In the end of term rush, Scratches becomes even shorter; recent releases are grouped in general areas of approximately equal quality with a few terse comments added for some elucidation.

**EXCELLENT/OUTSTANDING**

Stranded — Roxy Music (Aco) A dazzling extravaganza of wit, cultural consciousness, amazing music, and chic hit trends in a word, terrific.

Starless And Bible Black — King Crimson (Atlantic) Robert Fripp and his gang have released Larks' Tongues In Aspic, Part II, instrumentally, it follows a similar line to that preceding album, and even reaches greater heights come Side Two. Unfortunately, some tedious singing and irritating lyric-writing on Side One detracts significantly.

Nexus — Argent (Epig) Guitarist Russ Ballard departs Argent with this album; not surprisingly, Red Argent’s keyboards are more up front than in recent memories and the sound is therefore reminiscent of Argent’s great first two records.

Bridge Of Sighs — Robin Trower (Chrysalis) Trower has managed to make the rather spacey sound of his debut, Twice Removed From Yesterday, somewhat heavier and more down-to-earth; yet, while an improvement, this ace guitarist’s music still wallows in a bit of sameness and a lack of memorability.

Get Your Wings — Aerosmith (Columbia) Not as good as their first, but still a bitch.

**MORE GOOD THAN BAD/ABOVE AVERAGE**

For Girls Who Grow Plump In The Night — Caravan (London) This band of Englishmen has an amazing knack for fusing a myriad of different sounds and styles into a unique and catchy melodic creation; for fans of jazz, avant-garde rock, and noo.

Pipsqueak — Alvin Hutt (Elektra) Pipsqueak is the former leader of Lindsay’s combined little tunes. Lose That Number” — sandwiched amidst the remainder as usual, there is an outstanding single — “Rikki Don’t Lose That Number” — written as the sound is therefore reminiscent of Argent’s great first two records.

**NEAL VITALE**

Mediocre/Redeeming Social Value

Early Flight — Jefferson Airplane (RCA) "Have You Seen The Saucers" and "Mexico" almost justify the existence of this record; look for the single instead.

Queen II — Queen (Elektra) A astonishingly feeble follow-up to their dazzling debut record; What the hell happened?

Somewhere’s Happening — Peter Frampton (A&M) Very competent rock plus some snazzy guitar; yet it all blends together in a most undescript manner lacking in distinction.

Seven — Poco (Epig) Tim Schmit continues to reveal himself as the major creative force in Poco, rather than its being the predictably thought Paul Cotton; even so, it seems the group already misses Richie Furay.

Slaughter On 10th Avenue — Mick Ronson (RCA) Apart from two splendid new Bowie tunes, this album is a terribly monotonous, self-indulgent, affair. Ron’s lost without his MainMan.

**MORE BAD THAN GOOD/AWFUL**

Burn — Deep Purple (Purple/Warner Bros.) Awfully boring and one-dimensional rock yawnfest a la early Grand Funk. Quite sad, actually.

On the Border — Eagles (Asylum) They try to do more boogie rock and roll, but the dated country wimp still seeps through.

Texan Tornado — Sir Douglas Band (Atlantic) Disorganized, sleet-effort from a San Antonian who’s done so much better.

Reeling — Hookfoot (A&M) A fairly talented band in desperate need of some listenable material. And what with this being their fourth or fifth album, time’s just about run out.

**HOOFTE**

Differeces of Opinion

Todd — Todd Rundgren (Bearsville) Astolfi—permanently with Todd’s distinct genius; unrated. Vitale — good at points, but rather self-indulgent; would have made a good single-record.

The Hoople — Mott the Hoople (Columbia) Vitale — a perfectly awful record; ragged and unimpressive. Astolfi — great, fantastic, great.

Interesting Imports

These Foolish Things — Bryan Ferry (Island) This collection of cover versions done by Roxy Music’s vocalist/writer/music mastermind is just a bit more than that it shouldn’t be missed; “A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall” is just one of a baker’s dozen of Ferry’s interpretations (as opposed to re-recordings).

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