

Live Pie album perhaps the year's best

By STEVE GELLER

Humble Pie: Performance, Rockin' the Fillmore: (A and M Records SP-3506). This double album should give Humble Pie the recognition they deserve as England's best rock band. Performance offers an excellent representation of Humble Pie's versatility.

Two of the four sides of the album contain only one song each. Throughout the sixteen minutes of Muddy Waters' Rolling Stone and the twenty-four and one half minutes of Dr. John Creaux' I Walk On Gilded Splinters, Humble Pie are in complete control of their material, displaying the ability to play together as a coherent unit, as well as being able to support each other during their individual soloist interpretations.

The tendency for the music to lag during long tracks that has plagued the efforts of other groups has been no problem to Humble Pie. The remainder of the album also consists of longer tracks which allow the group time to exploit their freeform, seemingly unstructured rock and blues style to its fullest capacity.

The group performs some of its old material such as, their classic Stone Cold Fever before concluding the album with I Don't Need No Doctor, which really sums up everything that Humble Pie has to offer. Technically, the album is superb, and as a result, Performance is one of, if not the best, live recordings to be released this year.

Ritchie Havens: The Great Blind Degree (Polydor Records 248-049). Havens seems to have dedicated his latest album to a central theme focussing on the generation gap and the ecology scene. Accordingly, he has selected specific material from various artists such as Dino Valenti (What About Me), Graham Nash (Teach Your Children) and Cat Stevens (Fathers and Sons). Great Blind Degree suffers from being over-produced and from a lack of imagination, arrangement-wise. As a result, the album tends to become tedious as each song sounds similar to its preceding and following piece. Havens' usually moving interpretations have been completely subdued and this album would have to be considered the lowest point of Havens' recordings.

Chicago: Chicago at Carnegie Hall, Volumes I, II, III and IV. (Columbia Records C30866). Chicago's latest release, in the form of a four-record set, presents the group in a complete concert, live from Carnegie Hall.

The material performed is expectedly a random rearrangement of Chicago's first three albums, however, the live recording offers the members of the group the time they need to develop a feeling for each song they perform. The album allows the listener an opportunity to hear Chicago at their best as a group, while at the same time offers much insight into the individual backgrounds and talents of each of Chicago's seven members.

Because it is a complete concert, the album set does have its high points and its low points, but all the material is delivered with the confidence and professionalism that make Chicago as tight as they are.

In addition to the four album covers (which all fit nicely into one large jacket) the new Chicago set

comes with a picture book and history of the group's performances as well as two wall-size posters.

Cat Stevens: Very Young and Early Songs (Deram Records DES 18061). This album is comprised of recordings made by Cat Stevens in the years between 1967 and 1969. All of the cuts except for Here Comes My Wife, Lovely City (perhaps the best cut on the album) and Bad Night (definitely the worst track on the album and possibly the worst thing ever recorded by the Cat) have never before been released on record in North America. This is not an album to be enjoyed; rather, it is one which must be appreciated. It offers a fairly accurate account of the early days of Cat Stevens' career, which were not particularly happy times for the young, very talented composer who, because of contracts, had a tough time expressing himself the way he wanted to musically.

The songs on the album are terribly over-produced and over-arranged to the extent that the feeling the Cat tried to inject into his writing has been almost completely lost. There is however, the odd cut (Where Are You) in which Cat Stevens is almost able to balance his music in his own way.

Perth County Conspiracy: Alive (Columbia Records GES 90037). Perth County's second album has not lived up to the quality established by this talented group on their first album. Their material is not drastically different from their previous effort, but Alive seems to lack the tight, earthy feeling that radiated from their first L.P. Part of the reason for this may be the lack of studio mixing, as Alive was recorded at the Bathurst Street United Church. There is also too much introductory talk before many songs and this tends to create an anticlimactic air which detracts greatly from the flow of Perth County's delivery.

Paul McCartney: Wings Wildlife (Apple Records SW-3386). This is McCartney's third and most controversial album. Musically Wings Wildlife is nothing spectacular.



Rockin' at the Fillmore shows Humble Pie's exploding versatility.

There are no deep or hidden meanings behind its lyrics and the actual musical composition definitely does not throw any new light on contemporary musical trends. One might even go so far as to say that McCartney's new material is nothing more than commercial rubbish. To declare that McCartney is capable of composing better pieces would be an un-

derstatement to say the least. Why then does this former Beatle seem satisfied with his latest efforts? The only possible answer to this question lies perhaps within the personality of Paul McCartney himself. Paul has always been referred to as being "cute". As early as 1964, he was tagged as being "the cute Beatle". He was singled out as being the "cute" one in the films the Beatles

made. Now, while his music may be unappealing to many, it is perhaps less pretentious than the work of the other ex-Beatles and seems to reflect the feelings of a happy individual. It is simple, to the point (if and when there is one to be made), and offers the typical McCartney cuteness that the music public were so ready to accept a few years ago.



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