

# new views

## THE HISSING OF SUMMER LAWNS

Joni Mitchell

Court and Spark took a lot of people by surprise. It was a lot different than what anyone had heard or expected Joni Mitchell to do, but it put her on the cover of *Time* and sold a lot of records. The cult goddess was legitimized, accepted and finally, commercialized.

But now she has a new album and all that is changed. Ever since she hooked up with Tom Scott and the L.A. Express her style has been undergoing great changes. Although *Court and Spark* seemed to be her highest plateau, it now appears that it was only another level of development seemingly alien to and detached from the last.

She has again created a new level above the old and it is as different and renewing as the last.

It is called *The Hissing of Summer Lawns*, and it almost constitutes a glimpse of genius.

*Hissing* is a study of lifestyles filtered through tasteful jazz. "The Jungle Line" is a poem to Rousseau, a genius surrounded by the opiates of his environment. It is the most striking cut on the album and, at the first listening, the most unpleasant.

Suburbia is presented as strikingly as is the Old South in "Shades of Scarlet Conquering," but the music graciously disguises each theme as well as it enhances it.

Each cut is a jewel as many faceted and glowing as Joni Mitchell swimming in the sun.

It won't sell as many copies as *Court and Spark*, but it has far surpassed it in style.

Terri Van House

## SIREN Roxy Music

Well, here it is, folks — the one you've all been waiting for — *Siren*, the fifth Roxy Music album.

In the beginning, there was an intricately adaptable guitarist named Phil Manzanera; a saxophonist called Andy MacKay; a drummer (Paul Thompson); one bassist (Rik Kenton); a non-musician who played synthesizer, dabbled in experimental tapes and called himself Eno; and a crooner christened Bryan Ferry who was determined to be an idol, even if it killed him.

After two albums, Eno left the band and has since engaged in a wide range of projects which have included writing a book for non-musicians, forming a symphonic orchestra which mangled classic orchestral sounds (Portsmouth Sinfonia), constantly giving interviews in Europe, two unusual but unusually good solo albums and a collaboration album with ex-King Crimson man Robert Fripp.

Eno has since been replaced with Eddie Jobson on strings, synthesizer, and keyboards and John Gustafson has replaced Rik Kenton. Otherwise, the group remains the same.

Since the first album in 1971-72, Bryan Ferry and Roxy Music have been a hit in England. However, a hit is often as good as a miss in the world of music and Ferry is not one for taking chances. Since the third album (the first without Eno), Roxy Music has

been Bryan Ferry's band. The third album is best described as an array of love songs and heartaches "crooned" in the best sense of the word, to very catchy tunes done like no other band that comes to mind.

The fourth album featured more rollicking tunes with a bit more guitar and much more depth and perspective in the vocals. It was very tight, almost pop in a loose sense of the word.

So now, as if to compensate for leaning too far to the right, Roxy has just issued a very left-leaning album entitled *Siren*. *Siren* — the name conjures up visions of beautiful women — not quite real — but very appealing, luring mortal men from the realms of reality into the depths of the enchanted deep.

And so goes it; this is not a real album. It merely looks like one. The vinyl disc serves only to transform ethereal sounds from the enchanted deep. It is impossible to pin anything distinctive on this album. You still have the same Roxy Music and the same Ferry vocals. The tunes are unusual: nothing you would expect on the old AM radio nor nothing you would expect rock music to sound like; something from the past or maybe something from the future; some of it shallow, but some of it deep — somehow something that only Roxy Music could come up with and still not traverse the boundaries of roxy music.

"Love is the Drug" sounds like the theme from an import detective movie starring somebody like Elliot Gould or the Men from UNCLE. "Sentimental Fool" could pass for a trip through a space warp, and "Whirlwind" does justice to its name. On both of these, one can hear shades of Eno. "She Sells" could possibly feature a Billy Preston sound-alike on keyboards and all nine

songs enable Ferry to fathom the ranges of heartache and loneliness, despair and dependence while all the time maintaining full control. For Bryan Ferry is the synonym for suave, debonair and aloof. Slick hair, a fancy tux and an air of social grace are all Ferry attributes.

Nothing is definable as outright demanding on the album except the cover — Always a Roxy Woman. While the previous album covers have all portrayed beautiful women seemingly helpless and exposed; this one reeks of a different air. The cover woman here is a blue sea nymph (i.e. — a siren) crawling over a rocky coast, possibly struggling for help and pity, but apparently luring the browser on. Roxy covers are not mere contraversies or demeaning derogations. There are perhaps a fair appraisal of the music inside.

Whereas *Stranded* (third) was overcoming and *Country Life* (fourth) was challenging; *Siren* is alluring. And perhaps the best way to describe Roxy Music is overcoming, challenging, alluring, and ... roxy.

Steve Burke

## BONGO FURY Frank Zappa

For the past ten years or so, Frank Zappa has been turning out some of the most imaginative and adventurous music in America. His style is unmistakable, his talent undeniable, and his cheesy little mind is unfathomable. Of course, like any artist, Zappa has to have his low points and his ruts. Despite the fact that some of his work approaches sheer brilliance, Zappa does have his share of garbage.

As a rule, his music is quite good; it is even amazing. But there have to be some excep-

tions. Boys and girls, Zappa's latest release is such an exception. Sorry Frank, but *Bongo Fury* bites the big burnt weenie.

have a solo on *Bongo Fury*. Vocal duties that should have been given to Napoleon Murphy Brock (Zappa's best vocalist since the days of Flo and



To begin with, the appearance of this album so soon after his last was a little suspect. Prolificity has its cost, and Zappa has paid the price with *Bongo Fury*. Frank knows when he's put out a mediocre album and he doesn't waste much effort on the cover design. Witness the elaborate designs of his best albums as opposed to the simplistic covers of *Apostrophe* and *Bongo Fury*.

Adding to the mounting suspicions about this album was the presence of the inimitable Captain Beefheart (Don Van Vliet), Frank's old high school chum. While Zappa usually surrounds himself with an entourage of virtuoso talent, Beefheart's musical abilities are something akin to those of an enraged chicken. His singing (ahem) is grating at best, and his harmonica wheezings have little to distinguish them. It is hoped that the Zappa-Beefheart alliance will be a short one.

It is also hoped that the absence of Ruth Underwood, Zappa's incredible percussionist, will be short. Her presence was the one thing that could have redeemed this album. Also, Zappa doesn't give Keyboard Wizard a chance to stretch. George doesn't even

Eddie) are either taken by Frank or relegated to Beefheart.

ALTHOUGH Frank feels that "jazz isn't dead, it just smells funny," his best efforts are rooted in the jazz idiom. Unfortunately, *Bongo Fury* is firmly entrenched in rhythm and blues, and Frank's usually proficient guitar work is nothing but 1967-west-coast-feedback raunch.

But perhaps saddest of all is the fact that Zappa's humor is just about shot. Zappa's lyrics, once biting satire, are becoming rather silly. The intonation of his words are such that just about anything he says is sort of funny, but intonation isn't enough. Frank's wit simply doesn't leave anyone rolling in the aisles anymore. Anyone over 12, that is.

However, this reviewer's convictions about Frank Zappa are not easily shaken. Although he steps in a few holes every once in a while, Zappa usually manages to stay on top of things. Frank's next album may very well be excellent (if he brings back Ruth and scraps Beefheart), but *Bongo Fury* is a waste of a considerable talent.

Calvin Thomas  
Illustration by Billy Davis

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