

Sounds

Joe Fineman

1967

“Garden of Joy” The Jim Kweskin Jug Band (Reprise)—The flowers on the album cover have nothing to do with the inner product except that once again Kweskin has kept up with the times.

“Garden of Joy” is a conglomerate of raucous, jazzy and bluesy folk oriented material that steps on no one’s feet and needs nothing but itself to get you high. New to this album and the band itself are the talents of former country fiddler Richard Greene, turned jazz mechanic.

Richard is somewhat of a friend of mine and it surprises me not at all to see him move in this direction after exploding on the country scene in 1966–67. He is at least a prodigy and at most a true artist with his instrument. You may yet hear him play out of sight jazz fiddle with the likes of Monk and Archie Shepp.

The full title of the album is “The Euphoria of The Jim Kweskin Jug Band Doing Their Things In The Garden of Joy.” The music is as much a part of our culture as is the “Airplane” and deserves at the least a spot of recognition.

“Big Mama and The Chicago Blues Band (Arhoolie)—Big Mama has always reminded me of a combination of the screaming of Little Richard and the woman blues of Victoria Spivey. I’m not making a comparison because Big Mama remains a part of the once gutsy style minus modern embellishments.

This album surpasses most, because her vocal utterances are enhanced with James Cotton and his mouth harp as well as Otis Spann on the piano that has set the blues style for nearly twenty years.

Woman-blues are little known to today’s audiences but they miraculously survive and are certainly worth the effort in listening pleasure.

“Clifton Chenier / Bon Ton Roulet” (Arhoolie)—No doubt few readers are familiar with Cajun music; which is close to the kind of accordion music that Chenier plays.

To elaborate, Cajun music is the dance and vocal music of the Cajun speaking (a rather inarticulate blending of southern Negro speech patterns and the French of Louisiana) Negroes along the Gulf Coast.

More exactly, Clifton Chenier plays Zydeco music which is a combination of Cajun music and the elements of Rhythm & Blues, jazz, and Negro popular music in general. Truthfully, to this reviewer Cajun music has been listenable for short periods of time only because the words are usually inaudible or inarticulate and in French.

The instrumental backing consists often of accordion, fiddle, guitar, harmonica, drums and/or a host of anything which happens to be available at the time. But Chenier with his rococo and bluesy temper renders the style almost exciting worthy of consistent relistening.

A far cry from “Lady of Spain.”

fifth Estate

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