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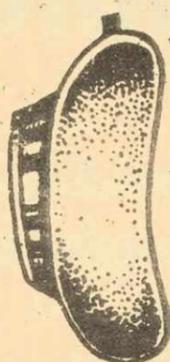
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# SOUND TRACKS



by Mark Teehan

**TRAFFIC - "When The Eagle Flies"** [Island]. Steve Winwood has forsaken the hermetic existence in the country that characterized his last few years, and with musical mates Jim Capaldi, Chris Wood, and Rosko Gee has come up with another challenging Traffic album. Always moving and exploring, but with meaning and purpose. There's also nothing rushed about this English outfit - been 18 months since their last one. Wish more groups would wait something like that between efforts, instead of coughing up LP's every 6 months that sound like it the 3rd or 4th time around. Gone are the **Muscle Shoals** cats that played on the last few Traffic outings, and for the first time Winwood employs an abundance of **studio wizardry** (synthesizers, mellotron) that lends such a wide-open spaciousness to the whole piece. No flash guitar as on "Shoo! Out," but rather coloring fills. He's also composed all the material, while Capaldi has supplied the lyrics in all but one case. Must say that they're a definite improvement over those found on his recent solo ("Whale Meat"), and though the fatalistic threads are similar, they are brought into much sharper focus here. To the point of generating a sharp sense of expectant doom - we're livin' on borrowed time and the cracked roof is slippin'. Someday it shall fall: "When the eagle flies you'd better watch your eyes/He's gonna sweep everything in his path/And when the heavens cry it's gonna drown the sky./And you'll get caught in the aftermath/When the mountains move it's no good trying/to prove that you've been doing what you can."

Side 1 is dammed close to perfect, though the flip has got its moments too. "Something New" starts things off in an energetic manner, Gee's bass lines and Capaldi's drumming sounding nicely spirited. This bit of romantic ruminating then gives way to 11 minutes of rich music titled "Dream Gerrard". Ex-Bonzo Viv Stanshall comes up with off-the-wall lines ("Hippos don't wear hats, lobsters shriek if provoked.") while the band works out every nuance subtly, Woods electric sax spewing forth a basic repeated riff that eventually is surrounded by Winwood's atmospheric mellotrons - "They won't let it be, they think it should be done with Reality." This album's "Low Spark" - mighty effective. From here we segue into "Graveyard People," an engaging jazz-rock exercise loosely in the H. Hancock vein that conjures up spooky images of the living dead, Winwood's synthesizers striking out above the funk-ed-up bottom: "Go slow workers with Union minds/Striking out for better times/Sunshine people with sunshine minds/living in these troubled times/Follow shop stewards like so many sheep/Sowing the seed our children will reap."

The most solid tracks, in terms of well-defined structure, is the opener on Side 2, "Walking In The Wind," which features an ascending melody that plateaus out nicely, more sterling keyboard work and good up-front vocals: "The prostitute is standing on the corner/suffering so much pain to stay alive./She's so real, life itself bows down before her/She couldn't ever make that nine to five."

Although there are a few awkward moments here that aren't gonna stick in your ears (mainly on "Memories of a

Rock 'n Rolla"), there's enough fine musicianship, quality material and meaty lyrics on "Eagle" to easily put it above most of the new stuff coming out now. A restrained album that you can get into gradually, one worth checking out.

**DONALD BYRD - "Street Lady"** (Blue Note). Has been out for many months now, but time is merely an artificial creation of man's. You'll stand a good chance of entering a timeless warp listening to this. Trumpeter Don Byrd works with producer/arranger Larry Mizell and a host of other musicians, coming up with a pleasant album of subtle funky jazz. Rich textures, tugging rhythm and Byrd's trumpet merge into one whole. Particularly enchanting on "Witch Hunt" and "Woman Of The World".

**JETHRO TULL - "War Child"** [Chrysalis]. "Have a cuppa tea, dear?/No thanks, I'm already late for the office." That's the intro (after wailing sirens) on this return of the **big bad Tull**, the boys who disliked the slugging reviews their last few albums got and sulked off in reply. Poor "Passion Play," Well this here sounds like a decent "comeback" with Ian Anderson writing songs, not epics, and the band using a fair bit of studio gimmickry in the process. It's a bit touch and go on Side 1, rather like wandering thru a dark cave with no lights, but Side 2 generates enough coherent energy to make the whole thing mildly interesting. Accordion and mandolin often present. Now's your chance to "Bungle in the Jungle", the die-hards will probably prefer to "Stand Up" and "Benefit."

**SPLINTER - "The Place I Love"** [Dark Horse]. Promising pair of singer-songwriters plying the Stealers Wheel vein of mature pop-rock, but I can't see what all the fuss is about. So **Hari Georgeson** (used to be with that group called the Beatles) plays guitar everywhere plus produced it. So what? Sure the level of musicianship is high, but then it oughta be with the likes of him, Billy Preston, Jim Keltner, Alvin Lee, Gary Wright on it. Great sound but except on "China Light" and "Somebody's City", which are both truly superb songs, I can't get too excited. Too many worthless calories elsewhere.

**HUDSON BROTHERS - "Hollywood Situation"** [Casablanca]. You won't find any superstars here and the slick LA/Vegas cover is an auto turn-off, but don't let that fool ya. Surprise! Inside you'll find a fine debut record choc full of short, snappy, melodious tunes that really WORK. Simple but upper-contagious pop-rock with harmonies galore and even some touches of moog. Production crisp/clean and sound literally jumps out at you. Except for a throw-away 6-min. comedy speel, no complaints. "So You Are A Star" is a dead-ringer for **Lenonesque Beatles '65**, and no doubt you've heard it 1,000 times on the radio. It's so well done that sometimes you don't even notice the trite words. While there's a few more subdued types roughly in this mold, these Hudson boys (3 of 'em) are not afraid to sow they're oats on choppy, riff-bustin' rockers like the title track and "Coochie Coochie Coo," truly a savory delight. If you got off on early Badfinga, Blue, ripened Raspberries you'll surely luv this. These dudes will perhaps never win any awards for originality, but if their music can make you happy then who cares? Be good to yourself at least once a day. Catch ya next year...