

Records

Randy Newman
Trouble In Paradise
Warner Bros

Randy Newman fans who swear by *Sail Away* or *Good Old Boys* (and I do) may be turned away by the blaring thump of L.A. rock arrangements, by the Village People-ish singalong shouts on 'I Love L.A.' (Newman says he does indeed love his home city) and by the sheer "commerciality" of using Toto as the backup band and including among the assisting vocalists such luminaries as Paul Simon, Rickey Lee Jones, Bob Seger and Linda Ronstadt.

It is my opinion that Newman orchestrates his musicians to provide a soundtrack to his word pictures. The fragments of "today" sound are as important to *Trouble In Paradise* as were his pastiche of turn-of-the-century songs and themes for the movie *Ragtime* (which was a major career high for Newman). For example, as a New Wave-ish riff drones in the background of 'Mikey's', a drunk whose woman has walked out bemoans his lot to the bartender, complaining about the arrival in the neighbourhood of blacks,



Barry Reynolds, Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare.

Mexicans and Chinese, and the "ugly music" that plays all the time. "Mikey, whatever happened to the fucking 'Duke of Earl'?" he cries.

Newman's most outrageous achievement here is 'My Life Is Good', in which he plays an upwardly mobile L.A. rocker who goes down to Mexico with his wife, brings back a girl who moves in to clean house, "Wipe the baby's ass" and write his songs. The song's, perhaps the album's, ultimate moment is when this creep meets Bruce Springsteen in a private audience at the Bel-Air Hotel and is crowned the new

"boss" of rock and roll.

However, the album isn't an unqualified success. The duet with Paul Simon, 'The Blues', is a slim and rather too obvious idea. Similarly, 'Song For The Dead', a lament for soldiers who die in foreign lands for politicians fails to find the right tone.

But the best stuff — and there's much of that — continues the brilliantly quirky line started with 'Davy the Fat Boy'.
Ken Williams

Barry Reynolds
I Scare Myself
Island
Marianne Faithfull
Dreaming My Dreams
Music World

Dreaming My Dreams was the first of two albums Marianne Faithfull made for NEMS prior to joining Island to cut *Broken English*. The album was yet another unsuccessful comeback attempt. Faithfull's girlish, folksy quaver had long since become harsh and haggard but she had yet to find an appropriate setting for it.

The performances here are an unfocused collection ranging from country & western waltzes through Eurovision-style pop to an excruciating 'Sweet Little Sixteen'. Only on her own 'Lady Madelaine' does she really convince.

Barry Reynolds signed up as Marianne Faithfull's guitarist in late 1978, just after *Dreaming My Dreams*. The following year he

was playing on the *Broken English* sessions, having written or co-written three tracks. Since then he's become a member of the Compass Point Allstars, writing and playing for, among others, Grace Jones and Marianne Faithfull.

While Reynolds' own vocals are not quite as distinctive as these luminaries they're nonetheless strong. The Nassau backing crew is on sparkling display and he has assembled a very fine bunch of songs, the great majority his own. 'Guilt' may lack the gnawing chill of Faithfull's version but Reynolds' fresh arrangement of 'Broken English' neatly sidesteps such comparison. In fact all the originals are striking enough for one to foresee other singers snapping them up.

Reynolds' own covers are a Dan Hicks and a 40-year-old Irish ballad. Interesting choices, but then Barry Reynolds is an increasingly interesting musician.
Peter Thomson

John Martyn
Electric
Island

Any recent John Martyn convert wishing to check out his backlog is faced with a dauntingly large choice: ten albums on Island precede two for WEA. Moreover, Martyn's albums were often patchy affairs with one or two gems scattered among the merely functional.

Luckily, Island has released two excellent compilations which together constitute a fine overview of Martyn's work as well as coming close to providing an all round 'Best of'. 1977's *So Far, So Good* contained nine classic tracks from his folksy period through to the increasing involvement with jazz. It's still available.

The new compilation, although partially overlapping the earlier one's timespan, obviously focuses more on Martyn's electric-based work. (Not exclusively though: 'A Certain Surprise' and 'Call Me Crazy' still sound acoustic to me). There's even one number that appears on both albums — 'I'd Rather Be The Devil' — but as they're quite different versions the comparison makes rewarding listening.

Electric also includes two tracks from Martyn's last and best set for Island, *Grace And Danger*, which

is essential in itself. Thankfully though, *Electric* again offers alternate versions. Particularly interesting is the popping 12 inch mix of 'Johnny Too Bad' which probably even surpasses that on the original album.

But no matter where the tracks originate from, they are all first-rate and the album's sensible sequencing provides both variety and flow throughout.
Peter Thomson

Eric Clapton
Money and Cigarettes
Warner Bros

After a period when his sweeter side looked set to submerge him, Eric got to show his blues teeth again on the underrated *Just One Night* album. Now he's with another label, although producer Tom Dowd is still around and he has a group that can push him almost as hard as the Dominos did.

Where Duane Allman once drove Clapton to new heights, Ry Cooder provides a more insidious although just as effective push. The interplay between Clapton and Cooder (a dream pairing) on the two venerable blues, Sleepy John Estes' 'Everybody Oughta Make a Change' and the much-recorded 'Crosscut Saw' (the guitar break is a bow to Albert King), is superb.

Not unexpectedly, the guitar work saves some of the album's lesser tracks, such as 'Man Overboard' and 'Slow Down, Linda'. But the lapses are few. By and large, things steam along, with Booker T bassman Duck Dunn and Muscles Shoals drummer Roger Hawkins stoking the boiler. Certainly Clapton's best studio album since 461 *Ocean Boulevard*.
Ken Williams

XTC
Waxworks:
Some Singles 1977-1982
Beeswax:
Some B-Sides 1977-1982
Virgin

Greatest Hits compilations generally serve as either post-humous retrospectives or as stop-gap plays designed to keep a band in mind during a lean period. The latter is XTC's situation.

Their creative spark has barely flickered over the last couple of years and so at the moment they're hardly vital components of the

current scene. Much of the music on these two albums sounds as if it belongs to another era but some of the songs have lasted the distance.

Partridge's eccentric cleverness, often too contrived and excessive as evidenced on *Beeswax* to intuitively make great pop, could produce the goods in the shape of 'Statue of Liberty', the remodelled 'This Is Pop', 'Sgt Rock' and 'Senses Working Overtime'.

Moulding, as the orthodox alternative, kept it competent and working along more predictable lines he managed a few right moves namely 'Nigel', 'Life Begins At The Hop', 'Blame the Weather' from the *B-Sides* and 'Ten Feet Tall', another flip but unfortunately absent from this collection.

Waxworks / Beeswax, at best, is an enjoyable trip down memory lane so it's not about to rekindle an XTC revival.
George Kay

Brave Combo
Music for Squares
Stunn

Call to mind the sort of small town restaurant that has wrought-iron matadors on the wall, a black ceiling (so you can't see the fly shit), and where the chef's special is steak burned black and crisp as a corn chip nestling to one side of the powdered mashed spuds and Watties mixed veges.

Picture the short-sighted man with the toupe and floral shirt who plays the Lowry organ while the mustard crimplene suit and canary yellow twin set stumble around the tiny dancefloor. Note his choice of material, note the versatility with which he switches the rhythm unit from 'rock' to 'rumba' to 'waltz' to 'cha cha'.

Imagine your local rock band sitting in the corner giggling when someone suggests it would be a real blast to rip off the Lowry man's repertoire and do real high energy versions of the dance tunes.

Imagine them doing it. Imagine them recording it all and putting out an actual album. Dream of what it would be like if the record actually got released, not only in hometown Denton, Texas, but in some place on the other side of the world called New Zealand. Try to think what it would be like if you had to sit down and write a sensible review of the record.
Don Mackay

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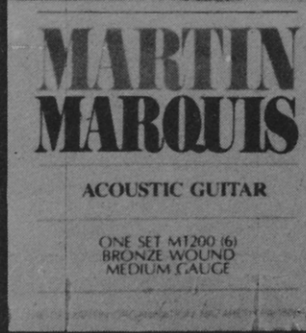
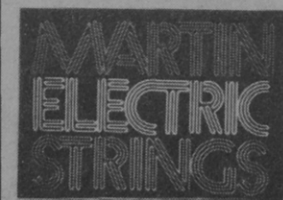
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BARRY REYNOLDS



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