

Billy Joel Watch for The Stranger

By B.J.

Billy Joel, after being absent from the musical scene since late '73 has recently returned with an interesting album with many songs that could possibly be released as singles.

Side one opens with "Movin' Out" (Anthony's Song) an upbeat but not too interesting song. Next is the title cut, "The Stranger" song with very good lyrics - has to be considered as one of the best songs on the album. Next is "Just the Way You Are" which is doing very well on the charts as a single right now. An excellent song, very well done. "Scenes from an Italian Restaurant" closes out the side. An interesting song to listen to, but I doubt that it would ever make it in the singles market.

Side two opens with "Vienna", a good M.O.R. tune that sounds like something Elton John would have

done in his earlier days. "Only the Good Die Young" is the next cut. This is a good tune which is another possibility for a 45 release. There are a lot of interesting hidden meanings in this song. The next tune, "She's Always a Woman" is a really decent easy listening song. "Get it Right the First Time" is next. This is an upbeat song which could also conceivably become a single release. The side closes out with "Everybody Has A Dream". This song was written in 1971 but had not been released until now.

All in all, an excellent easy listening album with some very interesting lyrics. Billy Joel's style has changed alot since the days of "Piano Man" and a few of the songs on this album have the potential to become big hits. Watch for this album to turn at least double platinum.

Trivia:

The Band: Billy Joel (Keyboards and Vocals), Doug Stegmeyer (bass) Liberty DeVitto (Drums), Richie Cannatta (Saxes, Clarinet, flute and organ), Steve Khan (guitars), and Hiram Bullock (guitar).

Guest Musicians: Ralph MacDonald (percussion), Hugh McCracken (guitar), Steve Burgh (guitar), Phil Woods (sax), Dominic Cortese (accordion), Richard Tee (organ), Phoebe Snow, Lani Groves, Gwen Guthrie and Patti Austin (background vocals).

All music and lyrics by Billy Joel. Produced by Phil Ramone. Recorded and mixed at A&R Recording, Inc., New York, N.Y. Available on CBS Records and Tapes

Next week - Meatloaf *Bat Out of Hell*



Utopia

Cynical album best yet

By CHRIS HUNT

Utopia - "OOPS Wrong Planet!" [Bearsville]

Like David Bowie, Todd Rundgren is a musician who you can count on never doing the same thing twice. In the early seventies Rundgren was, for all intents and purposes, a pop singer and even had a hit single "Hello its me". Then he drifted into heavy metal and from that to a highly experimental form of hard rock demonstrated on the first Utopia album. Then on "Faithful" he was back on the borders of pop again. "Ra" took him to a mellower form of progressive rock and now

"Oops Wrong Planet!" puts it all together for one of the most musically satisfying and at the same time popularly accessible albums that Rundgren has produced to date.

"Oops Wrong Planet!" is, without doubt, a protest album and, for the most part, a bitterly cynical one. Its message, as simply phrased in the liner notes, is, "Use your head, Use your heart, Save Yourself." The idea, presumably, is that our civilization is on a suicidal course and will, unless something is done, self-destruct. The collapse of western capitalist society will not be brought about

by nuclear war, or a Marxist revolution, but by our economic growth simply exceeding the earth's potential to support it. Those of you who have seen the film, "Limits to Growth", know what I'm talking about. Around this theme Utopia have built a musical style which includes hard rock, progressive rock, blues and ballads. For sheer diversity and musical excellence this has to be the best Utopia album yet. The songs are all good, short and tight; no loose ends are left hanging and no extended instrumental sections take your mind away from the message implied in the lyrics.

The album opens quietly with "Trapped", a song that starts like a ballad and finishes in a blistering flurry of screaming vocals and churning hard rock. "Ana if you don't have the stomach/ For all this radical crap/ Then have the guts to stand for something/ Or your gonna be trapped/ Trapped in a world that you never made."

"Trapped" merges smoothly into the softer "Windows". Roger Powell takes the vocal chores here and does it beautifully. "Love in Action" follows with a conservative rock beat and Todd doing the vocals. Then comes the beautiful "Crazy Lady Blue" sung by drummer, John Wilcox, and touched up with some heart-rending lead guitar work by Todd. The solid, pounding "Back on the Street", sung by bass player, Kasim Sultan relates the story of an ex-con who is 'back on the street' with periodic allusions to the entire human condition. The first side closes with "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell" which contains, within four minutes, some very drastic changes in tempo switching from fast rock to bouncy pop and back to rock again.

Side Two opens with the powerful "The Martyr" and then slides into "Abandon City", an R & B tune which has an almost disco beat. "Gangrene" follows, reverting once again to a pounding rock beat, and making an angry comment on business and advertising. "They'll sap your strength and suck your soul and feed you their trash/ Till your mind is left blank and your dreams have been smashed." Again we are

treated to a soft, moving musical extravaganza in "My Angel", complete with an angelic chorus. The vicious "Rape of the Young" follows and brutally attacks those who control our destinies and don't care what kind of world they leave to the children of the future. To the accompaniment of hard driving chords and thundering drums, Rundgren sings.

"Hey Minister President/ Nobody listens/ Nobody listens till we've run out of luck/ Why should you care, its too much trouble/ You got yours so it just don't bug ya/ It just don't bug ya 'cause you won't be around."

"Love is the Answer" brings the album to a moving finale. Piano and organ provide the melody along with softly strummed acoustic guitar chords while a solid rhythm keeps the tune moving. It is a melancholy song but is pieced with a ray of hope, an anthem for a new age. Todd's skilled production builds the song up from the bitter questions of a

lonely man to the rousing answering chant of the world, "We've got to love one another."

Whether or not Utopia's fears for the future are warranted is not really relevant to the discussion of this album. At least there is certainly no harm in being aware of the possibility that civilization may well crumble in the not too distant future.

The point is, however, that this is an extremely good piece of music. Four fine musicians, all of whom are also excellent vocalists, have produced under Rundgren's direction a finely crafted album of hard rock, progressive rock, and rock ballads. The musicianship is honed to perfection within its limits, and the music is not only enjoyable but, to a certain extent, it is also intellectually stimulating. Food for thought, if nothing else. Overall, "Oops Wrong Planet!" comes across as a very well-produced album with both artistic and commercial merit. Definitely worth a listen.

CHSR TOP 40

- 1) You Make Loving Fun - Fleetwood Mac - Warner Brthrs (3)
- 2) Turn to Stone - ELO - United Artists (17)
- 3) Blue Bayou - Linda Ronstadt - Asylum (6)
- 4) Desiree - Neil Diamond - Columbia (12)
- 5) Short People - Randy Newman - Warner Brthrs (14)
- 6) Gettin' Ready For Love - Dianna Ross - Motown (15)
- 7) Slip Slidin' Away - Paul Simon - Columbia (1)
- 8) Baby What A Big Surprise - Chicago - Columbia (5)
- 9) We Are The Champions - Queen - Elektra (20)
- 10) As - Stevie Wonder - Motown (10)
- 11) She's Not There - Santana - Columbia (23)
- 12) Moondance - Van Morrison - Warner Brthrs (-)
- 13) Wrap Your Arms Around Me - KC & Sunshine Band (19)
- 14) You Really Got Me Needing You - Peter Pringle - Warner Brthrs
- 15) Rock n Roll is a Vicious Game - April Wine - Aquarius (-)
- 16) Love At Your Convenience - Alice Cooper - Warner Brthrs (28)
- 17) Tried to Love - Peter Frampton - A&M (30)
- 18) Man To Man - Hot Chocolate - Big Tree (-)
- 19) Closer To The Heart - Rush - Anthem (26)
- 20) Drowning In The Sea of Level - Atlantic - Ringo Starr (25)
- 21) Your Backyard - Burton Cummings - Portrait (27)
- 22) Easy to Love - Leo Sayer - Warner Brthrs (-)
- 23) Blue Street - Blood Sweat & Tears - ABC (-)
- 24) Grandmother's Song - Steve Martin - Warner Brthrs (22)
- 25) You Light Up My Life - Debby Boone - Warner Brthrs (9)
- 26) Peg - Steely Dan - ABC (38)
- 27) Money Money Money - Abba - Atlantic (11)
- 28) Sometimes When We Touch - Dan Hill - GRT (-)
- 29) Sweet Sweet Smile - Carpenters - A&M (-)
- 30) A Clue - Boz Scaggs - Columbia (-)
- 31) Were Off You Know - Klaatu - Daffodil (21)
- 32) Draw The Line - Aerosmith - Columbia (-)
- 33) The Circle is Small - Gordon Lightfoot - Warnr Brthrs (-)
- 34) Gone Too Far - Dan & Coley - Big Tree (33)
- 35) Angie Baby - Alan O'Day - Atlantic (37)
- 36) Point of Know Return - Kansas - Columbia (34)
- 37) Just The Way You Are - Billy Joel - Columbia (-)
- 38) Come Away - Styx - A&M (8)
- 39) Crying In My Sleep - Art Garfunkle - Columbia (31)
- 40) We Just Disagree - Dave Mason - Columbia (36)

COMPILED BY MARC PEPIN

Rock 'n Roll Trivia

Rick Lee says that you do not know as much about Rock 'n Roll as you think you do and he will try to prove it. Answer the questions and then check the answers on page 16.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the name of the band that Jimi Hendrix employed for the Woodstock Festival?
2. What name did Johnny Winter use when he first began to record?
3. Where was the first "Grand Funk Railroad -LIVE" album recorded?
4. Who was Les Paul?
5. What was Steppenwolf's original name?
6. What was Janis Joplin's favorite drink?
7. Where is Heart from?
8. Who was the last member to join The Who?
9. Who did Ted Nugent play for before he went on his own?
10. Who is Robert Zimmerman?