

music

Memphis Slim — blues deluxe

South Side Reunion — Memphis Slim (Warner Brothers)

Recorded in Herouville, France, in September, 1970, *South Side Reunion* has been a long time coming. This album, however, was one well worth waiting for. Featuring Memphis Slim (Peter Chatman), assisted by such outstanding Chicago bluesmen as Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, A.C. Reed, Philip Guy, and Roosevelt Shaw, *South Side Reunion* is just that; a re-uniting of south-side Chicago-oriented musicians. The results are phenomenal: a tight, well-arranged, well-produced and well-executed record.

The most impressive facet of *South Side Reunion* is the arranging. Every song is meticulously put together and presented with just enough harmonica, just enough vocal work, just enough lead guitar and piano, complemented by horns and consistent rhythm guitar work. Instruments are successfully used to work for the songs and musicians and not against them. Memphis Slim, who now resides in Europe, is the central figure in the reunion. Besides having written all but two of the songs, Slim plays piano in his inimitable Chicago style — fast driving, then rolling, then tickling the piano keys. Slim also plays two numbers on harpsichord, "Ain't Nothing But a Texas Boogie On a Harpsichord" and "Ain't Nothing But a New Orleans Boogie On That Same Harpsichord." Both songs, although short, are effective and demonstrate Slim's abilities on keyboard instruments.

Slim's best performance on the album is "Roll and Tumble," a Muddy Waters composition. Slim's version is slower than most, but by slowing the tempo, Slim succeeds in making the song more bluesy, more pleading, more sorrowful. He makes the listener believe that, on the night his woman left him, he "rolled and tumbled, cried the whole night long."

Other highlights include "Good Time Charlie," which features outstanding harmonica work by Junior Wells, and "You Called Me At Last," which finds Slim on piano trading solo work with Buddy Guy on guitar. "No" also demonstrates Slim's piano abilities, complemented at first by gentle Wells harmonica, well in the background. Then, Wells' harmonica emerges into the foreground, with Buddy's guitar wailing behind it. The result is an effective expression of the blues.

The only weak song on *South Side Reunion* is "Help Me Some." This particular cut has a few rough spots in which the vocal work is lost behind the heavy instrumentation.

Despite this one weak point, however, *South Side Reunion* is the finest Chicago blues album that I have ever heard. Slim and Guy and Wells have combined to produce their music in a believable and effective manner. They are tight and sorrowful — and that is the blues.

Wanda Adams

ELP — sheer brilliance

Trilogy — Emerson, Lake & Palmer (Cotillion)

Trilogy is the album that Emerson, Lake & Palmer have been threatening to put out. The levels of technical sophistication and full-blown imagination they attain leave even such admittedly progressive rock bands as Yes and King Crimson far behind. A rock band only by virtue of their origins, ELP have done three albums before this one, and to put it bluntly, they've bored me to tears: lengthy compositions of dubious classical temper, with a rock hangover. But *Trilogy* is finally the perfect melding, as is best demonstrated by the two longest cuts, "Trilogy" and "Endless Enigma." Both are intensely intricate, richly programmed electronic adventures, the futuristic roar of the Moog offset by the beautiful precision of Emerson's Steinway piano. Right, Keith Emerson's exciting keyboard work is what's at the heart of *Trilogy*'s success, whether it be piano, synthesizer, or Hammond Organ C3. Every cut is excellent. "From the Beginning" is Greg Lake's showpiece: he wrote it, and, at one point, triple-dubs bass, acoustic, and electric lead guitars, the only use of stringed instruments, save bass and piano, on the album. "Living Sin" is evil personified, a black, seething, lurid composition. "The Sheriff" finds ELP as story-tellers, in a tale of murder and revenge in the old Wild West.

But this review will be purposely short, for *Trilogy* is truly a record that must be heard to be believed. And appreciated. It goes beyond the boundaries of even the most contemporary and talented rock bands, combining classical ideas and rock energy into a masterpiece of power and complexity. Rock fans will be overwhelmed by its furious beauty and far-ranging creativity, while classical nuts will be surprised by what these hippie longhairs have been up to while their backs were turned. Few records have I ever recommended as strongly as I now do *Trilogy*. It's sheer brilliance.

Mark Astolfi

Christopher Milk curdles

Some People Will Drink Anything! — Christopher Milk (Warner Bros.)

Most people know John Mendelsohn as a flip young Jewish rock critic, and America's leading Kinksophile, having written liner notes for two of their albums since 1969. Sure, he's one of your more, shall we say, precocious rock writers, and many a rock critic's writing style, mine included, has been spoiled by reading and enjoying too much of Mendelsohn. But beyond all that, our John has a dream; as revealed in an article which appeared about a half a year ago in *Rolling Stone*, his *Destiny* is Superstardom. The article was autobiographical (and long), and it showed that, lo and behold, John was a critic second, and a rock musician!! first, for it chronicled the groups which he founded, split from, and

drummed with, the groups whose records changed his life and made him grow his hair long, ending with a description of the origins and lineage of that band that, finally, was all he dreamed a band should be, the band that was going to ejaculate him into the upper stratosphere of pop-dom, the pasteurized, homogenized, quite possibly killer Christopher Milk.

And then, last spring, there it was. A half page ad in *Phonograph Record Magazine*, beckoning the reader to send for a free United Artists seven-inch Christopher Milk sampler. I did. It turned out to be one of the strangest, most refreshing records of the year, hinting that C. Milk might just be America's answer to Bonzo Dog Band, the Who, and damn near everybody else. The few songs it contained were already underground classics: "Hey, Heavyweight!," "Basket Case," "Just a Cop," and the super-destructo "There's A Broken Heart For Every Rock and Roll Star On Laurel Canyon Blvd." Insightfully touching lyrics, catchy, butt-slapping melodies, John's lead vocals as obnoxious and sublime as a Grand Funk Xmas album.

But nothing came of it. And now we have C. Milk's first honest-to-goodness album, *Some People Will Drink Anything!*, and it is a sorry disappointment. They're on Warner Bros. now, and it seems that John had to leave all the good songs behind with UA, for none appear here. The band has been mercilessly pruned, personnel-wise: gone is the ex-roadie goldenboy, invisible drummer Tres Feltman. Gone is the fearful Mr. Twister who didn't actually appear (occur?) on the UA sampler, since his only function with the band was, when they played a live gig, to do himself outrageously perverted bodily harm, throw microphones into the audience, and in general do the Iggy Stooze ultraviolence schtick without the unnecessary encumbrance of having to sing. Gone also is ace guitarist Donnie (Flashfinger Bazbo) Alvarado. The remaining C. Milk, drummer and rarefied beauty G. Whiz, bassist The Kiddo, and guitarist Surly Ralph Oswald (the John Lennon ringer), under the supervision of John Mendelsohn, stumble through two wretched sides, completely devoid of the pizzazz, the ephemeral effrontery, the misguided insanity of the UA disc. The only traces of that lost masterpiece that remain are in "A Second Hand Viola" and "The Tough Kids." The rest is pretty bad, as are the cover and liner notes. I had high hopes for Christopher Milk. With this album, they die, drowned in the curdled emulsion of a rock superbrain gone bazoomy.

Mendelsohn, you turkey.
Mark Astolfi

film

Romeo and Juliet in the red

A red mantle by any other name would smell the same, and the film *Red Mantle* is no exception.

Only people with the greatest tolerance both for Scandinavian scenery, dubbed dialogue, and great meaningful rehashes of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* will have any taste for seeing this film.

Its few good points might just as well be taken first. It was obviously filmed in a very pretty part of the world, (I am not at all certain it was Scandinavia; it may well have been Spain where everybody else shoots movies these days) with a cast whose native tongue was not English. If you are one for being swept away by your movies, go see Cinarama (remember Cinarama?); or, since there isn't any, go see this.

In addition to beautiful scenery, we are shown many beautiful people. Lithesome women, lean tanned men, lolling about in various states of total undress as they speak their piece at one another. Frontal nudity is not unheard of here, merely handled tastefully.

The dialogue and plot, such as they were, were thin and wooden, as was much of the acting. The violence often seemed contrived, even if it was made to look realistic by various special effects. Cut-off heads that look like real cut-off heads hold no great appeal to me. Neither do hangings or death by fire, which is how the two star-crossed lovers Hagbard and Signe do away with themselves at the end. Oh dear, I seem to have given away

the ending. I guess that means you won't have to see the film.

But then after the first 30 minutes of it, you would know the eventual outcome yourself. Starting with the boring sword-fight on horses at the start, we swoosh into the authentic looking village, where words are banded until the swords crash again. In the meantime, for no apparent reason other than straight out physical attraction, Hagbard falls into deep, undying love with Signe. What can I say? Marginal at best. *At the Kenmore Cinema*
Gene Paul

To Hail! with Nixon

Hail! is a new and thoroughly revolting film. Its biggest problem is that it's trying to make a farce out of a farce.

The film starts out in the lush appointments imagined by some writer for the National Security Council, plastic and glass are everywhere; so is the Presidential seal, and so are stupid or ugly politicians. These are the kind of politicians who are usually relegated to Dick Tracy or Steve Canyon. The ugliness is more than skin deep — it penetrates their souls. Of course, this is supposed to be a comedy, but even the "willing suspension of disbelief" which always takes place when you watch a film is not enough to overcome the broad strokes used to paint this picture.

The plot, such as it is, revolves around a Nixonian president, a Mitchellian attorney general, an asshole vice president, and a good guy Secretary of HEW. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? All the repression and evil which runs rampant in this film is supposed to remind us of the current administration in Washington. It does, in the same way that a banana reminds you of a phallus. The president in this film is insane, but that fact is revealed to us very gradually, as if to build up suspense. If the film makers knew what they were doing (and the credits seem to indicate that this is a film made by a committee) the suspense might have been there — but it isn't.

This film's greatest fault is its lack of narrative continuity. It moves from scene to scene with little effort made to connect them into a coherent whole. About the only thing that ties the film together is the fact that the same characters are used in different scenes. Their actions are not consistent, their motivations are never made clear. We are told, for example, that the president once saved the HEW secretary's wife during the war; we also find out that the secretary lost his leg in the same conflict. That's it. These two facts, mentioned time and again, never play any critical role in the film (in an assassination attempt, which both starts and ends the film, the bomb is hidden in the secretary's hollow leg).

No film is all bad. Most of the actors seem to believe in what they're doing, and there are rare moments of humor. Who wouldn't think it funny to watch the president of the United States drown rats; or to watch a squad of Secret Service police drop a briefcase into a bucket of water (thinking it contains a bomb) only to find papers, chewing gum and a comb rising to the surface? The film also takes satiric swipes at "White House preachers," hippies, old folks acting like hippies, and presidential bathrooms (near the beginning of the film, we see a Hollywood writers dream of a presidential men's room — it's miles long, each stall has a private sink, and each stall door has the presidential seal on it, as does every piece of toilet paper).

Women, when they are seen at all, are seen as naked or semi-clothed sex objects. They are often political wives or hippie hangers-on. We see so few of them, however, that it's difficult to tell whether the sample is sufficient to judge the writer's intention.

The secretary's plot to blow up the president, succeeds by the way, and I have now revealed to you the only mystery or excitement in the entire film. You're unsure of the outcome for all of ten minutes. There are no names mentioned in this review, either directorial or thespian; for much the same reason that no names are used in the commercials for this film, to avoid embarrassment of the principals. This film should be seen only by persons so involved in politics that any movie with Washington, D.C. in the title song appeals to them. *At the Abbey Cinema*

Paul St. John



Memphis Slim