

It wasn't a bad year

Herewith, a casual pick of the pops for '75

By EVAN LEIBOVITCH

The jolly season means that hordes of people will be jamming into Toronto's record shops, looking for a slab of vinyl that contains some soothing noises. So here it is, Excalibur's Year End Music Wrap-up, designed to confuse you even more when searching for that musical masterpiece for a friend.

The first and most disgusting thing about 1975 is the attempted comebacks of Frankie Valli, Neil Sedaka, and Paul Anka. Can't they leave bad enough alone?

There are just too many "heavy metal" groups around, putting out stuff that's an insult to music. Bowie, Kiss, Deep Purple, Sweet, Alice Cooper, and other albums of this type are useless, except for hand-to-hand combat. After all, imitators are usually not as good as the innovators, and when the innovators are Grand Funk, the stuff can be safely ignored.

This was the year for two of rock-dom's two finest performers to release lousy follow-up albums. Elton John's Rock of the Westies

comes nowhere near the excellence of Captain Fantastic, and Paul McCartney's Venus and Mars is an utter waste after listening to the classic Band on the Run.

The Stones came and went, leaving Toronto with one of the best rock shows in quite a while, as well as two pretty awful anthologies. Stick with Hot Rocks, unless you're a masochist.

Although most established groups pretty well stagnated in their own styles, three new groups broke some new ground with fine

first albums. Greenslade is on the electronics kick; HeadEast follows a proven rock formula perfectly, and the Captain & Tennille were two Beach Boys castoffs who made a name for themselves in the realm of Top 30 music.

There isn't too much to say about this year's rhythm & blues music. Most of it is average, except for disco music, which is worse: it can get on your nerves after the first 10 minutes.

A good alternative to regular rock is the new, upbeat form of country and western that the Eagles pioneered. They're still near the front, but there are few albums in this category that aren't above average. The Outlaws, Linda Ronstadt, the Ozark Mountain Daredevils and many more bands are popularizing this very easy to listen to music.

There's both good and bad this year on the Canadian scene. While the old groups like Lighthouse and the Guess Who are justifiably fading into obscurity, those on the horizon are promising. New names like Gino Vanelli, Dan Hill, and Shooter are getting good exposure (even Stateside), and established

artists Bruce Cockburn, Moe Koffman, and Murray McLachlan have released some of their finest works this year.

Not only is Quasimodo Rock alive and well, with fine releases this year by Gentle Giant, Pink Floyd, and Fireballet, it now has an offspring: Kraftwerk's Meccano Rock.

Some obscure joker named Zimmerman released possibly one of the best albums this year, called Blood on the Tracks. It shows enough talent—with a little more poise, this guy could just be the next Bruce Springsteen.

My favourite album this year is definitely Stamp Album by the Climax Blues Band, because of the imagination expressed in the music, and the superb style with which it is executed. The booby prize goes to Eliot Murphy's Lost Generation. His songs about Eva Braun and the like just don't hit the spot at all.

Well, that's about it. It hasn't been a bad year for rock, but you know things could be much better if A & M's best seller this year was Cat Stevens' (pretty dated) Tea for the Tillerman.

Whatever happened to Popeye?

By BILL GLADSTONE

According to the adage, old soldiers never die — they just fade away. So if you ever wondered what ever happened to the old Popeye cartoons you used to watch when you were three, now you know: they've faded from the cinematic scene.

TV MARKETABILITY

No longer marketable for television, many of these and countless other old top-notch cartoons have been destroyed by the film studios that made them. But Reg Hartt, film-buff and operator of the Aladdin Theatre on Yonge Street, has a private collection of some of the best animated art to come out of Hollywood.

And every Sunday night at 7:00, you can see Mighty Mouse, Betty

Boop, Popeye, and all the others as you remember them from the good old days.

It may surprise some people to realize that animated cartoon art can be as intricate and sophisticated as any other branch of the cinema.

"David Fleischer and Harman-Ising from MGM really put themselves into their cartoons," says Hartt. "Today, animation is done by computer, and of course, the difference in quality is painfully obvious."

Many of the old cartoons have racist or sexist overtones, which naturally eliminate them from today's super-conscious television market. "We don't have the ability

to laugh at ourselves anymore," says Hartt, who mourns the loss of our social naivete.

As Hartt says, the Aladdin Theatre is attempting to be an alternative, to bring in films that are good but usually unavailable. Hartt himself is a dedicated film buff (who claims, incidentally, to have singlehandedly initiated the revival of old films in Toronto), so the films he has scheduled are bound to appeal to most film lovers.

Besides running cartoons Sunday nights, the Aladdin Theatre runs all sorts of cinematic gems the rest of the week. The bill changes every night, and among the upcoming features are: Dreyer's Joan of Arc, Von Stroheims' Greed, and Fritz Lang's M.

Hilton's work is child-like

By SHEILA STANLEY

The work currently on display at the Art Gallery of York University is that of the British painter, Roger Hilton. Although well exhibited in England and Europe, Hilton is little known in Canada and makes his Toronto debut with this showing.

The most striking aspect of the show is his total unpretentiousness. His most obvious source is children's art, but though Hilton's work is undeniably child-like, it is in no way childish. He has taken the format of children's art and infused it with his own mature artistic expression.

COLOUR AND LINE

He paints with thick guache on paper, often combined with charcoal drawing. Though both mediums appear in the same pieces, neither is gratuitous nor subservient to the other. There is no lack of unity, yet colour and line retain their individual qualities. The directness of the medium has allowed him an immediacy rarely achieved on the large canvas.

The bright, unmodulated colours have a gay carnival air that is fresh and appealing without being too cute. Hilton has somehow managed to be both charming and gutsy at the same time. His reconciliation of simplicity and sophistication places Hilton's oeuvre among the great.

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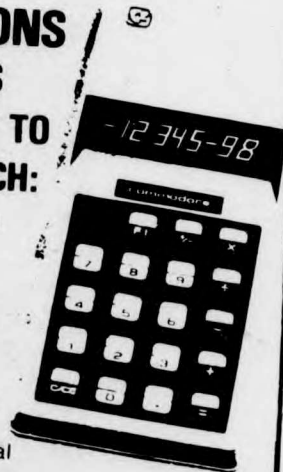
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