

on disc

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it is blindly, damnably egalitarian. It is too much of a piece. There are no hierarchies in fusion, no saints or goddesses or princes. All the instruments (including voices) are given the same value — sometimes literally the same dynamic value and same values of timbre, as in cases wherein electric and electronically-enhanced guitar, piano, and, maybe, tenor saxophone all blend to the extent that one is literally indistinguishable from the other. It is melting-pot music, in the worst possible sense of the term. It represents not so much a fusion as a dissolution.

Jazz — and, for that matter, much of rock — has always been an individualist's music, a music which stresses — which depends upon — the split-second, highly personal invention of new music based on established musical patterns. At its best, it is perhaps the most impressive form of composition in the world. Fusion music, on the other hand, discourages the individual. It asks him or her to fit neatly into established patterns, to parrot clichés (many of which were invented, though this is commonly forgotten these days, by John McLaughlin and the members of his various groups). It asks the musicians who play it to remember their places. What comes out may have moments of beauty, moments of excitement; much of what results makes good, compelling dance music. But it also represents, it seems to me, a sorry waste of talent — and, worse, a kind of enforced artistic entropy. Fusion music sashays, often to a disco beat, into a creative cul-de-sac.

Starbooty, by Ubiquity, which is the group former jazz vibraharpist Roy Ayers leads, is easily the least interesting of these three albums. The music is strong but repetitious (Ayers produced the album but does not play on it), the lyrics are inane, and if there are any distinguished players or singers here, they cannot be discerned.

Dee Dee Bridgewater's album is relatively without gimmickry, and there are some fine musicians present — including Stanley Clarke, who also produced Chick Corea, George Duke, Alphonso Johnson, Airto Moreira, Bobby Lyle, Ndugu Leon Chandler, and violinist Scarlet Rivera. But the music never comes alive. It fits too neatly into overly familiar patterns, and the songs themselves are nothing special. (The only well-known composition here is "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word" — which is scarcely among the best songs Messrs. John and Taupin have written.) Bridgewater's voice is clear and intense, but the material she does is mostly pretty blurry.

The Lenny White album is a mild pleasant surprise. The packaging suggests a comic-strip sci-fi "Star Wars" rip-off. There's even a synopsis of "a musical space odyssey" about space pirates, a "Heavy Metal Monster Machine," "Mandarin Warlord Starships," and such (in one passage, "Images of Millenniums [sic] past race by") but, fortunately, this nonsense doesn't actually find its way onto the vinyl. There are some nice, if very simple, melodic themes on *Astral Pirates*, and a few moments of true fire from Don Blackman on good, old-fashioned organ and good, old-fashioned acoustic piano, and Lenny White's percussion is crisp and hard-driving (though his one extended solo, which begins brilliantly, soon becomes a muddle). The music is undemanding, but not at all unenjoyable. It might be called "cocktail fusion."

Colman Andrews

AMPERCHART

ROCK

- 1 **Saturday Night Fever**
Soundtrack-RSO
- 2 **Slowhand**
Eric Clapton-RSO
- 3 **The Stranger**
Billy Joel-Columbia
- 4 **Aja**
Steely Dan-ABC
- 5 **Running on Empty**
Jackson Browne-Asylum
- 6 **Even Now**
Barry Manilow-Arista
- 7 **Point of Know Return**
Kansas-Kirshner
- 8 **Jefferson Starship Earth**
Jefferson Starship-Grunt
- 9 **Weekend in L.A.**
George Benson-Warner Bros.
- 10 **The Grand Illusion**
Styx-A&M
- 11 **News of the World**
Queen-Elektra
- 12 **Foot Loose & Fancy Free**
Rod Stewart-Warner Bros.
- 13 **Blue Lights in the Basement**
Roberta Flack-Atlantic
- 14 **Double Live Gonzo**
Ted Nugent-Epic
- 15 **Rumours**
Fleetwood Mac-Warner Bros.
- 16 **Street Player**
Rufus-Chaka Khan-ABC
- 17 **Waiting for Columbus**
Little Feat-Warner Bros.
- 18 **Bootsy? Player of the Year**
Bootsy's Rubber Band-Warner Bros.
- 19 **Waylon & Willie**
Waylon Jennings & Willie Nelson-RCA
- 20 **Excitable Boy**
Warren Zevon-Asylum
- 21 **French Kiss**
Bob Welch-Capitol
- 22 **Simple Dreams**
Linda Ronstadt-Asylum
- 23 **Infinity**
Journey-Columbia
- 24 **Feels So Good**
Chuck Mangione-A&M
- 25 **Champagne Jam**
Atlanta Rhythm Section-Polydor

RECOMMENDED RECENT RELEASES

- | | |
|---|--|
| Magazine
Heart-Mushroom | London Town
Wings-Capitol |
| This Year's Model
Elvis Costello-Columbia | Champagne Jam
Atlanta Rhythm Section-Polydor |
| And Then There Was Three . . .
Genesis-Atlantic | Keys
Bob Marley & the Wailers-Island |
| Double Dose
Hot Tuna-RCA | Nigel Olsson
Nigel Olsson-Columbia |
| Boys in the Trees
Carly Simon-Elektra | Son of a Son of a Sailor
Jimmy Buffett-ABC |

JAZZ

- 1 **Weekend in L.A.**
George Benson-Warner Bros.
- 2 **Live at the Bijou**
Grover Washington, Jr.-Kudu
- 3 **Rainbow Seeker**
Joe Sample-ABC
- 4 **Feels So Good**
Chuck Mangione-A&M
- 5 **Hold On**
Noel Pointer-UA
- 6 **The Mad Hatter**
Chick Corea-Polydor
- 7 **The Path**
Ralph McDonald-Marlin
- 8 **Let's Do It**
Roy Ayers-Polydor
- 9 **Funk in a Mason Jar**
Harvey Mason-Arista
- 10 **West Side Highway**
Stanley Turrentine-Fantasy
- 11 **Herb Alpert & Hugh Masekela**
Herb Alpert & Hugh Masekela-Horizon
- 12 **Heads**
Bob James-Columbia
- 13 **Tequila Mockingbird**
Ramsey Lewis-Columbia
- 14 **Just Family**
Dee Dee Bridgewater-Elektra
- 15 **Say It with Silence**
Hubert Laws-Columbia

RECOMMENDED RECENT RELEASES

- | | |
|---|---|
| Every Day, Every Night
Flora Purim-Warner Bros. | A Portrait of Bud Powell
Al Haig-Interplay |
| Lenny White Presents the Adventures of Astral Pirates
Elektra | Lionel Hampton Presents: Buddy Rich Who's Who in Jazz
Unfinished Business |
| Glider
Auracle-Chrysalis | Jimmy Smith-Mercury |

SOUL

- 1 **Saturday Night Fever**
Soundtrack-RSO
- 2 **Bootsy? Player of the Year**
Bootsy's Rubber Band-Warner Bros.
- 3 **Weekend in L.A.**
George Benson-Warner Bros.
- 4 **Blue Lights in the Basement**
Roberta Flack-Atlantic
- 5 **Funkentelechy vs. Placebo Syndrome**
Parliaments-Casablanca
- 6 **Street Player**
Chaka Khan-ABC
- 7 **All 'n All**
Earth, Wind & Fire-Columbia
- 8 **Thankful**
Natalie Cole-Capitol
- 9 **Golden Time of the Day**
Maze featuring Frankie Beverly-Capitol
- 10 **Raydio**
Raydio-Arista
- 11 **Stargard**
Stargard-MCA
- 12 **Once Upon a Dream**
Enchantment-Roadshow
- 13 **Reaching for the Sky**
Peabo Bryson-Capitol
- 14 **When You Hear Lou, You've Heard It All**
Lou Rawls-Philadelphia
- 15 **Warmer Communications**
Average White Band-Atlantic

RECOMMENDED RECENT RELEASES

- | | |
|---|---|
| My Favorite Fantasy
Dan McCoy-MCA | Park Avenue Sound
Gloria Gaynor-Polydor |
| We Came to Play
Tower of Power-Columbia | Pleasure Principle
Parlet-Casablanca |
| Magic
The Floeters-ABC | Sunburn
Sun-Capitol |
| Journey to the Light
Brainstorm-Tabu | Mandru Two
Mandru-Motown |

COUNTRY

- 1 **Waylon & Willie**
Waylon Jennings & Willie Nelson-RCA
- 2 **Ten Years of Gold**
Kenny Rogers-UA
- 3 **Here You Come Again**
Dolly Parton-RCA
- 4 **Simple Dreams**
Linda Ronstadt-Asylum
- 5 **Quarter Moon in a Ten Cent Town**
Emmylou Harris-Warner Bros.
- 6 **Take This Job and Shove It**
Johnny Paycheck-Epic
- 7 **Someone Loves You Honey**
Charley Pride-RCA
- 8 **Best of the Statler Brothers**
Statler Brothers-Mercury
- 9 **'Y' All Come Back Saloon**
Oak Ridge Boys-ABC-Dot
- 10 **We Must Believe in Magic**
Crystal Gayle-UA
- 11 **It Was Almost Like a Song**
Ronnie Milsap-RCA
- 12 **Heaven's Just a Sin Away**
The Kendalls-Ovation
- 13 **Let's Keep It That Way**
Anne Murray-Capitol
- 14 **Love Is Just a Game**
Larry Gatlin-Monument
- 15 **Out of My Head and Back in My Bed**
Loretta Lynn-RCA

RECOMMENDED RECENT RELEASES

- | | |
|---|---|
| Soft Lights and Hard Country Music
Moe Bandy-Columbia | Lonely Hearts Club
Billie Jo Spears-UA |
| Variations
Eddie Rabbit-Elektra | Old Fashioned Love
The Kendalls-Ovation |
| Tanya Tucker's Greatest Hits
Tanya Tucker-MCA | Entertainers . . . On and Off the Record
Statler Brothers-Mercury |
| Easter Island
Kris Kristofferson-Monument | I've Cried the Blue Right Out of My Eyes
Crystal Gayle-MCA |