

## A Stone's Throw Away Valerie Carter C.B.S.

As far as I am concerned, Valerie Carter has a lot going against her before the needle even hits the vinyl on her debut album. Before hearing her, I had read that she was too mild for an Eagles audience, that she was signed to C.B.S. because some record company executive thought she had a 'bankable face', and that so many of the L.A. session army played on *A Stone's Throw Away*, that she couldn't recall one of them even being there.

Imagine my surprise then, dear reader, to discover that this album is every bit as good as its reputation was fishy. *A Stone's Throw Away* may not quite be the album that Little Feat fans everywhere are looking for, but it cuts the latest offerings from both Linda Ronstadt and Bonnie Raitt.

The album starts slowly, with a faithful retread of an old soul near-standard, "Ooh Child", and a rather uncomfortable feeling that this is the way that James Taylor likes to get under way. All such thoughts are dispelled by the truly soulful "Ringing Doorbells in the Rain" — a collaboration between Lowell George and someone called Ulv, who is rumoured to be an inmate of a local institution for the insane. From that moment on Valerie Carter is set.

While the rest of the first side, and much of the second side doesn't quite match those heights, the album's closer, "Back to Blue Some More" is worth seven dollars on its own. With words by Lowell George, a stunning melody by Ms Carter, and arrangement by William Payne, the song leaves for dead anything on the Feat's *Time Loves a Hero*.

It's a sad commentary on the rock and roll world that women like Valerie Carter have to battle to overcome the kind of hype they are landed with in record company promo sheets, and rock magazines. It shouldn't be a surprise that she has talent, just a shame that we have to be told 'what a lovely little lady' she is before we can appreciate it.

Francis Stark

## Eric Carmen Boats Against the Current Arista

Perhaps it was a bad morning, but I had a fright when I spent two hours yesterday listening to transistor pop.

As production line single after sing-by-number chorus was slapped down, it became harder and harder to tell top 40 material from ad jingles. When it came to Donna Summer's machine written and machine played "Theme from the Deep" I gave up. And for somebody who places a lot of faith in pop music that was worrying.

Meanwhile I'd been pondering on Eric Carmen's *Boats Against the Current*. First of all, it is clear that Carmen is a top 40 operator and a good one. He has as strong a voice as you are likely to find in a consistent chart scorer. He's expressive, controlled, and just that bit bluesy. He is, further, a convincingly melodic writer and he can afford good studio musicians. In all you'd expect to conclude that this record should stand out as top popular product.

Well yes it does: but that's just the point. Eric Carmen's is by nature an imitative talent. Remember people calling the Raspberries the new Beatles because they sounded like the old Beatles? Remember "All by Myself"'s resemblance to Nilsson's "Without You"? Well, so too with this album. Carmen feeds off established pop styles in exploiting a little of Roger Daltrey, a little of Elton John, a touch of the Beach Boys (Bruce Johnston arranges backing vocals), and custom built West Coast production.

All credit to Eric Carmen's ability as a blender of styles — and by all means buy the record for songs like "She Did It" and "Love Is All That Matters" — but it's no hopeful reflection on current levels of innovation that a retrospective talent like this shines so bright.

Bruce Belsham



Tom Petty with cigarette and the Heartbreakers.

## An All-American Hero

### Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers *Shelter*

Rock 'n' rolls real heroes are few and hard to find but Tom Petty... well, he just looks right. Though, as listening to this album makes immediately obvious, there's more to this band than good looks.

It was a stroke of genius on somebody's part to pair Petty's Heartbreakers with Nils Lofgren, giving them the opening spot on Lofgren's recent UK tour. Lofgren is one of the few rock 'n' roll heroes worthy of the title and with Petty he shares a similar stance; that of the punk (in the old sense of the word) who is doing his best, trying to make an honest stand though everything conspires to try and stop him. From all reports it seems that Lofgren was hard-pressed to equal the performances of his show-opener (though I'd like to see Petty do an open backward somersault).

On their first record Petty and the Heartbreakers have found a near-perfect balance between band and vocalist, neither suffering at the expense of the other. Denny Cordell's production is simple yet sympathetic and the band work in well with Petty's songs, playing brashly, fast and energetically without sounding too raw.

But the main strength of this album lies with Petty's vocals. He bites at the words slurs them, runs them one into another:

*Some friends of mine and me  
Stayed up all through the night  
rockin' fairly steady till the sky went  
light*

*And didn't go to bed, didn't go to work  
I picked up the telephone  
Told the boss he was a jerk.*

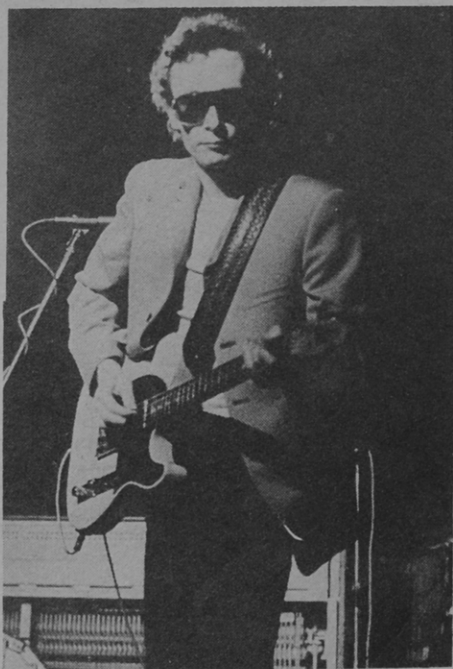
The influences aren't immediately obvious but, now and again, it's possible to detect some similarities with the Byrds — a jangled guitar line, the chorus vocals on "Hometown Blues", the lead vocal on "American Girl" — a song which Roger McGuinn has recently covered. "Mystery Man" has a wonderfully fluid bass line and could almost be a Van Morrison song. But these are Tom Petty's songs, none more than four minutes long, and while this album has more than its share of songs that I'm sure will eventually be recognised as bona-fide rock 'n' roll classics, it's "American Girl" that stands out. Not yet a woman, but dangerous all the same:

*Well, she was an American girl  
Raised on promises  
She couldn't help thinking that there  
Was a little more life somewhere else  
After all it was a great big world  
With lots of places to run to...*

Petty's tour with Nils Lofgren launched the Heartbreakers into headlining status virtually overnight. And, though I'm not sure that Bob Seger's "Rock 'n' Roll Never Forgets" isn't just determined optimism considering the years in which Seger has had to work the pits to get where he is now, it is nice when rock 'n' roll remembers.

Jeremy Templar

## Graham Parker: Howlin' Success!



### Howlin' Wind Graham Parker *Vertigo*

Reviewing records is dead simple really. If it is a debut record, you can say whatever the hell you like, because nobody has heard enough of the artist to be able to call down too much wrath on you. If it is a second record, it is either an advance or a disappointment compared with its predecessor about which there is a generally-

accepted theory of worth anyway. If it is a third record or more, then the artist is by definition an old fogey, and is fair game.

Dead simple.

All this falls apart, however, in the face of the vagaries of the local record business' policies on release. In the case of Graham Parker, for example, New Zealand first encountered his second album, and only now do we have the chance of hearing its predecessor. Where does that leave the Stark system then?

After hearing *Howlin' Wind*, I now know all the things I should have been saying at parties about *Heat Treatment*. In fact, it is not a carbon copy of the second album so much as a first draft.

It is almost possible to match up the two records track for track — "White Honey" with "Heat Treatment"; "Nothing's Gonna Pull Us Apart" with "That's What They All Say" and so on, the only difference being that the Rumour, interestingly not given equal billing on *Howlin' Wind*, seem to have mastered the style much better by the second time around. The record still has all the Parker trademarks, enormous energy, streetwise lyrics and suspiciously familiar melodies. It is just less confident in its working out of those elements than *Heat Treatment*.

Let me put it this way. If you know about Graham Parker, but don't own any of his records, buy *Heat Treatment*. If you have *Heat Treatment* and your neighbours are getting sick of hearing it ten times a day, buy *Howlin' Wind*. If you haven't heard of Graham Parker, gently return your head to the sand.

Dead simple.  
Francis Stark

## The Chieftains Live *Interfusion*

Well, the Chieftains are back with us, even if it is only on record. Those of you who feel deprived at missing their recent New Zealand concerts (and you should) can sample the group's magic on this new album.

The Chieftains are a seven man group who have a tremendous repertoire of Irish traditional music, played on instruments such as the uilleann pipes, bodhran, tin whistles, fiddles and harp. This live release is their seventh recording, and I would heartily recommend any of their recordings from *Chieftains 4* onwards.

In their live album, the group have produced a programme which is very close to their Auckland concert (although this set was recorded in Boston and Toronto). Time obviously did not allow the inclusion of their "Bonaparte's Retreat" a 15 minute suite showing the Russian defeat of Napoleon in 1812.

This album doesn't tend to duplicate material on other albums, but has many of the highlights of the Auckland concert. The opening number, "Morning Dew" sets the spontaneous atmosphere, with Paddy Moloney suggesting new ideas to the other players during the piece itself. "Round the House but mind the Dresser" is just as jolly a reel as it was in concert, and we also have all the solo items by the various members of the group.

In way of a digression. In their records the Chieftains usually include quite a few tunes by the blind Irish harpist Carolan (1670-1738). Carolan is a fascinating figure in the history of Irish music, whose beautiful melodies often have more than a hint of Corelli's influence. There are three Carolan melodies on *Chieftains Live*, a lively jig, "George Brabazon", "Carolan's Concerto" and a harp solo, "Carolan's Farewell to Music". The Irish group Planxty have also recorded some of Carolan's numbers on their albums.

Anyway, back to the Chieftains... *Chieftains Live* is a terrific record, and if you want it, be in quickly. Like all the Chieftains' records, it is an Australian import and probably won't turn up in sale bins.

William Dart

## The Doobie Brothers Livin' On The Fault Line Warner Bros

You'd wonder how the Doobies can keep the toons coming after seven albums, six of which have cleared a million in sales. The answer is simple; they ain't the same band any more.

The Doobies that made "Listen to the Music" and "Long Train Runnin'", compulsory standards for every rock band in the country, featured Tom Johnston's songs, voice, and guitar. Since then he has been officially out of the band at various times for health reasons. He was absent from the band at their excellent gig at Auckland. On this album he is credited with guitar and vocals, but his actual influence is minimal.

The man this time is Mike McDonald. His keyboards form the basis of the music, his voice stands out over the super-slick harmonies, and his songs are the high points of the album. "You're Made That Way", "Nothin' But a Heartache", and "You Belong to Me" are fine examples of white soul, with McDonald's intense vocals pushing them well beyond the ordinary.

Two longstanding Doobies, Pat Simmons and Tiran Porter, also contribute songs. Unfortunately, they detract from the clarity of an otherwise well-made album. The exception is Simmons' piece, "Larry the Logger Two-step", which is a great example of short-and-sweet acoustic guitar picking.

So what you get is an inconsistent set with little resemblance to early Doobies work (which may or may not be a good thing). If you like white soul, you'll probably like this rather sophisticated and polished album. And if their previous record is anything to go by, they'll probably rack up another million.

John Malloy

## Waylon Jennings Ol' Waylon RCA

The first time I played this record I found myself (not having heard too much of the boy) having to get used to Ol' Waylon's sometimes-not-un-Johnny Cash-like-voice. I quickly did and now he just sounds like Ol' Waylon.

Rah-oooh Waylon!!

At the second playing I had reached the conclusion that, although he included McNeil O'Diamond's "Sweet Caroline", which incidentally nearly cost him a demerit, there isn't a bad song on the whole