



English recording group Free get a B plus from Steve Geller for their newest album.

Soft contemporary blues

Free's 2nd album quite good

By STEVE GELLER

Free only came into existence during the early months of 1968. What brought this talented foursome together was a common bond of musical frustration plus the guiding influence of master bluesman Alexis Korner.

The actual starting point was at the Fickle Pickle, a suburban London club. Paul Rodgers was singing one night when guitarist Paul Kossoff asked if he could sit in. After the performance, the two Pauls decided to form their own group.

Kossoff brought Simon Kirke, a drummer he'd previously worked with and the three of them set about to find a bass player. Andy Frazer, who had just left John Mayall's group, was found to be the answer.

From the beginning, Alexis Kramer offered Free his advice as he watched them rehearse. In April, 1968, Kramer was booked to

play a jazz club in Chester. However, instead of going in with his own musicians, he went in with Free, sat in with them for a few numbers and then turned the stage over to them.

On the strength of this rather unique public debut, Free won over a jazz audience — something that few groups would like to attempt.

After the success of their first LP, Tons of Sobs, they have come out with their second, simply entitled, Free (Polydor 543.111).

As their name implies, Free's music has no definite classification. However, in their second album, they display a soft contemporary blues style. There are the traditional steady influences but they remain a subtle as can be expected.

Their music is steady and unbelievably light for a blues group. The vocals display the range required to capture the moods and emotions of their various feelings.

The instrumentals compliment the vocal work while creating the required atmosphere which varies from that of a dreamlike euphoria in Free Me to the retrospective recollections of Songs of Yesterday. Free are always in control of their music as is evident from their first cut, I'll be Creepin'.

All the songs were written by Free themselves and the quality of their material testifies that this anti-commercial blues ensemble will be around for a long while. Overall rating: B plus.

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Elvin Bishop is flop

Hailing from California, the Elvin Bishop Group consists of Elvin Bishop on guitar and vocals, Steve Miller on organ, John Chambers on drums, Art Stavro on bass guitar, Albert Gianquinto on piano and a fellow named Applejack on harp.

Their recently-released album, the Elvin Bishop Group (Fillmore F30001) is a weak attempt at capturing the traditional swamps blues of the black man.

The vocal work is poor while the instrumental material lacks depth

and originality. The element of humour which is uncouthly and constantly injected adds nothing.

Lyrics such as Sweet Potato's just don't seem to make it:

"The woman that I'm lovin' folks, has a shape like a frog. But that ain't so bad, she smells like a hog."

With an album like this, one begins to wonder what the musical requirements are before a group is allowed to enter a recording studio. Overall rating: E — S.G.

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