

Colin Newman  
A-Z

(Beggars Banquet/WEA)

Formerly of the group Wire, Colin Newman has just released a solo album that clearly showcase one of the most innovative voices to be heard in the new wave sweepstakes of recording. Fronting a primarily keyboard-dominated four-piece band, Newman delivers numbers that rip apart the pop song and put it back together in some bizarre, jagged ways. A-Z contains a song called "& Jury" in which Newman proclaims that his is not usually involved in the music industry, but he deems it necessary to get involved to release his music. "I understand that you are the judges," he explains in an emotionless manner. It's up to us to grab onto what he's trying to say or to simply pass him by. I wouldn't though, because A-Z, despite its sometimes grating keyboards and dry vocals, manages to be extremely invigorating at times. Like its title suggests, A-Z seems to throw everything at you, including all kinds of keyboards, guitar, percussion, horns, rhythm machines, echoes, and background vocals. The instrumentation keeps things very cold and alienating upon first listening, yet the layered wall of sound slips in between the cracks in the subconscious and can really grab hold. Credit should be extended for the production values of Mike Thorne who plays keyboard as well as producing the record. Thorne



Records...

## Drippy ozone

plans to accompany Newman when he plays The Edge in February. It will be interesting to see if the two musicians blend together as well in person, as they do on record.

Elliott Lefko

Steve Swallow  
Home  
(ECM)

After many years of backing up the likes of Gary Burton and Carla Bley and writing fine songs, (several of which have become modern jazz standards) electric bassman Steve Swallow has finally recorded an album of his own.

*Home* features the minimalist poetry of Robert Creeley set to music composed by Swallow. The album boasts a most impressive lineup from the ECM stable, including Sheila Jordan, vocals, Steve Kuhn on piano, Dave Liebman on sax, Lyle Mays on synthesizer and Bob "Ozone" Moses on drums. The result of this combination is a work so enjoyable that it makes one wonder why it has taken so long for Swallow to lead his own band.

Swallow never was the self-indulgent type and this album is no exception. His bass work is



Steve 'Gulp!' Swallow

adequate, though not exactly prominent (as is often the case with bands led by bass players) and he only allows himself a few chances to solo. Swallow's main contributions are his compositions framing the poetry of Creeley. Creeley's work seems at times to fit perfectly with the ECM style of music. The words are simply stark and the verses seem to float along.

Sheila Jordan was chosen to sing the poems and, as on *Playground* (the album she did with Steve Kuhn last year), she displays her multi-faceted vocal talents. Maybe if enough people hear her on this record she will be able to give up

her part-time typing job. Liebman and Kuhn also deserve recognition for the fine work they turn in, especially on tunes like "You Don't Think" and "Ice Cream".

*Home* is one of the most unique and enjoyable albums to be put out by the ECM label of late.

Hacker and Goldstein

The Clash  
Black Market  
(CBS)

In "Armageddon Time", a song on The Clash's new compilation album, *Black Market*, Joe Strummer sings, "Just remember to kick it over..." Unfortunately, he and his group do not heed that advice, and subsequently this release lacks a much-needed power.

*Black Market* is a compilation of British singles and various cuts previously unreleased in Canada. This ten-inch e.p. spans four years of The Clash's musical progression from the raw, kick-ass punky sound of their first album to their present ska-reggae-whiteboy fusion.

"Armageddon Time", tied for the number one song of the century (with *My Funny Valentine*—ed.), can be found on this release. Paul Simonon's bass work on the dub pieces such as

"Bankrobber" and "Justice Tonight" drips with funk making these cuts very danceable. Another highlight is the definitive cover of Jimmy Cliff's "Pressure Drop".

Unfortunately, many of the earlier songs included here lose much of the power that they have when performed live. Judging from their most recent releases (*London Calling*, *Black Market*, and *Sandinista*), however, The Clash is definitely one of the most vital bands recording today.

But really, Joe, do remember to kick it over.

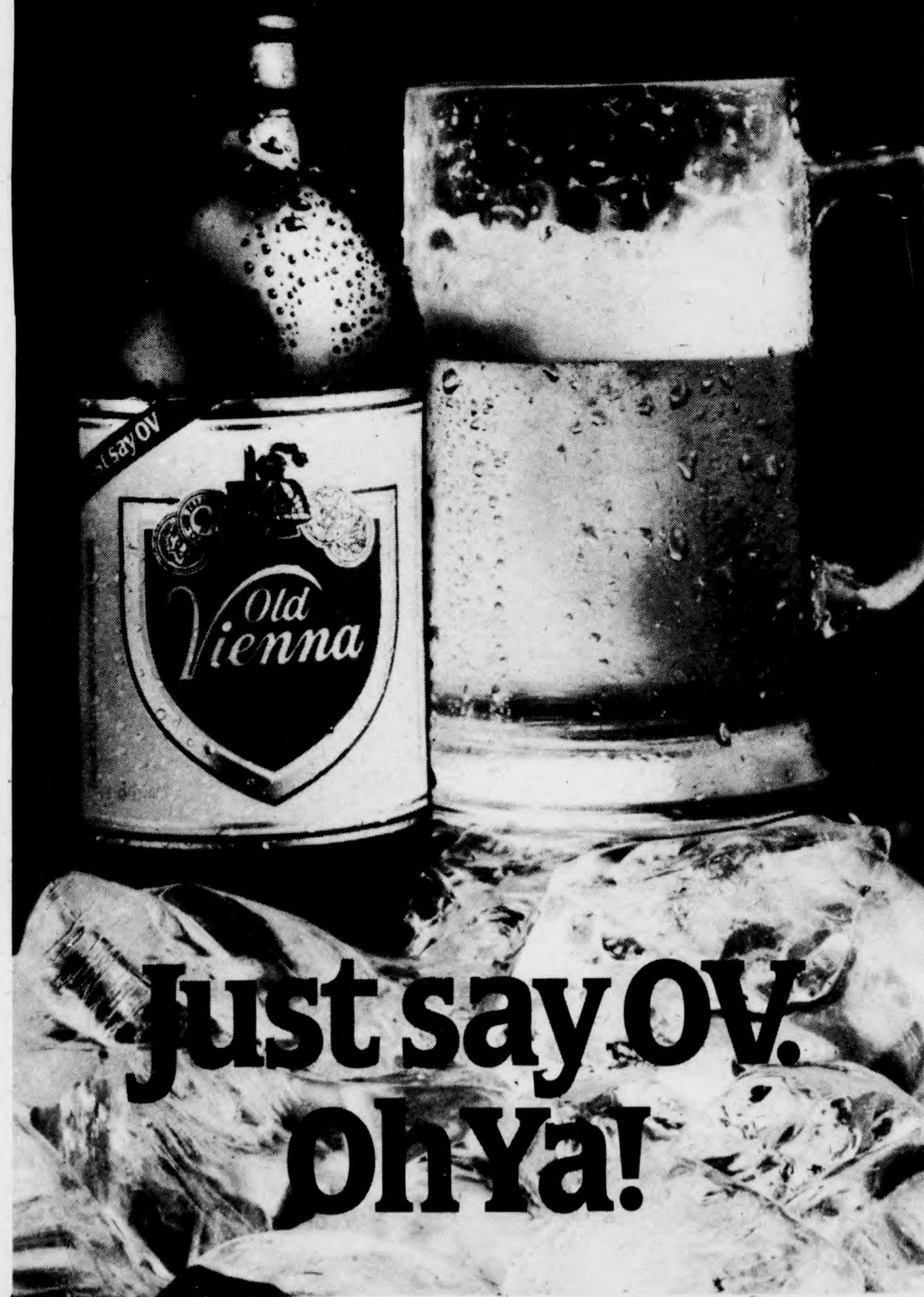
Ric Sarabia

Michael Chapman  
(Criminal/Polygram)

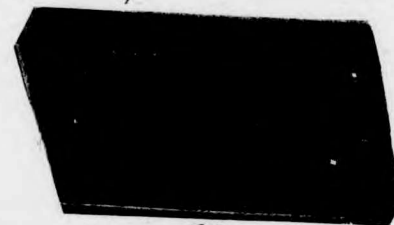
Michael Chapman, not to be confused with Blondie producer Mike Chapman, is one of the last romantics left in a contemporary recording field that has seemingly lost its heart somewhere along the line. Chapman is what used to be called a folkie. He sends out simple acoustic guitar, piano, and bass rhythms augmented by electronic guitar, keyboards, and very sedate drums. The sound takes off where folk-rockers like Eric Anderson and Eric Clapton, in his mellow days, left off. Chapman's sprawling ballads are grounded in folk, but easily extend into classical, jazz, and rock. The sound approaches what bands like the Little River Band and Ace attempt: love songs wrapped up in a mild format that is interesting both in lyrics and sound.

Elliott Lefko

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