

Tracks

The Spike-Drivers

A good voice and a standard arrangement just are not enough for today's ears. Within that thought lies a lot of truth and a lot of music conforms to just that formula.

Creativity: if the record medium is to mean anything in that light, then the effort, big E, has to be there from the outset. To wit: Joan Baez's latest cuts on Vanguard are what some would call competent, but to me they just sound lazy and uninspired. Joan's ventures into the rock idiom, even if you called them interpretations, are almost funny due to their lack of fortitude or GUTS!

Why should she be afraid to strike out or of losing her previous identity? If the artist has any responsibility to the buyer or listener, it's not to maintain what you've already done but to do something that extends the artist's ability and excites and pleases the mind's ear...

A point taken here: it need not be a colossal production, that's no guarantee (example: ESP's "Pearls Before Swine"). Listen to that...austere is the word.

But my, what taste! Not a sound is wasted, and there aren't many sounds, by count. There's many a buck made with the N.Y. studio hack arrangements, but if you ask the side men (the same ones are used time and again) what would they play if it were THEIR session, they would only yawn and say, "It's a living..."

Jackie Washington's new album on Vanguard "Morning Song" is another example of a metropolitan folk-singer attempting to make the transition to the rock-tinged idiom. However, Jackie doesn't try too hard and that's good.

He's sensible enough to understand the mistakes that so many folk-singers made trying to jump on the pop bandwagon. These musicians, rather than adapting the rock medium to their styles, generally tended to impose the folk sound over the rock bottom resulting usually in a completely sterile, restricted and suffocating blanket of blandness.

Jackie Washington's material stands largely on its own. The back-up arrangements neither excite nor involve the listener. They are just there lurking in the background of the songs. There are none of the tricks so common today in recording -the multitudes of sidemen, the tricky sounds, the generations of overdubs—to confuse your ears.

Each song remains a simple statement of poetic beauty, subtle, yet direct. There is only one bogue thing about this album: Washington's voice, usually soft, mellow, and soothing comes through on this album too sharp, grating and piercing. This is no doubt due to some spazzing in the recording or mastering of the disc.

A Brief Acknowledgment: To: Mixed Media Bookstore, for making records available for us to review; many thanks. And to the unnamed recording companies who have not made these records available, our most emphatic abusive epithets goddam your eyes!

Other Brief blurb dept.: Tamara's New Generation, Detroit's earliest attempt at a multimedia show troupe has just released a single on the IRC label, "Just Flowers" b/w (that's record biz for "backed with") "Traffic"...The Vox Band of the Land contest was won by The Midnight Riders. Sid and Larry Spike-Driver adjudicated the first two eliminations, but were disqualified from the final judging because of some charges of favoritism. Since the final result was out of our hands, we'd like to mention who we thought were the best bands: The Lubricated Cough-Drops, H.P. & the Grass Roots Movement and The Zoological Expedition.

...We'd also like to apologize to our friend Tony Wright for the horrendous version of his song "Blue Law Sunday" released under the name of the Misty Wizards, but in reality recorded by the old Spike-Drivers. This song was scrapped on several occasions as unfit for public consumption, due to rotten production and lousy recording technique. I hope some day that we will be able to give Tony's groovy song the treatment it deserves...

The next column will be back in the new rock bag featuring comments on the new records including the Procul Harum, The Chambers Brothers, Big Brother, and The Bee Gees.

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/37-september-1-15-1967/tracks>
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