

NOTES

Joe's Not Homogenized

by Sandy MacDonald
Not Homogenized, the latest album by musician / artist Mendelson Joe, is "basically raunchy blues, rock and roll, rhythm and blues, swing, and jug band music". Recorded on the Boot label it is, he continues, "simply unique rock and roll". And unique it is, for the disc is clearly a reflection of a truly unique artist.

Mendelson Joe, the bearded, burly Torontonian, resplendent in cherry-red cowboy boots, dropped into the **Gazette** offices recently during the Eastern sweep of his cross-Canada promotional tour. Though his material is little known outside his native southern Ontario, the album is his latest bid to gain national airplay and generate some following in the peripheral provinces of the country.

Influenced from an early age by Hank Williams, Ray Charles, bluesman Jimmy Reed and the early Elvis Presley, Mendelson Joe has defined and refined the base qualities of rock and roll that make it a powerful and exciting medium. His music is bold and brass, yet melodic enough to set it apart from the monotony of new wave.

The album is blessed with solid arrangements that don't

glitter the music, but flatter and guild it with a subtlety that is characteristic of Mendelson Joe. To ensure the proper guiding, Mr. Joe enlisted the services of Ben Mink, ex-violinist of the Silver Tractors. The result is a musically tight effort, held together by a lush rhythm section threaded with a typically strong bass line. The album is also lyrically lush, rooted in the strength and honesty that is the keystone of the blues.

"I use the blues as a conduit to express my own trip," says Mendelson. "The blues is honest, emotional and truthful." Mendelson Joe should know, for his music and his new album **Not Homogenized** is an honest, emotional and truthful collection of some of the most original rock/blues to be recorded in the last ten years.

Messina relaxing

by J.D. McKinnon, Jr.

Hopefully, Jim Messina, formerly of Loggins and Messina, did not throw a great deal of money into the production of this album. This might not be the "Oasis" Jim was looking for, but more a mirage. His talent as a singer and songwriter might be more easily appreciated on one or all of his previous albums which were recorded with his ex-partner Kenny Loggins.

A majority of the songs have a light, pick-me-up style, which tends to become a trifle monotonous. However, it is the instrumentals that drive you to the edge. The arrange-

ments are refreshing but they adopt the same Samba rhythm. Messina, with songs like "Free to be Me" and "Love is Here", is not blatantly attempting to jump on the disco bandwagon, which so many others before him have done, but is apparently trying to sneak through a back door.

Listening to "Loving You Lady and Seeing You For the First Time" one would think Jimmy is trying to regain, but never quite reaching past glory, which he achieved from his earlier songs, "Peace of Mind", or "Nobody But You."

Vocally, it seems like Messina has been taking lessons from his ex-partner, and could win in a Kenny Loggins sing alike contest. The harmony is performed well, but the lead singer should stick with his God given voice and not risk over production.

Jimmy Messina's first solo album **Oasis** cannot be considered as one of his greatest achievements, but those of you who do not know much about jazz and enjoy it just the same, might relax to an album of this stature.

For those of you expecting comparable quality to previous material found in albums "Sitting In", "Native Sons", or "On Stage" keep your fingers crossed that Messina will see the light before the production of possible future albums.

Music lacks conviction

by P.T.

Karla Bonoff is a new face

on the music scene, to most of us at least. Throughout this entire album it's hard not to notice the resemblance of her voice to Linda Ronstadt and Rita Coolidge. Bonoff is, at times, a cross between the two.

This resemblance is powerfully assisted by the musicians and background singers, a who's who of Ronstadt former and present bandmembers. Don Henley, John David Souther, Kenny Edwards, Waddy Wachtel and Andrew Gold.

Bonoff has a smooth, pleasing voice that is technically very good in the way Barbara Streisand's and Ronstadt's are. But unlike Streisand and like Ronstadt she does not sing with any real feeling or conviction.

Bonoff wrote or co-wrote almost all of the songs. As a writer she had a definite way with words but her music escaped the mundane only when she collaborates with Kenny Edwards on "Trouble Again" and "Baby Don't Go", two potentially harmless

and enjoyable semi-rockers.

The arrangements of those two songs and "Restless Nights" could be almost snuck into airtime as new Ronstadt singles.

But where this album really misses the boat is when Bonoff sings without the needed help of harmony. In "The Letter" and "Only A Fool" you can't help but feel as you listen she should go back to the studio with the boys and do them over. One cut alone stands out as memorable and that is the traditional "The Water Is Wide." Featuring Bonoff and the superb James Taylor on guitar as well as background vocals with J.D. Souther and Taylor, this beautiful song is done more than justice. Taylor and Souther's harmony is a joy to listen to.

In summary Ronstadt fans will appreciate some, if not most of the album, however, for the rest of you I wouldn't advise going too far out of your way to get this album even if it's on special.



Wild Watery West 'high class story'

Watertrails West

Doubleday & Co. Ltd.
 332 p. \$3.50

by Eleanor Austin

The movement was always Westward in North America and the great rivers provided the means to discover new boundaries when roads barely existed. Rivers sped up transportation, communication and facilitated new colonization.

Water Trails West is a well researched series of essays and photos portraying the discoveries and adventures of the main tributaries in Western America. It was written by Western Writers of America (WWA), an organization of professional writers who are interested in "high quality achievement in the various fields of western writing".

The historical account begins in the 1700's when the "hommes du nord" were searching for better canoe

trails that would speed up transportation to their scattered fur markets. These trails opened up much of the West, and with the advent of sail and steam, keelboats and ferries, mighty rivers and coasts began to bustle.

The Red and the Arkansas Rivers, the Ohio, the Mississippi, the Texas, the Columbia and of course the Yukon River opened new possibilities for wealth, colonization and adventure. The book gives a detailed and sometimes humorous narrative, describing which boats were built for which rivers, who built them and what was the result of these voyages.

I would recommend it to anyone who is keenly interested in history and boats, but the abundance of detail (eg. in naming what the passengers ate for dinner) may tend to distract the average reader from the fascinating development of the waterways.

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