

RECORDS

ROCK/POP

by John Swenson

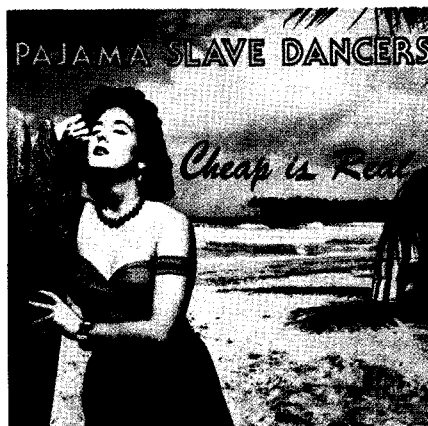
★★★ **PRINCE** HAS ALWAYS BEEN A versatile conceptualist in the recording studio. Few producers make better dance tracks, yet he is also capable of coming up with pop hits like "Little Red Corvette" and the rock-influenced music from *Purple Rain*. On *Around the World in a Day* (Paisley Park 25286), though, Prince has made the kind of radical departure from previous strengths that only the most inspired rock performers have been capable of.

This is not the party soundtrack or neatly digestible pop ditty that has characterized his output up until now. Instead of cashing in on the success of the *Purple Rain* film with the kind of formula LP that dominates the record industry, Prince decided to capitalize on his popularity to make a self-consciously artistic statement. The problem is that he has great musical instincts but no ideas that can employ them.

Psychedelic-era rock influences that have peeked through the fabric of previous Prince records dominate a set that is lyrically naive yet deliberately angular, spooky, and even disturbing. The title track is a wildly eclectic piece of pop music, a triple layer birthday cake that lumps Sly and the Family Stone and the Beatles into the same package. By the end of the set ("Temptation"), Prince is dealing psycho-sexual hallucination monologues set against dissonant saxophone phrases. The record ends up being musically successful but fails to carry off Prince's obvious design to establish himself as an *auteur*.

★★★★★ **DON HENLEY** AND **GLENN Frey** may have made the two most popular post-Eagles LPs, but **Joe Walsh's** *The Confessor* (Warner Bros. 25281-1) is the best. Walsh has been widely acknowledged as one of America's premier rock guitarists since his heyday with the James Gang in the early '70s (*James Gang Rides Again*/ABC S-711). Mid-'70s solo success

(*But Seriously Folks*.../Asylum 6E-141) came at the same time Walsh was revitalizing the Eagles. That group made its best album (*Hotel California*/Asylum 7E-1084) after Walsh signed on. His strengths are deceptive because of his self-effacing, laid-back stance. But fans of smart and exciting guitar playing will love *The Confessor* because Walsh uses the set almost purely as a showcase for his guitar work.

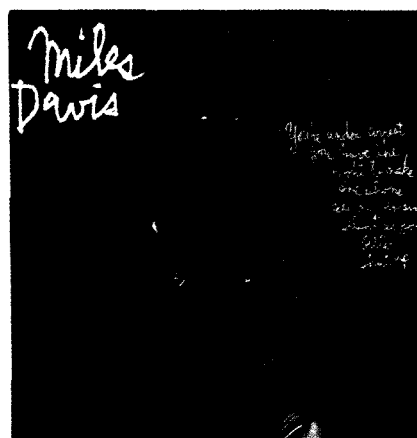


★★★½ **THE PAJAMA SLAVE DANCERS** are the scourge of western Massachusetts. The group has spawned a fanatic following that circulates newsletters exchanging gnostic truths. These same fans religiously adhere to the group's request for boos instead of cheers at live shows. This all makes for a show that must be seen to be believed, so the Slave Dancers are at a bit of a disadvantage on record. Still, *Cheap Is Real* (Pajamarama PR 881) showcases the band's strengths impressively. Rock conventions are lampooned with devastating wit. They put out the call to "De-freeze Walt Disney." The finest moment is "Farm Rap," which inverts the boasting convention of inner-city life fundamental to rap music in favor of a catalogue of farmers' perils: "I work my fingers to the bone/ but the government is gonna close my loan." With the Bonzo Dog Band out of the picture, the Pajama Slave Dancers are unquestionably the funniest band in the world. *Cheap Is Real* is available by mail. Write to Pajama Slave Dancers, 10 Spring St., Westfield, MA 01085.

★★★★½ **TOM PETTY AND THE Heartbreakers'** sixth album, their first in three years, fulfills the promise offered by previous outings. *Southern Accents* (MCA 5486) is a tough rock and roll set worthy of Petty's Florida roots. Several songs—"It Ain't Nothin' To Me," "Don't Come Around Here No More," and "The Best of Everything" (performed with Richard Manuel and Garth Hudson of the Band)—are destined to become classics. Petty's shrewd combination of blues, R&B, and hard rock elements remains one of the happiest sounds to emerge from Southern rock.

★★★★ **JULES SHEAR** IS A FINE producer and a savvy, expressive songwriter. *The Eternal Return* (EMI ST-17156) is made up of songs that tease and kick, modulating through exotic phrases and musical ideas meant as much to contrast as mesh with each other. This would qualify Shear for cult artist status, yet there is little of the trendy solipsism and cutesy obscurity that marks the style. Shear's songs deal instead with simple emotional truths, sometimes brilliantly ("Here S/he Comes," "Stand Tall").

R&B/JAZZ



★★★★ **SINCE THE 1950s MILES DAVIS** has made several significant stylistic breakthroughs that have profoundly influenced other jazz musicians and even some pop performers. Though Davis worked with Charlie Parker and John

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Coltrane and inspired the cool and modal schools of jazz in the '50s and '60s, he has spent most of his career pioneering and perfecting the amplified, eclectic style known as fusion. Fusion combines elements of jazz, rock, funk, and Latin music, and while many jazz buffs are critical of the style, few can argue that Davis isn't a masterful conceptualist in the genre. ***You're Under Arrest*** (Columbia FC 40023) is a solid record framed by two of Davis's most haunting themes, propelled by a splendid rhythm section, fine guitar playing from John Scofield, and plenty of Davis's magic trumpet. His beautiful rendition of Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time" shows that the modern Davis is still unsurpassed at reworking pop ballads.

★★★★ For the first time in decades the hottest music ticket in New York this year was for a jazz show. The concert and all-night jam session to celebrate the re-launching of the Blue Note label included some of the most accomplished jazz players in sets that recalled the heyday of Blue Note's influence on jazz in the '50s and '60s.

The Blue Note catalogue is a treasure-trove of internationally acclaimed performances by some of America's finest musicians. Its unavailability in this country recently has been an embarrassment to the U.S. recording industry as Japanese facsimile versions of the records have flooded the market.

The renewed commitment to this music is part of a ground swell of interest in jazz in this country. The first Blue Note release includes a number of invaluable sessions including Art Blakey's *One Night In Birdland*, Wayne Shorter's *JuJu*, Herbie Hancock's *Maiden Voyage*, Joe Henderson's *Mode for Joe*, Dexter Gordon's *Go*, Horace Silver's *Song For My Father*, and McCoy Tyner's *Expansions*. All of these, and most of the other reissues, are five-star albums that would form a cornerstone of any jazz record collection.

Blue Note is committed not just to reissues but to new products as well. While the new albums can't all measure up to the crown jewels of the label's catalogue, they compare favorably with the jazz records major labels are releasing today. The newly recorded sessions include ***Magic Touch*** (BT85101), the debut of a boldly original young guitarist,

Stanley Jordan, whose unique two-handed playing style makes him sound like two guitarists playing at once. The **Charles Lloyd Quartet's *A Night In Copenhagen*** (BT85104) is a welcome release from a talented and under-recorded saxophonist/flutist. The combination of guitarist **Kenny Burrell** and saxophonist **Grover Washington Jr.** on ***Togethering*** (BT85106) is a master stroke. Washington is a commercial player whose thin, monochromatic tone keeps him from winning critics' polls, but he shines as a role player next to the rich and varied textures of Burrell's magnificent guitar playing. Though Burrell is a great musician, he lacks Washington's commercial appeal, so the pairing of the two is a fortuitous strategy suggesting that Blue Note is well armed to take on the difficulties facing a jazz label in the '80s.



A CAREER ON FAST FORWARD

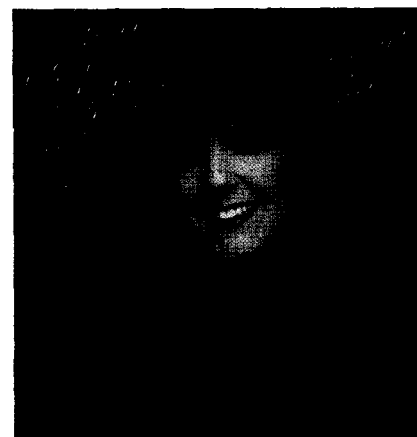
Last year Quincy Jones auditioned hundreds of aspiring singers for the chance to sign with his Qwest Records label and to record a segment of the soundtrack from Sidney Poitier's film *Fast Forward*. That's how he discovered Siedah Garrett, who follows in the footsteps of other Jones protégés including The Brothers Johnson, James Ingram, and Patti Austin. Siedah's song, "Do You Want It Right Now," made the R&B charts, and a new single and a first album are in the works.

COUNTRY

by Christopher Manion

★★★★ NO MATTER HOW MANY THOUSANDS of good (and poor) losers never get to sign for an album, it's still hard to find

someone who lifts you right out of your seat the moment the needle hits the groove. **Kathy Mattea** will make you think twice if you normally dismiss country music as profoundly unworthy of note. ***From My Heart*** (Mercury/Polygram 824-308-1) delivers one of country music's premier voices with music to match. Look out, Barbra Streisand.



★★★ ROCK MUSIC HAS DRIVEN THE generations apart for years—remember Mom and Dad wondering how we could *stand* all that noise? Well, country brings families together, and some of them make great music. **The Whites**—Buck and his daughters, Cheryl and Sharon—represent the best of that tradition. "If It Ain't Love" has toes tapping coast to coast as a single. Flowing and refined, their voices are a generation or two away from the farm, but that's where country comes from. ***Whole New World*** (MCA/Curb 5562) might be telling us something about where it's going.

★★½ IF **DAN FOGELBERG** CALLED AND said he'd like to drop over and jam for an afternoon with the likes of Doc Watson and David Grisman, would you turn him down? Well, neither did Epic. ***High Country Snows*** (Epic 39616) has a pretty cover to match the title song, but it's mostly bluegrass, and the high country sun doesn't shine through. Look for Dan's next to be safely back on his traditionally high, soft-pop plateaus. But the trend will grow: you don't have to be a cowboy to be country, and a lot of folkies are appearing on the range that the deer, antelope, and rednecks used to have all to themselves.

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★★ **HANK WILLIAMS JR.** MUST BE GETTING tired of being compared to his daddy, yet his whole life revolves around the tension induced by great expectations. In his wilder days ("I've always been labeled the rip-roarin', hell-raisin' kind"), Hank Jr. got pretty close to the edge and came back messed up. Now he just wants to have fun, something his daddy never had.

Five-O (Warner Bros./Curb 1-25267) parties a lot, but Hank isn't enjoying it: "I need somethin' to believe in, cause I've got a bad case of the blues." Maybe Hank Jr. just wanted a normal life, but who ever thought he'd be *boring*? "Hey Good Lookin'" it ain't.

CLASSICAL

by Gregory Sandow

★★★½ Trying to recreate a tradition that's all but dead, **Giuseppe Sinopoli** conducts Puccini's **Manon Lescaut** (Deutsche Grammophon 413 893, three discs) with a passion verging on violence. His recent recording of Verdi's *Macbeth* was a mannered disaster; this one isn't always likable, but at least it *moves*. Who's singing? The usual gang of international operatic celebrities, and that, I'm afraid, is a problem: good as they are, they can't, won't, or—could it be?—were never asked to plunge into the risky depths that, for better or worse, make Sinopoli's conducting (in this case, anyway) as intriguing as it is.

★★★½ **Ravel's Complete Songs** (Angel DSCX-3965, three discs) turn out, as a group, to be oddly reticent, impressive individually but without any sign of artistic impulse sustained from one entry in the collection to the next. That might be why the recording is arranged in six separate parts, amounting, in effect, to six recitals sung by six different singers. My score-card shows that only in the houses tenanted by **Teresa Berganza**, **Gabriel Bacquier**, and **Jessye Norman** does anyone seem to be home; Mady Mesple, Felicity Lott, and, most surprisingly, the usually stylish Jose Van Dam sing sturdily, but without much character. Too bad: the idea, at least, was good. Bravos to Angel, though, for making the set available in the U.S.—which they didn't do with earlier recordings by their French affiliate of the

complete songs of Faure, Debussy, and Poulenc—and for an offbeat March release, which included a repertoire other major labels might not touch: violin concertos by American composers Robert Starer and Earl Kim, and a fragment from Debussy's unfinished opera, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (recommended).

★★★★½ With nearly perfect love and understanding, **Leonard Bernstein** conducts the Vienna Philharmonic in **Mozart's Symphonies Nos. 39 and 40** (Deutsche Grammophon 413 776). Some people will call his performance romantic, which means more finely touched by light and shade than current ideas of eighteenth-century style might allow. But Mozart was hardly a typical eighteenth-century composer (that was one of the grains of truth in *Amadeus*), and in any case, Bernstein isn't sloppy or extreme. If anything, he's just a bit detached—though in his detachment I hear serenity, wisdom, and, as I said at the start, even love. (For more Mozart, try—four stars each—piano music played with gentle, timeless force by Mitsuko Uchida [Philips 412 122], and by Paul Badura-Skoda [Astree AS 919, two discs] on an eighteenth-century fortepiano that sounds clunky until you're enough used to it to recognize Badura-Skoda's blend of delicacy and straightforward navigation of the music's structure.)

★★★★ Nobody asked for a new recording of Stravinsky's **The Rake's Progress**, and so I'm impressed with London Records for giving us one (411 644, three discs), thereby confirming the work's place in the ongoing operatic repertoire, even after its composer—who conducted both previous recordings—is no longer with us. I won't complain that **Riccardo Chailly** can't quite give the music the bite Stravinsky did; he makes up for that with greater ease, just as **Philip Langridge**, as the rake of the opera's title, makes up for the imagination that Samuel Ramey, as his devilish servant Nick Shadow, so sadly lacks. (Langridge is spectacularly supple in a new London recording of Schoenberg's *Moses und Aron*, weakened, alas, by George Solti's savorless conducting.)

★★★ **Jorma Hynninen** isn't quite a

household name, except perhaps in his native Finland, but I've rarely seen a singer so excite sophisticated critics. His recording of Hugo Wolf's **Mörke Lieder** (Finnlevy SFX 53, available from Polygram Special Imports) shows us what—with admiration—I can only call a *compassionate* baritone voice, dark and full, along with a style that's maybe just a bit too serious. The album cover—a photo, by Hynninen himself, of a monument to Hugo Wolf—tells the story: this is music moved a step away from normal life, music in which enjoyment seems only incidental because the endeavor was respectfully conceived (unconsciously, no doubt, like so many classical performances) as a monument to a dead composer's greatness.



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