



Such Interesting Friends; Big Helps, Too

BY DAVID F. WAGNER

With a Little Help from My Friends (Joe Cocker, A&M SP 4182, stereo).

Johnny Winter (Columbia CS 9826, stereo).

Glad I'm in the Band (Lonnie Mack, Elektra EKS-74040, stereo).

Black and White (Tony Joe White, Monument SLP-18114, stereo).

Post Card (Mary Hopkin, Apple ST-3351, stereo).

The Adventures of Keith (RCA Victor LSP-4143, stereo).

The World of Oz (Deram DES 18022, stereo).

Large as Life and Twice as Natural (Davy Graham, London PS 552, stereo).

Look at it this way: if among your friends you counted Stevie Winwood and Jimmy Page — not to mention Barrie Wilson and Matthew Fisher of Procol Harum — you'd be doing all right, right? Well, so is English singer Joe Cocker.

The baritone's voice is gritty, flexible — sounding the way David Clayton-Thomas might if he did an impression of Richie Havens.

With considerable imagination and taste, the diverse ensemble (at times including a "soul chorus" of Madeline

England, but did little here. It and "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," plus "I Shall Be Released," are other previously familiar songs.

The occasional lapses on the technical level (his pronunciations are sometimes oddly strangled) are more than covered by the overall, intelligent, thoughtful musicianship and arrangements.

This is a remarkable album: not because it in any bold way departs from much that has been said in the same vein, but because it puts together beautifully (often novelly) compatible segments of rock in as likable and entertaining a package since the second Blood, Sweat and Tears lp.

Even after writing about rock music and musicians for 12 years, it still amazes and amuses me when some new "super star" seems to come out of the woodwork, invariably after many years of "paying dues" in one way or another. The latest is Johnny Winter, who hit the rock-blues scene recently with great notices from rock's "legitimate press," such as Rolling Stone, Jazz and Pop and others of that genre.

If Cocker has great friends, Winter has the blessings of one of the most respected men in blues, Willie Dixon, and that has to be the big bonus for the young albino blues artist (how about that for extremes?).

The best aspect of this very solid set is that every track has something to recommend it. Each is well-grounded music and Winter may well be

one of the brighter WHITE artists of the past year. His guitar and harp work are top-rate, also.

I remember Lonnie Mack when he was just another rock and roll so-so artist who never quite made it, but these many years later, and with his talent developed considerably, Lonnie is back; and maybe even in style.

Instrumentally, his guitar work is skillful, as on Berry's "Memphis," and vocally, he is adequate, or even a bit better. His material was selected with an ear toward the past and with an eye on young buyers.

Among the better tracks are "Roberta," "She Don't Come Here Anymore," "In the Band" and "Sweat and Tears."

After Cocker and Winter — and to a degree, Mack — Tony Joe White is a bit bland, but he does a fair job on his own works, which fill side one. Perhaps, though, the fact that these are unfamiliar makes them sound better; there is nothing with which we can compare them. Side two, however, has things like "Little Green Apples," "Wichita Lineman" and "Look of Love," so there are other points of reference. And that's where Tony Joe dips a bit.

Mary Hopkin, the first real discovery for Apple Records, has a precious little album which is light, fragile and a welcome diversion. One moment she sounds like today's hit parade ("Those Were the Days") and the next like an old movie ("Love Is the Sweetest Thing").

Mary's voice is delicate and virtually without depth or character, but her sound should be good for perhaps one other album. The next will be based on "Goodbye," which, regrettably, is not here. I hope I'm wrong about Mary's short future, especially when no-talents like Tommy Roe stay big after years, but the future will prove me right. I'll bet you my bippy it does.

Keith (remember "98.6"?)

is back. I agree, but let's give the kid a chance. That would be easier if it weren't so easy for attention to wander when his heavily-orchestrated, unimaginative ramblings are playing. Even such cuteness as "Trixon's Election" fails to get airborne.

The World of Oz is like a Bee Gees that tries harder. Too hard. There are bright

moments, such as "The Muffin Man" and "We've All Seen the Queen," and, in fact, most tunes are very enjoyable. But we've got a Bee Gees already. And also a Hollies, which they sound like, too.

Davy Graham has tried twice before, and failed to excite enough listeners to achieve a hit album. Perhaps it's three strikes and out for

the young artist who's into everything from folk and jazz to Indian and Arabian music. If this set doesn't sell, we probably won't see another of him. Sad as it may seem, his loss wouldn't put us out anything.

Davy's biggest problem is having fingers in too many pies. His recording is more potpourri than solid substance.

Columbia's Greatest Hits Kick

BY JACK RUDOLPH

Columbia Records, having made a good thing out of re-issuing short pieces from its extensive catalogue of recordings by the Philadelphia Orchestra, has gone on a "Greatest Hits" kick, only with a new gimmick. Instead of featuring the ensembles, Columbia is headlining composers, thus opening up a much wider field of selection.

This month there are about seven such releases (only part are discussed below), all made up of excerpts from previously released albums. Presumably they carry a reduced price, too, but don't bank on it. Anyway, these are all pleasant records, loaded with worthwhile music, whether you go along with the judgments of what constitutes a "greatest hit" by J. S. Bach, Frederic Chopin, etc.

BACH, J.S.

Bach's Greatest Hits, Vol. 1: Air on the G String, Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring, A Mighty Fortress, and others. Philadelphia Orchestra, Ormandy conducting; Marlboro Festival Orchestra, Pablo Casals conducting; Columbia Chamber Orchestra, E. Power Biggs, organist, and Walker Carlos on the Moog Synthesizer. Columbia MS 7501.

As the title indicates, this is obviously only the beginning for the great cantor of Liezig, and a very imaginative start, too. Everything here is familiar music, the headliner being the Moog Synthesizer

recording of the final movement of the Third Brandenburg Concerto, taken from the sensationally successful "Switched On Bach" release of the past winter. Very unusual and effective it is, although it reminds me forcefully of the old 1920-style juke box music we used to get by dropping nickels into the tricky machine in the old Alpha Sweets when I was in high school.

MOZART

Mozart's Greatest Hits: Eine Kleine Nachtmusik, Overture to "Marriage of

Figaro," and others. Glenn Gould, Robert Casadesu, Philippe Entremont and Andre Previn, pianists; Philadelphia and Cleveland Orchestras, Ormandy and George Szell, conducting, respectively. Columbia MS 7507.

Here is a good example of what can be pulled out to fill one of these Greatest Hits albums simply in the piano category. In addition to the purely orchestral numbers there are samplings of Mozart's solo piano works as well as single movements from various concertos, etc. The feature piece is the "Nachtmusik" played by the great strings of the Philadelphia Orchestra, which still stands as one of the truly fine

readings even if now several years old.

BERNSTEIN

Bernstein's Greatest Hits Vol. 2: Works of Gliere, Borodin, Smetana, Offenbach, Wagner, Saint-Saens, etc. New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein conducting. Columbia MS 7246.

Leonard Bernstein cracks the list as a conductor rather than as a composer, although the album concludes with one of his own pieces, the popular "Somewhere" from "West Side Story." Perhaps because it is more varied and colorful with Bernstein reveling in the lively music at which he is so accomplished, this is one of the more successful "Greatest Hits" on the group. All told, there are 11 fast-paced, brilliant pieces here, all brilliantly performed.

CHOPIN

Chopin's Greatest Hits: Etudes, Waltzes, Mazurkas, Polonaises, etc. Philippe Entremont, pianist; the Philadelphia Orchestra, Ormandy conducting, and the New York Philharmonic, Andre Kostelanetz conducting. Columbia MS 7506.

Since all of the pieces on this record were written as solo piano works, the album is pleasant enough but not representative of Chopin. Entremont does give the true flavor with solo appearances interspersed between orchestral numbers, many of which were arranged from the piano score by Ormandy.

Under the Album Covers

Bell, Brenda Holloway and Rosetta Hightower, among others) tackles gospel, r&b, folkish and pop numbers.

The antique "Bye Bye Blackbird" is a Redding-inspired outing; slow soul blues. The unusual arrangement (Latin maracas, rhythm piano, but still bluesy) of Dave Mason's "Feeling Alright" is an intriguing beginning for a record that has so many instant favorites that even top 40 is playing it. Dylan's "Just Like a Woman" is one of these. Cocker's reading, a marvel of insight into song and subject, bespeaks understanding with a trace of pity but no bitterness or disgust.

His falsetto in "Marjorine," a song he helped author, adds just the note of variety and unpredictability necessary for pleasing contrast.

The title cut was a hit in