

Short Notice



Debbie Harry of Blondie

Records

PARALLEL LINES

Blondie (Chrysalis Records)
Tough and lean rock showing that there's more to Blondie than Debbie Harry's pout and a bunch of Shangri-las/Ronettes sound-alikes. **bd**

GIVE THANKX

Jimmy Cliff (Warner Bros.)
Primarily because of his weakness as a songwriter, Cliff has never achieved the initial success of *The Harder They Come*. This rather innocuous album confirms Cliff's role as a conduit for reggae, rather than as an innovator. **bd**

HEARTS OF STONE

Southside Johnny and the Asbury Jukes (Epic Records)
If you had Bruce Springsteen feeding you songs, you might be pretty damn good too. The band's third album is also their best. **bd**

CA PLANE POUR MOI

Plastic Bertrand (Sire)
The debut album by Belgium's new wave sensation is loaded with raw power and sharp wit. Many of the French lyrics are utterly unfathomable, but with such catchy tunes it hardly matters. The title song, the number one hit in Europe, is a brilliant straight-ahead driving rocker, with a fantastic hook. When

Bertrand sings his "ooh" it's like Johnny Rotten meeting Brian Wilson. **msk**

AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'

Original Cast (RCA)
The original cast recording of this musical review, a showcase for the songs of Fats Waller, is as exceptional as the show itself, which won the Tony Award as the Best Musical in 1977. Wal-



Red Garland

ler's stride piano style is vividly recreated and accompanied by remarkable vocal performances by the entire cast, especially award winners Armelia McQueen and Nell Carter. "Your Feet's Too Big" and "Mean to Me" are just two highlights on this two-record set. **msk**

RED ALERT

Red Garland (Galaxy)
After over a decade of semi-retirement, pianist Garland returns to recording in a straight-ahead sextet/quartet context not unlike the Miles Davis/John Coltrane sessions he played on 20 years ago. His lush chords and lilting solos clearly inspire his sidemen (including Nat Adderly, trumpet, Harold Land and Ira Sullivan, tenor) to strong performances. **dr**

WATERFALL RAINBOW

David Friesen (Inner City)
Elegant contemporary chamber music—jazz flights with a classical touch. Guitars, oboe, flute and french horn give warm, airy embodiment to the graceful (and

relentlessly romantic) compositions of Friesen, whose magnificently resonant acoustic bass playing is a marvel of controlled passion. **dr**

GOLIATH

David Schnitter (Muse)
An impressive album by the versatile young tenor player from Art Blakey's current "Jazz Messengers." Schnitter's hard-edged tone is reminiscent of Dexter Gordon, but he has his own energetic and interesting ideas about how to construct a long solo. **dr**

HUMAN EMOTIONS

David Allan Coe (Columbia)
Coe, country music's most roguish renegade, graphically chronicles the peak and decline of his recent marriage in *Human Emotions*. Subdivided into a "Hap-



David Allan Coe

py Side" and "Su-I-Cide," the album opens with Coe's best-known and most optimistic composition, "Would You Lie With Me (In a Field of Stone)," only to close with an embittered "Suicide." Coe's vocals are impassioned as ever, and the album never gets too bogged down in "concept" to work independently of it. **cb**

JOHNNY MCLAUGHLIN—ELECTRIC GUITARIST

John McLaughlin (Columbia)
Stepping back from his recent Eastern-acoustic mode and shed-

ding the "Mahavishnu" mantle for this return to his roots, McLaughlin offers a primer in high-energy jazz-rock fusion. "Johnny's" soaring guitar is set against such powerhouse players as Chick Corea, Jack Bruce, Santana and Billy Cobham. Though without the sustained burning tension of earlier Mahavishnu Orchestra work, this should please fusion fans and surprise a few cynics. **dr**

SKULL WARS

The Pirates (Warner Bros.)
The Pirates (Mike Green, Johnny Spence and Frank Farley) are the oldest surviving British rock band of all (dating back to 1959 with late vocalist Johnny Kidd). The years have done nothing to bury their r&b roots in commercial veneer; a remake of Kidd's "Shakin' All Over," plus a handful of solid originals, present a raw urgency. **cb**

I LOVE MY LIFE

Jim Post (Mountain Railroad)
This is the first successful album by a Midwest coffeehouse troubador, produced with careful attention to Post's engaging tenor. **cb**

Video

DOWN TO THE WIRE

Long Island Video Ensemble
P.O. Box 568, Stonybrook, NY 11790

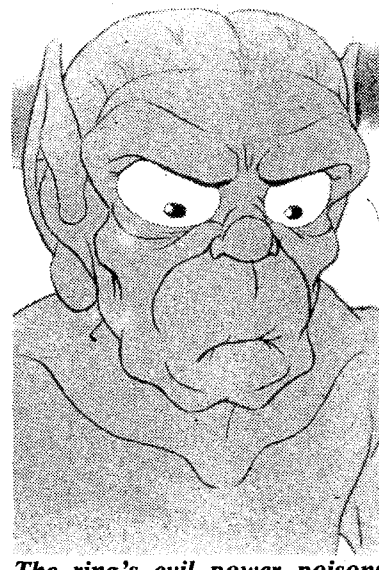
Fast-paced, informative video documentary on the anti-nuclear struggle in New York's Long Island. It shows anti-nuke activists, farmers, fishermen, politicians, lawyers and citizens at state hearings, at rallies, and at Seabrook, as they work to halt construction of three nuclear power plants. Testimony by well-known experts such as Dr. Helen Caldecott, Dr. Ernest Sternglass, and Dr. Marvin Resnikoff of the Sierra Club, increases the film's usefulness for educational and organizing purposes. **mh**

Movies

THE LORD OF THE RINGS (United Artists)

So long awaited that Hobbit fans have probably moved on to hot tubs and Calistoga water; maybe their kids will go, though. Unless they've read the book they may

not understand it. It's 100 minutes of exposition, an animated illustration to the book. Cartooning is surprisingly dull, for the man who drew such sinister urban images in *Fritz the Cat* and *Heavy Traffic*; Hobbits are pudgy kids, elves resemble prep school boys, the women are blonde Disney-fairy cliches. Bad guys suffer from Bakshi's "new" animation technique (drawing over live footage); they're murky images, and battle scenes end up merely a large moving smudge. The film ends halfway through the trilogy; as we left Frodo at the entrance to Mordor, groans were heard at my screening. **pa**



The ring's evil power poisons Gollum's life in *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*.

PARADISE ALLEY (Universal)

A mess of surreal magnitude. Crossing the Bowery Boys with Damon Runyon, the plot takes the Carboni brothers through their escape from Hell's Kitchen by way of the youngest brother's wrestling (as Kid Salami). Sylvester Stallone produced, directed, sang the theme song, and starred in it, as well as writing the script from his own novel. When he was done he let Universal process the color film. Both parties need help. There's spikey street dialog, and some sweetly comic moments, but no coherent whole to contain it. It takes forever to get off the ground, and the last half hour looks like a *Rocky* replay. **tb**

Contributions by Bruce Dancis, Michael S. Kimmel, Derk Richardson, Cary Baker, Marge Harrison, Tom Baglien, Pat Aufderheide.

CLASSIFIED

FOR SALE

POLAROID HALFTONES! Instant Paste-Up Photographs for Offset Printing. Illustrated Report, Informative Screen Brochure and Order Form, \$3.50. Bloomingville Grant-Society, Box 561, South Bloomingville, OH 43152.

"ZONING"—Jazz pianist MARY LOU WILLIAMS' outstanding LP: \$6.75 postpaid. Free catalog of RECORDS & TAPES BY WOMEN—over 150 reviews. Two stamps appreciated. Ladyslipper Music, #11T, PO Box 3124, Durham, NC 27705.

"SHE COMBINES political awareness with a rare sense of optimism and hope, and makes an effort to bring home the big issues in personal terms. An accomplished singer and songwriter" (Boston REAL PAPER). Joanna Cazden: HATCHING on Sister Sun Records. \$6.60 ppd. from Olivia Records, 2662 Harrison, Oakland, CA 94612.

MAKE YOUR OWN: Easy to follow instructions to make THC, PCP, cocaine, meth and all others. Send a buck for complete descriptive brochure. M&M Enterprises, P.O. Box 6911T, Saginaw, MI 48606.

EVENTS

HEARST STRIKE 40TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION—Chicago, Sat., Dec. 2, Midland Hotel. Strike films, slides, literature. Write: Gerald Minkinen, Exec. Dir., Chicago Newspaper Guild, 230 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60601 or call Henry Wineberg, (312) 675-3222. We need names and addresses of other strikers against the Chicago Herald & Examiner and the Chicago American.

IN NEW YORK—Dec. 1 Radical History Forum. David Noble on "The Politics of Machine Design: A New Challenge for Labor." John Jay College, 445 West 59 St., NYC. 7:30 pm.

BOSTON READERS—Robert Meeropol, son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, will speak on "Justice on Trial: The Rosenberg Case Re-examined" in Godard Chapel, Tufts University, Somerville, Wednesday, Nov. 29, 8 pm.

HELP WANTED

STUDENTS—Promote IN THESE TIMES and make extra money for

yourself by selling subscriptions on commission. Call or write Circulation Dept., ITT, 1509 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60622—(312) 489-4444.

FUNDRAISER WANTED—Quest: A feminist quarterly, (a 501 (C)(3) organization), is looking for a fundraiser who can work on a commissioned basis. In its fifth year, QUEST is an independent journal publishing feminist theory and political analysis. Join us in a unique work experience. Our only requirement is enthusiasm! Contact: Alexa Freeman, P.O. Box 8843, Washington, DC 20003, (202) 293-1347.

JOB OPENING: Executive Director, Nuclear Information and Resource Service (NIRS). NIRS is a national energy information clearinghouse, providing resources and services to local anti-nuclear and safe energy groups. Applicants should have managerial experience, a strong background in energy issues, writing skills, and fundraising experience. Salary: \$12,000-\$18,000. Send resume IMMEDIATELY to: NIRS, 1536 Sixteenth St., NW, Washington, DC 20036.

P/T or F/T organizer, to travel in Connecticut, talk with progressive groups of all kinds, explore possibilities for united front; also edit and produce newsletter. Political, community or union experience in Connecticut/So. New England desirable. Fundraising ability a plus. Salary negotiable. Write or call Louis Zemel, Unity on the Left, Powder Ridge, Middlefield, CT 06455; or (203) 349-3454.

LITERARY INTERESTS

WRITERS—Your literary property, fiction or non-fiction, could be represented by a flourishing Literary Agency. High percentage of placements, all categories. For further information write PETER MILLER AGENCY, 1021 Sixth Ave., NY, NY 10018.

ADVERTISE in Gleanings Magazine. Only 30¢ a word. Box 5842TT, High Point, NC 27262. Sample for stamp.

PUBLICATIONS

HEALTH ACTIVISTS' DIGEST Socialist perspective on critical health issues. One year's sub for \$3.00.

NAM Health Commission, 19920 Lichfield, Detroit, MI 48221.

MOVING TOWARD A NEW SOCIETY—Analysis, vision, strategy for a decentralized, democratic and caring social order. \$4.20. Also—RESOURCE MANUAL FOR A LIVING REVOLUTION—the Movement's most complete "how-to-do-it" manual. 368 pp. \$5.70. MOVEMENT FOR A NEW SOCIETY, 4722 Baltimore Ave., Box AA, Philadelphia, PA, 19143.

IN CHICAGO

The Midwest's largest selection of Marxist and leftwing books and periodicals. Many titles in Spanish & German. 20% discount on all new books. Mail inquiries are welcome. Tel. (312) 525-3667 11 to 7:30 p.m., 6 days

Guild Bookstore
1118 W. Armitage
Chicago, Ill. 60614

CLASSIFIED RATES:
25¢ PER WORD PREPAID



Steve Cogan

A RUMOR OF WAR

By Philip Caputo
Ballantine, 1978, \$2.25

BETTER TIMES THAN THESE

By Winston Groom
Summit Books, 1978, \$10.95

DISPATCHES

By Michael Herr
Avon, 1978, \$3.95

A FEW GOOD MEN

By Tom Suddick
Avon, 1978, \$1.95

FIELDS OF FIRE

By James Webb
Prentice Hall, 1978, \$9.95

Near the beginning of Winston Groom's novel, *Better Times Than These*, the Colonel briefs his officers about the operation which they are to take part in when they reach Vietnam. The operation is called, appropriately, "Western Movie," and he reminds his officers, "in this operation we will be the pursuers, not the pursued. What we will pursue is asses...the same asses the Seventh Cavalry has pursued for one hundred years.... Whenever they have been pursued by the Seventh Cavalry, these asses begin to shit, and the Seventh Cavalry has followed the smell and kicked the last remaining ounce of shit out of them."

Groom's choice of the Seventh Cavalry could hardly have been made without a trace of irony. The Seventh's most illustrious alumnus, General Custer, made military history by being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Groom himself was a lieutenant in the U.S. Army who served in Vietnam for two years. His book carries the endorsements of Willie Morris and Irwin Shaw, and is dedicated to that other novelist of combat: James Jones.

It is easy to see why it should be both endorsed by and dedicated to those men. It is a sprawling old-fashioned war novel, with some slight concessions made to the '60s. Frank Holden is a scion of a rich family; his girlfriend leaves him for an older man, a leader of the anti-war movement. The other major character is a Jew from the South, Billy Kahn, who becomes the sole survivor to come home and witness the futility of it all. There are maniacal

officers sending under-equipped units out to meet incomprehensible objectives; "lifers" too numb to resist irrational authority; men so twisted by combat that they rape and kill two teenage girls who may or may not be Vietcong.

Yet despite all this, Groom is not able to show us anything of import. The characters move as though in a fog, and even a climactic moment such as Lieut. Kahn admitting to the court martial that he ignored first reports of the rape and murder because he didn't want to hear it is lost on the reader. The same fog that has presumably swallowed Kahn's moral sense swallows everything else.

Groom's book was followed in publication by another, *Fields of Fire* by James Webb. Webb, too, served in Vietnam in the Marines and his book follows the same path as Groom's, with certain differences. Webb's characters are drawn sharper and clearer. They are tough city kids turned jungle killers, hillbilly crackshots and high school running back war heroes; Webb gives them an element of sympathy that was lacking from Groom's novel.

Webb touches on several things that Groom is unable to grapple with. He draws clearly a historical curse of war on American men. His main character, Lieut. Hodges, is from a family that lost a man in almost every U.S. war. The father died in WW II, the grandfather in WWI and several died in Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg (the last-ditch Confederate lunge at fortified Northern positions). Pickett's Charge hangs on through the book as an echo.

Webb also addresses the issue of atrocities more boldly than Grooms. Two Vietnamese civil-

ians are killed after the discovery of two dead comrades buried under their hut. While the killings are cold-blooded, they are committed by men we have come to know. The killing has its sequel; the unit encounters in a cemetery a little girl who smilingly leads them into an ambush that kills almost all of them.

Near the end of the book, the survivor of the massacre tells two anti-war activists that if he could go back and find the little girl he would kill her. If they had been there, he says, they would feel the same way. The statement shocks both protesters but it is true to the reactions of the men who exist in a world where the only value is survival.

Both books point out some of the difficulty in writing about Vietnam. On the one hand it is the war no one wants to remember, the one we "lost"; on the other hand, it is the one no one can forget.

Vietnam appears to defeat the popular novelist's best intentions. Where is the logic in Vietnam? As honestly as an author tries to portray the intentions of those who seriously believed in the war, they come out sounding like "Operation Western Movie" and their words as ridiculous as those spoken by the Colonel on the troop ship.

At least two writers have foregone the attempt at constructing a coherent view and aimed simply at conveying the absurdity and horror involved. Tim O'Brien's novel, *Going After Ciaciatto*, is probably a classic of the fears and fantasies of men at war. O'Brien starts with the simple idea of a man deserting from his unit, seen through the eyes of one of the squad members they go after him, through

hundred mile long tunnels staffed by NLF members who aren't sure what year it is, through Burma to Iran and finally to the streets of Paris, where the peace talks are underway.

In reality, though, the whole novel is taking place within the fevered brain of the soldier who first found Ciaccato's belongings. For O'Brien the war is so horrible that he can only depict it by moving away from it and showing what men who had been there would think about the world.

Tom Suddick wrote an under-appreciated book of short stories about Vietnam called *A Few Good Men*. Suddick's G.I.s are liars, pimps, torturers and frightened to death. They do not ride through mortar attacks, they "John Wayne" it; when their stereo tabs run out they rip out plastic explosive from Claymore mines and use that to heat the coffee. In between they talk. A newcomer who has difficulty riding out the barrage is told: "Being vulnerable makes you, at any second, as old as you might ever be." Few of Suddick's men live to be very old at all.

Yet Vietnam still seems to elude the writer's grasp. At most there are fleeting references to it, vignettes drawn as though from the movies, or television or the morning paper. This is not accidental. Vietnam was, more than any war before it, a media war. Journalists and cameramen went everywhere, on search-and-destroy missions, in F-105s dropping napalm, and to remote fire-bases in the highlands. When Saigon exploded in April 1968 into the Tet Offensive there were network cameras on hand to record the seige of the American embassy. It is, perhaps, not an accident that the books that tell us the

most about the experience of fighting in Vietnam are written by journalists.

Philip Caputo was sent back to Vietnam as a reporter, and when he later reflected on the atrocities, he remarked: "Out there, lacking restraints, sanctioned to kill, confronted by a hostile country and a relentless enemy we sank into a brutish state. The descent could be checked only by the net of a man's inner moral values.... There were a few ...who had no net and plunged all the way down."

Michael Herr spent several years in Vietnam as a correspondent for *Esquire*. In his book, *Dispatches*, he commented on the same phenomenon Caputo had mentioned, using the trained eye of the professional journalist: "People retreated into positions of hard irony, cynicism, despair, some saw the action and declared for it, only heavy killing could make them feel so alive. And some just went insane, followed the blacklight arrow around the bend and took possession of the madness that had been waiting in trust there for them for eighteen or twenty-five or fifty years. Every time there was combat you had a license to go maniac.... they hardly noticed if you forgot to snap back again."

Herr's book has received a great deal of press, most of it favorable and deservedly so. He has been honest enough to admit that part of the war was a game, an adventure. This was what most of the anti-war movements failed to comprehend for so long and what most reporters and veterans knew instinctively.

Herr is able, without glorifying it, to give voice to that aspect of the war. He says of Vietnam: "There was such a dense concentration of American energy there, American and essentially adolescent, if that energy could have been channelled into anything more than noise, waste and pain it would have lighted up Indochina for a thousand years." There can be no deeper understanding of the war without confronting that.

—Richard Greenfield
Richard Greenfield is a free-lance writer in Berkeley.

BOOKS

Vietnam novels: Waist deep in the Big Muddy