

PLATTERS

A New Wave Of Rock Fever

by Michael Snyder

Welcome to a fresh start. A new wave, as it were. Nonsequiturs aside, 1978's product has yet to hit the racks, so we're indulging in a quasi-retrospective of a few recorded goods that went unheralded in these pages during '77. No sense in another Tops-Of-The-Year list, anyway. You can see Blair Jackson's poll of local scribes in a recent *Bay Guardian*, if interested.

Backtracking briefly, 1977 was --pardon the alliteration--a rock 'n' roll revelation. The narcotic ecstasy, epileptic rhythm and emotional range of classic rock music has been rediscovered by the young, loud and snotty. It comes in all varieties. You can dance to most of it, but unlike disco-drek, it's got news for you. Depth. Humor. Pith. Less is more! No 10-minute solos! No symphonic la-de-dah! They make their point and get out quick.

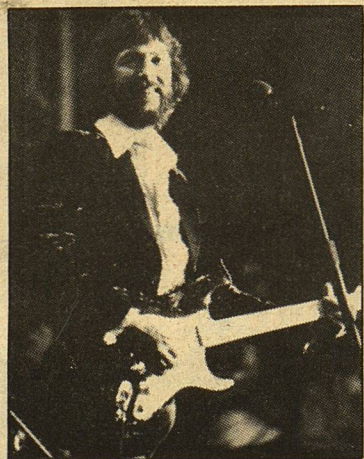
The Clash, Talking Heads, DEVO, Elvis Costello and Tom Petty promised us anything and gave us the fever again. The most telling symptom of the divine disease was the return of those ravers, the Flamin' Groovies, who blew San Francisco last month to record in Wales. Be on the lookout for their new Sire LP, produced by a Stiff's best friend, Dave Edmunds. It'll be preceded by their super-snazzy, limited edition, 12-inch, four-song EP, supposedly featuring a Groovie-ized "Blue Turns To Grey." Strictly "Teen-age Confidential."

Let's raise a can of beer on high to calculated primitivism! It's alive, Dr. Pretorius! Alive!

Cross Lou Reed's rock 'n' roll heart. We saw the corpse kicking and thrashing throughout Winterland at the Pistols' show last weekend. We heard and felt the beat. Born again, brothers and sisters...

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AEROSMITH--Draw The Line (Columbia): They drew it, but they didn't snort it. The title cut is as awesome as the Stones'



Clapton: "Slowhand" nods out.

"Rocks Off," its genealogical ancestor. There's even a dreamy middle 8, sandwiched between two slabs of pure furor. Alas, the remainder of the LP is simply Aero-hash. Savage production by Jack Douglas, as on the preceding and more potent Aerosmith album, *Rocks*. All for naught, unless you pick up the 45 of "Draw The Line."

JACKSON BROWNE--Running On Empty (Asylum): And sputtering to a halt.

CERRONE--Supernature (Cotillion): The cover shows our Mediterranean disco-hero, Cerrone, turning musicians into swine and other beasts. The record inside is your standard electro-drone. Draw your own conclusions.

ERIC CLAPTON -- Slowhand (RSO): Ten years ago, the nimblefingered guitar god was nicknamed "Slowhand" in supreme irony. Nowadays, the irony is that the name fits. Listen to him nod out during J.J. Cale's "Cocaine." Good night, sweet prince.

Close Encounters Of The Third Kind (Arista): If a lump clumped your throat at the sight of Carlo Rambaldi's rubberoid alien robot with the watery, Walter Keane eyes, then, by all means, hop on this John Williams soundtrack. If you wonder why Richard Dreyfuss couldn't construct a model of Devil's Tower in his backyard instead of his living room, then you probably don't watch television. Before long, they'll be syndicating episodes of "Duddy Kravitz, First Sweat-hog In Outer Space."

LOL CREME/KEVIN GODLEY --Consequences (Mercury): Mammoth, three-record boxed set, directed by two former members of 10 CC. Weird synthetic noises, two or three fair-to-middlin' songs (one with the silky voice of Sarah Vaughn) and tons of garbled rapping by British satirist Peter Cook. It's a fascinating demo for Creme and Godley's instrumental invention, the Gizmo, in the same way that the Bell System's presentation of the Picture-Phone was fascinating at the New York World's Fair in 1965. Without anybody worthwhile to talk to at the other end of the line, the novelty wears thin and you might as well hang up.

DAVE EDMUNDS -- Get It (Swan Song): Tall Paul at Rather Ripped Records thinks this LP could pass as a K-TEL Decade Of Hits mail-order special. I think it's among the finest releases of the past year. Edmunds is a superior producer and guitarist, who has a definite affection for the rock 'n' roll of the past. Initially the leader of the English progressive blues band, Love Sculpture, his first solo hit was a remake of "I Hear You Knockin'." On *Get It*, he's equally at home with "Back To Schooldays" by Graham Parker and "Where Or When" by Rodgers and Hart. His own compositions could have been written by anyone from Brian Wilson to Hank Williams. A delightfully eclectic showcase by and for the rock 'n' roller.

INTERGALACTIC TOURING BAND (Passport): Recorded over a year's time from summer of 1976 to summer of 1977, this New York/London super session is science fiction-flatulence with a couple of stirring moments in execution, but virtually none in libretto and concept. Rod Argent, Marge Raymond from Flame, Dave Cousins of the Strawbs, Annie Halsam from Renaissance and Meat Loaf get off some fine vocals. Nonetheless, an implied musical continuity is non-existent.

MEAT LOAF--Bat Out Of Hell (Epic/Cleveland International): A better name for this concoction could not be found. Todd Rundgren's kamikaze guitar and Wagnerian wall-of-sound. Composer Jim Steinman's Springsteen-like teenage mythos. Chunky ol' Meat Loaf himself, a leatherlunged neo-Clayton-Thomas, who once sang for Ted Nugent and also played a jovial moron in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. The ketchup on top is the voice of the Yankees, Phil Rizzuto, doing play-by-play during "Paradise By The Dashboard Light." Personally, I prefer London Broil. Chacun a son gout.

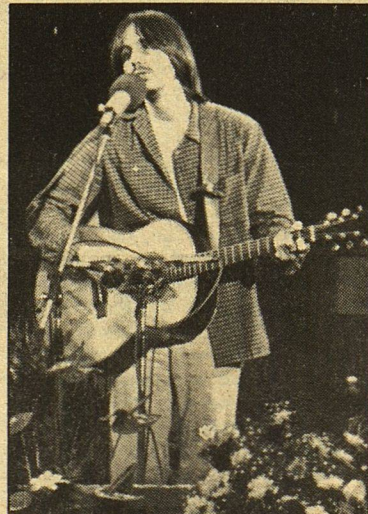
BETTE MIDLER-- Broken Blossom (Atlantic): Wherein

Bette the brassy babe becomes a fragile flower. Bessie Smith's "Empty Bed Blues," the Ronettes' "Paradise," a duet with Tom Waits on "I Never Talk To Strangers" (the same take that's on Waits' latest LP, *Foreign Affairs*) and "La Vie En Rose." Midler's strongest record since her first, which was arranged by Super-Wimp Barry Manilow. His absence makes *Broken Blossom* twice as good by default.

JONI MITCHELL--Don Juan's Reckless Daughter (Asylum): Boney Joni solidifies her claim to the title of America's Premier Twisted Sister. She's certainly the most articulate and beloved jazz-folk singer-songwriter-neurotic in memory. Back when she was a lady of the canyon, Joni sang, "They paved paradise and put up a parking lot." This time around, she takes a leak in that very lot.

It's all chronicled in "Talk To Me," an excellent song about inebriated interpersonal communication. Not only does this number boast Weather Report's Jaco Pastorius rolling out a deliciously sensual bass-line, it also offers a chance to hear Joni's impression of a chicken. Too little material for two discs, but some insightful moments, particularly for her fans.

Oh, yeah. The superfly dude next to Ms. Mitchell in the cover



Jackson Browne: Sputtering to a halt.

photograph is Joni the Drag King wearing blackface. I'd suggest that she stay out of Watts.

NAZARETH -- Expect No Mercy (A&M): Expect no quality. People enamored of Dan McCafferty's rich, growling vocals are advised to pick up *Hot Tracks*, a well-chosen assortment of white-hot Nazareth cuts on A&M. Without that solid repertoire, they're a bunch of loud, kilt-less Scotsmen. Ach!

THE RAMONES -- Rocket To Russia (Sire): There's no stoppin' the cretins from hoppin'. Especially while they feed on high-speed syncopation, hilariously-



Joni Mitchell: America's Premier Twisted Sister.

understated lyrics, and the stopped-up nasal cavities of Joey Ramone. Poor Jimi "You'll never hear surf music again" Hendrix. With covers of "Surfin' Bird" and "Do You Wanna Dance?," plus newbies like "Rockaway Beach" and "Sheena Is A Punk Rocker," the Ramones are blithely riding the pipeline. Not a wipe-out in sight.

10 CC -- Live and Let Live (Mercury): Half of the original band (5 CC?) continues to churn it out the easy way: double-record live album of tried and true favorites. Bolstered by a crew of faceless sidemen, Eric Stewart and Graham Gouldman flawlessly recreate the clean studio sound they cherish. "Ships Don't Just Disappear In The Night" sports a funkier arrangement and "Art For Art's Sake" gives Stewart room to stretch out on lead guitar.

The rest of the material is identical to the earlier studio performances, except... (1) The humorous songs aren't as funny. (2) The love songs aren't as lush. (3) The vocals, without the departed Creme and Godley or overdubs, are merely adequate.

GEORGE THOROGOOD AND THE DESTROYERS (Rounder): Look! Zooming out of the wilds of Wilmington, Delaware! It's Bo Diddley! It's Slim Harpo! It's Dr. Feelgood! No! It's actually George Thorogood! Possessing R&B and rockabilly chops far beyond those of normal groups, George and his trusty rhythm section fight a never-ending battle of the bands for sweat, slippin' and slidin'. One of the rare aggregates that will comply when the audience screams "Play all night!"

No silly clothes or posturing. Mucho flagrant jamming. The record is a true representation of their virtues, but they must be seen live to be fully appreciated. Hitline: "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer" and Bo Diddley's "Ride On Josephine."

GARY WRIGHT -- Touch And Gone (Warner Brothers): Gary Wright? Seals & Crofts swallowed by a ring modulator? Don't touch. Just go.

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