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**Records...
Radar fish**

**Dave Schnitter
Glowing
(Muse)**

It's certainly nice to see a relatively unknown young player fronting an impressive back-up band and not getting lost in the shuffle. For so many younger, less established players, assembling a supporting cast as powerful as the one on this record helps lend credibility and can help sales. It can also be disastrous if the leader isn't confident enough or at ease with the situation.

Tenor saxophonist Dave Schnitter (formerly with Art Blakey and Freddie Hubbard) has managed to overcome this obstacle to produce *Glowing*. Choosing songs ranging from "I'll Remember April" and "These Foolish Things" to bassman Mark Hellias' "Ellipsis", Schnitter shows he is comfortable with both standards and more modern pieces, as well as being an adequate vocalist (on "If I Love You").

Schnitter is an assertive player as his solo introduction to "Where or When" indicates, but he is able to sound dreamy too, as on "Darn That Dream".

Incidentally the back-up band, featuring the likes of Albert Dailey, Eddie Blackwell, Cecil McBee, and Kenny Barron, live up to the promise suggested by the album's title.

Hacker & Goldstein

**Captain Beefheart/
The Magic Band
Doc At The Radar Station
(Polygram)**

Captain Beefheart, a.k.a. Don Van Vliet, is a lot of things to different people; poet, dreamer, singer, band leader, artist, legend. He's that quiet kid in the back row who goes home and builds an atom bomb out of a five dollar science kit.

For purposes of this review Beefheart is the leader, singer and songwriter of The Magic Band, a colourfully, eclectic group of young musicians. This is the latest collection, who Beefheart brings out every few years with a batch of new songs, and some stunning memorable concerts.

The Captain's voice is comparable to a groaning, growling, rabid animal, guaranteed to stir up some kind of reaction from listeners. His band is musically fascinating. Five extremely skilled musicians playing at breakneck speed, complicated arrangements, trying to match with their pyrotechnics what the Captain does naturally.

Doc may not be "the best batch yet", as one song is titled, but it is pretty close to work he was doing on albums like *Clear Spot*, or *Trout Mask Replica*, when he single-handedly stretched rock music to the furthest limits possible.

Elliott Lefko

**Chico Freeman
Peaceful Heart, Gentle Spirit
(Contemporary)**

Every once in awhile a young musician comes along who is a sure bet to make a name for himself. Such a musician is Chico Freeman, however, in his case he didn't need to make anyone aware of the name Freeman, being the son of the legendary Chicago tenor player Von Freeman.

What Chico had to do instead was convince the jazz world that he was his own man. This is something which anyone who saw him perform with Jack DeJohnette's Special Edition at the Edmonton Jazz Festival or heard his India Navigation recordings, has been easily persuaded of.

Peaceful Heart, Gentle Spirit is Freeman's latest recording on Contemporary Records. This is his

second record for the label and the production quality as well as the pressing are far superior to his earlier India Navigation albums. But while the sound has taken a turn for the better, the music has taken a step backwards. That is not to say *Peaceful Heart* is a poor outing, for it is still a fine document of one of the music's up and coming reed players.

Aided by some of the finest young players in jazz today—people like James Newton, Jay Hoggard, and Kenny Kirkland—Freeman has turned in a passable offering of generally upbeat originals. But aside from the blowing head on "Look Up", the compositions don't give the listener much of a chance to hear why he is considered by some to be the music's next great tenor player.

There is much good music to be found on *Peaceful Heart, Gentle Spirit*, but to really hear Chico at his



best check out *Kings of Mali* and *Spirit Sensitive*.

Hacker & Goldstein

**Manfred Mann's Earth Band
Chance
(WEA)**

Three or four years ago, Manfred Mann's Earth Band was something of a welcome novelty, turning Bruce Springsteen songs into pleasant progressive rock. Today, they are a stale anachronism, still turning Springsteen songs into progressive rock, still playing every note as if New Year's Day 1976 was yet to arrive. This is a band that thinks musical growth means changing to the next key.

The basic formula for the songs on *Chance* is a by-now familiar one: take one pop song (originality optional), add a liberal surfeit of phase-shifted synthesizers running through major scales in 64th notes, throw in a helping of buzz-saw electric guitar along with some pale, emotionless vocals, and presto—progressive rock! And what progressive rock song would be complete without graphic sound effects to match the lyrics? On *Chance*, when the lyrics mention a Chevy, we hear a Chevy. When Bellvue is mentioned in "For You", you expect to hear a chorus of lobotomy-inspired shrieks.

Lyrical, this band seems to have nothing more interesting to say than to inform us that, all through the 80's, "We'll have cruise missiles, they think as they fly." And it is not entirely convincing to hear a bunch of British lads sing about a guy named Charlie Delta having his car break down in Iowa. It would probably sound more sincere if they sang about brushing their teeth.

Roman Pawlyszyn

**Ras Midas
Rastaman in Exile
(Skej)**

If you don't mind the sermons on Ras Midas' *Rastaman in Exile*, you'll love the music. Every song

has a political or religious connotation based on the beliefs of the Rastafarian faith.

The music and beat is familiar, with some interesting instrumentation. Featured on most of the songs are sparkling blues harmonica tones and an organ accompaniment that ranges from the stormy to the sublime.

Some of the highlights are "Rastaman in Exile", "Too Long in the Wind" and "Zion Last Train", but there really isn't a bad song on the album. Of special interest is the intriguing "Too Long in the Wind", which is done twice, the second time in French. Also, "Lean on Jah", a nice take-off on the old Bill Withers tune, "Lean on Me".

Paul Ellington

**Oingo Boingo
(IRS/A&M)**

The Johnny Rotten spiked hair style was a crucial element of the early punk rock scene. Oingo Boingo, a crazy eight-piece post-punk ensemble out of Southern California, borrow Rotten's hair concept for their musical concept. It's rough, hilariously expressive, and flays off in every direction.

This four song e.p. is a concise, powerful introduction to the group of bizzaro's who began life as a sidewalk theatre group (including three pom-pom girls).

Squeezing out pop sounds in a manner similar to England's dance crazed Madness, Oingo Boingo has a taste of rockabilly, some trippy rock stylings, and a lot of early punk energy.

"Only a Lad" and "Violent Love" are highlights. The former, the rise and fall of Johnny street punk, and the latter perhaps the unused theme score for *The Postman Always Rings Twice*.

"I'm So Bad" displays some of their musical versatility, with some interesting percussion similar to that of Maneige or Gentle Giant.

Oingo Boingo is a name that's hard to forget, after hearing their music you won't want to either.

Elliott Lefko

**The Piranhas
(Sire)**

Toronto Star reader Virginia May of Bramalea said in Tuesday's edition of that paper, "I say the general public has been amused to death...."

And in a related incident, a friend of mine hung up on me recently while I played her a record over the phone. "It's four in the morning," she blurted, not wishing to be amused.

Can't be helped.

But these people should listen to The Piranhas. 'Cause they've cut a truly incredible album. "Why, those Piranhas," said Don Knotts in a recent interview, "they're a cross between Nick Lowe, The Bonzos, and The Specials."

No bandwagon-jumpers these fish. They use all the best elements around and make amazing stuff. They've taken just the right amount of ska and injected it carefully into their pop/cabaret tunes. The result is pure entertainment—and not mindless, either.

And tasteful? "I don't want my body/Looks like a reject from an Oxfam poster."

They have a saxophone player named Zoot and a guitarist who makes phonecalls from the middle of the desert. So how can they go wrong?

And to quote from their song "Tom Hark", which would be at home on some Twilight Zone version of *Pig and Whistle*:

The whole thing's daft
I don't know why
You have to laugh
Or else you'll cry.

Stuart Ross