

Clapton returns

by Doug Wavrock

Roy Buchanan - Live Stock [polydor PD6048] In his 4th album, Roy Buchanan, one of the most underrated lead guitarists in the business, shows us he wants to do something about the unknown tag that many have applied to him. **Live Stock** recorded live in N.Y. in the dying days of 1974 gives us a new perspective of Buchanan, far removed from his previous studio works. In concert he comes alive, moving away from his usual blend of slow boogie-blues guitar and vocals into some good uptempo '50's boogie rock and some highly contagious guitar playing that may leave many a listener wondering why no one's heard more of him before. He's always been there plugging away, it's just that no one bothered to see who else there was besides those select group of guitarists who are already millionaires and have pretty well cornered the record market.

"Roy's Bluz", shows us where Roy Buchanan was on his past efforts and gives us the best example of guitar expertise, playing that easily puts 'Slowhand' Clapton to shame considering some of the dribble that Clapton's released since his comeback. In the amount of material released so far by Buchanan, he's consistent and unless it measures up to a certain level of quality, it doesn't end up on a record. Buchanan is no prolific writer or arranger but it's better than getting a half-assed effort every five months as some groups are prone to do nowadays.

Of the selections on the album only 2 out of 7 are Buchanan originals, the rest are penned by artists but Buchanan's interpretations make them sound like Buchanan originals. You just have to listen to "Can I Change My Mind" to get the true appreciation of not only Roy but his fine band as well. It rates as one of the best on the L.P. The classic "I'm a Ram" followed by "I'm Evil" feature some incredible electric blues guitar, the best I've heard in quite some time. Buchanan doesn't seem to be worried if the pundits say that this type of music is 'out of style', this guy knows what he wants to play and he's bound to make believer's out of a great many of us and that he is indeed right in his choice.

Alphonse Mouzon - Mind Transplant [Blue Note BN-LA398G] It's sometimes said that the small labels usually have better albums than their giant counterparts, the reason; they have less money to throw away and they make sure that the artist they sign has the musical ability before they invest in him. Blue Note records (a virtual unknown to many) have now in their possession one of the most incredible new musicians of 1975, his name is Alphonse Mouzon. He's no stranger to the music world (been there for years) but he's finally emerged into the open as a full-fledged personality.

He's taken the immensely popular disco sound, added funky jazz and some rock music characteristics and has created an album of lightening guitar work, quick and thunderous drumming, and fine organ work in one of the albums that will be probably underrated by most record industry people when they review the musical accomplishments of 1975. The thing is this album shouldn't be ignored.

The album features Alphonse in a dual role as a drummer and as a keyboardist, which calls for some fine production work on this album to combine these different tracks together. The best example of Alphonse as a 'skin pounder' is "Ascorbic Acid" that moves him

into the category as one of the best drummers around. If 1975 is remembered in music circles, it'll go down in history as the year of the accomplished drummer. Many top candidates have emerged this year primarily from Europe but more increasingly so from the U.S. Alphonse is another one in this long list and undoubtedly one of the best. Hearing is believing and unless you've had the chance to give it a listen (once is enough) you'll have to agree that Alphonse could be an outside choice as one of the best new artists of the year. "Some of the Things People do" is the best example of the progression that Alphonse has carried funk to. "Nitroglycerin", another fine cut at first glance seems harmless enough like it's namesake but hearing it is another matter, it works in a powerful but very useful manner. In addition to Alphonse, the album features numerous places where his backup members can play their chops off in some incredible solo pieces that lend further credence to Alphonse as not only a good musician but as a good guy to have playing with you as he isn't going to be stingy with respects to your desire to add a few licks of your own to the album.

Eric Clapton-E.C. Was Here [RSO SO-4809] After his comeback last year with the release of **461 Ocean Blvd.** (a very good album) and just a few months ago with **There's One in Every Crowd** (a highly mediocre effort), Clapton's back with another **E.C. Was Here** contains all the ingredients that made 'Slowhand' Clapton what he was from his Yardbird beginnings through to his Derek and the Dominoes Days.

The material is laid back and bluesy but it also features some good picking on the uptempo rockers like "Further Up the Road" which closes off the album. The music is the result of some of the better moments of his recent U.S. concert tour.

E.C. Was Here is highly blues flavoured, stirred up, by excellent instrumentation by E.C. and the band and brought to a slow boil by E.C.'s guitar work and the vocals of Yvonne Elliman and Clapton. Their vocal togetherness on "Can't Find My Way Home" an old Steve Winwood piece, shows us why Yvonne was on tour with Clapton and we can only hope that she can be featured on further albums in the future.

The album features only 6 cuts, four of them being seven mins. plus. Eric has again used his ever popular "Presence of the Lord" (This is his third version on an album, all live) in a longer and fairly adequate version. In a surprise move, Clapton tried his hand at reworking the traditional blues piece, "Rambling on My Mind" and has extended its overall length creating a well-flavoured electric blues version that's highly fluid. But the highlight has to be "Have You Ever Loved a Woman" which among other things has Clapton soothing the audience after a flashy solo piece with the words, "No hysterics please". He's back in his environment again as a premiere lead guitarist, let's hope he now realizes this and maybe we'll have the chance to hear the music that made him famous and not the reggae beat he's gradually fallen into. Reggae isn't his bag and it's better left to the Caribbean bands who should play the music as they can identify to it as musicians. This is important to any artist if he's to capture and hold the attention of his audience. I hope to see something along the lines of **E.C. Was Here** in Clapton's next RSO disc.

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