

# Records



**THE GRAND ILLUSION**  
Styx  
(A&M Records)

Styx no doubt are eagerly awaiting reviews of their seventh album. The reviews will contribute to the illusion the members of this Chicago-based band are trying to perpetuate: that we're all the same, and that these guys (Denis De Young, Tommy Shaw, James Young, John and Chuck Panozzo) wonder "who the hell we are."

As a statement of truth, this album doesn't make it. Styx know who they are and what they're doing. But as an exploration of what it means to be rock stars, it's their strongest album yet: a mediation on identity whose strength lies more in music than words.

"Superstars" should release as a single: its lyrics are incisive, its harmonies ringing, and it has an unforgettable chorus.

"Come Sail Away," a dazzling invitation to escape, begins with lovely acoustic Shaw guitar leading to spacy keyboard swirls by De Young, all dominated by one of the group's trademarks—tight harmonies. Young's "Miss America," a tough exploration of that institution, kicks off side two and features the best lyrics of the album, including this neat cliché turnaround:

*Well it's true just take a look  
The cover sometimes makes the  
book  
And the judges did they ever ask  
To read between the lines?*

Interesting, provocative and expert rock'n'roll, *The Grand Illusion* is a winner. The large full-color poster in the album is the package's real illusion, disposable as illusions should be. The album, however, is far from disposable.

Musically and lyrically, it is a step forward for Styx, who for the first time show a sense of irony. They've begun to match their musical strengths with a vision of the world, and the match is promising.

—Carlo Wolff

## TWILLEY DON'T MIND

Dwight Twilley Band  
(Arista Records)

The Twilley band is another group that hails from that mecca of southwestern rock, Tulsa, Okla. They are on the Arista label through a licensing arrangement with Shelter Records, the organization that gave other Tulsa boys like Leon Russell and J.J. Cale their big starts.

Twilley's roots lie in a tight basic beat, accentuated by strong vocal harmonies. It's these vocals (duets between Twilley and Phil Seymour) that solidify the group's ties with a geography that has given rock the voices of Buddy Holly, Roy Orbison and the Everly Brothers.

It's sometimes forgotten that rock is not only the focal point for lead voices or personalities like Jagger, Slick, Joplin, Ronstadt, Dylan or Plant. One direction of rock works through beautifully arranged voices, rather than "sound" constructed around lead instruments and personalities. The Twilley Band features two voices in constant harmony from start to finish, allowing simple musical progressions to take on added amplitude, as for example in cuts like "Twilley Don't Mind," "Here She Comes" and "Invasion."

Twilley's music is a welcome return to a style of rock appreciated by artists like Lennon and McCartney, both being affected by Holly and the Everlys.

Buddy Holly's records still stand up today on the strength of lyrics, the rockabilly sound, and most important, his voice.

If you listen to the work of the Everlys, you can hear voices stressing melodic integration above all else. The Twilley group believes in a similar musical style. It enhances the power of their sound and creates interesting rock that continues to generate both listening and dancing music.

—Joe Heumann

*Joe Heumann teaches communications at Eastern Illinois University.*

## CROSBY, STILLS AND NASH

(Atlantic)

Openness is the key to this album, a much-heralded reunion of three people who eight years ago put an important cast on rock sensibility and its expression.

The three have been through a great deal: massive publicity and adulation, a good share of tragedy in their personal lives, particularly in the case of Crosby and Stills.

They've come together after eight years to form a temporary community based on a shared vision, a new willingness to take musical risks, and the perfect, expected harmonies. They seem to have grown through their experience. They harmonize as beautifully as ever. Stills is gruff, giving the music its rough, rock taste; Crosby is sweet and modest; and Nash with his high clear voice gives it room to breathe.

All three songwriters explore the themes of community and time, reminding us of where they were, what they've gone through and how they want to be.

There's an urgency to the best of the songs—Stills' "See the Changes" and Nash's incredible "Cathedral"—that allows the album to transcend its preoccupation and become timeless.

Crosby, (the weakest link in the trio but its essential foundation) is at least honest here: "I'm the world's most opinionated man," he sings in his "Anything At All."

In "Cathedral" Nash takes us on a trip through his mind, telling us he sometimes doesn't know who he is, but given time he'll be fine.

*Part of me is screaming to say.  
I want to be carried away.*

he sings in "Carried Away," leaving the impulse of that resolution open.

There's a calculation here. It would be naive to assume that CSN would release an album that's raw and unstructured. This album plays effortlessly, smoothly, ranging from Stills' rough, faintly Spanish tinge, to Nash's open, slightly Gregorian harmonic structures.

I've read some reviews of this album that say it is dated and bland. I don't agree, since I think it is an important one, a testament to survival and creativity.

—Carlo Wolff

## SIMPLE THINGS

Carole King  
(Capitol)

For her first new album in several years, King is offering pop tunes, harder and musically clearer than what we're used to hearing from her.

One of the pioneers of soft rock, long before Fleetwood Mac and Frampton laid claim to pre-eminence in that field, King now fits right in. She has a new label, a new band, a six-man Colorado group called Navarro, which complements her vocals and keyboard work beautifully.

The songs written with Rick Evers, her new musical and emotional associate, are not as strong as the ones written by herself, with the exception of the powerful, "Hold On," which seems to be about someone wrongfully imprisoned and features an arresting hook.

But the title tune, with a pretty enough melody, has vapid lyrics, as do "One," "To Know That I Love You," and "In the Name of Love."

The rest of the album is strong. When King deals with the difficulties of love ("Labyrinth," "You're the One Who Knows" and the angry, stirring "God Only Knows") she's a convincing chronicler of the modern hypersensitive sensibility. And in "Hard Rock Cafe," she's written a tough, uptempo masterpiece about rock music, kind of a bleached "Living for the City." It's catchy, sassy, clean and it swings.

When she started out, she was mainly a composer, with such credits as "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow" and "The Locomotion." Those songs haven't become dated; their simplicity has lasted. She's been singing for and by herself now for some time, and her work has grown more complex. When she surrenders to that complexity, as in "God Only Knows," a long cry of pain from a person who recognizes she doesn't have the answers, she's very powerful. When she cops out to the "simple things," her music is pap.

Strength and pap cohabit on this interesting album. Fortunately, strength has a slight edge.

—Carlo Wolff

*Carlo Wolff is a journalist in Albany who reviews records regularly for IN THESE TIMES.*

## CLASSIFIED

Albany NY-ITT will co-sponsor a conference on "Health Care Planning in the Capitol District: Radical Alternatives" Wed., Dec. 14, at the Capitol District Psychiatric Center. The other co-sponsor is Dept. of Community and Preventive Medicine at Albany Medical College. Speakers include: Sander Kelman, keynote speaker, Cornell University, "Health Insurance, Health Service, or Health." Dr. Andrew McBride, Director, Whitney Young Health Care Center, "Problems of Health Care Delivery in our Area and Elsewhere." Molly Back-up, Physician Assistant, Community Health Plan, "Work Process, Hierarchy and Division of Labor in Local Treatment Models." Ed Bloch Int'l. Rep. United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union, "Stress on the Job: The Case of the PCB's at the Hudson Falls GE Plant." Dr. Tim Liveright, Moderator. Informal workshops may follow the initial presentations. For more information contact Gene Damm, 22 Fairlawn Ave., Albany, NY 12203 (518)482-7675.

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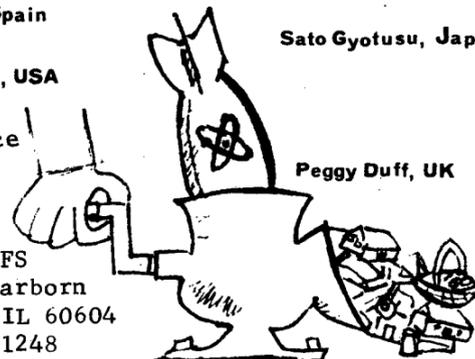
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## FILM

# Equus loses in translation to the wide screen

## EQUUS

Screenplay by Peter Shaffer,  
from his own play  
Directed by Sidney Lumet  
Starring Richard Burton, Peter  
Firth and Joan Plowright

Billed as a psychological thriller, *Equus* would be a lot more satisfactory if it settled for being just that.

The story—told almost entirely in flashbacks—is the unravelling of the motivation behind a peculiarly repulsive crime of violence, committed by a boy who loves horses upon six of his favorites. The psychiatrist who does the unravelling (Richard Burton) begins to wonder early on whether he is doing his patient a favor. He can cure the boy of his obsession, put an end to his nightmares and probably keep him out of an asylum, but he will in the process rob him of the passion that raises a humdrum life to peaks of ecstasy when it isn't driving him criminally insane.

As theater this worked very well. The psychiatrist's self-doubts and vague allusions to deep, dark forces at work in the caves of everyone's psyche were embellishments on a gripping melodrama, brilliantly and imaginatively staged. The audience could take the philosophizing or leave it.

Not so in the film version.

Richard Burton delivers all the "deeper meaning" monologues with full Shakespearean flourish, photographed at closer and closer range until one of his eyes fills the entire wide screen and his voice thunders like that of some Greek god-out-of-the-machine.

And this is not the only—nor even the worst way in which the camera spoils what was a fine piece of theater. The staged attack on the horses was horrendous; the viewer's imagination made it real. The film version is real—or at least it looks so real that it breaks the illusion. One forgets the problem of the bedeviled boy and begins to worry about how those bloody shots were managed—unless they really did that to real horses!

(This is an object lesson in why the old Greek dramatists did their bloody work off stage and wheeled in the results.)

There are lots of good things about *Equus*—fine performances, marvelous photography (especially in the scenes of the boy's secret night rides), and the same literate, taut script that made the play so powerful.

But it is not a successful transposition from one art to another, and it is not going to throw any new light on the "dark recesses" of the human soul.

—Janet Stevenson



Peter Firth, who played Alan Strang on stage, now plays the role in the film.

# Semi-serious story of a Vietnam vet

...to dispel the national amnesia about Vietnam and its veterans.

## HEROES

Screenplay by James Carabatsos  
Directed by Jeremy Paul Kagan  
Starring Henry Winkler and Sally  
Field  
Universal Pictures, Rated PG

*Heroes* is the story of a disturbed but lovably wacky Vietnam vet, played by Henry (the Fonz) Winkler, who sets off on a cross-country journey to find his old comrades-in-arms and begin the worm farm they have planned together. The worm farm is an unrealizable dream, one facet of Jack Dunne's (Winkler) refusal to accept the fact that his friend Monroe is dead—killed in action while saving Dunne and three other soldiers.

The film is curiously ambiguous. The underlying theme is profound, but the tone, plot and characterizations are Hollywood schlock at its worst.

On the one hand, the screenplay refers to the issue of the war and its effect on countless veterans, portrays the camaraderie of men who shared each other's lives at the edge of human endurance, and sharply projects the returning combat veteran's

disrespect for traditional authorities, which may be the most enduring legacy of that brutal time.

On the other hand, it trivializes the subject by offering the saccharine conclusion that one good woman can assuage and privately eliminate a deeply social pain.

Early in his odyssey, Dunne meets a young woman (Sally Field) who is pulling back from a wedding date and who gets enmeshed in his quest. In the end, love between them wins out amidst the wreckage of that quest.

This excessively romantic ending might be more understandable if we knew more about the lovers, who are presented as isolates, divorced from family ties, jobs, residences, class and ethnic background. We know that they live in New York City, that one protested the war while the other fought it, that one is engaged to someone named Joel while the other has three old Army buddies. But we never learn why they are drawn to each other or what they receive from each other.

The minor characters are presented with no more depth. The sequences with Ken (Harrison Ford), a troubled veteran who has returned to his family's hard-scrabble farm, are opaque. When he fires his smuggled M-16 at the stars, the writer and director seem to be straining to tell us something about Vietnam and what it did to the men who fought there, but what, is hopelessly unclear.

Most of the film is played for



laughs (what will our wacky veteran hero do next?) and serious moments like the roadhouse fight scene are negated by slapstick endings. We are not adequately prepared for the closing sequence, which is climaxed by Dunne's memory of Vietnam.

This is the most effective part of the film. Brief as those TV newsclips that had such an effect on public opposition to the war, this segment personalizes the horror.

Winkler has been quoted in the press as questioning whether "the country is ready for it yet." Those responsible for the film believe the country is not and have chosen to undercut the film's seriousness with uneven comedy, facile advertising ("finding the one you love is finding yourself"), and a happily-ever-after ending.

Despite this, *Heroes* is worth seeing.

In addition to the Vietnam sequences, there are good scenes: Dunne with the VA doctor; Monroe's parents being cruelly reminded of their loss; Dunne and the Army recruiting sergeant, and others. It does attempt—however mildly—to dispel the national amnesia about Vietnam and its veterans.

As one of the first in a series of soon-to-be-released films on the subject, it may prepare the way for a national accounting of those years.

—Gary Kulik

Gary Kulik is a veteran of the war in Vietnam.