

Ondisc

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ELVIS COSTELLO & THE ATTRACTIONS Get Happy!! (Columbia)

In the past 2½ years, Elvis Costello has given us one singer-songwriter album (*My Aim Is True*), a rock band LP (*This Year's Model*), and one modern pop long player (*Armed Forces*). *Get Happy!!* is the bespectacled Britisher's rhythm and blues record, an album permeated with references to the soul music tradition.

"I Can't Stand up for Falling Down" is an old Sam & Dave B-side and both "Five Gears in Reverse" and "Beaten to the Punch" are virtual throwbacks to the Stax era. "Secondary Modern" is a very close cousin to the "I Heard It Through the Grapevine" groove while "High Fidelity" sounds like a backing track from Motown's mid-Sixties heyday. "Opportunity" boasts the throbbing, slow-burn sensuality of an Al Green song and "Human Touch" is based on the Jamaican ska rhythm that's all the rage in England these days.

But the black influence extends only to the music. Lyrically, Costello has largely returned from the political commentary of "Oliver's Army" and "Goon Squad" to his familiar themes of romantic obsession and thwarted desire. His flair for the brilliant wordplay ("He's got double vision/when you wanted him double-jointed") is still there and Elvis struts his lyrical stuff best on "Riot Act," the brooding "New

Amsterdam" and the country-tinged lament of "Motel Matches."

Get Happy!! contains 20 songs and close to 50 minutes of music but this admirable display of quantity isn't quite matched on the qualitative end. Muffled, distant production prevents the hooks from really sinking in. There's a sporadic air to the album — the songs sound good while they go in one ear but quietly slip out the other 15 minutes later without leaving much of an impression.

Don Snowden

LINDA RONSTADT Mad Love (Asylum)

The scene is the West Hollywood office of Peter Asher, producer/manager extraordinaire. As the curtain opens, Peter is engaged in an intense discussion with Linda Ronstadt, singer/superstar. Linda is furiously chewing gum and pouting at the same time, a talent she alone in the world possesses. The play begins:

Linda: Gosh, Petey, (chomp chomp), why can't I do a punk album? I've just gotta branch out, or I'll go cray (chomp chomp) zee.

Peter: (a bit angry) And how do you expect me to produce that kind of album, anyway? I've made a very successful career, thank you, taking rock 'n' roll and running it through limiters and compressors and smoothing out every rough edge. Now you want me to work with that craftless noise? Why, it would take a damn near Herculean effort to reduce it to proper blandness. I'm get-

ting on, ducks, I don't think my heart could take it.

Linda: Aw, Petey, yer the best! You could do it (chomp chomp), I know you could. You made Chuck Berry's "Livin' in the U.S.A." sound like a Carpenters' "B" side, didn'tcha?

(The phone rings. It is Joe Smith, Chairman of the Board of Elektra-Asylum Records.)

Joe: Lissen, on this new Ronstadt thing, I gotta great idea. Let's go New Wave on this one, awright, sweetheart? The kids'll eat it up. I figure a couple Costello things, some fuzzy electric guitars to kinda jazz it up a little, y'know, can't lose....

Peter: You tell Linda, I've got to lie down. (Hands phone to Linda.)

Linda: Hiya, Joey. What's happenin'?

Joe: You are, baby, you are. (The curtain lowers.)

Richard Levinson

PUBLIC IMAGE, LTD. Second Edition (Island)

Listening to *Second Edition* is like experiencing physical harm, which is exactly what John Lydon's gang of four, Public Image Ltd, had in mind. The bass guitar dances circles around you. The drums pin you against the wall. The guitars and keyboards stick in the knives. Lydon's vocals pour vinegar on your wounds.

As with Brian Eno before them, Public Image aim to reinvent music as we know it. Their songs — which generally begin sparsely and then expand, swell and finally burst — are simultaneously primitive and futuristic, repetitive and intricate,

militaristic and random. Blending elements of reggae, ska, dub and disco, the group winds up with a sound that's somewhere *out there*.

Lydon's voice is central to the group's oblique strategies. Twisting words and even syllables beyond recognition, Lydon shrieks, moans, howls. But ultimately, the lyrics don't matter so much as the momentum and timing with which Lydon exorcises them. Check out his delivery in "No Birds," a song that terrifyingly presents heaven — "Life in lovely allotted slots" — as another hell.

Some may write off Public Image as heartless experimentalists. But they'd be dead wrong. Their mission — teaching us to respond differently to familiar noises and creating new ones — is quite heroic and actually compassionate.

Buy *Second Edition* for your children. It's beneficial, like a good spanking.

Mitchell Schneider

JOE PASS I Remember Charlie Parker (Pablo)

I Remember Charlie Parker is Pass' tribute to the jazz world's most influential figure — a collection of standards from Parker's first album with strings. Parker didn't contribute any originals to that date, but by all accounts it remained one of his favorites and an appropriate choice for a guitarist with Pass' melodic gifts.

There's a reason Pass is sitting atop the most recent *downbeat* Best Guitarist poll and it's convincingly demonstrated on "They Can't Take That Away from Me." Glistening

single-note flurries, walking bass lines, perfect color and chording — all there and all beautiful. An impressive addition to the solo work already turned in on *Virtuosos 1, 2 and 3*, Pass must be only two or three albums

Glistening single-note flurries, perfect color and chording.

behind Oscar Peterson in the race for most-recorded Pablo artist. With albums this good, he's in no danger of overexposure.

Terry Gloe

LENE LOVICH Flex (Stiff/Epic)

Lene Lovich sings like silent movie stars used to act — her flourishes, exaggerations, swagger and warble are vehicles for a delightful quirkiness. She renders nonsensical all insistence that rock is inviolate as a style. Both with *Flex* and last year's brilliant debut, *Stateless*, Lovich and co-conspirator Les Chappell have made rock synthesis work, blending disparate forms into a cohesive whole.

The primary influence on *Flex* is Middle European and Baltic music, although strains of opera, country & western, cabaret, *Wide World of Animals* sound effects and a severe techno-frigidity that makes Gary Numan sound like Andy Williams are also prominent.

Davin Seay

EARL KLUGH

The album he's had in him a long, long time.

Dream Come True

on UA
United Artists Records