Sledgehammer Rock

Johny and the Distractions A&M Records

If a band is established and has already produced a healthy amount of original material, a review of their new release would focus on the album. If the band is relatively unknown, however, a review might try and describe the band, placing their new sound in the context of the current music scene. Let It Rock is ideal for this purpose. Though not particularly exciting as an album, it serves as a good introduction to an up and coming band with promise.

Johny and the Distractions are the first national act since Paul Revere and the Raiders to hail from Portland, Oregon. This is significant. Their sound could start a new branch of popular music called "Red-neck Rock." The boys were seasoned on a club circuit where a sure note might elicit the tows of a beer bottle. Their audiences wanted hard and fast songs about cars, bars, and broader.

Traces of Bruce "Bass" Springstein are evident but not dominant. Their overall sound is not particularly distinctive, different or exciting, but not unpleasant either. I'll bet these guys are a lot of fun in concert. Unlike many bands, they truly seem to enjoy making music. A warm important factor in the continuing development of any band.

The album cover has a sledge hammer striking sparks on a sone. It is a good metaphor for the content; each song is like a chip from a block. The edges are different but it's all from the same rock.

The opening cut "Shoulder of the Road" has received plenty of air play and is easily the best song on the album. A nice jumpy beat perfect for a party, the rest of the first side is more of the same. An opening organ riff in "In the Street" raises an eyebrow that is quickly lowered by further redundancy. The second side starts slower with "My Desire," but is soon back to the norm with "Girls Like Me," "City of Angels," and "Break These Chains" are different but lack direction and "Let It Rock" is a disappointing conclusion for a title cut. It seems like the band had a few good songs but still needed to fill out a whole album.

As singer, guitarist, songwriter, and leader, Johny is a hard worker and determined to make the most with what he has.

Johny and the Distractions are sloppy, but have a style that will mature with age. It takes a while for hometown boys to understand the world of professional Rock and Roll. I wasn't that impressed by let It Rock, but I wasn't turned off. It's a good disc to throw on at a party for background.

Mark DeCes

---

Shakespeare and the screen

Victor/Victoria, starring Julie Andrews and James Garner, produced, written and directed by Blake Edwards; music by Henry Mancini; an MGM release, now playing at the Sack Cinema.

As You Like It, presented by the MIT Shakespeare Ensemble, April 15-20, 8pm in the Sala de Puerto Rico, for information call 253-2506.

Imagine a tale, if you will, concerning a woman, cleverly masquerading as a man, who shamelessly pretends to be a woman. Rather a world-solving affair, to be sure, but not so preposterous in this era of rampant moral debauchery and sexual ambiguity. In fact, this scenario forms a basis for writer-director Blake Edwards' latest cinematic socio-comedy, Victor/Victoria, a delightfully disarming romp through the gray never-never land of sexual identification.

Featuring Edwards' well-preserved, Julie Andrews (formerly with the Trapp Family singers but lately of S.O.B. es-

pose), Victor/Victoria chronicles the bizarre fortunes of a destitute coloratura soprano in Paris (Peggy Parei) circa 1934. Motivated by starvation and shunted by a particularly gay Parisian named Toddy (Robert Preston), Victoria (Andrews) emerges ennobled in a perverse scheme to market her prodigious but as yet unprecipitated musical talent. She is induced by Toddy to masquerade publicly as a mysterious Polish Count (Victor), who then performs in night clubs as a female impersonator. Owing to Victor's uniquely accurate impersonation of womanhood ("Just a spoonful of sugar ..."), he immediately becomes the rage of Parisian nightclubs. Simultaneously, Victoria learns to be a woman and succeeds as a man. Victoria resolves to continue the charade indefinitely but infatuationally falls for a homophobic, American macho James Garner). What follows is a seismically satirical look at love and the social implications of sexual per-mutation.

Edward's exquisite treatment of the elusive affair is made possible through the curious theatrical device of a double-glassed rever-\n
sion. One is tempted to ascribe to this novel double-play device a soupons of recent times, but surprisingly Victor/Victoria deribes its plot for Rhinestead Schuenaert's 1933 film It's Mr. and Mrs. Whatever. What is more disconcerting, however, is that the underlying denouement, switch first crept its way onto the stage 10 years ago in Shakespeare's comedy As You Like It.

In Shakespeare's version, As You Like It is surveyed by Rosalind, a young prig, duchess, who in unjustly banished from court by her nasty uncle. So that she in travel safely, Rosalind disguises herself as man (Ganymede) and heads for the jum outdoors. She encounters the young, putzish Orlando, who, having fallen desperately in love with Rosalind dons her more feminine days, seems comically wander about and bemoans his watchful, inter. Relighting the possibilities afforded by her disguise as Ganymede, Orlando avails Rosalind uses her mas-termind fancy wiles to convince the innocent Orlando that wooing practice is in order—then as a sides on pretending to be Rosalind. Yet heartbroken is heartier and poor Orlando sets about wooing Rosalind, masterminding as Ganymede, pretending to be Rosalind. The whole situation is marvelously cabled by some of Shakespeare's most provocative characters: Touchstone, a not-so-Shakespearean fool, who lucratively Sweetest, but not coarsest, mind.

Such a nut is Rosalind and the incidental women, who purple more lucidly observes that As You Like It is the perfect vehicle for all the men and women merely players...Loosely, what Shakespeare delivers admits this embalming confusion is a devastatingly witty look at love and the pure joy of social existence. Shakespeare's timeless treatment of a timeless conflict.

After through enjoying Victor/Victoria and learning of the imminent production of As You Like It by the MIT Shakespeare Ensemble. Some friends suggested going to talk to a number of opportunity not to be missed by all. The similarities in the under-structure between the two productions are forceful enough that their simultaneous performances, our entertainment, for some, a simply rocks of orchestration. Nevertheless, the agents response is inevitable and enjoyable. A rare chance to do a little side-tripping within these hallowed halls of technocracy.

Mike McP