

Spotlight

Pop

KENNY LOGGINS—Nightwatch, Columbia JC35387. Produced by Bob James. This second solo album by Loggins since the breakup of Loggins & Messina dwarfs his previous effort by comparison in terms of the craftsmanship of the songs, the versatility and sincerity of the vocals and the overall delivery. The love songs are touching and the rockers uplifting. Backed by a six-man band, there are contributing vocals by Stevie Nicks, who turns in a strong performance on "Whenever I Call You 'Friend.'" Loggins also gives new interpretation to Joe South's "Down In The Boondocks," as well as providing some original beauties. Jazz keyboardist Bob James, surrounds Loggins with a dazzling production.

Best cuts: "Nightwatch," "Down 'N' Dirty," "Whenever I Call You 'Friend,'" "Angelique."

Dealers: Very strong effort that should sell well.

CALIFORNIA JAM 2—Columbia PC235389. Executive producers: Bruce Botnick, David Krebs, Steve Leber. The double disk live album from the recent all-day concert in Ontario, Calif., includes two songs each from Santana, Dave Mason, Heart, Ted Nugent, Rubicon and Frank Marino & Mahogany Rush. Headliners Aerosmith are represented with three selections. The LP also includes Jean Michel Jarre's studio recording of the progressive jazz instrumental "Oxygene (Part 5)," which was played during a laser light show. Polydor's Jarre and 20th Century's Rubicon are the only non-CBS acts on the package; two other acts featured in the concert are omitted: Atlantic's Foreigner and Capitol's Bob Welch. The LP might be commercially stronger if it included the artists' most well known hits; less successful singles were chosen instead in most cases.

Best cuts: Pick and choose.

Dealers: The concert set attendance records and drew heavy publicity.

CAPTAIN & TENNILLE—A&M SP4707. Produced by Daryl Dragon. The songs on the duo's first studio album since "Come In From The Rain" range from the recent country-tinged single, "I'm On My Way," to a romantic version of Johnny Mercer's 1944 copyright, "Dream." Other songwriters covered include Leon Russell, Ray Stevens, John Hall, Bruce Johnston and Rod McKuen. There are also two tunes by Neil Sedaka and Howard Greenfield, who wrote "Love Will Keep Us Together," the monster hit which made the husband & wife team a household name. One of the Sedaka-Greenfield offerings is the equally bouncy and infectious "Love Is Spreading Over The World." While the Captain's keyboards dominate the instrumental mix, Tennille's superb, wide-ranging vocals are the main selling point.

Best cuts: "Back To The Island," "Dixie Hummingbird," "You Never Done It Like That," "Dream."

Dealers: All four of the duo's albums have gone gold, including a recent greatest hits package.

PETER GABRIEL, Atlantic 19181. Produced by Robert Fripp. This is another eclectic art rock effort from the prince of the rock'n'roll esoteric. The music is closer to the edge than what is coming out of Genesis these days, though old fans should be able to recognize the measured stamp, the regal pace, and the surreal aspirations. But Gabriel does not neglect the beat, and his pretensions are always, at least, amusing. The LP relies much on keyboards, and though it belongs to a more patient age, it overcomes its diffusion with solid instrumentals.

Best cuts: "On The Air," "White Shadow," "Animal Magic."

Dealers: Gabriel still has a following from Genesis.

WHITE MANSIONS, A&M SP6004. Produced by Glyn Johns. This superbly crafted concept LP is comprised of 15 cuts, many arranged in progressive country and country/rock styles, which tell in terms of catchy melodies and thoughtful lyrics the story of Southerners in the Civil War. Jessi Colter, Waylon Jennings, John Dillon and Steve Cash (both of the Ozark Mountain Daredevils) portray main characters, with excellent backup from Eric Clapton and Bernie Leadon. A 28-page booklet contains lyrics and relates the story to actual history.

Best cuts: "White Trash," "Southern Boys," "Dixie Hold On," "Bad Man."

Dealers: This will appeal to more than Civil War buffs if played; singles may emerge.

Soul

MILLIE JACKSON—Get It Out'cha System, Spring SP16719 (Polydor). Produced by Millie Jackson, Brad Shapiro. Jackson has truly perfected her smokin' story-in-song technique, and each of the nine musical tales here burns with a vocal intensity seldom heard in current soul circles. Some cuts may even be too hot for radio! There are sparks from the sidemen as well, exemplified by Peter Carr's blistering guitar on "Put Something Down On It." The whole package, which includes Jackson's workouts of "Here You Come Again" and "Sweet Music Man," is ablaze with wit and wisdom, musical and lyrical.

Best cuts: Take your pick.

Dealers: Jackson has her strong following, so alert them with this strikingly sleeved set.



NATALIE COLE—Natalie... Live, Capitol SKBL11709.

Produced by Charles Jackson, Marvin Yancy, Gene Barge. Cole's first live album is a double record package which also serves as a greatest hits retrospective on her first three years of stardom. It includes several singles from her four studio albums as well as funky reworkings of Doris Day's "Que Sera Sera" and the Beatles' "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds." The performances, recorded last summer and this past spring, feature excellent orchestration, with a strong rhythm section. The three-time Grammy winner's vocals are alternately raucous and tender, showing a great versatility on her part.

Best cuts: "This Will Be," "Mr. Melody," "Inseparable," "I've Got Love On My Mind," "Our Love," "Party Lights."

Dealers: Cole hit number eight with "Unpredictable" and number 16 with "Thankful," her last two LPs.

CANDI STATON—House Of Love, Warner Bros. BSK3207.

Produced by Dave Crawford. Staton long ago emerged from the soul field to take her place among pop thrushes capable of performing all types of songs. In this seven-song outing she displays all the requisites for stardom, a versatile and skilled singer who improves consistently. Lyrics of all tunes are included on inner sleeve but annotation is sadly absent. Charts are by Sylvester Rivers.

Best cuts: "So Blue," "Yesterday Evening."

Dealers: Staton has mass audience appeal.

HIGH INERGY—Steppin' Out, Gordy G7982R1 (Motown).

Multiple producers. This group brings a fresh, unique sound on this LP. Energetic, vibrant vocal spirit is carried throughout. All voices are clear, coupled with clean lyrics. Vocal interplay is exciting and complicated vocal changes are well executed. There is a wide range of material from ballads to swingers to down right rockers. Instrumentation is both large and small and well arranged. The lead singer takes what might be a basic tune and transforms it into a full production number.

Best cuts: "Lovin' Fever," "Hi," "Fly Little Blackbird," "Beware," "Peaceland."

Dealers: This group is building a strong following.

Country

CONWAY TWITTY & LORETTA LYNN—Honky Tonk Heroes, MCA MCA2372.

Produced by Owen Bradley. Twitty and Lynn release their annual duet LP that includes some of the couple's latest singles, plus some numbers that fans will hear for the first time. Instrumentation is straight country—with a bouncy, prominent bass line, frequent bursts of harmonica and a surplus of guitar: lead, bass, rhythm and steel. Similar talents and philosophies make for a comfortable pairing for Lynn and Twitty, both onstage and on record.

Best cuts: "I've Already Loved You In My Mind," "How High Can You Build A Fire," "You're The Reason Our Kids Are Ugly," "We've Made It Legal," "Live It Up."

Dealers: Expect sales to be consistently strong.

MERLE HAGGARD—I'm Always On A Mountain When I Fall, MCA MCA2375.

Produced by Fuzzy Owen, Hank Cochran. Package is another first rate collection of well balanced mid-tempo tunes and love ballads partly written by Haggard. Simple instrumentation—fiddle, guitar, bass, dobro, steel, harmonica—enhances the mood of the LP as it enfolds Haggard's easy, yet sensitive interpretative delivery as he glides from summery, light midtempo offerings to ballads.

Best cuts: "I'm Always On A Mountain When I Fall," "It's Been A Great Afternoon," "Love Me When You Can," "There Won't Be Another Now," "Don't You Ever Get Tired (Of Hurting Me)."

Dealers: A proven seller time after time. This LP is no exception.

Jazz

THE CRUSADERS—Images, Blue Thumb BA6030 (ABC).

Produced by Stix Hooper, Joe Sample, Wilton Felder. The musician's musicians here return to a relatively small combo format, which arguably makes for their finest, most cohesive work. Each member freely flexes his musical muscles, and the highlights include saxman Felder's "Bayou Bottoms" and keyboards king Sample's "Snowflake." Underpinning everything is Stix Hooper's crisp, economic drumming and Pops Popwell's beautifully bubbling bass. It's fluid, intelligent jazz at its contemporary best—and highly accessible.

Best cuts: "Fairy Tales," "Cosmic Reign," "Bayou Bottoms," "Merry Go Round."

Dealers: The band sells to a variety of markets, so stock with confidence.

First Time Around

JOANNE MACKELL—United Artists UALA 878H. Produced by Joe Falsa. Debut LP highlights a genuine rock 'n' roll lady who can write words and music and sing. Her vocal delivery seems a melding of Bob Seger, Janis Joplin, Rod Stewart and Bonnie Tyler. The mix of uptempo rock and ballad like material is strong and powerful and sung with ultimate gusto and feeling. She also demonstrates a talent to write insightful and compelling lyrics.

Best cuts: "Used To Think It Was Easy," "Fire Down Below," "Pushin' Bad To Worse," "I Don't Want A Lover," "My Cryin' Didn't Wake You."

Dealers: Mackell is a priority for the label.

BILL CHAMPLIN—Single, Epic/Full Moon JE35367. Produced by David Foster. Aptly titled, this is the founding member of the Sons Of Champlin's first solo effort. Backed by the musical of David Paich on keyboards, Jeff Porcaro on drums, Ray Parker Jr. on guitar, David Hungate on bass, this is a musically sound work. In addition to playing keyboards and guitar Champlin has a rich vocal delivery. Daryl Hall and Michael McDonald are among those contributing background vocals. Producer Foster, who also handles keyboards, collaborated with Champlin on a few tunes. A strong rock effort.

Best cuts: "What Good Is Love," "Love Is Forever," "We Both Tried," "Key To The Kingdom," "Yo' Mama."

Dealers: Champlin's fans will welcome this.

Billboard's Recommended LPs

pop

KENNY NOLAN—A Song Between Us, Polydor PD16151. Produced by Kenny Nolan. This artist's first album for Polydor demonstrates his firm grasp of the pop ballad stylings that have served him and others (most notably, Barry Manilow) so well. Material like "Take The Time To Know Me," "Your Love," "You Started Something" and the title track is melodic, the orchestrations full and flowing, the vocals convincing. But the lighter side of Nolan is represented, too, in the perky "I'd Love You To Love Me Back" and "Stranger Things Have Happened." **Best cuts:** Those cited.

RAM JAM—Portrait Of An Artist As A Young Ram, Epic JE35287 (CBS). Produced by Kasenetz-Katz. Clone an Aerosmith and you may have yourself a Ram Jam. In its second LP the band plays heavy metal with a strong guitar sound. The LP is not to be taken too seriously, but it does have a measure of commercial appeal. The five-man band works hard at its business, and it is not really its fault that it has all been heard before. It's all a matter of spirit and energy, and for this no blame goes to the musicians. **Best cuts:** Take your pick.

STOMU YAMASHTA—Go Live From Paris, Island ISLD10. Produced by Stomu Yamashta. With the release of his third album, a double live recording, Yamashta takes a musical direction similar to Traffic with Steve Winwood on vocals and Al DeMeola, fusion guitarist, and synthesizer programming throughout. Performing original material, the group's total output is smooth and pleasing from beginning to end. **Best cuts:** "Wind Spin," "Crossing The Line," "Marr of Leo."

STONEBOLT, Parachute RRL9006 (Casablanca). Produced by Walter Stewart, J.C. Phillips. Debut effort by this Canadian band is a strong one. The overall sound is mellow rock with lots of good vocal harmonizing and tight playing with guitar, bass, keyboards and drums. Strong melodies and hooks are also there to compliment intelligent lyrics. **Best cuts:** "Was It You," "I Will Still Love You," "The Shadow," "Singin' In The Streets," "Queen Of The Night."

STEVE GIBBONS BAND—Down In The Bunker, Polydor PD16154. Produced by Tony Visconti. Gibbons rocks somewhere between early Dylan and early Bowie, oddly enough, and succeeds as far as instrumentation is concerned although his lyrics are a bit adolescent. A wry sense of humor prevails, however, and the music is flawless blues, folk, rock and rockabilly. "Please Don't Spit On The Bus" is a classic, for sure. **Best cuts:** "Please Don't Spit . . .," "Any Road Up."

LORI LIEBERMAN—Letting Go, Millennium (Casablanca) MNLP8005. Produced by Paul Leka. The respected stylist performs songs by Frey & Henley and David Clayton Thomas in addition to six of her own compositions. String arrangements by Kenny Ascher and a great tenor sax solo by Michael Brecker highlight the instrumental backdrop. The producer has helmed No. 1 singles by the Lemon Pipers, Steam and Harry Chapin. **Best cuts:** "Let Me Down Easy," "After The Thrill Is Gone," "Boston."

FAMILY OF LOVE—The Bible, Polydor PD29301 (Polygram). Produced by Paul Buckmaster and Martyn Ford. If the Moody Blues tackled "Jesus Christ Superstar" it may well come out sounding like this non-sectarian approach to The Greatest Story Ever Told. Old and New Testament themes are given skillful arrangements and modern lyrics, and a mixed bag of vocalists turn in excellent readings of rock/pop tunes that are worth some spins, although the production gets schmaltzy sometimes. Jeane Manson and Demis Roussous sing two songs. **Best cuts:** Pick and choose.

ROADMASTER—Sweet Music, Village VR7804. Produced by Greg Riker, Roadmaster. This is a surprisingly strong first effort by this five-man Indian based band. The focal point is the rugged lead vocals and harmonies, complemented by some searing guitar work. The material is well-crafted rock delivered within a mainstream pop frame. The band gets the opportunities to showcase its instrumental strength with some high powered breaks. **Best cuts:** "The Swan Song," "It Doesn't Mean A Thing," "Sweet Music," "Ya Move Me."

ASTRUD GILBERTO—That Girl From Ipanema, Image IM305. Produced by Astrud Gilberto and Vincent Montana Jr. Brazilian singer has lost none of her appeal despite a long hiatus from vinyl. Her 10-song program spots four different orchestras as backup and effective charts by Montana, Don Sebesky, Al Gorgoni and Ben Aronov. Excellent singing, attractive graphics but no annotation. **Best cuts:** "Meu Piao," "Wanting You."

ELLA FITZGERALD—Dream Dancing, Pablo 2310814. Produced by Norman Granz. With Nelson Riddle's studio orchestra backing, the First Lady goes pop with a generous 15-track serving of Cole Porter gems, all but two of which were originally taped in 1972. Pop or jazz, Fitzgerald's talents shine in front of Riddle's clean, dependable charts. But drab front and back cover graphics won't help sell this laudable LP. **Best cuts:** "I Concentrate On You," "Just One Of Those Things."

LIBERACE—Mr. Showmanship Live, AVI6039. Produced by Ed Cobb. Taped at the Warwick Musical Theatre in Rhode Island, this LP offers nine tunes, one ("Ciao") a Liberace original. His piano is adequate, his appeal is to the older buyer inclined to purchase records of television sales pitches. Strictly for Liberace devotees, and there are many out there. **Best cuts:** "We've Only Just Begun," "My Buddy," "Over The Rainbow."

ROSEMARY CLOONEY—Rosie Sings Bing, Concord Jazz CJ60. Produced by Carl E. Jefferson. Concept of this package is tenuous, but the music comes off well as Clooney chirps 10 oldies associated with the late Crosby, Nat Pierce, piano, and Scott Hamilton on tenor play impressive fills behind Rosie's heartfelt singing. A pleasing but unspectacular disk with brief notes by Kathryn Crosby. **Best cuts:** "Just One More Chance," "I Wished On The Moon," "It's Easy To Remember."

THE SUPREMES—At Their Best, Motown M7904R1. Producers: Various. Several of these 1970-72 Supremes hits (post-Diana Ross) have been packaged before, but retain their classic pop-soul appeal alongside more recent outings like "I'm Gonna Let My Heart Do The Walking" and "You're My Driving Wheel." Also of interest are the delightfully old-fashioned "Sha La Bandit," never before released, and the pounding "Love Train," hitherto only available in Europe. **Best cuts:** Everything here is top notch.

BAUTISTA—The Heat Of The Wind, ABC AA1071. Produced by Wayne Henderson. Much of this handsomely produced package serves as showcase for Roland Bautista's work on an assortment of guitars, electric and acoustic. The material, predominantly instrumental, is a blend of soul, disco and light jazz, sweetened with full horn and string sections. Good musicianship throughout on tempos that vary from upbeat to mellow. **Best cuts:** "Elena," "Rhapsody," "Steal Your Love Away."

VARIOUS ARTISTS—Say It With Music, Monmouth/Evergreen MES7084-85. Produced by Bill Borden. Ambitious two-LP package offers 36 Irving Berlin songs sung and played about every way possible. Artists include Steve Clayton, Annette Sanders, the Jack Manno Singers and charts by trumpeter Rusty Dedrick, all slickly produced and amply notated. Ties-in, of course, with Berlin's 90th birthday anniversary. **Best cuts:** All are effective. (Continued on page 70)

Spotlight—The most outstanding new product of the week's releases and that with the greatest potential for top of the chart placement; picks—predicted for the top half of the chart in the opinion of the reviewer; recommended—predicted to hit the second half of the chart in the opinion of the reviewer, or albums of superior quality. Albums receiving a three star rating are not listed. Review editor: Ed Harrison; reviewers: Eliot Tiegel, Gerry Wood, Alan Penchansky, Jean Williams, Dave Dexter Jr., Pat Nelson, Sally Hinkie, Agustin Gurza, Roman Kozak, Dick Nusser, Jim McCullough, Paul Grein and Adam White.