

Billboard's Top Album Picks

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Billboard SPECIAL SURVEY For Week Ending 2/7/76

Number of LPs reviewed this week **30** Last week **38**



BARRY WHITE—Let The Music Play, 20th Century T-502. First album in some while for White is his familiar, disco sound fronted by his booming talk/sing style. Six cuts, with several including White's patented talking intros. Usual strong instrumental arrangements, with good strings and flowing melodies. Sound, on the whole, is a quite familiar one. Nevertheless, White's legions of fans have continued to support him even though he has not changed direction a great deal in the past several years, and there is no reason to expect that support to diminish markedly now.

Best cuts: "I Don't Know Where Love Has Gone," "I'm So Blue And You Are Too," "Let The Music Play."

Dealers: Expect large 20th promotion.

JOHN McLAUGHLIN/MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA—Inner Worlds, Columbia PC 33908. Usual potent McLaughlin mix of jazz, rock and soul with the artist excelling on guitar and guitar synthesizer. Lots of unusual sounds, but, amazingly enough, all is melodic and listenable. Instrumentals more familiar and generally better than the cuts featuring vocals, though Narad Michael Wilson turns in creditable soul oriented vocals as well as performing with skill on piano and drums. As for McLaughlin, unlike many star guitarists, he takes the lead but not to an extreme. His work is tasteful and exceptionally well done. Eastern sounds included with jazz/rock mix. Only one cut really features Mahavishnu Orchestra, by the way, and that group seems to have gone the way of McLaughlin's earlier groups.

Best cuts: "The Way Of The Pilgrim," "River Of My Heart," "Lotus Feet," "Inner World."

Dealers: McLaughlin reportedly set for tour.

JIMMY BUFFETT—Havana Daydreamin', ABC ABCD-914. Buffett brings his unique mix of lunacy and sensitivity to the forefront again, offering his listeners a little of everything. Appeal to both pop and country listeners here, and the artist's vocals seem a bit stronger than on his last effort. Excellent Don Gant production, which brings in strings and a few horns without interrupting the basic simplicity of the songs. As for Buffett, this is a better all around album than his last set and one that should, if he gets out on the road, further his career measurably.

Best cuts: "Woman Goin' Crazy On Caroline Street," "The Captain And The Kid," "Big Rig," "Havana Daydreamin'," "This Hotel Room."

Dealers: Buffett's following grows each time out.

PRETTY THINGS—Savage Eye, Swan Song SS 8414 (Atlantic). Veteran band, that has been a factor on the British scene since the beginning days of the British invasion, takes a slightly different tact than they have in the past and it works. Mix of easy rockers and ballads here go with the pounding rock they have been identified with offers group a chance to showcase far above average harmony vocals and complicated arrangements. A more mature music, sounding at times like a funky Moody Blues without the MOR feeling the Moodies often had. Vocals even resemble Paul Simon at times. Good pounding abandoned rock is also present. Group hits home on about half the cuts, which is more than most pop artists.

Best cuts: "My Song," "Sad Eye," "It Ain't Rock And Roll," "Drowned Man."

Dealers: Band continually adds to following and U.S. tour should start shortly.

JERRY GARCIA—Round RX-LA565-G (United Artists). Grateful Dead leader goes to work with most of the Dead as well as Mickey Hart and Nicky Hopkins and comes up with the kind of easy rock/country mix he is best known for. Usual top guitar work from Garcia, as well as his trademarked lazy vocals. Instrumental backup is simple and effective. Material from Garcia and long-time writing partner Robert Hunter as well as Allen Reynolds & Bob McDill, Allen Toussaint and Hank Ballard. Set could do with a bit more action, but this is the kind of set Garcia's fans know and seem to like.

Best cuts: "Might As Well," "Mission In The Rain," "Catfish John," "It Must Have Been The Roses."

Dealers: Merchandise with Dead catalog and other group members' solo sets.



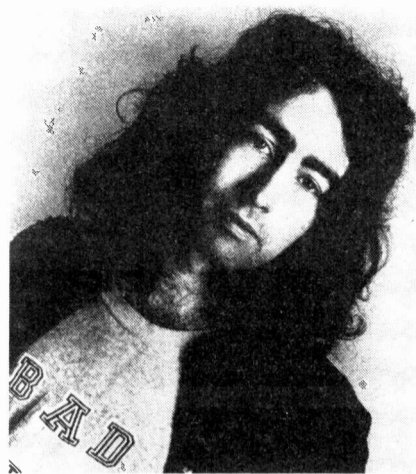
VARIOUS ARTISTS—Fire Into Music, CTI CTS 2. This is a compendium of the CTI group's greatest hits, more or less. Included are top-selling records by Grover Washington Jr., Hubert Laws, Freddie Hubbard, Stanley Turrentine, Bob James and Deodato, as well as cuts by Hank Crawford, Esther Phillips and George Benson. The latter is a disco-single featuring the vocals of Benson, that was never before available on LP.

Best cuts: Listen to the entire album and pick the ones that fit most properly.

Dealers: Give this one plenty of wall space, as well as a constant reference to the fact that it is a greatest hits package.

PASSPORT & LES McCANN—PHILIP CATHERINE—JOHNNY GRIFFIN—BUDDY GUY—PETE YORK—Doldinger Jubilee '75, Atlantic SD 18162. Anytime you get a live concert jam to in-

Spotlight



BAD COMPANY—Run With The Pack, Swan Song SS 8416 (Atlantic). Same basic rock as heard on two prior chart topping LPs, but with more emphasis on ballads. Paul Rodgers' distinctive, blue-eyed soul vocals and Mick Ralphs' basic yet effective guitar take the spotlight as usual, while drummer Simon Kirke and bassist Boz Burrell remain, like the Stones' Watts and Wyman, in the background doing a standout job. Slower cuts seem to work best for the most part, with Rodgers' voice seemingly better suited for a ballad format. Slower cuts also show Ralphs a better guitarist than most think. Some variety also heard on slower songs, and singles in this direction could prove successful. Harmonies also show through on slower cuts. Lyrics not always great, but they are often hardly noticed in the instrumental barrage of the rockers. Listen for touches of "Bad Company" and "Seagull" in the easy tempo material.

Best cuts: "Simple Man," "Silver, Blue & Gold," "Do Right By Your Woman," "Sweet Lil' Sister" (sounds like a hit single), "Fade Away."

Dealers: Expect spring tour.



PHOEBE SNOW—Second Childhood, Columbia PC 33952. Second LP from Snow brings into focus her unique talents, showcasing a distinctive voice and style (reminiscent of Ellen McIlwaine from several years ago) and a strong lyrical sense. The Snow style is one that is not heard much anymore, for it is often the style of the nightclub or torch singer. What she has really done is take bits of a style generally considered outdated, combined elements of her own and delivered a specialized, uncompromising sound to the mass audience. Vocal tricks are interesting but not gimmicky. Strong jazz feel in both instrumental and vocal arrangements, and compliments must go to Pat Williams for the brilliant orchestration and Phil Ramone for production. Musicians include some of New York's best—Grady Tate, Ron Carter, Richard Tee, Hugh McCracken, David Sanborn, John Tropea and others. All told, a brilliant album.

Best cuts: "Inspired Insanity," "No Regrets," "All Over," "Goin' Down For The Third Time," "There's A Boat That's Leavin' Soon For New York" (all written by Snow except "No Regrets.")

Dealers: Artist build gold LP following with first album.

clude the above mentioned artists, fireworks are bound to happen with an assortment of soul, jazz, blues and even rock. Doldinger is gaining a large U.S. following and many people will enjoy listening to him in the company of international stars from several idioms.

Best cuts: "Compared To What" (with a great McCann vocal performance), "Jadoo," "Ready For Takeoff" (strong instrumental performance with some excellent guitar work by Catherine), "Abracadabra."

Dealers: Each of these artists has a following and this LP should be spread out in their particular dividers.



First Time Around

FINCH—Glory Of The Inner Force, Atco SD 36-124 (Atlantic). Dutch rock with keyboards, synthesizers, mellotrons, guitars, bass and drums sounds a bit like Focus but is generally more melodic. Guitars and synthesizers dominate, alternating in lead chores. All instrumental, with complicated tempo shifts working well. Some jazz elements, but really a rock set. How commercial this is remains to be seen, with none of the four cuts under 9:18. Several portions, however, could easily be lifted for single or airplay without damaging the cuts. Guitar work of Joop Van Nimwegen is a highlight.

Best cuts: "Paradoxical Mood," "Pisces."

Dealers: Some airplay should be forthcoming.

Billboard's Recommended LPs

pop

WING AND A PRAYER FIFE DRUM CORPS—Baby Face, Wing And A Prayer HS 3025 (Atlantic). Standards converted to disco along the lines of the title cut are the hook here and it works well. Big band and four girl chorus (which is excellent). Nine minute medley of standards, a show medley and hits like "Eleanor Rigby" and "I Hear A Symphony" in the disco format are surprisingly good. Quite enjoyable for listening as well as being danceable. **Best cuts:** All good.

ROY WOOD—Mustard, United Artists UA-LA575-G. Former Move, ELO leader is back with another set on which he handles all instruments and vocals as well as production, arrangements and writing. Some '40s sounding material, a lot with American surf influences and the usual excellent musicianship. Still, the set is primarily for existing Wood fans, and cannot really be called commercial. The man is undoubtedly a major talent, and could easily make a highly commercial LP—let's hope his next fits the bill. He deserves it. **Best cuts:** "Any Old Time Will Do," "Look Thru The Eyes Of A Fool."

WAYNE PARKER—Oklahoma Twilight, Ariola America ST-50005. New singer comes up with strong country/rock mix. Several songs should appeal to the rock crowds, several to country and several to both. Mid-tempo material works best.

Vox Jox

• Continued from page 18

terested in hiring a young, good air personality: call 1-919-592-6403.

★ ★ ★

Michael J. (Mike) Brown, vice president of KGB-AM-FM in San Diego, writes that the **Ron Jacobs** interviews "are a nice salute to a man who has contributed much to contemporary broadcasting. We will miss him sorely; but I have a hunch that the radio world has not seen the last of **Ron Jacobs**."

"One of the better radio promotions in recent history is the 'Homegrown' album, as conceived by Ron. This year's 'Homegrown III,' which includes original songs about San

Diego and adjacent communities written and recorded by local artists, will sell 60,000 copies.

"Unfortunately, there are a number of stations attempting a ripoff of this promotion. Attached is a copy of the letter our attorneys have written to KWST in Los Angeles referring to a promotion they are now running called 'The L.A. Soundtrack Album.' This promotion, as those done at a few other radio stations without our approval, follows the format of 'Homegrown' exactly. Only the name has been changed.

"I would appreciate a mention in Billboard of the fact that we have copyright protection for the 'Home-

grown' promotion and are pursuing legal remedies to enforce this protection. "Thanks again for the article on Ron. Will look forward to seeing you at the next convention."

★ ★ ★

Source is out in Los Angeles and, more and more, I find it one of the most reliable audience ratings surveys going. In persons 25-49, average quarter hour figures Monday-Sunday 6 a.m.-midnight, KBIG leads with 28,800, followed by KMPC with 23,100, KHJ with 20,800, KNX-FM with 20,500, KLOS with 17,600, KLAC with

(Continued on page 58)