THE HISSING OF SUMMER LAWS

Jocelyn Mitchell

Court and Spark took a lot of people by surprise. It was a lot different than what anyone had been led to expect from Joni Mitchell, but it put her on the cover of Rolling Stone and a lot of records. The cult goddess was in a huff, but she couldn't have looked more beautiful, and finally, commercialized.

But now she has a new album and all that is changed. Ever since she hooked up with The Band and became a member of Bob Dylan's backing group, Express her style has been undergoing great changes. Although Court and Spark seemed to be her highest plateau, it now appears that it was only another level of development seemingly alien to and detached from the last.

She has again created a new image, and it is as different and renewing as the last.

It is called The Hissing of Summer Laws, and it almost constitutes a glimpse of genius. Hissing is a study of life, of sex, and of the environment. It is so striking in the way it combines the soft, slow, and the harsh, but it is still a beautiful woman

Some have described it as the opposite of the songs on "Shades of Scarlett Conqueror's," but the music itself is a study of life, and it is something that one can make sense of.

It won't sell as many copies as Court and Spark, but it has far surpassed it in style.

Terry Van House

ROXY MUSIC

Well here it is, folks — the one you've all been waiting for: the first Roxy Music album.

In the beginning, there was an introspective, adable guitarist named Phil Manzanera, a saxophonist called Andy MacKay; a drummer (Paul Thompson), one bassist (Rik Kenton); a non-musician who played synthesizer, dabbling in experimental tapes and called himself Enzo; and a crooner christened Bryan Ferry who was determined to be an idol, even if it killed him.

After two albums, Enzo left the band and has since engaged in a wide range of projects which have included writing a book for non-musicians, forming a symphonic orchestra which mangled classic orchestral sounds (Portsmouth Sinfonia), constantly giving interviews in Europe, two unusual but usually good solo albums and a collaboration album with ex-King Crimson man Robert Fripp.

Enzo has since been replaced with Eddie Jobson on strings, synthesizer, and keyboards and John Guastafla has replaced Rik Kenton. Otherwise the group remains the same.

On the first album (1971-72), Bryan Ferry and Roxy Music were a hit in England. However, a hit is often as good as a miss in the world of music and Ferry is not often for taking chances. Since the third album (the first without Enzo), Roxy Music has been Bryan Ferry's band. The third album is best described as an array of sharply crafted songs and heartbreaks "crooned" in the best sense of the word: to very catchy tunes done like no other band that comes to mind.

The fourth album featured more rolling tunes with a lot more guitar and much more depth and perspective in the vocals. It was very tight, almost pop in a loose sense of the word.

So now, as if to compensate for leaning too far to the right, Roxy has just issued a very left-leaning album entitled Siren. Siren — the same conjures up visions of beautiful women — not quite real — but very appealing, luring mortal men from the realms of reality into the depths of the enchanting.

And so goes it: this is not a real album. It merely looks like one. The disc serves only to transform ethereal sounds from the enchanted deep. It is impossible to pin anything distinctive on this album. You still have the same Roxy Music and the same Ferry vocals. The tunes are nothing you would expect on the old AM radio nor necessarily would you expect rock music to sound like: something from the past or maybe something from the future; some of it shallow, but some of it deep. It is just another thing that only Roxy Music could come up with and no one could traverse the boundaries of roxy music.

"Love is the Drug" sounds like the image from an intimate detective movie staring somebody like Elliott Gould or the Men from UNCLE. "Sentimental Fool" could pass for a trip through a space warp, and "Whirlwind" does justice to its name. On both of these, one can hear shades of Enzo. "Silent Sells" could possibly feature a Billy Preston sound-alike on keyboards and all nine songs enable Ferry to falter the range of heartbreak and loneliness, despair and dependence while all the time maintaining full control. For Bryan Ferry is the synonym for suave, debonair and aloof.

Slick hair, a fancy tax and an air of social grace are all attributes.

Nothing is definable as out-north; no one could mention the music except the cover — Always a Roxy Woman. While the previous album covers have all portrayed beautiful women seemingly helpless and exposed; this one reeks of a different air. The cover woman here is a blue sea nymph (i.e. — a siren) crouching over a rocky coast, possibly struggling for help and pity, but apparently luring the browser on. Roxy covers are not more controversial or demeaning derogations. There are perhaps a fair appraisal of the music inside.

Whereas Stranded (third) was overcoming and Country Life (fourth) was challenging, Siren is alluring. And perhaps the best way to describe Roxy Music is overcoming, challenging, alluring, and ... roxy.

Steve Burke

BONGO FURY

Frank Zappa

For the past ten years or so, Frank Zappa has been turning out some of the most imaginative and adventurous music in America. His style is unmistakable, his talent undeniable, and his cheery little mind is unshakable. Of course, like any artist, Zappa has to have his low points and his ruts. Despite the fact that some of his work approaches sheer brilliance, Zappa does have his share of garbage.

As a result, Zappa's music is quite good; it is even amazing. But there have to be some exceptions. Boys and girls. Zappa's latest release is such an exception. Ferry, Frank, but Bongo Fury bites the big burnt weenie.

To begin with, the appearance of this album so soon after his last was a little suspect. Provocative it has its roots, and Zappa has paid the price with Bongo Fury. Frank knows when he's put out a mediocre album and he doesn't waste much effort on the cover design. Witness the elaborate designs of his best albums as opposed to the simplistic covers of Apostrophe and Bongo Fury.

Adding to the mounting ecstasies about this album was the presence of the inimitable Captain Beefheart (Don Van Vliet), Frank's old high school chum. While Zappa usually surrounds himself with an entourage of virtuoso talent, Beefheart's musical abilities are something akin to those of an enaged chicken. His singing (ahem) is grating at best, and his harmonica breathes have little to distinguish them. It is hoped that the Zappa-Beefheart alliance will be a short one.

It is also hoped that the absence of Ruth Underwood, Zappa's incredible percussionist, will be short. Her presence was the one thing that could have redeemed this album. Also, Zappa doesn't give Key-

Eddie) are either taken by Frank or relegated to Beefheart.

Although Frank tells that "jazz isn't dead, it just smells funny," his best efforts are rooted in the jazz idiom. Unfortunately, Bongo Fury is firmly entrenched in rhythm and blues, and Frank's usually proficient guitar work is nothing but 1967-west-coast-fanatic-sounding.

But perhaps saddest of all is the fact that Zappa's humor is just about shot. Zappa's lyrics, once biting satire, are becoming rather silly. The intonation of his words are such that just about anything he says is sort of funny, but intonation isn't enough. Frank's wit simply doesn't leave anyone rolling in the aisles anymore. Anyone over 12, that is.

However, this reviewer's convictions about Frank Zappa are not easily shaken. Although he steps in a few holes every once in a while, Zappa usually manages to stay on top of things. Frank's next album may very well be excellent (if he brings back Ruth and Steve information), but Bongo Fury is a waste of a considerable talent.

Calvin Thomas

Illustration by Billy Davis

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