Help Yourself To The Wizzard's Brew

By Bob Craft

Wizzard's Brew
Roy Wood's Wizzard
United Artists UA-LA042-F

Roy Wood is one of those people in the rock music world who does a little of everything and does it quite well. He was the guiding light of The Move and the Electric Light Orchestra. He tried both of those and moved on to form something called Roy Wood's Wizzard, an experimental group devoted to rock and roll while finding ways to expand the form.

This expansion of form is quite evident in the Electric Light Orchestra which experimented with the idea of Classical/Rock fusions.

So we have now Wizzard, a band which does more than simply fuse classical and rock. It fuses jazz, English music hall, hymns, as well as classical. Sound like an unusual mixture? It is.

I like the second side of the album much better than the first. The second side opens with Buffalo Station/Going Down to Memphis. To tell you the truth, the lyrics on this album are harder to understand than the ones on Exile on Main Street, which I thought was the all time winner in that category. It doesn't matter though. The lyrics that I have been able to decipher are, with a few exceptions, silly and inconsequential. The music's the thing. The music is a drunk redneck making a pass at your date. It is coarse, loud and belching.

"Roy Wood's music is like a drunk redneck making a pass at your date. It is coarse, loud and belching."

don't know whether Wood means by crush, a giggling blushing form of adoration aimed at a member of the opposite sex or crush as in Alex and his droogs kicking the crap out of a devotchka then raping her. The music that goes with the lyrics belies the fact that the singer has a crush on anyone. He comes across more like the leering Lee Jackson of the Nice grunting out "One Of Those People." And no one really believed all those cute Beatles wanted to hold hands.

The last cut is Wear a Fast Gun, my favorite. Wood here has used brass reminiscent of Telemann's Overture in D Major for Trumpet, oboe and strings and Continuo. Here is another of Wood's classical/rock fusions and if he had forgotten to put in the lead vocal it would have been even better. The piece ends in a wash of sitars and flutes and a slightly reeling version of Abide With Me.

The first side is much harder to listen to, the main offender being Me at the Jailhouse which indulges in the sort of nonsense that killed jazz and now threatens rock.

The first side ends with the marvelous little gigolo Jolly Cup of Tea which sounds like it was snatched from a London music hall stage.

In all, this album is a tribute to the craftsmanship of Roy Wood and his wealth of ideas on the Rock genre. Take this one home before you buy Led Zeppelin's newest. It rocks, belches and crawls on its belly like a reptile.

Beware the Shadow
Help Yourself
United Artists UA-LA079-F

I'm getting tired of groups putting out albums when they don't have an album's worth of material. I don't mean weak cuts, I'm talking about stuff that shouldn't have even been through a microphone.

Take Help Yourself's new album for example. It has two of these cuts on it. One is Molly Baked Bean and it sounds like the result of eating too many of them and Calapoos which is not as good as the Trinidad Steel Band or even Follow Your Daughter Home. I take time to do this because the rest of the stuff is so good that you want to punch the band for letting this garbage get through.

The band isn't so much of the Springfield copy that was indicated with the first album. While there are still sounds of the Springfield in this album, they have been muted somewhat. And I think that it is good. Trying to replace the Springfield is a little like being cast as Superman and we all know what happened to George Reeves.

The album rocks more than did the first album. The music is still mellow but it is not lethargic as it was in so many places of the first album.

This album tends to be boring in spots, i.e. the jam in the middle of Reaffirmation, but if you liked the first album you won't go wrong. However, if you can't stand CSINY, Americans or any of that bunch, better stay away from this one, they still have a lot of Springfield to get out of their system.