



**Stevie Ray Vaughan
and Double Trouble
"Soul to Soul"
Epic Records**

★★★

Stevie Ray Vaughan is probably the best guitarist in Texas, if not the world. Vaughan can play the blues with a most uncommon flair, but his talent has trouble being fully expressed on the new album.

"Soul to Soul" is the third album from Vaughan and Double Trouble. "Soul to Soul" is similar to the first two albums in style and content, but there's just *something* missing that keeps the album from being a masterpiece.

One of the album's problems is its inconsistency. The first side, for the most part, doesn't quite pick up. Side one would rate two stars. The second side, except for one song, is pretty damn good. Side two would rate four stars. By taking the average of both sides, the album rates three stars.

Side one starts off with a "Green Onions" like instrumental, "Say What!" This song gets the album off to a good start but it really slows down with "Lookin' Out the Window" and "Look at Little Sister."

"Ain't Gone 'n' Give Up On Love" is a little better and shows that Vaughan can play the blues really *slow*. The highlight of side one is the instrumental "Gone Home." It's more jazz than blues and showcases Reese Wynans' organ and Tommy Shannon's bass as well as Vaughan's guitar.

Side two is a lot more fun. "Change It" is a powerful song in the best of the blues tradition while "You'll Be Mine" is hot and danceable.

Drummer Chris "Whipper" Layton shines on "Empty Arms." Layton purposefully plays off beat to give the song a weird, skipping feeling. How the band can keep in time during this song is beyond me. "Come On (Part III)" has the same problem as side one. The song has potential but it just doesn't make it. The album ends up with a beautiful slow dance song, "Life Without You."

Stevie Ray Vaughan is a fantastic guitar player but "Soul to Soul" doesn't call for the attention he deserves. Vaughan's style is better suited for the extended jams he does in concert. See him live before you make your decision. □

— by KARL PALLMEYER

**Neil Young
"Old Ways"
Geffen Records**

★★★

Yeeee haaaa! Pull on your boots and grab some cow chips, Neil Young has gone country.

For the past 20 years, Neil Young has been somewhat of an enigma in the rock world. The status of Young's popularity lies somewhere between cult figure and rock giant. Young has written some of the best rock 'n' roll songs ever written. He also has written some of the worst. Young has never been consistently brilliant enough to gain acceptance from the general public or the critics. Although Young has developed a very loyal cult following, he tries his best to offend his fans by changing styles as often as most normal people change socks.

Young has devoted his last few albums to ill-fated experiments with various musical styles. "Everybody's Rockin'" (1983) was Young's attempt to make a rockabilly album, "Trans" (1982) was electronic music, "Reactor" (1981) was hard rock and "Hawks and Doves" (1980) was country rock. Young made his last decent album in 1979. "Rust Never Sleeps" was a fine blend of folk, rock, heavy metal, punk and country.

Some of Young's best songs have shown a strong country influence and he has even made albums that could almost be classified as country. But nothing that came before "Old Ways" can compare to the sh*t-kicking Young is doing now.

"Old Ways" is a *country* album. The album, recorded mostly in Nashville, uses lots of fiddles and steel guitars. He even sings with Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings.

The album starts off with the cowboy classic "The Wayward Wind." This song is bad. Very bad. It's very tempting to take the album off the turntable and use it for a frisbee. But wait, it gets a little better.

"Get Back to the Country" is a nice little song that gives the reason that Young has left rock 'n' roll. Young says there used to be a certain "spirit" rock bands in California had during the 1960s. He says the "spirit" is gone from rock 'n' roll but that he's found it again in Nashville. "Get Back to the Country," along with "Misfits," "Old Ways" and "Bound for Glory," features Waylon Jennings on guitar and backing vocals.

Willie Nelson sings a duet with Young on "Are There Any More Real Cowboys?" Nelson and Young seem to enjoy themselves while they're singing about the praises of the good ole boys. By the way, does anyone remember Young's "Southern Man," also about those same good ole boys?

The rest of the album is full of good-ole-boy and tears-in-beers songs. Young seems to be comfortable with country music and his twang is done with taste. He doesn't seem to be taking himself too seriously. But Young is capable of doing much more.

I don't care much for country but, except for the first song, "Old Ways" is not too bad for the first song. "Old Ways" is not too bad for the first song. I find it easier to listen to Young's new album than to listen to any-thing by Alabama, The Jiggs (excuse me, the Judds) George Strait, Barbara Mandrell, the Oak Ridge Boys or any other of the country-pop acts that are so popular today. Maybe Nashville can take a lesson on how to make a country album from Young, a Canadian rock 'n' roller. □

— by KARL PALLMEYER



**The Boomtown Rats
"In the Long Grass"
Columbia Records**

★★

If Bob Geldof had put as much energy into the new Boomtown Rats' album as he did in organizing Live Aid, "In the Long Grass" would be the best album in rock history. But he didn't, so it isn't.

The Boomtown Rats have made a few great singles, especially "I Don't Like Mondays" from the album "The Fine Art of Surfacing" in 1979, but their albums have always been weak. "In the Long Grass" is another weak album with only one good single.

"Lucky," written by Johnny Fingers, is a great song about the fickleness of popularity. The Boomtown Rats have often received critical praise but its albums rarely live up to the critics expectations while the general public rarely take notice of the band and its music. "Lucky" tells of the problems the Boomtown Rats have had trying to please the public, the critics and themselves. Their members' biggest problem, I think, is that they doesn't know exactly what they want to say.

On two of the songs, "A Hold of Me" and "Hard Times," the Boomtown Rats' Irish heritage shows through. "A Hold of Me," is an overly ambitious and somewhat trite call to arms. "Hard Times," a much better song, is a sarcastic indictment of England's attitude towards Ireland. If the Boomtown Rats would use more political topics in their songs, like U2, they could better define their image.

Some of the songs, "Drag Me Down," "Over Again" and "Another Sad Story," are typical boy-loses-girl love songs. "Tonight" is a most untypical, and somewhat sadistic, love song. It's most disturbing to hear Geldof sing "Scratch my back and maybe I'll claw yours/You understand being used," and to remember he was recently nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Although "In the Long Grass" is a weak album, it's listenable. It's best to put on the album while you're doing something else instead of sitting, listening and thinking about the music. I have a great deal of respect for Geldof and the Boomtown Rats, but I don't think they have yet lived up to their full potential. □

— by KARL PALLMEYER