

After waiting almost a year and a half for the new James Taylor album, there is a great sense of disappointment upon hearing his latest musical offering. It just does not live up to the expectations preceding its release. The major fault of the album is that Taylor has not progressed lyrically or musically since "Sweet Baby James". Songs on this album and "Mud Slide Slim" gave indications that Taylor was tired and as "dry as a bone". This album confirms the fact that Taylor peaked on "Sweet Baby James". None of the songs on the first side are really outstanding. They lack the power and energy to reach out to the listener and encompass him. They are merely pleasant easy listening tunes of little importance. There is the typical brand of Taylor funk. The back-up musicians are very competent and there is some particularly nice piano bits by Craig Doerge, that occasionally brighten up the lack-lustre songs. These musicians are the same ones who appeared on "Mud Slide Slim" and as a result this record has much the same feeling and setting to it. Perhaps it would be better if Taylor developed new musical alliances to get some energy back into his music. Possible results of this show up on side two. A song called "Someone" written by John McLaughlin, is the best cut on the album. There is a beautiful but elusive melodic line and the lyric is exceptional. Because of McLaughlin's presence, Taylor and Kortchmar

play at a higher level. This cut is exciting because the three guitarists are expanding and getting into something new. Previously Taylor and Kootch had been consistently playing old lame themes they have deployed before. They have played with each other for too long; a lack of inspiration results from over familiarity. Having a sense of style is fine but if you

can't explore within that particular style and develop new facets, different textures, then the music ceases to be vital and alive. This is perhaps the major reason that this album fails.

On the whole the second side is much stronger and seems to have more energy and feeling to it. New musical possibilities are laid down but these are not fully realized. Half-hearted attempts are made at orchestration but it sounds as if these versions were just sketches for an arranger who is waiting to do the thing up right. A traditional ballad, "One Morning in May", is prominent chiefly because of some fine back up singing by Linda Rondstadt. On this side Taylor has done something new. He has run the songs at the end of the album together. "Hymn", "Fanfare", "Little David", "Mescalito Dance and Jig". In some places the transition from one song to the other seems to be forced and

awkward, but the whole concept comes off rather well despite some of the insecure changes.

After reaching a "superstar" status, it is a pity that too many recording artists are intent to rest on their laurels and assume (correctly) that the public will gobble up whatever product is released. Taylor has found a profitable style but like Neil Young, Rod Stewart and Cat Stevens, the magic once there is wearing thin. It is only a matter of time before the public grows tired of the sound, and it is imperative for Taylor (and the others) to either develop a new formula or continue in the same vein but explore all possible facets of this particular style. Retracing steps taken before will not do. The problem is that Taylor is resorting to a conscious imitation of what was once spontaneous and instinctive in his music. There is an unmistakable resemblance of nearly every song (particularly

those on the first side) on the album to a previous Taylor composition. Sure there are horns and strings added, but the basic core of the songs are the same. Despite all this, it is really not a bad album. It is pleasant to listen to but it clearly shows that Taylor is just an average singer/songwriter. "Hymn" and "Fanfare" along with "Someone" are really the high points of the album and possibly show a new direction that Taylor may take. If he continues along the lines of these songs, then his next album, could be much better. If you have not succumbed to the Taylor brand of music, pass this one by. You would be far better off to get "Sweet Baby James" which is really representative of all that Taylor has musically and lyrically to date. Hopefully his next album will contain something new.

guitar lines that add much to the album. He can play loud and raunchy or soft and mellow; a fine musician. The drumming is handled by Jim Keltner and Andy Newark (who also tours with her). Carly takes on the piano chores herself on the slower numbers and thought she's not, technically speaking, a good pianist, the piano parts fit well into the songs. The stalwart back-up singing is provided by Mick Jagger ("You're So Vain"), James Taylor ("Waited So Long"), and a surprise visit by Paul and Linda McCartney on ("Night Owl"). Much of the string arrangements are done by Kirby Johnson (who worked with Van Dyke Parks). These are fine arrangements but at times it would be better if they forgot about the strings because they tend to dilute the power of some of the songs. Despite all these excellent musicians, Carly remains in control all the time. She is not over powered by their presence.

The album begins with a fast number called "The Right Thing". In many ways it is an answer to the song "Anticipation" and is reminiscent of that song in structure. She seems to have resolved the problems expressed in "Anticipation" and this song is a result. This is a fine vehicle for her back up band. It is a joyful song and in it she is confident; there are no doubts in her mind. Just simply a "I Love You" song.

"You hold me in your arms like a bunch of flowers / Set me moving to your sweetest song / I know what I think I've known all along / Loving you's the Right Thing to do."

The single from the album is "You're so Vain". Undoubtedly you have heard it on the various radio stations and it is getting a lot of air play on all of them. It is currently ranked no. 4 on the Billboard charts. This song is representative of Carly Simon in a rock vein. It has her characteristic syncopation and rhythms to it. Klaus Voorman plays a compelling bass. Jim Ryan provides the lead guitar and the breaks in this song are typical of the work that he does. The major feature is once again Carly's voice. She just belts out the lyrics with authority and shows the rock side of her. There is fine back-up singing by Mick Jagger on the chorus. The two voices mold together to form a good duet because both voices have a rough, gutty character to them.

"When You Close Your Eyes", written with Billy Merrit, closes out the album. It is a beautiful haunting song with a simple arrangement. The juxtaposition of "Night Owl" and this one truly reveals what a diversified artist Carly Simon is, and it shows the two sides, rock and folk, very clearly. This song is the real clincher to the entire album.

Forget the fact that she is James Taylor's wife. She is an emerging artist in her own right and deserves to get recognition as such. With this album there is a confident assured sense of style that is developing and you can tell the songs are Carly Simon songs largely due to her vocal stylings. A songwriter writes from inner rhythms. So it is inevitable that songs will begin to have a distinctive flavor to them. The songs on "Anticipation" set the guidelines to follow and these songs clearly stem from those on "Anticipation". At the rate she is going she can only hope to keep getting better all the time. She has proven she can stand fast despite today's plethora of new groups and singers. Within the next few years, she should become an artist of great stature. Don't pass this album by; just listen to the music because that's what it's all about.

S.C.C. Holder

the taylor's:

james and carly (simon)

Son of a gun! What can you say? With this, her third album, Carly Simon emerges as one of the best singer/songwriters around today. Her skill with verse and melody lifts her well above the run of current songwriters. She is an adept composer in a fair range of styles (folk, country, pop). As a singer, she exudes animal vitality and she can be dusky and down-home simple as in "It Was So Easy" or show full, poised wisdom, as in "Embrace Me You Child".

Her second album "Anticipation" was a delight from start to finish. On that album it was the more subdued pieces which set it apart. The music of "Anticipation" is a wide range of love songs. Here, she shows the ability to detach herself from a situation and write as an observer; she is direct and to the point. Generally speaking, she writes unobscure lyrics that are easy to understand. "Anticipation" was aptly titled because in her new album she continues and expands the trends set previously.

The music on "No Secrets" is of a different nature than that of "Anticipation". Although the songs are structurally similar, they differ in regards to lyrical quality and presentation. She gets more into rock numbers. This is possibly due to the influence of her producer Richard Perry, who is basically a rock producer. "Anticipation"

was produced by Paul Samwell-Smith (Cat Stevens' producer) and so had traces of his soft-touch technique. It was very much an acoustical album. This album strikes a balance between rock and folk music. She shows clearly her musical roots. She toured with her sister on the folk club circuit in New York. For a time, she was the lead singer for Elephant's Memory (John Lennon's back up band on "Sometime in New York City"). Both forms of music are well represented on this album with a touch of country influences thrown in also. It is gratifying that she does not limit herself to one particular style and she appears to be comfortable in any style she chooses.

The most outstanding feature of the album is her exceptional voice. She is a rare singer who exudes vitality and energy in her vocal styling. Much emotion is carried within the voice. It is alive. She has an enormous range going from a soaring soprano to a very low earthy alto. On many of the cuts she uses her voice as an instrument, humming background harmony and counter melody instead of using strings or horns. It is refreshing to hear this being done. The lyrics contained in the songs are very astute and the rhymes she uses are not forced or predictable. This is particularly true of those songs written with Jacob Brackman. The lyrics flow naturally from one phrase to the next. She shows great ability to fit words and music together as a unit. The songs are largely ambivalent in tone and though the words reveal uncertainty without a doubt there is no confusion with regards to the presentation of the music. At times she sings with child-like bewilderment and then on the next line shows the full poise and confidence of a woman. Throughout the album there is always the conflict of these two points of view.

For this album, she has assembled a fine group of well respected musicians to back her up. Klaus Voorman plays very good bass lines and Nicky Hopkins spices up the rock numbers with his spirited piano playing. Jim Ryan, who is a member of her touring band, consistently plays superb lead

the arts

culture vultures scoff ives

It seems to be the case that a few spoil it for everyone. This however, was not the case at the Symphony last Saturday night. It was evident that most of the audience ruined it for the few who were interested in hearing some good music.

Yes, the evening started off the the usual warm reception for the new conductor. Edmonton concert-goers gave Mr. Yannatos a large round of applause, something they seem to give freely to any conductor, politician, or sports hero, whether they merit it or not.

The ESO swung into the Mendelssohn piece with romantic feeling. It even sounded like it was written in the nineteenth century. Mr. Yannatos seems to handle the Symphony with a little more grace than his illustrious predecessor. It would at least seem that he can get the orchestra into music other than pre-romantic works.

The Strauss Horn Concerto was ho-hum, a bit tedious. The soloist's performance seemed uninspired. The composition, itself, isn't exactly an eye opener.

After a few stiff belts at the newly acquired bars, opened in the Jubilee, the audience wandered in to hear the second half of the evenings' 'entertainment'. What they got was not exactly just entertainment.

I don't know whether it was Ted Kardash's co-conducting, Yannatos' ignorance of the Edmonton audience or if the ESO was struck with real challenge. Ives' "Unanswered Question" was beautiful. The orchestra, under Kardash's baton, and the woodwind ensemble (two flutes and two clarinets) under Yannatos' baton were brilliant. The ESO wasn't the same ESO that trudged through so many salon works in order to keep itself alive. This was something rarely heard in the Jubilee. The genius of the composition lended inspiration to the performers; I have never heard anything done on that stage as effectively executed. However, the audience, for the most part, found it offensive and/or humorous therefore coughed and giggled throughout the whole piece.

Then Mozart began and it was back into the darkness again. I wonder how he would feel if he knew that his music was being flogged to death because his 'patrons' have chosen to ignore another man's genius.

John Shearer



home time

this weekend

This Friday and Saturday night, Albany Studio (RATT) will be presenting Home. The eight piece group will be performing the music and poetry of John Shearer. The group will feature as guest performers: Nancy Nash (of Hot Cottage) and Jay Smith (of CKUA). Shearer's music ranges from dimented country waltz-time to the fringes of contemporary jazz. The group's commercial material is not what you've been getting lately. Come and enjoy it... maybe you won't.

Home will also be playing at the Hovel, north of Jasper on Ninth, tonight!

