Van Morrison

St. Dominic's Preview – Van Morrison

Van Morrison is one of the more taxing rock performers around today. Starting out with them in 1963, he is one of the best "British invasion" groups, where it seemed that every year from the Islands who had his hair touching his ears was forming a band. Then there two U.S. kits, "Ghettos" and "Here Comes The Night," then broke up in 1966. Van sit the charts again with "Brown-Eyed Girl," but the follow-up disc, Jenningsly titled Blowin' Your Mind!, did little to live up to expectations. He disappeared for from a couple of years, until the subsequent Astral Weeks album he has never been disappointing. St. Dominic's Preview is no exception.

"Jackie Wilson Said (I'm In Heaven When You Smile)" gives the album a bouncy, rocking start, as "Dominoro and "Wild Night" worked Van's past two records. This tune is even better, however, containing interval sax playing, and a few catchy breaks in the music. Where only the brushing of the guitar string is heard. Van's "do-da-do-do" and "boop-whoop's" sound perfect, and his handling of these syllables can always be instilled but never equalled. "Gypsy" is a wonderfull song, as phrasing lyrics are sung to a relaxed musical setting in triple meter, which easily transforms into a fast dance between verses. Again, the complementary bass playing is excellent, and a jangling tambourine completes the mood. "I Will Be There" has a jazzy feel

to it which much back to the days of the "standards," and contains expert tinkering by Tom Salisbury. "St. Dominic's Preview" has interesting lyrics as Van relates his life of interviews and with concerns with thought of the turmoil in his home thousands of Northern Ireland. "Lon- Don To The Lion" and "Almost Independence Day" are two extended excursions through his mind and music, the style of which hasn't been tapped since Astral Weeks, and these songs are a surprise. "Almost Independence Day" is Van's first attempt with a big band, and it is potentially used in a low-key manner, as his music is not suited for the electronic standards of Emerson, Lake and Palmer or Yes. "Redwood Tree" is a refreshing, easy listening tune, strategically placed to offer a rest between two songs ("St. Dominic's Preview" and "Almost Independence Day") which should require more concentration.

It's been a year since Van Morrison's last record, the countrystyle and beautiful Tapestry Money. It may well be another year before his next album, but the recorded results make one sure the wait will be worth it.

Jeff Palmer 29th, 1977

Guess Who

Live at the Paradise - Guess Who (RCA)

Unless you're an ardent Guess Who follower, you simply won't record in Seattle last May has little to offer. Side one contains two high spots: one is the following interpretative number "Albert Flasher," a single not previously available on any LP. Burton Cummings' piano work is exceptional. The other is a six-minute song called "Pain Trail," which is both one of the prettiest and one of the heavier tunes. GW has ever performed. The rest on the side is puzzling; tunes which are neither safe nor GW standards, nor very exciting new things. Some pleasant amusing, I suppose, but nothing earth-shattering here. If the Guess Who can manage to be palatable in short bursts, however, they fall apart over the long haul, as side two demonstrates: 16 minutes plus of "American Woman," followed by seven minutes of something called "Tracks" Off Across The Skies. The album's some sort of "moody wretched inside your head" anti-drug pitch. And you're really running out of time. Burton Cummings' true pseudo-hip underside comes into painfully clear view with the embar- rassingly amateurish things he does with "American Woman," and you'd be called exceedingly generous if you labeled this album "uneven." As

Records are due shortly from, above, Jethro Tull and Joe Cockr. Ian Anderson and friends have gathered together a collection of "greatest hits" into an album, Living in the Past. A lavish hard covered book/two-record set in its currently available import form, most of the songs have never been released in America, including a live side recorded in New York. Reprise has scheduled the disc for sometime in October. Joe Cockr, teamed with Chris Stein and a few other ex-Mad Dogs, has just released an excellent cover version of The Allman Brothers Band's "Midnight Rider," on A&M. His first effort on vinyl since his "High Time We Went," a full album by Mr. Cockr should be seen by year's end.