

For the record

'Cold Blood' returns with strong blues influence

by Gary Miller and Ted Claghorn

Cold Blood: "First Taste of Sin" (Reprise MS 2074)

As a brief introduction to Cold Blood you will find that they are a horn oriented group. Cold Blood relies on the vocal talents of Lydia Pense and includes Rod Ellicott as the most talented musician on electric bass.

"First Taste of Sin" is Cold Blood's third album, technically a very good third album. The previous two attempts were flawed in many aspects. The first album (*Cold Blood: "Cold*

Blood" San Francisco SD 200) presented us with an amateur group with a professional bass player. Even Lydia's vocals were strained.

The excellent repertoire, Rod Ellicott's bass runs and Fred Catero's engineering were the only exciting elements of the record. The second album (*Cold Blood: "Sisyphus" San Francisco SD 205*) brought many needed changes in the group. A new drummer and trumpeter, one less sax and Danny Hull emerging as a talented sax player to back Rod Ellicott on bass. In "Sisyphus" Lydia's vocals are less forced, but still not completely believable. The material was very weak and the influence of Chicago stood out like a "South California Purples" ending.

It has been four years since the release of that

first record and many changes have occurred in the group. Take the personality of the group, Rod Ellicott (bass), Danny Hull (tenor sax), Sandy McKee (drums and vocals), Lydia Pense (lead vocals), and Raul Matute (organ and piano), add newcomers Bill Atwood (trumpet), Max Haskett (trumpet and vocals), Mel Martian (tenor and baritone sax, flute) and Michael Sasuki (guitar) and place lightly into the Wally Heider Studios. Stir in such fine musicians as rhythm and blues star, Donny Hathaway (piano, organ, arranging, and composition), Coke Escovedo and Pete Escovedo (percussionists extraordinaire that appeared on Santana's last record) and you have just baked yourself one tasteful record.

One of the better pieces is a blues version of

James Taylor's "Lo and Behold." Lydia shows more feeling and emotion than ever before in her sometimes tender, sometimes raunchy treatment of the lyrics. The group is remarkably tight and they dazzle the ear as they play three separate parts running in an odd sort of dissonant harmony.

Cold Blood has always had a rhythm and blues influence in their records. They have recorded songs by Willie Dixon ("I Just Want to Make Love to You") and Issac Hayes ("Your Good Thing"). This time we get a strong dose of rhythm and blues from Donny Hathaway. Hathaway lends a hand in the arranging and writes two songs: "You Had to Know" a tender love piece and an instrumental called "Valdez in the Country."

"First Taste of Sin" is an incredible step

forward for Cold Blood. They try things and experiment as a complete unit, not just separate members of a group. Rod Ellicott's bass lines are the perfect compliment to any song. Lydia's voice has matured to the point that she has to be in the competition for best female vocal in rock. The use of the horns in the music is amazing in that they are as tight technically as anyone could ask for. They prove it in the arranging and execution of "Visions" and "Inside Your Soul."

Had this been Cold Blood's first album the impact of the record would probably be greater, and by third record standards "First Taste of Sin" may only be mediocre. But Cold Blood shows an abundance of potential, and if they can improve their writing their next album should be superior.

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