

## RECORDS

### Rodney Crowell Warner Bros

There are some performers who can take a style that has been run into the ground by others and make it transcend all the clichés and shimmer with new life. In the seventies Gram Parsons was the man who worked such a miracle with country rock. In the eighties Rodney Crowell is doing the same thing.

Crowell's debut album, *Ain't Living Long Like This*, from 1978 was a largely undiscovered gem, containing brilliant writing — try a line like, "Dad rode a stock-car to an early death, all I remember was a drunk man's breath" — allied with superb melodies.

It is a pleasure to report that on his third album, *Rodney Crowell*, the man's voice sounds in better shape than ever, and there's nothing wrong with his songwriting either. Crowell has turned to other writers, Keith Sykes, Ray King and Tommy Hill, for the two steamers on the new album, 'Just Wanta Dance' and 'Old Pipeliner', but his own songs include a couple of ballads, 'Til I Gain Control Again' and 'Shame On The Moon', that are as lovely as anything he has ever written before.

If you ever liked the country side of the Byrds, or the Burrito Brothers, then listen to Crowell. He's no throwback. He would be a major talent in whatever era he emerged.

Phil Gifford

### Jimmy Cliff Give The People What They Want WEA Manu Dibango Gone Clear Island

Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar are a dominating force in black music nowadays. They're the power behind two of the year's best albums, Grace Jones' *Nightclubbing* and Black Uhuru's *Red* and also answer the roll call on both these discs.

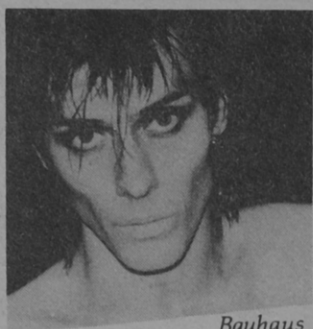
One problem, however, is the threat that the Taxi sound will overpower the artists it's simply meant to back up. In Jimmy Cliff's case, there's little risk of this. The man's just too good a singer and songwriter, and *Give The People* is his best work in years. Cliff is no Rasta, his mind is open, as shown in the title track:

Some like it in a rub-a-dub style  
Some like it when the rhythm is wild,  
Some like it in a one-drop style,  
Some like it in a Jimmy Cliff style,  
Reggae music is sweeter everywhere ...

Cliff is one of the original freedom fighters, and when he gets angry, the man is mad:

You babbling fools  
Taking innocent ones on a wobbling spool  
In your ageing schools  
Filled with broken rules ...

Manu Dibango finds the going hard amidst the same company, not to say Geoffrey Chung, Ansel Collins, and even the Brecker Brothers. Dibango, a West African, is best remembered for his early 1970's hit 'Soul Makossa', which he revives in reggae style on *Gone Clear*. He plays sax, marimba and keyboards, and



Bauhaus

sings, but it's the people backing him who carry this album. 'Pleasant' is the word that springs readily to mind, a mellow blend of reggae and funk which should be checked out by all those who liked that last Grover Washington Jr album.

Duncan Campbell

### Joan Armatrading Walk Under Ladders A&M

Joan Armatrading's first visit to New Zealand included a masterly performance in Christchurch. Second time through she came right down to Dunedin, and gave one of the most disappointing concerts I've ever seen. The difference on that second tour was her desire to be seen as a sunken centrepiece of a band, and with that desire driven home by the bang-bash drums of Danny Seiwel — and conveyed to the audience by the Dunedin Town Hall's atrocious acoustics — I left that concert with teeth ground to dust.

The syndrome of the proven solo performer wanting to be part of a band is as common as it is understandable in rock, but it makes things tougher for the writer on record. On last year's *Me Myself I*, Armatrading showed she had the flexibility and the sheer writing ability to come out on top, but on this new one, she battles. The synthesisers of Thomas Dolby help her on 'I'm Lucky' and 'Only One' and some fun is had with the Dunbar-Shakespeare team on 'I Can't Lie To Myself', but the stronger tracks aren't strong enough to exorcise the mediocrity ('When I Get It Right' and 'Eating The Bear' especially).

The strongest shots are delivered in the middle of the record — 'No Love', and a moving tale of loving two 'The Weakness In Me'. It is only then we are reminded just how classy a writer this lady can be.

Roy Colbert

### John Martyn Glorious Fool WEA

John Martyn's previous LP *Grace and Danger*, was released here in January and is still on my short list of the year's best albums. It was his first release since 1977 and now here we have another, on a new label, within a year.

*Glorious Fool* is produced by Phil Collins who again plays drums and, although bass and keyboards personnel have changed since *Grace*, the overall exemplary standard of musicianship has been maintained.

Then of course there are the remarkable guitar, vocal and writing abilities of Martyn himself. While freely drawing on rock, folk, jazz and blues, Martyn remains beyond categorisation, a true original.

But if the best tracks on *Glorious Fool* easily measure up to the superlative standard of its predecessor, many lack the well-crafted structure — not to say melodic hooks — that gave *Grace* such strength. Often here, the group will brilliantly establish a mood only for it to never develop beyond a few sprawling phrases.

Still, despite its shortcomings *Glorious Fool*'s merits make me definitely pleased to own it. A patchy John Martyn album is better than no John Martyn album at all.

Peter Thomson

## BRIEFS

Def Leppard

### John Cooper Clarke

*Me And My Big Mouth* (Epic)  
Manchester's Poet Laureate and ideal support artist, JC Clarke. This is his compilation, a collection of the ditties that made him, his backing band, the Invisible Girls, and producer Martin Hannett, quite notorious between 1978-80. Clarke's adenoidal Northern English drone is ideal for slipping across his vulgar satires and send-ups. 'Twat' is the ultimate in insult send-ups, 'Kung Fu International' a hilarious account of being a victim to a 'tupenny fart' martial arts expert, and 'Beasley Street', Clarke's squalor epic. Every home should have at least one JC album. Make it this one. GK

### Bauhaus In The Flat Field (RTC)

If jagged shards of sound and fractured bellowing are to your taste then *In The Flat Field* will be an essential purchase. Bauhaus, from Northampton took its name from a German functionalist art movement, and come equipped with an excellent track record in the UK indie charts. To these ears Bauhaus are both emotionally and intellectually dry, but definitely not dull. GD

### Roy Buchanan My Babe (Polydor)

Roy Buchanan serves up a mixture of old rockers (eg 'Dizzy Miss Lizzy'), an exquisite treatment of the old pop hit 'Secret Love', mediocre originals from vocalist and keyboards player Pat Jacobs, and the excellent Buchanan originals 'My Suntan' and 'Blues For Gary'. The former is a tranquil guitar piece, the latter stamped with Buchanan's trademark of scintillating runs in the higher registers. Superior to his last studio outing, but his continued retirement from the vocal mike is a retrograde step. DP

999

### Concrete (Liberation)

Fifth year of operation, and fourth album for the hard-working, no-frills English post-punkers, who have occasionally ('Emergency' and 'Homicide') shown an ability to create something noticeably out of the rut. This time, 'Break It Up' recycles 'Homicide' as one of the stand-outs, and while the more adventurous 'Obsessed' was the single, the cover of Sam The Sham's 'Little Red Riding Hood' appeals as the one to give to the radios. RC

### Dynasty The Second Adventure Midnight Star Standing Together Klymax

Never Underestimate The Power Of A Woman (Solar)

Solar, a black Los Angeles based record company, has simultaneously released three albums from among their newer acts. The poppiest of the three, Dynasty, have produced a great single, 'Here I Am', and although most of the rest of the album falls below that high standard, the second side has a nice pop-soul feel similar to British band, Linx. The funkiest of the three is Midnight Star. From their loud silver suits to their instrumental attack, they echo early Commodores. And like the early Commodores they have a tendency to hammer a groove for too long. But a lot of what's here is pretty outstanding stuff. Funk fans should investigate. Duds of the bunch are Klymax. They don't have the voices or strength of playing to cut it in this company. AD

### Carly Simon Torch (Warner Bros)

Who was it that said a good Carly Simon album should be seen and not heard? Forget her flat-voice glossyrock of the seventies. She is phrasing better than ever and, aided by gorgeous arrangements, delivers glowing



renditions of a few deservedly classic songs (Duke Ellington, Hoagy Carmichael et al) and a couple of respectable originals. A warm, smouldering *Torch* and a pleasant surprise. PT

Rod Stewart

### Tonight I'm Yours (Warner Bros)

Rod Stewart has been living on past glories for a long time now, and while this album is an improvement it is no return to the glory days of 'Maggie May' or 'You Wear It Well'. To be brutally honest Stewart seems to have written himself out, and it will take a lot more of the inspired cover versions he used to include in good numbers on his albums to recover the lost ground. PG

### Patti Austin Every Home Should Have One (Warner Bros)

In which Quincy Jones aims for the over-30's sophisti-set while continuing to mine the motherlode he struck with Michael Jackson's *Off The Wall*. Austin, long one of the dude's featured vocalists, now gets her name up front even though her voice remains under the thick spread of process. Quincy and Patti provide the perfect music for that cocktail party you've been planning to christen the new patio on your Herne Bay split-level. PT

### Peter Baumann Repeat Repeat (RTC)

It is too easy to dismiss ex Tangerine Dreamer Peter Baumann's latest as disco for socialite androids. However, sharp production by Robert Palmer and some superb synthesiser programming by Baumann cannot disguise the paucity of ideas on this album. The opening track says it all: 'We have heard this song before, didn't we, didn't

we? There's nothing new at all repeat, repeat." GD

### The Clarke/Duke Project (Epic)

In the early seventies these two individuals represented the best music happening at the jazz-funk interface. George Duke used to play the loveliest synthesizer on record; now it's merely the slickest. Similarly, Stanley Clarke's ultra-nimble basswork has been sounding sterile for years. Here they pretend they're the Brothers Johnson imitating the Commodores. And no, the smirk-ridden version of 'Louie Louie' isn't funny either. PT

### Def Leppard

### High 'n' Dry (Vertigo)

Coming from nowhere last year with the much-touted *On Through The Night*, this young five-piece from Sheffield show even more steel on this second album, which bulletted into the US charts at number 43. From the opening metal classic, 'Let It Go', recently on *RWP*, there is no let up. Excellent production, too, from Mutt Lange. Go on, bash your head against a wall. It's therapeutic! GC

### Jah Malla, Jah Malla (WEA)

*Jah Malla* is reggae shaped by a giant record company. File off all the rough edges and file under 'ethnic'. At the same time, remove anything in the sound that just might have given it some distinction, some bite, some emotion. Their reggae is dressed up for the town, LA rather than JA. Sessioners present here include David Sanborn, Dick Wagner (ex-Lou Reed and Alice Cooper) and Blondie's Jimmy Destri. The result is a travesty of the sound, so smooth and seamless and sooooo boring. DC

### Thin Lizzy

### Lizzy Killers (Vertigo)

Lizzy seem like a spent force in the 80s and so it's easy to forget just what they did deliver in the mid 70s. This album is virtually a foolproof resume of their rise and fall. Starting with the Celtic overtones of their beginnings, 'Whisky In The Jar' and the 'Wild One', the album then traces the band's ascendancy through 'Jailbreak' and 'Don't Believe A Word' to the mediocrity of 'Do Anything You Want To Do' and finally to the staleness of 'Killer On The Loose'. One important omission — 'The Rocker' — otherwise this is an ideal introduction/overview of a band that once was (something). GK

### Australian Crawl Sirocco (EMI)

Australian Crawl are potenti-

ally Australia's best singles band and with hitmaker Peter Dawkins at the helm their second album is chocker with radio fodder. Good lyrics, melodies and Jim Reyne's highly distinctive voice are let down, however, by a rather patchy rhythm section. Compensation, though, comes in the form of newcomer Guy McDonough, who relieves Reyne of vocal duties on three tracks. McDonough is an equally fine singer. JD

### Nils Lofgren

### Night Fades Away (MCA)

Producer Skunk Baxter has organised some very tasteful assistance for Lofgren on his debut for Backstreet, but they don't disguise the essentially limited nature of the man's writing. Covers of 'I Go To Pieces' and 'Any Time At All' are included. Stick with that stunning early stuff, the first two Grin albums especially. RC

### John Entwistle, Too Late the Hero (WEA)

Entwistle, alias the Ox, the inanimate Who bassist has always alternated between occasional turgid solo albums and contributions to Who forays. With the exception of the deliberate dumbness of 'Boris the Spider' and the deadpan perfection of 'My Wife', his songs have been stolid, square-jawed and predictable. *Too Late the Hero* follows the same pattern with Joes Walsh and Vitale rounding off the power trio. Dull. Entwistle can add this to his growing queue of dispensable sideman albums. GK

### Mick Fleetwood The Visitor (RCA)

Nick Mason and Phil Collins have proved that albums by drummers don't have to be boring. This debut effort by Mick Fleetwood, however, is a limp affair. Drab versions of 'Not Fade Away' and 'Rattle Snake Shake' combined with dull originals make for ordinary listening. GD

### The Byrds

### The Original Singles 65-67 Vol 1 (CBS)

The Byrds were one of the five most important bands of the 60s. There have been compilations before but this is certainly the most intelligent. Here, in chronological order, are the first eight singles including the often equally brilliant B-sides. There are also excellent liner notes. If you were around when these singles first appeared, your copies must be worn out by now. If you weren't, these are some of the most magnificent moments that rock has ever produced. PT

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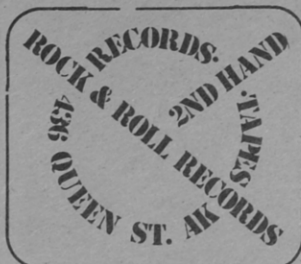
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