

# SOUND TRACKS

by Mark Teehan

**BACHMAN-TURNER-OVERDRIVE: "Not Fragile"** (Mercury). That's for sure, and an appropriate title for BTO's third LP in the past year or so. All in all, this is a solid effort that—with a few exceptions—works pretty well. It's definitely stronger than the last rushed album and more up to the standards set by the first trailblazer of last summer. Here BTO stay within their limits and deliver what they can do best: thumping, crashing hard rock with choice blue metalish flavouring.

The group has gotten a good deal harder and reached into the old heavy metal bag of tricks for dominant bass lines, hammer riffs, and crashing chords that generate explosive energy. Music for your body while your tired mind rests, or gets numbed in the process.

Side 2 is dammed close to perfect, faltering only slightly during the plodding "Blue Moanin'". "Second Hand," penned by leader/ace axer **Randy Bachman**, is the LP's best cut, a true gem with its pulsing rhythm, climbing chords, and cringing guitar solo. "Sledgehammer" (also by Randy) is just that, displaying good dynamics and a tempo reminiscent of a lumbering buffalo, while on the album's closer—"Givin' It All Away"—the group really cuts loose in a hard r'n r style similar to Led Zep's classic on their 4th LP. Randy's solo lifts off nicely, and after a false ending the group hits it and fades while the words "not fragile" emanate from your speakers. Don't nobody say these prairie boys ain't clever.

Alas, Side 1 of this opus fares less well, getting off to a draggy start with the title cut (riffs hammered into ground in dinosaur fashion) and "Rock Is My Life..." (once again Randy bares his soul but this bit can get tiring—a little too contrived for me). But all is saved by "Highway" (classic BTO) and the galloping single which you've no doubt memorized by now as it helps improve the polluted airwaves around here.

New second guitarist **Blair Thornton** then chips in with "Free Wheelin'", a pleasant jazz-based instrumental workout that keeps things coastin' along and sets up the flip side dynamite. Thornton seems right at home and is a perfect foil for Randy's superb soloing.

Lyricaly the band doesn't say too much, still content to spout the "Hassles of being a Rock Star & keeping It Together in the process" routine. That's OK—the music here is what counts and generally makes it. As long as the group can cope with their hot success—they do seem concerned enough about this sorta stuff—and "keep on keepin' on" making good music their future looks good. That's what It's All About. And with "Not Fragile", BTO renew their position as one of the leading bands of the New Wave hard rock movement that has become a welcome addition to the Canadian rock scene and seems to be the spearhead of a new Canadian Music Invasion of the U.S. Put her in overdrive, boys, and let 'em have it.

**CHILLIWACK—"Riding High"** (Goldfish). Not really. It's good to see these guys from out B.C. way are back, but unfortunately this LP is barely adequate and a sad letdown from their excellent winner of last year, "All Over You". Formerly known as the Collectors (of "I Must Have Been Blind" fame), Chilliwack have become one of the better mainstream pop-rock outfits in Canada in the last 4 years or so, fusing intelligent, sometimes zany lyrics with a tight guitar-dominated sound in the best CCR mold. And their songwriting was usually of high calibre. On "Riding High" though the material is pretty mediocre and the playing sometimes uninspired, almost mechanical.

The only real sparks of innovative creativity here are "Crazy Talk" and the 3-part "Suite" ending the LP. For the rest, it's

mostly hook-less workouts, plodding rhythms with chunky chords laid on top—either unimaginative rockers or filler throwaways. The sort of stuff you won't notice unless it's blasting at full volume from your speakers. Come on Chilliwack, you can do better than this.

**LFO—"Phenomenon"** (Chrysalis). Well, it depends on what you see and how you look at it. Right? Now this here Angloid specimen ain't no heavy metal thunder nor would your sound tracker fall over himself and call it "one of the most exciting debut albums of the year" (in *Stone*, but it looks like an OK effort by a group with a good bit of potential. Their main problem, as English critics have rightly pointed out, is a lack of originality with respect to material and arrangements.

Don't get me wrong, their a tight 3-piece band with a topnotch guitarist you'll probably be hearing more of (**Miches Schenker**) and Side 1 comes off rather well: 3 nifty rockers interspersed with 2 slower, more progressive cuts. Nice but a little predictable, and shades of Wishbone, Pretty Things, and Mott shine through fairly often. And except for "Oh My" (drivin' rocker with usual solid solo from Schenker), Side 2 simply disintegrates. Yeah, this is one shot-down UFO that don't make it home. The wreckage is worth checking out, but look before you touch. One final note: this is not a debut flight—object in question has been sighted twice before, with heavy reports coming from Germany and Japan.

**STAMPEDERS—"New Day"** (Quality). Flash: In an incredible *volte-face*, the Stamps leave the cattle behind and get heavy/"progressive". Unbelievable, huh? Just wish I could believe in the album. Sorry boys, but it don't really work—the tunes don't cut it and the lyrics are uh...a little too obvious and clicheridden (would've been good for '67-'68 but in these jaded/cynical times they don't go down so well). But they've got a gutsier sound and 2 tracks do stand out and deserve mention: "Running Out of Time" and "Brothers of the Universe" (with synthesizer no less!).

Well anyway, give 'em an A for trying—better luck next time. And wish 'em luck on their projected U.S. tour with the likes of Black Oak Arkansas and Lead Zippilin (???don't believe that part—what a combination).

**ABBA—"Waterloo"** (Atlantic). A classic example of what good pop can sound like, and a refreshing, consistent LP chock full of infectious upper tunes. Simple but extremely well-done. Out of 12 cuts, I notice only one miss. Group borrows heavily from pop masters of past/present but comes up with unique arrangements and wholesome harmonies—the air must be different over in Sweden or something. Two single releases from LP are nice/cute but album gets harder in places. Highly recommended for everyone—even heavies should take a break now and then.

**EDDIE KENDRICKS—"Boogie Down"** (Motown). If you were hoping for a good dose of loose funky uptempo material in the "Boogie" single mold you won't find it here. "Fraid not. What you will find is a smooth, lushly-produced LP with an over-abundance of soft soul ballads sung capably by ex-Tempter Eddie Kendricks. Pleasant enough MOR-easy listening stuff but nothin' to get worked up about. Actually, Side 1 holds up pretty well, with the aforementioned block-buster, the slinky "Thin Man" and 2 of the better ballad-tupes. Boogie down.

**Notes:** Correction on last week report on **Alvin Lee**—he's still with TYA but will work as a solo artist also...Expect new LPs from **Stones** and **Led Zep** shortly—sometime next month; **Stones** will have single studio and **Zep** a double studio, with recent material and older unrecorded stuff—the word is that it'll be raunchier/more basic than "Holy".....

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