



'Erb 'n' Transport

Bob Marley and the Wailers
Babylon By Bus

Island

Wherein Bob Marley provides a double live guided tour of the best from his Island albums plus a spirited version of "Punky Reggae Party" hitherto only recorded on the flip side of "Jamming". It's a taking-reggae-to-the-people album, music to make you dance before, during or after you've smoked plenty of 'erb mon.

Gleaned from four European concerts of last year *BBB* is nothing if not exhilarating evidence that Marley is now public property, a new hero with a new ethnic, social stance that is being adopted, or at least accepted, by the record buying public. Right from his affected spoken intro Marley never lets up and leads the revved-up audiences through gutsy crowd-pleasing versions "Stir it Up", "Exodus", "Lively Up Yourself" — a true Best Of line up. The seven minute

"Is This Love", in particular, knocks the *Kaya* version into a cocked hat, and "Concrete Jungle" which I thought might lose something live, is handled with care as Al Anderson and Junior Murvin do their best to emulate Peter MacIntosh's original insidious guitar line.

It's reassuring to hear Marley play his older more intense songs with so much care as *Kaya* seemed to be too slight and trivial when compared with his earlier best. Regardless of popularity I hope he can retain that hunger in his belly which makes his songs mean more than just reggae-bound rhythms. *BBB* suggests that he can, so if Bob Marley means no more to you than "Is It Love" piped through the local supermarket PA then this double live album should serve as an excellent lead-in to his first four Island albums.

George Kay



Rodney Crowell
Ain't Living Long Like This

Warner Bros

It's the fate of every new performer to find themselves compared to already known artists. And the name that will constantly recur in introducing Rodney Crowell is that of the late Gram Parsons.

The connections are several. Crowell is best-known as rhythm guitarist in Emmy-Lou Harris' Hot Band. Further, he also sang duets with the lady, fulfilling for Ms Harris the role she once played with Parsons. The second most obvious connection is in the musicians — *Ain't Living Long Like This* utilises many of the players Parsons featured on his two solo albums, the great James Burton on guitar, bassist Emory Gordy and pianist Glen Hardin.

But the greatest debt Crowell owes to Parsons is musical. Like Emmy-Lou Harris he works in the sophisticated country-rock vein that Parsons took to its peak. But, unlike Harris, he avoids the clinical precision that has dogged her work. Instead he sings in a far looser style and the musicians respond in kind — for example the title tune "Ain't Living Long Like This", charges forward on a bounding bass-line and rocks in a way that country-rock so rarely does. Crowell falters only on the ambitious "California Earthquake" which does not have sufficient melodic weight to carry the lengthy narrative.

But for the rest this is one of the finest albums of the year and, together with Carlene Carters debut album, proves that there is life yet in the mating of country music with rock'n'roll.

Alastair Dougal

Heart
Dog and Butterfly
Portrait

A one-time Vancouver bar band, Heart gained international attention with their *Dreamboat Annie* album, which spotlighted the songs and the distinctive vocals of Anne Wilson.

Dog and Butterfly demonstrates their eclecticism, their tightness as a band and their ability

to consolidate earlier success.

The album is divided between Dog (hot) and Butterfly (cool) sides.

The opening live track, "Cook With Fire", is archetypal Heart, a slow, smouldering start, wailing harmonica from Nancy Wilson, Ann Wilson's keening vocals weaving contrapuntal patterns a la Grace Slick, the band building to a driving crescendo. It's the sort of thing I'm not sure one remembers 10 minutes later, but it's very exciting while it's happening (as the actress said . . .).

The Dog side generally follows this pattern, but the real surprise is the Butterfly side, melodic, dreamy and lilting. Here Ann Wilson's voice is closer to Sandy Denny and the sound is reminiscent of Fotheringay's sole album. It's this aspect of Heart that may ultimately pay the greater dividend.

Ken Williams

Jimmy Buffet
You Had To Be There
ABC Records

Anyone who includes Jerry Jeff Walker and Hunter Thompson amongst his best friends would have to be a hedonist. Jimmy Buffet's songs concerning the joys of artificial stimulants in a world filled with willing women reflect this lifestyle.

Buffet's hedonism is now an integral part of his appeal and on this double live album he demonstrates the rapport he shares with his audience by including an incredible total of twenty minutes of between-song "dialogue" — anecdotes, dope references and bulletins regarding his changing state of consciousness — delivered in a hip John Denver-type shout (like many Southerners Buffet has a tendency to scream rather than speak) and the crowd, of course, goes apeshit at his every word. A bit too much for me, actually.

My only other complaint is the inclusion of his version of Lord Buckley's "God's Own Drunk" which at ten minutes is far too long. (Buckley fans would be advised to stay well clear). Still, the actual music is of a high standard. The Coral

Reefer Band perform superlatively throughout, giving many of the familiar tracks an improved raunchiness. Unfortunately though, the thought of enduring 2-3 minute rambles between songs is enough to relegate the set to mere decoration for the studio albums.

John Dix

The Electric Chairs
Safari Records

Max's Kansas City was the throbbing pit-head of the New York rock scene when CBGB's still stood for country, blue-grass and blues. Wayne County, noted Gotham transvestite and habitue of the pages of *Rock Scene* magazine, knew it well. So it's no surprise that just about the best song on the debut album by his band The Electric Chairs is called "Max's Kansas City", a roll-call celebration of some of the clubs more notable acts, past and present.

There's a light satirical touch to much of the rest of the album and some of it's funny, but not that funny. The band are a competent support to County's lyrics and persona — energetic but never passionate, sharp yet somehow not straight to the heart. One of their better moments is near the end of "Eddie & Sheena" when they tear into a Sex Pistols cop after farting around with a sub-Deville early sixties riff for too long. But on the album as a whole it's difficult to detect any truly original elements, or borrowings that are reworked with real power.

Even the group's name suggests that the new wave is running out of good ones (which I don't believe). But I've got a soft spot for quirky, inferior, non-pivotal rekkids like this so you won't catch me saying it's a bad one — I'm just not sure if I'm likely to play it again.

Terence Hogan

Livingston Taylor
3-Way Mirror
Epic

His last L.P., five years ago, was almost inevitably viewed in the light (shadow?) cast by sweet baby James and even now Livingstone has yet to really establish an independent style. Here his unmistakably Taylor drawl — slightly deeper and flatter — luxuriates in ten self-penned songs of the familiar soft pop-rock vein.

And very pleasant they are too. Liv receives solid support from a highly-credentialed bunch of West Coast musos and if, as sometimes happens, the melodies get a little slight then producer Nick Decaro buoys things up with strings.

These smoothly flowing tracks are saved from the blandness of similarity by three factors which make *3-Way Mirror* the minor delight it is:

Firstly, the rhythms which gently vary from samba to romantic ballad to R & B swing.

Secondly, the wry lyrics are all listenable and generally exude a sense of fun.

Most importantly, there are some strong tunes and performances. Personal favourites include "Train Off the Track" and "No Thank You Skycap" which features Maria Muldaur.

This charming album is Taylor-made for playing while one is lazing in the sun with a glass of something cold — much like the music of, aah . . . Liv's elder brother.

Peter Thomson

Daryl Hall and John Oates
Along the Red Ledge
RCA

After a period of uncertainty that included an unlively "live" album, Hall and Oates appear to have found a firmer footing.

The acclaim that accompanied the early *Abandoned Luncheonette* may be a cross to bear, and perhaps there is nothing here to touch the sublime "She's Gone" from that album, but *Along the Red Ledge* is not to be sniffed at.

A Hall tune, "It's a Laugh," sets the tone: kickstart drumming, crying saxophone, and hurt vocals. Most of the songs are of wounded love and Hall and Oates show that on a rock ballad their vocal interplay is almost unsurpassed.

It's when they try their hand at uptempo rockers that they seem to lose control. "Alley Katz," for example, is a jumble. The band cooks at a simmer, but the voices fall over themselves, and

surely with H & O the voices are the *raison d'etre*?

The album credits are heavy with guest spots (George Harrison, Robert Fripp, Todd Rundgren among others). The presence of the ring-ins is, however, largely unfelt. Despite its overall lack of lustre the previous *Livetime* album showed just what a tight band Hall and Oates have assembled. Do the stellar invites reflect some lack of confidence?

They need have no qualms. Songs such as "It's a Laugh" and the closing miniature "August Day" prove they're back on the track.

Ken Williams

The Grateful Dead
Shakedown Street
Arista

This is a sad L.P. Heaven knows the last album was pretty lacklustre but at least it had Bob Weir's stunning "Estimated Prophet" to redeem it. Weir/Barlow obviously put the rest of their good compositions onto Bob's recent solo set because their one song here, while moderately humorous, is fairly ordinary. But at least it's got some guts which is more than can be said for most of the album.

The Garcia/Hunter contributions are pale reflections of former glories. The title track is catchy funk but never really develops and the potential in the closing ballad is similarly unrealized. Their reworking of the "Stagger Lee" story is tedious.

"Good Lovin'" is O.K. but not a patch on the Rascals' original. Perhaps the best of the whole bunch is "France", a duet between Weir and Donna Godchaux. (Donna's solo number is, like last time, coy and incongruous.)

The Dead's appeal has always been bound up with the hippy ideal of laid back ease. This album suggests that (to paraphrase Woody Allen) if they get any more mellow they may over-ripen and rot.

The cover by Gobert (Furry Freak Brothers) Shelton is excellent. Pity the music couldn't match it.

Peter Thomson

Janis Ian
Janis Ian
Interfusion

A friend of mine once knew a man who cut his wrists to a Janis Ian record. And it wasn't a once either. Whenever this man was depressed, it just had to be Janis. She said it all, you see.

That was a while ago now, back when adolescent despair was still chic. Once providing music to gnash and moan by, Janis now sends us off to sleep rather than down the road to torturous sensibility.

Janis was never a one for the musical genius accolades anyway. Although she tinkled on the ivories and clung to an acoustic guitar, she sang, rather than played, her heart out. It was always the words with her.

Remembering this, it's hard to imagine a market for her latest album. The lyrics are appallingly trite and hackneyed. The sing-along sheet provided is riddled with direct steals, not to mention the unmerciful rehashing of her 1977 album, *Miracle Row*.

As for the be-bop backing it up, a good half of the album suffers from Barry Manilowed orchestration. And even those reflective numbers, once her trademark, are pop rather than passion.

Advice: Sturm & Drang it with some old Janis Ian if you must, but don't expect inner vision from this disc.

Louise Chunn

Dictators
Bloodbrothers
Elektra

In many ways the Dictators seem to be another manifestation of Sandy Pearlman's and Murray Krugman's admiration for slick crazy hard rock'n'roll. Just as they had a hand in Blue Oyster Cult's midgets-posing-as-he-men image I'd lay odds that they are behind the beefcake macho stance that the Dictators have adopted over their three albums.

Take a look at the don't-mess-with-us-pose of Andy Shernoff and his dudes on the front cover of *Bloodbrothers*, and dig the use of initials by H.D. Manitoba. I mean these guys are tough, you best believe it — *tuf*. To be a Dictator you gotta be, ask H.D.

Bloodbrothers lacks the variety of *Manifest Destiny*, which in retrospect was a successful melee of sixties buzz and cornball agaro, but Shernoff's send-up lyrics and Manitoba's monotone easily compensate. As a vocalist H.D. (Handsome Dick to his friends) proves beyond all doubt that he is one of the worst singers ever to grace a pair of black leathers but his drone is appropriate for communicating Shernoff's Klutz lyrical content. "I Stand Tall", for example, is damn near a hymn but who can take it seriously with lyrics like

*Everybody should pick up a guitar
It's the American Way.*

The Dictators don't suffer from an overdose of humility and like they claim they can play faster and louder than most but their main asset is definitely their healthy sense of fun and parody. If you take this album seriously then you've missed the point.

George Kay