Herbie Mann

Mississippi Gambler - Herbie Mann (Atlantic)

A fine album called Mississippi Gambler is one of the best of Herbie Mann's recent output and is another slice above his past few albums. An oval-shaped album jacket, featuring Herbie Mann poised for action, looks like a New Orleans street scene and has a photograph of Mr. Mann from the 1960s. After countless personnel changes, Mann recently recorded a new album called Mississippi Gambler. "I stopped playing for a while (he co-wrote Kenny Rogers' "Streets of Fire") but this is his first recorded material. He wrote or co-wrote all but one of the tunes, including the title cut, which best exemplifies the simplicity and power of Mann's music. "Greenwich's Cadillac" is a string ballad which uses the Cadillac as a metaphor for the empty promises and false treatment which the white man used to deceive the red. The wonderful guitar breaks add to the effect, the organ, and yes, the rhythm department. "The White Man's House" is one you will kickin' yerself from here to Nashville and back.

One positive aspect of Peace Will Come is that it is Paxton's first essentially recorded record in quite some time. The arrangements are at least palatable. Paxton succeeded in giving this song a mystic quality, yet joyful tone by means of mellow chords and simple bass runs on his guitar. One of the main problems of this album is that it is slow and failing apart at the edges. For example, "California" has nice words but a muddled jazz arrangement. "What a Special Friend" has lyrics that are nothing new. "The Night Before" is a story told in the first person about the man used to deceive the white man. The lyrics are poignant and meaningful. Andersen plays his own piano backup for the song and tends to lean towards the gentleness and pensive that he introduced with "S.R.O." and "The Hostage". Paxton's social commentary has always been a strongpoint, and "The Hostage" is no exception.

The song is another classic. As Paxton himself notes, "I'm still trying to be effective in that area but now I'm failing. In "Jesus Christ, S.R.O." and "I Lost My Heart on a 747", he attempts to poke some fun at a few American institutions. But we've all heard it before and it's beginning to sound tiresome. The only other song worth mentioning is one called "Dance in the Shadows," which features his first child. The song has a haunting, eerie quality that is not lost behind heavy electric guitar and drums. The remainder of the album is just there, almost as if Andersen needed fillers to make up an entire record. On the whole, Blue River is an average album, perhaps like so many others, he "cooled off or he is becoming lazy; or tired down and letting the band do more of the playing.

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Peace Will Come is a fine debut release, an exciting showcase for extended flute, sax, and guitar pieces, with a simple but steady rhythm section. "Dippermouth" also features solos by Mann and Young, and ends with some nice interludes from work by Mann and Newman.

Side two doesn't fare as well. He has chosen better material of others to perform, as evident in his past renditions of "New Orleans" and "Soul Man." "Never Can Say Goodbye." Instead, "Respect Yourself," with the exception of short solos by Mann and Young, is note-for-note the "big hit" we all know of short solos by Mann and Young. "New Orleans," "Soul Man," "Respect Yourself," and "Never Can Say Goodbye." Instead, "Respect Yourself," with the exception of short solos by Mann and Young, is note-for-note the "big hit" we all know of short solos by Mann and Young. "New Orleans," "Soul Man," "Respect Yourself," and "Never Can Say Goodbye." Instead, "Respect Yourself," with the exception of short solos by Mann and Young, is note-for-note the "big hit" we all know of short solos by Mann and Young. "New Orleans," "Soul Man," "Respect Yourself," and "Never Can Say Goodbye.

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