

ART & ENTERTAINMENT

Records

NIGHT FLIGHT
Yvonne Elliman
(RSO)

Yvonne Elliman, who hit with the old Caria Thomas smash "Hello, Stranger" last year, has found her own voice on this, her third solo album. She's split from Eric Clapton, has a big hit in the Bee Gees' "If I Can't Have You" from the *Saturday Night Fever* sound track, and on *Night Flight* she proves she's got staying power.

Her own "Up to the Man in You," is a sensual rocker, mixing the feeling of Stevie Wonder and Little Feat with the *a cappella* voicings she's so fond of, helped by a great rhythm section (including Jim Keltner, Scott Edwards and Paulinho Da Costa) and backup the likes of Kiki Dee.

There's a lot of name-dropping on the album, with musicians from all walks of music helping out. But Elliman is strong on her own primarily as an interpreter. Her version of the old, magical Jaynettes' hit, "Sally Go Round the Roses," is longer, more overtly sexy and sadder than the original; and she turns Danny Kortchman's "In a Stranger's Arms" into the risky, passionate plea its lyrics imply.

Her voice has much scope, few gimmicks. It doesn't trill like Dolly Parton's, doesn't have the brassy, sassy snarl of Linda Ronstadt's. Elliman is a quintessential pop singer who pulls in many kinds of material, gives them her own stamp and delivers them with conviction.

The production by Robert Appere is razor-sharp; the musicianship is low-key and to the point; the material, ranging from good to excellent, is varied. The album sounds better with every listening.

Pop with power and drive; but there's no feeling of her dominating her material, *a la* Midler. She speaks out, sings clearly and lets her album stand on its own.

Carlo Wolff is the editor of the *Vermont Vanguard*.

HAVE MOICY!

Michael Hurley
The Holy Modal Rounders
Jeffrey Fredricks and the Clamtones
(Rounder Records)

LONG JOURNEY

Michael Hurley
(Rounder Records)

SPIDERS IN THE MOONLIGHT

Jeffrey Fredricks and the Clamtones
(Rounder Records)

Have Moicy! is an excellent introduction to a wild and wacky bunch of New England-based musicians and songwriters who have used a strong background in American traditional music as the basis for some highly original creations of their own. Michael Hurley and his pals live in Vermont, Peter Stampfel and the Unholy Modal Rounders are from New York City, and Jeffrey Fredricks and the Clamtones currently work out of Portland, Ore. Some of these guys have been playing and recording together



for ten years or more, and these joint sessions have the warm atmosphere of a reunion of old friends. The music is mainly acoustic, and features some fine fiddling by Stampfel, Hurley, and especially Robin Remaily of the Clamtones.

But the finest thing about *Have Moicy!* is the songs themselves: 121 great original tunes and one slightly re-written oldie, "Midnight in Paris," which opens up the album and sets the mood. Featuring the Unholies, "Midnight" begins sedately enough with a tinkling neopolitan mandolin obligato, then takes off like a raped ape with some rowdy verses:

*You wear my beret and I'll use
your bidet, cheri,
I'll be clean, you'll be free,
Oh how happy we'll be, tou-
jours l'amour...*

A strong current of humor flows through most of these songs, sometimes explicit in the lyrics, sometimes implied by the juxtaposition of subject and style that results in light-hearted parody. For example, you get a great fiddle tune cast as a piece of barnyard disco in "Country Bump" by Stampfel:

*Come and do the Country
Bump, it's fun and fancy free,
Funky as a monkey and as
natural as a tree,
Kinda like the clog, kinda like
the bop,
When you do the Country Bump
you never wanna stop,
Do it in the bar, do it in the road,
Do it any time you wanna drop
your heavy load...*

Peter Stampfel cut his first record some 13 years ago with Steve Weber as the Holy Modal Rounders, a classic collection of old-timey fiddling tunes still in print today. A truly unique singer, Stampfel performs with manic exuberance, whether he is beseeching a country girl to go walking in the woods at night ("Grizelda") or describing the wonders of a marathon bacchanal ("Hoodoo Bash").

Michael Hurley is a backwoods surrealist, a hard-drinking, romantic, a gruff and unpolished performer and a great songwriter. His creations often start with a lurch, proceed through a bewildering variety of rhythms and antic musical structures, to come unraveled at the end like an old sweater. But like an old sweater, once you get used to it, nothing

is more comfortable. *Have Moicy!* has only four Hurley songs and doesn't begin to cover all his moods and styles, but does include "The Slurf Song," a wonderful bit of whimsy featuring all three fiddlers and a highly gastronomic view of life:

*We fill up our guts and we turn
it into shit,
then we get rid of it...*

Hurley saved his best for a solo album, later released as *Long Journey*, a great collection from one of America's finest (and most reclusive) songwriters.

Jeff Fredricks hails from Vermont, where he hung out with Hurley, and the off-the-wall imagery of his songs owes much to the influence of his older friend. Titles like "The Red Newt" and "What Made My Hamburger Disappear" testify to his fondness for off-beat subject matter. Fredricks has a fine, resonant voice reminiscent of Johnny Cash, and, like Cash, uses a hint of country-boy innocence in his delivery to accentuate the good-humored parody of his lyrics.

In "Weep, Weep, Weep," a slow, almost rhythm-and-bluesy number, the words are delivered with the utmost seriousness.

*I pasted your picture on the bot-
toms of my glass,
I stood there and drank till I fell
on my ass,
Weep weep weep, sob sob and
beat the dog...*

At other times Fredricks clowns on the vocals, singing falsetto, kazoo-style "trumpet solos," or delivering tongue-in-cheek monologues.

Fredricks and the Clams have subsequently released an album entitled *Spiders in the Moonlight* featuring a full-tilt electric sound (dubbed "folk-drunk boogie" by a Portland writer) and such titles as "I Played My Guitar on the Toilet Too Long," "Singing to the Dentist," and a crucifixion song called "All Your Sins Are Forgiven, Now Let Me Down!"

Long Journey and *Spiders* are records all country fiddling fans will enjoy. But *Have Moicy!* stands as a remarkable achievement of mellow collaboration in a field where egomania and recording contracts generally preclude such a relaxed and free-wheeling meeting of first-rate talents. —Joseph Stevenson
Joseph Stevenson is a member of a country fiddling group called The Famous Potatoes.

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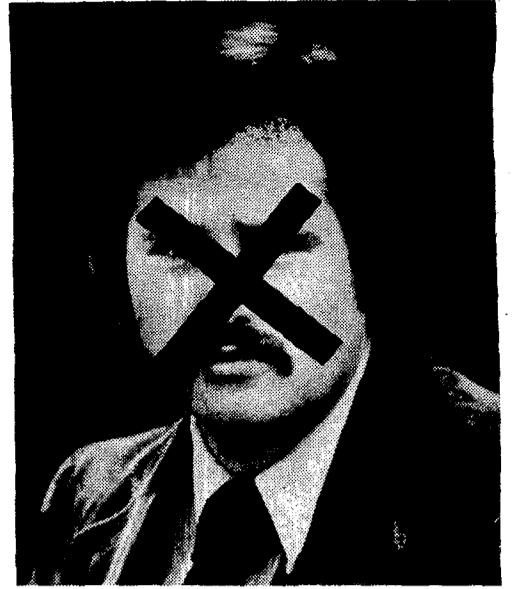
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Left to right: Beatrice Arthur as Maude; Bob Newhart as himself; Sally Struthers as Gloria; Robert Reiner as Michael. Right below: Norman Lear.

TELEVISION

Look who's turning up missing

By now you've probably heard the news: producer Norman Lear "the conscience of television," is quitting TV for the silver screen. He's entitled. But look what's happening at the same time.

Two of the four *All in the Family* stars are leaving the nest. *Sanford and Son* have left the air, *Maude* is on her way out and *The Jeffersons* are barely hanging in there. *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman* has lost its leading lady, been retitled and (at least in L.A.) shuffled off to the purgatorial hour of midnight. *Good Times* aren't so good any more.

And these are just Norman Lear shows. Others of the more adult sitcoms—like *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Bob Newhart*—have already left or are on their way out.

While draft cards and bras were burning in the '60s, the height of TV comedy was *The Lucy Show* and *The Beverly Hills*

billies. Then came the '70s and, better late than never, TV discovered the "social problem." Relevance was in, and some of the shows that dealt most effectively with controversial issues were sitcoms.

But no more. Widening the wasteland today are the likes of *Love Boat*, *Happy Days* and *Three's Company*, to name three of the season's biggest hits. Lear *et al.* are leaving us just when we need them most, and the social sitcom is lost in a deluge of dumb jokes and dippy characters.

Relevance is out and inanity is in.

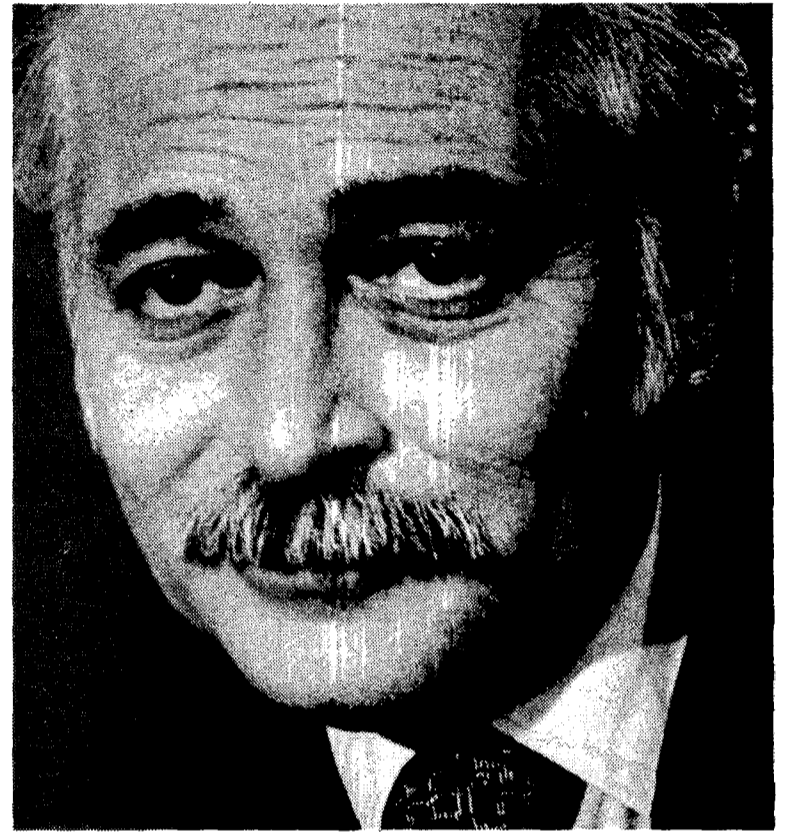
Perhaps TV has finally caught up with and matched its times after all. Tom Wolfe has called this "the Me Decade." Reflected on TV, the emphasis on self becomes an emphasis on easy entertainment without the slightest edge to provoke thought. Easy-viewing to match the easy-listening of

our most popular records.

That's this season. Wait till you see what's coming up next.

The networks have been under strong public pressure to put one of their staples in the deep freeze. Violence is out. But no problem. Executives who follow the Nielson ratings like Moses obeying the burning bush have looked at the success of *Three's Company*, *Soap* and especially *Charlie's Angels* (which could be classified as a comedy). If one show is a hit, can more of the same be anything less?

So sex is in—the type of show privately referred to in Hollywood as "tits and ass" programs. (Or, by those more careful of their language, as the "jiggles school.") Next season you can expect a host of series with titles like *The Cheerleaders* and *Roller Girls*. Buxom, no-talent starlets haven't had such opportunities since *Love That Bob*.



Maybe that's why Lear is leaving TV.

The makers of adult sitcoms fought hard to deal frankly with sexual matters, from *Maude's* abortion to Edith Bunker's lesbian cousin, only to be bested in the ratings game by snickering

bedroom jokes and sexy young women. It was a good fight, but when they brought sex on TV into the 20th century, "tits and ass" wasn't what they had in mind.

—Pamela Feinsilber
Pamela Feinsilber is a free-lance writer in Los Angeles.

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OUR EYES MET outside the Film Forum (the Chile film). I was wearing yellow boots and an orange poncho. You were selling IN THESE TIMES. It was just a glance and a smile (I was with someone else.) But if it meant something to you too, write to Stephanie, Box 6, In These Times.

VICKIE DEAR, thanks for the subscription. Daddy and I have been reading your newspaper and are quite impressed by its seriousness. Daddy thinks it might be nice for you to bring your good friend Jenny home with you this summer. We can change too—but slowly. Please don't be afraid to get in touch.—Mother.

O.K. ROBIN, you're right. The Democratic party is a cop out and a trap. But our relationship isn't. Please come back—Noel.