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John Cale has not allowed his ideas to destroy his music. The sound in these cuts is striking. Late, romantic classical sounds, blues guitar, popular rhythms are fused to produce rich, deep, and unusual tones. Unfortunately, the novelty of the sound cannot compensate for the boring, repetitive rhythms and banal chord progressions. Like much in this album, the sound promises more than the total album can deliver.



SPARKS
Bearsville 204f

Previously released as Halfnelson, Sparks has put together an album the likes of which have not been heard since the English Invasion of '65. It's all light, fun, sounding something like Badfinger or middle-period Kinks and Beatles. But it doesn't sound as though they're trying to sound like anybody else, really. There's a lot of whimsy here, and some humor as well. In one song, "Fa La Fa Lee" they sing: "she ain't heavy, she's been a brother to me," which not only prods a few rock lyric clichés, it reveals a fine cleverness and irreverence at work.

Using primarily the three-minute song form, they've put together some delightful harmonies and instrumental surprises which hover closely but laughingly above bubble-gum-and candy rock. I don't expect anybody to believe that these elements make for memorable music but actually their sounds keep popping up in my head at unexpected moments. Somehow the simplicity of their aspirations and freedom from pretense makes their music a good bit more enjoyable and lasting than the efforts of a dozen heavy bands. The album is just pop at its truest: carefree refreshing and bouncy.

Freddy Bosco

CONCERTS

YES IN THE COLISEUM

The Coliseum came close to fulfilling its intended purpose by hosting a variety of sporting events which were simultaneous but extracurricular to the Yes-Edgar Winter-Eagles performance: besides frisbee, and social games, there were some fiercely played side events. A brief but intense cops-and-robbers match was held in the vicinity of the box office between a dealer in an army jacket and a team of Denver policemen. It was mainly a game of tag, and a close one at that; where the police outnumbered and outequipped their opponent with a Plymouth and a Harley-Davidson, the dealer had his youthful fitness and adrenalin working for him. Spectators around the boxoffice witnessed some brilliant broken-field running from both teams, as they dodged

cars and curbs. Though the contest became invisible by moving to the other side of a viaduct, obscuring the outcome, sports fans had been briefly treated to a spectacular display of Urban Olympics.

The Eagles actually did begin at the scheduled 7:30, which came as no happy surprise to the majority of fans who arrived shortly after eight, the customary starting time for night games. Unlike the pseudo-classical, primarily intellectual experience which Yes would provide, or the adolescent, if chemically induced explosions of Edgar Winter, The Eagles, coming variously from Poco and the Flying Burrito Brothers, play music inspired by Natural Observation. Unlike Poco, or more recent practitioners like Goose Creek, the Eagles could not just as well be playing radio commercials for the Western States Tourist Bureau. In other words, where Poco et. al. sought to convince themselves of country joys, the Eagles would seem to have been living outdoors all along. Using banjo and bottleneck guitar, along with the usual instruments, they gave off very sweet natural vibrations of harmony-from-the pines.

Some fans, impervious to the peace the Eagles gave off, played the second sport of the evening: finding a seat near the front. Somebody—an idiot, some writer or something—asked an usher for the location of the seat corresponding to his ticket. The greycoat, after flashing a light around, went to the sidelines for help and returned with a microcephalic Feyline "advisor." Soon the contest began, the object of the game being first, whose shirt could stretch farthest, and second, who could scream louder, longer and with fullest tone. Although the turtle-neck of the writer pulled way out, winning that category, the foaming rage of the pretender-to-the-seat clearly won him the title, over the greycoat, the "advisor" and the writer.

The Eagles, best but bottom on the bill, have meanwhile been giving the finest, if unheeded, advice with their hot pop single: "Take It Easy." Their country-folkie sound and attitude run through the Coliseum violence like a clear stream through New Jersey, putting the torn nerves of the writer in some pattern of natural order. But all too soon they leave, bringing with their exit the overhead basketball intermission lights, sailing frisbees and milling about.

The writer, after two "really tight rock-trio" numbers, hears only a sound from the Edgar Winter Band that sound like cars colliding at 90 mph, head-on. After the initial boogie-man come-on, Edgar goes out of his way to show the difference between playing instruments and playing on them. Round and round and round he goes, using a saxophone, a set of drums, and some electric keyboard computer to fry eardrums. (A red-haired Irishwoman, seller of tickets at the DFC, later recommends stuffing the ears with cotton for such shows.)

Entering into the third and perhaps least significant contest of the evening, Edgar and his guitarist, a gamine in tight black clothes with the facial plasticity of a mime-artist, exchange riffs which the other must match. The guitarist grimaces while Edgar shrieks while the audience does the standard freak out when their ear drums burst.

Edgar's guitarist, a master of surprise attack and surprise restraint, brings the only comedy of the evening to the show, while Edgar, satisfied once he had reduced every hearing mechanism to the consistency of pork-rinds, quits the stage, taking his really tight rock-trio with him. The lights again flood in, to perform on the eyes what Edgar has just performed on the ears.

"How they gonna top that? I don't care who it is: Yes or No or whoever it is, they can't beat that," says a fat blackman sharing my seat. Just to prove that Yes doesn't begin to approach St. Edgar, he sits through their set with his arms folded and his lower lip extended, shaking his head.

Vaunted as creating the musical context of the 70's (as was "Let It Bleed" et. al.) Yes does indeed span any given fifteen minutes with a complexity that is as ambitious as it is abruptly changing. Other than Chris Squire on bass, choked in purple satin with pink and lavender chiffon wings, looking like an impossibly evil androgynous devil from Beardsley, hopping back and forth as would a maimed butterfly, the Yes present no real visual excitement. Tiny Jon Anderson's manners, perhaps better suited for some outrageous London hash-mansion, drew the crowd into the necessary cerebral and motionless mindset, even skimming over tubby Black's request that they "Bring back Edgar Winter!"

They played their hits. Steve Howe did some lovely acoustic work and Rick Wakeman, in his chrome jean-jacket played some soaring, explosive, sounds-like-an-orchestra stuff from behind his bank of keyboards. Those prepared to exalt the Yes did exactly that, while new listeners left with a mild, perhaps brief interest in hearing more of the Yes. Actually the Eagles really won, with a score of 4.

Freddy Bosco

