

# POPS

JAMES BELSEY

**Hejira: Joni Mitchell (Asylum)** — Joni Mitchell is a peerless singer-songwriter, restrained, crystal-clear in delivery and writing. The latest album blazes a fresh trail to glory with its mood of sighs and resignation. Backings are simple, just gentle electric guitar chords behind those magnificently delicate vocals, and I could play the emotive "Amelia" or the beautifully textured "Furry Sings The Blues" endlessly.

**Year Of The Cat: Al Stewart (RCA)** — Stewart's sudden, if late, rush to success in America has done him good. The new album is a fine production, using rich backings to telling effect. I particularly liked the thoughtful "Broadway Hotel", the tender "Sand In Your Shoes" and the clever title track.

**Golden Age of Sam Cooke (RCA)** — A useful package, combining all of Cooke's best-known and best-loved tracks, songs like "Chain Gang", "Cupid", "Twistin' The

Night Away", "Shake", "Only Sixteen" and "Another Saturday Night".

**I just Want To Be A Country Singer: Vernon Oxford (RCA)** — And so you'll be, Mr Oxford, and so you'll be. The music is no-nonsense cowboy / redneck country with a large dash of humour as well as the usual lashings of sentimentality. Try the banal "Clear Your Own Tables" or "Wait A Little Longer, Please".

**E-Man Grooving: Jimmy Castor Bunch (Atlantic)** — Yet another neat, crisp set from the Bunch led by sax player Jimmy Castor. Everything hops along at a spanking pace, and the tracks to try are the excellent title track, "Dracula Part 1" and "Super Love".

**Somewhere In Between: John Stevens Away (Vertigo)** — Despite everything, I really can't use Away's fiddly, irritating jazz-rock. It patters along to no particular purpose

and with annoying noises too. Tracks like "I Can't Explain" and "Follow Me" are poor echoes of jazz a decade or more ago.

**Heat Treatment: Graham Parker and Rumour (Vertigo)** — Another hunk of no-nonsense, full-blooded rock 'n' roll from one of the best of this country's outfits. They avoid cliches, stick to the point and emerge triumphant. Try "Fools' Gold", "Black Honey" or "Turned Up Too Late".

**Moving Targets: Flo and Eddie (CBS)** — Flo and Eddie are two of the original Turtles who've since grown their hair, moved on to "higher" things — you can take that any way you want — and lost their charm in the process. It's efficient vocal rock on tracks like "Guns" and the hard "Mama Open Up", but interesting that their remake of the splendid pop song "Elinore", their own composition by the way, stands head and shoulders above the rest.