Winwood dives in

Art of a Diver. Steve Winwood on Island Records

When “Little Steve” Winwood was asked to talk about his work, the answer came in 1968. “Little Steve” Winwood was coming into his own in England. At the tender age of sixteen, Winwood became the singer and organist for one of the greatest rhythm and blues combos — the Spencer Davis Group. After recording some of the classics of the genre (“I’m a Man” and “ Gimme Some” and “Out Here I Go”), he pressed through a series of groups whose contributions cannot be ignored. Traffic, Blind Faith, the late Yvonne Fair and Steve Winwood’s Go All show the significance of Winwood’s influence.

Steve Winwood is not an artist who can be overlooked. Yet, when he released his first solo album (Winwood), the public was not prepared for much of the same. He was accused of being too mellower, too introspective — something that should have been expected from a musician who had spent ten years on the road with “super-groups.” A second solo effort fixed much of the same at the first. Making a hit with the critics, but falling any public approval. Undaunted by the poor acceptance of his work, Winwood returned to the studio to produce his newest (and best) work: a solo album.

This is an almost perfect album. No fault can be found with the music or production. Winwood wrote and produced all the music, and played all the instruments. The flow lies with the lyrics, so often the target of criticism with his past efforts. In an attempt to improve his music’s message, Steve asked three friends — Bill Jennings, Viv Stanshall, and George Fleming — to contribute the lyrics. Of the three, Jennings’ contributions stand out as the ideal union of words and music, from the simple philosophy of “While You See a Chance,” to the captivating hooks: “When You See a Chance.”

The MIT Shakespeare Ensemble will perform a series of short plays and scenes from plays March 5-7 at 7:30pm in Room 10-20. Refreshments will be served and admission is free. Playswrights represented include Jules Feiffer, Woody Allen, Arthur Kopit, and Tennessee Williams.

At the Undergound.

U.2, a young band out of Ireland with an exaclidly popular sound, will appear for two shows at the Paradise, 967 Commonwealth Ave., with La Peste tonight.

The MIT Arts Ensemble presents a concert tonight at 7pm in Symphony Hall. The Nutigat Chamber Orchestra (its) will perform works by Pachelbel, Vividale, Respighi, Gluck, Mozart, and Britten under the direction of Karl Manninger. Reduced price tickets for this concert are available; TCA, 4th floor, MIT Student Center.