GRAM PARSONS AND THE FALLEN ANGELS:
Live 1973 and EP (Streets Records, Box 5853, Pasadena, CA 91107-5853) These recent releases from the struggling Sierra label are of significant historical interest, much like that of Vol. 1 of the same set (which it is), as part of early group The Shillos. These newer issues feature Emmy Lou Harris, a new backup band called the Fallen Angels, and even some Clarence White guitar playing with a return to the "collector" status Parsons will want to own both of them, even though the recording, playing, and musical importance of the records falls a little short of the standards one expects from Parsons. The band (this is after James Burton, Glen D. Hardin, etc.) is practically a pickup band, and their playing, though adequate, is not especially distinguished. There are however, some interesting air checks of short interviews with Parsons: these are enjoyable and more or less funny. Most cuts are covers of previous Parsons tunes ("Well Sweep Out the Ashes," "Streets of Baltimore," "Cry One More Time."... ) and gain little from these alternate versions. A few new tunes, previously unrecorded by Parsons (Chuck Berry's 40 Days" and "Rambler's Tune" give some idea of the directions he might have gone. Both records were recorded live on March 13, 1973 (not long before his death) at the Garden Club, Garden City, NY, but on the back cover the EP contains a kind of posthumous release (the liner notes are unclear) of "Hot Burrito 1," one of Parsons' most beautiful compositions. This features George Parsons singing lead and Clarence White on acoustic guitar.

—Larry Polansky

THE PASSAGE
"Wave","Drugface," "Angieqm-
land" (Cherry Red Records Ltd., 53 Kensington Gardens Square, London W2 4BA) This is a very good, very catchy dance music and an interesting musical composition. For a three-minute song this has a lot to offer—pounding drums that never let up, simple melodies trans-
formed and recombined to form polyrhythms, well executed and complex vocals, even touches of humor. The two songs on the flip side sounded like their typical ostinato-based techno-pop.

—Tim Walsh

LEE "SCRATCH" PERRY: Mystic Miracle Star (Heartbeat, 186 Willow Ave., Somerville, MA 02144) Your enjoyment of this reggae/rock band LP depends upon your willingness to perpetuate the mystique of this legendary producer/song-
writer. I think all can agree that he's got a unique sound, but the songs are long and ob-
scene (Roky Erickson kept coming to mind), and there's nothing revolutionary about the pro-
duction. Perry's scratchy vocals (he raps like an old bluesman over his own singing) and unusual effects (harmonica, xylophone, etc.) are the
whole show. Rochester, NY's Majestics just keep the songs from drifting away. While I enjoyed the basic song structures, the ideas seemed a bit thin.

—JF

PERSONAL EFFECTS 5-song 12" LP (Caphatht, 611 Broadway, Suite 214, NYC 10012) Formerly the Hi-Techs, this Rochester, NY Band is led by the vocals, sax, and organ of co-songwriter Peggy Fournier. Based on the structure of bands like Mahalia and Romeo Void, I'm betting this danceable serious-side-of-pop group has a good chance of acceptance. Fournier's vocals are strictly beautiful "new wave" boy poet, but she has a strong melodic sense. The atmospheric music, making good use of guitar and keyboard effects, is stylized, distant, captures the nouveau post-punk perfectly.

—JF

PERSUASIVE PERCUSSION, Vols. 1-3. The Command All-Stars (Command 200, 26 W 42, New York) Back in the 50s, when every Fischer brought us living stereo, such folks as Ennio Light and Terry Snyder had the bright idea of "aligning music with text patterns," and their RIAA speaker, and whatever else they were interested in doing. The result is the Persuasive Percussion series of stereo albums. I only know of three volumes. The first two (which I have) are a great combo of early Muzak with occasionally inspired solo breaks and lots of stereo-shit gimmicks. Great with headphones. The third released on Pickwick, but seek out the original, Command Records...they're better pressings and have lots of useless information on the jacket, like the fact that they used a Teledynken U-47 mike on the opening bongo solo in "Blue Tango." Makes for great background music that you can occasionally hum to.

—Tom Leonard

POISON GIRLS: Where's the Pleasure (Katrix Records, c/o Brunswick, 135 S. Crescent St., Winooski, VT 05404). This record actually makes me think, something I can say about very few records these days. The second album (I think) for what is now the Poison Girls who are further out from their punk roots musically but not lyrically. This is one of those bands where the musical backing—which varies in this case from garage-like to ballads to funk to what must be some type of Irish folk hymn—seems incidental in comparison to the words and feelings expressed. Puzzling at times, the emphasis here is on love and freedom, on the latter—the deic, failed expectations, and failure. It's bittersweet, often hard to swallow, but nonetheless thought-
ful. "Where's the Pleasure" is a heartfelt and very well written song that makes a dramatic music-making process. The resultant music leans towards melodrama, but it's kind of engaging... really.

—Blake Cunepround

POLYROCK: Above The Fruited Plain (PVC, c/o JEM, 3619 Kennedy Road, South Plainfield, NJ 07080) Although a bit more accessible than their two albums produced by noted composer Philip Glass, Polyrock still suffer from their self-
indulgent trappings. The complex, shifting rhythm-
ics and abstract melodic abstraction is a fair vocalist, but the tunes are drab and faceless. Polyrock's main problem is that they're trying to reach too many people. The final outcome is a very generic music, wobbly and not
not enough for the tendencies on the dance floor. There's talent here, but it's still struggling to find a way to come to the fore. —C.F. Lamey

RICHARD POVALL: Another Time, Another Place/End Music cassette (Poval, Mills Center for Contemporary Music, Oakland, CA 94613) Poval is a young composer from England, now a grad student at the CCM, interested in com-
positions dealing with recorded modification of a homogenous instrumental ensemble. Of these pieces are for live instrumentalist and tape (the first for saxophone, the second for trombone). Another Time, Another Place is a kind of jazz/ pattern music fusion work featuring the solo playing of altoist Magdelene Luecke. Poval produces some beautiful multi-tracked sax section playing, and the use of an old ribbon mike on the sax gives the even more distinctive sound. End Music is a long work for trombone and multi-track tape delay, and features the fine "extended" playing of James Fullerman. The most documenta-
tion of the live performance version of the piece. Both of these works are enhanced by Poval's fine recording skills, and the sax piece is one of the newer pieces to come out of CCM.

—Larry Polansky

RICHARD POWELL: Roses of Hell (Zyrule Records, 36 York Rd., Montpellier, Bristol 6, U.K.) Solo improvisations overdubbed in multi-track, using just piano, guitar, and later, though it's a bit cold. The label is owned by Northampton Cooper-
ative, a British performing arts organization that looks very interesting and exciting. But here is another case of free music losing its freedom in the process of disc mastering. An experiment is no longer experimental at its conclusion—and here the conclusion is dull. However, I admire and respect any musician with the honesty to release such a record and stand behind the effort...

—Michael Huntsberger

PROPELLER LABEL. Box 658, Allston, MA 02135. Specialty. Post-punk garage rock. Latest EP sells EP as $3.65, Dangerous Birds, Christmas, and 21-64. Charts no new ground in active rock rhythms, but the groups all seem exceptionally committed, sincere, and there is a lot of women participation. The bands all but invest in the music-making process. The resultant music leans towards melodrama, but it's kind of engaging... really.

PULSATIONS "Fat Girls"/"Creature of Habit" (Mirror Image; PO Box 10430, Chicago, IL 60610) "Fat is a poppy lyric-oriented discourse on the love life of fat girls that goes for Elvis Costello-popular "creepies" is a spooky cinematic cartoon with words... guitar trills, tinkly bells, keyboard washes. Pretty good.

—JF

PYLON "Warp"/"Attitude" (DB Records, 432 Moreland Ave, NE, Atlanta, GA 30309) Aural seduction. Produced by Chris Stamey and Gene Holder of the DBs (no relation) and engineered by Greg Egan, this is easily the best-sounding 7" I've heard in a while, a long time. Oh, those resonant vocals and snares (Vanessa Briscoe's most expressive performance), that ringing guitar (one writer called it "squirly and spidy"), and pounding rhythm make for one happy boy. Zowie! I have no idea what the songs are about and don't care. "Deep Deep" has the passion of the Neo Beatgirls but is more interesting because I'm not a dance floor hit. "Altitude" builds like one of those Neil Young guitar-wrenchers (pre-vedettes), even takes one of Young's bass lines. Teflic. 9

—JF

QUARTET Soundtrack (Gramavision Records, 260 West Broadway, NYC 10013) The movie from which this record is taken is set in the "Jazz Age" of the 20s (as if we are not in a jazz age now). Each piece of music is a contemporary composition performed in the style of the 20s and 30s. As is generally the case with movie soundtracks, there is the usual "filler" music, but Quaret also manages to include some outstanding swing numbers—not surprising, as Marshall Royal plays both clarinet and alto sax. If you saw the movie but loved the music, you have probably rushed to buy this record—if you didn't see the movie but love this style of music, there is much better classic fare around.

—Kevin Martin
DEV SINGH: Made In Chicago (Rampur, 2018 Delaware St., Chicago, IL 94709) Singer-songwriter in a mixed bag of styles, traditional to soul. Singh's got a clear tenor with unexpected range, but his phrasing is often haphazard and he can be overly theatrical. Arrangements tend to have the same problems. The highlights are a folky, nostalgic look at Chicago's 1960s, "When Rich and Famous" and "The Days of 68;" a goodtimey "Battle of New Orleans" with mouth-ho, fiddle, and dulcimer; Singh's stratospheric vocal on "Even the Sky's Got Soul"; and "Ellicombe," a beautiful bit tune where he plays harp and doesn't sing at all. -JF

SLAPP HAPPY "Everybody's Slummin' (Even Men and Women)"/"Blue-Eyed William" (Half Cat; dist. by Recommended, 503 Wadsworth Rd., Leningrad, YS, Peter, Bly, tell us all about Moore, and Dagmar Krause's reunion features the funniest, funniest white rap to date—charming and down to earth. "Sweet William" is an entirely different set of sounds, is relaxed and mysterious, and still has a soul beat. An essential slice of eccentric esoterica. -JF 9

THE SORROWS: Take A Heart (Raven Records, PO Box 92, Camberwell, VIC, 3124, Australia) Of the many groups that missed the boat to America during the mid-sixties British invasion, the Sorrows were one of the best. Even in their homeland, their success was limited to a few minor hit singles, of which "Take a Heart" was the biggest. Their failure to make more of an impact is mysterious, for the Sorrows just about had it all. With a good lead singer and tight, powerful playing, the group produced an excellent tough pop-rock sound, recalling the Pretty Things (though not as R&B oriented) and the Kinks (though not as pop-oriented). They wrote well, got other songwriters to write good material for them, and knocked off a couple of unlikely covers of the Strangeloves' "Cara Lin" and the Lovin' Spoonful's "My Girl," which surpass the originals. They also hinted at exciting potential artistic growth in the nearly psychedelic "Pink Purple Yellow and Red" (possibly one of the first rock songs about a bad trip, though probably on pills, not acid) and the Dylan-esque "Don't Sing No Sad Songs for Me." All of which got them virtually nowhere, compelling the group to pack it up less than two years after they first recorded in 1965. A shame, for they decisively outclass many other more renowned second-rank British Invasion groups, such as the Small Faces and Hollies. This 14-song LP is remarkably consistent for its time and place—although some tracks are better than others, you can nearly always count on a sound which, as the sleeve notes claim, "will make your feet very, very tired." One minor complaint: the album notes, written as though the group had any clue about the group's ages and birthplaces, but little about their history. -Richie Unterberger

SO YOU WANNA BE A ROCK'N'ROLL STAR, Volume One—the Scream Years of Australian Rock, 1964-1966 (Festival Records, Australia). Australian rock archivist Glenn Baker set out to create an Australian Nuggets with this double album. While it is occasionally excellent, it fails to match Lenny Kaye's classic compilation for several reasons. First, there is just too much pop and lightweight, ranging from pleasant to mediocre, as opposed to Kaye's straightforward rock selection. Second, the covers various rock standards (such as "Poison Ivy" and "Ain't That A Shame") are tame, although they may have special significance for Australians who had to settle for Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs in the absence of the Rolling Stones. But there are some good moments. The Sunsets' "I Found You" and the Black Diamonds' "See the Rain" are British Invasion-inspired pop-rock of the highest order. "I'm The One With The Magic Wings" and "Don't Ask Me Why" is first-class R&B tinged rock; and the Purple Hearts' "Early in the Morning" is an original hard rock interpretation of a traditional folk song. These are also some enjoyable Beattle imitations. You could easily boil this down to one pretty good record, but Baker chose to include a lot to make it a comprehensive document of mid-sixties Australian rock. That is, it is means you have to take the bad with the good, for which you should be warned before investing in this expensive import. -Richie Unterberger

SU YOU WANNA BE A ROCK'N'ROLL STAR, Volume Two—the Psychedelic Years of Australian Rock, 1967-1970 (Festival Records, Australia). This collection suffers from the same faults as its predecessor. There's too much pop (many of the "psychedelic" tracks are pop-oriented with some gratuitous orchestra and tape effects), and too many thoroughly undistinguished covers of American/British rock standards. Although several tracks on Volume One helped make up for these flaws, this set doesn't contain anything really first-rate. There is some decent stuff: about the best are the James Young's "Woman," the "Magic Eyes," and the "What's New, Pussycat?" (equal parts Pink Floyd, Moby Grape, and early Soft Machine) and Chains' "Mr. Time," the best Traffic/Poco Harum soundalike I've heard. Combined with the extensive liner notes, this 39-track album gives a good overview of the late sixties Australian rock scene, a curious amalgam of pop-rock, pop psychedelia, and early progressive rock. But apparently it wasn't much of a scene, so only avid historians need invest in this volume. -Richie Unterberger

LARRY SPARKS: The Testing Times (Rebel, Box 191, Floyd, VA 24091, USA) Chris Stahl and Larry Sparks's version of hardcore "bluegrass" isn't for everyone, especially for those weaned on the progressive bluegrass of a younger generation. But I've always liked his unadorned and unabashed approach, and have especially been a fan of his simple, Travis-style guitar playing. This album, however, isn't all one would hope. The biggest problem is that the guitar is often half the cuts are reissues of King recordings, although the liner notes do not give details as to whether cuts, or (specifically) where they were previously released. I happen to own these earlier LPs, and it's interesting to note that these are the best on this new album. Some of the other sides feature Ricky Skaggs on mandolin and these are excellent. Sparks specializes in gospel bluegrass and nearly every cut on this album is in that tradition. "I'm Gonna Fall In Love Again" and "I Want To Die Easy, Lord" are two of the standout here, and should be of interest especially to guitar players—for, within the particular limits of his style, Sparks is one of the strongest and most polished in bluegrass. -Larry Polansky

SPRAY PALS "Happy Go Lucky"/"Dead Sea" (available from Wax Trax, 638 E. 13th Ave., Denver, CO 80203; $2.50 per record, guitar, voice, and keyboards) with a fairly original sound—Mediterranean pop perhaps? "Happy" has bouzouki added, both have industrial percussion. Sombre and arty but still different enough to make it special. -JF 8

SQUEEZE LOUISE "Wire Hangers"/"Train of Thought" (Wax Lisc; dist. by Lady Slipper Music, 3217 St. SE, Washington, DC 20003) 5women rock quintet (usually plus synths). "Hangers" is sarcastic, abrasive punk, a mother talking to her "bad girl" daughter. "Train" sounds closer to Patti Smith but has unimpressive hard rock backing. -JF

DONNA STARK "I've Gone To Hell Just To Get To Heaven"/"Time Alone" (RCL, PO Box 126, Elmhurst, NY 10303) Sweet Karen Carpenter version of Flange guitar, and rhythm unit, bright sound. "Time," the ballad, goes astray. CK:5, BP:6, JF:5.

START: Look Around (Fresh Sounds, PO Box 36, Lawrence, KS 66044) Second release from this excellent pop trio. They blend the sounds of '60s American psychedelia with '60s British mod, giving them a diverse sound (kind like the Doors meet the Jam). The eight cuts are all excellently produced, using light effects on the guitar, drums, and Eastern style keyboards. All the songs are very catchy, snappy, and quite enjoyable. My favorites are "Six Little Fish/Big Fish" (which features Allen Ginsberg giving some of his socio-political commentary) and the moody ditty, "My Town." -Mike Clark

CLIVE STEVENS: Brainchild 12" EP (Guerrilla, PO Box 122, NYC 10025) Steve's plays seven sax and lyric-on—a wind instrument that sounds like a synthesizer—and fronts a very energetic fusion ensemble. I'm not a big fan of this sort of fusion, but this is convincing with its screaming but wistful melodies and general sort of screamingly beautiful sound—rather like Return To Forever in their most strident. Of the four tunes I like "Caribbean Man" most all but not too slick blend of reggae and jazz-rock. So, though it inhabits an uncomfortable position somewhere between genres—it's fairly funky but not dance music—I'd have to say I can dig it. -Robert Legault

STICKMEN: Get on Board 5-song 12" EP (Red, 810 Longfield Rd., Phila., PA 19118) Wild, wild white funk, the Minutemen of the funkateer circuit. Rapid-fire no wave guitars, clanging percussives, occasional contorted sax, imaginative J.B. meets Parliament vocals (in a parodic style some would call racist). "Funky Hayride," with a big, boppy bass-line, is long at almost five minutes (the only cut to break two minutes) but it allows the band to stretch out some of their super-speed routines. -JF 7
**GUNTER HAMPEL, JEANNE LEE, THOMAS KEYSELING**

Companion (Birth; dist. by NMDS, 500 B'way, NYC 10012, 212-925-2121) I'm not usually impressed by sound per se, but the clarity of this digital recording is remarkable, greatly enhancing the enjoyment value of this session for vibes, flute, alto sax, bass clarinet, and voice in various combinations. Vocalist Lee, heard on all six compositions, with her "bu-wa-bupa" and "su-ya-flu-evens," has a pretty, gentle voice that usually softens and fleshes out the otherwise fairly sparse music in the way a lounge crooner vocalist would if not expected to sing the song, setting the tone for edge-of-experimental jazz tunes that would have more sharp corners without her presence. And I think the trio decided for the stereotypical Euro-ECM sound, maybe too controlled for the stereotypical Hat Hut crowd, but it does find a pleasant spot somewhere between.

—DF

**THE HAPPINESS BOYS: Meat Parade 12" EP (Duotone Records, Box 1168, Miami, FL 33243) Duo playing a variety of instruments (synths, guitars, sax, etc.). Their press bio claims they play at a large number of "dance-rock clubs," which is sorta hard to believe, as they're kinda weird, even if they do have a beat. With "roots of Dada, Stockhausen, Sun Ra, and the Sex Pistols," this isn't exactly my cup of tea, but I still found it to be pretty interesting, especially since they seem to be trying pretty hard to keep themselves interesting, while not being "out" that they can't get gigs. I wonder what they sound like live.

—Steven Feigenbaum

**LOYD HEMMINGS** “To Slow to Disco”/“Believe” (Musc Video Prods, 2016 Lincoln Blvd., Venice, CA 90201, 213-399-6624) 33-year-old Jamaican singer (a recording veteran of 10 years) doing his stuff on a couple of lightweight reggae tunes, "Believe" stronger in all respects. It has a soulful and gentle vocal but is marred by somewhat poor production. Fast percussion plays a big role in the arrangement (until a "Kung Fu Fighting" synthesizer put at the end, providing an interesting contrast to the slow, natural singing style.

—DF

**GREG HICKS**: Ragtime-Tickled Pink (Folkways, 43 W. 61st St., NYC 10023) Hicks is a kind of young specialist in ragtime, and in the tradition of his producer, David Jason (responsible for the excellent "lute liner notes," and people like Trebor Tichenor of St. Louis, has recorded an album of rather obscure rags, ranging from old folk and novelty rags, to two that might even be called modern. I found it hard to follow, but that's what's so nice about this album. And these are fine rags as well. I especially like Mayer's "Virginia Creeper" and Roy Bargy's "Pianoflage." Bargy is represented by two other interesting rags on this record, and I would like to hear more of his work. Hicks has done a fine job in putting together the material, and his playing is sensitive and technically excellent. Just one quibble: however, I'm not a rapist and I do know that there's no Law that says you have to play all these tunes as fast as you can (a la Max Morath), but I guess that's just a matter of taste. The three rags by Will Lamb (in 1948) are listenable but are surprisingly square, and one can't help but compare them to some of the great contemporary rags by people like William Bolcom and James Tenney. But I applaud Hicks for playing them, and indeed for this whole album which is an intriguing musical and historical gesture. Born in NY, but moved to St. Louis, Hicks is further proof that ragtime still hasn't moved up the river.

—Larry Polansky

**THE HI FI ORCHESTRA** (e/o Ernesto Ramirez, Apartado Postal #33, Jalostotitan, Jalisco 45720 (Mexico, $10, available from Wayside Music) I've heard very little progressive music from Mexico, and if this is any indication, I'd be up to hear more. The HFO seems to be the brainchild of guitarist Jesus Martin, as he wrote and produced the LP. They use a standard quartet format (keyboards, guitar, bass, drums) and are entirely instrumental. The music doesn't really reflect "native" influences to any great degree, except for "Piel Morena," where the mariachis lend a mariachi-band air to the tune. Pretty good playing throughout by all involved. While not earth-shattering or incredibly original, jazz/rock listeners and people looking for something a bit unusual will certainly enjoy this.

—Steven Feigenbaum

**DERECK HIGGINS**: Derek 2 4-tune 7" EP (4115 N. 36th Av., Omaha, NE 68111) Very different from his first (under just the name Derek), this finds one-man band Higgins working with clear, beautiful sonorities, producing impressionistic rock-based instrumental landscapes with titles like "Sky Blue," "Clouds Adrift," and "Dream Music" that are excellently self-produced (of course) and never overblown. Probably of more interest to Eurotrashers than as these are fairly complex arrangements. Higgins, incidentally, is a black Residents fanatic, a big fan of Stockhausen, Fred Frith, and Cecil Taylor—all the more reason for him making music like this in Omaha.

—DF

**TOSHIYUKI HONDA & BURNING WAVES** Burnerang (Electric Bird Records, 2-12-13, Otowa, Bunkyo-Ku, Tokyo, Japan) This band plays high-spirited, melodic jazz rock that immediately reminds me of several other artists of this ilk. Strains of Weather Report, Return to Forever, and Spyrogyra can be heard throughout. Bandleader Honda plays sax and flute with apparent ease but doesn't hog all of the solos, the rest of the band turning in their share as well. I liked "Nihon 1-3" the best. The keyboards work is particularly nice on this cut. The album almost sounds like a sampler, going from straight swing to heavy metal guitar riffs all in one side.

—Derek Higgins

**HUDSON ROCK—15 BANDS FROM ALBANY, NY** (MCE Records, 463 State St., Schenectady, NY 12305) A neat collection of rockers (modern variety) excellently recorded at Mark C. Ernst's 8-track and released as an alternative to the local station's "best of local rock" album. I'm not sure how all these guys get along on the mean streets of Albany, but they sound great together; better, in fact, than on their own projects; if songs by Bistro ("Lightning Strikes" again), the A.D.A., the Moreons, and Fear of Strangers are any indication. The young reptiles version of Peanuts Wilson's rockability number called "Cast Iron Arm" is revelatory if you've heard them as the arty Leopard Society. But art bands aren't afforded much space here; most bands would come under the "real rock'n roll" or "punk" rubrics. There's even some hardcore punk, including a message by Capite说明 onto the end groove. I don't think any of the bands on this album are as good as the best bands in Olympia, but at least they've been able to put out an LP that is listenable all the way through.

—JF

**HUGO KLANG** "The Wheel of Fate"/"Mouse Runner" (Au-Go-Go, PO Box 251, Pitzbry, 3065, Victoria, Australia) "Ollie" sings kind of like the Birthday Party's Nick Cave and clangs (with extra singing by Marie Hoy), gets a good rhythm going, too. I enjoy his low, rumbly grumblings and yelps, reminds me of my own intuitive approach to singing, but at least I know what I'm rambling on about.

—JF

**THE HUNGARIAN QUARTET**: Quincey Porter—String Quartet No. 7, Cecil Effinger—String Quartet No. 5 (Civl Records, PO Box 4538, Boulder, CO 80306) I enjoyed both of these quartets, though they may not be music for all time. Porter and Effinger are of an older generation of American composers whose music is based on tonality and neo-classicism, though clearly in a modern idiom. Of the two, Porter's is the more pleasant, especially in the first movement which reminded me of Peter Garland's Matachín Dances, though it has none of Garland's experimental tendencies. Effinger's work seemed to synchronize with Improvisations and the more conserva
tive side of Bartok. Perhaps not the most challenging music, it is nonetheless well crafted and finely executed by the Hungarian Quartet.

—Dean Suzuki
MUTABARUKA "Drug Kulcha"/SISTER BREEZE "Slick" (12" 45 (Heartbeat, 186 Willow Av., Somerville, MA 02144) Both sides are produced by "dub poet" Mutabaruka, whose scanning, hard-edged vocal on the "A" is fiercely anti-drug. The full, disco sound includes appropriate rock guitar. The flip, composed and sung-spoken by Jean Breeze, features the same self-righteous tone. The instrumental dub versions at the end of each side are nothing special. —JF 8

NERVOUS MELVIN & THE MISTAKES 4-song 7" EP (2110 Village Dr., Louisville, KY 40205) Straightforward pop-rock quartet with the usual social and political influences, including rockabilly, ska, and British Invasion. Danceable, yes; new and exciting, no. —JF 4

THE NEW AGE STEPPERS: Foundation Steppers (On U Sounds, Studio 345, O&N Warehouse, Metropolitan Wharf, Wapping Wall, London E1, England) Adrian Sherwood takes two tracks by Arri Up with the Roots Radics (one of them the worst version of "Storray Weather" I've ever heard) and expands them into an LP. Not bad as it sounds. There are only a couple of instrumental tracks, and he got Bin Sherman to contribute their very good new songs. Sherman has a great voice, like Gregory Isaacs, and he's a top rate songwriter (as you would know if you got his Across the Red Sea LP). On previous New Age Steppers albums Sherman has only sung background vocals or written a few songs. Here he steps out front (including experimenting with new vocal styles) and makes this worthwhile. Creation Rebel backing tracks rule okay, too. —Jim Finnigan

NO GUITARS (CMI, 36 W. 38 St., NYC 10018) They must be trying hard to sound like the Buggles, but there's no "Video Killed the Radio Star" to keep the proceedings from getting boring. There are even moments when No Guitars manage to capture the essence of Elton John at his most mediocre. The humor of the lyrics isn't especially engaging, either. —Dave Luhrsen
THE NOT: What’s The Reason (Not Records, PO Box 238, Cambridge, MA 02238) Thanks, John, for sending this to me. I needed it. Good to hear an original garage band that sound a bit like the Buzzcocks but know how to play their instruments and don’t get in each other’s way. All six of the songs here are similar in form and sound to any number of other bands, but any number of other bands don’t perform songs like these nearly so well. More fun than cable TV—Steve Jones

THE NOVAS “The Crusher”/“Take 7” (Mean Mountain Music, PO Box 04325, Minn., WI 53204) Reissue of “The Crusher,” since made famous by the Cramps, is similar to Fred Blackes’ forays into popular song (e.g., “Penicilled Gook”), though the phrase of note here is “turkey necks.” The “B” is a RAR instrument for electric guitar, G6, B5, D5, A5.

THE NYLONS Seamless (Artic Records, 625 King St. West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada) NSW 1M7) A cappella and vocal ensembles seem to be making a run comeback. The Nygons are four man group accompanied only by percussion. Their sound is very much like that of Motown groups before the advent of the beat. The harmonies are sweet, thick, incredibly tight, and seemingly endless. And so is the vocal sound! However, one member is from Tennessee and bass-baritone Arnold Robinson is black, from North Carolina, and a former member of the R&B group The Flatters. Still, the three white boys had me fooled, especially Claude Morrison, whose falsetto is derived from R&B without a hint of Franky Valli’s stiffness. Their talent was spotted by Lamont Dozier, of Holland-Dozier-Holland, who wrote a song especially for this album. The Nygons also know their roots and the vocal tradition with their fine rendition of “Oo-wee, Oh Me, Oh My” originally done by the Ad-Libs of “Boy From New York City” fame and the Shankles’ “Remember When.” The second side is devoted to songs written by members of the group, and here they succeed as well, with songs ranging from a sweet love ballad to the jungle rhythms and percolating energy of “Combat Zone.”—Dean Suzuki

MICHAEL NYMAN, PAUL RICHARDS, BRUCE MCCLEAN “The Masterpiece” Award-Winning Fish-Knife cassette (Audio Arts, B Brianwood, Lon- don SW1 JP3, England) Composer Nyman has provided the sounscore for the “performance sculpture” created by Richards and McClean. Side one is devoted to large extracts recorded during a live performance of the score by Nyman’s band. For those familiar with his last couple of records, this will sound familiar, characteristic of his current style, though his indebtedness to Philip Glass and Steve Reich is even more pronounced. The steady pulse, the timbres (keyboards, woodwinds), and the tonal melodic and harmonic elements are obviously derived from the American minimalists, especially Glass, by virtue of rhythmic repetition and irregular and changing phrase lengths. However, Nyman is his own man and the style he employs is identifiable as his own. The gitches found in this live recording—inexact entries, inaccurate innovation, etc.—are mitigated by the vibrant energy of the performance. The second side is a much faster, sardonic piece in which several writers enunciate their texts separately and simultaneously. The entire work is an inter-media piece which incorporates dance and gymnastics.—Dean Suzuki

OFFENDERS “I Hate Myself”/“Bad Times” (Rabbit Cat, Box 49293, Austin, TX 78765; 512-492-8851) Rabbit Cat was formerly Froco Records, but Tolken Ent. threatened to sue. Amazing! Nicely-recorded sort of stylized metallic hard rock with changes in tempo, some dynamic range. “Bad Times” riffs around organized religion, sounds like Motorhead and early Circle Jerks combined. Viki thought the lyrics were refreshing, better than the usual “rock with meaning.”—DJ, DJ, DJ, BS, BV7

BRUCE OLSEN: Home on the Range 4-song 7” EP (Genetic Records, PO Box 7054, Richmond, VA 23223) Written, produced, performed, and engineered by Olsen at the local Floodzone studio, where he has been chronicling a bunch of records for Richmond bands. His biting guitars, in the grand, ringing, townshend/Richard tradition, add an extra string of hope to “Home on the Range” of a tale of a disfigured man’s search for salvation in the American wilderness. Sound too heavy? Try “Pressure Point,” where he has the gals to “rumm and beer’z and plittz” with “the girl I see at.” All in all, a nice, fun rock and roll record.—Jeff Lindholm

THE OESBORNE BROTHERS: Some Things I Want to Sing About (Saggar Hill SH-340, Box 4540 Deke Sta., Dublin, CA 94527) Fine new record by this gloriously bluegrass band—must if you’re an Oesberoe fan. Aside from a good place to start if you’re not. They haven’t changed their style much, still incorporating electric bass, pedal steel, and drumming in a blend similar to Creedence, and still relying on Sonny Oesberoe’s fantastic banjo playing. Bob Oe’s furry mandolin and patented “tenor” sound. The Oesbroe brothers, have always voiced their trio harmonically differently than other bluegrass artists. They solos the above the tenor, and on this record their sound unusually clean and tight, with a great recording. It’s hard to single out favorite songs, but “Hear My Heart,” “Biggern Linenwoman,” and “This Time” of “Wet Her Hair” (which can almost make you like barro’s) are standouts. Also, pay special attention to the playing of young fiddler Blairnoone Sprouse—how’s as finn a backup player as I’ve ever heard. Though there’s times when their sound is too loud, it’s first class in all other respects.—Larry Potanski

OZ: Fire in the Brain (Combust/Impact—1994-03 Guy Brewer Blvd., Jamaica, NY 11454) First, convoluted (2 guitarists) ultra-heavy metal from Sweden (sung in English, if it matters). Advanced marvel.—JF

THE PAISLEY: Cosmic Mind at Play (Psycho Records, 24 Cecil Sq., Margate, Kent, UK) if you can imagine the Mothers’ “We’re Only in It for the Money” performed with total sincerity instead of total sarcasm, you’ll have some idea of what this band is about. There’s no pasting the badly dated absurdism, you may find yourself enjoying this reissue. The six songs on side one are: cosmic, beat with a lightheartedness and verse which would seem to be the answer for a “heavy” approach. Side two, (which is also the third) is no better. Said heaviness is all too apparent on “Masonic Journey,” one of the earlier side-long rock tracks. Some interesting moments, but ultimately a trial to sit through, though it’s kind of cut which might be fun to hear once (on the radio). At one point the track is inexplicably interrupted by some nintch-

KRYSZTOF PENDERECKI: Symphony No. 2 (EMI Records, 90034) is said to be the innovative, creative genius of one of the most radical, innovative composers of the post-World War II generation. Penderecki has abandoned the traditional form and structure, the emphasis on timbre, for a more Romantic form. It is not clear what the former does for the Victims of Hiroshima, here, rather a symmetry that belongs to the likes of Bruckner or Wagner. Of course, one cannot go on re-writing pieces based on huge clusters forever, but Penderecki’s work to the twentieth century is really no answer. In and of itself, the symphony is too long...lush and interestingly listenable, but amid the crush of other no-Romantic works, it fails to rise above and assert itself.—Dean Suzuki

PENNYROYAL: Well All Right! (P& R Records, 12 August Rd., Southport, England) Excellent, the Boswell Sisters, Pennyroyal consists of three women who sing and play (guitar and bass) swing music with a repertoire that includes compositions such as Fab Wallen’s They’re Running Away with My Heart, the Fabulous Not So Fabulous in- stuments including the pianoforte styled Dave Frisbie and violinist Richard Greene. Jackie Kelso contributes some very tasty clarinet lines on the title cut. There is some undulating, but generally very smooth instrumental work. Donna Medici doubled by solo guitar played by Paty Fiske on “Big Bad Bill is Sweet William Now.” A past era is evoked, somewhat humorously, by the use of a male chorus that appears to the male emcee. A new ‘good’ idea of God! The vocals are far up tempo melhor rap on OK and some raunchy Charms.—Don Johnson

THE PANTHERS: It’s About Time (Vex Records, PO Box 7112, Burbank, CA 91510) I’ve mused legends about this all-women’s 60s garage/pysch revival group. On one hand, I admire them because they obviously share my love for mid-sixties rock, because they’ve invading an almost exclu-
THE CAVES VALLEY DRIFTERS: Tools of the Trade (Flying Bike 290) This record interests me because it indicates the extent to which the string band musicexperimentation of the Central Valley and the Red Clay Ramblers, Good Ol' Persons, and others has filtered down to where it is now common practice for less accomplished bands to play a combination of bluegrass, swing, jazz, and rock. Indeed, this is a live album by an L.A. based group made up of two guitarists, a mandolinist, and a bassist. Several of the tunes are recognizable as covers of other bands' trademarks, like "Cherokee" and "I'm Satisfied With You" (Good Ol' Persons'), "Hot Burrito #1", and even an obligatory Bob Wills Tune ("Blues for Dora"), and are, I'm sorry to say, poor imitations. What I like best about this record is the singing and the tunes I had not heard before, like "Cane Fire" (my favorite), "Shout It Out," "Barbados," and an old time California favorite Kate Wolf called "Green Eyes." I knew it was only a matter of time before other bands would start doing her music. What disappoints me about this record is the mediocre instrumental playing, especially on the frequent and overlong solos. The Drifters seem to try to fit rifer mundane bluegrass and rock licks over the more sophisticated jazz changes of tunes like "Cherokee" and "I'm Satisfied With You," and it doesn't work, especially if one has heard the brilliant and innovative acoustic guitar of Richard Lieber- son (of the Shiek's) on the former, and mandolinist John Reischman (of the Parson's) on the latter. Overall, I give it a lukewarm recommendation for this record. --Larry Polansky
DAVID KNOPFER: Release (Passport, 3619 Kennedy Rd., S. Plainfield, NJ 07080) A very ambitious debut by the former member of Dire Straits (& a band that Mark Knopfler co-owns) called, appropriately, "earthy" and "dull" rock, which sounds about right. Knopfler's guitar voice (lower but similar to Mark's) sounds forced, but makes an okay contrast to everything else—which is just fine but ultra-slick. It's a credit to his co-production, which manages to make the most of modern multi-track recording techniques, that this work as well as it does. The lyrics, too, are personal and poetic, & I wouldn't be too surprised if someone told Knopfler it actually was Dire Straits' tallest, though piano & synthesizers get the nod over guitars in most cases. I'm not sure I like it, but I definitely admire the craft involved in putting something like this together.—JF

KOO DOT TAH: Permutations (Krit Records, Box 85781, Seattle, WA 98115) A busy, bouncy, poppy attempt at new wave rock by people who seem old enough to know better. The recording quality is superb, the musicians sounds talented, but I don't get the feeling they have their hearts in this all. The lyrics strive for cleverness and wit but never say anything (collaborator Mike Fink). "Free Rita Hayworth," "Faced the Insomnia Squad," "Be A Helicopter." The music cries out for hooks and melodies—after all, this is pop. Yet the words are crammed sideways into the hyperactive arrangements and the songs get lost in the process.—Scott Becker

LAIBACH EP Les Disques De Crescensule, address needed—(An old release from Crescendos, dark and foreboding, heavily percussive, yet primal and strikingly urgent. Laibach's material is very industrial, with its ferocious rhythms and twisted, pained vocals. This reminds me of a cross between the Joy Division at their most depressing moments, combined with the dissonance of PiL's recent nightmare visions. Overall, it represents a powerful fusion of industrial elements and traditional dirge rock, not nearly as extreme an invention as Laibach but far more unsettling than the Box, Clock DVA, and a host of other brooding groups.—Paul Lomax

MAJOR LANCE: Monkey Time (Edsel Records, available from Cby Hall, 15 Taborun Dr., San Rafael, CA 94901) Vintage pre-Motown soul sung in the high tenor with falsetto swoops. While Lance was no Wilson, Smokey Robinson, he did have the good fortune to be a close, personal friend of Curtis Mayfield, who penned all the songs here, giving them the expected improvisations-like backup singing and horn arrangements to really rock the house. Side two's tunes are all great and it includes the classic "You'll Want Me Back," side one tends toward sappy sounding dance craze songs in the vein of his hit "Monkey Time." An outstanding record that is at the top of my list.—GK

MARK LANE: Who's Really Listening? 5-song 12" EP (Idiosyncratic, 832 Enterprise Ave., Ventura, CA 93003) The kind of record that makes Op readers write letters about why they hate synthesizers. Lane layers sequenced synthesizers over electronic percussion to produce five tight, nearly indistinguishable tracks derivative both of British electron-pop and the more rigid German electronics.—Michael Draine

ELODIE LAUTEN: Concerto for Piano and Orchestral Memory (Cal Collectors' Productions, 141 Ridge St., #10, NYC 10022) dist. by New Music Distribution, 500 Bway, NYC 10012) Don't be sicken'd by the rather pretentious title. We saw her in concert last year, and found her piano recital of Glass' E-Mm piano sonata to be quite engaging, almost altogether light and a welcome blast. The difference between this and Glass or Riley is that they don't ignore things like melodic and/or textural development. Lauten's piece just randomizes on and on and on, going nowhere. Pink Floyd fans would probably call it Neukroth over this stuff twelve years ago, now it just unintentionally reminds me of that I quit doing drugs.—David Sheridan

STEVE LAYTON: 84 et al. cassette (119 E. 3rd #2, Moscow, ID 83843) Many of the pieces are short, almost pop rhythm structures overlayed with light, sometimes "keyboard" synthesizer colors. However, the electronic rhythms are tight and more complex than most synth-pop and some border on straight electronic music. The tape also contains a few pleasant pieces for cellos reminiscent of some of John Cage's work from the 1960s. A few pieces use tracks borrowed from ethnic music recordings layered over synthesizer rhythms. Another track reminds me of Igor's. Another track sounds like an ensemble recital piece for a modern composition class.—Marc Barera

RICK AND LORAINNE LEE: Leeway for Dulcimer (Greenways Records, 72 Locust Ave., Port Washington, NY 11050; dist. by Fying Fish) An interesting if uneven record by post-Isaac Rhoten Jessie Hutchins. A neodulcimer—whole grain—fuson music. On the first side, Lora Lynn plays a stringing songwriter and dulcimer player—playing everything from harmonica to Epping tonal, and capable of a wide variety of techniques. Hearing the Epping saxophone flute from Rick Lee's "An original called "Leeway" and "...Song..." the backup band sounds like they get their changes from Mel Bay, and play the same, lessing, as he was a periodical. On several tunes Rick Lee plays a cheap sound synthesizer, which is annoyingly out of place. However, Rick's singing, especially on the Woody Guthrie tune "Ludlow Massacre," is nice, and some of the original tunes (Lee's "Lonesome Time") may work better in the hands of another group. Dulcimer lovers should add this record to their collection, for all others I recommend it as a sincere first effort.—Larry Polansky

LIBERTEA: STATE OF MIND: Don't Vote... Suburban Grass 7" (First Mind Matter, PO Box 4763, S.F., CA 94101, $1.50) Political punk/poetry/2 groups with lots of neat intros, sort of from the Crass model, including a punk raps/catch track that's pretty unique. Every one here begins out their "fucks," god bless 'em, JF, VB, 4-S, CJ

DAVID LIEBERMAN: Memories, Dreams, and Reflections (PM Records, 20 Martha St., Woodcliff, NJ 07675) Lieberman's first solo excursion, recorded in Aug. '82 and recently released, fails to take advantage of the possibilities inherent in the setting. It's a rather self-indulgent affair complete with program notes for each selection and other explanations of purpose. The music itself is simple and unadorned, in an introspective, meditative mood. Lieberman plays his usual soprano and flute as well as some rudimentary piano and percussion. The only composition not his interpretation of Satie's "Ronsi Grossenheit," which is mildly interesting. Two of the songs have intriguingly illegalical ideas that Lieberman missed covering in his notes. An unremarkable recording.—Steve Hahn

LILA: "Illustratorz"/"Zeitfeister" (cm) (Heinrichstz, 12 D-4000 Dusseldorf 1 or Michael Teich, Das Büro, Forstenwall 64, D-4000 Dusseldorf 1, West Germany) This space electronic duo call their pretty instrumental pieces "electric tronic sound pictures." Both shift gradually, adding new elements and melodies as they go. DS-5, CJ-4, JF-5

SCOTT LINDENMUTH GROUP: Another Side, Another Time (Dark Stream Records, PO Box 5404, Lynnwood, WA 98048) Why is it all jazz-rock fusion sounds alike after awhile? Mostly loud, mostly unmelodic. Mostly forgettable. And where the hell is the music? There's nothing here. No reason to go whistling after listening to these guys. But if you really, sincerely, with all your heart, like fusion and don't give a hoot about whistling, you may like this album.—Bobby Hunk

LIVE SKULL (Massive Records, 231 West 29th St., Suite 902, NYC 10001) The promo sheet reads: "Live Skull creates emotionally charged instrumental music in an experimental style. The cyclical bass lines and rhythms derived from dance and rock beats form the core of the sound, the guitarists adding dense modal harmonies. The vocals are used as a textural rather than a melodic element, responding to a wondrous emotional state." Um, yeah. That's pretty accurate, a little pompous, but accurate. Call it slow death/sludge rock for short.—Bill Bolin
HOLLY TANNEN: Invocation (Kicking Mule, PO Box 158, Alderpoint, CA 95411) Based on five years of living and research in the British Isles, Holly Tannen presents a beautifully recorded collection of songs on what I find is a puzzling theme. An enclosed circular asserts: “Folk Music: A Return to Ritual and Ceremony,” and these alleges songs to be pre-Christian survivals. Sounds like an interesting idea, but I have difficulty matching the content with the idea. Many songs were “written” by specific people, at least one is based on a child ballad, and two selections are unknown. None relate directly to ritual, ceremony, or invocation as I understand the terms. Ignore the title if it bothers you and just listen to this music, which is delightfully sung and played.—Terry Miller

DICK TARRIER: Songs For Kids (Wheelstand Music Org., PO Box 22, Remus, MI 49340, $8.25) Reissue of folk songs for younger children, Tarrier on vocals and banjo backed by an appropriately loose and playful group that includes fiddle, harmonica, guitar, mandolin, and bass. Rowdy little minchkins contribute their voices (in North Carolina tradition) to a couple of songs. Subjects are traditional: collectors, trains, tall-tales (Rosalie Sorrell’s “I’m Gonna Tell”), and a barnyard of animals. Like Woody Guthrie’s children, little Cathy’s (or any other Cathy’s) face is included, parents won’t need to leave the premises when this is playing—makes me look forward to the “older kids” volume due soon, just one in a whole series of children’s records planned by Wheelstand. This one is an ideal kick-off.—JF

JOE TARTO: Titan of the Tuba (Broadway Int., Box 100, Brighton, MI 48116) A tribute to “One of the great men in the Rhythm Section,” this record taps Tartos tuba repertoire of the twenties, thirties, and forties, he plays Dixieland, polkas, “symphonic music,” and some solo tunes I would hesitate to characterize. But despite the handsome title and the comic introductions on the album, the record is a serious and well-made look at the talented Taro’s long career.—Jean Grey

THE TEMPEST “Lady Left This” (“Attie”) (Glass, dist. by Pinnacle, 1 Oasthouse Way, Cray, Ayr, St. Mary le Cray, Orpington, Kent, England or Rough Trade U.S.) Pleasant albeit undistinguished punk-influenced rock hard gruff with vocalists, Derek & Dominique guitar.—JF

MALCOLM TENT “Airplay” (“U.S.A.”) (Goldent, PO Box 3079, Marceline, MO 64758) The most interesting thing about this punter with a gift for overstatement is that he plays accordion in a rock context.—JF

TERVEEN KAEDET (Propaganda Records, Box 393, 00101 Helsinki 16, Finland) 7 short, fiery bursts of extreme intensity! You can feel it even though you can’t understand a single word. Yeah, there are those three basic punk themes, but I think it’s admirable that even though his Finnish lyric, I can still identify with what they’re saying. As a whole, this record is not as good as some of their earlier stuff, but it’s still quite a good record—give it a listen.—Duane Dinhahn

THEY ALL PLAYED THE TIGER RAG (Folkways, 43 W. 6th St., NYC 10023) At first glance the idea of a bunch of folks playing the same song might seem of interest to diehard jazz fans with bad skin and penis's chilidren. This collection of wild, barreled, husk-bucket, struttin, stompin jivey jazz is too free to be caged. This disk has more stars than Graumann’s—Tatum, Armstrong, Ellington, and even pre-Harriet Ozie Nelson. If you do possess a music degree (or at least glasses) you’ll really appreciate the way the tune has adapted and metamorphosed via

oral transmission, as well as pre-Basie band Count, the almost modern modal Earl Hines, the tuba player at the end of side one, and, best of all, Jelly Roll Morton playing the original French dance tune that inspired the “Tiger Rag.” Kudos to D. Jasen who compiled it. An entirely painless jazz record to enjoy with appeal to the head and heart. It can’t be tamed, but it can be purchased.—GK

DAVID THOMAS AND THE PEDESTRIANS: Variations On The Theme (Such International Records, Rough Trade, 366 Sixth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103, $6) This would sound a lot better without Thomas’ vocals. His throat isn’t cute—they’re inane—and they’re definitely inferior to the instrumental. The record is brimming with piquant, evocative, self-indulgent woodwinds on “Semaphore,” to Richard Thompson’s sea-chantey guitarwork on “A Day At The Botanical Gardens,” to Anton Flar’s clatterboom drumming on “The Rag,” the overall sound is jazz—folk-Burundi-rap. There’s even some ersatz rockabilly (“Bird Town”). The ensemble has a loose improvisational feel, in contrast to the trim orchestration on The Sound of the Sand, the group’s previous LP. They are truly at home, and those quirky moments of genuine soul throughout the disc but David’s singing is hard to stomach, even to a die-hard happy-guy such as myself. His childish mannerisms—the whooping and mewing—clang like unsavory harmonica in an unseasonable performance. But with a cleverly placed, self-conscious goofiness. His inability to hold a note ruins whatever poignancy the “accessible” tracts—“A Day At The Botanical Gardens,” “Hurry Back”—might have had. And his lyrics, more now than ever, are self-indulgent nonsense. He’s always straining for significance, trying, without success, to squeeze fresh inspiration from a stock of empty pet-metaphors: birds, buckets in the ocean, acrobats, “but of all the “vices of the sand” His attempts to introduce new pets—Humpty Dumpty, beavers, garden hoes—are noticeably devoid of wit or insight. What, for example, is the point of this line: “The egg I cannot deny the consequences of being hopped?” It appears that David is trying to get away with as little original thought as possible, and still make it look as if he’s hard at work churnng out fresh poetry.—James Koleidas

GUTHRIE THOMAS: This One’s For Sarah (Eagle Records, PO Box 23344, Nashville, TN 37202) One of those singer-songwriter albums that used to be made in the early 70’s by artists like Jackson Browne and Cat Power. Thomas is a talented musician and, though this album does not sound very trendy, it shows he can play well in more than one style of music—rock, country, and folk. Some high-power session musicians, including Rolling Stone guitarist Ray Wood, drummer John Simon, and Drummer Howard Wyeth contribute their talents to the music. Thomas’ lyrics—a bit hackneyed at times about being a ramblin’ man—more often than not are introspective and biographical.—Tom Spigolon

GUTHRIE THOMAS: Buffalo (Eagle) Chilled melodies and tired chord changes combined with almost unbelievably lame lyrics (“I can see that it’s raining, it’s really coming down—and it gets worse”), and a recording to boot (how can one overmodulate a quiet acoustic guitar and voice?). I can’t recommend this record at all, though I normally is a real sucker for simple acoustic music. Several of the tunes are very bad with painfully obvious stylistic rip-offs of people and self-indulgent, others, and but it isn’t clear to me if Thomas is even aware of this kind of “imitation.” Rarely have I found a record so annoying, and because of this I would like to invite other Op reviewers to submit a second opinion—maybe someone else can find something good about it that I don’t hear.—Larry Polansky
METAL MASSACRE VOLUME III (Metal Blade, 22458 Venture Blvd., Suite E, Woodland Hills, CA 91364), marketed by Enema, PO Box 2396, Torrance, CA 90509) While not as uniformly well-recorded as the U.S. Metal series, this sampler of heavy bands is a bit more diverse, evenly divided between those with debts to Zeppelin and early Sabbath and others who come closer to approximating the speedy hardcore sound a la Motorhead. Obligatory faster-than-light guitar solos, high-pitched screaming (it's an art). A couple of bands (Snowwhite and Bitch, batch) have female lead singers. Other bands include Slayter, Tyrant, Medium, Test Pattern, Black Widow, Warlord, Virgin Steele, Sextet, Marauder, and La Mort. Almost every track has something to recommend it. JF 6/8, GR 7

PAPA MICHIGAN AND GENERAL SMILEY

"What a Life!"/"Sugar Daddy" 12" 45 (RAS Records, PO Box 40804, Washington, DC 20016) Super reggae DJ duo that they are, they have very high expectations. Too bad the instrumental tracks and most of the DJ rap used here are getting worn out. They can do better, although it's still fun music.—Keith Bowman 4

THE MILKSHAKES: IV the Men With the Golden Guitars (Milkshake Records, 5 Kentish Town Road, London NW 1, England) Possibly the wildest instrumental rock album of all time; harsh, spooky and beautiful, treading a fine line between an early Sixties garage sound and the early Stooges (especially Williamson-era) influenced. The net result sounds like a 1963-1964 band that was incredibly ahead of its time. Cool photos and liner notes, too.—Peter Bronstein

SUGAR MINOTT: Sufferer's Choice (Heartbeat, One Camp St., Cambridge, MA 02140) No brittle vocals or instrumentation, but some deep-throbbing reggae stuff will blow your mind. Easily the best instrumental backing behind Minott that I can remember. Also the songs mean something. Not a masterpiece, but worth a shot.—Keith Bowman

MISSISSIPPI DELTA BLUES BAND: Greatest Hits (T.J. Records, PO Box 8444, Stanford, CA 94305) If these are their greatest hits, the Mississippi Delta Blues Band is in deep trouble. Fronted by Sam Myers, who does vocals and plays harp, the band grinds out with track after track of cliché-abundant urban blues facsimiles. Perhaps the band is a smoking performing group, I don't know. On this record, the party's over. Everybody sounds like everybody else. Myers sounds like B.B. King singing in his sleep. His Little Walter harp is nowhere near as hot as it should be. 

The lead guitarist (there are two listed on the album) sounds like he's riffing solo out of a music store book on how-to-play Basic Chicago Blues. Only once, on "Sleeping in the Ground," does a guitar solo emerge with any kind of articulation. Caveat emptor.—David Meitner

MONTAGE: "The Boy Is Hot!" 12" 45 (Birdie, 1626 Wyckoff, Suite S, Hollywood, CA 90028) Could almost be an answer to Michael Jackson's "Billie Jean," using a similar tune/groove with a more regimented production and lots of those shooting-star effects so popular in disco. The emotional lead singer reminds me of Labelle.—JF

JOHN MOONEY: Telephone King (Blind Pig Records, 208 South 2nd St., Ann Arbor, MI 48103) Mooney borrows the horn section from Koolfunk of Blues and harpist Mark Wenner from the Nighthawks for this New Orleans R&B set, comprising himself well on vocals, National Steel, and slide. Piano player Bob Cooper is a capable Longhair exponent, but, all in all, the album should cook a lot harder than it does. Despite solid musicianship, there are few moments to distinguish this from the conventional. Mooney needs more of the horn sound in the arrangements. Fritz Domino's records might even sound thin without that delicious punch from the sax section. There is also a flaw in the rhythm arrangements and a subsequent failure to capture the flavor that sets New Orleans R&B apart. That fine line between straight 4/4 shuffle harmony and the looseness of the deep South. Listen to Huey Smith (Rockin' Penguin), the Meters (Hey Pocky Way), Charlie and Inez Fox (Mockingbird) to find out just how irresistible the New Orleans magic can be.—Rex Zeens

MOUSE & THE TRAPS "Bottom Line!"/"Gypsy Girl" (Smudge, PO Box 23376, Nashville, TN 37202) Can't say if this is the original Mouse &/or Traps, but it could be judging from the Dylanish vocals on the latter. The hexen system on which the latter piece is based is also an invention of Wilson. It is a way of arranging tonal material (musical notes) in three dimensional geometric space (as opposed to the one dimensional linear space of our ascending and descending scales). This facilitates a new way of looking at scale structure, modulation, and the interrelatedness of intervals and chords. Don't sound half bad neither.—Stephen Smith

MULKINS & GRACE "Welcome to America with Love!"/"Seeds of Time Today (Ten Years Later)" (RCI, PO Box 126, Elmhurst, NY 11373) "Welcome" is dedicated to Vietnam War vets; 12-string, voice, and cheery MOR synth arrangement.—JF

ELLIOTT MURPHY: Murph the Surf (Courtesiane, 107 E. 88th St., NYC 10028) Licensed and distributed by Plexus Trading, PO Box 270, Gordon Way Sta., White Plains, NY 10605) The new Dylan who never was, Murphy seems trapped in the early '70s of David Bowie, Lou Reed, Ian Hunter, and Steve Harley. He's a fair introspective songwriter, very good lyricist, throws in a lot of knowing references—certainly his song about suburban life is more vivid and published than thousands from the punk era, but it's an old story, and his relationship songs just don't convey the passion of Bruce Springsteen. The band includes Richard Sohl (keyboards), Jimmy Brooks (bass), Peter Gordon (sax, clarinet, synth), Tony Machin (gtr), and Jesse Chamberlin (drums, fake drums), Murphy on guitars and harmonica.—JF

MUSICAL CHAIRS "Because It's You!"/"One Man's War" (MCM, 5005 Bryant Av., Suite 111, Mpls., MN 55419) "You" is pleasant, light pop with a lowly rock guitar solo towards end. "War?" adds a reggae beat, was another one of those inappropriate heavy guitar solos. Hopeless!—JF

MUTABARUKA "Ode to Johnny Drughead!"/" Junk Food!" 12" 45 (Alligator Records, Box 60234, Chicago, IL 60660, $4) 1. Once again the dub poet mounts an issue and eliminates the opposition. Mutabaruka's anti-drug campaign (particularly cocaine) seems to point the finger at the big star. Just who could be Johnny Drughead? Good tracks both words and soundwise. The dubs are both smoothly segued into the lead tracks.—Keith Bowman 7. Second description: Warning against the evils of ice cream, hot dogs, and drugs, Mutabaruka's self-produced "dub poetry" (a la Linton Kwesi Johnson) is a very effective mix of dead serious vocal delivery with colorful sound effects and odd production gimmicks, e.g., scratchy electric guitar solo, electric piano, crying, unusual placement of background vocals. You wouldn't think a guy who lives in the country without electricity would take such delight and care in recording his accompaniment with the tools of Babylon. OK 7 1/2, JF 7

THE NASHVILLE GRASS (with Curly Seckler): Chasas Grove My HomeTown (Folkways) I believe this is the first album by the Nashville Grass since the death of Lester Flatt, and it is a recording of mixed quality. Many of the tunes are mediocre and played in an uninspired fashion (e.g. "Chasas Grove,..." "Cold Cold Loving," "Till the End of the World Rolls Round," etc.). There is a rather sweet tiger tune — "Old Joe" (fine fiddle/banjo duet), "Ruben," and "Dixie Holliday." Curly Seckler, for many years a regular with the Nashville Grass, is the lead singer, and his style is a direct reference to Flatt's wonderful voice, yet it's not nearly so strong. Kenny Ingram, one of the last of the great 'straight ahead' bluegrass banjo players, is rock steady but a little dull;—it seems to be business as usual for him on this recording. The big surprise for me is the superlative dobro playing of One Woolen. Even though he plays in a very traditional mold, there is a freshness and interest to his playing that is missing in the rest of the group. Woolen's intonation is also superior—especially when compared to the vocal harmonies here.—Larry Polasky

NATIVE TONGUE: Yowl (Modern Method Records, 268 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116) Ten generally fast tempo songs featuring jangling, ringing, sometimes noisy guitar and punchy bass and drums. Native Tongue's instrumental interplay and sound reminded me of Pylon's at times, but N.T. are more chaotic (on guitar) and melancholic ( vocally). It's pop, I guess, and some of the songs are even danceable, but this record's not at all silly or saccharine. Recommended.—Pam Kirk

GLUON'S 4-song 12" EP (Beth Records, 132 Garfield St., New Bedford, MA 02746) Exquisite Col borador and his feminine-sounding, theatrical, yet convincing voice. A few fast and slow parts, a thievery of classic hardcore punk on a top of a locked-in rhythm section, plus a developed melodic sense, put over songs that would sound convivial in other hands, e.g., “We’re living in a place I want to hold your mannequin hands.” Compelling “distasteful pop.” — JF

GOLDENEN VAMPIRES 7-song 12" EP (Zensor, c/o B. Seller, Stuttgartt P13, 1 Berlin 12, West Germany) (slightly blurry hole on back cover) and post-punk, I think the slowly-recited lyrics must be of prime importance. Unfortunately, no schreien de Deutsch (typical ignorant American). — JF

MAX GOLDFIT 6-song 12" EP (Zensor) An authentically German eccentric but, of course, the only words I can understand are “David Bowies.” Anyway, within a fairly minimalist classic context, are some mauchkin (voices at different times), some ethnic percussion, interesting vocal arrangements, Redneckly tongue-in-cheek, it’s kind of engaging. — JF

DICKIE GOODMAN: Greatest Hits Rhinocerous, 1201 Olympic Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90404 Goodman constructs fake “special reports” on newsworthy media events, having Reagan or Luke Skywalker answer his questions with actual excerpts of hit songs, so you can find out Nixon “was drinkin’ wine, spill COD [sic] drinkin’ wine” during the Watergate break-in. This is a good sampling of his artform, more than enough actually, that includes 3 new pieces. However, “Superfly Meets Shaft” is inexplicably missing. — JF

THE GOOD OL’ PERSONS: I Can’t Stand to Ramble (Kaledoscope Records, PO Box 6, El Cerrito, CA 94803) Comprised of three women and two men, the Persons achieve a rare and beautiful balance of terror and tenderness (except for the occasional vocal of John Reischman’s sophisticated mandolin), and good taste. Most of the lead singing is done by guitarist Kathy Kallick (who also wrote several of the tunes), and it’s nearly flawless, with a kind of relaxed yet carefully ornamented style that reminds me of the Bluegrass Cardinals. Bethany Raine, the bass player, sings lead on one gospel tune and she has such a beautiful and subtle sound I’m surprised they don’t let her do so more often. In general, the harmonies are more interesting than the melodies, and the parallel motion bluegrass standard. Much of the material is nicely influenced by non-traditional bluegrass themes, like male/female relationships or growing up in the city. Most of the soloing is done by David Shelasky on fiddle and Reischman on mandolin, and though Shelasky is a great fiddler, it is Reischman’s playing that really bowls me over. Whether he’s playing background leads, fiddle tunes, or simply taking a solo, he is consistent, moving and mean, and he has more than his share of mandolin players in musical sophistication. His “chomping” on the swing tune “I’m Satisfied With You” is the hottest this side of Lew London, and every mandolin player should own this record just to hear the superb sound of his vintage L.Loyd Loar Gibson mandolin (though some credit should be given Bob Lindner for the excellent recording quality). The “rhythm” instrumentalists (bass guitar and dobro) are all much better than compet-
ent, and Sally Van Meter even gets off a couple of tasty dobro solos, especially on “Get Up!” (though I wish dobro players would finally get tired of Mike Auldridge’s “raised sixth” lick—Listen to Van Meter’s comping on “Open Up Your Heart!” for example.) If you have any interest at all in authentic music buy this record. — L. Polansky

JOHN GREAVES: Acoustic (Europe, NYC 10012) Greaves is an unadulterated melodicist who punches up already strong tunes with a fastidious ear for pleasingly odd production flourishes. There is nothing radical, anarchic, or belligerent to be heard here, yet I sense the spirit of a former firebrand. In fact, in the whole band Greaves is that rarest of birds, a punker who’s developing a keen sense for melody. A refreshing change for lovers of povera pop. Accidents consists of short, gentle, yet slightly twisted pop songs, somewhat similar to those found on Peter Blegvad’s record LP, Noisy Messenger (4). Basically, the record is pleasant enough, with its soothing synthesized strings and resonant vocals, yet it lacks the vitality that has always marked Greaves’ work with Henry Cow, National Health, etc. Accidents rarely rises above mediocrity. There are indeed some fine passages which feature adventurous use of percussion and electronics but, unfortunately, they are few and far between. — Paul Lemos

GREY PAVILION EP (Pink Shoe Production, Suite #204, 12021 Wilshire Blvd., L.A., CA 90023) A rather boring attempt at the already overdone field of techno-pop. The rhythm programming is average (drum and clap machine). The vocals are uninspired. A danceable EP, but the ideas to get excited about. — Deborah Wigger

DAVID GRISMAN: David Grisman’s Acoustic Christmas (Rounder, One Camp Street, Cambridge, MA 02140) Essentially, this volume has Grisman superimposing his dawg on Xmas, though he also throws in touches of reggae (“Silent Night”), raucous (“What Child Is This?”), “Resplendent An- cillary Item,” “Heavenly Father,” and “Sing Praises to Jesus” for things up. His regular cast, including bassist Rob Wasserman, fiddle player Darol Anger, guitarist Mike Marshall, et. al. are on hand to turn in a vital albeit predictable solos. In fact, during the solo sections, one easily forgets the seasonal launching pad (which is good or bad depending on one’s orientation), though Grisman is usually careful to provide an almost straight reading of the pieces before blast-off. Also on hand are recorder, clarinet, and burdy guitar players to add to the undawg (read: straight) parts, as well as a certain famous duck for a cutsey closer to side one. — nillo fine

GROCERY'S 6-song 12" EP (RDR Records, Mountainview Rd., Belle Mead, NJ 08502) Self-consciously witty, with a nod to reggae, funk, and newwaviness, these guys struck me as a Jersey version on Men At Work. Not that they really sound alike, but the lightweight earnestness is a dead ringer. The whole thing, though not very convincing. The tunes chug along at a clip too dull to danceable; suffice it to say I wasn’t movin’ to get on my good-foot. The band execs too much effort trying to be clever and topical (“Government Rock,” “Heinrichy McShuffle,” “Intelligence Junky”) and not enough energy on anything else. One cut does stand out: the dreamy, enchanting “Moon on Tuesday.” Otherwise, this is pretty uneventful stuff. — Scott Becker

GIΞE GRIYCE QUINTET, FEATURING RICHARD WILLIAMS: The Rat Race Blues (Fantasy, 10th and Parker, Berkeley, CA 94710) The late Gicie Gryce was a prolific composer-arranger-alto saxophonist in New York from the mid-1950s to the early 60s, collaborating with such artists as Thelonious Monk, Art Farmer, and Donald Byrd as well as leading his own groups. After fading into the relative obscurity of the public school system in the 1960s, Gryce passed away last year in Florida. The Rat Race Blues presents us with a very typical 1960 Prestige “blowing session”; two horns and a rhythm section playing five originals. The compositions, all not based on the classic 12-measure form, are all close to the spirit of the blues. One of these, “Blue in Bloom,” indicates that not only Miles and Trane were investigating modal music in 1960. Gryce plays in the Parker tradition (almost impossible to avoid at the time), but with a slightly mellower tone perhaps suggestive of earlier influences. Truly impressive is the playing of trumpeter Richard Williams, who is one of the great underrated jazz trumpeters. He is still active in the New York City area. Richard Wyands, Julian Ewell, and Micky Roker provide a solid swinging cushion for the horns, and each also solos capably. — Peter Leitch

GUADALCANAL DIARY: Watusi Rodeo 4-song 12" EP (Entertainment on Disc, PO Box 95233, Atlanta, GA 30328) Dist. by Important; pr-omoted by Mark Pucci, 9400 Roberts Dr., NE, Atlanta 30338) I play a game with myself every time I try to pick the band with the most commercial potential—I think this is it for the “W,” despite a tendency towards glibness, like his sexual Response, who they kind of resemble, on songs such as “I Wish I’d Killed John Wayne,” which is awful, its local popularity and a nice swipe from “Stepping Stone” side. Anyway, an arrangement of Miriam Makeba’s “Lwanda Wochi” in Congolese is swell, “Michael Rockefeller” is tense and intriguing in that post-punk pop sort of way, and “Dead Eyes” features a dandy surf-drums beat. Produced with aplomb by Ronchon Bruce Baxter and played with perfection and flair, Guadalcanal Diary look to occupy a spot between the B-52s and the late, great Pylon. — JF

JOHN HAMMOND: Live (Rounder, One Camp St., Cambridge, MA 02140) To most of it’s contemporary “advocates,” black and white, the blues is a score for a night of beer drinking. Hammond, one of the original white blues revivals, fashioned his renditions from an understanding of the uncertainties, the deep well of pain and the transitory joys that gave birth to the blues. It’s little evidence that Hammond has wrestled with the demons that overtook Robert Johnson, Live shows him to be in greater command of the material than most any post-Jim Crow bluesman. — Dave Lahrsson
experimenation abound, yet at the same time there’s still a sense of daring and wit which was all but lost by British art bands in the seventies. Despite the “heavyness,” these tunes often manage to be melodic and soothing. Highlight is the accurate Family impersonation of Ghost.—Richie Unterberger

BURST [Streetwise Records [note: not NYC’s], PO Box 474, Haley Corners, WI 53130] Looks don’t deceive here. They look like corporate rock stars and play the part all too well. Songs are overly long dwaddle in the erotic, quasi-mystical, pseudo-romantic, and macho stances which make AOR so attractive. However, for while womanizing high school guys who put on some guise of sensitivity. The guys graduated, paid their dues, and wrote some tunes to appeal to their kind of crowd. The only pity is that such musical talent is wasted on such cliches. Eh, the capitalist dance...—Jamie Bake

BUTTLEFORD SURFERS (Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 11438, S.F., CA 94101; dist. by Subterranean) The legendary Texas group (re-formed, originally from San Antonio. A joke but a good one. Abrasive, outrageous sax, guitar, and scream improves that will appeal to hardcores and aradies alike. And it doesn’t all sound the same.—JF

RAY BATTIGIE: The Essential Transition, Symphonic Poem No. 1 (Cyclx, PO Box 299, Lenox Hill Station, NYC 10021) With all of the synthesizers, processors, and electronics at his disposal, Battigie hasn’t enough compositional savvy to create a substantial work. The Essential Transition consists of a series of vignettes based on devices ranging from musique concrete to purely synthesized sounds. There are many effects and sounds, but they are strongly together haphazardly and never form a cohesive whole.—Dean Suzuki

BY PRODUCTS OF AMERICA (BPA) 6-Song 12” EP (Hospital, c/o 594 Ridge Ave. #1, Cincinnati, OH 45212) An interesting, though provoking EP reminiscent in sound to early Pere Ubu and Devo. While their influences are obvious, their work rises above mere imitation and is some of the best coming from Ohio. Some of the songs feature jiggled rhythms, jangling guitars, and nervous vocals (a la David Thomas). Each piece represents an observation of alienation experienced in everyday situations, giving the entire record a depressining, hopeless tone. A very challenging, worthwhile release.—Paul Lemos

OSCAR CACERES: 12 Songs for Guitar, 3 Temas Populares Cubanos (Pavane Records; dist. by Harmonia Mundi USA, 2351 Westwood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90064) Toru Takemitsu, who wrote the 12 Songs for Guitar, is Japan’s best known composer and writes in an elegant, often delicate, yet mostly dissonant style that is wholly his own. These songs are a departure from the style with which he is associated. They are actually arrangements of popular songs that prove Takemitsu to be sentimental, nostalgic, if not a bit mushy. The songs include “Summertime,” “Over the Rainbow,” “Londonderry Air,” and four Leazen & McCartney songs. The arrangements are sophisticated, sympathetic, and, in a few cases, such as in the “Londonderry Air,” opulent. The Popular Cuban Themes by Leo Brouwer are done in similar style. They too are arrangements of popular songs, but they reflect a strong Afro-Cuban influence with their syncopated rhythms and jazzy harmonies. Oscar Caceres has never been one of my favorite guitarists. His tone is too nasal and his interpretations are usually flat. However, Intelligent Arab, this is an exception. Though his tone is not exceptional, he plays with tremendous feeling and insight. His use of varying dynamics and tempo fits the music extremely well.—Dean Suzuki

JOHN CAGE: Freeman Etudes I-VIII (Paul Zukofsky-violin (CP); dist. by NMDS, 500 Broadway, NYC 10012) Like so many recent large works from Cage, this one begins ethereal, almost non-existent, and creeps towards complexity. If you are patient the silence is wonderful and I imagine that Etude III will be more refined than the others—very Kraigger. In 32 minutes you hear more silence than sound (determined by star charts as in Etudes Australes). Zukofsky’s timbre is breathy—it sounds like he is using a lot of bow and very little pressure—and takes getting used to. If you know and like Cage you might like this; if you think you’re interested in violin music or Cage begin somewhere else.—Jay Hamilton

ROYCE CAMPELL: Solo Guitar (Redbud Records, 611 Empire Mill Rd., Bloomington, IN 47401) Campbell is a guitarist out of Indiana who is best known for his work with the Henry Mancini concert orchestra. He lists as influences John McLaughlin and Wes Montgomery, although the former is more evident on this recording than the latter. Campbell overdubs on several tracks, and percussion by Art Reiner is also utilized on three of the ten tunes. Displaying fine musicianship on both acoustic and electric guitar, Campbell crosses the mystic boundaries with case (the ECM-Windham Hill sound, straight-ahead bebop, lush post-bop harmonies, etc.), fortunately resulting in a kind of anomaly all too common to studio or commercially oriented players. Perhaps more than anything else material might have helped. The music, all original, almost seems to have been chosen to demonstrate versatility or mastery of styes, rather than any kind of unified concept. Still, in spite of the above reservations, an entertaining album for guitar fans.—Peter Leitch

DON CARLOS AND GOLD: Raving Tonight (RAS Records, PO Box 40804, Washington, DC 20016) A nice blend of voices from Carlos and Gold puts this reggae album a little above some other solo Carlos material. A nice bonus is the inclusion of some songs with segued duets. This increases the “dance chance” potential of some cuts. The hit “Spread Out” (which also appears on several albums) and two of my favorite Carlos songs, “Black History” and “Harvest Time” make this worthwhile.—Keith Bowman

THE CHARLATANS (Eva Records, F.G.L. 15, rue de l’Amiral Roussin, 75015 Paris, France) A lot more people seem to know about the Charlatans than have actually heard them. One of the very first San Francisco groups, they didn’t get an album together until 1968, and never recorded again before breaking up the following year. Original members Dan Hicks and George Hunter left before this LP, and the word is that it failed to capture the group’s essence, which like many San Francisco groups was best experienced live in the city’s unique social climate of that era. Still, this reissue of their one-shot album has its share of good stuff. The Charlatans’ good-time sound is well balanced by an engaging sincerity and folksy, melodic composition reminiscent of the very early Jefferson Airplane (though there are a couple ho-hum jugband tunes). On the other hand, the production and performances are too accomplished and tame, lacking the spaced-out recklessness of the San Fran scene which groups like the Airplane captured so well on record. It’s best likened to what Van Dyke Parks would have sounded like if he had a decent group (in fact, there’s a cover of one of his songs on this album). Apparently, the true spirit of this legendary band comes through better on a collection of rare singles and demos from 1968-69 (Eva’s “Alabama Bound” which I haven’t heard yet. However, I’m not sorry to have this record in my collection. As a bonus, this reissue includes the album’s original commercial preface.—Richie Unterberger

CHRISTMAS SOUL SPECIAL (Varrick, One Camp St., Cambria, MA 01240) A nice idea, getting classic ‘50s soul singer back in the studio to cover Yuletide hits. The singers—Willie Pickett, Mary Wells, Ben E. King, Martha Reeves, Sam Moore (of Sam & Dave), & Shirley Alston (original leader of the Shirelles)—generally sing well, but the upbeat, lead arrangements and piling rhythm sections are not up to the standards of the old records. The only interesting instrumental break comes on a cameo by saxophonist Clifford Jordan on King’s velvety rendition of “The Christmas Song.” still no match for Nat King Cole’s. First issued in 1982 on QAG Records.—JF

CHURCHILLIANS CHANTS OF THE NYABINGI (Heartbeat, One Camp St., Cambria, MA 01240) Recorded on a portable cassette and sounding like it, this contains an interesting 7-day ceremony in the Jamaican hills commemorating Reagan’s 1982 visit to the island. Real Rasta ribs, chants of redemption and indignation aimed, literally, at the white devils (the Pope is compared to the Pope of Babylon, the white man). A century old Jamaican equivalent to the hardcore movement. Excellent notes.—JF

RUDY CIPOLLA: The World of (Rounder Records 0189) Cipolla is one of the mandolin’s true patriarchs and this monumental first recording, produced by David Grisman in Berkeley, should be on every mandolin player’s shelf, and on everyone’s list as far as I’m concerned. Cipolla and Cipolla has defined a unique style of plucked string music, drawing heavily on his Italian background and on the American tradition of mandolin ensembles (mandolins, mandolino, mandocelli, etc.), and this album is a fine representation of the type of music Rudy has been playing in the Bay Area for years. The Berkeley Mandolin Ensemble, perhaps the leading such ensemble in the world, accompanies Cipolla on most of the cuts, and is well well-placed to do so, as they have been concertizing with him for years (they call his music "Ruditunes"). Mike Marshall, David Grisman, Bob Bruen, Rob Wasserman, and other "New Acoustic Music" performers are on a few of the other songs, it is nice to hear these younger musicians accompanying and at the same time paying tribute to this man who has been an important teacher and influence to many. Cipolla’s compositions, extremely limidate for mandolin ensemble (Cipolla writes practically the only interesting mandolino pieces for any composer writing for this idiom), are honest, beautiful, harmonically complex, and full of dratic and romantic changes of timpe and mood. Cipolla’s “chops” are nothing short of phenomenal: a small man with a tremolo like none accompanied by as much sound as the entire Berk. Mand. Ens. combined! Even if you hate mandolins, you won’t be able to resist the pure uninhibited joy and dedication that is present in abundance throughout this long-awaited record. My highest recommendation.—L. Polansky

CIRCLE JERKS: Golden Shower of Hits (Alliance Records, 7527 Fountain Avenue, Hollywood, CA 90046) At least 7 tracks are arranged and ready to play. These tracks are arranged with an ear for the spirit and harmonies of popular songs, but they reflect a strong Afro-Cuban influence with their syncopated rhythms and jazzy harmonies. Oscar Caceres has never been one of my favorite guitarists. His tone is too nasal and his interpretations are usually flat. However, Intelligent Arab, this is an exception. Though his tone is not exceptional, he plays with tremendous feeling and insight. His use of varying dynamics and tempo fits the music extremely well.—Dean Suzuki
ROLF TROSTEL: Two Faces (See You Later, PO Box 322, 3000 AH Rotterdam, Holland) Trostel is another one man band composing, arranging, recording, and mixing his music played on analog and digital electronic instruments. Ostinato is the principal structural device. A three bar, three chord descending pattern marches through. "I love Europe. To sustain long forms the length of the ostinato are varied from section to section, but the chords, changing on the downbeat, are rigidly regular. At one point in "BAO" the melody line tries to free itself from the rhythmic chains of the ostinato, in a fit of brief emotion it disintegrates in its own vibrate expanding to an uncontrollable tremolo. But the beat goes on undisturbed. "Hope is the answer" seems overly optimistic. What hope is there while marching in place to a lock-step beat? What hope is simulated movement? Even the attempt to soar above in melody seems insidiously tied to an invisible, mechanical drill sergeant.—Ralph Blauvelt

ERNEST TUBB: Honky Tonk Classies (Rounder Records, One Camp Street, Cambridge, MA 02140) A dozen 1940-54 chunks of Texas country from a prime Jimmie Rodgers-Merle Haggard connecting rod. Tubb is a true vocal stylist, compensating in grainy, bluesy/boozey warmth what he might lack in pure technique. Backing is clean and simple with three guitars (electric, acoustic, and steel) augmented by string bass, drums, and an occasional fiddle. A neat division of material between swallow-tailed, hard-wood stompers (like the subsequent rockabilly standard "You Nearly Lost Your Mind") and weepers ("Letters Have No Arms") is a fully guaranteed heartbreaker. The album title is apt, for Tubb did pioneer a form that reached its zenith when Hank Williams ruled the world in the early 50s.—John Johnson

DUKE TUMATOE & THE ALL-STAR FROGS: Back To Chicago (c/o Sounds Rite Records, 707 E. Michigan, Urbana, IL 61807) The title had me hoping for some rough-and-tumble Southside blues, but the contents turned out to be a bar band hodge-podge. For instance, side one includes a Sam Cooke cover, reggae, Tower of Power-style funk, some vocal jazz, and a Peter Green-type instrumental that smolders but never catches fire. The tempos never really let fly and the production gives everything a certain sameness of texture. Best cut to my ears is a slow blues number on side two—some tasty guitar highlights the only arrangement limited to just the four band members. Overall, the record lacks bite.—Scott Becker

DUKE TUMATOE & THE ALL-STAR FROGS: Naughty Child (Blind Pig, 208 South First St., Ann Arbor, MI 48103) Bluesy rwb more than a little reminiscent of mid-period Allman Brothers. The same fat Leslie (or was it Hammond?) organ tone, the same ethereal electric piano on slow stuff, plus slabs of wheelie jammin featuring southern fried (alas, not slide) guitar. Add in relaxed, nearly off-hand vocals and you've got a not unpleasant anachronism.

"Love to Play the Blues" has some fine single-string Chicago-style playing and is a good change-up from the simulated Peach Street shuffles.—John Johnson

DUKE TUMATOE & THE ALL-STAR FROGS: Red Pepper Hot! (Sounds Rite) The blues were full of pathos and pain, irony and high spirits, resignation and defiance, pathos and self-satisfaction. Collectively, Tumate and the Frogs convey the angst of a suburban kid who can't get laid and wonders if it's because of acne or his brand of toothpaste.—Dave Lusharsen

TWICE AS MUCH: That's All and Own Up (Line, Parkacelle 20, D-2000 Hamburg 13, West Germany) Like Peter & Gordon and Chad and Jeremy, Twice As Much were a British duo (David Skinner & Stephen Rose) who tried hard to be part of the mid-sixties British Invasion. They were managed by The Stones' string-puller Andrew Loog Oldham, who convinced Jagger and Richards to give them On A Fierce, which Twice As Much took into the top 30. Unfortunately, they couldn't do the same in the states, and their follow-ups as well as their two albums didn't fare very well. Still, because they were on the highly collectible Immediate label, people have been seeking their vinyl, hence these two reissues. The music is pleasant, simple British pop. Skinner & Rose certainly had pleasing voices, though nondescript voices, and the material was very fashionable.—Charles P. Lanzer

U-BROWN/TRISTON PALMER "Kick-Up"/"You're Too Young" 12" 45 (Live and Learn, 3503 Georgia Ave., NW, Washington, D.C. 20011) U-Brown isn't pumping out vinyl like Yellowman but in more consistent. "Kick-Up" is a hot mover with easy sing-along stuff that stays in your head after the needle is hitting the paper in the center. Palmer (or Palma) is a gold-tongued singer with all the stuff to break the hearts (much like a Dennis Brown or Gregory Isaacs), but uses a little different angle. "You're Too Young" is good, but expect to see him do much better.—Keith Bowman 8

UPBEATS 3-song 7" (LP, 1964 1346 Fletcher Rd., Tifton, GA 31794) Formerly the Beatles, "Look At Me Now!" and "Corduroy Blues" were found on their first 45 and have a light Donovan meets early Bowie tone to them. "So Free!" has a nice new wave rhythm to it, but is mostly taken up by a screaming guitar solo.—JF

JOE VAL & THE NEW ENGLAND BLUEGRASS BOYS: Cold Wind (Rounder) Val is an interesting case in bluegrass. He has established a kind of "radical-conservative" sound, developing his music far from the geographical and commercial centers of bluegrass. I have always felt that Val's bluegrass—hard edged, "high-lonesome," and blues-tinged—is an art, not a business. And I think that he represents an interesting musical phenomenon in this country, that of the "local" musician, who, relatively unumbered by the prospect of "selling out," has dedicated himself to a rare sort of musical and instrumental mastery with a high degree of integrity. How many virtuoso country guitar players are right now playing night after night in midwest roadhouses without even Val's modest degree of recognition? This album is one of Val's best and most eclectic. Some highlights are the almost note-for-note Everly Brothers rendition of "Old Rocking Chair," the particularly apt "Cold Wind," and the Bill Monroe/Jimmy Rodgers yodeling showcase "When the Cactus is in Bloom." There are also some old standards, like "I've Been Around This World," Bill Monroe's "Never Again," and the Louvin Bros. "You're Running Wild." Every song is characterized by tight, straight bluegrass harmony, Val's more-Bill Monroe-than-Bill Monroe mandolin playing, and excellent high-energy energetic playing. The LP may not be so accessible to listeners weaned on more commercial or progressive, or even more watered down acoustic music and bluegrass, but then again, neither is Gustav Leonhardt music for everyone who wants to listen to a little Bach. However, if you want to hear the real thing, even if it's not from the real place, pick this album up. It's an acquired taste, but a good one.—L. Polansky

V-EFFECT: Stop Those Songs (Rif, marketed by Rough Trade; dist. by NMD, 500 W Broadway, NYC 10012) Difficult songs for difficult times. This good first effort by V-Effect is appropriate after a year of bleak events like the invasion of Grenada, contra attacks in Nicaragua, the occupation of Lebanon, and other foreboding aspects of imperialism. V-Effect is a New York trio (drums/bass/alt sax) assisted by the ubiquitous Fred Frith who is continuing in the Lower East Side tradition of dissonance, nervous rhythms, and general apocalyptic. Snatches of Eiron Pou and Sleep Happy/Henry Cow appear as Ann Rupel's nasally bass lines provide the foundation for sixteen tracks of political intensity, frustration, anger, and even a little grim hope for the future. (Example titles: "Master/Slave," "Battle of Algiers," "A True Crawler in Managua"). The live tracks are of special interest.—Roger Klerie
LOU HARRISON: Double Concerto for Violin and Cello with Javanese Gamelan performed by Kenneth Goldsmith & Terry King with the Mills College Gamelan Ensemble (TR Records, 1910 Ingersoll Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309) Harrison is undoubtedly one of the finest and most interesting living composers of the violin and the gamelan. The piece is striking in its virtuosity and the way it combines the two instruments. The result is a beautiful and sophisticated work, a true contribution to the world of classical music.

DANIEL HEIKALO: Ratatouille cassette (Ayer Press, 928 Spring St., Madison, WI 53715, 5744) This is a true New York-cum-Canadian release that is both unique and interesting. The music is a mix of classical and jazz influences, with a strong emphasis on improvisation. The result is a fascinating and engaging work.

HATERS: Seven (Jupiter-Larsen, PO Box 48184, Van., Can. V7X 1N8) This is a collection of top-notch jazz music, with a focus on improvisation and creativity. The musicians are top-notch, and the result is a beautiful and engaging album.

HEZEKIAH & THE HOUSE ROCKERS: "Do Your Thing," "Low Down Druggy Shame" (High Water, c/o Dr. David Evans, Music Dept., MSU, Memphis, TN 38152) These are two of the best tracks on this album. The first is a funky, driving, and soulful song, while the second is a more relaxed, laid-back number. Both are top-notch, and the result is a great album.

HIGH PERFORMANCE: The Record (Astro Arts, 240 S. Broadway, 5th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90012, $10) Yet another "art rock." This one is bit different in that it is intended as an issue of High Performance, a magazine that documents performance art. The interface between the arts (visual arts, music, theater, dance, etc.) continues to evolve. This particular collection consists of songs by 17 different performers. The quality ranges from excellent elegance (Jacki Apple, Carolee Carmello) to humorous (Paul McCarthy, Bob & Bob, Martha Wilson) to obscure decadence (Michael Peppercorn). Most of the songs are clearly not good, but a few include interesting pieces of sculpture, C&W, blues, rock, and even reggae. The best and most successful pieces are those that incorporate music as a substructure and do not pretend to be primarily musical compositions. Fine examples of this include the works by Apple, whose narrative style suggest that in a musical accompaniment, is contemplative and evocative, and Wilson's political pieces which deal with right wing politics and art with an ironic sense of humor. Others, such as Terry Allen and Jim Krewski seem less successful, though both have been highly touted. Other big names include Jeff and The Kipper Kids. Among the lesser known, Bill Talen's "Slow White Heterosexual Man" is both humorous and revealing, while Michael Scott's "City" attempts to serve as an insight into a state of decadence, but comes off as merely offensive. Something for everyone.—Dean Szaiki

HIGHS IN THE MIDDIES SIXTIES VOL. 1: L.A.'65 Teenage Rebellion (Archive International, PO Box 7112, Burbank CA 91510) As in your typical Pebble collection, there is a certain archetypal naivete to these songs: sneering self-pitying juvenilia and enthusiastically vapid rock and roll. Even though L.A. seemed to be bluer and heavier on country than most locales. Some unmemorable Stones imitations here, but no doubt here were (and quite). I mention this cautiously as the Sessions of "I'm gonna "听到 by the lapin and the Sopra melodic folk-punk of the Spats and the Answer. The Standells are at their best here on "Somebody to Love," and Warden & Bracco's "Fly" is more than a "Shotgun" for the locals.

HIGHS IN THE MIDDIES SIXTIES VOL. 2: L.A.'66 Rite On Sunset Strip (Archive International) Second installment falls short of the first volume. Oh, all familiar elements are here: snotty vocals, fuzzy guitars, and roller rink organs. And there's a variety of interesting twists to the garage band norm. There's a psychedelic surf ride to the back seat of a '68 Dodge, an ode to Dylan and Donovan, and a ridiculous white teenage blues about going to New Orleans. There's yet another version of "Hey Joe" (by the Tentidges), the original version of "Spoonful" (by the W.C. Fields Memorial Electric Band), and the collage of sounds from the Sunset Strip Riots, and yet another revile of "Gloria." And also some folk-punk and folk-punk. But nothing that really grabbed me like the best of the garage band rock does, so the exception is "Fly Away" by the No-No Mees (love those far-out names). Also good, though not exactly garage bands, are Terry Randall's "S.O.S.," a subdued and effective protest about the Strip Riots, and the Clamaxes' "He's Not There" (a very good girl's number in the Shangri - Las mode). For the historically curious, there's an omenous pincer by the Second Helping, which was let by none other than Kenny Loggins. It isn't that good, but does decrease my contempt for him ever so slightly.—Richie Unterberger
AND AND AND 4-song 12" EP (Soundtrax, 8170-U Rosson Rd., San Diego, CA 92111, 619-560-8449)
Two-person synth-funk-band highlighted by little
tunes and general playfulness. Vocals are as unaffec-
ting as most of the British dancemachines who
hop the hip swirlers. — JF

ANGELES IN HOUSTON: The Legendary Duke Blues
Recordings (Rounder, One Camp St., Cambridge,
MA 02140) Once considered too pop by purists (time
considering new recordings, this late 50s-early
60s recordings by Bobby Blue Bland (4 tunes), James
Davis (3), Larry Davis (3), & Fenton Robinson (4)
showcase the rough, brassy sound of Deadlock
Blues. Unlike other releases in the series, this
urban sound but not overly polished,
all four earthly, emotional singers, Robinson hav-
ing mellowed over the years. Arrangements are for
horns, electric guitar, and piano. Interesting
variety varying considerably. Excellent liner notes. — JF

ANTE: Def The System (New Underground Records,
4305 W. 153rd St., Lawndale, CA 90260) At least half
of this record is damn good, especially "Back to
Suicide" and "Your Problems." Melodic
tempo hardcore, counter-punched by a surfer beat
and slashing guitars. This dene Blue Cheer wall of noise
comes complete with a very groovy record sleeve. Un-
fortunately, the cover art of-view is more "I want
more, me now" moaning. Strictly reactionary
stuff. — Scott Jackson

JOHN ARE "Blown Away!"/"Can't Talk 'til It's
Over" (c/o Peter Gorman, 303 E. 76th St. #3, NYC
10021) Rough-edged pop-rock in a Tom Pettyish vein
by basic all-pro quartet. Are putting his all into the
vocals, reminding me of Alex Chilton. — JF

ARKANSAN MADE "Every Job"/"Mark Twain"
7" EP (Subterranean Records, 577 Valencia St.,
San Francisco, CA 94110) Punk minimalism meets
classy horn mix plus a bass boom as manic as any found
on Jamaican dub sides. "Every Job" is a properly
nihilistic rant about the backside of the American
dream. The misteriously titled "Mark Twain" is a
fascinating instrumental with guitarist Stephen Clark
stripping it. Things 

ARMORED SAINT 3-song 12" EP (Metal Blade
Records, 22458 Ventura Blvd. Suite E, Woodland
City, CA 91364) Definitely heavy metal connois-
seurs. The record is self produced and they manage to
get a sound that begs to be turned up. Together for
little over a year the Saints (five men between the ages of
19 and 22) come across as metal veterans, without
the rust of yetesterday. The influences seem to cover a
large spectrum: Black Sabbath, Van Halen... the intro
to "False Alarm" trying to represent a cliched
"Learned the Hard Way" and "On The Way" are both
piercing and powerful. — David Geerck

ROBERT ASHLEY: Perfect Lives—an opera for
television 2-cassette set. Lovely Music, 325 Spirt Street,
NYC 10011. The "original sound recording" of
Perfect Lives (it seems to have lost its subtitle "Private
Parts") runs for nearly three hours, and I was sur-
priised to find it easy to listen to the whole thing in
nearly one sitting. Those who have heard the LPs

Private Parts, The Bar and Music Word Fire have
a good idea of what the complete opera sounds like.
spoken narration aside, it's a rhapsodic, sometimes
Cryptic, but in the end a moving statement, with atmospheric
background music played by keyboards and percussion. Since the
text is spoken rather than sung Perfect Lives is real-
ly a melodrama rather than an opera. But it is much
more "realistic" than the vox-pop records from hearing the
earlier recorded episodes. There is a true plot which
is never told without much trouble; the characters
are distinct, the seven episodes each have a different
atmosphere, yet the entire piece is cohesive; and the
chorus is a true feature, not just a means to
someone's personal goal or to set up the
amusing or romantic couple. The
characters are all real, and that is a
breakthrough in this sort of musical
comedy, even if the music is not
very good. — JF

SAMUEL BABBET: Reads The Devil's Storybook
& Natalie Babbett cassette (Weston Woods, Weston's
08883) A skilful reading of a line series of short
stories. Babbet, the author of the mischievous
magic plank, is also a very excellence in
writing. He reminds me of W. E. Clyde in the
Roadrunner cartoons. Very entertaining. — Alan F.

EMIL BARNES: The Early Recording Sessions
(Folkways FJ 2858) A fine record of New Orleans jazz
played by relatively little known musicians. Ti
record serves as a companion volume to Folkways
3837, entitled The Early Sessions and primo of alternate takes to the form.

As such, the liner notes for this particular record is
more informative about the recording process th
the musicians, who are: Barnes, clarinete
Lawrence Toca, trumpet; Charlie Love, reed
Albert Henry, string bass, Bill Huntingdon, bals
and others. Oleen is a veteran New Orleans bass
who has played with, among others, the great, Bu
Balden, and all I know about Barnes is from
his trumpet playing of Keil C

DECCA (FL906). Huntington, at the time this rec
was made, was a young student of the great banjo
Lawrence Marerro. However, while I regret not
ning better informed by the notes, it's quite an
album. Love and Toca are both relaxed and invi
tive trumpet players, and Barnes is a feisty clarinete
with a range that only wolves and porpoises can
preciate. Of most value to collectors, and to SB
with a deep interest in old New Orleans jazz, if
we're recorded in 1951, it was the first record for
Barnes ever made! The recording quality, pesuma
made on "home" equipment, is surprisingly good
the one of the best. — Larry Polanskis

BATTALION OF SAINTS "Sweety Little Girl
S.V.D.B. "Chain Reaction" (Mystic, 677 Selma
 compliant 152, 213-462-9005) San Diego BOS meet the Ramones and the Dickies; it
fighter slice of '60s SB. It also turns in a gi

other a lyric-oriented song with a great, dry
line—only wish I could follow the plot... — JF

BELFEGORE "Belfegore!"/"Heilige Krigs
NAAC in Sodermalm's SU.7 (Pure Freude, Det
defter Str. 55, 4000 Dusseldorf, West Germ
The self-titled track is gothics with load be
the other side finds the heavy trio in amore dance
mode. With effects and all, they're sort of like a
Joking joke, though cleaner and more melodic
perhaps. — JF