

Wavelength reviews

by D. Wavrock

Welcome to Soundtracks for a new year. Hopefully from now until April we'll have the chance to tell you about the latest miracles on wax as they appear on music stands. Prophesizing, I can say there'll be a lot of chaff and little fertile seed, but then that's the way the business goes.

This year hopefully, we'll not only be looking at rock albums (good and bad) but also at some of the fine material in the jazz, folk and blues fields as well. If the occasion warrants it, maybe even a few items on the more outstanding classical releases. The reason is simple, rock isn't the only type of music being produced today and believe it or not, in total output of releases often makes up on 15% of the total inventory in most record company catalogues. Rock music seems to be big because of T-40 and prog-rock radio. Somehow I've moved into musical ideologies, so here is the pick of the litter for this week:

Sailor - Sailor [Epic KE33248] The original Sailor was formed in the midst of W.W.II in a rather unique way. As the story goes, the owner of a Paris cafe, Le Matelot, was tied and left in front of his establishment one day to await pickup and ultimate execution at the hands of the Nazis when an AWOL American sailor came along and freed him. In appreciation, the cafe owner named his house band Sailor. When in 1971 the cafe burned down, the band that had changed its personnel over the years departed for parts unknown. But another American, Steve Morris, on hearing the story of the group sought to find some of the band's members, reunite them and cut an album. Eventually four former members were found: Phil Pickett, Georg Kajanus (descended from Russian royalty), Grant Serpell and Henry Marsh and an album cut: and what an album!!

Their unique sound was the idea of Georg Kajanus who designed twin nickelodeons using synthesizer components. The result is a rich cabaret-type sound. Coupled with guitars, piano, drums and an accordion you can hear 30 years of musical progression present in all it's stages using the musical

expertise of the '70's and the cornerstones of all specific styles, in particular '30's jazz and present-day electronic R'n'R. The album, almost in a story-theme tells us about and has us in sympathetic understanding of the sailor's life as he moves from port to port. This is told in, "Let's Go To Town" and "The Street" describing the red light districts, the bars, the ten dollar girls and backalley brawls. Other cuts of merit include "Sailor", "Blame It on the Soft Spot". It's a nostalgic musical outlook with a 1970's freshness and it's a definite addition to the library of the hard-to-please music buff who collects albums on merit alone and not on a big-name basis.

Greenfield - Sanctuary (Casino CA 1004) If you can remember back a couple of years ago to a T-40 single called "New York's Closed Tonight" by Greenfield then you'll be amazed to hear that Barry Greenfield and some talented musicians from Canada's West Coast are back again, hopefully on a permanent basis, with a fine new album. No specific credit is given to the backup people but their apparant

ease in combining different music milieus coupled with the excellent production work of Terry Jacks for Casino Records (formerly Goldfish Records, a company owned by Jacks) gives us one of Canada's best musical treats of the year.

Vocally, Greenfield sounds a great deal like Cat Stevens but the difference between the two lies in musical interpretations. Greenfield isn't content to rest in neither a quasi-T-40 rut nor in a hillbilly-rock groove. Instead, his music ranges from the opening synthy-rock title track to "She's Going to Live With Me" reminiscent of a Bryan Ferry love ballad to a banjo pickin' foot stompin', "Love Talk".

As far as individual characteristics in instrumentation go, the album features an animated bass. By animated bass, I don't mean a plodding a-la-Black Sabbath nor an album of broken string heroics featuring a two-string bass player who hasn't figured out how to play the other two strings on his guitar. Instead, I mean a person with a good working knowledge of what each instrument is capable of, how production can enhance this knowledge as well as a great deal of creative ability that can be put to the test. Barry Greenfield is one further step in the evolution of a growing Canadian music scene with a roster of talent that is gaining popularity worldwide.

U.F.O. - Force It [Chrysalis CHR 1074] This is Rock 'N' Roll! From the opening riffs of "Let It Roll" these English gents let you know that you're not settling back to listen to an album of half-hearted pop-rock. The style they deliver is definite; Staccatos of guitar, The frenzied roar of the bass, the over-generous beating of super-heated drums. The group UFO have in **Force It** achieved a level of musicianship that was not apparant in their last effort **Phenomenon** which grew rather stale at times. Here, the music is crisp and well defined and it reminds one highly of the power trios of the late 1960's; e.g. Grand Funk Railroad, Cream, etc. groups that have since either disappeared or else fell victims to an overgrowing T-40 music culture. But that doesn't mean that these Chaps always work at top voltage, they ease into soft numbers like "High Flyer" and "Out in the Street" which are strongly acoustic in character when you realize that they are basically electric orientated.

The title of the album has a message, look closely at the cover depicting a tiled bathroom-full of stainless steel fixtures for an explanation. Selections such as, "Shoot, Shoot" and "Love Lost Love" give further clues. It seems that most groups are using suggestive covers these days to sell their wares in a glutted music market. U.F.O. have the talent and hopefully the imagination to sell themselves without such tactics and I hope that they'll eventually realize this. Although they're fairly new to the North American music scene (**Force It** is their second L.P. to be released on this side of the Atlantic) they can use better methods to familiarize a musically naive public that so often seem to buy on cover design and not on musical abilities.

That's it for this week folks, we'll be putting on the critical earphones again next week. If you should have any comments, complaints, suggestions etc. let me know through the Gazette.

Gazette Staff Meeting

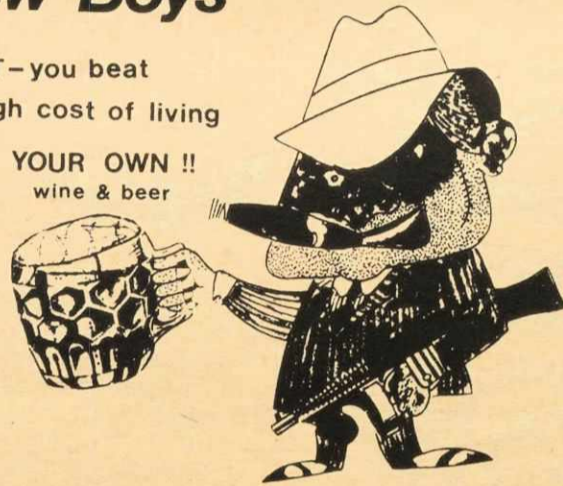
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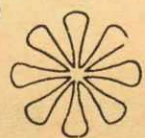
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