



by Mark Teeham

LIGHTHOUSE—"Good Day" (GRT). If you're keeping score, this is Lighthouse's 9th LP in all, 6th if you start counting with the incredible "One Fine Morning" of 4 years back that put this group on the road to widespread recognition and success. Lighthouse have often been dumped in the Chicago/B,S,&T axis of big horn bands doing rock-type material, but to me this was unfair and really not true. Sure there were similarities sometimes in sound, but Lighthouse always came across as more original, tasteful, and broader in musical scope. Maybe more electric.

Since "Morning" though, the quality of their albums seems to have fallen off gradually — excepting the solid 2-Lp live Lp. Keith Jilimore's departure saw the song-writing standards start to slip, the vocals were hurt when Bob McBride split to go solo, and when co-founder Paul Hoffert (keyboards) left after "Sunny Days" the band lost a good writer and musician. When it came time to do a follow up to "Sunny Days", original guiding light, drummer Skip Prokop was left firmly in the spotlight; he doubled up on rhythm guitar and was helped in the writing department by lead guitarist Ralph Cole. The resulting LP of last year, "Can You Feel It", was a dismal disappointment and marked a low point in the bands fortunes (salvageable were about 3 or 4 cuts, if you include the "Pretty Lady" single). With "Good Day" however, things have fortunately taken an upward and the band has turned in a credible, if uneven, effort.

The album's outstanding high points come at the beginning and end of 4 cuts, all of which were penned by Prokop alone except for the soothing "White-eyed Lady" where he was helped by Bob McBride and Don Dinovo (violin). It's on these tracks that the 9-member group channel their collective talents in an innovative, fairly complex but effective direction. In expressing ecological concern, "White Buffalo" leads things off and features a richly-textured sound (similar to Manfred Mann on side 2 of "Solar Fire") that is embellished by some swirling electronics (synthesizer? no credits given) and crisp drumming from Billy King; guitars, sax and flute float on top and keep it all interesting. Tying-in with this is the album's closer, "Reincarnate Nation", which has a similar full sound and deals in a general way with mankind's search for an identity, for meaning. Once again the group opens things up with a subdued intro that develops tension and then breaks out in tempo, this time latching on to a jazzy base that eventually loosens up and gives way to "windy" electronic effects fading down. The bluesy "Going Downtown" is a tribute to city hookers, with more great drumming, some good gear shifts and a perfect climax.

The rest of the album falls down in comparison. "Got A Feeling" is a straightforward jazzy rocker in "classic" Lighthouse style, but ultimately seems too "busy" and jammed, lacking the dramatic tension and dynamics of the best stuff here. "Man, Women, Child" expresses some worthwhile sentiments (the need for more respect/dignity toward fellow human) that the song's structure fails to support musically. The title track is OK, conveying as it does a sweeping/panaramic feel, but otherwise is nothing to rave about. The other two tracks, "Be Here Now" and "Mighty Waters" are nothing more than excuses for instrumental jams, basic filler.

The good stuff here though is good enough to let you forgive/forget about all the misses—really. If Skip Prokop can keep things together and come up with more quality material, or the rest of the band can improve their contributions, the next album should be something else. For now it's partly cloudy, but still an improving pretty Good Day.

HUDSON-FORD: "Nickelodeon" (A&M). Out since late Spring, this album has to rank as one of the year's best—a fine, cohesive effort loaded with strong tunes. Along with the Egan-Rafferty team that is the core of Stealers Wheel, and 10 cc, Richard Hudson and John Ford have emerged as one of the best English songwriting talents in the varied area of tasteful pop-rock. Hudson (drums) and Ford (bass) were formerly with the Strawbs. Since joining that group back in '70, they have written a number of songs together that have been recorded by the Strawbs: "Heavy Disguise", "Cannonade", "Flight", "Lady Fuschia", and most notable of all, "Part of the Union". While this chart-topping pub-rocker catapulted the

Strawbs to bigger-time fame, its success persuaded Hudson and Ford to go it alone. For some time before this it had been evident that the tighter/shorter direction Hudson and Ford had been taking in their songs didn't exactly fit into the Strawbs repertoire, dominated as it is by the more progressive offerings of mentor Dave Cousins. A lot of the rhythm section's material—good as it was—just wasn't being recorded. Another reason to split. On the strength of this LP, it looks to be a good move. "Nickelodeon" showcases the duo's ability to come up with a wide, well-arranged collection of high quality material, from pub-styled chanters (Burn Baby Burn) to gentle ballads ("Let Her Cry") and sombre folk tales with a medieval tinge ("Dark Lord"). And stuff like the spirally "Angels", the infectious rocking "Crying Blues" and the single "Pick Up The Pieces" are every bit as outstanding. So you can't loose—can the can and checketh out, it's coming down in layers and curled around the edges.

Correction on previous Notes: CSN&Y "Best of" is a single album out by now, titled "So Far".



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