

# Cognitive approach to rock

by Doug Wavrock

**Myles & Lenny—It Isn't the Same** [Columbia-KC33938] The release of Myles Cohen's and Lenny Solomon's second album, *It Isn't the Same* has long been awaited by an expectant public after the impact and success of their first effort **Myles and Lenny**. Like their first L.P., *It Isn't the Same* does not deal with any one type of musical interpretation but rather with a variety of music ranging from classical to jazz to country-rock to electric and pop rock as well. Perhaps this wide diversity in a way explains why the duo have had such great success in their still young careers with a highly diverse audience. To some, the incorporation of a violin into a group which normally plays music centered around different interpretations of rock, seems novel and perhaps even out of place. But in the 1970's the violin is accepted by many musical groups, particularly those from England and Europe, as an essential instrument which sheds a whole new interpretation on popular music. One can perhaps equate the re-emergence of the violin in popular music as similar to the re-emergence of the organ and later of multiple keyboards in the 1960's.

*It Isn't the Same*, in contrast to **Myles and Lenny**, features several well-known musicians performing in a cameo role; the chief guests are Charlie McCoy and David Bromberg. Also, the inclusion of Doug Riley into the back-up band adds a certain depth to the overall sound, though this is in no way a reflection on the abilities of Maribeth who is also featured on this album.

The main feature of the album is the degree of musicianship revealed to us by Myles, Lenny and the studio musicians. The selection "Greycloud" features a duel of sorts between Myles' lead guitar and Lenny's violin interspersed with electric guitar work. The selection also features an excerpt from J.S. Bach's "Partita for Violin", viewed by many as a difficult violin piece to play. Hagood Hardy on vibraphone adds a 'jazz' feel to the piece following its transition back and forth between electric rock and pseudo-classical music. "I Care Enough", which opens up the album is a rather interesting admixture of country fiddle, boogie piano and a rock'n'roll background that appears at first glance an impossible combination but the mix of these divergent styles creates a fine up-tempo number.

One feature of the album is the attempt to blend the violin of Lenny Solomon with a wide range of musical instruments, while, in other instances, to feature a distinct contrast between the violin and other conventional instruments. "I Will Remember You" features a blend of clavinet and violin with the

vibraphone of Hagood Hardy used as a contrasting instrument; "It Isn't the Same", a reggae number, features a blend of steel drums and violin; while "Bad Risk" features Lenny on electric viola which blends with the tracks of the electric guitar. Both are enhanced by the synthesizer work of Maribeth Solomon.

"Here Again" features an alteration between a french Horn (played by Dick Berg), acoustic guitar and violin, though there are places where two or more of these instruments are combined together. Eventually the acoustic nature of the selection gives way to a ballad approach and this in turn diverges into a classical rock climax. "Love Has a Way", the selection which has my vote as a single release, features a clavinet and violin contrast featured in a media of up-tempo pop rock. "I Don't Think It's Fair", a country flavoured number, features David Bromberg on dobro and electric guitar with Lenny Solomon playing mandolin in a piece that is country-blues in origin. Here the dobro, guitars and mandolin are employed as tone contrast to each other. "Oh No" features Charlie McCoy on Harmonica and Lenny with a country fiddle accompaniment while the viola (also played by Lenny) lends an interesting percussion base further enhanced by McCoy on Harmonica.

Myles and Lenny in *It Isn't the Same* have created an album that is a cognitive musical approach to conventional rock music. In many ways, their second album is much superior to their first, particularly in the efforts that they have undertaken to refine their musicianship.

**Elkie Brooks-Rich Man's Woman** [A&M—SP4554] First impressions can be deceiving. Such was the case when I first saw the cover of Elkie Brooks' album **Rich Man's Woman**, in which Elkie appears with a big smile, a feather wrap-around and little else. In most cases an album cover featuring a female vocalist 94% unclad and leaving the remaining 6% to our imagination (not much is needed by the way) indicates a vocalist who has to sell herself literally, on the cover of her debut album in order to sell her music.

Unlike the first impression the cover may give the musical contents of the album are solid. Elkie Brooks is no ordinary singer, her voice reminds one of the unique throaty style of Bobby Gentry, who has disappeared down the road of musical oblivion. In contrast to Gentry, Elkie Brooks is a rock'n'roll balladeer and she isn't afraid to let her voice soar above the music. The first two pieces of the album, the title selection, "Where Do we Go from Here (Rich Man's Woman)" and "Take Cover" are rock and roll

in character with a modified boogie disco-sound in which strong emphasis is placed on the percussion of the studio musicians. "Jigsaw Baby" is a slow, laid-back number that features the mellowness of Elkie amid simpering violins that allow her with a barbershop background vocal section, to achieve a sense of vocal superiority. "Roll Me Over", featuring Nino Tempo on sax, is a boogie number with vocals, written by Elkie, that matches the musical mood of the piece. "He's a Rebel", a Gene Pitney oldie, is redone by Elkie in a version that is superior to the original version, especially in the instrumental portion of the selection.

"Rock 'N Roll Circus", although much like the title track is more pop orientated and it possesses the possibility of being released as a single. "Try a Little Love", featuring an active brass section comes close to the style typified by the disco sound but Elkie's bluesy voice moves the selection away from this particular music label. "Tomorrow and "One Step on the Ladder" are both excellent examples of Elkie's vocal capabilities. Although the cover of the album may attract you because of its portrayal of Elkie Brooks or turn off because of your past experience of non-talented vocalists who use such means to sell their music, the true character of the album is the music presented on the record and for Elkie Brooks, a lot of musical character is present.

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