

RECORDS

Warren Zevon The Envoy Asylum

His first studio album since his purported recovery from alcoholism marks a brilliant return for California's toughest songwriter. Still shooting from the hip but tempered with diplomacy, Zevon combines rock and ballad styles with witty lyrics.

The title track opens the album — an epic in the tradition of 'Lawyers, Guns and Money'. Zevon offers his services as the envoy. 'The Overdraft', a barbed mid-tempo rocker, sets the stage for 'The Hula Hula Boys', a masterly ballad about losing out in Hawaii (outstanding chorus). 'Jesus Mentioned', an acoustic item, continues Zevon's unflattering examination of Southern heroes — Elvis Presley fans beware! 'Let Nothing Come Between You' is mainstream pop, and could even herald his return to AM radio in NZ.

Side Two opens with the maso-

chistic 'Ain't That Pretty At All', reminiscent in tone to the earlier 'I'll Sleep When I'm Dead':

So I'm going to hurl myself against the wall,

'Cause I'd rather feel bad than not feel anything at all.

'Charlie's Medicine' follows, featuring punishing guitar in a story about the death of an LA pusher shot down by a doctor in Beverley Hills — neither felt a thing. 'Looking For The Next Best Thing' is smooth rock with underlying bite and the side ends with a poignant Zevon ballad, 'Never Too Late For Love'.

The Envoy is Zevon's best studio album since the self-titled masterpiece of 1976 and is proof that not everyone in LA has nodded off to sleep. Great rock music requires tension, the crashing chord when you least expect it. There is tension aplenty in this hunk of vinyl. Make the effort to listen.

David Perkins

Black Uhuru
Chill Out
Island

Having raved at some length

over last year's *Red*, my favourite of 1981, and picked this group as a pacesetter, this album makes me feel a shade uncomfortable. It would be tough to match such a heady, forthright predecessor, but this one doesn't even get halfway.

The fault lies largely with the material, though there are also problems with the reggae-funk fusion that is Black Uhuru's hallmark.

To put it bluntly, it appears Michael Rose now only has one song in him, and he's intent on rewriting it a dozen different ways. 'Darkness', 'Eye Market', 'Fleety Foot' and 'Mondays' all bear a very familiar stamp, pale duplicates of the last two albums. Only Rose's vocals save these tracks from mediocrity.

The only two worthwhile songs, are the title track, which is a collaboration with Duckie, Puma, and the ever-present Sly and Robbie, and Simpson's 'Emotional Slaughter', a sombre piece underlined with a growling synthesiser bassline. 'Chill Out' is a tough New York song, a bleak picture of the city that is Black Uhuru's home. Rose must be

wondering whether leaving JA was a good idea.

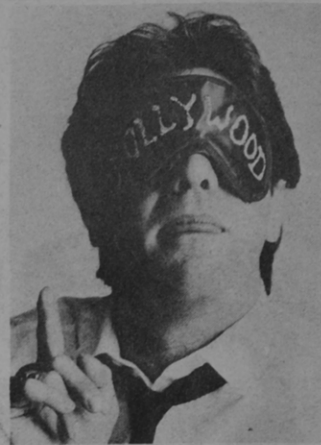
Dunbar and Shakespeare do their best to dress up some very tired tunes, but you can't disguise what is now sounding like a formula. The rhythms are generally sluggish, suggesting an uneasy period of transition from a Jamaican to an American sound. Maybe they'll do better next time, and get some new ideas sorted out. Hope so.

Duncan Campbell

Don Henley
I Can't Stand Still
Asylum

With the aid of Danny Kortchmar and others, Don Henley has produced a fine album of honest songs — the baring of the soul in the wake of the demise of the Eagles.

The title track opens the album, a slice of the Eagles at their peak, distinguished by the quavering keyboards of Kortchmar, co-writer of a number of tunes on the album. 'You Better Hang Up', a Kortchmar song, is almost country honk — a fun item. 'Long Way Home' is a love song with a



Eagles: Don Henley and Glenn Frey.



Albert King

stunning guitar arrangement complementing Henley's plaintive vocal. 'Nobody's Business' boils with urgency, evoking a sense of total freedom — the catharsis after his cocaine bust.

Side Two opens like the thud of a howitzer. 'Dirty Laundry', featuring adroit use of mocking keyboards, hammers the sensationalism in the presentation of TV news.

We all know that crap is king. Give us dirty laundry ...

'Johnny Can't Read' is a rolling rocker about educational disadvantage leading to tragedy and Henley asks who is to blame. Them And Us' delivers the two sides of the nuclear issue with the punch of John Fogarty at his rollicking best. 'La Eile', an interlude from the Chieftains, is the backdrop for 'Lilah', a story of love set in the midst of turmoil in Northern Ireland. The album ends with a tinge of optimism, on the reworking of the old gospel standard 'Unclouded Day'.

Don Henley, the guiding spirit of the Eagles, is alive and well. The album avoids the sentimental blandness of much of the West Coast sound and compares favourably with any album the Eagles recorded. It has all the ingredients of a massive seller.

David Perkins

Glenn Frey
No Fun Aloud
Asylum

When I mentioned to friends that I had this album to review they were sympathetic. When I told them that I was enjoying it they expressed surprise. Such is the low esteem — not to say contempt — with which many of us regard the Eagles and those who flapped therein.

And with good reason. The Eagles took the folk-rock of the Byrds and early Burritos and smoothed off all the edges with limpid harmonies and slick rhythm guitars. Passion was replaced by sentimentality in the interests of commercial viability.

What is so pleasantly surprising about *No Fun Aloud* is that, while it obviously sounds like the work of an ex Eagle, it largely transcends the smug, detached efficiency of old. Of course it's all very professional but, freed from the glistening harmonies, Frey's vocals carry commitment and responsibility. The slow songs are yearning and tender without being bland. ('She Can't Let Go' is the only exception.) The medium to up-tempo numbers — all very catchy — successfully combine Californian laid-back with a Stax-like punch in the horns and rhythm section.

So there you are: mellow music strengthened with real fibre. Glenn Frey certainly no longer deserves to be critically tarred and Eagle-feathered.

Peter Thomson

Albert King
Masterworks
Atlantic

Albert King's *Born Under a Bad Sign* album of 1966 was one of the most — perhaps the most — important blues albums of its time.

It changed the thinking of virtually all the blues-based electric guitarists from Eric Clapton to Jimi Hendrix. They in turn changed the sound of rock. If that seems too simplistic, take a listen to the seven tracks from that long unavailable Stax album (sadly, never released in New Zealand) which are included in this 18-track compilation.

The scorching scream of Albert King's Flying V guitar, coupled with his gently gruff, almost-spoken vocals, is a sound you'll never forget.

This excellently selected compilation features Albert in several contexts from 1966 until the present day, but there can be no argument that he is at his strongest in the *Born Under a Bad Sign* situation, with the exemplary assistance of Booker T and the MGs. (What a terrible loss to music was the late Al Jackson, the MGs' drummer cruelly murdered in his Memphis home a few years ago!) These tracks, from the menacing 'Born Under a Bad Sign' and 'Laundromat Blues' to the haunting 'As The Years Go Passing By' are vintage King, possibly the best-ever meeting of blues and the then-emerging Memphis soul sound.

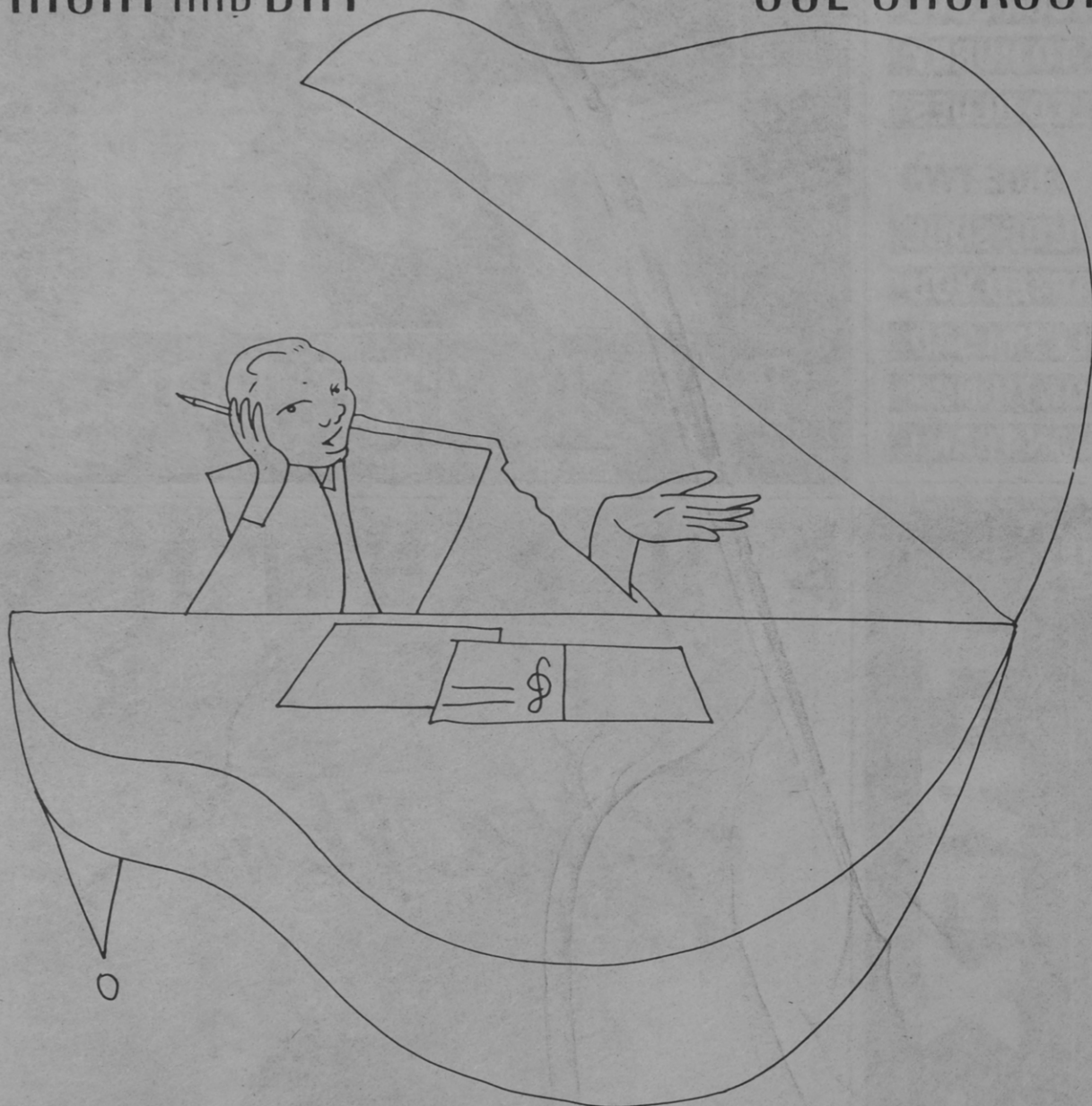
Elsewhere, Albert is heard in more modern surroundings under the direction of producers Allen Toussaint (from the excellent *New Orleans Heat* album), Don Davis, and Bert de Coteaux, as well as a superb live version of 'Blues at Sunrise' recorded at Montreux.

Very little of Albert King's work has been freely available in New Zealand. Don't miss this one at any cost.

Ken Williams

NIGHT AND DAY

JOE JACKSON



NEW ALBUM ON RECORDS AND TAPES



MSG/One Night at Budokan

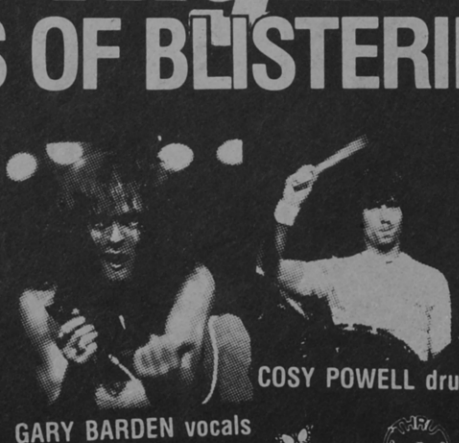
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