

POP

PICKS

ROBBIE NEVIL
A Place Like This
 PRODUCERS: Robbie Nevil, Chris Porter, Tom Lord Alge
 EMI-Manhattan E1-48359

Blues-eyed soulster who hit first time out with "C'est La Vie" is back with a strong second showing that again highlights his funky-up stylings and solid-sounding singing. Good bets for pop and crossover success are "Somebody Like You" and sweet ballad "Getting Better."

DIRE STRAITS
Money For Nothing
 PRODUCERS: Various
 Warner Bros. 25794

Straits' hits package includes chart winners from "Sultans Of Swing" on down. Hook is baited here with a remix of the EP-only "Twisting By The Pool" and a previously unreleased live version (circa "Alchemy") of "Portobello Belle." Will show certain holiday strength.

MIKE & THE MECHANICS
Living Years
 PRODUCERS: Christopher Neil & Mike Rutherford
 Atlantic 81923

Second stanza by Genesis' Rutherford and band features soulful vocalizing by Paul Carrack and Paul Young and carefully tailored sound that can play both tough and tender. Title ballad, "Nobody Knows," and harder-rocking "Poor Boy Down" should capture album rock and top 40 play.

JULIAN COPE
My Nation Underground
 PRODUCER: Ron Fair
 Island 91025

British genius/lunatic refines his idiosyncratic pop vision with a jovous barrage of inescapable hooks and delicious '60s mannerisms. Highlights of a strong set include the horn-section splendor of "5 O'Clock World" and "The Great White Hoax," the smooth midtempo gait of "Charlotte Anne," the garage rock of "Someone Like Me," and the relentless dance groove of "My Nation Underground."

SHEENA EASTON
The Lover In Me
 PRODUCERS: L.A. & Babyface, Angela Winbush, Jellybean, Prince
 MCA 42249

Easton's first album in three years—her first for MCA—is well worth the wait. Unquestionably her strongest output to date, the package includes five hook-laden cuts helmed by the hot writing/production team of L.A. & Babyface and two Prince-penned-and-produced numbers, including the outstanding "101." And Winbush's contribution on the ballad front shouldn't be overlooked. A fine collection of dance, funk, R&B, and pop sounds—Easton's comeback is a winner.

RECOMMENDED

PRIVATE LIFE
Shadows
 PRODUCERS: Edward Van Halen & Donn Landee
 Warner Bros. 25803

Newcomers won't be hurt by Van Halen's name, the strong Ann Wilson-style vocalizing of Kelly Breznik, the zooming axe work of Danny Johnson, or a tough-enough repertoire of heavy pop material. "Put Out The Fire," "Don't Blame It On Love," and "Don't Let Go" all stand to make their mark at album rock and even top 40.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS
Love Junk
 PRODUCER: Todd Rundgren
 Chrysalis FV 41675

Coed Canadian band flashes lots of sarcastic smarts and blunt rock'n'roll

power on clever and funny debut album. Songs like "I'm An Adult Now" and "She's So Young" could make a dent with jocks who like wit in their songs. Group boasts best promo gimmick of the year—the album has been issued on a noncommercial DAT cassette.

TALK TALK
Spirit Of Eden
 PRODUCER: Tim Friese-Greene
 EMI-Manhattan E1-46977

Fourth album by English band is most ambitious outing yet; lengthy, moody material incorporates a variety of interesting sounds, from harmonica to dobro to a full church choir. Airplay possibilities are slim, but sharper retailers should think about giving this an in-store spin.

NATIONAL VELVET
 PRODUCER: John Naslen
 EMI-Manhattan E1-90336

Canadian foursome is fronted by a pretty potent lead vocalist, Maria Del Mar, but band's music, which bears the heavy imprint of early Siouxsie & the Banshees, is too undistinguished for ready cutting-edge acceptance. Still, "Another Day (In The Life Of You)" pounds hard enough to gain some alternative radio buy-ins.

OFRA HAZA
Shaday
 PRODUCERS: Izhar Ashdot, Wally Brill
 Sire 25816

Israeli thrush has been an underground item for a while; first U.S. album showcases her lush vocals against formidable dance-oriented productions. Yemenite lyrics (including an adaptation of the Song of Songs, no less) won't send this set racing up the charts, but cognoscenti already familiar with Haza from "Pump Up The Volume" samples and other dance mixes will sign on.

LUCINDA WILLIAMS
 PRODUCERS: Lucinda Williams & Gurf Morlix
 Rough Trade US 47

Texas-born, L.A.-bred singer/songwriter with a couple of fine blues-based albums on Folkways to her credit returns with this superior indie effort. Williams has a gutsy yet understated style, and her songs are distinguished by sensitivity and good humor; jockeys should especially check very funny "Changed The Locks."

CLIVE GREGSON & CHRISTINE COLLISTER
Mischief
 PRODUCER: Clive Gregson
 Rhino R1 70842

Much-acclaimed Topic import album from former Any Trouble leader Gregson and partner Collister finally sees American release. Duo's intelligent, hard-edged writing and Gregson's instrumental work recall the partnership of Richard Thompson (whom the pair are currently supporting on his stateside tour) and ex-wife Linda. Contemporary English folk rock at its finest.

DAVID KNOPFLER
Lips Against The Steel
 PRODUCER: David Knopler
 Cypress YL0120

First domestically released album by the Dire Straits co-founder bears a distinctively gruff vocal sound reminiscent, not surprisingly, of his brother. Here, however, keyboards take precedence over guitars in an understated mix ideally suited to pensive material. The lead track, "Heat Come Down," one of several with mystical/spiritual leanings, stands out with the addition of an emphatic, gospel-type chorus.

SPOTLIGHT



ROBERTA FLACK
Oasis
 PRODUCERS: Marcus Miller, Jerry Hey, Andy Goldmark, Michael Omartian, Barry Miles
 Atlantic 81916

The first album since '82's "I'm The One" proves to be Flack's most satisfying work to date. Top-notch producers effectively enhance the talents of the soloist and the compositions written by Flack and Ashford & Simpson, Brenda Russell, and Marvin Hamlisch & Siedah Garrett. Tasteful song selection complements a comforting delivery that will undoubtedly be embraced by dedicated fans while serving as the perfect introduction to new ones. All selections shine, but pay particular attention to the title cut; "All Caught Up In Love"; "Shock To My System," a duet with Simon Climie of Climie Fisher; "Uh-Uh Ooh-Ooh Look Out (Here It Comes)"; and "You Know What It's Like." There's something here for everyone.



RATT
Reach For The Sky
 PRODUCERS: Beau Hill & Mike Stone
 Atlantic 81929

L.A.-based hard rockers stand to elongate their solid-platinum track record with their fifth album, which finds the quintet continuing to hone its stomping attack in the context of some highly melodic songs. "I Want A Woman," "Way Cool Jr.," and "I Want To Love You Tonight" sound like surefire album rock tracks.

BLACK

RECOMMENDED

DONNA ALLEN
Heaven On Earth
 PRODUCERS: Lou Pace, Peter Lord & V. Jeffrey Smith, Raymond Jones
 Oceana/Atlantic 91028

With her second release, "Serious," Allen is back with a stronger and more consistent effort than her debut. Allen's vocal strength is more than prominent here and is best captured on the slick ballads "Come For Me," "Renew The Love," and the killer title track, which is finding a close friend in radio. Among the indistinguishable up-tempo numbers, "You Move, You Lose" stands out.

STARPOINT
Hot To The Touch
 PRODUCERS: Lionel Job, Bernard Edwards, Ernesto Phillips & Starpoint
 Elektra 60810

Led by the single "Say You Will," this talented six-piece outfit offers an album of indistinguishable and commercially tailored R&B tracks. The potential for something great is here, but the act misses the mark with material that for the most part, it has done plenty of times before. All's not lost, however; do put the needle on "Hot To The Touch" and "Tough Act To Follow."

ANGELA BOFILL
Intuition
 PRODUCERS: Various
 Capitol 48335

Bofill's label debut boasts a clearer artistic vision than past disco flirtations. Fans will welcome back her delicate yet technically self-assured vocals on the sassy title track, the seductive "Long Gone," and the jazzy "Special Lover." Also features a cover of Gino Vannelli's "I Just Wanna Stop" and a Peabo Bryson duet on "For You And I."

ROBERT IRVING III
Midnight Dream
 PRODUCER: Robert Irving III
 Verve Forecast 837 034

Solo debut from young Miles Davis keyboardist/writer/arranger includes some tasty surprises, especially Irving's refreshing attachment to the acoustic piano sound. Pop-oriented jazz standouts include "All Is Well," "Margaret," and "Seeds." The crisp funk edge of the anti-apartheid "Let's Not Wait" could make it a winner.

JAZZ

PICKS

GERALD ALBRIGHT
Bermuda Nights
 PRODUCER: Gerald Albright
 Atlantic 81919

Albright's debut surprised the industry with multifaceted success. New effort should climb high, too, but this time it won't be a surprise. Like Grover Washington Jr. and David Sanborn, Albright has found comfortable formulas and grooves, to which his fans should be happy to return.

COUNTRY

PICKS

LARRY GATLIN & THE GATLIN BROTHERS
Biggest Hits
 PRODUCERS: Various
 Columbia 44471

A roundup of the group's chart material from 1984 on, including "Talkin' To The Moon," "Runaway Go Home," "Denver," and "The Lady Takes The Cowboy Everytime."

THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND
Homesick Heroes
 PRODUCER: James Stroud
 Epic 44324

A breezy collection of redneck rock and country-oriented folk tales. While the whole album is quite listenable, Daniels' mock-woeful culture-shock saga, "Uneasy Rider '88," merits particular attention.

JOHNNY CASH
Classic Cash: Hall Of Fame Series
 PRODUCER: Johnny Cash
 Mercury 834 526

Twenty rerecorded hits define Cash's writing and performing genius. Includes "Don't Take Your Guns To Town," "Ballad Of Ira Hayes," "Long Black Veil," "Sunday Morning Coming Down," and "I Still Miss Someone."

THE SELDOM SCENE
15th Anniversary Celebration
 PRODUCERS: John Starling, Bill Wolf, the Seldom Scene
 Sugar Hill SH-2202

Even great bluegrass albums face modest sales prospects, but this two-record set, recorded live at the Kennedy Center, is so permeated with big-name guest artists (Linda Ronstadt, Emmylou Harris, Ricky Skaggs, and Sharon White, among many others) that the project transcends the usual. An acoustic triumph.

NANCI GRIFFITH
One Fair Summer Evening
 PRODUCERS: Nanci Griffith, Tony Brown
 MCA 42255

Acclaimed folk/country songstress offers a nice change of pace in a live acoustic set, with only keyboards and bass augmenting her guitar work and bittersweet soprano. Recorded at the Anderson Fair singer/songwriter haven in Houston, the concert includes such Griffith faves as "Once In A Very Blue Moon," "Love At The Five And Dime," and "From A Distance." Perhaps more notable, though, are the artist's evocative spoken song intros—always a delight in her performances.

CLASSICAL

RECOMMENDED

BARTOK: THE SIX QUARTETS
Emerson String Quartet
 Deutsche Grammophon 423 657

No longer forbidding to modern ears, these works have won a substantial connoisseur following. Through many concerts, some featuring the complete Bartok cycle, the Emerson ensemble has knitted tight its identification with the quartets, strengthened further in these absorbing readings. Their complete appearance in a two-CD package, compared with competing three-CD versions, is a commercial plus.

WINTER WAS HARD
Kronos Quartet
 Nonesuch 9 79181

The Barber "Adagio" stands out as a calm interlude in a collection of 10 works by contemporaries Riley, Part, Zorn, Schnittke, and others that tease, startle, and stimulate. At least as effective, and probably more durable, are a set of Bagatelles by Webern. Kronos aficionados, who straddle a number of genre lines, will respond avidly.

MAHLER: SYMPHONY NO. 1
Berlin Philharmonic, Haitink
 Philips 490 936

An auspicious start to yet another Mahler cycle. Haitink is more relaxed than some, letting the music run its course naturally. The orchestral playing is superior and the sound refulgent.

SPOTLIGHT: Predicted to hit top 10 on Billboard's Top Pop Albums chart or to earn platinum certification.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY: Highlights new and developing acts worthy of attention and other releases of special interest.

PICKS: Releases predicted to hit the top half of the chart in the format listed.

RECOMMENDED: Other releases predicted to chart in the respective format; also, other albums of superior quality.

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