Bert Jansch—In new directions?

Bert Jansch

Birthday Blues (Reprise SRS6343) is a sampling of Bert Jansch—his songs (all his compositions), his acoustic guitar work and vocals, his remarkable footwork, and his presence as a performer to work within the context of a group of other musicians.

Jansch is one of the two guitarists who comprise the heart and soul of the English folk-jazz group of Sweet Child fame. Although practically unknown until the recent success of Pentangle, this is Jansch's golden comeuppance. U.S. The first, Lucky Thirteen was completely a solo effort with a single producer, his talent for acoustical finger work comes through with a great vibrato. Now, four years later, Jansch is accompanied by a variety of instrumentalists: the same guitar players and musicians and instruments which provide the variety and distinction of the LP. Where were this Bert Jansch's single accomplishments? The answer is: he did serve all the praise we can give, yet this is his talent which sets this album apart.

Jansch's music becomes a mesmerizing, multiparted sort of dissonant vocal, and a carefully controlled counterpoint with himself, his music is intertwined with his accompaniment, so sensitively that it is never necessary for the musicians to discontently perform while one of their masters wishes to work out for a few bars. This is not to say that the musicians are capable of carrying a number by them- selves; it is to say that such an undisciplined, selfish attitude is a rare thing.

Their varied musical styles evident in Birthday Blues are most well adapted to place in any identifiable musical bag. Jansch has always shown some learning to older English folk music of the Renaissance period and the days of stealing mistresses, the stonewall stanzas have none fewer other than his personal connection to this impression.

Many of the songs on this album evidence this English ballad tradition. “The Bright New Year” is a solo effort on which Jansch uses the traditional lack of time signatures to full advantage. “Miss Heather Rosemary Sewell” is an instrumental ode to Bert’s wife, with an suiting counterpoint between Jansch on acoustic and Danny Thompson on bass, with Abrahams on “Garden Walk” is another solo venture in which fifteen were arrested. “Have You Comin’ Home” just doesn’t quite please. They sped rather rapidly through their early material in group effort, combining “Communications Break-Down” and “Good Times, Bad Times” into a medley. At this point, the spotlight turned again to Paige, almost to the end of the performance Plant (lead vocal) began to play vocal catch with Paige’s riffs.

The Zeppelin performance really had two climaxes, one of them being the first performance of “White Summer,” a very lengthy medley of both Jansch and W INSTA; involved with the process of identifying the various patterns, connected at times rather finely with semi-classical phrasing. The second climax was the well-rehearsed solo of Zeppelin drummer, John Bonham, who continued to encourage the audience with rhythm while effortlessly evoking the imitation of Baker’s “Toad,” which is no small feat of willpower.

The album opens with “It’s Only Love,” and as a reference for Lan- caster’s over-dubbed saxophone (two tenors, one baritone, and one soprano), which drive steadily through the piece in a rock beat. “Dear Jill” is a complete change, a soft blues number featuring Abrahams on astring- tingle slide guitar and Lancaster’s hard rock foundation, “Walk on the Water” just doesn’t quite please up. “The Modern Al-

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