

records



talk show *

Go-Go's music fun, lacks any meaning

Go-Go's
Talk Show
(A&M)
●●●½

Throw away music. That's the label most frequently attached to this all-woman band by the critics. And, when you look at them for the first time, the band does seem to produce pleasant-but-adolescent songs about boys and girls and vacations, à la Beach Boys or Frankie Avalon.

Yet despite their lack of what anyone would call serious musical directions, the band still makes you tap your feet, and the songs linger pleasantly in your mind long after you listen to the album. Perhaps the strongest thing about this group is their complete lack of pretension; they don't even try to do anything but produce catchy tunes.

And produce them they do. Songs like "Turn to you" and "I'm the only one" on this album, and "Vacation" and "Our lips are sealed" of previous ones, are positively infectious; their quick-paced vocal harmonies and naive tone make them difficult to ignore.

What's more, the group is finally being recognized as trend setters, blazing the trail for pop music's latest arrivals, people like Cindy Lauper and especially, Mari Wilson who sings similarly naive streams of joyful nonsense. If you insist that pop music must have a message, the Go-Go's will undoubtedly not be your cup of tea, but for those who can enjoy the thoughtless escapism of some of the early rock and roll, the Go-Go's will be a welcome find.

—KEVIN CONNOLLY



This one's good but it isn't great

UZEB
You, Be Easy
(A&M)
●●●

You, Be Easy is the third album by Montreal quartet UZEB, which must be one of the only groups in Canada still playing jazz-rock-funk fusion—a la 1970's—and making money at it.

UZEB's obvious influences take in Weather Report at their most commercial, and Spyro Gyra at their least. But the thin sliver in between doesn't leave the band's musical mastermind, guitarist Michel Cusson, with much room to maneuver with many of his compositions here, infectious though they may be. Cusson is a master of texture with his various guitar synthesizers, but when he tries for one of those singing Allan Holdsworth-type solo excursion, his fingers seem to get tangled up in throwaway Led Zeppelin licks.

On the other hand, when bassist Alain Caron tries for the Holds-

worth sound, he succeeds. Caron possesses a commanding technique, an impeccable sense of tunin, and the skill to construct a solo from beginning to end, finally erupting into slurred, machine-gun streams of notes, constantly edging upward on his fretless piccolo bass, as on "Fretless." And Caron's solo ballad, "Bella's Lullaby," uses harmonics and open, unresolved chord voicings to create an understated performance that is the high point of *You, Be Easy*.

Although the album lacks the flat-out soloing that marked UZEB's fiery debut LP (on CBC records), there's some fine playing anyway; a likable effort.

—ROMAN PAWLYSHYN



Wobble at the helm causes limitations

Jah Wobble (with The Edge and Holger Czukay)
Snake Charmer
(Island)
●●½

Every so often, Jah and the boys get together to record some music over a few bbers and some expensive recording equipment. Jah, of course, is Wobble, ex-bass player of Public Image Ltd., whose simplistically repetitive, timidly funky bass lines provide the ground layers of this 30-minute, 5-track mini-LP.

The boys, in this case, include Holger Czukay; multi-instrumentalist, producer (not here, though) and effectsmeister extraordinaire; mysterious guitarist "The Edge" (if he weren't mysterious he'd tell his name); a trio called the Invaders of the Heart Band; and drummer Jaki Liebezeit, Czukay's skillfully proficient ex-colleague from defunct German avant-rock band Can.

The music, if you're familiar with these players, is predictable. With Wobble at the helm, however, the more interesting potential of these musicians are left unexplored. Czukay's penchant for editing together short bits of everything from french horn and middle eastern wind instruments to cheesy, spacey organ lines, all liberally spiced with spacey dub effects, is missed.

"Snake Charmer" typifies the Wobble-et-al "sound": rhythmically-textured, danceable numbers, with an assortment of overdubbed instrumental extravagance mixed erratically on top. Wobble's own gruffy, semi-sarcastic but inconsequential vocals (or else, Marcella Allen's soulful voice on one track) are added in occasionally for good measure.

Judging by their past, these guys could do better—for instance, by cutting out the computerized percussion and keyboards and making more of a heartfelt effort.

—A.I.

A parody of punk

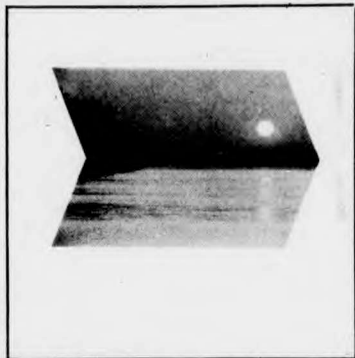
The Cramps
Bad music for Bad people
(A&M)
●●●

This New York-based quintet seems to thrive on being outrageous, and have attracted a rather extensive cult following with their incomparable brand of punk parody. Often hilarious, this greatest hits collection includes songs like "Human Fly" and "Goo Goo Muck," and most often combines senseless, Pythonesque lyrics with deliberately bad

musical accompaniment. The guitar solo on "Garbage" is virtually unlistenable, as are the hee-haw country vocal renditions of the aptly named "I Can't Hardly Stand It."

What the album amounts to is a highly enjoyable series of musical jokes, most of which are at the expense of the unintentionally absurd screechings of many late-'70s punk bands.

—K.C.



Album's cover reveals contents

Raphael Rudd
Reflections
(Globe Records)
●●●

Like most kinds of music with the word "new" in their names, there's not much new about New Age music.

New Age, the latest musical catch phrase—and perhaps one of the most pretentious—is a kind of instrumental folk music for the 1980s, played with all acoustic instruments. It's all about nature and serenity and meditation and its reference points are about equal parts Chopin and James Taylor. It's meant to lull you, not shock you.

It's also meant to sell. The independent U.S. Windham Hill label is the surprise success of the decade, thanks to its roster of about a dozen New Age artists; its star, pianist George Winston, is currently outselling Keith Jarrett ten to one.

Albums for the connoisseur in you

R. Murray Schafer—*Ra*
Harry Freedman—*Chalumeau*
Roxolana Roslak—*Kuyas*
Rivka Golani-Erdesz—*Viola Nouveau*
(All on the Centrediscs label)

If you've always wanted to be a sophisticated connoisseur of contemporary Canadian art music, but never knew where to start, these four albums are for you. Released on the Centrediscs label (distributed by the Canadian Music Centre on Bay Street) all are digital recordings of recent works composed and performed by Canadians.

The internationally-renowned R. Murray Schafer is known equally well for his pioneering work in music education (in 1972 he founded the World Soundscape Project at Simon Fraser University) as for his composition. In recent years his interests in theatre and ritual and in eastern philosophy (among other things) have led to a number of ambitious music-theatre works. "Music for Wilderness Lake" and "The Princess of the Stars" were both performed on country lakes in the early morning hours. "Ra," which premiered at the Ontario Science Centre last May, was a dusk-to-dawn music-theatre event in which the "audience" participated as "initiates" into the mysteries of the Egyptian Sun God, Ra.

Performed by the Comus Music Theatre and a cast of 33 singers, dancers, actors and instrumentalists, "Ra" was Schafer's attempt at synthesizing opera, music, dance and pantomime with religious and mythical symbolism, and all in an atmosphere at times resembling that of a circus fun-house. Influenced by the idea of Carl Jung, Schafer's aim was to repentalize Ra's mythical nightly trip through the underworld,

Which brings us to Raphael Rudd. Rudd is a classically-trained pianist and harpist who wrote and conducted the orchestral arrangements for the movie soundtrack of The Who's *Quadrophenia*. *Reflections*, an album of solo piano recorded at Le Studio near Montreal, marks perfect New Age time. For much of the album, *Reflections* sounds reminiscent of Vince Guaraldi's "Theme From Charlie Brown," with Rudd churning away on the arpeggios underneath the hummable modal melodies; the rest of the time he sounds utterly tranquilized, seemingly ready to drop off in mid-note.

If it all comes across as a sanitized version of the ECM sound, no matter. It's pleasant, it stays with you on the subway, and it makes you like to think it was recorded on the shores of the deserted lake pictured on the album's cover.

—R.P.



Great pan-galactic

Time Warp
Asteroid Alley
(C-Note 821039, 1983)
●●●

Asteroid Alley, the second album by Toronto jazz trio Time Warp, carries the band's unique approach to jazz one step further than their studio debut. The essential ingredient on this live recording which sets it apart not only from Time Warp's previous LP, but also from the bulk of studio produced jazz, is intensity.

This comes as no surprise. Ever since the 'Galt Rhythm Machine'

teamed up five years ago, Time Warp's dedication to original material with a strong foundation in the integral elements of jazz and blues has made the group one of the most entertaining on the Toronto scene. The album opens with "Nommo," one of five tunes composed by bassist Al Henderson which he calls "Pan-galactic Bebop."

In a nice change of pace, the band shifts into a more lyrical mood for the second tune on each side. Both Henderson's "Nima Na Kombo" and Barry Elmes' "Dahomey" are African oriented compositions in which the rhythm section sets up a dense rhythmic groove and Brough floats melodically overtop with his yearning pensive tone.

"Theme for Coleman Hawkins" closes out the album and is a perfect showcase for the group's diverse talents. Henderson begins the ballad with a bluesy, speech-like statement fully exploiting the expressive freedom of the bass.

Even if you're not already hip to the Pan-Galactic movement, this album is a must, a burning testimony that exciting jazz is still alive.

—RICHARD UNDERHILL

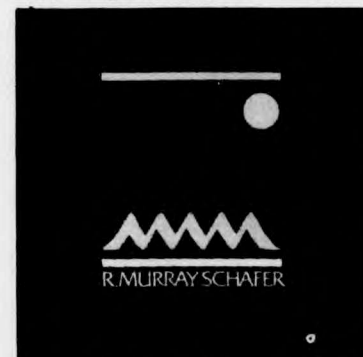
Slick getting soft

Grace Slick
Software
(RCA)
●●½

The former psychedelic firebrand of The Jefferson Airplane/Starship sees the future of rock-and-roll—and it is syntho-pop. And though wave-isms on *Software* make for more entertaining listening than the overblown '70s rock clichés on other Slick solo albums of late.

Slick—who is seen on the cover sporting a blender on her left breast, a see-through globe on her right, and a space shuttle on her bellybutton—wrote most of the lyrics, while ex-Frank Zappa keyboardist Peter Wolf created the music and provides the synthesizers.

—R.P.



affair. Dominated by percussion, female soloists, male choruses and sometimes violin or Egyptian "Qanun," the music here provides only a taste, but a very interesting one, of the dramatic otherworldliness of "Ra."

Chalumeau features three works by Harry Freedman. One of Canada's most widely-performed composers and a founding member in 1951 of the Canadian League of Composers (and, like Schafer, also a one-time recipient of the Canadian Music Council's Composer of the Year award), Freedman has cultivated his own style of 20 Century Music, utilizing serial procedures and avant-garde techniques. He was also influenced by his youthful interest in jazz.

"Chalumeau," for James Campbell's clarinet with the Orford String Quartet, and "Opus Pocus," for flute and string trio, are picturesque and vivacious pieces displaying instrumental virtuosity and a refreshing stylistic exuberance. "Pas-

torale," on the other hand, pits the solo English horn of Lawrence Cherney against the curtain-like choral movements of the Elmer Iseler Singers in a kind of figure-ground interplay that evokes images of interstellar drift (though the timbre of the English horn somehow doesn't allow these to take hold for very long).

Kuyas is a showcase of the singing of soprano Roxolana Roslak (in English, Italian and Cree, though the French translations of the poetry used are also included in the insert). The music, by Harry Somers, Violet Archer, Lothar Klein, and Jean Coulthard, is sparse and inventive. Particularly notable is the impressionistic exuberance of the piano work on Archer's "Caleidoscopio" and the expressive piano-cello-flute arrangements of Coulthard's "Four Prophetic Songs." Unfortunately, despite Roslak's powerful and sensitive voice, it's difficult to listen to her heavy-vibrato operatic vocal style.

Lastly, *Viola Nouveau* is a record of solo viola music by five Canadian composers (Milton Barnes, David Jaeger, Otto Joachim, André Prévoost and Brian Cherney). There's a spacious ambience to Golani-Erdesz' playing; the music is like a sculpture in time that twists and winds an invisible thread through your living room.

Of these four albums, Schafer's *Ra* is the least satisfying (possibly because it's the most conceptually interesting). But all four are enjoyable, well-performed, extensively annotated and superbly produced, an obvious indication of the backing and assistance these artists receive as practitioners of the "official" Canadian artistic culture.

—ADRIAN IWACIHW