

Alan Bisbort

'Laid Back' too mellow

Laid Back—Gregg Allman (Capricorn)

From the same corporate brain who drained every last living guitar lick and breath from the Allman Brothers phenomenon, here is one of those good ole Allman boys out on his own with a good ole album for all us good ole folks.

This album is out on the market because the record company knows there is a ready place for it in the homes and hearts of a large segment of the record buying public (Boy, do they know it. The last A. Brothers album was number one on the charts for God knows how long.)

But, it also goes to show you that Gregg Allman is just a "mellow laid back dude" (a nifty record industry phrase batted around among the "we just play our instruments; we

don't need no gimmicks" school of rock music, of which Gregg Allman is a lifetime charter member.)

To prove the point that there is "another side to Gregg Allman," the song selection and instrumentation on this album are unmistakably and almost embarrassingly MELLOW. There is none of the life force which seems to weave in and out of the Allman Brothers group music here. Some folks like to think that it has an eerie or mystical air, but when you come right down to it, this album is just plain boring.

Now, to look at the music. He has chosen to go with one of the most overworked songs in the history of 20th Century music—*These Days*. Understandably, it is a nice song, but today Jackson Browne (who wrote it five

years ago) almost refuses to admit that he wrote it. It's the kind of overtly personal song that a writer writes for himself but comes to dislike after performing it too many times and hearing other people perform it too much. Anyway, it sounds like it says something, especially when Gregg Allman's pleading voice gets hold of it.

Next, there is a reworking of an old Allman tune *Please Call Home*. It sounds nice enough, but why does it merit being redone? Once should be enough, shouldn't it? (I'm asking for my own benefit.)

And lookee here...yet another version of *Midnight Rider* (for all of you who missed it the first time around). This time, Gregg decides to sing directly into the microphone so that there is no mistake about the lyrics (or some other equally as confusing reason). About this time in your listening to the album, you reach for the cover to check the back up personnel because you are almost certain it is not the A. Brothers.

And you are right. What made you think this? Because everything seems so incredibly lazy, so incredibly non-Allman like. Except for a few guest licks from fellow Brothers, the back up is strictly unknowns (not that that is especially bad—you gotta start somewhere). But, like I was saying, they aren't the Allman Brothers. They probably weren't meant to be. After all, it is a solo album. Still, there doesn't appear to be any life, just a semi-wasted "smoking dope all night" feeling.

Only two of the songs are previously unrecorded Gregg Allman tunes. These are the only pleasant breaks on the album. Gregg Allman can still write songs when he wants to, which is what he should have done for his "solo" album but didn't.

The final blow is dealt by his inclusion of *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* (shades of Leon Russell and Delaney and Bonnie and countless other better left unmentioned folks...) Who needs an education in sing-along folk songs? We want some music. Besides, this song has been capably handled several times already in the past.

There has to be a message (or a lesson) in all this. I think I have it. It has something to do with musicians making money through good hard work and then sitting around wondering what to do with themselves. *Laid Back* is an example of this recording (or recordings sake mentality. I think I'll cut an album...

Radio dramas set

"CBS Radio Theater Mystery" begins nightly at 11:07 p.m. with the sound of a creaking door and the voice of E.G. Marshall, the permanent host, telling an eerie tale ranging from the macabre to the occult.

The early 1950's saw the death of most network radio series. Television was the culprit.

But CBS has revived its new radio series in prime time, bringing the chills and thrills of the old-time programs to listeners in the 1970's.

"CBS Radio Mystery Theater" will run seven nights a week, each a 52-minute episode beginning at 11:07 p.m. on WDNC (AM), 620 on the AM radio dial and on WDNC-FM at 105.1 on the FM dial.

Of the 195 original shows planned—about 170 will be repeats—26 will be reworking of classics from Edgar Allen Poe to Mary

Shelley, H.H. Munro, R. L. Stevenson.

But "nobody is going to say this is nostalgia," Himan Brown, the show's producer, says. "The programs will be new. Many will have contemporary backgrounds and themes. And never before in the history of radio has there been a seven night-a week series like this."

Brown calls the radio drama something people need—"a legitimate art form, like films, or theater, with its own form and discipline and ability to communicate and shouldn't be allowed to die because of television."

The series won't have staff writers or a stock acting company, he says. "It's an open show for all the fresh, proven and unproven talent we can find."

If the show clicks, Sam Cook Digges, head of CBS radio division, says it could lead to a dramatic anthology series, a daytime soap opera—and even a new comedy series—in short, a modern mini-revival of the golden days of network radio.

But the only CBS throwback to vintage radio drama, Brown said, will be the mystery theater's opening format—the sound of the squeaking door, the sound he created years ago for "Inner Sanctum." "That and the NBC chimes are only two copyrighted sounds in radio," he said.



'Yellow Submarine'

Yellow Submarine, starring Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band—Ringo, George, Paul and John—in an animated frolic, is slated for 11:15 p.m. Sunday in the Carolina Theater. All-time classics include "Yellow

Submarine," "Help!," "All You Need Is Love," "When I'm Sixty-Four," and "A Little Help from My Friends." Co-sponsored by the Daily Tar Heel, tickets are \$1.50.

Holiday TV specials first-rate

by Billy Armistead
Television Critic

Over the Christmas holidays, ABC broadcast two dramatic specials that deserve a second look, when and if they reappear.

On December 16 there was a new television production of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, starring Katharine Hepburn. Pauline Kael to the contrary, *The Glass Menagerie* is a first-rate play. It does seem to wallow in its sensitivity, and its dogged delicacy, fragility and unicorn symbolism often make one want to laugh. But it has lovely dialogue, with the kind of nonchalant poetry Williams used to have at his command, plus vivid characters and real, if somewhat clumsily expressed, feelings.

ABC's production, filmed with all the care and resources of a theatrical movie, was excellent. Katharine Hepburn received too much publicity regarding her television debut, hence her perfectly-all-right-but-scarcely-monumental performance was apt to disappoint some viewers.

Hepburn was never a polished technician; and if her Amanda Wingfield missed the mark slightly—too tough, too old, not vulnerable enough—the performance nevertheless benefited from her extraordinary, intuitive expressiveness. She is mannered, yes, and too beautiful to be true, but her mannerisms and her beauty call forth tremendous emotions and hold one riveted. As one watched her in *The Glass Menagerie*, the weaknesses in her conception seemed trivial.

As Tom, Sam Waterston brought back memories of the young Anthony Perkins—sensitive, rebellious, embittered, everything a Tom Wingfield ought to be. The tall, assertive-featured Joanna Miles was miscast as Laura (the part calls for a Mia Farrow); moreover, she had no limp, but she gave a sound performance.

The most remarkable thing about ABC's production was Michal Moriarty as Jim O'Connor, the Gentleman Caller. The Gentleman Caller is usually played as slick, brash and charming—in the bad old Hollywood movie, Kirk Douglas took the

part—but Moriarty turned him into a self-conscious, disillusioned nurd.

The change makes sense. The more conventional Gentleman Caller, who is supposed to fool Laura, often fools audiences—especially younger audiences—as well. They actually believe all his rot. Moreover, Laura's willingness to be taken in by such a ridiculous man poignantly underlines her desperation. Moriarty filled out his unusual, excellent conception with an impeccable performance.

A week after *The Glass Menagerie*, ABC broadcast the Joseph Losey-Jane Fonda film of Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. The television networks have never given a damn for Ibsen before; what made this production lucrative was the combination of Jane Fonda and women's liberation.

A Doll's House is a rather four-square play of a type—nineteenth-century realistic problem drama—not particularly fashionable nowadays; and if Ibsen is called for, one can think of several more interesting plays, (*The Master Builder*, *When We Dead Awaken* and *John Gabriel Borkman*) that could stand for revival. On the other hand, *A Doll's House* is a terrific piece of theatrical construction; it is fun to watch because each plot turn occurs at exactly the right time.

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Answer to Yesterday's Puzzle

Crossword Puzzler

ACROSS

- Weakly
- Postage unit
- Article of furniture
- Goodness of feeling
- Get up
- Swiss canton
- Admirer
- Lit
- Commit
- Appreciations
- Black's nicknames
- Bedside
- Wider
- Difficult
- Highways
- Note of scale
- Blind
- Chairs
- Fall behind
- Pronoun
- Quarrel
- Partner
- Hold in high regard
- Ballades
- War god
- Wan
- Domesticated
- Not-emptied
- Snake
- Genus of birds
- Girl's name
- Footless part
- Part of illustration
- Base

DOWN

- Dry, as wine
- Ventilate
- Slows nearly
- Belated
- Another name for lingo
- Ventilate
- Manuscript

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