

Billboard's Top Album Picks

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EDDIE FLOYD—Baby Lay Your Head Down (Gently On My Bed), Stax STS 3016. Floyd knows how to communicate: with discernable lyrics and a clean, open vocal style which carries with it all the power and impact of a good performer. His voice is easy on the ears. Basically, these are unpretentious pop tunes with tinges of soul spice. Arrangers Dale Warren and John Allen are the energy sources for the moving arrangements. The LP was cut in Muscle Shoals and Los Angeles and there is one track cut in Kingston. Thus there is some reggae influence, but it is underplayed in favor of the straight 4/4 rhythms of America. Floyd retains a consistency of ability; his music is on a high powered level, mostly gentle but with the power to scream when necessary.

Best cuts: "Whatcha Gonna Do With My Heart," "Baby Lay Your Head Down."
Dealers: Floyd is well-known in the soul field. This LP goes beyond soul into the pop idiom.

OHIO PLAYERS—Ecstasy, Westbound WB 2021 (Chess/Janus). This band tries to work in two environments: as a pulsating soul instrumental, band and as a large sounding vocal group. It succeeds in the former category and fails in the latter. Instrumentally, the horns and organ lead with the pulsating bass out in front strikes a responsive chord if one thinks of the James Brown type soul band crossed with the overlay type of section sound developed by Blood, Sweat and Tears. The group's selection of songs is weak. The overall sonic impression presented is of a group trying to find its identity and falling short. But there is enough energy and clean, modern lines in the arrangements to attract soul fans and some soft jazz buffs who

LITTLE JOHNNY AND TED—The Super Taylors, Ronn LPS 7533 (Jewel). This is simple soul featuring two distinct and flowing voices. It is their first together. The backup support is nice. This isn't sweaty music by any means. Best cuts: "Walking the Floor," "Cry It Out Baby."

CANNONBALL ADDERLEY AND FRIENDS, Capitol SVBB 11233. This is a superb collation of Cannon's works running back through his Riverside days and including of course a host of significant performances during his Capitol days. Today, Cannon is into a newer state, but these works nonetheless retain the beauty and joy of his playing and the solid ensemble sound of his various groups. The music takes us through his funk period with Bobby Timmons ("Dat Dere") to his association with vocalists Nancy Wilson ("A Sleepin' Bee"), Lou Rawls ("I'd Rather Drink Muddy Water"), Eddie Vinson ("Back Door Blues") and Ernie Andrews ("Big City"). There are some interesting and forgotten cuts with Sergio Mendes. Cannon's biggest hits on Capitol like "Mercy Mercy Mercy" are not in this collection. But there is enough solid entertainment on the four sides.

THE NEW HERITAGE KEYBOARD QUARTET, Blue Note BN LA099F (United Artists). Combine some veteran players like Roland Hanna on piano, Mickey Tucker on piano and harpsichord, Richard Davis on bass and Ed Gladden on drums and out pops this concept group playing blues and quasi-classical. The tight sound works for each

CLASSICAL FILM SCORES FOR BETTE DAVIS—National Philharmonic (Gerhardt), RCA ARL 1-0183. Highly successful series continues with yet another winner, this time devoted to scores associated with a single superstar performer rather than one composer. But the latter category is also out of the top drawer, comprising such luminaries as Steiner, Korngold, Waxman and Newman. The 12 films represented are from Miss Davis' golden period, ranging from "Jezebel" (1938) to "All About Eve" (1950). Sound is lush symphonic-pop, all newly recorded.

BARTOK/PROKOFIEV/HINDEMITH: SONATAS FOR SOLO VIOLIN; STRAVINSKY: ELEGIE—Ruggiero Ricci, violin, London STS-15153. Justly acclaimed by critics in an earlier full-price incarnation, this reissue at the Stereo Treasury list will be welcomed by fiddle collectors. Where repertoire duplications currently exist in the catalog, none challenge Ricci's superior performance.

HAYDN: SYMPHONIES, NOS. 20-35 (Complete symphonies, Vol. 7)—Philharmonic Hungarica (Dorati), London STS 15257/62. Monumental project of presenting all of Haydn's symphonies in an integral edition nears completion with this survey of 16 early works in the form. Not for every store, but highly attractive at the modest

THE DIXIE HUMMINGBIRDS—We Love You Like a Rock, Peacock PLP 178 (ABC). The group that backed Paul Simon on his latest LP has been around for years as a top gospel attraction, and this set should remind fans that they are first and foremost a gospel group. This LP features fine harmonies as well as excellent lead singing and a sound that verges on pop on several occasions. Best material is still the pure gospel, but the group repeats the hit they backed Simon on and Stevie Wonder sits in for one cut. A strong possibility for crossover into other markets.
Best cuts: "Loves Me Like a Rock," "Let it Alone," "I've Been Born Again."
Dealers: Display in gospel and pop. Many fans know the band through Simon's disk.

Soul

don't know where to find the true, hard stuff. The Ohio Players show potential which has yet to be honed sharply. But based on its past acceptance, this LP should draw patrons.

Best cuts: "Short Change," "Food Stamps Y'all."
Dealers: Eye arresting cover using the beautiful bald female model who has graced previous LP's by the band guarantees eye attention if displayed.

INEZ FOXX—At Memphis, Volt VOS 6022 (Stax). This veteran songstress has come up with what might well be her best LP in years, combining her vast experience in the music business with the production of Dale Warren, Randy Stewart and Willie Hall and the excellent vocals of some of Memphis' top backup singers. The material ranges from solid soul rockers to ballads with an almost MOR flavor. This could be the LP which will put Ms. Foxx back into the top of the soul field, particularly with the number of potential singles it contains. Her voice has lost none of its power over the past decade and this should delight her fans.

Best cuts: "Let Me Down Easy," "Crossing Over the Bridge," "The Lady, the Doctor and the Prescription."
Dealers: Display heavily.

also recommended

THE ARTISTICS—Look Out, Brunswick BL 754195. A well-done work from a seasoned group. Both production and string arrangements are superb. Best cuts: "She's Heaven," "I'm Gonna Miss You."

ASHFORD & SIMPSON—Gimme Something Real, Warner Bros. BS 2739. One of Motown's most respected writer-producer teams emerges as artists on one of WB's strongest soul releases yet. Team's production sound here shimmers and pulsates with the most exciting of contemporary soul music. Most cuts have the well-crafted dynamo feel of potential hit singles. Though presumably first breaking on soul charts, act is a crossover natural. Valerie Simpson has a sweetly piercing distinctive lead voice and Barry Ashford effectively fills out their duo sound.

Best cuts: "Bend Me," "18," "I'm Determined."
Dealers: If you're not used to shelving WB releases in soul as well as pop, make sure you do it this time.

THE MAD LADS—A New Beginning, Volt VOS 6020 (Stax). Extremely versatile set covering everything from straight soul rockers to ballads to "talk-sing" numbers. The band features several top vocalists who are capable of singing lead or intricate harmonies, and the group is backed by a fine group of musicians including Duck Dunn and Fred Briggs. Dale Warren's production and arrangements, be they with strings or the horns commonly associated with this brand of soul, are exceptional. As opposed to many soul LP's, this one has a number of long cuts that work.

Best cuts: "Pass the Word (Love's the Word)," "Seeing Is Believin'," "Destination."
Dealers: Group has been around some time and are known in soul field. Display this one soul and pop.

TERRY CALLIER—I Just Can't Help Myself, Cadet CA 50041 (Chess/Janus). Contemporary big-band bluesy set by a promising crossover vocalist. Best cut: "I Just Can't Help Myself."

Jazz

Best cuts: "Dat Dere," "Never Will I Marry," "A Sleepin' Bee."
Dealers: Cannon is now on Fantasy. Stock this fine LP under his name and also in jazz groups.

GENE HARRIS—Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow, Blue Note BN LA141 G2 (United Artists). Re-emergence time for Harris and the Three Sounds. The leader's piano retains the crispness and soulfulness which made the act one of the most popular

of the 1960's trios. The repertoire is a cross behind old evergreens like "On Green Dolphin Street" to "Monk's Tune." Drummer Carl Burnett's patterns are crisp and dynamic at the same time and he works with Harris. This is organized and controlled music, a tight cohesive style at a time when the penchant of the players is to run in an organized, open yet loose fashion. Bassist John Hatton plays an open style which is clearly heard and makes the third instrument an upfront accessory to the fact. This double LP is a good catch for students of basic jazz, tinged with blues.

Best cuts: "Trieste," "After Hours," "Monk's Tune," "Something," "Love for Sale."
Dealers: Locate in jazz small groups and in the Three Sounds bin if you have any.

also recommended

instrument is clearly delineated. Best cuts: "State of Affairs," "Monstrosity March."

MARLENA SHAW—From the Depths of My Soul, Blue Note BN LA 143 F (United Artists). Elegantly smooth interpretations from a quality contemporary jazz-soul

thrush. Best cut: "Prelude."

FREDDIE ROULETTE—Sweet Funky Steel, Janus JLS 3053 (Chess/Janus). Title is a perfect description of a truly charming contemporary jazz-blues session on talking steel guitar. Best cut: "Smoked Fish."

Classical Picks

Dealers: Classic black and white cover photo of Miss Davis and enclosed brochure of notes and movie stills will feed the nostalgia urge of collectors.

MONTEVERDI: MADRIGALS, BOOKS 3 & 4—Soloists Glyndebourne Opera Chorus (Leppard), Philips 6703 035. A first reaction to pass this by as too esoteric should be countered by the memory of the unexpectedly heavy sales garnered by

Philips' earlier multi-disk collection of Monteverdi madrigals featuring the same artists. That was a sleeper and brought in solid revenue to full-line stores. Musically wondrous and historically significant, these pieces for five vocal lines, some for soloists alone and others for solo voices and chorus, are beautifully performed and recorded.

Dealers: Lavish 24-page booklet with detailed notes, complete texts and translations, reinforce the class character of this set.

also recommended

Stereo Treasury price to the avid collector.

KARAJAN FAVORITES (TCHAIKOVSKY/J. STRAUSS/GRIEG)—Vienna Philharmonic (Karajan), London STS-15208. Strong competition to full-price disks of light concert material more recently conducted by Karajan for other labels. Program, a listenable MOR assembly, includes excerpts from "Nutcracker," "Swan Lake," "Sleeping Beauty," "Fledermaus" and "Peer Gynt."

BEETHOVEN: PIANO CONCERTO NO. 3—Claudio Arrau, Concertgebouw Orchestra (Haitink), Philips 6580 078. Basic repertoire item once manufactured in the U.S.

and now reissued on superior imported pressings.

THE GREATEST HITS OF ENRICO CARUSO, VOL. 1 (ARM1-0279) and VOL. 2 (ARM1-0279), (RCA-Victor). Two individual records, issued simultaneously as part of RCA's commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the legendary tenor's birth, they gracefully bear the "Greatest Hits" rubric. Many of the real biggies are here: "La donna e mobile," "Celeste Aida," "Vesti la giubba," "Una furtiva lagrima," as well as lighter efforts such as "O sole mio" and Cohan's patriotic "Over There." Transfers to LP have been lovingly made and these treasures have never sounded better. Plenty of sales mileage left in these oldies.

Religious

WILLIE BANKS AND THE MESSENGERS—Heaven Must Be a Beautiful Place, Peacock PLP 186 (ABC). A fine gospel set from the Peacock-ABC file, featuring Willie Banks, for years a standout with the Jackson Southernaires. His current group exemplifies the style of gospel which has shown indications of crossing into the soul and pop markets in recent months with up tempo material, solid lead vocals and an answering chorus. Highlight of the LP is Banks' vocals, which can be either screaming or soothing.

Best cuts: "Heaven Must Be a Beautiful Place," "Walkin' Till You See His Face," "Pity Me."
Dealers: Gospel is getting a lot of attention these days. Display.

PAT BOONE & ANDRAE CROUCH & THE DISCIPLES—Christian People Vol. 1, Lamb & Lion LL 1005. This album is very unique, combining white and black gospel—all excellent—with flavors ranging from MOR by Pat Boone to funky by Andrae Crouch. Other groups include the Imperials.

Best cuts: "I Wish We'd All Been Ready" (by Boone), "Christian People" (by Crouch who's very big right now), "Jesus Is Coming Soon" (by the First Nashville Jesus Band).
Dealers: This LP should sell in soul and pop MOR bins, too.

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