



# POPULAR MUSIC

NEW RECORDINGS REVIEWED BY CHRIS ALBERTSON, FRANCIS DAVIS,  
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**EARTH, WIND & FIRE:**  
*In the Name of Love.*  
PYRAMID/RHINO 72864 (49 min).

★★★★

**SMOOTH ELEMENTS — THE SONGS  
OF EARTH, WIND & FIRE.**  
SHANACHIE 5036 (58 min).

★★

After four years away from the studio, Earth, Wind & Fire has come up with its best album in at least a decade, *In the Name of Love*. Founder/producer Maurice White has turned down the technology to recapture the warmth of the band's early sound. Here again is the blend of R&B-based vocals, African-derived rhythms, and jazz-influenced playing that made EWF a genre-bending group.

The signature shouting horns provide an

exciting response to the strutting vocals of the catchy title song. Lead singer Philip Bailey intoxicates with his falsetto in the hauntingly atmospheric "Cruising." Familiar treatments occasionally make way for a bit of change; lyrics of the rousing "Revolution" are pure hip-hop, with Bailey's son serving up a rap that sounds more like the Sixties than the Nineties. But what matters most is the music, and with this set of skillfully shaped songs, White has positioned Earth, Wind & Fire to move into the next century.

*Smooth Elements* features instrumental versions of the group's hits, ranging from Tuck & Patti's virtuosic "Getaway" and Larry Coryell's kalimba-driven "Evil" to saxophonist Mark Johnson's bloodless "Devotion." The vigorous EWF vocals we know so well are sorely missed. David Benoit and

Russ Freeman avoid the problem in "After the Love Is Gone" by integrating singers Vesta and Phil Perry into their robust arrangement. But mostly, this is music for the Quiet Storm crowd, with just a few peaks among the bland. P.G.

**DAN FOGELBERG: Portrait —**  
*The Music of Dan Fogelberg 1972-1997.*  
EPIC/LEGACY 67949 (four CDs, 290 min).

★★

Listening to the sixty-plus songs on *Portrait*, including five previously unreleased tracks, it becomes clear that Dan Fogelberg is a talented tunesmith who is gifted with a fine sense of melody, a decent flair for poetic romanticism, and a warm, celestial baritone. But only a half-dozen of the songs are truly memorable: "The Power of Gold," "Dancing Shoes," "Same Old Lang Syne," "As the Raven Flies," "Sweet Magnolia (and the Travelling Salesman)," and perhaps "Tell Me to My Face," an old Hollies tune that he passionately revived with flutist Tim Weisberg. Otherwise, there's a lot of stuff here that sounds like copies of other, more original artists (Buffalo Springfield, Neil Young), and there's far too much dreck of the Barry Manilow school.

For us sentimentalists who love to wallow in the melancholia of lost love, you can't beat "Same Old Lang Syne," a perfect meeting place of romantic yearning, spiritual independence, and, yes, frozen food. If Fogelberg had kept his musical scope this focused, he might still be a hitmaker. Instead, right or wrong, he's the ultimate symbol of the overly sensitive male. A.N.

**GENESIS: Calling All Stations.**  
ATLANTIC 83037 (68 min).

★★

As an English synth/orchestral pop album in the vein of Tears for Fears or Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, *Calling All Stations* isn't bad. But as a Genesis album, it's pretty much a bust. Genesis, you recall, was a wildly creative progressive-rock group before the drummer got carried away with himself. The band's last really good record, the 1983 single "Mama," neatly coincided with the rise of Phil Collins's adult-contemporary solo career.

With Collins out of the picture, you'd think Genesis might make the art-rock comeback that long-time fans have been hoping for — with one more "Supper's Ready" for the road — but you'd be wrong. Instead, Mike Rutherford and Tony Banks have pulled in young, photogenic singer Ray Wilson and homogenized even more. Wilson has a perfectly fine set of pipes, but he fails to put across a Genesis-type personality — or any other type. The music here is pretty but slight; even the two 9-minute tracks are less Genesis epics than pop songs that take too long to make their point.

The two original members laid down most of the instrumental tracks before Wilson's arrival, leaving signs that the album could have been better. Banks can still turn a haunting melody, and his keyboard textures are the one link with the Genesis of old. And after twenty years as the band's

## HOST GHOST CROONS TUNES

Don't let the Kid Rhino logo deter you: *Space Ghost's Musical Bar-B-Que* is definitely appropriate for adults, especially adults who are fans



of the Cartoon Network shows featuring the befuddled superhero from the Sixties. For those not in the know, *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast* is a Friday-

night talk show where the animated Ghost "interviews" live guests, such as Simpsons creator Matt Groening, shown here, and Beck, who on a recent episode donned a lampshade and took a nap. The variety-show spinoff, *Cartoon Planet*, has Space Ghost sharing the limelight with his band-leader, the giant space mantis Zorak, and another sidekick, the dimwitted space pirate Brak. All three will reduce you to a laughing puddle as they banter and warble on Rhino's CD, which serves up classics like "Don't Touch Me," "What Day Is It?," "Minkey Boodle," and "Smells Like Cartoon Planet." To hear Brak squeal through two previously unaired acoustic blues — and to hear Space Ghost declaim, "I got my mojo risin'" — is to know that life is deliriously silly.

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