

records

NEIL YOUNG
Everybody's Rockin'
(Geffen)

Contrary to recent rumors, Neil (Heart-of-Gold) Young is not, I repeat, *not*, on a personal campaign to become Mr. Rock Eclectic of 1983; or at least, not wholeheartedly.

With the release of *Everybody's Rockin'*, a good selection of basic rock, country/blues, and be-bop gems, Mr. Young has finally allowed his avid groupies and a large contingent of newer, curious listeners a chance to breathe easy and get a grip on just what the heck he's been trying to prove for his last two records. Believe me, there is a connection—somewhere.

Earlier this year saw the release of *Trans*, Neil's deliberately (?) affected treatise on the blizzard of synth-swamp, techn-pop music, which has recently over-run the radio waves with no end in sight. In fact, there must be a lot of snowed-in stations who can't get any new sounds into the studio because those synthesizers are beginning to sound woefully alike.

Young's latest stands in valiant opposition to the cold electrodes and gets back to the roots of rock-and-roll. Impeccably produced with a dash of the old slap-back echo technique, Neil takes you back with a few oldies ("Betty Lou," "Mystery Train," "Bright Lights, Big City"), and some solid rock originals ("Payola Blues," "Kinda Fonda Wanda," and "Jellyroll Man"). This album made me think about just how exciting it must have been to hear this stuff for the first time around, and the energy is still there. But is it anything more than extremely danceable nostalgia?

In "Payola Blues" ("This one's for you, Allen Freed), Neil sings, "If a man is making music/they oughta let his records play." This isn't just a noble bow to the up-and-comers and hopefuls who are abused by big record companies. Old Neil's a

victim too (if you believe that a legendary past is a burden) and he's got some things to get off his chest. The past can trap you artistically.

So, is Neil Young gradually becoming rock's Ralph Nader, leaping onto the music scene as crusading man of a thousand faces? First he was the blundering sold-out Computer Cowboy and now the well-meaning Bill Haley.

Well, granted *Trans* was more critical bark than bite (musical product). With *Everybody's Rockin'* however, he lets go of the leash and gives us a record with guts and a 'lotta love.' Thanks, Mr. Soul.

John Ens

TALKING HEADS
Speaking in Tongues
(Sire)

Talking Heads have established a reputation for producing innovative and well-crafted music. *Speaking in Tongues*, the band's latest offering is no exception.

The incomparable New York foursome have come up with a chirpy album of dance-oriented music that retains the lyrical power of *Remain in Light*, the band's last LP, while escaping its more sombre and oppressive tone. Lead singer and lyricist David Byrne's indictment of middle class values and the absurdities of everyday life still dominate, but this time his parting emphasis is more positive. "This Must be the Place", is nothing more than a simple love song, with an infectious melody superimposed on a light rhythmic background. "Making Flippy-Floppy" is a strong dance tune with a funk bass-line reminiscent of Rick James.

Surprisingly, the two singles from the album are also its most bizarre: "Burning Down the House" with its raspy vocal and eerie synthesizer backing, and "Swamp", undoubtedly the most outrageous pop song since "Rock Lobster". The music on *Speaking in Tongues* is both

commercial and innovative, a rare combination in recent years. The lyrics, while at times annoyingly obscure, are multi-leveled and clever. The title of the album stems from an occult term for a type of trance communication. Byrne's unique blend of cliché, nonsense, and sharp imagery is at least partially successful in mimicking a language that at first glance appears incoherent, yet holds some deeper meaning.

Kevin Connolly

RICKIE LEE JONES
Girl at Her Volcano
(WEA)

Two years after her highly successful *Pirates* LP, Rickie Lee Jones could only, so it seems, come up with enough material to fill a seven-song EP. In fact, *Girl at Her Volcano* is essentially a collection of compositions by other people.

To her credit, Jones has chosen to include "My Funny Valentine" and "Lush Life," two of the more challenging ballads in any jazz singer's repertoire. They come off quite nicely, performed live with Jones' piano providing virtually all of the accompaniment.

The other tunes are all studio material, recorded between 1978 and 1983. "Under the Boardwalk" and "Walk Away Rene" feature the same crisp production that characterized her first two albums. The only original composition is "Hey, Bub," written in 1979 but not recorded until this year. This tune, we are told, was the first song written for the *Pirates* album.

Taken individually, the songs on *Girl at Her Volcano* are wonderful and provide evidence of Ms. Jones' multiple talents. Unfortunately though, the EP seems quite fragmented (unlike the first two albums) and the absence of any upbeat bop-type numbers, along the lines of "Slow Boat to China" or "Pirates" is a let-down.

Steven Hacker

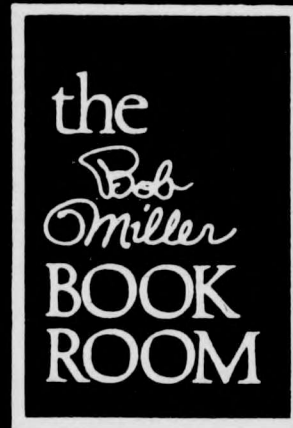
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