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Occasionally, message is sacrificed to rhythm as in the reggae version of "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" and the ludicrously cheery carnival stomp of "All I Really Want to Do." This song is reminiscent of the Turtles during their folk rock heyday. Is it some sort of looney reverse homage? And what about that bass-string Duane Eddy guitar on "Blowing in the Wind?" Is Dylan tipping his hat to all those people who once did ".....sings/plays Bob Dylan" albums?

If anything, the riches are too great. Four sides of superb, heart-felt music is a lot of music, from the Latino touches at the opening of "Mr Tambourine Man" to the desolate Mexican landscape of "One More Cup of Coffee" and the Armageddon crash of "It's All Right, Ma (I'm Only Bleeding)."

The band is exemplary. If there is a star in the band it's Steve Douglas whose sax and flute accompaniments make perfect counterpoint. Guitar player Billy Cross proves himself the equal of such previous Dylan sidemen as Michael Bloomfield and Robbie Robertson. The harmonies of the girl singers are magnificent, soaring, where on *Street Legal* they tended toward the shrill.

At the heart of it, there's Bob Dylan who at every turn of his career has confounded his critics and his fans alike. I'm sure this album will have people debating for some time yet. No doubt some will disdain it, as Dylan's electric guitar was disdained.

Although double live albums have become a cliché, there are one or two which provide a sharp picture of an artist at an important stage of his development. Van Morrison's *It's Too Late to Stop Now* was one. *Bob Dylan at Budokan* is another.

Ken Williams

Rickie Lee Jones Warner Bros

Rickie Lee Jones is really neat and funny and cool. I've never heard anything like her before. She writes all her own music and plays guitar, keyboards and some percussion. But, unlike the work of many other women singers warbling out of the well-endowed West Coast studios, this is Rickie's own album all the way.

It would be wrong to call this a 'concept' album, but there's a definite persona carried through the eleven tracks. It's an urban 'kid' of indeterminate age, a street-wise, hip girl whose friends have names like Perry, Bragger and Junior Lee. This character is at her height with songs like "Coolsville", a brilliant piece of adolescent nostalgia and "Chuck E.'s In Love" with its crazy slang and silly punchline.

But she's more than what she first seems. "The Last Chance Texaco" perfectly parodies USA television commercials with a breathy C&W delivery of a wonderfully witty set of lyrics. The only number to break away from the street-stuff is "Company", the closest Rickie gets to a traditional love song and even then she's appropriately cool about it.

The production of this album is impeccable. Her voice — swinging high, low and loose, almost like a scat singer — is incomparable; she has an amazing and potently original sense of timing. I simply can't fault her. Nor stop giggling either.

Louise Chunn

Steve Forbert Alive On Arrival Nemperor

Steve Forbert is the latest in a series of CBS signings (Bruce Springsteen, Elliott Murphy etc) over the years to be touted by critics as the new Dylan. Well, he is a singer/songwriter with an acoustic guitar and a harmonica holder but beyond a healthy debt to such famous forbears, Forbert displays a sizable hunk of originality.

Moving to New York from Meridian, Mississippi three years ago Forbert (now 24 years old) supported himself at a series of day jobs until he attracted attention by playing as the sole acoustic act at the Big Apple's punk haven, CBGB's. Many of the songs on *Alive On Arrival* comically detail Forbert's city experiences — busking in the subway on "Grand Central Station, March 18, 1977" and the perils of staying at the YMCA on "Big City Cat".

But Forbert is at his most effective when using his husky tenor to convey disillusionment on "Tonight I Feel So Far Away From Home" and the especially impressive "It Isn't Gonna Be That Way".

These songs provide strong evidence that Forbert may develop into a major talent but elsewhere here there are enough memorable moments to make *Alive on Arrival* a substantial success in itself.

Alastair Dougal

Robert Gordon Rock Billy Boogie RCA

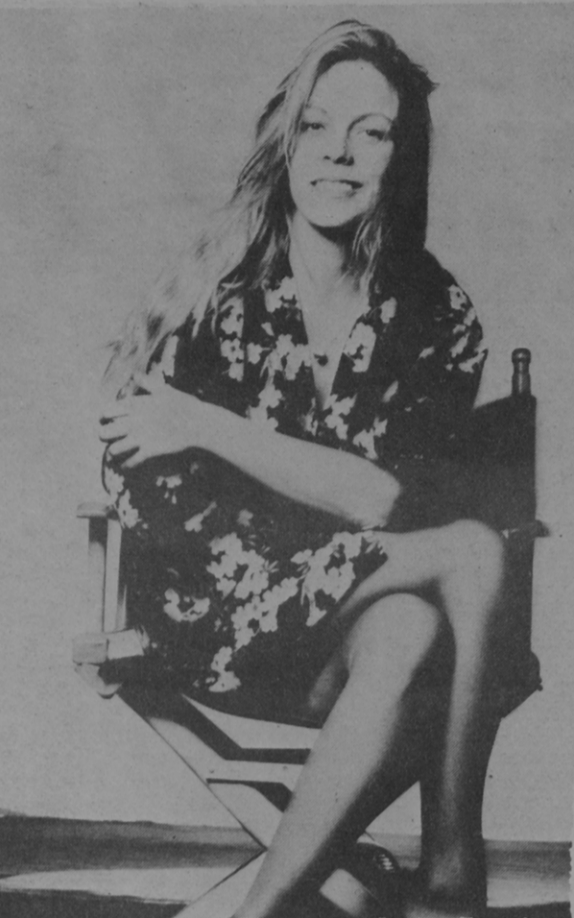
The one legitimate gripe about Robert Gordon goes something like this, why listen to Robert Gordon doing note perfect covers of rockabilly classics when you could listen to the originals? Well for a start, you're not going to find the originals easily available on record. For another thing it's not Robert Gordon's intention to add anything to the tradition he lovingly revives. But maybe more important than either of these things is the fact that his albums are simply so enjoyable to listen to.

Like its two predecessors, *Rock Billy Boogie* is a collection of '50s rockabilly songs chosen



Bob Dylan

DYLAN PHOTOS BY PRISM



Ricky Lee Jones



Robert Gordon



The Only Ones



Police



Steve Forbert



Skids

with consummate good taste and lovingly reproduced. This time out Gordon has leant to the balladry of the period, so you've got to cope with a side of the likes of "It's Only Make Believe" and "I Just Met A Memory". But he has every vocal nuance off pat and such is his obvious affection for the material that it is difficult not to be won over.

For my money the faster rockabilly side sporting such outright gems as "Rock Billy Boogie", "Black Slacks" and "The Catman" is the real winner. The recent addition to Gordon's band, guitarist extraordinaire Chris Spedding, goes where only brave or the foolish would in stepping into Link Wray's shoes. Yet he seems to have a great time, effortlessly mastering the style though admittedly the energy levels do drop a bit. There may be nothing new in what Robert Gordon is doing but everyone can have a lot of fun listening to him do it.

Dominic Free

Police Outlandos d'Amour A&M

The lead-off track on this debut album is a fairly ordinary piece of rock'n'roll called "Next To You" that might have been done by anyone. We don't hear what these Police have really got up their sleeves until further along that same groove wherein lie "So Lonely" and the following track "Roxanne", which will

already be familiar to some of you hep-cats out there.

These two songs are the best examples on the record of the distinctive blend of reggae feel into a white rock style that gives the album its special interest. It doesn't occur on all of the tracks but the three or four on which it's employed are significantly the highlights. This is the second record I've discovered this week by white artists that successfully draws on reggae as a major influence in its best music, the other being Johnny G's excellent first album on Beggar's Banquet. In both cases the reggae is an essential element fully integrated into the performers' styles — inventive and personal, and not merely a mode-ish appendage to their repertoire.

The lead singer's name is Sting, and for a little while I had the nagging feeling that he was reminding me of Jon Anderson, but suddenly I realized that he was more like Speedy Keen and I felt much better. There's a couple of duds here, as I said "Next To You" is not a favourite and "Be My Girl - Sally" wears thin quickly, but "So Lonely", "Can't Stand Losing You" and the very fine "Roxanne" are delights.

Sounds like a good band.

Terence Hogan

The Only Ones CBS

Any radio listener who has caught The Only Ones' single "Another Girl, Another Planet"

would have to admit that it sounds very promising indeed. The single has been getting heaps of airplay on Barry Jenkin's night time show which is a recommendation in itself. Acknowledging that the single is promising, the question is does the album fulfil the promise? The short answer is probably not.

Don't get me wrong its a pleasant album but that single is a knock-out. Certainly there are other high points on the album. For a start Peter Perrett, who incidentally is no mean contender in the rock star pin-up stakes, draws his way through a couple of very catchy ballads "The Whole Of The Law" and "No Peace For The Wicked". Then guitar ace Mike Kellie shows up with the fireworks on "City Of Fun" and "The Immortal Story", a pair of impeccably tough rockers. As for the rest, it improves with every listening.

So there it is, The Only Ones are still promising. If you're talking about eight hard earned dollars the answer maybe to wait for their second effort. In a word, this is a good album by a band who will do better.

Dominic Free

Phil Manzanera K-Scope Polydor

Phil Manzanera is a musician's musician; a man of consummate skill, a no-nonsense producer, a professional to the fingertips, who commands enormous respect among his fellows, and, happily, among the listening public.

Listen Now, his previous effort, has seldom been far from my turntable in the past year. Its excellence carries on in *K-Scope*, an album which wins this listener's vote as The Album To Be Seen With Of The Year.

The title track, an instrumental, kicks the disc off in a busy fashion, as Manzanera's guitar soars over some superb drumming from the great Simon Phillips, who shares traps honours with the equally great Paul Thompson, of Roxy.

Also present from *Listen Now* are Bill McCormick, Simon Ainley, Mel Collins, Lol Creme, Kevin Godley, and, from Godzone, Tim Finn (joined by little brother Neil) and Eddie Rayner.

Loud applause should be given here to the purely delightful vocals of the Brothers Finn on "Remote Control" and the chilling "Cuban Crisis". Mr Rayner contributes several kinds of black and whites to the mix in his usual exemplary fashion.

Our Tim takes lead vocals on another killer track, "Hot Spot", where Phil has a sly dig at the disco ducks, and turns up trumps.

K-Scope won't knock you off your feet at once. Mr Manzanera is too well-mannered for that. But if you don't find yourself returning to it time and time again, I, for one, will be most surprised.

Duncan Campbell

Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers Back In Your Life Beserkley

Anyone who has heard the classic first Modern Lovers album knows that there is something very special about Jonathan Richman. Subsequent releases, culminating in the dull, silly live album were starting to destroy the myth, as Richman regressed more and more into the nursery.

But with this latest album Jonathan is *Back In Your Life*, hope is rekindled. I think he's fallen in love. A strange, almost spoken song, "Affection", explains his first inability to cope with stardom, and his recovery through a second childhood. The rest of the record is simple, affectionate love songs, with a couple of Richman's left-field nursery rhymes thrown in for good measure. Overall very enjoyable.

The Music has a jugband simplicity; Jim Kweskin without the kazoos. The Velvet Underground influence is still present, with some songs reminiscent of the quieter Velvet numbers circa the 1969 live-album period. An instrumental version of Clyde McPhatter's 1962 hit "Lover Please" has the drive to be another "Egyptian Reggae."

This record probably won't convert anyone to the Modern Lovers; that's for "Roadrunner" to do. The novelty has worn off, and Jonathan Richman is back to healing the spots that Clearasil can't reach.

Adam Gifford

Skids Scared To Dance Virgin

Skids are a young Scottish group whose music transcends the fickle whims of fashion — it's original, committed, ferocious, inventive, yet mainstream — and you can dance to it.

Vocalist Richard Jobson penned the lyrics to most of the debut album *Scared To Dance*, and depending on your views regarding the compatibility between rock and poetry, these sketches in manic-depressive paranoia will either seem compassionate and illuminating, or downright pretentious.

But it's the music that matters: William Simpson and Thomas Kellichan on bass and drums respectively, make for a tight, energetic rhythm section, but guitarist Stuart Adamson is the group's musical force. Most of Skid's songs are built around Adamson's biting riffs and distinctive guitar sound (he writes all the music) — which he attains by open-tuning one string to provide a bagpipe-type drone effect.

All twelve songs cut the mustard, showing considerable maturity for such a young group. "Into The Valley" is the opener and an immediate attention-grabber, but the frightening title-track and bizarre "Hope and Glory" are most indicative of the serious nature of Skid material.

Skids music is 1979 — cold and paranoid — but ultimately human. Skids spit tacks. Better first albums are rare indeed.

Gary Steel