

Cunning Stunts new album

by Doug Wavrock

Caravan-Cunning Stunts [BTM Records-9188-5000] The release of Caravan's new album **Cunning Stunts** continues along in the fine musical style that Caravan have made themselves well-known for in the years that they have been together. Caravan was actually the result of a number of semi-pro groups which were formed in the Canterbury area back in 1966 when the Mersey and Birmingham beats were competing for the music market of the world. Caravan actually came into being in '68 and were only discovered in '69 in London after a one year period of seclusion and practice, during which time they wondered where their next can of beans was coming from. But is you've ever had the chance to hear any of their albums. (five counting **Cunning Stunts**) you'll have to agree that their devotion to long hours of practice has created one of the more talented groups to come from Britain. Although they are not well known to North America, this is gradually beginning to change and hopefully a tour may someday be organized for them to introduce their music to a live audience. Their approach to music, rather than being a blistering guitar or drum solo, or a blues-based potpourri is in fact a smooth and melodious blend of classical composition containing definite rock and jazz influences. In combination with a small orchestra, most notably in their last effort **The New Symphonia** but also to a fairly large extent in **Cunning Stunts**, Caravan creates a strong musical effort showing that classical-influenced rock is a vibrant and powerful music medium.

Cunning Stunts sees the group return to the studios and in listening to the final results, it's not hard to see that a great deal of production work, principally dubbing, was needed to feature not only the five members of Caravan but an orchestra as well. If you feel that such a high degree of production and mixing takes away from the overall originality of the group then their previous album **The New Symphonia** recorded live at the Theatre Royal on Drury Lane in 1973 should put to rest that particular fear. In a way though, **Cunning Stunts** lacks the spontaneity that a live album has, especially in the case of the **New Symphonia** which was recorded the first time it was publicly presented with the 22 piece orchestra present on the same stage with them.

In **Cunning Stunts**, Caravan feature yet another highly classical-like work entitled the "Dabsong Conshirtoe" with the falsetto voice of Pye Hastings adding spice to the jazz-rock-electric qualities of the Conshirtoe. "The Show of Our Lives" features a highly refined piece of music resting on a basic track of string orchestration and in a way it reminds one of the material featured on their earlier and not too well known albums. "Stuck in a Hole" sounds a bit out of place in the whole conceptual sphere of the album and in fact sounds as if it should have been on **Waterloo Lily** instead. But the inclusion of the selection provides us with an interesting contrast for comparing the past and present compositions of Caravan. "Lover" sounds in many ways like a MOR oldie, not that there's anything wrong with that, much along the lines of an old Glen Campbell original complete with the multitudinous and simpering strings (arranged by Mike Wedgewood and Dave Sinclair) in the background. "Welcome the Day" like "Stuck in the Hole" reflect on older days but here they

tend to portray a more basic and coarser selection that does add variety to the whole album in a rock'n'roll type number that features brief solos on the part of all the Caravan members. "The Fear and Loathing in Tollington Park Rag", features an acoustic guitar and flute piece which closes off side one and although short and brief seems to prepare the listener quite adequately for side two and the "Dabsong Conshirtoe".

When it's all taken together, Caravan have created another album that indeed lives up to the reputation that they have created over the years. Part of the secret perhaps lies in the fact that four of the founding members of the group are still in Caravan. For Caravan, the close affinity of one member for the other's musical interpretation adds to the final product when they perform either live or else in the studio. With Caravan, this closeness works well; with other groups however, a stable nucleus of personnel could have disastrous effects. Somehow 1968 gave Caravan the impetus that has made them what they today are.

Ross Holloway-The Eagle, The Hawk and the Dove [Aquarius-AQR509] Most people will probably remember Ross Holloway who not too long ago released a fairly successful single called "Mostly New Days" which launched the talent of another fine Canadian artist. As a result of the single and the confidence that Aquarius Records has in Ross Holloway, a brand new album has been released entitled, **The Eagle, The Hawk and The Dove** which gives us an excellent idea of what Ross Holloway is all about. The title of the album concerns itself with the lack of love in the world and until man can rid himself of all his loneliness it'll be impossible for us to be happy and co-operative to other people. The three species of birds portray of course symbolic meanings that have been assigned to them by mankind.

The album overall, is a fine blend of Folk-like music that in combination with Ross's feelings for his lyrics and musical arrangement produces an apparent aura of simplicity. The title selection is perhaps one of the better selections on the album and it features a fine combination of strings and a jazz-like music theme that adds particular emphasis to the real meaning behind the song and why it was chosen as the title of the album. "Tuesday Afternoon", a rock'n'roll cut is a fine up-tempo number and it gives us an idea of Ross Holloway's range, not only musically but vocally as well and in all aspects he is a fine musician with his future success highly assured. "Woman I Found a New Way" possesses an R and B formula and it again shows his adaptability in performing different types of music to a highly satisfactory standard. The album contains in total eleven different selections portraying a different musical aspect of Ross Holloway. If any one selection is taken from this album and played by itself, it is hard for us to gain a true appreciation of Ross Holloway's talent. The single he has released has probably given many people perhaps a pre-set notion of Ross's style. Even I have to admit that I had this notion of Ross before listening to his album and since listening to it several times I have come to appreciate the wide degree of talent he has going for himself. It seems that an album can more adequately explain the musical interpretations of an artist and in the case of Ross Holloway this is undisputably true.

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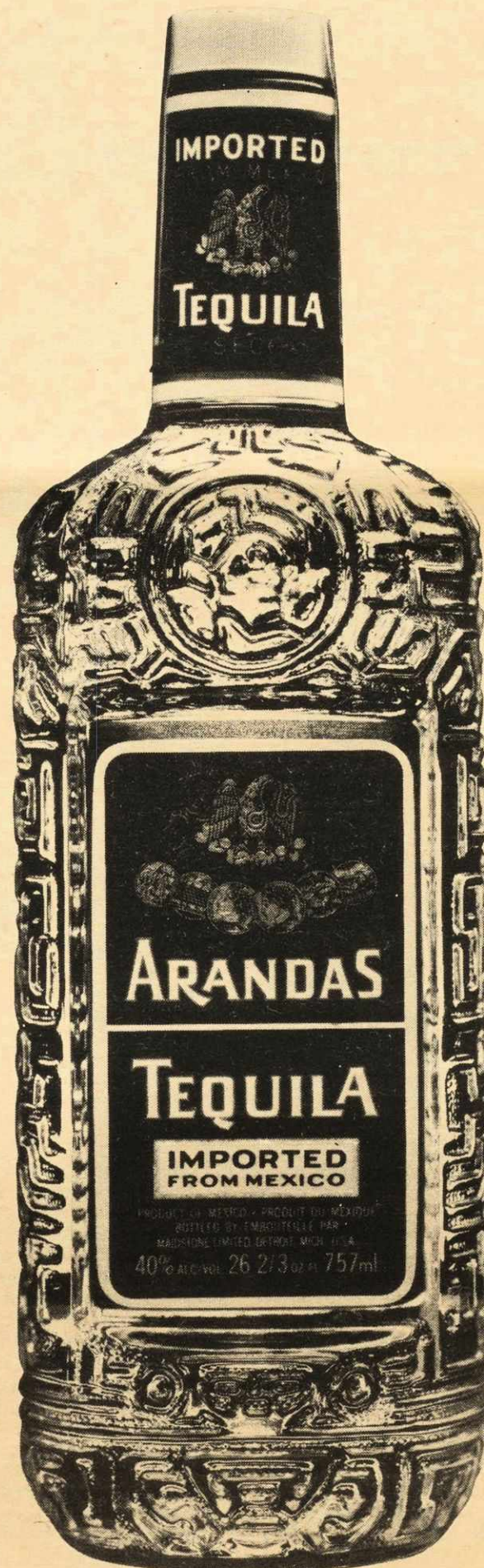
Sunrise

1½ oz. Arandas Tequila juice of ½ lime
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