

# Overlooked promo albums miss garbage can

By JOHN VANORE

My last review was supposed to have been last week. But then I looked around my room and noticed that I had nearly a dozen promo albums that record companies sent us. So I decided to do a series of capsule reviews for this mostly overlooked material.

Lots of the promos are throw-aways — things that won't sell very much on their own, so the record companies send them out for a little free publicity. Some of them are pretty decent, though. Granted, I wouldn't pay current record prices for them, but that's usually due to their limited appeal.

## GENESIS

Take Genesis, for example. Atco sent us what I believe is that band's third album, "The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway." It's a double in the rock opera genre about a Puerto Rican kid named Rael on the streets of New York, and it relates a series of adventures, real or imagined, that he undergoes.

The album is very strong on keyboards, and, to a lesser extent, on guitars. The vocals are well-done throughout, although the lyrics tend to get jumbled a bit. All in all, it's a pretty good set.

## TANGERINE DREAM

Virgin Records, a subsidiary of Atco, submitted "Rubycon," the latest offering from Tangerine Dream, a keyboard band coming in a wave of German bands collectively referred to as Krautrock. Edgar Froese, the band's leader and driving force, diverges occasionally on guitar, and, once in a while someone smacks a gong, but otherwise it's all keyboards.

Here's a listing of the keyboard instruments they play on this album: organ, piano, mellotron, electric piano, double moog synthesizer, synth A, vcs 3 synthi, and ARP 2600.

The album is divided into "Rubycon Part I" and "Rubycon Part II," which are sides one and two respectively.

"Rubycon," thus, is a fitting culmination of their current musical evolution. At times the music may sound like anything from the Transylvania Philharmonic to the sound track for "Star Trek" or "The Twilight Zone." But it never stops being good or interesting.

Their greatest accomplishment, however, is to show what electronic music can sound like, thus allaying fears of immensely complex noise. It makes the synthesizer far more palatable as an instrument in its own right rather than being relegated to a backseat role as an amusing gimmick.

Tangerine Dream is without a doubt on the rise as an important band, and as forerunners in the electronic field, taking second to Emerson, Lake and Palmer. "Rubycon" is an equally impressive album, and a fine showcase for the band's diversified talents. If you like keyboards, it's definitely worth looking into.

## AMON DUUL II

Amon Duul II is another German group, albeit somewhat more conventional. Maybe that's where their mistake lies. After I got done listening to "Hijack," their latest release, my first impression was that Duul should have been spelled Dull. It's probably the most boring album I've heard in a long time. The songs all basically sound alike, and it's my understanding that even Amon Duul fans can't tell the difference between one of their albums and the next.

I suppose I could sum it up like this — the instrumentals are pathetically unimaginative and the singing is flat in every sense of the word. In short, this is one band to avoid.

## GOLLIWOGS

The last offering in the rock category is a collection dating back to 1964, when Creedence Clearwater Revival was called the Golliwogs, of all things. The album, "Pre-Creedence," is truly a gem in that it represents the roots of a group in a way that we very rarely see or hear. The fourteen short cuts (no song is longer than 2:49) are the A and B sides of seven singles released in the winter of 1964-65.

Usually an artist's early works bear a good deal of resemblance to his accomplishments in his heyday, but this is an exception... in spades. The numbers are all Golliwogs originals, but they have absolutely nothing in common with "Bad Moon Rising" or "Down on the Bayou."

On the contrary, these songs are all perfect for a new band circa 1964

— there is a lot of Beach Boys, Beatles, and Four Seasons (sans Frankie Valli) influence. I even picked up some riffs that sounded like they were borrowed from the Stones.

Only on "porterville," one of the last cuts, does a trace of later Creedence come through. It's evident in John Fogerty's vocals and lead guitar, and it doesn't seem to be a very far cry from the days of "Suzie Q."

## HEARTWOOD

Now we move to the softer stuff. Heartwood is a group which hails from North Carolina, and they purport to play in a soft, mellow, pseudo-country style. In actuality, they come across on "Nothin' Fancy" sounding like a watered-down combination of the Eagles and the Grateful Dead. They describe themselves as a musical compromise between the harder Led Zeppelin extreme and Seals and Croft,

who are diametrically opposed to the Zep in style. They're right on that count, but still their music is nothing spectacular.

## GULLORY

Isaac Guillory, on his debut album simply titled "Isaac Guillory," treats us to some very pleasant music indeed. On "St. Peter," the first cut, he tends to style his singing after James Taylor. The instrumentals, which he handles for the most part, are original and much

better. After that opener, however, he develops his own identity in an acoustic/folk style.

Guillory is an accomplished musician, and gives a fine accounting for himself here, especially on guitar. He'll probably be moving very soon from the depths of obscurity to achieve status on a level with his abilities.

## MIKE GREENE BAND

"Pale, Pale Moon" is another debut album, this time by the Mike

Greene Band. The head honcho, Greene, has organized a Traffic-style band very strong on woodwinds. This is the nice, mellow stuff. They also manage to be dynamic and forceful in their own way; the title track, an instrumental, is a fine example. Greene, on sax, switches back and forth with guitarist David Michael to keep the sound fresh and crisp. Probably my biggest gripe is that the vocals get cluttered pretty often — Greene is trying to say too much

in too little space, and the rather lyrics detract from the music's beauty.

Offhand, I'd say that Greene's next album will be worth looking into, after he and his band smooth out the kinks in their music. Well, this is it for the season. After floating around with the New in the West Pacific for six weeks, I'll resume sending in columns for the summer edition of the paper. Until then, happy listening, and Gig 'em!

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