

## Tell No Lies too long

By RICK JANSON

The Spoons are one of those bands that has been able to cling to the AM radio charts by weaving careful little hooks into their music. A little phrase coupled with a distinct musical pattern sticks in your brain all the way to the record store.

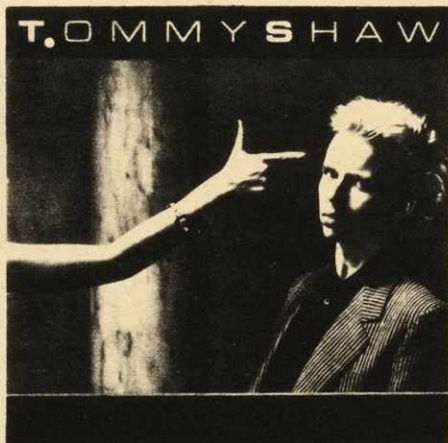
*Tell No Lies*, the band's new 12-inch single, takes the hook to an extreme. For more than six minutes the phrase "tell no lies" is repeated along with a funny little riff that sounds as if it was borrowed from an old Three Stooges movie. Although the shorter radio version works in its limited format, the longer version on the extended plays tends to get on your nerves after a while. There is simply not enough to the song to make it consistently interesting. And if six minutes of it is not enough, a mostly instrumental version follows on the flip-side.

*Tell No Lies* marks a bit of a departure for the band from their previous work. The keyboards and guitar are faded in the mix while the percussion and horn section dominates.

Although horns have been making a comeback in contemporary music, the song lacks the blues base to really allow the horns to do more than add percussive emphasis.

Much has been made about the fact that the Spoons used David Bowie's horn section from *Let's Dance* to make the single, but the imported musicians are given little opportunity to repeat the kind of work they did on that LP.

Joining the instrumental version of *Tell No Lies* on the flip-side is a song called *Romantic Traffic*—a song that holds together better than its sister tune on the A-side. □



## Records In Review

## Don't Stop insipid bad stuff

By BARRY WALSH

People like Michael McDonald, Michael Sembello, James Ingram and Lionel Richie can release the same album only with different artwork on the sleeves and have it accepted by critics and consumers alike as the 'new' R&B. It displeases me to no end that another "artist" has lumped himself into that incongruous mass of "slicker than salad dressing" performers.

This time around the name is Jeffrey Osborne and the album is half of their potential. In fact, the Fairlight is used on *The Borderlines* merely to provide the overused symphonic blast that every artist that comes in contact with a CMI seems to use, ranging from Kate Bush to Herbie Hancock.

Indeed, on a purely musical basis, *Don't Stop* contains lame performances interjected with snippets of "new technological sounds" that were new in 1980. entitled *Don't Stop*. Not unexpectedly, the album is produced by George Duke, the grand-daddy of the new, slick, recycled garbage being passed off as R&B. Duke is present on every track, providing each song with his own style of lame keyboard lines.

Other notable names from the recording studio are Mike "Maniac" Sembello, Fred Washington and Steve Ferrone. Despite the presence of superlative studio musicians led by Duke and Osborne—

who was the lead singer for LTD before going solo—the album fails miserably. Why?

To start with, the aforementioned musicians provide the perfect background for Osborne's insipid lyrics—tired and bland. The only songs that pack any punch on the whole disc are the title track (featuring a nice solo by Sembello) and *The Borderlines*. Musically, the rest of the album resides in the doldrums. The presence of the Linn drum machine and the Fairlight CMI is embraced by Osborne and Duke; unfortunately these innovative advances are not used to even

Lyrically, the album is much worse. Even by the standards of "new R&B," these words are just plain horrible. Try this inspirational verse from the title track:

*Everytime I look at you my heart starts dancin'  
And every little thing you do is so entrancin'  
You opened up a door I never*

*knew before  
You leave me wantin' more 'n more 'n more.*

That portion of lyrical sewage is typical of every printed passage on the lyric sheet. The subject matter of the lyrics lies dormant in the "boy loves girl" mode, except for *You Can't Be Serious*. That track is a "whimsical tale of a UFO sighting and its aftermath" in the words of the A&M press release for the album (perhaps they didn't have the chutzpah to call it inane).

Also present on the album are two truly inspirational songs, *The Power* and *Live for Today*, a track that almost prompted me to do quite the opposite.

All exaggeration aside, Jeffrey Osborne's latest effort functions best as a mere symbol of the tepid snooze material being lumped into the 'R&B' bins in your friendly neighbourhood record store. Indeed, it seems that the PR people at A&M and the other record companies have forgotten what the two initials stand for. That's

Rhythm and Blues, two elements that products like *Don't Stop* seem entirely devoid of. For record executives, the color of Osborne's skin may make this an "R&B" album, but this is not black music or white music. It's grey. □

## Shaw's LP nasty to women

By RICK JANSON

When a performer breaks away from a band to record a solo album, usually the resulting work deviates from what the artist produced as part of the band.

When Pete Townshend produces a solo album, for example, it consists of songs that wouldn't work well within The Who's format.

Tommy Shaw's first solo effort, *Girls With Guns*, clings carefully to the Styx formula of songwriting. Prominent in the mix are synthesizers, guitars and high-pitched harmonies that have become the Chicago band's trademark for over a decade.

Unfortunately missing is the sense of drama the band usually crafts into each project. The result is that *Girls With Guns* comes across as a second-rate Styx album, the formula carefully reproduced but the old magic sadly absent.

As much as this album fails to inspire musically, its lyrical content borders on the misogynous.

*Girls With Guns* is full of songs about men not being able to relate to women and not acknowledging the flaw might rest with them.

In the title track we might very well substitute the word "feminist" for "girls with guns."

Shaws tells men:

*Stand tall, don't think small,  
don't get your back against the wall,  
Shoot straight, I can't wait,  
aim for the heart and fire away.  
I've come around  
I understand today,  
and she's the target now,  
I'm gonna have my way.*

Socially the album is infantile, not acknowledging changes in society that have manifested themselves over the last 20 years. In Shaw's lyrical world, men are wounded he-men and women are either gun-toting ball-breakers or neurotic introverts.

Perhaps the most prophetic lyrics on the album are in a song called *Fading Away*:

*Too bad the bad conversation  
too bad the poor choice of words  
don't let me go and spoil the party  
it's not the end of the world  
There's a reason you're fading away.*

For Styx, and Tommy Shaw, being out of step with the times culturally and musically may very well be the reason the band has been slowly fading away. □