

entertainment

Rock rolls over disco

Album reviews

Ian Hunter - Short Back 'n Sides
Chrysalis - CHR 1326

By J. F. Butland
Brunswick Staff

Short Back 'n Sides is Ian Hunter's strongest recorded work since Mott The Hoople's MOTT album. Hunter was one of the first old guard rockers to embrace punk rock, even going as far as producing an album for Generation X. After some uneven post-MOTT solo work he made a strong comeback with You're Never Alone with a Schizophrenic and Welcome to the Club. Both were excellent but flavoured albums.

The Clash are all over this one. Topper Headon provides steady drum backing and Mick Jones tend a hand on guitar and co-produced the record with Mick Ronson. Also contributing are Clash allies Ellen Foley and Tyron Dogg.

With Ronson and Jones present you'd expect this to be an

album filled with crunching guitar riffs, but it's not. There is no one instrument that dominates but rather they pop in and out as needed. Several songs employ the Reggae-Dub effects that the Clash have pioneered in rock. There's also experimentation with calypso rhythms and steel drums. The album contains a multitude of ingenious and original synthesizer and percussion work.

Possibly, the strongest cut on the album is "Gun Control". It is a powerful damnation of the gun nuts and their ilk, boasting lyrics like, "Fight For your right-We'll all feel special on a Saturday Night" and "We can make a lot of money boys - If we stick to our guns." As the song accelerates to an end of a chant of "Be More Macho!" is taken up. Hunter has never been one to back down from a controversial topic. Long before Elvis Costello he was biting the hand that fed him by

writing "Rock 'n Roll's a loser's game" in "the Ballad of Mott the Hoople." It's heartening to see a public figure take a strong stand on an important issue.

While always being able to rock with the best of them, Hunters forte has always been the sweeping ballad. They are what raises this album to the level that it obtains. His past records had great rockers but weak ballads. Once again Hunter is writing majestic ballads; the best since MOTT, "Rain", "Keep on Burnin'", and "Old Records Never Die" are magnificent and his singing has never been better.

This is a challenging record that rewards the careful listener and requires repeated listening to divine even a portions of the riches present. All in all a convincing refutation that "boring old farts" can't make exciting, dynamic rock 'n roll.



By J. J. FLASH
Brunswick Staff

Fair Warning
Van Halen
Warner Bros.

By DARYL BARTON
Brunswick Staff

It is more than unfortunate when one must continue to look back a decade to find scintillating hard rock. Yet the guitar riffs on Van Halen's fourth album reinforces this deterioration all too clearly.

Fair Warning opens with "Mean Street," a rough and tumble number structured around a reverberant chug, capturing all the gusto of Eddie Van Halen's guitar work. These power chords provide an appropriate climate for the album's most imposing lyrics as well. In older songs like "Funning with the Devil," lead singer David Lee Roth relates experience; in "Mean Street," he philosophises on a way of life: "See, a gun is real easy-in this desperate part of town-Turns you from hunted into hunter- You go and hunt somebody down."

Sorrowfully, this song is the sole jewel in a collection of otherwise worthless gems. Eddie's guitar on other numbers is frenzied, not distinct. Solos serve as mere gap-fillers. "Un-chained," for example, begins powerfully, but falters to a creaking lead guitar, while "Sinner's Swing!" uses artificial eloquence both musically and lyrically.

After "Mean Street," the



flair of Edward Van Halen (undeniably the group's backbone) succumbs to over-indulgent solos on numerous occasions, and what's more, it lends no ecstasy - as it did in Van Halen II to Roth's egoistic vocals. Rather, rambling guitar and the egregious yelps of Roth characterize each song here.

Roth's vibrant howls in Van Halen were electrifying, soaring above chaotic pace like some theatrical wonder. But here, where the musical groudwork is submarginal, the musical complement of effective vocals suffers. There guys sound so caught up in the

endless party that they have overlooked the need to work their creative talents. The outside of Fair Warning depicts a collage of frustration and brutal death, somewhat analogous to the motivation of those who recorded what is inside (only thirty-one minutes long).

In short, Fair Warning is easily Van Halen's worst effort to date. Any self-respecting rocker knows that bends of wild vigor and volume which lose their creativity inevitably lose their identity and ultimately, heavy metal assimilation results. Listening, 'jys?

There is a spectre haunting rock and roll; something disgusting, vile, insidious and popular. I refer of course to the dreaded Disco Medley. I'm sure you have all been subjected, willingly or otherwise to several of these foul things on the airwaves or in clubs, and there is absolutely nothing you can do about it.

The whole unpleasant business began with the amazing success of Stars on Forty-five and their irritating Beatle Medley, soon followed by another irritating Beatle Medley. We are now being subjected to a veritable spewing out of this perverse interpretation of music, and even some people who ought to know better are getting involved. Even the Beach Boys are engaged in this reprehensible behavior. The one that really ticks me off is a puerile piece of offal called Greatest Hits of the Sixties, or something like that. It features snippets of many of my favorite songs from the era, but only a few lines of each. This is all very frustrating; the phrase coitus interruptus comes to mind. [Look it up, boys and girls.]

I don't like these records at all.

Please note that the above paragraphs contain no less than ten derogatory adjectives, only one of which is repeated. While I've got my venom up, I'll point out that the Rolling Stones are on tour, and breaking attendance records all over America. This also irritates me, since they have not produced any quality music on stage for almost a decade. Some people will buy anything.

Take notice of the new Meatloaf album. It sounds exactly like the old Meatloaf album. It's called Dead Ringer. You can do wonderful things with that title, but that's too cheap even for me.

And speaking of Meatloaf, equally porcine Brunswick Editor Joey Kilfoil is involved in a band called Foreplay. They have an extensive repertoire of Disco Medleys. I hope he appreciates this good press.

Stoned Again: The Stones will not be playing Canada on this tour; these guys take everything so personally.

The second Pretenders album is out; I really wish I could like it, but no such luck. The first one was a real beauty but most of the charm and impact of Chrissie's material went missing somewhere along the way. Better luck next time, lady. I hope our dinner date is still on for tonight.

What's this I hear about Yoko Ono?

Jerry Lee Lewis recently came pretty close to solving the mystery of life after death, but fortunately is still unenlightened. Hang in there, fella.