

Billboard's Top Album Picks

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Billboard SPECIAL SURVEY For Week Ending 9/30/78

Number of LPs reviewed this week **49** Last week **35**



10cc—Bloody Tourists, Polydor PD16161. Produced by Eric Stewart, Graham Gouldman. This consistent group's Polydor debut ranks as its most stimulating in some time. Stalwart members Eric Stewart and Graham Gouldman wrote or cowrote all tunes and pace the orchestration with nifty guitar and bass riffs. The rest of the 10cc unit now consists of Duncan McKay, keyboards; Rick Fenn, guitar; Stuart Tosh, percussion; and Paul Burgess, drums. The tracks combine clever hard edged rock with a melodic base and intelligent lyrics. The single, "Dreadlock Holiday," has a strong reggae feel while the other cuts alternate between midtempo ballads and rockers. Most cuts display 10cc's wry sense of humor which cuts through the superb vocal and instrumental passages. A very tasty package.

Spotlight

LINDA RONSTADT—Living In The USA, Asylum 6E155 (WEA). Produced by Peter Asher. Aside from being one of Ronstadt's more perfect albums, this collection of 10 songs ranging from Hammerstein/Romberg's "When I Grow Too Old To Dream," to Elvis Costello's "Alison" provides a unique display of her vocal charm. The instrumentation, for the most part, is sparse, and it enables the special qualities of Ronstadt's voice to shine through. There are many moods portrayed here, including some husky ones that indicate maturity and a broadening taste, although Ronstadt has always chosen material beyond the merely popular. "All That You Dream" is a classic and could be her biggest song so far.

Best cuts: "All That You Dream," "Back In The USA," "Mohammed's Radio," "Just One Look," "Love Me Tender," "Alison."

Dealers: Play in-store.



way while the slower ballad-type material changes the pace. The package also includes a 45 EP containing a live version of "Maggot Brain." Clinton's imagination, audible on vinyl, becomes quite visual on the spaced out album jacket concept.

Best cuts: "One Nation Under A Groove," "Maggot Brain," "Promentalshitbackwashpsychosis Enema Squad (The Doodoo Chasers)," "Groovallegiance."

Dealers: The title cut is happening.

POCKETS—Take It On Up, Columbia JC35384. Produced by Verdine White, Robert Wright. This Baltimore octet delivers a fine second album, spiced with the sound of mentors Earth, Wind & Fire, but additionally flavored with originality. Recipe is tight vocals (Larry Jacobs is a strong lead singer) atop equally together brass, horn and keyboard work, all underpinned by emphatic drum rhythms. Most of the tunes are uptempo, as in "Heaven Only Knows" and "Funk It Over," but the band is good on ballads like "In Your Eyes," too.

Best cuts: "Take It On Up," "Heaven Only Knows," "Happy For Love," "Lay Your Head."

Dealers: Act's debut did well, backed by national tour, so

Closeup

LINDA RONSTADT—Living In The U.S.A., Asylum 6E155. Produced by Peter Asher.

Ronstadt's followup to her triple platinum "Simple Dreams" is a tedious, unimaginative work that breaks no new ground. Unlike "Simple Dreams" which had a charming and sophisticated boldness, "Living In The U.S.A." is a tired sounding, formularized extension of her last album right down to the LP's graphics.

Ronstadt simply has to break away from her trademarked rehash of oldies. Unlike writer/performers, where lyrical and musical growth can be judged, Ronstadt's growth is harder to gauge.

As an interpreter of other writers' material, she does an admirable job, perhaps better than anyone else. But there is just so much that one can take.

What has made Ronstadt so successful in interpretations is the choice of material she chooses. Her most popular songs were remakes of more obscure tunes and songs which enjoyed initial popularity long enough ago so that new versions are welcome and fresh sounding.

On this LP she chooses more contemporary songs like Elvis Costello's "Alison," Warren Zevon's "Mohammed's Radio" and Eric Kaz's "Blowing Away."

Unfortunately, her versions are bogged down in forged emotions with none really hitting the mark with the same conviction as the original.

Yet despite the lethargic monotony of the album, Ronstadt's vocals are again first-rate. "When I Grow Too Old To Dream" is a marvelous showcase for her vocals as she is accompanied by the simple piano and vibes orchestration that allows her to project her full range.

Chuck Berry's "Back In The U.S.A." is the worst track on the album. Despite its authentic '50s rock'n'roll feel, it is wrapped up in monotony and grows more and more irritating with each listen.

"Just One Look" and Elvis' "Love Me Tender" comes across as filler. No matter how sweet Ronstadt's vocals are, they are delivered without passion and with no purpose to them.

Despite an admirable vocal interpretation of Elvis Costello's "Alison," Ronstadt's version pales in comparison to the original. Costello was bitter over losing Alison. Ronstadt gives the love song a sweet and syrupy view that lacks much of the intended passion. David Sanborn's sax part at the end saves the song as does the reliable play of her outstanding band.

One of the best cuts is J.D. Souther's "White Rhythm & Blues." While the lyrics are on the banal side, Ronstadt gives them a dramatic working over, squeezing emotion and setting a light, bluesy mood with her well paced vocals.

Waddy Wachtel's searing guitar and Dan Dugmore's pedal steel work well with Kenny Edwards' bass, Russ Kunkel's drums and Don Grolnick's piano.

Little Feats' "All That You Dream" is the one song that surpasses the original. Boasting some tasty guitar licks, Ronstadt's inter-

pretation machine churns out a winner.

Also first-rate is her version of Smokey Robinson's "Ooh Baby Baby," in which Ronstadt drains every ounce of the song's emotion. Sanborn's sax is at it again, giving the tune a bluesy feel and complemented by Grolnick's tingling piano.

Warren Zevon's "Mohammed's Radio" is reduced to just another



Linda Ronstadt

song. The anthem-like feel of the original is erased and therefore becomes a plain song. Ronstadt reaches back with a gutsy vocal in attempt to save it at the end.

And the most counterfeit song is Eric Kaz's "Blowing Away," which really pales next to Bonnie Raitt's superb version.

Ronstadt has reached a critical stage in her career and she must come up with something to show career development and growth. Producer Peter Asher must lead her in a new direction and stop relying on overly melodramatic recitals and flashy studio techniques.

There is nothing on this album that excels and that's a shame because the lady can really sing. Too bad she can't write. **ED HARRISON**

Infringing Costs Olympic \$180,000

NEW YORK—Damages of almost \$180,000, believed to be the largest ever awarded in a copyright infringement suit involving records, were upheld here last week by the U.S. Court of Appeals.

At issue were a number of Scott Joplin works released in a five-record Joplin album produced by Olympic Records and marketed by Olympic and Crown Publishers.

Valid mechanical licenses were not secured for three selections from the Joplin opera "Treemonisha" the court held in endorsing the award granted plaintiffs Mary L. Wormley and the Joplin estate.

Defendants were held liable for half the profits they realized on the sale of the album, or \$15,426.78 in the case of Olympic and its proprietor Joseph Abend, and \$77,225.17 in the case of Crown. Statutory "in lieu" damages amounted to \$57,815.68 for Abend and Olympic, \$27,513 for Crown.

In addition, interest of 6% from the commencement of the action on April 23, 1975 is due, said the court, as well as "statutory costs according to law."