

# ARTS and CULTURE

## DISCUSSIONS

By Greg Hall

**Earth** - Jefferson Starship (Grunt/RCA Records)

It's a miracle that Jefferson Airplane/Starship has survived the transition from sixties to seventies. But then, so have Fleetwood Mac, mainly by adapting the Mainstream approach in a grand compromise that has made their name a household word. With their fourth album **Earth**, the Starship hope to follow, or siphon off, this success formula.

Despite its being lyrically bankrupt, **Earth** contains several highly-charged songs abounding in melodic hooks. The production makes the lyrics secondary to the performance and pop energy. Grace Slick's vocals and harmonies soar like she was trying to dethrone Stevie Nicks for the top female Rock Vocalist. Marty Balin's vocals have convincing dramatic flair, and the vocal balance achieved between the duo is superb. The band meshes like a tight and economical rhythm unit, with not a riff or beat wasted.

In one trite effort to disguise or offset the marked commercialism, Grace includes a protest song (shades of the sixties), but again the shallowness and cliches are overpowered by the performance -- just as they are on another weak cut, "Fire." The remainder is all professional, as any number of the songs could be marked as potential hit singles.

**Even Now** - Barry Manilow (Arista Records)

You've got to give Manilow some credit -- he does put out a good product. His albums do not differ from product -- he writes songs like McDonalds make hamburgers. Crescendo-

style ballads with big dramatic builds and romantic lush strings, lovers lost-and-found schmaltz, it all is listenable, infectious, and even enjoyable.

Wholesome, but like junk food not nutritious, appealing to taste buds of everyone from grandmothers to grandsons -- **Even Now** is his strongest album. As usual, at least three cuts are obvious hits. He's become the McDonalds of the Music Industry, so isn't it ironic he used to write their commercials? Have a Big Mac and hum along.

**Slow Hand** - Eric Clapton (RSO Records)

Eric Clapton's best and most self-assured album since **Derek & The Dominoes' Layla** finds him returning to some of the earlier influences in his long career. The album title is taken from his nickname "Slow Hand," gained in his early days with John Mayall's Bluebreakers.

Emerging in his music once again are the biting guitar leads

and runs that made him famous, but have been conspicuously missing in the past years. **Slow Hand's** span of material, the majority penned by Clapton, takes him from shuffle and blues riffs to boogie and hard rock.

**Watercolors** - Pat Metheny (ECM Records)

Pat Metheny is not just another fast-fingered guitarist. His work on **Watercolors** is not cold and technical like that of the McLaughlin/DeMeola school; but it is warm, fluid, and beautifully alien.

Metheny's playing defies a category. Half of his uniqueness is firmly rooted in be-bop jazz, the other half is innovative and best described as impressionistic. "Icefire", "Oasis," and "Sea Song" are like nothing you've heard, so exotic, foreign to the ear, and strangely refreshing are the tonal colors he creates.

Along with conventional acoustic guitar, Metheny uses a 12 string guitar restrung with all E strings and retuned. "Oasis" and "Sea Song" also use a 15 string harpguitar to paint a rich aural atmosphere. Versatile pianist Lyle Mays switches his styles to complement Metheny's compositions, and when called upon weaves his solos into and around Metheny's landscapes.

## Grass News

By Bob Buckingham

It was standing room only at the Gurnsey Barn last Saturday night as people flocked in from as far away as Baltimore to see the Highlands Stringband and the Lewis Family. Young Amish and Mennonite Kids lined the rear balcony while folks stood eight deep behind the rows of folding chairs. And then they were ready.

The Highwoods came on with all the power and jest they ever had. This was their first job since December because they took a mid-winter vacation. But nothing had been lost. Mac Benford and Walt Koken had the mixed audience of young freaks and farmers loving the humor, the music and those five raggle taggle gypsies, the Highwoods themselves.

The Highwoods closed the set with "Leather Breeches" a fine old fiddle tune which took on a new dimension under the double fiddling of "Uncle" Bob Potts and Walt Koken.

The Lewis Family had a little trouble getting started but soon got into the feeling of it and lit her up with some hard core Bible Beating Gospel. "Glory hallelujah to the Lamb!", to quote Uncle Dave Macon.

As a matter of fact that is what places the Highwoods, in my mind, over the Lewis Family. The Highwoods incorporate not only the old time music but that old time "stop, your pulling my leg" humor as well. Undoubtedly there is no one else in bluegrass as crazy as Little Roy Lewis who opened their second set by throwing a bucket of snow at the M.C. Perhaps the real star is five year old Little Lewis, the 3rd generation to appear on stage and a promising vocalist and banjo player. Matter of fact Pop Lewis told the Highlands if Mac gets sick the nthey could use Little Lewis.

Also interesting to note is who came to see whom. The

chairs in front of the stage area were mostly populated with regulars and other older couples who haven't heard the Lewis Family since last summer. The area in both was filled with farm boys and dancing fools who came especially to dance to the live music of the Highwoods. Here is a fine example of good booking of a show. Two diverse groups drawing separate crowds. Neither group had appeared in the area recently but both had good followings. That's show biz folks.

This weekend also saw the Little Folk Fest at Ambler which concentrates on old time and bluegrass styles. There were lots of bands but I only attended The Saturday Afternoon Workshops. The most impressive talent there was the Red Clay Ramblers, a powerful and diverse band. All in all however it was unorganized and lacked any traditional performers. It was a meeting of the revivalist elite from Philly and NYC.

This evening The Carroll County Ramblers will perform at Dante's Upstairs. This is a good middle of the road bluegrass band. They feature the hard driving banjo picker, Chris Warner and a mysterious lead guitarist.

On Thursday, March 23, the Buffalo Chip Kickers from State College will be at the Open Hearth. The Chipkickers are an interesting blend of stringband music and popular appeal. The band features a favorite personal friend and good banjo picker, Lee Lenker.

If anyone out there knows about a concert or local band they'd like to plug or read more about, let me know. The main concern here is to keep you folks in touch with the grass roots movement around here. So help me by giving some feed-back and I'll see you there.

[NOTE: Music Scene in the East Mall is selling the Highwoods new lp for \$3.99 ea]

### Contributions Welcome

The scope of the arts is unlimited in potential. You can help us realize this potential. Have you been to a movie, play, art exhibit, or concert that was so good (or bad) that you'd be inspired to write about it? Well, then write about it, and submit it to the Arts and Culture page of the Reader.

Be a Dandy



and Write.

## The Tarnhelm Film Festival

presents—

**Dreams of the Wild Horses**

**Moor's Pavane**

**I Am Pablo Neruda**

**In Search of Hart Crane**

**Thursday, March 9- 7:00 p.m.  
Student Center**

FREE

FREE

FREE