

The Music File



Billy Joel

by Alan Gasmer

Billy Joel has been known for many years as an artist on the verge of making it big. From what started out to be a disastrous career with his first solo album, "Cold Spring Harbor," recorded at the wrong speed, and with his being constantly called the "Piano Man," Joel has managed to survive all these things marvelously.

Turnstiles, his previous excellent effort contained the three main ingredients that I have found common to Joel's past L.P.'s: a sense of musical dynamics — going from soft musical passages to very loud ones suddenly, thus keeping the audience interested; biting, hard lyrics portraying middleclass social values in a very cynical tone; and bad record production.

This all brings us to Billy Joel's latest release, **The Stranger**. (Columbia) I have pointed out all the past components that have made me enjoy Joel's music. With "The Stranger," most of these vital elements are missing. I'm not saying, however, this record is bad — on the contrary, nothing Joel turns out is bad. The main problem is its lack of depth — the bite that characterized earlier Joel L.P.'s. Instead of singing about the

"Angry Young Man," he now sings about "Brenda and Eddie." The lyrics are straight-forward and tell a story but there's no punch. The rebellion is gone.

The album has several strong points which should be pointed out. For one thing, the production is crystal clear bringing Joel's fine voice and piano up front where it belongs. Highlights include: "Moving Out," (the single) which is characterized by a consistent stuttering of rhyming syllables, "The Stranger," an extremely danceable tune complete with syncopated rhythms, (hints of disco perhaps?) and the epic tune of the album, "Scenes From An Italian Restaurant." This is only the first side. I could go on a lot longer — but due to lack of space I won't.

There's no doubt in my mind that "The Stranger" is an attempt on Joel's part to increase his audience and sell more records. As a matter of fact, I commend him for his professional piece of work. But, as a Billy Joel fan, I found this L.P. lacking the substance and sting that I have come to know and enjoy from past Billy Joel works.

Billy Joel will be at the Spectrum Theatre on December 6th.

New Releases in Brief

Chicago's new L.P. Chicago XI (Columbia) continues the same formula that their past seven or eight albums established. This is the tight arrangements, highlighted by the identifiable brass section, and "nice" slow numbers sure to become AM hits and sell zillions of records. This all fine and dandy but isn't the same style being overworked? I wish they would return to the style of their first L.P., "Chicago Transit Authority," which would give us all a break.

Now you can see that I'm really getting into the M.O.R. sound when I start talking about Neil Sedaka — which is exactly what I'm going to do. If you're a Neil

Sedaka fan, well, this one's for you. (Didn't Barry Manilow say that?) Anyway, we are now being honored with the second generation of Neil Sedaka's **Greatest Hits** (Rocket). This one L.P. contains all the hits, plus much more, which have made Sedaka famous since 1974. And that's not all. You will experience such pleasant numbers as "Laughter In the Rain," "Love Will Keep Us Together," (he wrote it) "Bad Blood," and a reworked version of his all-time classic, "Breaking Up Is Hard To Do." If you're in to Neil Sedaka, buy it. If not, use it as a frisbee.

A new twin album by Lightnin' Hopkins (Tomato) is sure to find its way into blues lovers' hearts everywhere. Rolling Stone called it, "One of the best blues packages of the year!" I wouldn't go that far. It sounds as if it had been recorded all in one hot afternoon. If you're into blues (not Josh White type) this one's for you. (I've said that twice now.)

You remember the song "Radar Love" from a couple of years ago, don't you? Well, the band, Golden Earring, has released a live L.P. called: **Golden Earring Live** (MCA). The album itself is another in the long wave of live albums trying to push through and break an artist. In fact this album

succeeds in capturing all the live excitement of a Golden Earring concert recorded live in Europe.

Also (of notable mention) on the MCA label is the Pete Townshend-Ronnie Lane collaboration called **Rough Mix**. Townshend demonstrates that he's definitely the main source of ideas and concepts in the Who. His voice is not bad and if Daltry ever decides to leave, Townshend really wouldn't have any problem filling in.

Out of the two leaders on the L.P., it is Townshend who shines. Lane does put in a good tune here and there but it is Townshend who is clearly the creative force.

RECORD DUST: By the end of 1977, all record prices on all past, present and future releases will be increased by \$1.00 on the total list price. The record industry blames rising royalty rates paid to artists, higher shipping costs, higher vinyl costs and higher costs of just about everything ... Meanwhile ... Columbia Records projects 1 billion dollars in sales by 1980. It's no wonder with Boston's debut L.P. selling 5 million copies, Boz Scaggs "Silk Degrees" selling three million and Kansas' "Left-overture" selling 2 million. This is only a slight example of Columbia's huge million-selling talent stable ...



James Earl Jones

Paul Robeson in Review

by Judy Brockman

"Paul Robeson," the new play by Phillip Hayes Dean, opened at the New Locust Theater on September 27th, starring James Earl Jones of "Great White Hope" fame in the title role. Playing before a packed house, Jones portrayed both sensitively and realistically the life of one of the most extraordinary and controversial stage, screen and concert stars of this century.

The two-act play, which is performed in monologue style, has only a two character cast, consisting of Robeson and his longtime accompanist, Lawrence Brown. The story outlines Robeson's life from his arrival at Rutgers University until his Carnegie Hall performance. James Earl Jones, powerful in the role of the bass-baritone Robeson makes the viewer feel he is actually being spoken to by Robeson behind those footlights. During the press interview, Jones declared, "Robeson had a special inner talent, which only the great ones have, for feeling human pain and suffering."

Directed by Charles Nelson Reilly, award-winning actor turned director, the play is currently being improved and perfected during this pre-Broadway period. Philadelphia is one of the major cities where "Paul Robeson" will be playing in the next few months.

For a moving as well as very entertaining evening, this reviewer highly recommends, "Paul Robeson."



Delaware Co. Campus... Sure... hike past the back forty... it's between the corn and the winter wheat... can't miss it!

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