

Moonlight Records

Local label sports three new albums

By TIM MOONEY

Be Somebody, Rolly Gray and Sunfire
Secret Service, Secret Service
Lively, Arrogance

Chapel Hill, beer-drinking capital of the world, is also the distinguished home of a lesser-known institution: Moonlight Records. The Moonlight label is sported by three recently produced discs of Chapel Hill-area bands, Rolly Gray and Sunfire, Secret Service and Arrogance.

Trinidadian Rolly Gray makes an extremely impressive showing on his four-song *Be Somebody* EP. Each of the four songs could actually be classified into four different musical categories, as Rolly and Sunfire display their adeptness with calypso, reggae, and soul.

The title cut is a funky, get-down-and-party number, with skipping, hopping melodies backboning a great dance beat. Rolly's stellar vocal range climaxes the album's high point in "Loving You One More Time," a song which could only come across with a native West Indian affecting the love-crazed cry. The dabbling keyboards and shuffling percussion section give an ecstatic calypso rhythm to "Soca Jam."

As diverse as *Be Somebody* is, it's strongly reinforced by the sheer ease and comfortability with which Rolly Gray and Sunfire adapt each of the four musical styles. Diversity means nothing if competence is lacking, which isn't the case here at all. This is a professional outfit possessing an engaging, unique sound. As much as Rolly has traveled, let's

hope he'll settle down in Chapel Hill for awhile.

Secret Service is a band whose four-song EP you could pick up, examine the group photos, song titles, design, and for some reason know exactly what the album will sound like. Well, this record fell below even my meager expectations, and can only be rated as mainstream rock at its very worst. The entire output, production as well as the band's performance is downright pallid.

Secret Service labors, drags, and stumbles through four songs loaded with all the flair and verve of a dead mule. The result is four uninteresting, half-hearted love songs that don't even merit the vinyl they're produced upon.

The vocals on three of the four songs sound as if the singer's standing behind a brick wall. In the fourth, "As the World Turns" you wish the vocals were behind a wall:

*As the world goes down the drain
no one ever learns
that you and I won't feel the pain
as the world turns.*

If a best cut had to be awarded on *Secret Service*, it would go to "She's Dangerous" simply because it's the shortest.

Arrogance's *Lively* is a sixteen-song live compilation on three album sides, recorded on two consecutive nights. A couple of high points exist, but as far as live albums go *Lively* falls flat.

The refreshingly varying keyboards excel throughout, particularly on the Springsteenish "Backseat Rider." Surprisingly, the reg-

gae number "Me No Know" is extremely well-conceived, and dwarfs everything else on the album. Considering the small venues at which the disc was cut and the limited post-production work, the overall sound is crisp and polished.

However, there are a lot more drawbacks than high points on *Lively*. Opening with a sludged-out cover of Barrett Strong's "Money" is a mistake, and sets a slow, plodding tempo for the entire first side. In fact, the obvious problem with *Lively* is that it never even gets off the ground at all.

The arrangement of songs is choppy and disjointed, and severely cramps any flow or continuity that Arrogance may have developed. A semi-climax comes with the final two songs on the third side, but you probably will have discarded the album by this time.

It's not a whole lot of fun slamming local bands like this, but there's no point in giving credit where none is due.

Tim Mooney is a staff writer for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

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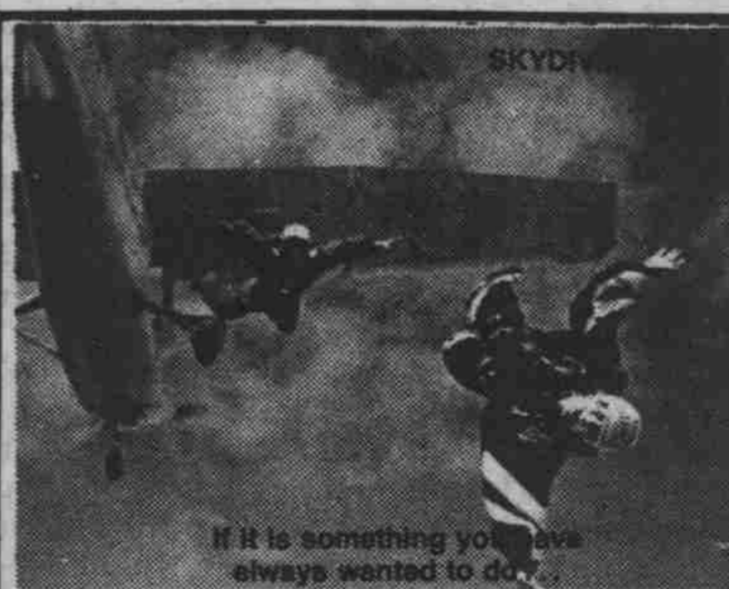
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Spotlight, September 24, 1981