

ARTS and CULTURE

DISCUSSIONS

by Greg Hall

Feels So Good - Chuck Mangione (A&M Records)

Feels So Good is the perfect MOR jazz album. It is also Chuck Mangione's most impressive and successful effort since **Chase the Clouds Away**, of a couple years back. Along with the recent albums of George Benson, this album is one of the very rare breed of jazz album to establish itself firmly in the top ten. But, unlike Benson, Mangione's success has not involved changing his style or making a musical sacrifice for the sake of commerciality. Mangione is doing what he has always done—giving intelligent, refined textured music to his audience. The reason that **Feels So Good** is striking a popular common chord is that the music does feel good, both as a change of pace that the title song has provided for top-forty playlists, and also

as a happy fanfare for the summertime.

Mangione's band is consistently excellent throughout the album and they are the biggest reason why **Feels So Good** feels so good. Mangione has integrated himself into a band that perfectly understands and lavishly complements his arrangements. At the same time he can free himself from the spotlight enough to let music do the talking. Each member of the band carries the weight of the music, and solo spots are traded off by the three frontmen while the rhythm section cooks down below. What is unusual is that Mangione is the only jazz flugelhornist in the business, yet his horn provides expression and texture equaling that of the more common jazz sax, and most importantly gives his overall sound an element slightly foreign to jazz buffs and completely different from his contemporaries.

Jazz - Ry Cooder (Warner Bros. Records)

This is Ry Cooder's most unique and also best album in his career. He pays homage and tribute to musical forms not acknowledged by too many artists in jazz circles these days. The results of these sessions that made up this album are interesting and fun to listen to. Cooder dives head-first into "slow-drag" warehouse ragtime, mellow swing, Jelly Roll Morton rhythm, 40's jazz impressionism of Bix Beiderbecke, an obscure form of Bahamian syncopated and transformed hymns, and even some jazz burlesque. The resulting album is pure, and the interpretations showcase Cooder's guitar work as an example of one of the greatest and most versatile guitarists around. Special guests include Earl Hines, Red Callender, and mandolinist David Lindley. **Jazz** is Cooder's first experiment in this direction—I hope there are more ideas where these came from.

Boys in the Trees - Carly Simon (Elektra Records)

This album is a moving, sensitive portrait of Carly

Simon. The music is well-conceived, the lyrics brilliant, and the production by Arif Mardin superb. The greatest portion of the album consists of slow and tender ballads, but there are also two up-tempo numbers ("You Belong to Me", "Tranquillo"), a new song by James Taylor ("One Man Woman"), a duet between Carly and James Taylor ("One Man Woman"), a duet between Carly and James (The Everly Brother's "Devoted To You"), and an extremely humorous surprise in the calypso "De Bat Fly In Me Face". Most striking, however, are the self-penned ballads, most notably the title cut where she tries to come to grips with her instilled feminine ideals so guilt-ridden and different from those of the "boys in the trees."

U.K. - (Polydor Records)

U.K. is made up of refugees from Yes, King Crimson, and Roxy Music; yet they sound like someone spliced unused tapes and rejects of songs from Genesis, Yes and ELP together and tried to release an album from the jumble of cold, synthesized techno-rock sounds. This band has no identity of its own, and despite a few scattered moments of technical

proficiency U.K. comes off as uninspired and lifeless.

Greatest Hits--Nilsson (RCA Records)

Early in his career, Nilsson proved himself both as a master composer and as interpreter of the serious as well as the playful pop song. Since then he has isolated himself from the mainstream, and his writing has become obscure, unintelligible and even abstract. This collection documents Nilsson's contribution to the art of the pop song, and they all are here: "Without You", "Everybody's Talkin'", "I Guess The Lord Must Be In New York City", "Without Her", and "Coconut". All the songs still sound as fresh now as they were when they were first recorded early in this decade, and they are still as pleasurable to listen to now as they were then.

.... Watch for new albums in the next weeks--Rolling Stones ("Some Girls"), Boston ("2"), Bruce Springsteen ("Darkness at the Edge of Town"), Moody Blues ("Octave"), Graham Parker ("Parkerilla"), Neil Young ("Give to the Wind"), Dylan, Barbra Streisand, and Dave Mason.

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