

Browne's 'Empty' A Good LP

"Running On Empty," Asylum Records
Jackson Browne is perhaps more talented than we ever realized.

Without even trying too hard, Browne has become the underground monarch of the teen-age music world. He first started his musical career shyly writing songs, ignoring his own talent and saleability, and providing sheet music for the likes of The Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, Kiki Dee and Joe Cocker.

Almost by accident he started cutting a few of his own records. And lately, he has made enough of a stir to rank in Rolling Stone's year-end poll as one of the hottest recording acts in the business, despite almost non-existent air time on commercial AM radio.

That Jackson Browne shuns the type of PR hype that is currently "selling" Andy Gibb should be his downfall. But music-minded people will always eventually seek out such and after a huge success with "The Pretender," Browne now has released "Running On Empty," which in less than a month has climbed to number 10 on the Top Ten LP chart.

As "Running On Empty" spins on the turntable, it is easy to tell that the title cut and "You Love The Thunder" are standard Browne material. They may even smack of dullness because it is so easy to tire of the same old lyrics and the same old musical flow.

But the amazing talent that emerges on this disc is the fact that several songs are recorded either backstage, in motel rooms and even on a Continental Silver Eagle bus somewhere in New Jersey. Browne is incredible when recording under any conditions — he always sounds good.

The off-beat material that makes "Running On Empty" more than just a standard Browne LP are Daniel Kortchmar's "Shaky Town" and a revised version of "Cocaine."

In essence, the album literally packs your bags and books you on a tour with Browne. Each song reflects aspects of being "on the road," with the majority of the lyrics being on the depressant side. For instance, "I got a bottle of wine (pass it over)/I got a broken white line (I'm still sober)/There ain't nothin' but time between this Silver Eagle/And that New Jersey line."

But lyrically, Jackson Browne has established himself as poetically superior to all current music personalities, save Joni Mitchell. On this album, his lyrics ring the side of "superstardom" that the fans never experience — the constant road travel, the one-night stands and "when they got up on their feet they made the show/And that was sweet/But I can hear the sound/Of slamming doors and folding chairs/And that's a sound they'll never know."

Currently, Browne is headlining a concert tour across the South. And most likely, 1978 will be his year. Browne is starting to get more radio air time without asking. He deserves the recognition because he has arrived at the front door without disc jockey backing or big business hawking. And he's added another good album to his un-hyped collection.

By BOB LONGINO



Vocals Spark 'Emotion'

"Show Some Emotion" A&M Records
Many rock connoisseurs tend to view negatively Top 40 singles and the artists recording them. These reviewers are further inclined to judge with displeasure the recording containing the so-called hits — albums which do nothing more than fill out the remainder of the disc.

So when Joan Armstrong (pronounced ARM-a-trad-ing) released "Show Some Emotion," critics were greatly surprised to learn that not only were the album's two Top 40 hits worthy of praise, but also that the rest of the recording was as good or better.

On her third album, "Joan Armatrading," this talented artist revealed that she was on the threshold of brilliance. And with "Emotion," Joan Armatrading has taken that final step forward to greatness.

From the country blues of "Woncha Come On Home," to the laid back jazz tune of "Opportunity," to the flowing melodies of "Warm Love" and "Willow," the secret ingredient to the album is Joan's dynamic, prominent vocals.

Most obvious on "Woncha Come On Home," where she performs with nothing more than her acoustic guitar and a thumb piano, vocals are clearly the difference between a good album and a great one.

"Emotion" marks Joan Armatrading's fourth album in a five year career. Born on the isle of St. Kitts in the Caribbean, later moving to England at the age of 8, she has attained half of her musical goal while permanently preventing another — a goal to be both famous and anonymous.

By JEFF COHEN



Joan Armatrading

She's Got Nothin' To Brag About



Mary Kay Place

"Aim'n' To Please," Columbia Records
Mary Kay Place has made a living as well as an art out of playing second rate singers — first as the star-struck Loretta Haggars of television's "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman," and recently on film as a not-so-hot torch singer in the ill-fated musical "New York, New York."

"Aim'n' To Please" is her second attempt at shifting musical focus from the character(s) to herself, but one wonders if the transition from a comical bowling alley songstress to a serious country music singer will ever be completely possible after listening to a few bars of this album.

There are bright spots such as "Dolly's Dive" and "Something To Brag About," the single release with Willie Nelson (who sounds amazingly like Lee Hazlewood on this cut). Both songs are up-tempo where Mary Kay's greatest singing ability lies. However, the rest of the material selec-

tion, coupled with the singer's limited vocal range, makes this album C material.

Mary Kay's experiences as a television comedy writer are evident in the lyrics of her own compositions, which often provided an earthy, humoresque look at America's working class in her first album, "Tonite! At the Capri Lounge." The intention is the same on "Aim'n' To Please" but lyrics alone cannot keep songs like "Marlboro Man" and "Cattie Kate" from being overshadowed by humdrum melodies.

It's true, Mary Kay Place has the voice and the backing to make inroads into an unusually tight facet of the music industry. But unless she soon decides whether she is shooting for acceptance as a novelty singer or a bona fide member of the "world of country music," albums like "Aim'n' To Please" will always hit off target.

By MIRIAM PACE

'Reckless Daughter' Too 'Weird'

"Don Juan's Reckless Daughter," Asylum Records
One of Joni Mitchell's most famous trademarks is that she is absolutely "weird." And never has she proved it more than with her new double album release entitled "Don Juan's Reckless Daughter."

No doubt, die-hard Joni Mitchell fans will drool over this cut, but from start to finish the LP is tough to like as schizoid Joni balances her several "personalities" (folk, rock, jazz, classical) in a mish-mash of music and words.

Lyricaly, Joni is her ever-genius best, poetically mastering her unusual ideas. But musically, this time she's a downer. Before, albums like "Court and Spark" mixed beautiful melodies and sounds. But on "Reckless Daughter," Joni concentrates on a synthesized bass with a hornish sound that is distracting as well as too overly unique.

Most of the songs include a hint of jazz which she first started to develop in "Court and Spark" with "Twisted." She's downright black with "Cotton Avenue" and the opening

section of "Talk To Me," with black-faced Joni struttin' on the album sleeve to complete the effect.

The really trying parts of the album come in "Paprika Plains" — a 16 minute 19 second excursion through slow melodies that are innovative, but tiresome — and "The Tenth World" — a six minute 45 second bongo lesson that repeats itself at least 250 times.

By BOB LONGINO

City Boy Is Slick But Solid Group

By ROB PATTERSON

new English rock bands. While the bulk of new British rockers are political punks with a cause, City Boy's mission is music. Judging from their reviews — which seem to range from

the heartily approving to the outright ecstatic — it looks like City Boy's got a sure foothold on success. As one California reviewer noted, "Their sophistication is contagious."

The dearth of high quality in a lot of today's music would almost seem to create a natural audience for the sound of City Boy — slippery, sneaky rock songs and glorious ballads rendered with wit and a strong instrumental style. But it's been the long road up for them, and even now, the end is only just in sight.

"We originally started out to be songwriters," says Steve, exuding the charm of a youthful Cary Grant, even through a fog of flu. "Performing never seemed to be a thing that we really thought about. It just developed that way, because nobody else would do our songs," he says with a smile. "and when it came to be an electric band, showmanship started rearing its beautiful head. That's where we are today... still just as broke," he jokes with a wave of his hand. "but electric. And we have three albums out."

Actually, the British side of City Boy's "on the verge of success" story has some of that overnight star quality which is so magical. Skipping from one dead-end job to another, Steve and the gentle, but bear-like Lol were forced to pursue their songwriting in their spare time. Eventually, they formed an acoustic group with Max Thomas on keyboards and Chris Dunn on bass. Their demo tapes finally attracted the interest of Phonogram Records in London: "It all happened very quickly, actually," picks up Lol in his deep baritone, "because within six months after the start of the six-piece electric band we had a record contract."

City Boy became the first English studio project of a young South African

producer — Robert John Lange — who almost functioned as a seventh member of the band. The first offspring of that partnership, titled City Boy — was likened by some to Genesis. 10cc or even the Hollies, but I've always found their music unique.

It wasn't until after the next two records — Dinner At The Ritz and Young Men Gone West — that City Boy finally did come West to the U.S. Their albums had already enticed reviewers, radio programmers and listeners into demanding a stateside tour. So last fall the band, crew and management set out to win America.

Their showmanship is grounded in the low-key antics of Broughton and Mason, who function like a singing Laurel and Hardy, playing off each other vocally and theatrically. But instead of garish glamour, City Boy's theatrics are the type where the flick of a wrist can say more than a whole skit. And the music — it's truly sublime.

After a taste of the States, the band's sights are set on coming West again, and again. "It's encouraging," says Steve with a half-smile. "We've found small pockets of fanatics across the country — and they know the words to every song on all three albums!"

"I think we've established a firm following over here" says Lol. "We were developing something over here with the albums before we came over, but it was faceless... nobody knew who we were. When we came over we gave a face to the albums." And it's a friendly, eager-to-please face they've presented.

After recording their

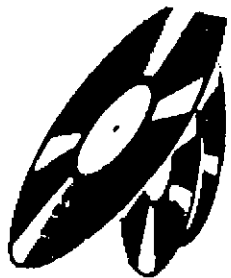
fourth album (which Steve and Lol are determined to make a killer), City Boy will be back to the States later this spring. Though the old adage, "good taste is timeless," fits them to a tee, the only problem is counting the long hours until they return. As far as my faces to watch in 1978, City Boy is tops. Don't miss them.

Another band from the tasteful side of European rock to watch is Lake. Their first lp won the German

equivalent of a Grammy for Best New Album of the Year, and was released early this fall here by Columbia Records. Though the half German, half Scottish band's fall tour here wasn't without complications (they were opening for Lynyrd Skynyrd until that band's tragic accident), they certainly proved themselves firm contenders in the rock-with-brains category. Look for a new album and tour this spring.

Lol Mason and Steve Broughton, the singing-writing tandem of Britain's City Boy, are certainly a welcome change from most

Top Ten Hits



By The Associated Press
Here are the top singles and albums as listed by Billboard magazine.

- TOP 10 SINGLES**
1. STAYIN' ALIVE — Bee Gees (RSO)
 2. SHORT PEOPLE — Randy Newman (Warner Bros.)
 3. BABY COME BACK — Player (RSO)
 4. WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS — Queen (Elektra)
 5. LOVE IS THICKER THAN WATER — Andy Gibb (RSO)
 6. JUST THE WAY YOU ARE — Billy Joel (Columbia)
 7. HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE — Bee Gees (RSO)
 8. SOMETIMES WHEN WE TOUCH — Dan Hill (20th Century)
 9. YOU'RE IN MY HEART — Rod Stewart (Warner Bros.)
 10. EMOTION — Samantha Sang (Private Stock)

- TOP 10 LPs**
1. "SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER" Soundtrack — (RSO)
 2. ROD STEWART — Foot Loose & Fancy Free (Warner Bros.)
 3. EARTH, WIND & FIRE — All 'N' All (Columbia)
 4. QUEEN — News Of The World (Elektra)
 5. ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA — Out Of The Blue (Jet)
 6. FLEETWOOD MAC — Rumours (Warner Bros.)
 7. NEIL DIAMOND — I'm Glad You're Here With Me Tonight (Columbia)
 8. STYX — The Grand Illusion (A&M)
 9. BILLY JOEL — The Stranger (Columbia)
 10. JACKSON BROWNE — Running On Empty (Asylum)

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