



## "If you gotta ask, you'll never know"

Steve Forbert, *Little Stevie Orbit*  
by Chris Mitchell

With his first album Steve Forbert presented us with a country boy come to the big city. He did so with a flourish, a naivete and a brashness that enhanced his image as a singer-songwriter. This prompted Dylan comparisons galore. Despite such backhanded treatment, the album stood, and stood well. On the second album the direction was from the city to a rural sort of suburbia. The production changed from low key folk to tasteful pop; there were even hit singles. Forbert's image became one of a cheerful yet street-smart kid,

the kind that doesn't take cynicism too seriously. Now, there is a third album.

*Little Stevie Orbit* is a good album. It fits in well with the first two records and it establishes Forbert as a consistent force in pop music; rarely has an artist as young and as talented as Forbert lasted long enough to make a third album, let alone an album with commercial potential. Too often talented writers and performers either fall prey to insubstantial sales or they lose sight of their own direction. Forbert's saving grace is in realizing that without commercial appeal his writing and performing would go unnoticed. His triumph is in not

letting this obscure his talents.

Forbert's songwriting is stronger than ever; his evocations of time and place, of love and sorrow are exacting and identifiable. Never once does he ask the listener to grant him poetic license. The fact that he can write of everyday things in a more than ordinary manner is to his credit. As he sings "my problems are few if I don't stop to think", one realizes that his treatment of life with music is done so that we may be happy for a while. This sounds very saccharine, but Forbert is a master entertainer and knows that the way to an audience's heart is through the heart.

The first cut on the second side is an instrumental duet with harmonica and accordion entitled "Lucky". It is a lighthearted number bringing to mind a rural European dance. It lives up to its title; we're lucky, he's lucky, we don't know why and at this point we don't really care, one way or the other. The melancholy side of this idea is expressed in "One More Glass of Beer", which ponders existence on earth, but not on grandiose terms; this theme is echoed throughout the record, but summarized in this song, which admonishes us to have another drink as "It's almost time to go".

Forbert's willingness to roll about without a reason, but with a smile and a guitar, is a large part of what rock and roll has always been about. This record oozes joy, the blues, and everything in between; Forbert is definitely a force to be reckoned with. I'll leave you with this verse from side two:

"What's it mean?  
When your brother's back  
home with a record  
By some weird lookin' hill-

billy cat.

Yes, he plays it and he shouts

And he's leapin' about,  
Dancin' 'round on his floor,  
While you stand at the door  
Askin' "How come you're  
actin' like that?"

Well, if you've gotta ask,

the album is composed of diverse sounds. His band is equal to this task; the drummer, Bobby Lloyd Hicks, is especially notable, never sacrificing his own style throughout tempo and genre changes. Having both a pianist and an organist in the band fills out



you'll never know." Forbert is, of course, singing about himself.

There are thirteen compositions on this album: they kick along at a brisk pace and make good use of the musical spectrum. Forbert draws on both the rural and the urban sides of pop music, first one, then the other and now both;

the sound considerably, and having Paul Errico double on accordion only enhances the already eclectic sound of the record. Forbert's voice is strong and full of glee, and at times threatens to overshadow the band, but never does, as the sound is so full and complete.

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