

Records

Willie Dayson Blues Band Rogues and Fools Festival

All the promise of the Dayson band's *Live at the Globe* first album pays off in this, their first studio album. And what an album it is!

Studio techniques have enhanced the subtleties without losing the vigour of live performance. The album sounds "live in the studio," but that's immaterial. What is important is that the feeling is there.

The Dayson band is clearly influenced by the hard-edged rhythm sound of Chicago's Alligator label, but its new album shows a firm group identity based around Willie Dayson and Brian Glamuzina. That is not in any way to undervalue the fine contributions of keyboards man Malcolm Smith, drummer Brian Mitchener and bassist Neil Edwards who, as an Underdog, was one of the first to play Chicago-style blues in New Zealand. But it is Dayson's often brilliant guitar and Glamuzina's fine harmonica and ever-improving (he was good, he's a lot better now) vocals and song-writing which dominate.

Glamuzina's originals are strong, especially 'Livin' On Borrowed Time', the remake of 'Ivan's' and the moody 'John's Diner Blues'. Dayson shows flashes of Django Reinhardt's *Hot Club of Paris* days on the instrumental 'Rick's Blues', although more in the mood than the playing. The covers are handled brilliantly. Detroit Junior's 'Call My Job' is nicely

wry and Dayson's flat battery effect no doubt makes it a crowd-pleaser; the oft-recorded 'Kidman Blues' gets a rollicking treatment and 'Every Night and Every Day' has the intensity of the man with whom it is associated, the late great Magic Sam.

Rogues and Fools is a great album by any standards. Ken Williams

Donald Fagen The Nightfly Warner Bros

Every year from 1972 to 1977 the annual Steely Dan album appeared in virtually all the critics' best albums lists. Then Steely Dan simply ceased. (Not being a band, they hadn't been touring anyway.) But in 1980, when Walter Becker and Donald Fagen reassembled their studio sidemen to record *Gaucho*, the album only partially recaptured their once enormous audience. Pop music had changed and the Dan's immaculate craft was now sounding just a little too slick.

Now Fagen returns alone and, as one hears immediately how exactly like a Steely Dan album this is, the question arises: apart from playing bass, just how much did co-writer Becker really contribute last time?

On first listening, this former fan felt the same reservations that I'd had about *Gaucho*. Were those smooth, mellow performances calculated to complement the lyrics, or were the words merely an arty justification of increasingly enervated music?

But what's so striking — beyond the arrangements and production — is how very strong Fagen's solo writing is. *Nightfly's* music is enormously catchy. Secondly, the lyrics, while discarding most of the old intentional obscurity and some of the scabrous tone, have lost none of their finely honed wit.



Donald Fagen

Every lyric is a minor gem and with musical styles masterfully varying from traditional shuffle, through Latin to the shrewdly swinging reinterpretation of Dion and the Belmonts' 60s 'Ruby Baby', Donald Fagen is likely to win his way on to at least this reviewer's year's best list. Peter Thomson

John Lee Hooker Tantalizing With The Blues MCA

John Lee Hooker has had an uncommonly high number of records released in New Zealand. This probably results from Hooker's label hopping. Compare Hooker with such giants as Muddy Waters and Howling Wolf, whose lengthy ties to the Chess label have left them sadly under-represented in NZ.

This surprisingly good Hooker compilation comes from the period 1965-1971 when he was associated with the American

ABC labels Bluesway and Impulse. Some of the tracks, from 1967/68 have been previously released in NZ, but make a welcome reappearance. While this is not regarded as Hooker's peak period, he did make some outstanding recordings. 'I Serve You Right To Suffer', one of his best, sees him in the company of jazzmen Barry Galbraith and Milt Hinton. Elsewhere, the Hook is accompanied by such blues stalwarts as Wayne Bennett, Eddie Taylor and Louis Myers.

What gives the album extra interest (or lack of it, if you're a purist) is the then-fashionable combining of Hooker and rock musicians. Steve Miller is the rocker on 'Kick Hit 4 Hit Kix U (Blues for Jimi and Janis)' — say it a couple of times — which is almost grotesque verbally (an exhortation to "drug addicts" to give it up), but has a superb, brooding musical atmosphere. One of Hooker's greatest students, Van Morrison, gets most of the vocal on 'I'll Never Get Out of These Blues Alive', an edited version of a much longer track. Excellent performance from Morrison.

A good album all round, but much will depend on your attitude to the rock players. Ken Williams

D.A.F. Fur Immer Virgin

I only heard *Gold Und Liebe* once and was put off (shame!) by its discosity and by how it seemed much safer than early stuff I'd heard on tape. This is harder, edgier and I wish I knew what the fuck they were singing about. It's all very frustrating. I'm pretty sure I like this, no, I mean I do, but what if they're talking about ripping the toenails off negro women or advocating that a vegetarian-only nuclear deterrent is the only answer? My knowledge of German comes from war comics and there's not an 'Achtung!' on the album. It's difficult to relate to, but the sounds are neat.

Conny Plank is much more at home with this stuff than with

Killing Joke (he is a very famous and much-revered producer/engineer who's worked with wonderful people like Can and PiL). This is moronic synth lines that my 18-month-old daughter can sing to, wedded with acoustic percussion (including charming xylophone playing) and monosyllabic vocals.

At first this all sounds very professional, but after a few hearings it becomes clear how inept these people are (by those queer standards that so many pub bands cling to, anyway). The British synth groups bubble and squeak with much more virtuosity than these two, but D.A.F. are content with their hunks of electronic noise and quite rightly so.

Chris Knox

P.S. Someone just translated the titles for me. The album's called *Forever*, and songs include 'A Little Bit Of War', 'The Gods Are White' and 'Shorten Your Haircut'. Now we can all get some sleep.

The Crusaders Royal Jam MCA

Guesting with the Crusaders on this live album (Royal Festival Hall, London, September 1981) are B.B. King, his band and a fair sampling of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Bigger than Ben Hur? Wrong. In fact, the feeling throughout is of a small group with occasional added underpinning. Not unlike the Band's *Last Waltz*.

It's a good and occasionally great concert. Best are Sides Three and Four when B.B. King gets into a relaxed groove. He reworks 'The Thrill Is Gone' to good effect before getting into some of the songs with which the Crusaders gave him a new direction. And while B.B. can't match the wonderful Randy Crawford on 'Street Life', he has a damn good try. Sadly, the same can't be said for vocalist Josie James. On her own showcase, 'Burnin' Up The Carnival', James sounds merely shrill and in danger of being left behind by the band.

The Crusaders themselves are, generally, in immaculate form, although their opener, 'One Day I'll Fly Away', is rather leaden.

It is the appearance of the one-time Memphis Blues Boy which lifts the performance beyond merely sustaining, rather than surpassing, their reputation. King and the Crusaders remain a magical combination.

Ken Williams

Briefs

Lee Connolly and Steve Garrish, Past Kalylee (Siren)

Lee Connolly, Mancunian producer of Graeme Gash's great sounding *After the Carnival*, and Steve Garrish, Californian globe trotter, have teamed up for an album of eclectic folk recorded at Auckland's Harlequin Studios.

Stylistically they fall between Bruce Cockburn and Al Stewart with the playing and production amongst the best to come out of this country. Evocative, thoughtful and delicate it also avoids the hippie whimsy that can often undermine albums of this genre. Surprise yourself. GK

Gregory Isaacs

In Person (Music World)

Another welcome reissue from Music World's Trojan catalogue. This dates back to Isaacs' early pre-Rasta days. His best was yet to come, but this is still fine stuff. Silky smooth vocals and very strong, soulful melodies with a deeply religious overtone. DC

David Lindley

Win This Record (Asylum)

After nearly a decade of excellent supporting roles, David Lindley stepped into the spotlight last year with the infectious *El Rayo-X*. And while the new album doesn't quite carry the wacky surprise of his debut (or follow up its more oddball ventures) it does, however, consolidate Lindley's main strengths: his remarkable affinity for reggae and joyfully rocking R&B. The band, if anything, has more bite than last time — they deserve those sleeve photos — while Lindley's characteristic vocals and gritty guitar stamp his leadership overall. With an astute choice of cover versions and five, fine originals, David Lindley has delivered a first rate second album. PT

Peter Green

Blue Guitar (Junction)

Subtitled "the best of," this album collects in one package the cream of Green's work since he emerged from self-imposed musical exile a couple of years back. Although it seems clear he will never again be the guitar star of his Fleetwood Mac days, Green is still making fine music. The playing and singing on 'Last Train to San Antonio' and 'Walkin' the Road' should dispel all doubt. KW

Mike McDonald

That's What It Takes (Warners)

Michael McDonald displayed enough ingenuity and songwriting craft with the Doobie Brothers to suggest that freed of the constraints of the band, he'd come up with a great album. But no, it turns out that the constraints of the band were what McDonald wanted, for this, his first solo album, follows the formula and takes no more chances than the Doobies did. McDonald's choked singing and the funk-based songs hit a groove but never break out of it. It's kind of like the most consistent album the Doobie Brothers never made. But that's all. AD

The Rods, Wild Dogs (EMI)

Second album from New York trio the Rods. Sounding more English than American, they're tight, tough and heavy, but their songs keep them firmly anchored in the middle of the pack. Most tracks are based on recycled Purple/Sabbath riffs and consist of predictable metal clichés. Contains tasteless rendition of the Supremes' 'You Keep Me Hangin' On'.

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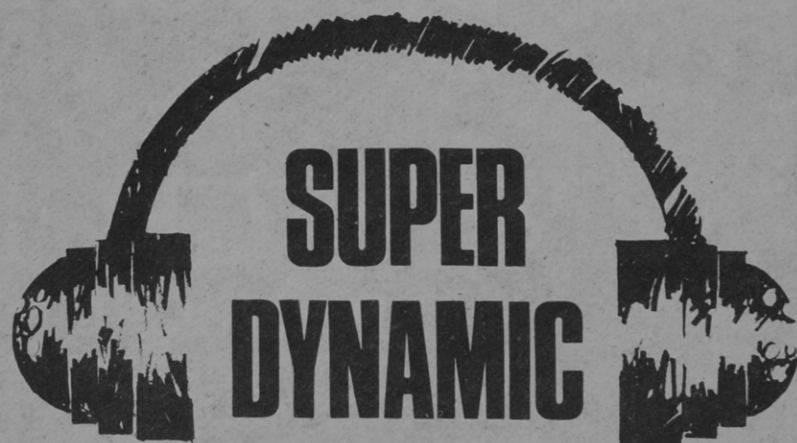
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