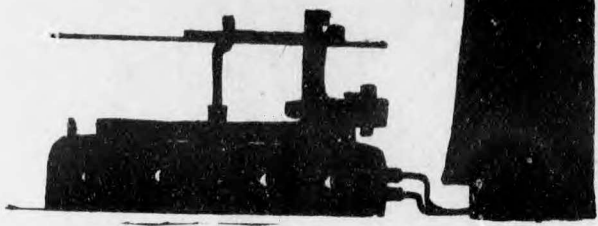


disques

by Stan Twist



A Delighted Angel

Fairport Convention is a household name in Britain, but outside of a hard-core underground following, they've failed to make much noise on this continent. They have been together now for five years and their personnel has never remained constant for any two of their six LPs. From their ranks have come and gone such names as Ian Mathews (Mathews' Southern Comfort) Sandy Denny (Fothergay, as well as being guest artist on the latest Led Zeppelin LP) and Richard Thompson, short term Traffic member and one of the top session musicians in Britain. Even though not one of the original six members of the band are now in it, the evolution has taken place so slowly that Fairport have managed to retain the same basic sound from album to album. That evolution has finally brought the band to "Angel Delight" (AM SP 4319), which is by far their best record to date.

The new album is much more accessible than their last, due in part to the excellent production by the group and producer John Wood. In listening to their previous record, Full House, I found that outside of one or two songs, it took a little while before I actually

started getting into the record. "Angel Delight" is a much cleaner and, dare I say it, more rock-oriented LP than any of their previous records. Where before I would have hesitated at recommending Fairport to most people because of their eccentric English wit and their unorthodox choice of material and approach, I now feel the masses are ready for them.

Fairport's roots are deep in English and Scottish folk traditions, with many of their songs being arrangements of traditional English and Scottish folk ballads. The record's opening number is one of these traditional numbers, as are 6 of the album's 10 songs. "Lord Marlborough" is a song about an English knight who has enjoyed a life of war and "knocking down castle walls" and "now to death must yield". Dulcimer and fiddle give this song a somewhat different sound than your average top 40 hit, but it's a gas just the same.

"Sir Williams Gower" starts out with distorted guitar and a very thick bass sound, then is joined by acoustic guitars. It sounds like some of the Byrds early folk interpretations with its twelve-string guitar and dominate bass figures. The lyrics are pretty far out at times too "...and to my sister I gave babies five, I killed my wife and her children three, now I must face what's comin to me."

"Bridge over the River Ash" is an English jig performed by Fairport on two violins, one viola and bass guitar. I must admit I never had an ear for jigs before, but I find this tune extremely appealing.

"Bonny Black Hare" is another traditional ballad about a man who goes out "hunting for the Bonny Black Hare". I won't go into the story, but the Bonny Black Hare is a metaphor and...well let it suffice to say that he comes back from his hunting trip satisfied (does anyone out there know what I'm talking about?)

The four songs that were written by group members are the songs that stray the furthest from the traditional folk idiom and are perhaps the groups' best chance for commercial success.

"Sickness and Diseases", written by Dave Swarbrick and Richard Thompson, opens with some tricky counter-pointing by lead guitar

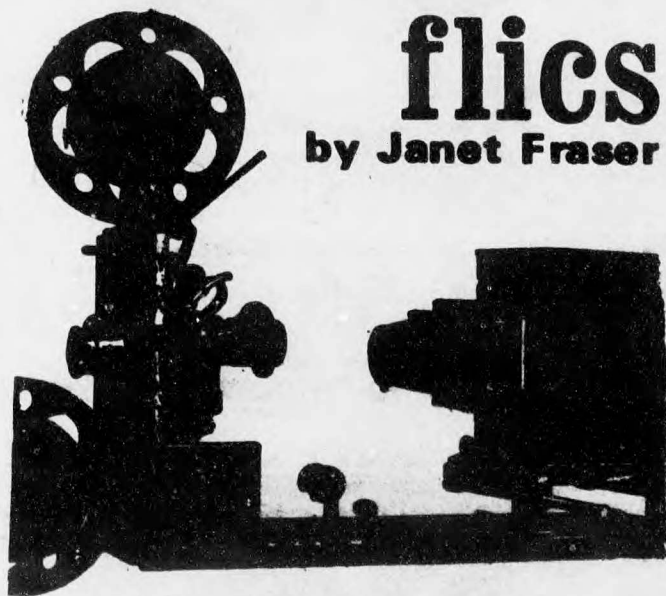
and mandolin. Bassist Dave Pegg picks up a guitar for this little ditty and manages to shoot off some speedy riffs that make you forget that Richard Thompson was ever in the band.

The album's title cut is very heavily influenced by older forms of British music, but it sounds modern enough not to be found in the repertoire of the Irish Rovers. It should also be noted at this time that all songs are sung in voices that sound like they would be more at home in "The Pig and Whistle" than at the Fillmore East, but despite the connotations attached to heavy Irish, Scottish and English accents, I think most will find it does anything but detract from the type of music Fairport Convention plays.

One of the prettiest tunes on the LP is "Wizard of the Worldly Game", a slow moving ballad about a tree and its thoughts. Good feelings guaranteed when the lead vocal is joined by other voices on the chorus. The tune is very catchy and I found that I was singing it to myself after hearing the song only twice. A potential hit single for Fairport perhaps? No, how could I even entertain such a thought. The song's too good to be picked up by the moronic robots who create top forty hits.

Finally, "The Journeyman's Grace" will crush all those skeptics who say that traditional folk and rock can't be integrated. The song opens with a Who-like repetition of a single guitar chord, then hops into a bouncy tune that sees a fiery battle between fiddle and guitar with the fiddle winning hands down. So now all you Eric Clapton fans can start reconsidering those harsh thoughts you used to have about Don Messer and "The New Brunswick Break-down".

Actually my review does little justice to the album or the group. They're very hard to describe verbally and they defy any set category. The best thing I can recommend is that you try to hear a copy of the LP before you buy it and if you can't find one get in contact with me and I'll turn you on to a copy of it. I'd hate to see an incredible band like this go to waste, so don't deny Fairport Convention your ears (and vice versa). They're really quite a band.



flics

by Janet Fraser

Pretty Maids All In A Row

"Pretty Maids All In a Row" is not only a skin flick with a lot of style but also a tightly-woven suspenseful murder story. Although a satire of the contemporary American lifestyle, the comedy is not in a light-hearted vein but rather, it is cynical, detached, and obviously tragic. If it insults the viewer's intelligence with certain gross scenes, it is because the characters themselves are rather grotesque, ignorant, biased, and almost inhuman at times. The supposedly happy, healthy members of the idyllic California

high school slowly become part of a nightmare which envelops the story. Not only does the film artfully convey the subtle terror of mass murder: but it also expresses the horror of a nation with neither morals nor traditions. The now generation does not represent love and peace but rather, greed, corruption, and pleasure-seeking.

Rock Hudson gives his best performance to date as a sexy high school coach and guidance counsellor, whose "experiments" on female students have to be seen to be believed. As soon as one of the "pretty maids" becomes a menace, he does away with her, neat as a pin.

It becomes apparent that he is sick and psychopathic but his thin veneer of compassion and integrity is accepted because the other people want to believe in him, no matter how false their conception is.

There is a tremendous emphasis on human aggression in the film: men and women both must be tough and skillful competitors, insensitive to the people around them. When the corpse of one of the girls is found, all the inspector can talk about is the score of the last football game and the outcome of the next. During half-time of a game, the tribute to the dead girls is interrupted by cheerleaders and noisy crowds. The viewer may be disgusted with these people, but isn't this an ordinary American high school?

Roger Vadim, the director, whose list of protégées and then lovers have included Bridget Bardot, Catherine Deneuve, and Jane Fonda

now celebrates the high school girls of America who all look like Hollywood starlets. Much of the amusement in the story is centred around a seventeen year old boy whose experiences do not match his appetite. A young and (naturally) gorgeous English teacher cures him of his problems in a pathetic and also grotesque fashion. There is a fine bit of irony at the end of the story when the boy begins to follow in the footsteps of his idol, the coach. Needless to say, the coach is not punished for his evil ways and Captain America does not triumph again.

The film begins and ends on a light note but it is the content that is so disturbing. The movie is technically well done and keeps you at the edge of your seat wondering what will happen next. It is the sort of film that can be easily glossed over as a superficial and rather ugly black comedy but, to me, it is the vision of a man with both eyes wide open.

In the art review of January 28th, G.K. Roberts' sculpture, "Sorrow" was mistitled "Screw", due to an error in correcting. We offer our apologies to Mr. Roberts and to the readers.