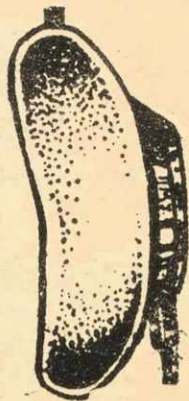




SOUND TRACKS



By Mark Teehan

JOHN LENNON - "Walls and Bridges" (Apple). Hassled by the U.S. government over his right to stay in that country and split from **Yoko Ono** for most of this year, **John Lennon** has come through with his 5th solo album and it has to rank among the years best - a coherent/consistent effort with some solid music and gut-wrenching lyrics. The title is an accurate summation of what the LP is all about, dealing as it does with the legal/personal concerns facing Lennon these days and the anguish, fear, bitterness, loneliness he feels as a result. As such, it's lyric content is more direct/immediate than that found on "Mind Games," more on a par with the naked honesty exuded by "Plastic Ono Band." On the steady/insistent "Scared" he sings desperately "I'm tired, I'm tired, I'm tired Of being so alone/No place to call my own/ Like a rollin' stone," while on the funky "What You Got" Lennon admits that "You don't know what you got, until you lose it." The more varied and subtle music on "Walls and Bridges", together with its often rhythmic, sometimes jazzy material would seem to represent a departure from Lennon's past albums and interject enough optimistic lightness to effectively balance the more downer lyrics. The Plastic Ono Nuclear Band, The Little Big Horns and The Philharmonic Orchestra generate some of the richest/fullest music Lennon has ever put out, and on "#9 Dream" (minus the horns but with "44th St. Fairies" for backing vocals) the result is literally overpowering, truly an exquisite "river of sound" to go with its gliding melody. Highly recommended.

STATUS QUO- "QUO" [A&M]. The Big Boogeeee comes to you in a relentless churning assault guaranteed to make you boogie, wince, and/or flee. These limoid boogers are the ultimate in static-rock: close your eyes, set the controls, and play leaden-handed riffs in a monotonous fashion without thinking at all. About anything. Smother the youthful audience with your ripped-off, boringly simple songs, crude playing and droning sound. They'll eat it up and luv ya for it (at least in England). Actually this here piece of vinyl is an "improvement" over "Piledriver," in that the sound is fuller, the group's playing tighter/more aggressive, and the "material" not quite as dumb as before (tho that ain't sayin' too much). Once more there's even 2 cuts I can't help but like - "Fine Fine Fine" and "Lonely Man". The first is sort of a country-flavored rocker and features the kind of lyrics that have made Quo famous for drivin' some folks up a wall: "And now it's fine, fine, fine/Cos you're with me all the time/Everywhere/And even nowhere too. "Uh, how do they come up with lines like that? HOW???" "Lonely Man" is thankfully melodious, a truly good song with some nice acoustic guitar and surprising organ fills. On an LP like this it's almost a classic. But in case you forget just who you're listening to, there's lines like these to remind you that it's Quo: "Look at the sky/why do you cry?/What do you see?/Your misery." Oh really now.

ROD STEWART - "Smiler." (Mercury). It's good to see that affable Rod has gotten his new solo LP released amid all the record companies disputes and bickering, but "Smiler" turns out to be a bit of a disappointment for me. That's not to say it doesn't have the usual Rod Stewart stamp of careful quality plus good-natured fun. "Smiler" is enjoyable enough with some OK cuts, and I'm sure Rod and his huge gang of friends-musicians had some good times makin' it, but it lacks the incredible high points and intensity of some of his earlier albums

(notable "Every Picture" and "Never A Dull Moment"). It amounts to a collection of decent tracks on which Rod turns in inspired vocal performances that are always well-tailored to the mood/nuances of the material. The ultimate stylist who pours out all that feeling with one of rock's best voices, as amply-evidenced on covers of Sam Cooke's "Bring It On Home To Me/You Send Me", (You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Man," and **Dylan's** "Girl From The North Country" (complete with jet engine sounds, strings, and poignant guitar playing from presumably Ron Wood). But the other covers, including an **Elton John** - B. Taupin number on which Elton sings and plays piano and a pleasant but cliched tune by Paul McCartney, are not of the calibre that'll warrant repeated listenings. The Elton John business I find rather pointless-one can catch Elton quite well enough on his own turf. Otherwise, we're left with only 3 Stewart originals, 2 of which were co-authored with Wood and 1 with M. Quittenton: "Farewell," "Sailor," and "Dixie Toot." The 2nd of these is a passable crunchy rocker, but the other 2 are definitely better: with its mandoline & acoustic intro, and by a chugging pace "Farewell" is classic Stewart; "Toot" rocks nicely with some tension for a change. Well this will have to do for now, but next time around we'll hopefully see more Rodney originals and better choice of outside material. Smile.

T.REX- "Light of Love" [Casablanca]. The little elf with the big ego, who had England in the palm of his glittery hands several years ago but failed to conquer North America in similar fashion, is back with a new album on a new label. Although not up to his '71/'72 classics "Electric Warrior" and "Slider" it's an all right comeback effort that should give Marc Bolan (the man behind the T.Rex thing) another shot at this continent's record market. T. Rex is still essentially **Bolan and Micky Finn** riffing it up while the rhythm section bounces out those infectious beats, and the material is in the Rex mold of pop-rockers and crooning ballads that often have a strong '50s undercurrent (romantic melody lines, do-wap backing vocals, etc.). But there are changes, for the most part made probably to give T.Rex more commercial (read American) appeal. First you've got the "Cosmic Choir" that chimes in on the choruses (a bit campy and they tend to clutter up the sound, so crystal clear on "Tanx" it was almost a little un-nerving), then you've got a lot more fuzz-tone from Finn, presumably to "harden up" the sound so it won't get lost in a sea of heavy metal. Oh yeah, the songs jerk more than they used to thump-guess that funks it up a little more. As on "Tanx" Marc has not furnished a lyric sheet, so that means he wants you to concentrate on the music (smart move 'cause he ain't sayin' too much). On that note, your attention is drawn to the following rockers that jerk well: "Light of Love," "Solid Baby" (ultra tense with lightening drumming), "Think Zinc" (apparently residue from the disastrous "Zinc Alloy" LP before this which even Bolan wasn't too pleased with), and "Till Dawn." Slow & subdued awards go out to "Token of My Love" (with piano and a crunch-out glide) and the over-long "Teenage Dream". "Explosive Mouth" gets the Unique award as it mesmerizes with its pulsing fuzziness and panting vocals. If that don't get ya nothin' will, but if still interested you are advised to check out the aforementioned goodies where Bolan & Co. really glow (if you like half-LPs, then you can add "Tanx" to the list). This proves Bolan is still alive and back to making good albums.



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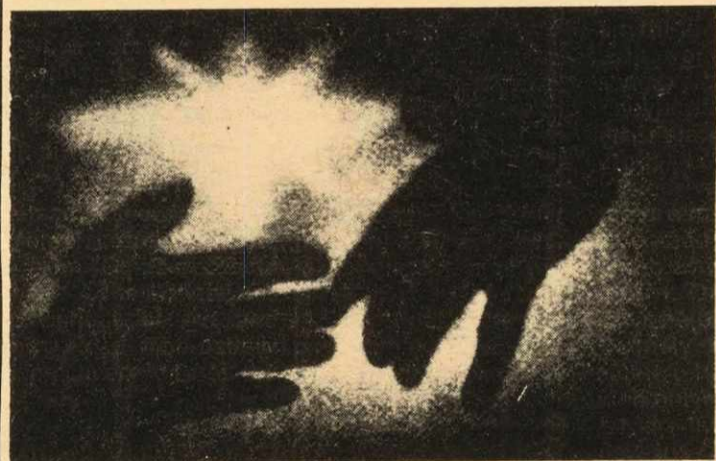


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