

Hotcakes

Hotcakes (Elektra K32905). This is the fourth album from the lovely Carly Simon and it certainly seems to be living up to its name in America at least where it is selling like the proverbial — Carly Simon albums? It is a very satisfying and complete record, it is beautifully produced by Richard Perry, while the strings are arranged by Paul Buckmaster. The best two tracks are the ones co-written with lyricist Jacob Brackman, Safe And Haven's Cot Time For The Pain. The musicians playing include

Robbie Robertson, Dr John, Klaus Voorman and David Spinozza. They provide a very solid backing to Carly's voice which must be one of the best in rock. There are a couple of novelties included — the Inez and Charlie Fox x number. Mockingbird is a duet, sung with husband James Taylor, who features prominently throughout the album playing acoustic guitar. James also co-wrote one track and wrote the instrumental title track. The overall feel is one of harmony and domesticity — the girl is quite obviously in love. C. P.

Live Lou

SMOKEY ROBINSON AND THE MIRACLES Anthology (Tamla Motown 725 123). Absolutely, positively definitely and supremely worth a place in any collection. Smokey is one of the true Great Ones of pop history and his work with and without the Miracles will surely stand the test of time. As a producer he has produced more good ideas than most. This is a three-record set which covers all the ground, right from the days of Got A Job, which featured Berry Gordy on the session, and up to Tears Of A Clown, and Abraham, Martin and John and so on. Compare the sound through the years. And specially marvel at I Second That Emotion.

DAVID ELLIOTT Solid Ground (Atlantic K4057). 24-year-old David Elliott makes good looking on the outside of his album sleeve. The question is does he make good listening on the inside? The opening track I Read The News is a catchy number, which keeps Mr Elliott busy on vocals, guitar and piano — a mad for a hors d'oeuvre. I like the steel guitars on the following two tracks, Railroad Line, and Can't Go Home, it gives them a country feel. But goodness gracious he's beginning to sound very much like Jose Feliciano on the latter. By far the best track on side 1 must be Stuck In Love which features prominently Terry Stannard on drums and Gasper Lawl on congas. On side 2 — he IS Jose Feliciano. G. H.

LOUREED Rock 'n' Roll Animal (RCA AFL1-0472-A). Despite the grotesque facial make-up and weird expressions, Lou Reed looks no more terrifying or animalistic on the album cover than our Editor when he comes in snarling for an argument after spending some time in a famous place of refreshment near Carnaby Street. Avid fans were obviously disappointed with Berlin and so the man himself tries to redeem the situation with the release of this live album recorded at Howard Stein's Academy Of Music in New York. His stage act hasn't changed much since his British Tour last year — the tasteful instrumental by his band at the beginning and then into the grinding familiar chords of Sweet Jane as Lou casually walks on to receive the applause before he utters a word. It's a bit too professional for ver actual live album, Heroin having lost most of its sexual tinge and Reed seems to lose interest in White Light/White Heat and Lady Day. Seems Lou has lost a lot of spontaneity since his VU days and the only track which matched up to anything in Transformer was Rock 'n' Roll when for once, he seemed to forget he was recording a live album. This album just tells us that Mr Reed is drifting away on his own miserable trip but he's always done that to my knowledge anyway. J. B.



UN-KNOCKABLE!

ALVIN STARDUST The Untouchables (Magnet 5001). There were those who laughed outright, or giggled nervously, or guffawed openly when this Alvin Stardust first came out with My Coo Ca Choo, hit the charts and was finally unveiled as your actual Shane Fenton (real name Bernard Jewry) . . . a former hit parade hero of the Sixties. The instant success of the Jealous Mind follow-up put the mockers on those who assumed he was going to be a one-hit wonder. And now it's album time for the surly-burly rocker. He operates largely on Peter Shelley songs, co-writing some of them. It's a pretty strong mixture of song forms — a touch of blues here and there, with useful guitar boost; a bite or two at a ballad; and mostly the all-action rock and roll for which our hero is now justly famous. He manages somehow to up-dale rock and roll — hard to define this, but he has some of the 1950 mannerisms, yet adapts them to cope with the demands of the Glitter-Bowie addicts. He has a pouting style, vocally; again still hard to define, but it's pop-rock which glowers and yet can still get over a romantic message. Jealous Mind is the stand-out track, and was rightly put out as the single; but there is quality on such as Dreambreaker, Guitar Star and Dressed In Black, all of which Alvin is. With guys like Big Jim Sullivan abounding in the back-up sound, it's a good album and, for those unconvinced of Alvin's star-status, often a surprising album. P. J.

Consistent Skellern

PETER SKELLEREN Not Without A Friend. — (Decca NKL 5178). There's a constant aura of class about Peter Skellern's recordings. So he hasn't been a consistent hit-maker — but he HAS been a consistently good composer, full of surprises, painting his musical magic on some pretty broad canvasses. He bounces along on Send My Heart To San Francisco, with backing chorus; Still Magic changes mood again.

with the plaintive voice and the concerto-type piano — nobody gets the plaintive mood better than Peter. Piano Rag is another mood-buster. And on the B' side, Song In The Critics is a selling bit of self-defence as well as satire, and No More Sunday Papers is good! The voice may not be of operatic quality, or of spot-on accuracy, but it suits perfectly the romantic mood of most of the songs. P. J.

HOLLIES

Hollies (Polydor 2383-262 A). They've been described as the most consistent group on the pop scene but unlike the singles, The Hollies have never quite hit it off in the album market. Romany was a fine, but unrecognised effort and now we have no flash design cover with the release of this one simply titled, Hollies. The album lives up to the true tradition of Hollie harmonies and it's the first group album to be released since the much-publicised return of Allan Clarke. The lyrical credit goes to Clarke and rhythm guitarist Terry Sylvester with Hicks and Elliott adding a couple of compositions and the album also includes the last and current Hollies' singles, Curly Billy and the Hammond/Hazelwood song, The Air That I Breathe. I particularly liked the inclusion of Duffy Power's harmonica on several tracks — such as Down On The Run. If I had to pick an outstanding



song, apart from the single, then it would be Sylvester's Pick Up The Pieces Again — this guy could turn out as Britain's answer to David

Gates! The orchestral arrangements are very crisp and Ron Richards, as always excels with the production work Obviously Allan's return

Joni's masterpiece

Court And Spark (Asylum TE 1001). "Help me! I think I'm falling in love again." The opening to Help Me says it all. Joni Mitchell once again exposes her perplexed soul to the scarring gaze of her fellow man, once again delves deep within the complexities of her personality to reveal her particular brand of intellectual / animal / emotional / philosophic quizzaphenia. How long her sanity can survive this process of dissection remains to be seen. At least she can provide us with a collection of songs whose poetic brilliance is so far above that of her contemporaries it creates a category of its own. The lady's already carved one masterpiece — Blue — and now comes a second with a comparatively short time span. The music of Court And Spark is not the intrinsic part of the whole called Blue, more a framework, a point of reference as on For The Roses, or perhaps more aptly Ladies Of The Canyon. That's not to demean it in any way. Joni's piano work is as individually excellent as ever and the qualities of co-conspirators like Jose



consequences of the process. I doubt that we'll see a better album this year and despite the sycophancy surrounding Dylan's Planet Waves, I know we'll not have a more relevant or important one. R. G.

Logical Dan

Pretzel (Probe SIFA 6282) There's a few surprises here, like the intrusion of brass, even strings, and an increasing sophistication which worries, but basically it's still Steely Dan. They are perhaps the most distinctive sounding of the newer American rock bands. A shame then that their last album, Countdown To Ecstasy, a favourite of many last year, was obviously so hard to follow. To their

credit the Dan have not stood still. They bring in a lot of acoustic piano when electric stood before and, pity though it is, miss out some of the 'ole flowing electric guitar. But the songs are still good if a little short of rock. The harmonies are fine and just to freak you there's a gassy Duke Ellington toner East St. Louis Toodle Oo, that's given the treatment. Overall it's a little over-done this time but still ahead of the field. P. H.

Corny Sedaka

Lauder In The Rain (Polydor Super 2383 265). I heard several tracks from this album when Sedaka was in concert recently at London's

Festival Hall and performed live they didn't sound too bad. But now I've got the chance of hearing them whenever I like. I'll be quite honest and say I'll be a long time before I put this album on the stereo again. The lyrics are really corny, the music for my money is the worst I've ever heard of from Sedaka, and generally the whole thing is a big disappointment. It's not a dancing record, nor a listening one — in fact I wouldn't like to say when's the best time to play it. The best track is his latest single, A Little Lovin', and I can't even say the others grow on you even after several plays. Perhaps the Tra La Sedaka reach a climax and now for the anti-climax. Still, if you're a mad keen Sedaka fan then you'll probably say that. For me, I think I'd have the bread. R. H.



has added extra enthusiasm and the material is varied and interesting, the album should do well. J. B.