

Pick of the platters

YES GOING FOR THE ONE (Atlantic)

Rick Wakeman's return to Yes seems to have revitalized the group and turned them once more into a viable progressive entity. Their last two albums (*Tales of Topographical Oceans* and *Relayer*) were for most Yes fans disappointments, coming as they were after the classic *Fragile* and *Close to the Edge* albums. *Tales* and *Relayer* consisted primarily of pretentious experimentation which resulted in two very boring and annoying records, although they both had their inspirational moments. On their new album Yes has recaptured some of their old style without regressing and the result is a very satisfying musical experience.

The album opens with the title cut - a fast-paced, heavy tune in which Steve Howe makes interesting use of that standby of country music - the pedal-steel guitar. This is followed by the soft, melancholy "Turn of the Century" and again the superb guitar work of Steve Howe stands out, unlike the last two albums wherein all the instruments tended to merge into one vast onslaught of noise. "Parallels", another rocker if you like, brings the first side to an exciting conclusion.

The second side opens with another light, acoustic tune - "Wondrous Stories" and then fades into the album's "tour de force" - "Awaken". This is a long song with numerous changes of mood and pace comparable to

"Close to the Edge"

Overall "Going for the One" is a definite must for Yes fans. It's simpler and more entertaining approach should certainly appeal to those of you who were disenchanted with the last two albums.

RUSH A FAREWELL TO KINGS (Anthem)

One must certainly give these guys credit for trying but unfortunately their attempts at creating artistic rock never seem to quite come off. They get a little closer everytime, however.

A *Farewell to Kings* is generally a lighter album than any of their previous efforts although one would still classify it as heavy metal. There is more acoustic guitar, more keyboards and more soft material than on any of their other albums. The music is denser and less repetitious but there are still a great deal of those churning heavy metal chords and not enough lead guitar which Alex Lifeson can do very well when he lets himself go. And I wish they would get another singer. When he's not screaming Geddy Lee sounds quite good and even though he is somewhat more relaxed now he still does a lot of unnecessary screaming. One cannot make any complaints about Neil Peart, however. He writes interesting lyrics and is a superb drummer who makes his own contribution to the music rather than merely holding down the rhythm.

My favorite track on the album is "Xanadu"; a long piece which

has an excellent slow build-up and several changes of pace. Almost all the songs shift between heavy and soft which makes *A Farewell to Kings* much more enjoyable and less ear-hammering than their earlier music.

BE-BOP DELUXE/LIVE IN THE AIR AGE (Harvest)

This set consists of material from Be-Bop Deluxe's first three albums plus three previously unreleased songs. For those of you who like Be-Bop Deluxe (and I know there are a few of you out there) this album is a definite must.

Although the group performs most of the material on this album almost exactly as they do in the studio there are a few notable exceptions which make it much more interesting. "Shine", a nine minute instrumental on side two is one of these. It starts off with some very funky percussion and for the next minute or two one might suspect that it is a disco number, but when Bill Nelson breaks in with his fluid, melodic lead guitar all notions of disco are dispelled and it begins to sound more like Jeff Beck style jazz. Nelson's virtuosity on the guitar is displayed to maximum effect on this cut.

"Piece of Mine" and "Mid-Street Junction", both previously unreleased songs, are high points of the set. Heavy, bluesy rockers - they lend a raw, primitive edge to the otherwise sophisticated "modern" music.

"Adventures on a Yorkshire Landscape" on side four is

probably the best song on the album. It is a slow, moving ballad in which Nelson's guitar work is at worst spell-binding and at best simple brilliant.

Live in the Air Age is a very good album and an excellent introductory package for those of you who have yet to savour the musical pleasures to be derived from the music of Be-Bop Deluxe.

STRAWBS BURNING FOR YOU (Oyster)

Strawbs have been around for a very long time. Their records sell steadily but they never seem to become any more popular which is unfortunate because they are an excellent band. The music of Strawbs can be classified as progressive, (I know a lot of people resent this term for one reason or another but I'll have to keep using it until a better word comes along) with roots both in American blues and traditional English folk music. This combination when blended with a modern rock sound gives Strawbs quite a unique style.

"Burning for You" brings back the splendour of *Hero and Heroine* and "Ghosts" something which was sadly lacking on their last two albums, *Nomadness* and *Deep Cuts*, as well as adding a new commercial touch to the music. All the songs are under five minutes long although still managing to deliver the same impact as earlier, longer songs. The music consists of heavy, fast-paced numbers, ballads and everything in between including a little ditty called "Back in the Old Routine" which despite being an original composition sounds like it came straight out of an English pub. It's simply a good old fashioned drinking song. (Remember "Part of the Union"?)

Throughout the album Dave Lambert's guitar is very impressive and much more predominant than in the past. Keyboards are admirably handled by Robert Kirby and John Mealing. The album is smooth, well-polished and well produced without a single bum cut. *Burning for You* is the kind of album that with the right promotion and publicity could turn Strawbs into a big name group.

ILLUSION OUT OF THE MIST (Island)

So you're into classical rock but find ELP more than you can handle, Renaissance too mellow, and ELO too commercial - well Illusion may be the answer. I find their music to be one of the most accessible brands of non-commercial classical rock that I've heard in a long time.

Illusion is a new band in the sense that this is their first album under that name, but the band's members have been working

together under different guises on and off since 1969. Four of them - Jane Relf, Jim McCarty, John Hawken and Lois Cennamo first came together under the auspices of Keith Relf, former vocalist for the legendary British blues band - The Yardbirds - a group which produced such notable rock stars as Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton and Jimmy Page. Jim McCarty also happened to be the Yardbirds' drummer. Together the five of them formed the original Renaissance, put out one album of very, very classical rock and then broke up. Keith Relf and Lois Cennamo muddled about for a while and formed Armageddon in 1975. That group, too, only lasted for one album. John Hawken did a stint with the Strawbs while Jane Relf and Jim McCarty temporarily vanished from view.

In 1969 Keith Relf was laying the foundations for what would later become Illusion when he died of a heart attack. Gradually the members reorganized themselves and the present line-up consists of Jane Relf-vocals, John Knightsbridge - guitars, Jim McCarty - vocals, acoustic guitar and percussion, John Hawken-keyboards, Louis Cennamo-bass, and Eddie McNeil-drums. Together they have produced an album of very listenable classical rock. Jane Relf's vocals lend the music a pleasant respectable air while John Knightsbridge's electric guitar gives it that biting rock edge. Jim McCarty and John Hawken keep the melodies flowing while Louis Cennamo and Eddie McNeil handle competently the essential but complicated rhythm.

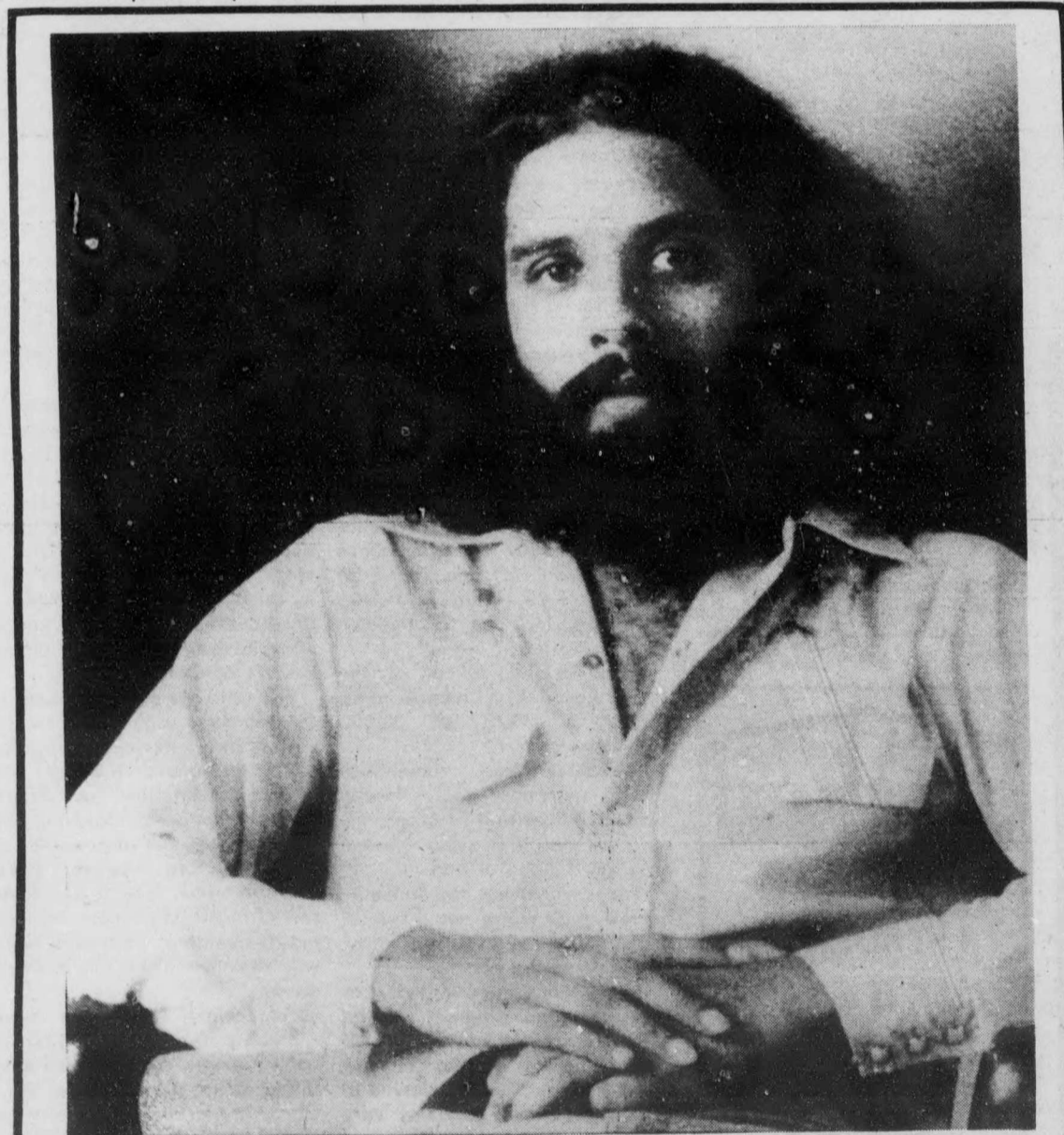
All in all a very good record.

LITTLE RIVER BAND/DIAMANTINA COCKTAIL (Harvest)

The Little River Band is a group of extremely versatile Australian musicians who have united to produce a unique sound which draws its inspiration from such varied sources as Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young; The Beatles; The Eagles and injects a healthy shot of rhythm and blues. The Eagles meet the Who, perhaps?

The band is large enough to sound just as good live as they do in the studio and their music is slick, professional and well-produced. They display a mixture of skill and professionalism combined with a primitive, bluesy style which I find very appealing. Their new album is much more commercial than their first one and although it is good I prefer the first one. Nonetheless it is a fine blend of ballads and up-tempo numbers, with a diverting jazzy flavour on a couple of the songs.

Quite enjoyable.
CHRIS HUNT



DAN HILL will be giving two concerts at the Playhouse on Monday October 3rd.

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