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by Stan Twist

A new model from Detroit

Seems like a lot of old Rock stars are hitting the comeback trail. Take Mitch Ryder for example. Leader and star of Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels from the mid-sixties on, he had several of those elusive golden discs to his credit; "Jenny Take a Ride", "Sock it to Me Baby" (banned in many places because of its sexual implications), "Too Many Fish in the Sea", etc. Then Mitch disbanded the Wheels and started recording songs like "What Now My Love" with 58-piece orchestras and generally walked backwards musically. But weep no more, our wayward brother has again saw the light and seen fit to put together a band that plays nothing but straight ahead, no-bullshit, high energy rock and roll. And that's something we can all dig.

Ryder calls his new band Detroit. To name a rock group after one of the musical centres of America carries some pretty heavy burdens with it. Chicago did it and in my opinion, don't live up to their name. Chicago (the city) is the urban blues centre of America and Chicago (the band) neither play blues well or with any reverence to their black teachers. Detroit, on the other hand, is the centre for the other side of black music. Remember the records the Beatles started out copying came from Detroit. In other words Detroit is the centre of rock and roll or more simply, music you can dance to, or do anything else to, as long as it can co-exist with a consistent rhythm behind it.

The white bands that have come out of Detroit to date have somehow lacked musical skill, but nevertheless possessed the ledgendary Detroit energy that can bring the straightest audience to their feet dancing and clapping out of sheer joy. I could never accept groups like The Stooges, The MC 5 or Grand Funk Railroad on a musical level, but I couldn't deny the excitement and pure energy that these groups generated to their audiences. So the ideal Detroit band would be one that had this energy and also equaled it with musical talent. And guess what? It's happened.

Ryder has a tight little six-piece band put together and when it comes to rock and roll they take a back seat to no one. The album opens with "Long Neck Goose" and it immediately becomes apparent that Ryder has been through some changes. The vocal sounds nothing like the Mitch Ryder of old and the band certainly doesn't sound like The Detroit Wheels. Ryder still has a distinctive voice, but it possesses more of a rough edge than it had before. And that band!

Organ and guitar perform the function of horns here and Steve Hunter's lead guitar slithers in and out of Ryders phrases like a snake. This cut, like all the album, is saturated with percussion. Drummer Johnny Bee and conga-monster Dirty Ed push the rest of the band to the edge of falling apart, but Detroit is breakneck pace set in this number.

Johnny Bee and Ryder shared lead vocals on the next track, "Is it You". Bee sings the first verse with Harry Phillip's piano forming the base of the tune. Ryder and guitarist Hunter both enter as the chords rise for the second verse. The track intensifies as the band stresses every third beat until both vocalists simultaneously explode into the chorus with Hunter wailing feverously after each line. The guitarist project the same sort of sound (on this track, at least) that Steppenwolf used to have back around the time of their first LP; that metalic energy that makes songs like "Born to be Wild" classics.

"It ain't Easy" is given the best treatment I've yet heard the song given. It's far superior to the versions by Ron Davis Three Dog Night or John Baldry and it's a great lead up to the best song on the LP, entitled appropriately enough, "Rock and Roll".

Starting out with one of those "super-heavy" Led Zepplin-Mountain riffs, it moves along for six minutes and ten seconds like an unstopable avalanche of pure, funky, heavy music. Most bands can't play heavy music without falling into musical cliches and instrumental ego-trips, but Mitch has got his boys trained well. There's not an unnecessary note in the entire song. And that guitar solo of Hunter's, straight from the guts. The entire track is a knockout.

The second side of the LP isn't as impressive as the first side, but manages to maintain the level set by tracks one to four Like all Rock and Roll albums, Detroit contains the mandatory Chuck Berry tune, in this case "Let it Rock" Ryder's voice sounds strongly reminicient of Jim Morrison with those gutteral cries of "Roll On" in the middle of the song.

"I found a Love" sounds a lot like the Allman Brothers, from the vocal right to the lead guitar. Yeah, they're that good.

As far as my tastes go in music, I don't usually fall head over hells for what most people term a "heavy" group, but Detroit are talented enough to have earned the right to walk in a realm that most bands have died in. I hope Detroit doesn't share the fate of the others. It would be a said day for rock music.



McCabe and Mrs. Miller

Opening shot of a lone rider, sun-fleeked sky, dark woods and muddy trail, while Leonard Cohen sings of the dealer who, like Joseph waiting for his stable, waits for the last card to deal him out. "McCabe and Mrs. Miller" is a strange movie, at once totally realistic and touching. It pits a small-time gambler and entrepreneur (McCabe) and an opium-smoking Cockney prostitute (Mrs. Miller) against the agents of big industry. Perhaps the movie attempts too much in studying the evils of materialism but it is an interesting piece which cannot be stereotyped, with the photography that is one surrealistic painting after another, subtle poetry of Cohen, and the characters from the card sharks to the pioneer men to the whores, who are as crude and greedy and entertaining a segment of early Americana as you would want to meet.

The story is relatively simple: After Mr. McCabe has created his own model pioneer town, Mrs. Miller (a complete mystery) appears on the scene to run a "proper whorehouse" for him. They work together on a 50-50 basis but when a larger outfit offers to sell him out, McCabe refuses. Mrs. Miller, besides being a tough businesswoman, understands people; she fears that the businessmen will destroy McCabe if he continues in his naive, pompous belief in

free enterprise. The final scenes involve a shootout and battle of wits between McCabe and the three agents.

McCabe is proud, materialistic, involved in the American Dream - "get rich quick". Warren Beatty's interpretation of his character is excellent-full of humour and life, and sincerity. McCabe is really a weak person compared to Mrs. Miller, who is a protector and friend to him; nothing in life surprises her, not even her relationship with him. Constance Miller however is too involved with her work as it is, too hardened and degraded, to ever regard McCabe as more than a station in her life. She and McCabe just don't have much left in their lives but the search for an accumulation of money - therefore, McCabe would rather die than lose his investments. The ultimate expression of money replacing the soul is shown during a bedroom scene when McCabe says "You're a funny little thing... Sometimes you can be so sweet..." and while she smiles slyly he puts the five dollars into her jewelry box. For Mrs. Miller is a whore above everything else and proud of it, too. Maybe she sells hersoulalong with her body but she accepts her position with

The sweetness of McCabe's character and the silent, flickering winter scenes contrast with the brutality of the film. Mrs. Miller's employees are animals, silly, harmless animals. Nothing is sacred - in a funeral scene the widow searches out Mrs. Miller's eyes; she is looking for a job. In another scene, one of the agents roars into the church and shoots the preacher by mistake. But the scene that is most effective in expressing violence and stupidity is one in which a happy-go-lucky cowboy, comes to town looking for the whorehouse and is shot by a young punk trying to prove some obscure point. The cowboy falls into a pond after being shot and all one can see is his tall Stetson rising above the

In my opinion, the movie is a particularly fine piece of art. The effort that went into making the sets and costumes realistic paid off, as well as the care taken with photography, cast, and music score. A feeling of authenticity pervaded throughout the film. As well as being amusing and lively, it offers certain illuminations to the interested viewer.

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