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MOTT THE HOOPLE'S COMPLETE HISTORY

The Move Divide & Conquer,
David Bowie's Love Letters,
The Stones in Los Angeles,
plus The Return of the Troggs



sing his ass off. Doubt me? Check out the lyrics to *The Singer Sings His Song, Canto Libre, Song Sung Blue* and many others; he's no longer just making a living as a songwriter — now he's shaping a life and a worldview.

Anyway, comes *Solitary Man* and you're suddenly realizing how good Neil's back-up band really is — here it's Alan Lindgren's smooth, multiple keyboards and Prett's omnipresent bass, while handclaps, tambourine, Bennett's fancy strumming, and St. John's destructo drums bring *Cherry Cherry* in rolling high, the best version I've yet heard him do. Ah, but then *Sweet Caroline* is a letdown — ever-lush strings and pizzicato picking.

And *Side Two* has too much comedy relief to suit me: *Porcupine Pine, You're So Sweet the Horselies Keep Haugin' Around Your Face, Soggy Pretzels* — a little of Neil's cute shit goes a long way. But the side also offers a trio of winners, starting with *Red, Red Wine*, the first of his *in vino veritas* numbers (I'd include *Cracklin' Rosie* and *Captain Sunshine*); and its mock-honkytonk, piano-and-sweet-steel qualities are still just right. Also, redolent with rippling mandolin, crackling with rhythm 'n' brusin' organ, *Shilo* howls everyone over — I sure am glad Bang Records' belated release of that song forced Neil to reconsider it.

Third, there's Neil's ultimate small-R romantic, outdoors love song (indoors it's *Play Me*), *And the Grass Won't Pay No Mind*, with bass and acoustic guitars chiming like purest crystal, congas and piano gently enhancing the rhythm, and Diamond himself doing a number on your lusty imagination: "Listen easy, you can hear God calling/Walking barefoot by the stream/Come unto me, your hair softly falling/On My face as in a dream/And the time will be our time/And the grass won't pay no mind."

So the first half of his live show aims to catch the folks up and carry 'em along through (mostly) older stuff; Part II, however — *Sides Three and Four* — aims to overwhelm 'em, tuck 'em away in his hip pocket. You can almost hear his mind grinning: "Watch me work, y'all..."

New stuff starts the big build — the strongest ballads from *MOODS*, all fresh in the ear and mind of audience and band alike. "Let me do

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THE DIVINE MISS M. Bette Midler Atlantic

"Bette Midler is *Melanie* for adults," said one of them.

I shattered his right knee-cap with a single, well-placed kick.

"Boy," said another. "I sure would like to get into her tereador pants."

I cast him a glance of withering scorn.

"But...but..." stammered yet another. "She's a...a grotesquerie."

I looked him straight in the eye. "Yes," I said softly but with an unmistakable tone of omniscience in my voice. "Yes, she's a grotesquerie." I paused for maximum dramatic emphasis. "But she's our grotesquerie."

Yes, well, the thing is that there has never been anyone like Bette Midler, and there may not even be now.

The Divine Miss M. is Fannie Brice from Spanish Harlem, Carmen Miranda from the Bronx, Barbra Streisand with balls. She is an entertainer because she is a Star (not just a Star because she is an entertainer, like so many others). She not only has Presence. She is a Presence. And she has Presents (i.e., gifts), too. Lots and lots of gifts. Like the gift of immediacy, the gift of animal magnetism, the gift of shameless, brazen flash. She has a natural sense of comedic timing, a perfect sensitivity to audience reactions, and (need it be said?) a brilliant flair for capital-S Style. She also happens to have a hell of a good voice, as smoky and forlorn or as brassy and shiny as the occasion demands.

How much of all this comes through on vinyl? Well, not all of it by any means, but enough to get you going in the right direction. Enough to at least hint to you why those of us who know about Bette Midler actually know about Bette Midler.

There are a lot of old friends here: side one opens with *Do You Want To Dance?*, and it's an absolute revelation, and entirely new, incredibly sexy, impossibly elegant song. I mean, all that stuff just wasn't in the song in 1958. (And I loved Bobby Freeman, for Chrissakes.) Then there's *Chapel of Love*, all blary

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FOR THE ROSES Joni Mitchell Asylum

Dear Joni:

I have to write a review of your record and I'm wondering how to do it. It's easy to write a bad review or a flippant one if you are in a hurry and don't care about your work. You know that, and that's why you see critics holding the makings of crucifixes in their hands when they come to see you. What you want to do is write and play and sing your music, without interviews and press notices to annoy you. I can dig that and so I don't want to sound like a critic. I'd rather talk about you and what I feel about you and what the record does to me.

And I know the editors of this magazine aren't going to like me talking about myself like this. But they ought to learn that when you say "I" in a song, or I say "I" in an article, we both mean not just I, but "I" as one of many people in the world who can't put their feelings into print or music, so we do it for them.

People are used to having other people write songs speaking for them and to them, though only if the songs are very generalized. But you've done five records of songs that are your autobiography; nevertheless, people have identified with your songs, and with good reason.

I listened to your life as it went through its sadder, lonelier changes on the first two records: found and lost love, observed Canadian winter and California summer. And now, inside a blue-green filtered, water-colored package, you explore your surprising existence as a star in a musical sub-world which on the one hand exalts you and on the other laughs at you, as it laughs at all that is sensitive and striving for purity.

Your record is one long song about love problems and drugs and

musicians in general. It's about time you told them how you feel. You make those of us who are "critics" because we would rather be writers but can't earn enough money as writers feel ashamed of those press parties and other freebies that are supposed to be your gifts to us. That's the tragedy of this money-run world, where songs must be sold and critics must also eat. I would rather see us trading art, your music for our

stories, food for roses. As you say, "Some get the gravy/And some get the gristle/Some get the marrow bone/And some get nothing/Though there's plenty to spare." *

You've seen the hungry at the "Banquet" and the "common people" looking for the "Barangrill" — I wonder if it was a certain barangrill where the "common people" aren't welcome. You think

about the problems of loving a Rock and Roll man and watching musicians and others playing with the "Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire" and you try to understand the disc jockey and the touring rock lover and even the famous classical musician who went deaf from the world's noise, retreating into his own world, and what I marvel at is that you get it all down in lyrics both poetic and to the point — and they fit the music, too!

When I look at the word "printed" on the inside of the Unipak jacket, I wonder how they can be sung, but somehow you make up tunes that carry them, and it all comes out very natural. You still write your most personal ones on the piano, which you play with baroque gentility and modern abandon. Your chord changes are getting jazzier with each album and you use descending chromatic chords on the title song, like you used to do back in your sad-both-sides-now days. It'll take a while for me to learn to hum them, but when I think about it, these songs are really songs this time, not mysterious arias without form.

My only regret is that you didn't write any real up-beat songs this time, like *Big Yellow Taxi* or *Carey*. You can do those, too, and they're a lot of fun to hear. But you demonstrate you're not the lacrymose lady in lavender the critics think you are — you can put a good old Anglo-Saxonism in a gentle song about your woman-new, and you can stand naked on a rock facing the sea, being free, rather than some dirty old man's fantasy.

In short, I know you have composed another great collection of musical poetry. It makes me glad there are talents like yours around and I hope you will be able to go on with your work. I have known many young women who live and create because of you and other women like you, who fearlessly go on creating while the Hard-Rock Hard Heads laugh. Maybe one of these days you'll conquer your fear of talking to strangers and I can tell you some more of my thoughts. Right now, though, I've got to write this review, get it in by deadline, pray it will be used, and count on my fingers the successes I've had. I wanted to be a musician, too, but I thought it would be easier to be a writer.

Hell, we're both running for the roses. * ©1972 Sicolb Music
— Lynne Bronstein