

# record

## REVIEWS

### JOHN BISHOP

PLAYS HIS GUITAR—Tangerine TRCS 1513: *Sweet Emma; Wichita Lineman; Come Together; A Time For Us; Your Guess Is As Good As Mine; My Chevie Amour; Bright Lights And You Girl; Never Fall In Love; For Wes; 35 Saint Servon.*

Personnel: Bishop, guitar; unidentified organ, electric bass; drums; strings.

Rating: ★★ ★

Had I not had the opportunity of hearing Bishop in person on several occasions, this album might have been less disappointing. It fails to conclusively demonstrate that this young man is a brilliant jazz guitarist, mainly because the selection of material and the unimaginative arrangements keep him boxed in most of the time.

What we have here, then, is a skillful musician doing the best he can within imposed limitations. On his own *For Wes* and *Saint Servon*, and on the attractive *Never Fall In Love*, there is some indication of his gifts as an improviser, and here and there we get other glimpses.

Beyond that, we hear his good sound, accomplished technique, and good time (on a jazz romp, he can swing his tail off), but that's unfortunately not enough to make the album a sample of Bishop's best. Nor are the recorded sound and balance flattering, and the drumming is often lousy while the organ is only fair. This young man deserves better, but fanciers of the guitar and/or current pop hits might investigate. —Morgenstern

### TIM BUCKLEY

LORCA—Elektra EKS-74074: *Lorca; Anonymous Proposition; I Had a Talk with My Woman; Driftin'; Nobody's Walkin'.*

Personnel: Lee Underwood, electric piano, guitar; Buckley, 12-string guitar, vocals; John Balkin, basses, pipe organ; Carter C. C. Collins, congas.

Rating: ★★ ★ 1/2

STARSAILOR—Straight 1881: *Come Here Woman; I Woke Up; Monterey; Moulin Rouge; Song to the Siren; Jungle Fire; Starsailor; The Healing Festival; Down by the Borderline.*

Personnel: Buzz Gardner, trumpet, flugelhorn; Bunk Gardner, tenor, alto flute; Lee Underwood, electric piano, pipe organ, guitar; Buckley, 12-string guitar, vocals; John Balkin, basses; Maury Baker, drums, tympani.

Rating: ★★ ★ ★

I never did, and still don't dig "folk": that sort of guitar-strumming/relevance bit, mainly as the music always seemed to me virtually gratuitous, just acoustic licks of little moment to accompany the actual focus in the lyrics. Hyped as the New Poetry, many zealous critics and fans alike sought in such ditties as *Blowin' in the Wind* every metaphysical/political ounce, and now and then even used the

Records are reviewed by Chris Albertson, Mike Bourne, Bill Cole, Alan Heineman, Wayne Jones, Larry Kart, John Litweiler, John McDonough, Dan Morgenstern, Don Nelsen, Harvey Pekar, Doug Ramsey, Larry Ridley, Harvey Siders, Carol Sloane, and Jim Szantor.

Reviews are signed by the writers.

Ratings are: ★★★★★ excellent, ★★★★ very good, ★★★ good, ★★ fair, ★ poor.

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tunes as mass panacea for demonstrations—under the assumption that "we shall overcome" if we all sing.

Nevertheless, one cannot deny an entire genre, and so I did listen, even to Dylan (who is by now too big for himself), and one salvation amid the doggerel and pickin' was Tim Buckley.

Unlike most contemporaries, Buckley (with collaborator Larry Beckett) offered on his first Elektra dates true poetry within evocative musical contexts, and yet, as he progressed a curious reversal happened: where at first his imagery proved more complex and his music simply tasty, gradually (as best indicated on the *Happy Sad* album) his music became more impressionistic and his lyrics mainly tender love songs. Though lyrical, his singing and playing likewise moved with a freer impetus; always unpredictable, always humorous, his voice evolved as more than a mere vehicle for words, although he still retained that characteristic delicate quiver—that sort of magical ethos I often term elfin.

On *Lorca*, the sensitive interplay of Buckley's vocals (both verbal and non-verbal) with pianist Underwood and the drone of the strings bear witness to his new directions: a contrapuntal scheme of drifting ensemble colors, with an ultravibrato temper throughout, and much more sense of musical atmosphere than in the customary leader-with-accompaniment. But *Lorca* is somewhat like an embryo to *Starsailor* (likely cut just prior to Buckley's move from Elektra to Straight), and sounds much less fulfilled; certainly adventuresome, but still formative, not at the point of melodic and rhythmic fruition of *Starsailor*, even though it is moving.

Truly, to witness lovely ballads like his early *Once I Was* and *Morning Glory* and then realize the distance between that style and the moaning, more abstract attitudes on *Starsailor* is quite a shock, especially when one hears the whining, almost laughing scat on *Monterey*. Of course, Buckley has not wholly abandoned his charms as a troubadour, as in the petite chanson *Moulin Rouge* (with savory trumpet accents by Buzz Gardner) or the sighing, self-accompanied *Song to a Siren*, but has indeed expanded upon his own initial sense.

Where at first Buckley offered only a somewhat pleasant high-pitched croon, now he has proven himself a consummate vocal technician, from shimmering coos on *Song to a Siren* to primitive wailing on *Jungle*

*Fire* to distorted chanting on the title cut—and far too few (if any) pop artists exhibit such expressive control of the resonance and general tone of the voice as does Buckley, though no less limited in range to a ceiling tenor and falsetto than before.

Furthermore, Buckley is lucky to have with him such compatible co-evolutionary creators as Underwood and Balkin, plus the added tastes of Baker and the Gardner brothers—for the success of the album is clearly the mutual propulsion among the players, from erratic jittery tempos through almost formless sound textures and into even the quasi-cutesy *Moulin Rouge*. As ever, I rejoice that such spirit as that of Buckley and his cohorts is available on record.

Finally, at a point at which Elton John and Leon Russell and the other one-dimensionals are being heralded as the new superstar solo performers, *Starsailor* proves Tim Buckley the far greater (and so far less noticed): a sincerely eclectic and compassionate artist who, as the adage speaks, must be heard to be believed.

—Bourne

### LARRY CORYELL

SPACES—Vanguard/Apostolic VSD 6558: *Spaces (Infinite); Rene's Theme; Gloria's Step; Wrong is Right; Chris; New Year's Day in Los Angeles.*

Personnel: Coryell, John McLaughlin, guitars; Chick Corea, electric piano; Miroslav Vitous, bass; Billy Cobham, drums.

Rating: ★★ ★

I suspect that in an intimate club, the music played on this album would appeal much more, at least sound more tangible, for a sense of immediate energy seems lacking here that would be readily compensated for in a close listening atmosphere. Yet this is no unusual response toward Coryell for me, as I have yet to be very moved by his recordings, although on this current date is by far the most compelling sample of his playing I've witnessed.

Nevertheless, despite his brilliant company on this LP, Coryell still seems somehow never quite *there*—an impossible critical pronouncement, I realize, and yet I do not believe Coryell has ever wholly fulfilled the varied and surely ambitious directions he has attempted.

Of course, I do admire Coryell for what to me seem less than fruitful musical adventures (among the earliest attempts at jazz/rock with the Free Spirits and Chico Hamilton, among the earliest attempts at introducing the guitar to the