

Album reviews

Cheap Trick Next Position Please

CBS

Cheap Trick is one of those bands that never really get over the sophomore jinx. They have been on a somewhat erratic decline in popularity since their first "break-through" album, *Live at Budokan*. Unfortunately this trend is likely to continue based on the merits of this album.

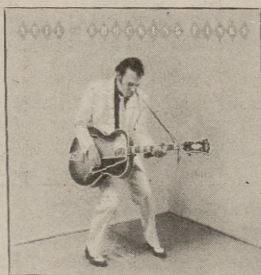
It appears that the band is grasping for straws among the potential sales generated by radio playlists and their music suffers because of it. The songs are good when lead singer Robin Zander's voice comes through all the studio manipulation; this just doesn't happen enough for my taste.

One chance Zander does have to showcase his voice is the title cut, "Next Position Please." The vocals are unusually gritty for him, and they give the song the extra amount of style it needs to stand out.

Another interesting cut is "Heaven's Falling", written by Todd Rundgren. The cut begins with a nice rhythmic intensity that is missing from the rest of the album, but it also is lost when Rick Nielsen joins in his power chords in the chorus.

Although Cheap Trick has always taken their inspiration, and quite a few melodies, from the Beatles they truly take a jab at the Who with the introduction to the album's last cut, a quick steal from "My Generation."

With more original songwriting (instead of just cute titles) and fewer studio tricks, Cheap Trick could regain many of their former fans, but this certainly is not the album that is going to accomplish that.



Neil Young and the Shocking Pinks Everybody's Rockin'

Geffen

I might as well say this at the beginning, I have never been a fan of Neil Young, and worse than that, he confuses me. After being the mogul of folk guitar for years on end, he shocked even his fans when his last album was based almost totally on synthesizer.

With *Everybody's Rockin'* he has decided that '50s rock is the way to go, and it is difficult to distinguish most of the album from something recorded by Bill Haley 25 years ago. Although

Young pulls the nice rhythm and blues aspects out of that music, I still am wondering why.

The only song that really sounds like the old Neil is "Wonderin'," and it is a welcome relief to hear his voice without the reverb present elsewhere. This is easily the best material on the album.

Young covers his material well everywhere, but I would suggest that if you are really interested in the music of that period, go with the originals.



Billy Joel An Innocent Man

Columbia

Apparently there is a '50s revival going on in the music AGAIN. The review of Neil Young's attempt is included above, and now I find that Billy Joel is on the same trend. While Neil at least borrowed from some of the best musicians of the time, the same cannot be said of Joel. Joel sounds as if his idea of '50s and '60s music comes from a combination of ShaNaNa and Beach Boys' rejects.

Worse yet, Joel has decided to name his album after what is easily the worst song on the entire work, "An Innocent Man." It is a strange calypso-like number with Joel's voice totally unrestrained by good taste.

The single "Tell Her About It" is a good solid song and one of the few on the album where the nostalgic influence is congruous with Joel's personal style. In most every other case, he is struggling to assert his voice and retain the borrowings, too.

The only time Billy Joel relaxes enough to be Billy Joel is on "Leave the Tender Moment." It is a good ballad with vocal styling within tasteful boundaries.

This album has to be a big disappointment to Joel's fans, especially coming on the heels of one of his better works, *The Nylon Curtain*.



Midnight Star No Parking On the Dance Floor

Solar (Sound of Los Angeles)

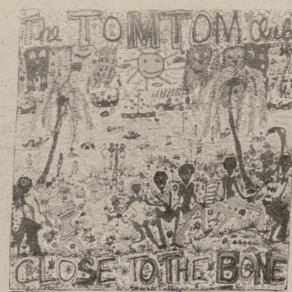
Although this album has been out for several months, it is just now beginning to sell heavily. I only wonder why it took this long; this is one of the best deals per dollar for the entire summer.

Out of the eight singles included, four have been or are on their way to becoming hit singles. "Freak-a-zoid" and "Electricity" were both very popular and very infectious dance singles that still are played heavily on black radio stations. Both combine a solid funk beat with sharp, harmonic vocal lines.

A little bit newer are "Playmates" and "No Parking On the Dance Floor." "Playmates" is one of the bouncier songs on the album, depending on the synthesizer effects heard elsewhere.

The remaining four songs are not just filler material, but strong material that all show some flair of their own. That is

what is great about this album. With so many albums today issued while they are only half finished, this one is an exception that is enjoyable and danceable from start to finish.



The Tom Tom Club Close to the Bone

The Tom Tom Club consists of a loose collection of musicians centered around the sisters Weymouth. Tina is the bassist of the Talking Heads, so it is natural that the Club's music is a reflection of some of the things that the Heads have done on their own albums.

The Tom Tom Club gets most of its energy from its tight

underlying rhythms and then adds to that with the innovative sounds that also garnish the usual Talking Heads' album. What separates the Weymouth's music from the Heads' is that it is even more dance-oriented and doesn't worry nearly as much about saying something important. Basically these people are just out to have a good time.

The first song, "The Pleasure of Love," espouses the fun of a good old-fashioned shallow relationship, and "The Man With the 4-Way Hips" seems to be an appropriate sequel on the flip side.

The only striking problem with the Tom Tom Club is that the vocals are often stylistically just as bland as they can be.

Most of the time the background can take up the slack, but when it comes to a slower point, the inadequacies poke right through. Still, considering the amount of enjoyable and innovative music contained within this multi-hued dust jacket, the vocals are a small loss.

Reviews by Cary Stegall

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