the rest of Champaign's album debut. Cool is the word, and while not all the songs reach the same high standard as the single, and nobody's about to break out of the restrained groove, there's enough to suggest we may not have heard the last from this band. AD

REISSUES

Spencer Davis Group  
Best Of ... (Island)

Spencer Davis, who played rhythm guitar in the band, said years later that he didn't really think Stevie Winwood had ever

done anything better than his work on this album, which was all done before Winwood was 20. Not all 14 songs are classics, but this reissue of a 1970 release includes the half dozen or so that were. One of the best voices in rock, captured in its prime. PG  
Willie Nelson  
Red-Headed Stranger (CBS)

A reissue of the 1976 album which is, quite simply, the best country record ever made. Passion without hysteria, power without empty fury, and beauty that never descends to mere prettiness. If you've never considered listening to a country album make an exception for this one. PG

Pete Townshend, Ronnie Lane  
Rough Mix (Polydor)

A reissue of the classic seventies' collaboration. 'Keep Me Turning' and 'Streets Of The City' are among Townshend's finest. Lane's folkly style on 'Annie' and 'Nowhere To Run' complements Townshend's dynamics. This is best seen on the stand-out 'Heart To Hang On To', with the two of them swapping vocals over a tension-packed explosion of acoustic guitars. If you missed this gem first time around, the reissue in the original gatefold sleeve makes the wait worthwhile. DP

Beach Boys  
Surf's Up (Caribou)

From 1971, this album remains most notable for the title track, one of the songs eccentric leader Brian Wilson composed for the lost Beach Boys' masterpiece, Smile, an unrealised album, canned by Wilson in the midst of one of his numerous breakdowns. The rest of the songs are good, but not outstanding. PG



The Specials

Ghost Town EP (Chrysalis)

After the drab More Specials comes this delightful piece of vinyl. Fruity horns, blended with bossa nova and Caribbean beats earned the song a number one spot in Britain. On the other side, we have 'Why' and 'Friday Night Saturday Morning'. The former is lightweight, protest reggae, the latter is possibly the best Specials' song since the first album.

Echo And the Bunnymen  
Shine So Hard EP (Korova)

Live material from the band's movie, dispels any doubts about their stage sound. 'Crocodiles' and the title track are from their first album, and 'Over the Wall' and 'Zimbo' (formerly 'All My Colours') from the second. Hugh Jones produces, and the whole exercise is nothing short of excellent. But will we see the movie?

The Teardrop Explodes

Passionate Friends (Mercury)

A simple pop song, with a nice melody and fanciful lyrics. The sooner the Teardrops are recognised here as the excellent pop

band they are, the better. 'Christ versus Warhol' on the flip is a slightly dark exercise for Julian Cope's vocal abilities.

Alvin Stardust, Pretend (Stiff)

Shane Fenton makes his third comeback with a Gerry and the Pacemakers' hit. This should have them bopping in the aisles again. 'Goose Bumps' is more reminiscent of his last time around.

Dead Kennedy's

Too Drunk To Fuck (Alternative Tentacle)

Jello has a problem, doesn't he? Great hook, inane lyrics and some wonderful chundering noises at the end. Everything you need for a hit. Other track is 'The Prey': slow and withdrawn.

Ian Dury

Spasticus Artisticus (Polydor)

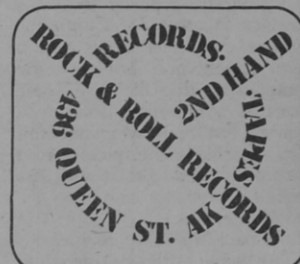
No Blockheads - Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar instead. This record has been deleted in the UK because of radio resistance, so get yours quickly. By the way, it's pretty awful, and B-side is the same thing in dub.

Britannia Waives The Rules

(Stunn)

A sampler of Stunn artists. 'Miranda' and 'Oh No It's You' from the Passions. 'A Matter Of Gender' from the Associates. The irritatingly catchy 'Cult Hero'

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