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Record Review Ratings

THOMAS McCLARY

Thomas McClary Motown 6121ML

Wild Imagination, Read Between The Lines, Thin Walls, Marianne, Man In The Middle, Contagious, Gonna Get You Back, Love Will Find A Way

Rating - * * 1/2

After more than a decade in the business, Mr. McClary finally steps out on his own with his first solo LP. "Thin Walls," his initial single release, is a romantic, pleasant piece of pop, and seems well-suited for some chart action. The difference between former Commodore Lionel Richie and McClary is very apparent in a ballad like "Marianne." McClary's baritone may become an instantly recognizable sound some day, but even if it doesn't, for now it is quite sufficient to express the kind of emotions McClary expresses in the "Marianne" lyrics. Produced and arranged with the expected Motown professionalism and glass, McClary's first LP is a respectable effort. It does not sound like the Commodores or Lionel Richie. It sounds like Thomas McClary.

SHALAMAR

Heart Break Solar 60385-1

Amnesia, Dancin' In The Sheets, Whenever You Need Me, Heart Break, Don't Get Stopped In Beverly Hills, My Girl Loves Me, Melody (An Erotic Affair), Deceiver

Rating - * * 1/2 Here's Shalamar's fifth album on Solar, "Heart Break." Group leader Howard Hewett says, "change is synonymous with life," and you'll find that Shalamar's latest disk reflects that sentiment, for on this LP they have continued to experiment with various formulas. The rugged rock and high-tech funk style evident in recent tunes such as "Dead Giveaway" and "Dancin' In The Sheets" is also quite noticeable in this new set. The group's latest single, "Amnesia," was written and produced by George Duke (I'm sure you've heard of him), and as you would expect, sounds nothing like the disco-era stuff Shalamar did in the 70's. One of the more interesting rockers on this disc is "Don't Get Stopped In Beverly Hills," which lyrically has the perfect message for a movie like "Beverly Hills Cop," in which it appears.

KLYMAXX

Excellent * * * * * Very Good * * * Good * * * Fir * * Pour *

Meeting In The Ladies Room Constellation MCA-5529

The Men All Pause, Lock And Key, I Miss You, Just Our Luck, Meeting In The Ladies Room, Video Kid, Ask Me No Questions, Love Bandit, I Betcha

Rating - * *

Not for ladies only, the latest album by a group called Klymaxx features nine funky tracks. Their latest single is titled "The Men All Pause," about a woman who is always noticed by the guys whenever she goes out. When I put it on the turntable and listened to the bass, it had me singing Midnight Star's "Freak-A-Zoid." "Video Kid," is a "handclapping good" rock piece about computer-chip-gamesman.

RONNIE LAWS

Classic Masters Capitol ST-12375

City Girl, Always There, Love Is Here, Every Generation, (You Are) Paradise, Friends And Strangers, In The Groove, Stay Awake, Saturday Evening

Rating - * * * 1/2

Ronnie Laws, of course, is a well-known name in jazz and jazz fusion, having had one of the biggest-selling albums in the history of Blue Note Records, "Pressure Sensitive." This tenor sax player has recorded a number of albums for Blue Note and Capitol, and some of his better-known tracks have been compiled on this latest release, "Classic Masters." In addition to "Always There," the big track from "Pressure Sensitive," the album also includes his first excursion into vocals, "Every Generation," the title cut from the "Friends And Strangers" album, and his single, "City Girl." As a "best of" compilation, this one's as good as any. The die-hard Laws fan will already have every cut on this album except "City Girl" and "(You Are) Paradise," and the album is worth buying just for "Always There," one of his most classic "classic masters."

HELEN STEPHENS & THE LIGHTHOUSE SINGERS

See The Glorious Light Hope Song HSO2004 See The Glorious Light, The Lord Has Been Good To Me, He Loves You, Breathe On Me,

He Will Answer Prayer, Bluer Than Blue (Till I Found Him), Just For Me, Thank You

Rating * * 1/2

Another D. J. Rogers production, this album, released last year, featuring a choir of almost 40, is a competently made collection of melodies that should produce a relaxing, peaceful atmosphere when played on just the right kind of hi-fi. Fender bass, electric piano, guitar and drums in the background — perfect choral harmonies in the foreground — and not bad songwriting, either. A variety of sounds is to be found here, and it sounds like fun to sing. For the most part, I ignored the lyrics when I listened to this, since there was nothing really memorable about them, and listened to the overall effect. These folks got soul.

THELMA HOUSTON

Qualifying Heat MCA-5527

(I Guess) It Must Be Love, You Used To Hold Me Tight, Fantasy And Heartbreak, I'd Rather Spend The Bad Times With You Than Spend The Good Times With Someone New, Shake You, Generate Love, Love Is A Dangerous Game, What A Woman Feels Inside

Rating - * * 1/2

In this record business race, Thelma Houston, whom we haven't heard from in quite some time, has decided to run in the "Qualifying Heat," her tenth album. In 1977, she won a Grammy for "Don't Leave Me This Way," a single that hit number one on the pop charts. One interesting cut on her latest LP is "You Used To Hold Me So Tight." It isn't often you hear stuff recorded backwards on records, but sure enough, a vocal track of Thelma singing the title can be heard backwards at the beginning of this cut. Spacey synthesizer lines and a few bits of saxophone also help out this funky number. And check out the fourth cut on side one, whose hip-hop instrumentation is reminiscent of such recent jams as Shannon's "Give Me The Night," among others — Yep, it's the one with the long title. The album really shifts into high gear with "Shake You," a crisply produced rock number with the same beat and style as Shalamar's "Dead Giveaway." And to close out the album, Thelma decides to tell you "What A Woman Feels Inside," a slower number with a heavy bass. As executive producer of the project, Thelma Houston has reason to be proud of this