

# Disc Spin

**Steve Earle**  
**Copperhead Road**  
**Uni/MCA Records**

Back in the late 70's, there existed a being known as Southern Rock, a fusion of styles such as Country, hard rock, and Blues. The groups in this genre ranged from hard rockers, such as Blackfoot and Molly Hatchet, to glorified barbershop quartets, like the Byrds, to the greatest of them all (hats over hearts please): Lynyrd Skynyrd. The smoke had pretty much settled by 1985, leaving only the Charlie Daniels' Band and .38 Special to man the guns. About this time, Steve Earle entered the music world with a vengeance, and a killer attitude.

His debut album, *Guitar Town*, created a few waves in a Country industry infatuated with the world's best George Jones wanna-be, Randy Travis. Earle was too Country for Rock, and too Rock for Country. By the time his second album, *Exit 0*, hit, he was being hailed by some as the new Southern Rock messiah, the man who could play both *The Bottom Line* and *The Grand Ole Opry*, which he has done. But Earle is a veteran and would not be bothered with labels, and decided to plow on his own course with his third album, *Copperhead Road*. The new Southern Rocker has recorded a work which is very interesting and almost refreshing. The two sides are split into song cycles, one hard and the other soft.

True to the Southern Rock formula, Earle's songs are about enemies and ancestors, and fighting and loving America. This time around, however, the enemy is not the Apaches, but the Viet Cong, as side one is basically the voice of a boy who went to war and came home a confused man; confused enough to write about it, but not confused enough to put it in a John Cougar video. The title track, in particular, reinforces the theme of a mountain man who went to the jungle and came home to take over the family moonshine trade, but with marijuana instead of lightning. Side two is about relationships in the modern world, but saves itself from redundancy through Earle's musical adventurous streak, with the Pogues featured on one track, and Telluride on another.

If Steve Earle is the shape of Southern Rock today, then the genre will have little to worry about. Earle is a songwriter of very high caliber, and a composer with enough daring to keep himself interesting, but enough focus to stay in line. This is a good album. If I took stock in giving grades or stars to records, this would definitely be A plus, or \*\*\*\* material.

**Eric E. Faircloth**

**Ian Gillian and Roger Glover**  
**Accidentally on Purpose**  
**Virgin Records**

When the history of Rock is written, Deep Purple will definitely go down as the greatest hard rock band, bar none. As the only group to merge varying styles into a heavy package, they forged a path for other adventurous hard rockers in the 1970's. After showing the world what they could do, they disbanded in 1976, leaving a tremendous gap in the rock world. They returned in 1985 with *Perfect Strangers*, and showed pale imitators who was boss. The group is once again going on a brief sabbatical, with the members going their separate ways for a short while. Two of the members decided to stick together in the wilderness and put out an album together: lead vocalist Ian Gillian and bassist/producer Roger Glover.

The result of this union is called *Accidentally on Purpose*. Strange title, but it is appropriate for the music. The album reminds me of the various internal offshoots of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young. Picture Neil Young and David Crosby making a Eurofunk album together. Gillian and Glover prove that it is possible to make a lame album when one tries hard enough. And they really tried. And they succeeded. If this is what they have to offer right now, I hope they let Ritchie Blackmore take over the next Deep Purple album. Overall, this is the only thing I have heard that is more boring than a Baptist hymn.

**Eric E. Faircloth**

**Traveling Wilburys**  
**Vol. 1**  
**Wilbury/Warner Bros.**

The term "supergroup" is used to describe what happens when stars get together and form groups. The 70's were full of them, with Blind Faith, Rocket 88, and the Super Sessions series. The 80's gave us Asia and the KBC Band. All of these groups share two common traits: they are boring, and they should have stayed home instead of going into the studio or on tour. The Traveling Wilburys certainly qualifies as a supergroup, with five figures who are legends in their own right: George Harrison, Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, Geoff Lynne (of ELO fame), and Roy Orbison (the only rock singer who comes close to touching the crown of Elvis Presley). Instead of making a boring, self-indulgent piece of vinyl waste, the old boys have turned themselves into the only supergroup that can be called super.

The music is very good, with a tight backing band of session players and vocal harmony work that is as seamless as anything the Beach Boys have ever done; except that the Beach Boys only wish that they could be this good. The voices mix well, and the harmony style is not unlike that of a good Gospel Quartet, with each member given equal time in the spotlight. Standouts are Bob Dylan's vocals (of course) and the brief moments when Roy Orbison steps up to the mike for his parts with a voice as smooth as the best silk, and as haunting as a lonely fog (how's that for a lame comparison?). This is the last we'll hear of Roy Orbison, as he died shortly after the album's release.

There are several singles on radio right now, and well they should be. This is one of the best albums I've heard in years, and it's sad that Vol. II, if there is one, will not be nearly as good because of Orbison's death.

**Eric E. Faircloth**

**Living Color**  
**Vivid**  
**Epic Records**

A long time ago, in a galaxy far away, Dr. Funkenstein looked upon the Earth and decided that the world was incomplete. In his infinite wisdom, the Chosen One sent down George Clinton and gave us Parliament/Funkadelic, the first group to ever mix hard funk and hard rock for the masses. Equal parts James

Brown and Jimi Hendrix with a big dose of Led Zeppelin in there somewhere, P-funk rocked the world from one end to the other. The newest group in the line of P-funk progeny is a New York assembly known as Living Colour. Currently known for the song "Cult of Personality", the group is in the middle of a long climb that should end up at the top.

Discovered by Mick Jagger and the toast of the Big Apple rock scene for a few years now, Living Colour is as tight and refined as most veteran groups. The first single, "Cult of Personality," is about mind control and (guess what) personality cults. This is a good sign: lyrics that are not the usual superficial fare heard on the radio. The rest of the songs are about similarly weighty topics. The group has a unique sound and texture to it, with a hard-rock rhythm section of Muzz Skillings and William Calhoun. The distinctive lead vocals of Corey

Glover (remember him from Platoon?) give an edge to the sound, and are distinctive enough to make the listener pay attention and grab the ear. My vote for Next Big Thing in the guitar world is Vernon Reid, who can lay in the background, and then unleash a great riff which is far more interesting than anything Eddie Van Halen has done in the last five years or so. This is a group to watch.

**Eric E. Faircloth**