

# Records

**Yoko Ono**  
**It's Alright (I See Rainbows)**  
*Polydor*

Yoko both produced and arranged this, so she must get the 'blame' for not being the mind-

warpingly, great musical force she was over a decade ago and kudos for being the public property she is and still coming out with an album as good as this.

Good, but not great, for where-as at her best she relied on her

voice to inspire, terrify and thrill you, these digital days she's content to sing in her off-hand off-key fashion and leave the sound effects to her musicians and engineers. In 1980, Lennon's guitar chilled spines on 'Walking On Thin Ice' and that sound (albeit in synthesised form, played by sessioners) permeates Side One, becoming an almost unbearable scream at the end of 'Never Say Goodbye'. There's lots of synths and things making some pretty extreme noises but they would've sounded better from John's guitar or her own larynx.

That notwithstanding, she's made pretty good use of her session men, with 'Let the Tears Dry' being the spooky, evocative highlight and several other tracks being edgy enough to make this a more interesting record than *Season of Glass*. I hope she's happy.

Chris Knox

**James White and the Blacks**  
**Sax Maniac**  
*Chrysalis*

Seconds after the needle hits these grooves, the James White style (and its limitations) becomes clear. A white boy with jazz roots and a passion for real funk, White plays a mean saxophone and forms songs by melding flashes of sound around it.

Both the music and lyrics are coarse, demented attempts to exorcise the problems which have plagued White's career and personal life. Unfortunately that manic drive fails to work for him because it highlights the lack of variety in his songs, the limitations of scissors and paste composition and White's one-eyed production. The sax alone rises clear of the muddy-sounding mire he's sunk the music in.

Of the seven tracks on this album, the best moments are provided by the ring-in brass section of John Mulicern and Joe Bowie on 'Sax Maniac' and 'Sax Machine'.

The soft porn play on words was intended by White, but fails to attract or appeal. 'Irresistible Impulse' starts well enough, but like the other songs here suffers from excessive length.

*Sax Maniac* would have made a titillating EP, but over-exposure renders White's moves too familiar and less than awe-inspiring. Variety and a new producer are required.

David Taylor

**Midnight Oil**  
**10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1**  
*CBS*

Countdowns usually mean one of two things: a launching or an explosion. In this case, Midnight Oil are waiting for the bomb to drop.

Much of their work has displayed a certain sense of moral outrage, concern at the state of the world, a protest march set to hard rock. But this album hones and focuses those feelings better than anything before and thus becomes their most accomplished work to date.

Concept albums are considered an anachronism these days and yet there is a central theme to *10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1* - the quality of life, and things which erode it. The bitter repercussions of colonialism and imperialism and the lessons nobody seems to learn. Cold war politics, militarism, class structures and inequality. Antipodean lassitude and complacency, its associated materialism and selfishness. Each song is linked to the other, both musically and lyrically. The complete picture is grim.

The band relies more on acoustic guitars and synthesisers this time. Peter Garrett says they took time to add 'more colour' to the sound, and it shows.

The strength lies in the songs, rather than sonic assault. It's an album that displays a lot of thought and care and the listener should treat it accordingly.

Duncan Campbell

**Ricky Skaggs**  
**Highways and Heartaches**  
*Epic*

It is almost an article of faith among current country performers to mourn the passing of simple recording and arranging of their music. 'Ah don't like these 24-track boards mahself,' moans the picker, 'but everybody else is usin' them, and addin' strings, so Ah have to.'

Ricky Skaggs, a 28-year-old who emerged from a pure bluegrass background, is a man who has put such feelings into his music. He sings with a high, spring voice that holds echoes of country pioneers like Lester Flatt and Hank Williams and produces himself without a hint of studio artifice.

What makes Skaggs a fascinating and entertaining artist is that he applies such traditional country virtues to songs from the best of what could loosely be called the new country writers, men like Guy Clark and Rodney Crowell. Clark provided 'Heartbroke', a surefire hit or records aren't round, while Shake Russell wrote 'You've Got a Lover' another superb song on the new album, Skaggs' third. It's an odd twist that Skaggs, by turning back to the old country music virtues of fiery, uncluttered playing and heartfelt singing, should sound so much fresher and nearer to the rock music mainstream than the Eddie Rabbitts of the world.

Phil Gifford

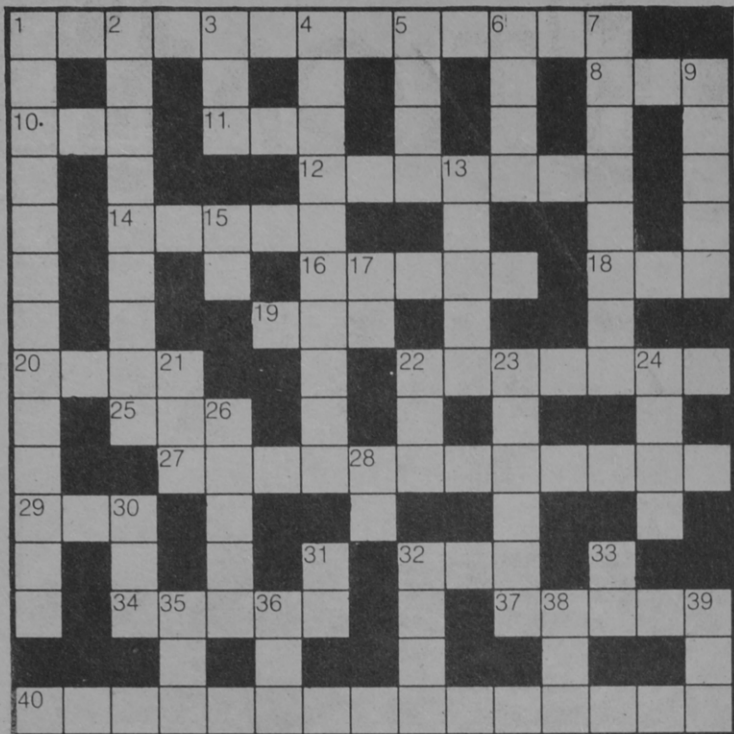
**Various Artists**  
**Countryman Soundtrack**  
*Island*

The plot for this movie, thoughtfully outlined on the cover, does not look encouraging. Two spoilt rich kids pinch Dad's plane, crash it into a Jamaican swamp. Conniving cops set them up in an anti-government plot, they take refuge with a backwoods type, who saves the day. 'A classic adventure story of good against evil, of power misused, of fear against fate', the spiel concludes. Oh dear. But since reggae films aren't considered 'bankable' in this country, we probably won't get to see it anyway.

So consider now the music. Much better, although the material written especially for the film by Wally Badarou is a little bit monotonous, being mostly throbbing jungle drums and various wildlife noises.

The rest is well-chosen tracks from the likes of Marley, Toots, Steel Pulse, Aswad, Lee Perry and Jah Lion. The movie is actually made by Island Pictures, a subsidiary of the record label and is produced by Chris Blackwell, a man who doesn't make many mistakes. It might even be a better film than suggested by the plot synopsis.

Duncan Campbell



## ACROSS

- 1 Astronomical new local single. (5,2,2,4)
- 8 Jim met his, but Nico has yet to.
- 10 Wheezy old rockers enter through this door.
- 11 The Greatest?
- 12 Igor, Don's wall of sound!
- 14 Manfred's band.

- 16 'Beautiful Sunday' Daniel.
- 18 Boy singer in popular Club.
- 19 Slits' first Slash.
- 20 What was split before Enz?
- 22 Otis wanted it first, then Aretha.
- 25 Pacific drum?
- 27 They had a last request before dying.

- 29 Brian gets rearranged, but only in the singular.
- 18 The 60s had *Georgie Girl*, we got a ...
- 19 Knock the ends off a Walker Brother and you've got a bed for the night.
- 32 Good what from the Hip Singles?
- 34 One of Clapton's songs.
- 37 'Funky Kingston' man.

- 40 Pop's aviary of the walking dead. (6,9)

## DOWN

- 1 'Christine' creator. (8,5)
- 2 Not quite deco track on Bowie's *Low*. (3,6)
- 3 XTC's black stuff.
- 4 Band next door?
- 5 Whose eyes did Th'Dudes sing about?
- 6 Ono, it's ...
- 7 This captain's not silly!
- 9 Head dickhead.
- 13 B52's mess around, this.
- 15 Initially, the Furs' leading man (1,1)
- 17 Wot way and Barrett?
- 21 Clean eyed lady?
- 22 This went better with Coke on a Hello Sailor B-side.
- 23 Mods, a rather tedious affair.
- 24 If this is it, then what's the disease?
- 26 Bob's day women.
- 28 Smash movie that Disney might have made but didn't. (1,1)
- 30 ... Pie, British studio and publishing co.
- 31 Who a bleeding Dylan reassured.
- 32 To be had with skittles, rhythm and blues?
- 33 ... 2 and number two for XTC.
- 35 Not yer average black band. (1,1,1)
- 36 To recline or misrepresent.
- 38 Lennon's plastic band.
- 39 A man named Johnny sang boy named ...

ANSWERS ON PAGE 30



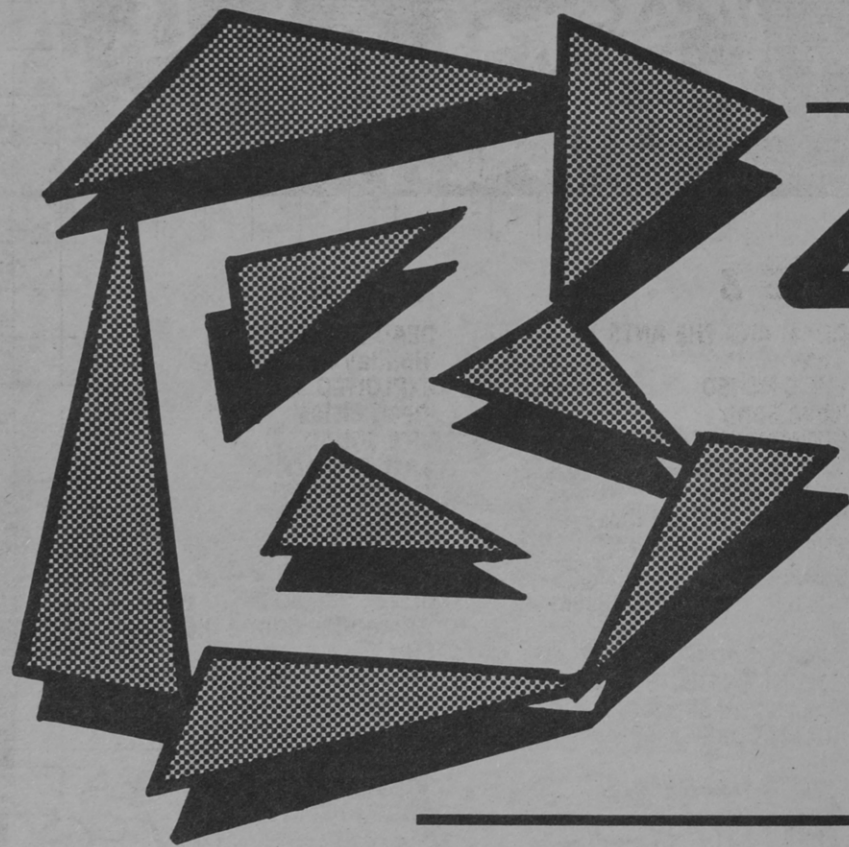
BILLY CONNOLLY IS JUST DOING IT FOR LAUGHS AT ...

THE  
**SECRET POLICEMAN'S BALL**

"MONTY PYTHON FANS SHOULD LOVE IT - IT IS CONSISTENTLY FUNNY RIGHT DOWN TO THE CREDITS." *Newsday*

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