

albums

Watergate Comedy Hour
 Jab Productions
 Copyright 1973

For those of you with a couple extra bucks heading towards the record store with a liking for the unusual, you might want to be aware of a combination of sketches relating to a situation which has come to be known as the "Watergate Affair." Then again you may wish to make a protective reaction maneuver upon the Watergate Comedy Hour Album.

In association with Jab Productions are the "Watergate Seven" who, in the guise of Ron Ziegler (Jack Burns), Pat Nixon (Ann Elder), Martha Mitchell (Fannie Flagg), God (Avery Schreiber) and Nixon (Frank Welder) offer some good impersonations despite the transparencies of their scripts. The transparencies could have been solidified had the producers taken the time. As it was, the album was cut on May 8, 1973, mixed, edited and on the market little after mid-May. The Senate hearings didn't commence until May 17 and if Jab Productions can work fast we may yet have sequels to the Watergate Comedy Hour or, "News on Record." Thus, it takes an exploitation to know an exploitationist.

Jab Productions naturally takes to the punch-line George Burns, Gracie Allen gag-type comedy. It jabs yes, but not so piercingly as to laud upon themselves, as they have done, the term "satire". Parody yes, satire no.

Fannie Flagg, however, as Martha Mitchell is source to some amusing observations while speaking to the UPI by telephone:

"Hey . . . UPI? this is Martha . . . that you Helen? Talked to Pat lately? . . . neither have I. You know I haven't talked to her in a coon's-age. Well, you know she appears cranky, irritable and frankly comes over as one uptight broad . . . (pause) Well all I can tell you is that if her husband gave her some of what he's been giving the rest of the country she'd be a whole lot happier . . .!"

Indeed Martha! But remember "that the strongest steel must go through the hottest flames," and if King Richard got too close to Pat she might melt.

Appearing on the Dick Cavett Show skit, Martha tells why she was let out of the bathroom after being locked there for ten months.

Cavett: Well how did you get out?

Martha: Goodness! John finally had to use it, bless his heart.

Martha comes across Clay-like (Cassius) in her efforts to castrate Nixon and defend her John who, when you get him alone is "really quite a cutup." Martha you're beautiful—and good too.

Alleged conspirator, ex-CIA, FBI, commie pinko hippie hating flag-waving Nixon loyalist, James McCord, is played by Jack Burns. Burns replaced "Barney" (Don Knotts) in the T.V. show "Mayberry." Burns is good, but when given material like:

Juan?

Which Juan?

I'm Juan, you're Juan too . . .

reminds me of deadpan Jerry Lewis.

Frank Welker, as our villainous first citizen, has transmitted the essence of Nixon's public personality but not, however, to the chagrin of David Frye. The remaining cast just don't cut it.

Listening through the stylistic constipation of the Watergate Comedy Hour Album is like watching a professional wrestling match. Lots of grunts and groans—but no substance. Characteristically, as the break-in at the Watergate complex begins, Juan asks McCord how he knows if they're breaking into the right door. They must be—"it opens on the left." That left me.

Finally, the motivation behind the album reminds me of an old Biblical story about Abraham who begat Jackson, who begat Franklin (who wasn't even a president), who begat Grant, who begat Jab Productions—the creators of this lousy album . . .

Bill Beckwith

"Penguin"
 Fleetwood Mac
 MS2138
 Copyright 1973

In the almost 20 years since rock and roll was born, an awful lot of music has been written, performed, recorded and packaged under the premise that there is a healthy differentiation between cool and un-cool.

The premise, of course, is flexible enough to bend with the times, and, hence, our continuous acquaintance with fads. Pop music is traditionally tied to the whole "in" syndrome. In fact, it thrives on it.

Fleetwood Mac's new album, "Penguin," is a good example of what things might be like without this infatuation with what's neat and what isn't. It's a refreshing album, full of breezy, unpretentious music, music seemingly unaware of itself.

Everything on it — each instrument, each voice — foregoes any opportunity to stick out, in favor of a higher goal, that of contributing to the total group and the total song. And those temptations surely must be strong — the caliber of skills is high, especially those of Mick Fleetwood (drums), John McVie (bass), and Bob Weston (guitar).

Of the album's nine cuts, only one is not an original Fleetwood Mac tune. That is Jr. Walker's oldy "Road Runner." It, like all the selections, is vigorous and clean, a pleasant escape from heaviness.

All the songs are unobtrusive. They don't require intense attention. You don't need to get into them — they'll get into you, in much the same way Moby Grape's early material did.

"Penguin" will probably never be a rock classic (in the sense that "Sgt. Pepper" or "Tapestry" or "Wheels of Fire" are classics). It doesn't try hard enough. It's not cool. It's simply there, and it's excellent listening.

Mikel Kelly

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