

(L-R) Ian Morris, Bruce Hambling, Peter Urlich, Lez White and Dave Dobbyn.



Th'Dudes' First Time

Th'Dudes
Right First Time
Key

No exaggeration here, but there was a time when New Zealand albums were dreaded by reviewers. Presenting as they did the dilemma of either deluding the record buyer or discouraging the local bands, it was damn near a suicide mission to review them. Now those days are over. In the light of recent years' output from New Zealand studios it is obvious that local bands are quite able to both earn the praise and cope with the criticism meted out to overseas outfits. So that's the general introduction over with, now for Th'Dudes album.

For those who like it in a word the album is a pretty consistent winner. There is simply no substitute for strong melodies and the song writing team of Dave Dobbyn and Ian Morris can consistently come up with the goods in that department. Having done the really difficult part they make no slips with the arrangements which consistently bring the best out of the material. Perhaps the most distinctive feature is the dual guitar sound developed by Dobbyn and Morris. These two have a real battery of hooks and catchlines which make most of the tracks pretty well addictive listening after a couple of plays.

None of that is meant to detract from the contribution made by Lez White (bass) and Bruce Hambling (drums). Maybe I'd like to hear the rhythm section really stretching out (and more on this point later) but they lay a solid foundation for the arrangements on all tracks. Similarly, though I don't think he needs me to

convince him, Peter Urlich has the vocal range and expression to put him well nigh into the top class.

Well this might be a good place to run through some of the high spots of the set and it says a lot for the album that it's so hard to leave much out of the standouts list. Predictably the two singles "Be Mine Tonight" and "Right First Time" are highlights with the latter perhaps having the edge in the classic pop singles stakes. But for my money the surprise value is in the ballads — "Stop Crying" and "You Don't Have To Go" really reward repeated listening. Maybe the only slip up in the arrangements is "That Look In Your Eyes", a live favourite which takes a bit of getting used to in its new rather overproduced form.

Th'Dudes have rested their reputation, as any band worth its salt should, at least partly on their outright danceability. Therefore it is something of a puzzle why there are only two fast tracks on the entire album. All the more so when a track like "Can't Get Over You At All" is a quality rocker featuring outstanding drive from the rhythm section. Dudes fans might also question the inclusion of newbie "There You Are" at the expense of established favourites like "On The Rocks."

Still it would be quite unfair to end on a critical note. At the risk of being repetitive the whole point is that you don't have to take a protective attitude with New Zealand albums anymore. This album will stand up to comparisons with anything in the record stores. As for the acid test is it worth eight dollars? The answer is plainly yes.

Dominic Free

Ron & Russell Mael, Sparks.



Sparks
No. 1 in Heaven
Virgin Records

Sparks have always been one of my favourite bands even if they did have the distinction of being one of the three name acts that Kim Fowley walked out on — the other two being Curtis Mayfield and Television. Without sacrificing their very individual style Sparks have managed to play that trickiest of all games in the rock world — surprising their fans with each new album.

This is no exception and shows the Mael brothers entered in the disco stakes with a stable of synthesizers and an expert producer in Donna Summer's mentor, Giorgio Moroder.

So it works as disco (listen to their single "No. 1 in Heaven" if you have any doubts) but what else is going for the album? Lyrics that snap and crackle with a terse wit all of their own, walls of synthesised sound built up with such infinite care that the very word 'disco' seems strangely out of place, not to mention the Mael's formidable musicianship. And that's a fairly rare commodity in musical circles these days.

Love it love it love it. With one record Virgin have absolved themselves of all their sins of Oldfield.

William Dart

Mickey Jupp
Japanese
Stiff

In his native Britain Mickey Jupp is a limited legend. He has been knocking around for years, an inspiration for others (Dr Feelgood, Eddie & the Hot Rods), but one who has never found a wide audience for his talents.

Max Bell of NME says of him: "He's a star in his own right, a white Chuck Berry who for some reason known only to God and the fates has been passed over while lesser men achieve fame and fortune." Wilko Johnson calls Jupp "the best white singer I've ever heard."

The description "a white Chuck Berry" is apt. His songs, like the master's, are superb

Mickey Jupp



miniatures, witty tales of the struggle to make it through the day in the face of such hazards as school teachers, bosses, and unsympathetic women.

He writes and sings with daring eclecticism, evoking without imitating. At his best, as on such booting songs as "Making Friends", "Short List" and "Old Rock'n'Roller", the impression is of Chuck Berry singing with the tongue-in-cheek elan of Jerry Lee Lewis in front of Fats Domino's striding New Orleans back-up.

It will put the colour back in your cheeks. Get it while you can. As Jupp says:

If you's five or sixty five, nobody gets out of life alive.

Ken Williams

Muddy Waters
Muddy "Mississippi" Waters Live
Epic

The collaboration of Muddy Waters and Johnny Winter must rank among the great musical partnerships. On this collection of live performances, Muddy sounds inspired — and nowhere more so than when he shares the stage with Winter, who produced the album and plays guitar on three of the seven tracks.

Muddy sounds not a day of his 64 years and the performances stand with his finest. By and large, the songs are drawn from Muddy's usual performing repertoire — "Mannish Boy", "She's Nineteen Years Old", "Nine Below Zero", "Howling Wolf", "Baby, Please Don't Go" — but he drives them on down, setting new excitement levels for himself (the oft-recorded "Mannish Boy" was never better).

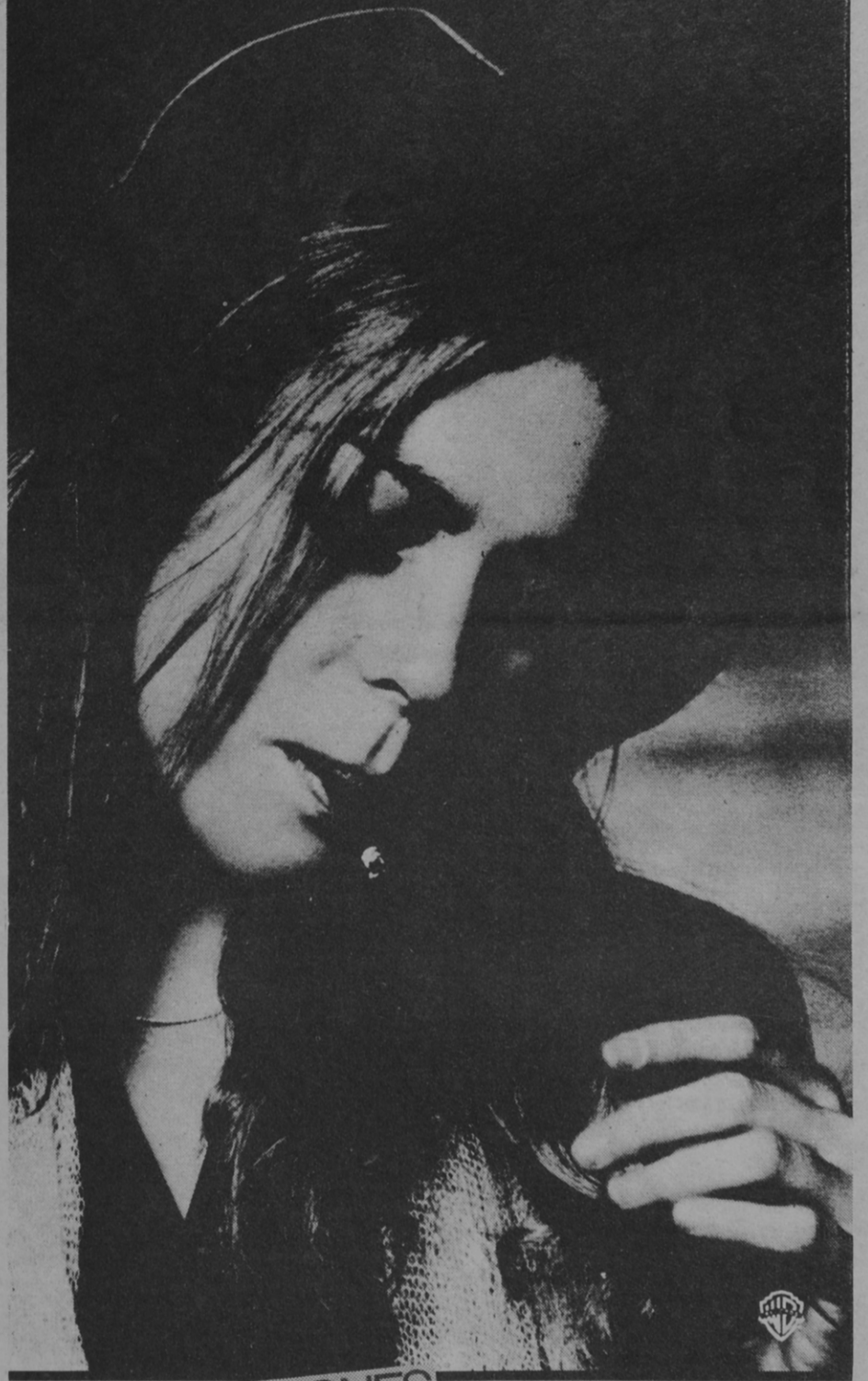
The newer songs, "Streamline Woman" and "Down in Florida" are up to Muddy's best. "Florida" is a nine minute workout for the band where Johnny Winter's scorching slide guitar is nicely complemented by the mellow ivory work of Pinetop Perkins, who has so ably filled the gap left by the death of Otis Spann.

This is another winner from the Waters-Winter Connection. The question is: how do they top it?

Ken Williams

RICKIE LEE JONES

Produced by Lenny Waronker and Russ Titelman



RICKIE LEE JONES

INCLUDES
THE HIT
"CHUCK E'S
IN LOVE"

THIS STUNNING DEBUT ALBUM
ESTABLISHES RICKIE LEE JONES
AS THE MAJOR NEW ARTIST FOR 1979.

ON WARNERS BROS. RECORDS AND TAPES. BSK 3296.