

Hits of the summer reviewed

Riding the Wave — — Summer '79

by Hollis Brown

This summer was not exceptionally exciting in the way of new releases, with only a handful of albums being produced with the quality required to give them any lasting importance.

"Mellow" is certainly on the way out. What was once considered, (no matter how erroneously), to be a musical style as well as a lifestyle, has now become a coffee style. Prophet Woody Allen was correct when he guessed that mellow would become too mellow and finally just rot away. Artists like Jesse Winchester, James Taylor, Carole King, Jackson Browne and the like have become increasingly boring and predictable, and it is only the anti-nuclear work that some of them are doing that makes them worthy of discussion at all. But if laidback was the style of the seventies, it will be the anachronism of the eighties.

Over on the other side, the so-called new wave has concurrently entered a slump, with the record companies jumping on and taking over the bandwagon's controls. The summer of 1979 saw a deluge of albums by bands loosely dubbed new wave. So, while a lot of mediocre bands such as No Dice, Sniff n' the Tears, Moon Martin, and The B-52s were able to sell a lot of albums under new wave guises, it was the original new wavers who released two of the best albums of the summer, Patti Smith and The Talking Heads.

The Patti Smith Group's *Wave* combined the commercial perfection of Todd Rundgren's production with the wild stylings of Patti Smith to create a true rock classic. While I don't see Smith as the poet-visionary she sometimes likes to suggest, there is little doubt that Smith is a determined and talented songwriter. "Frederick" and "Dancing Barefoot" are two examples of Smith's mesmeric lyrics and eerie vocals. Sometimes violent and sometimes ominously reposed, Patti Smith continues to lead the way in hardrock new wave.

Fear of Music, the third album by The Talking Heads, reaffirms songwriter David Brynes' messianic message in a musical package that puts to shame

second-rate imitators like Devo. If you want to experience an apocalypse now, don't go see the Hollywood movie, just buy a Talking Heads album.

Elsewhere, San Francisco pop-rocker Greg Kihn came out with his fourth album this summer, entitled *With the Naked Eye*. Bright and intelligent, Kihn's music is backed with one of the best bands in America, and as usual, the combination of acoustic and electric guitars that Kihn employs is superlative.

A true album highlight of the summer was Neil Young's *Rust Never Sleeps*. The album has its problems, such as uneven lyricism and a somewhat boppy production style, but overall it represents a kind of redemption after the weak Young album *Comes A Time*. The best move Young has made was to get rid of warbler Nicolette Larson, though she unfortunately makes a spot appearance on *Rust Never Sleeps*. Neil Young proved with *On the Beach* that he is by far the most exciting and serious rock artist on the West Coast; with *Rust Never Sleeps*, he goes further.

Other summer standouts include Mick Taylor's first solo album, *Enlightened Rogues* by the revived Allman Brothers, the Kinks' *Low Budget*, and Dire Straits' *Communicue*. On the folkier side, Joan Baez

continues to amaze with *Honest Lullaby* and Irish folkies Clannad released a brilliant live album called *Clannad in Concert*.

Then of course, there's Bob Dylan. Call me a homer or whatever, but Dylan's *At Budokan* is simply one of the finest live packages ever released. It shows Dylan as the completely contemporary and timely artist that he still is. Dylan revives his own material with a vigor that is a joy to behold, thus giving somewhat dated material a new and equally important meaning. Dylan also continues to prove that he is his own best critic, with gentle but well-placed jibes at the reverence with which his old material is held. Sterling production and excellent musicianship from all members of his large 1978 band, the Budokan package is a solid, solid proof that Bob Dylan is not only still in the thick of it, but right on top.

So, what about *Slow Train Coming*? An objective view of that masterpiece is coming soon . . .

The summer of 1979 has contained a number of surprises: American folkie John Stewart, who has been recording steadily for over ten years, finally found fame and fortune as a Fleetwood Mac clone, Joni Mitchell focused her significant intellect on the works of a late great jazzier and stands to make millions from the deal, ex-Motors Bram Tchaikovsky recorded a commercial biggie, and Paul McCartney's first album on CBS is a bigger dog than anyone could have imagined.

The Tom Robinson Band released their second album, and though it did not top the unparalleled scope and integrity of *Power In The Darkness*, it at least continues Robinson's admirable fight against capitalism and elitism. The true meaning of Robinson's term "power in the darkness" is certainly understood when brilliance like his is overlooked in favor of schlock like Billy Joel and the Ramones.

While I certainly haven't looked at all the big albums of the summer, I think trends can be discerned from the rubble. Mellow is out, new wave is dead but in, and it is the experienced veterans in rock music, such as Bob Dylan, Neil Young, The Talking Heads and Patti Smith who continue to make waves. And that is hardly surprising. The record companies continue to shaft and softsell their inferior products while radio audiences continue to eat it up while thinking they are developing taste.

Film makes mish-mash of talent used

The Seduction of Joe Tynan
Movie Review by Marni Stanley

The Seduction of Joe Tynan which opened at the Odeon last weekend is perhaps the most frustrating movie of the year. Frustrating because, in spite of all the talent involved, it fails to produce more than a few moments of wit and intelligence.

Alan Aida, doing a variation on his Hawkeye Pearce wit, is charismatic and handsome as the New York Senator, Joe Tynan. In fact, he looks so believable in all those navy suits with dotted silk ties that one leaves the theatre half expecting him to appear on the next cover of *Time*.

Unfortunately, the character Tynan does not fare as well as the actor portraying him. The endless personal and political dilemmas which confront him come across like a conglomerate of *Good Housekeeping* political wife's tales and are resolved with the same "love and justice conquer all" cliches. Tynan is also so good at mastering the paternal sincerity suggested by his television coach that by the end of the film his tone no longer differentiates between his family and his public.

Meryl Streep is beautiful and polished as the politically canny Southern civil rights lawyer with designs on our poor hero. However, it is Barbara Harris as the wife, who must choose between her family and her husband's career, who turns in the film's most dynamic performance.

The scenes that redeem the movie are those that include this triangle of characters. Here the comedy is fine and true and the dialogue warm and intelligent. All too often in this film the laughs are generated by burlesques and the wide range of supporting characters are reduced to stereotypes. Melvyn Douglas is the senator tottering on the brink of senility, Charles Kimbrough is the over-zealous aid, and Rip Torn (at his most obnoxious) is a frighteningly believable degenerate senator. The cheapest characterization of the film is that of the estranged daughter who is given almost no redeeming virtues and enough problems to make Lizzie Borden look like a model child.

Add to all this the endless political games of vote getting and one-up-manship, the fervor of a democratic convention and the courtroom type drama of a Senate Investigation Hearing and you get a film that is dangerously over-extended.

Throughout all this, Tynan tries to stay on the side of right. Aida, who also wrote the script, seems to be saying of his character, "his foibles make him loveable" but the end of the film is tainted by the impression that the wrong choices were made. As Harris stands like a plastic doll, slowly moving her silly little paper flag, the only thing we have to feel cheerful about is that we are spared a Tammy Wynette rendition of "Stand By Your Man."



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