

WILLIE ALEXANDER
 Meanwhile... Back in the States (MCA)

Willie "Loco" Alexander is one of those truly lunatic rock and roll characters who I want to like more than their music generally allows me to. A veteran of a decade spent in underground Boston bands, his leering, quirky vocals give a decidedly lascivious edge to the raunchy "Mass Ave." and a surprising tenderness to ballads like "Modern Lovers" and "You Were So Pretty When." The Boom Boom Band works best in a kind of raucous Bad Company groove but many of the songs here seem to have been hastily thrown together, and Craig Leon's attempt at a budget Spector production falls flat. Gotta admit, though, that I like this album the more I listen to it.

Don Snowden

LUDWIG VON BEETHOVEN
 The Complete Piano Sonatas: Anton Kuerti, piano (Odyssey)

Purists will sputter, academicians alarm, and pianists shudder, but Kuerti pulls it off. Handsomely. Stunned at first by his unconventional approach, this reviewer only gradually and grudgingly came to accept the validity of these readings by the University of Toronto music professor and concert soloist.

Kuerti has re-examined all the accepted interpretations, discarded many, rethought everything, and come up with an "edition" that humanizes rather than ennoble the composer.

It is not that Kuerti is outlandish, like the clown who dons a lampshade at a party. Rather he is the musical equivalent of someone who shows up at a formal reception wearing Levi's because he always wears Levi's. You end up admiring him for his intellectual honesty and wishing you had the nerve.

It is worth adding a word about Kuerti's extensive notes which help one appreciate the pianist's understanding of the music. They are informative without being stuffy, often witty, and as idiosyncratic as the recordings themselves. One has to admire anyone who would write: "...we reach a magic moment when all restraints are unleashed in a heaven-storming passage that roars up and down with excruciating poignance."

Ed Cray

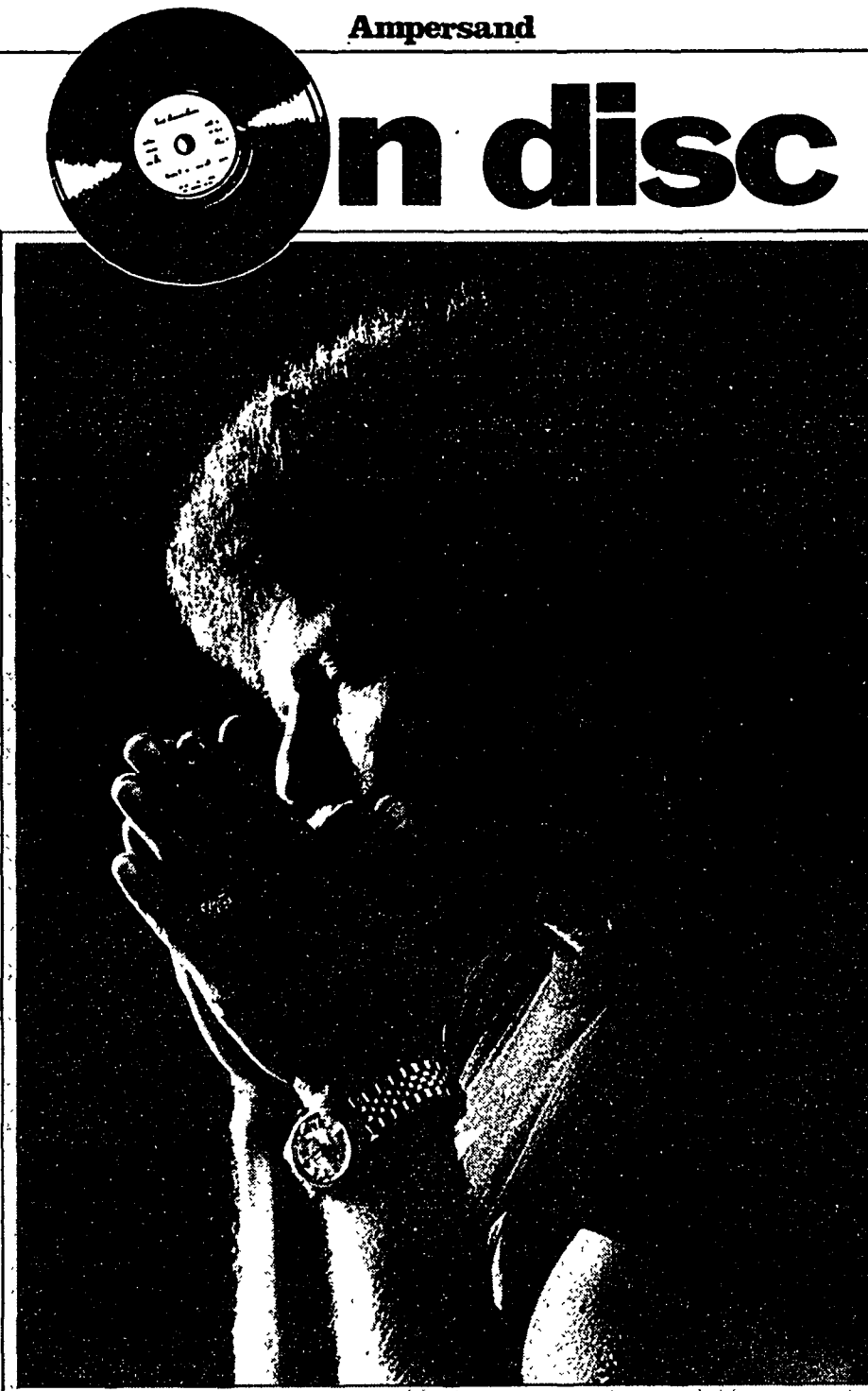
PLASTIC BERTRAND
 Ca Plane Pour Moi (Sire)

Plastic Bertrand may be a Belgian named "Plastoc," as his bio says, or a French studio group like the Archies, as rumor has it. But either way the title song is the hardest-driving, happiest thing from Europe since Golden Earring's "Radar Love." There's a guitar like a buzz-saw, staccato Beach Boy vocal choruses, unintelligible lyrics—it's got everything! And the album? Well, five songs are punk-inspired; two, reggae; one, English Sixties pop; and there's even a soppy Italian ballad—a *tour de force* that leads one to suspect that this guy isn't taking it too seriously. So, good! If your tastes run to the Ramones or Bootsie's Rubber Band, this one's for you. And if you prefer Dan Fogelberg or Phoebe Snow... cheer up, and have a party with Plastic Bertrand. Ooh ooh wee ooh.

Art Fein

CHICK COREA
 Friends (Polydor)

Ever since Chick hit it big with Return To Forever, he's been taking his fans on a musical journey through different periods—big band, solo piano, Latin-based jazz—of his career. With this album he gets back to the



Lee Oskar: War hero

small ensemble brand of acoustic jazz he played in the late 60's and early 70's.

His years in the fusion sweepstakes have apparently taken their toll because, apart from "Samba Song," the compositions and playing are bland and uninspired here. Corea made one major mistake in selecting his friends for this album—Steve Gadd is simply not the man to hold down the crucial drum chair. He isn't a jazz drummer and his intrusive snare shots and grating hi-hat constantly interrupt the smooth flow and subtle swing this kind of music requires to really work. Chalk *Friends* up as a noble failure.

D.S.

CRAIG FULLER/ERIC KAZ
 (Columbia)

...In which the nucleus of American Flyer tries to out-Jackson Browne one another. Kaz wins, but just barely. There are a couple of good songs here ("Cry Like a Rainstorm," for one), but how are we expected to contend with lines like "Time is a lonely prophet, and a thief in the night" (from "Restless Sea")? Like Browne, the guys are so hung up on the sound of their words that they forget to make sense. At least Browne isn't trying to sound like anybody other than himself. Keep playing your American Flyer albums and don't encourage this highfalutin' garbage, the kind of singing-songwriting that gives Southern

California a bad name—though ironically, Fuller and Kaz are both Easterners.

Lynne Manor

G. F. HANDEL
 Theatre and Outdoor Musick: Kenneth Cooper, harpsichord (Vanguard)

These transcriptions of various orchestral works by the celebrated Mr. Handel are probably not the ideal purchase for those just beginning a record collection, people who presumably would want to have the *Water Musick Compleat* in its original form. But Cooper's stylish performances, the witty music itself, and unobtrusive engineering make this a choice addition for anyone who fancies the Baroque.

E.C.

GREG KIHN
 Next of Kihn (Berserkeley)

If you like Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, you'll probably find that Greg Kihn's music is right up your alley. Kihn is fashioning the same sort of melodic American rock and roll heavily influenced by the Byrds and mid-'60's British rock, although he operates more in the Beatles boy-next-door vein than from Petty's Stones-outlaw stance. *Next of Kihn*, his third album on the oddball Berserkeley label, is full of hook-laden and driving

rock songs highlighted by Dave Carpenter's fiery but tasteful lead guitar and Kihn's excellent singing that proves you can be sincere without sounding like a wimp. Some of the songs drag on a bit too long but, by and large Kihn delivers the goods here.

D.S.

CHARLES MINGUS
 Cumbia & Jazz Fusion (Atlantic)

There's a fairly safe argument that you can find all you need to know about jazz by listening to any of Charles Mingus' albums. The scope of the man's influences—from classical to field hollers to free music—is phenomenal; the way he combines and synthesizes them, unique. All that *and* he's a virtuoso bassist and sharp-eared talent scout. The present album, each side devoted to music from a Mingus film score, gives plenty of evidence as to his greatness.

The title selection, Side One, begins with bird-calls and Latin percussion (the movie's about dope-smuggling in Colombia), and by the time the nearly half-hour playing time has finished, he's taken us through early Ellington, swing, the blues (with a funny, nasty vocal by the composer), and God knows what else. The nine-man band, including Mingus regulars trumpeter Jack Walrath and drummer Dannie Richmond, is augmented by eight percussionists, including several of the band, overdubbing.

"Music for *Todo Modo*," the second side, comes from the score for an Italian political-mystery yarn, and is to a degree more brooding than the largely uptempo first side. Soloists get more room, and Mingus' gift for orchestration, right up there with Ellington and Gil Evans, gets a workout. As does the listener: while Mingus' music is not at all difficult to listen to, you can get as much out of it as you want, and there's much more left over.

Ray C. Robinson

THE MOIRS
 State of Shock (Rocket)

You may be in for a bit of a shock of your own upon first listening to this U.S. debut album by the trio of Scots/Australian sisters. Their sound, of which "unique" is an understated description, is a cross between ABBA, the Pointer Sisters, Lesley Duncan and —thanks to the ladies' shrill falsettos—the Chipmunks. A glance at the speed control of your turntable should convince you that the r's per minute are correct; after that discovery, the music stands up better than well on its own merit. There's something almost Oriental in the feeling of the Moirs' frequently ethereal lyrics, and John Farrar's fittingly spare production leans heavily on the use of acoustic guitars. There's no doubt that *State of Shock* is peculiar. It's also original, very well done, and certainly worth your attention.

Todd Everett

W. A. MOZART
 Piano Quartets: Artur Rubenstein, piano, and members of the Guarneri Quartet (RCA)

Among the acknowledged musical masterpieces which were first received with ill favor—a list which makes critics cautious—Mozart's two piano quartets would rank well up. There were to be three originally, but the publisher scuttled the project and Mozart's commission when the Viennese public declined to buy the scores for home use. (Would that publishers today, as they did in 1786, could turn a profit by selling newly composed *classical* music.)

Rubenstein is in charge here, and there may be rather more Romantic drama than