

Record Reviews



**"Johnny Comes
Marching Home"
The Del-Lords
EMI America Records**

★★★½

When I listen to the Del-Lords I think this is what Bruce Springsteen might sound like if he was brought up in Chicago instead of New Jersey.

The Del-Lords make working class music for working class people — just like Springsteen used to before "Born in the U.S.A." The Del-Lords music is more blues based and doesn't come off sounding superficial like Springsteen's recent, more popular music. But the Del-Lords don't have Springsteen's gift for lyricism or orchestration.

"Johnny Comes Marching Home" is the second album from the Del-Lords, drummer Frank Funaro, bassist Manny "Manuelo" Caiati and guitarists Scott Kempner and Eric Ambel. It's a good album but there are some major problems, the first being the drum mix.

They should have put a huge wad of cotton in the snare drum or done something so that we don't have to hear the consistent THUD, THUD, THUD, THUD, THUD through every song. It's almost as if the drummer is using baseball bats for drumsticks. The other problems have to do with three of the songs.

"True Love" is a song done in failed blues style with sexist overtones. "Saint Jake," a tribute to rock music, is a distasteful attempt to cannonize a radio disk jockey. "Dream Come True," another tribute to rock music, is a not-too-good story about a band which has finally made it. Aside from "True Love," "Saint Jake," "Dream Come True" and a hyperactive snare drum, the album is pretty good.

"Everlovin'" and "No Waitress No More" show the Del-Lords can play the blues when they want to. "Everlovin'" is a tender, almost country song, in which the drums are finally subdued so we're allowed to hear a delicate interplay between guitar and bass. "No Waitress No More" is more upbeat and features some excellent slide guitar playing.

"Heaven" is an optimistic song about a better world — not the one we'll go to after this life but the one we must make here for ourselves before we die. Certain Washington wives might object that this form of secular humanism has found its way into rock 'n' roll.

And those same Washington wives might also disagree with the subject matter of "Soldier's Home," a wonderful '60s style folk rock song which calls for peace. The song "Drug Deal," even though it has no offensive lyrics (it's an instrumental), might also cause this album to be banned from Tipper Gore's hi-fi. The guitar work on "Drug Deal," by the way, is excellent.

A recent hijacking provides the subject matter for "Against My Will." "Against My Will" is a realistic portrayal of a hostage's confusion during the situation instead of a "Delta Force" fantasy. The fanaticism of the terrorists as well as a bit of the ugly American are in the song.

"Love Lies Dying" is about a romance doomed because of the social conditions in which

the lovers are forced to live. Something like Springsteen would write if he hadn't become a yuppie. (Hey, I like Springsteen but if I see another 13-year-old wearing a Rambo T-shirt and singing "Born in the U.S.A." I'm going to throw up. Doesn't anyone remember "Nebraska" or "The River?")

"Johnny Come Marching Home" shows a lot of promise. The Del-Lords have a ways to go but I think their next album will be a masterpiece. As long as I'm comparing the Del-Lords to another artist, does anyone remember "Born to Run," Springsteen's third album?



**"Primitons"
The Primitons
Throbbing Lobster
Records**

★★★★½

There is a musical explosion happening during the '80s. Thanks to the empty-headed blandness of MTV and top 40 radio, few people know about it.

The Primitons are a part of this new explosion which includes R.E.M., the Replacements, the Dream Syndicate, Guadalcanal Diary, the Meat Puppets, Let's Active, the Hoodoo Gurus and the Violent Femmes. These bands are able to take past musical styles and synthesize something new and exciting.

The Primitons are Brad Dorset on vocals, bass, guitar and piano, Leif Bondarenko on drums, percussion and accordion, and Mots Roden on vocals, guitar and organ. Producer Mitch Easter works with the band on their first release, a seven-song EP entitled "Primitons." Easter, who produced R.E.M.'s first three records, knows how to capture the spirit and feel of this musical explosion.

"Five Lines" is something of a tribute to Pablo Picasso and his art. The cover drawing of the band is reminiscent of Picasso's "Three Musicians" and the other pictures on the cover and lyric sheet are also Picasso-ish in style.

"City People" is fantastic! The blend of acoustic guitar, accordion and voices is undecorably beautiful.

It's hard to say too much about these guys. Their music evokes more of a feeling than something tangible to discuss. Even though there is a lyric sheet included in the package, it's hard to decipher a single meaning out of the words. All I can say about "All My Friends," "Seeing Is Believing," "She Sleeps," "You'll Never Know" and "Stars" is that they are pretty good songs.

The Primitons are good but they still have to work off a few rough edges. I hope to hear more from these guys.

*by Karl Pallmeyer
music reviewer*

Albums provided by KANM