

By ROB MACLEAN

*Excalibur's archeologist uncovers yet another stack of wax from beneath multiple waves of popular culture.*



*In Praise of Older Women and Other Crimes*  
*Kid Creole and the Coconuts*  
Sire 92 52981

Over the past four years Kid Creole and the Coconuts have rocketed from being a cult New York dance band to playing such unlikely venues as the Imperial Room at the Royal York Hotel.

What August Darnell (The Kid) has done is to pull together a dynamic mix of tropical and latin rhythms, swing and New York funk to come up with one of the most fun-oriented and creative dance sounds in ages.

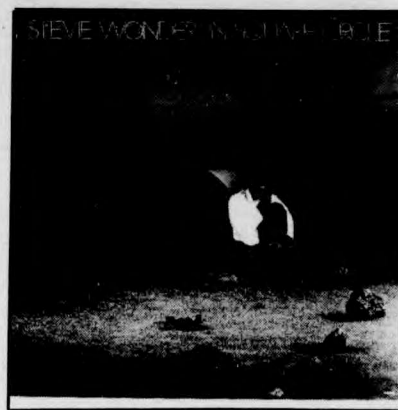
Following on the commercial recognition of their last two LPs and the exposure of a recent film appearance, (*In Praise of Older Women and*

*Other Crimes*) is another collection of wildly orchestrated generally upbeat and imaginative subjects. This time, however the compilation is not a so called 'concept album' tracing the adventures of The Kid and his musical henchmen. The result of this change is that the 10 songs are less personable.

Regrettably, even the powerful image of Kid Creole, who looks comically sinister (like Cab Calloway on acid), and The Coconuts (three cool blond babes) is conspicuously absent from the record package leaving the music on its own to be taken at face value.

Side one contains the hit *Endicott* which is really a tongue-in-cheek exposition of nonconformity with an eargrabbing horn arrangement and snappy, acute lyrics. Also outstanding is *Darlin' You Can Take Me* which has a breezy organ groove and a bass line echoing early Memphis R&B before Motown homogenized the genre. Of the other cuts *Luv Got Me Dancin' On My Kneez*, written by Darnell's righthand-man Andy Hernandez, is the most amusing and probably the most dated as it pokes fun at the breakdance craze. Great stuff.

Side two, entitled *Other Crimes*, has a weaker lineup. Standouts here are *Caroline Was a Dropout* and *Dowopsalsaboprock*: a couple of high energy shakers which maximize the brass, sax and giant percussion section that characterize the group. Almost out of place is *Animal Cop*, a rawer-sounding track with little merit and notable only for its dismal social comment. Overall this release tends to reaffirm Darnell's splattered genius because while some of it sounds like a vaudeville soundtrack, some of it sizzles.



*Square Circle*  
*Stevie Wonder*  
Tamla T-6134

South Africa banned this album because it openly criticizes apartheid. But Stevie Wonder, maybe the most popular and influential American recording artist today, goes well beyond such politics in *Square Circle* by making a broad humanistic comment about "the light of love."

Whether or not one agrees with what Wonder believes to be the nature of love, human motivation and progress, the results are interesting although not always successful.

In the glossy color booklet included with the album, Wonder supplies the philosophical lietmotif by giving symbolic pictures of himself, the lengthy lyrics to his songs, and a small story which attempts to tie the whole package together.

Digitally taped, written, produced, arranged and performed almost entirely by Wonder himself, this LP again showcases his enormous musical talents. His affluent vocals, drums, percussion and keyboard playing create a mood which is certainly provoking and emotional but unfortunately not so diverse.

Songs tend to be unduly long and lacklustre and the seriousness of Wonder's 'concept' becomes tiresome.

Undeniably there are the usual moments of brilliance one expects from the king of Motown. Side one begins with the single *Part-Time Lover*, a catchy, full sounding statement about the conflict between the quality and the relativity of love. Following this is an aggressive and edgy piece called *I Love You Too Much* raking the ground of give and take in human relationships. The other highpoint, buoyed by the innocent tone of accordian and harpsichord, is *Stranger on the Shores of Love*, a mellower, melodic composition concerned with insecurity and the guiding love needed to overcome it.

The second side is notable for two tracks both of which, while continuing Wonder's theme, are very political. The first of these, *Land of La La*, is a scathing Darwinian remark on American values, reflecting Los Angeles with its illusion of opportunity and good living. The other is of course *It's Wrong (Apartheid)* an anthem of hope condemning the racist South African regime with a mixture of tribal chants, comparisons and prophetic optimism.

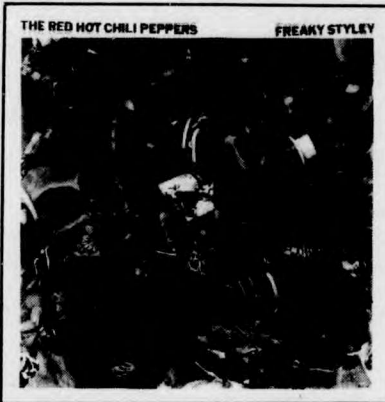
As admirable as all this is, the feeling of the record is a bit overbearing as Stevie takes his role as a musical guru a little too earnestly.

ably and 'roots rock', a strong and sometimes bleak picture of the South emerges.

The context even becomes political in tracks like *Common Man* and *Dark Night* which are apt comments on the hidden disparity and the hypocrisy of working class values deep in the United States.

The band never quite escapes this groove and only in *Rock and Roll Will Stand* (this cut alone is worth the price of the album), where pianist Gene Taylor is brought in to boogie a bit, does anything uptoempo and really exciting occur. But this number too is a bitter denunciation of big businesses ruining music and destroying musicians.

*Hard Line* is the flipside of The Blasters, that is, a darker, more diversified sound underpinning their contemporary but 'real' brand of rock 'n roll.



*Freaky Styley*  
*The Red Hot Chili Peppers*  
EMI ST 17168

Being from California, it's somehow not so surprising to hear this type of psychedelic rap-funk coming from four punkish white boys.

Produced by George Clinton, the Frank Zappa of funk, The Chili Peppers have an almost funny, almost good first record. The cover version of Sly and the Family Stone's *If You Want Me to Stay* is interesting and the rendition of The Meter's *Hollywood (Africa)* perhaps deserves a listen.

Their own material however is less inspiring as it tries too hard to be eccentric, forgetting the strength of their influences and the fact that what they're doing is really old news; it's something Sly Stone did much better fifteen years ago.

On the title track when the band chants, "say it out loud/I'm freaky styley and I'm proud," it's more of an ironic reference to the jacket art which is the freakiest and most 'far out' thing on this album.



*Hard Line*  
*The Blasters*  
Warner Bros. 92 50931

Based out of Los Angeles this hot, hot rhythm and blues outfit is known as one of the best in America for its explosive live acts.

In *Hard Line*, their second release, singer, song-writer and guitarist Dave Alvin seems to be exploring his influences, giving us a softer and more traditional-sounding collection of songs. With hints of country and gospel music easing the tone and down-playing the elements of rock-

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