

pop picks

**VENUS AND MARS ARE ALRIGHT TONIGHT** — Wings — Capitol SMAS 11419 — Producer: Paul McCartney

This album is easily McCartney's most together effort since departing the Beatle's veil of tears. On Venus and Mars McCartney goes beyond the pop role he'd created for himself to prove a deft handler of all kinds of music. It's the blues for breakfast on "Letting Go" while the early issuance of "Listen To What The Man Said" is already proving a wise single's move. On "Venus And Mars" McCartney and Wings have put together an earthy ballad while "Rock Show" shows the band off as one ready, willing and able to kick out the jams. Venus And Mars Are Alright Tonight, and a bright new musical planet is born.

**METAMORPHOSIS** — The Rolling Stones — London ANA-1

A facet of the Rolling Stones' career usually passed over is that they, especially in their earliest days, were strong handlers of rhythm and blues. And so it is with Metamorphosis that this aspect of the band's blackest musical leanings. On never released cuts as "If You Let Me" and "Downtown Suzie" Jagger and company forsake the strutting image of recent image in favor of a foray into the deepest possible musical roots with the overall effect being that of a bar band doing three sets a night in a dingy London club. On Metamorphosis the Stones let you know where they came from and, on all cuts, literally time it black.

**EVERY TIME YOU TOUCH ME (I GET HIGH)** — Charlie Rich — Epic PE 33455 — Producer: Billy Sherrill

Charlie Rich's brand of country music succeeds beyond the initial attraction by virtue of a free-flowing musical and lyrical arrangement that allows for mass appeal. His latest LP offering contains the same content and, as a result, is a winner. Rich's full resonant vocals are all encompassing on the likes of "A Mellow Melody" and "Since I Fell For You" while his working knowledge of the Nashville sound comes into play on "A Little Bit Here (A Little Bit There)" and "Pass On By." Charlie Rich, the musical master of all he surveys.

**COMING DOWN YOUR WAY** — Three Dog Night — ABC ABCD 888 — Producer: Jimmy Ienner

One of the major factors behind Three Dog Night's rise to the top of the pop heap has been their almost uncanny ability of giving new life and stature to other people's songs. This mastery of other people's material continues on Coming Down Your Way as the Dog put their own brand of pop polish on the likes of Randy Newman's "You Can Leave Your Hat On" and Allen Toussaint's "Mind Over Matter." Chuck Negron's gritty vocals on the disk's title track proves a musical as do the same on "Til The World Ends." Three Dog Night's Coming Down Their Way; there isn't a dog in this musical litter.

**INTERNATIONAL** — The Three Degrees — Philadelphia International KZ 33162 — Producers: K. Gamble and L. Huff

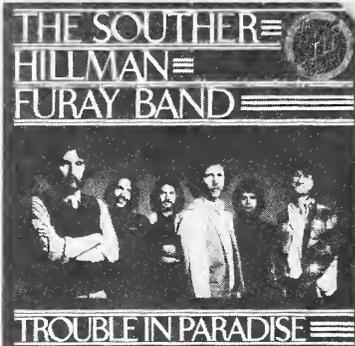
The Three Degrees are the owners of the most naturally soulful voices to ever grace the airwaves. Add these natural talents to Philly International's resident production aces, Gamble and Huff, and you've got International, a soulful polished monument to the singer's art. All around tight arrangement highlights this album as the patented MFSB sound plays a willing foil to the Degree's vocals. Highlighted are "Take Good Care Of Yourself," "Here I Am" and "Lonelier Are Fools." If you've ever wondered what it meant to be perfectly at ease, give this album a listen. And the Philly sound just keeps on coming.

**RENAISSANCE** — Ray Charles — Crossover CR 9005 — Producer: Ray Charles

When it comes to discussing the merits of a Ray Charles album, it becomes a challenge to find error. I mean, let's face it, the man just doesn't make any mistakes. Renaissance proves itself a continuation of this musical perfection as Charles gets into a fine series of music that is decidedly his in nature. Highlighted on this good listening disk are "We're Gonna Make It," "It Ain't Easy Being Green" and a truly professional cover of "Living For The City." Ray Charles is good and he trys harder. What more can you ask?



METAMORPHOSIS



**JASMINE NIGHTDREAMS** — Edgar Winter — Blue Sky PZ33483

Edgar Winter has long been known for his wizardry on the keyboards and various other technical instruments that have gone a long way towards giving his sound that other worldly jazz taste. Well, those influences are still with us but on Jasmine Nightdreams they are hardly alone. It's a slightly less frantic Winter this outing as the subtle shadings of rhythm and blues and country mix with the fineries of rock to form a full blown musical conglomerate that is heavy on the laid-back. It's a change of musical heart for Winter and now, happily, his nightdreams can now be ours. Have a pleasant one.

**TROUBLE IN PARADISE** — The Souther Hillman Furay Band — Asylum 7E-1036 — Producer: Tom Dowd

The topic of country-rock is a sure prelude to the bantering about of the names Souther, Hillman and Furay. Separately they've been at the forefront of breaking this musical ground and together the listener is treated to the cream of their combined talents. On Trouble In Paradise the trio, backed by one of the most professional backing units in the business, run through a series of first rate uptempo numbers. Highlighted are "Move Me Real Slow," "Love And Satisfy" and "Somebody Must Be Wrong." Souther, Hillman, Furay, the hottest trio since Tinker, Evers and Chance.

**THE HEAT IS ON** — The Isley Brothers — T-Neck PZ 33536 — Producers: Isley Brothers

There's a middle music ground that lies just to the right of funk and just this side of soul. For want of a better word let's call it earth music. Long before the form warranted a title The Isley Brothers were grinding out this very palatal brand; with their latest offering, The Heat Is On, proving a logical extension of their musical art. This disk is a mind scathing excursion, reaching deep to probe the darkened recesses with a music that is at once predictable and yet subtle in a transitory way. Black Oak Arkansas are considered the leading purveyors of sexually oriented music. Well, with this album, the Isley's prove their equal. Get hot.

**THANK YOU BABY** — The Stylistics — Avco AV-69008 — Producers: Hugo and Luigi

The music of the Stylistics has become synonymous with love and being with the one you love. This intimate nature is all evident on Thank You Baby as lead singer Russell Thompkins weaves a vocal tapestry around the sturdy Stylistic's harmony. From the opening of "Thank You Baby" through the likes of "What Goes Around Comes Around" and "Sing Baby Sing" the overriding musical theme is closeness. If you've got somebody this record makes the perfect adjunct. If you haven't, this record will serve as a suitable substitute until you do.

**STIPPIN'** — The Pointer Sisters — Blue Thumb BTSD-6021 — Producer: David Rubinson

The Pointer Sisters' brand of musical funk is a hybrid of sorts. A bit of pop, a dash of soul and sliced up jazz on a raw one. The feel is a bouncy kind of Broadway soul guaranteed to be easy on the ears. It's this musical stew which provides the overriding aura on Steppin' as the sisters do just that to eight heady slices of music. Highlighted on this moving album are "How Long (Betcha Got A Chick On The Side)," "Save The Bones For Henry Jones" and "I Ain't Got Nothin' But The Blues." This is funk for the upper reaches. Get Steppin'; an album that gets up and walks.

**INITIATION** — Todd Rundgren — Bearsville BR 6957 — Producer: Todd Rundgren

It's a most existential road Todd Rundgren's chosen to travel with Initiation and, happily, it is a road well taken. His philosophical approach takes the form of two well orchestrated synthesizers backed outings on "Real Man" and "Born To Synthesize" before pulling out all the rock and roll stops on "The Death Of Rock And Roll." His assault on man and his concepts continues with "Fair Warning" as the ability to handle truth and lies takes on lyrical dimension via Rundgren's musings. It's rare that a musician allows his listener so deep an insight into his psyche. Initiation; welcome to Rundgren's mind.