BILLY PRESTON, SM 43436. Who is that gorgeous, microphone-draped dandy in the white top and tails, topping his top with a 'Thank You' hat? It's Billy Preston, one of the most innovative keyboard stylists around, and his former wife of the '长得 and flashy Grateful Dead. His performance is so electric that it often overshadows the lead vocals of the other band members.

REPSY HUNTS - Singles, (c) EPC4328. Immediately visible in contemporary pop writing, singing and arranging, Hunts has the equipment to come out of a major position in the market area now dominated by Barry Manilow. His urban-sounding style of the obstacles to be cured in a crowd is a simple, but effective approach. He has a track record for being the session leader and should stick close to it. While there are several cuts that fall into the so-called "New American" category, this overall effort is best when he settles down and sticks to his guns. It's safe to say that Hunts could be here to stay.

Best cuts: "Randy Lover," "Sales of The References." The LP by the Becky Cobb, Frank Zappa and new releases, as well as for the ever increasing Dance action.

BETTY CARTER - Now It's My Time, Roulette SR3050. This is one of the most listened to LPs in some time at last. Here's a vocal jazz album that appears to have been influenced by the "Dance of the Sunset". The modern trend of jazz in this past year was the re-emergence of Carter who can sing like a very few others. Carter has never been this good since the 50s. "Tight," "Try Me," "Peerless Follies," "Dance Of The Sunset" and "Dance Of The Sun" a couple of moments. Carter demonstrates this from the first note to the last.

Best cuts: "Music Mainbrace, Pave/Swing Better Swing," "Ming The Merciless," "Dance Of The Sunset," "Dance Of The Sun," "Dance Of The Sun." Carter is a star turn who will take you to the top of this style and under the top of this group.

OHIO PLAYERS - Gold, Mercury SRE11122 (Protagonist). The Ohio Players, one of the most popular dance bands on the current scene, have proved themselves to be the favorites of the young. Some of their previous hits, like "Express Yourself" and "Love Is The Answer," have already proven to be huge hits.

The LP is powered by a variety of styles that have been added to the mix. It's the Ohio Players who have been the ones to make this LP a success.

Best cuts: "Skid Row," "Free The Beat (Everyday Dance)," "If You Can't Have It, The Ohio Players."

KERRY KENNEDY, United Artists UA8401. A master musician, Kenny has his own LP country but with a definite pop crossover appeal. He takes country overtones everywhere, from "Labra's (What's He Got That I Ain't Got)" and "Green Beans Of Go (Fleres) plus some number swings. Kenny's production is on target, and Kenny blends his smooth voice nicely with Nashville musicians. The LP employs 11 guitarists and most of Kenny's records have been released on the Capitol label. Kenny's main strength is his ability to handle rock'n'country combos. Kenny comfortably handles a wider range of material than most of the LP's competitors. If you find yourself stuck in a rut, go for Kenny. "To Love Someone," "Take Me Like You Know Me," "Mama's." Kenny has a unique voice and his performances of these songs should help sales.

MICHELLE MURPHY & Freeing Forever, Epic EPC43290. Yes, it's true; Kenny's previous LP also had four hits in a row of similar styles and still didn't produce a key single to build on the sales acceptance of "Wildfire." But Murphys has a different style that moves more energy away from banjo and arrangements that are predominantly featured in American Indian music, with far more music from Euro-American sources. The LP features a full string band and full country pick. Murphy's more than a country singer, he's an all-around pop creator.


L.A. EXPRESS - Shadow Play, Caribou PE24355 (CBS). This is an excellently formatted light modern jazz band which combines a lot of energy and originality. The LP is marked by innovation, but the best cut is "Shadow Play" which was the lead instrument. The quartet of LA name sidemen is a characteristic of a Weather Report inspired impression, less commercial and more exciting. The LP also features some jazz bands that are leaping into swing jazz.