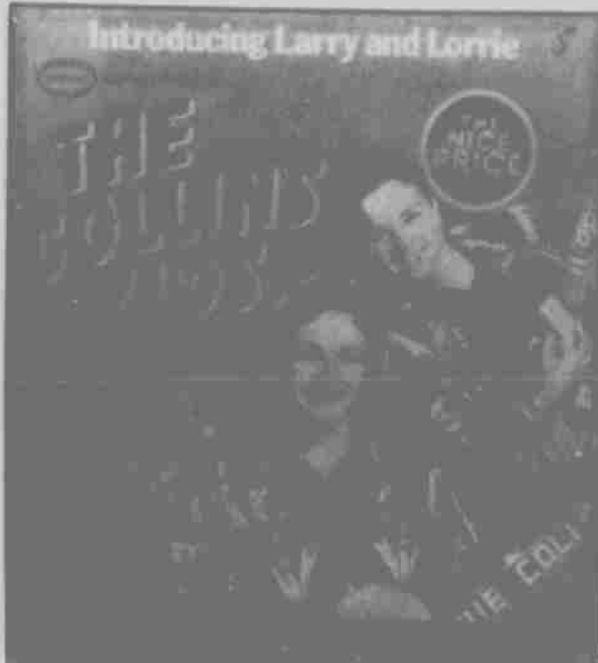


Arts & Entertainment

Album Reviews

Collins kids make Cats look tame



Introducing Larry and Lorrie
The Collins Kids
Epic

There are two ways to take *Introducing Larry and Lorrie*; one is as pure kitsch, as Epic Records would have you do. The other is as pure rockabilly music that makes Stray Cats look tame.

First, let's examine the former. Epic has gone all out to make the Collins kids look like some vestige of bad taste from the '50s. The packaging is supposed to be circa 1958; but don't be fooled, this album was never released before 1983 — the Collins Kids were never "big" enough to have an LP.

Current CBS A&R Vice President Gregg Geller tries to recall the worst of '50s fan magazine lingo in his liner notes with such verbiage as "these Sooner state siblings bowed on the California TVer Town Hall Party in 1953, and have wowed audiences ever since . . . play 'Short'nin' Bread Rock' for baby brother and watch his nursery rhyme rhythm set his little toes a tapping." Actually, this may be Geller's true writing style. His liner notes on Elvis Costello's "Taking Liberties" album have the same ring.

In addition to all this, on the back of the jacket are some ridiculously dated pictures of the Collins Kids with various CBS dignitaries and, most amusingly, one photo with an overbearing stage mother and wimpy father. Gee, Beave, it's like the Collins Kids next door!

But, if you can approach this LP with a little more maturity than Epic evidently was able to, you are presented with a fairly intelligent collection of rockabilly singles from the 1950s. These cuts, recorded between 1954 and 1958, show the true spirit of this musical form, played by two truly talented youngsters.

Rockabilly has two main characteristics that sets it apart from other music — wit and musical ability (speed also helps). As for wit, these songs are brilliantly satiric and self-deprecating. In "Hot Rod," Larry and Lorrie croon the many assets of their "roadster," while grudgingly admitting they can't actually drive it for another three years. "Hoy Hoy" satirizes '50s love-talk like Rodgers' and Hart's "Snooky Ookums" did in the '30s. "Whistle Bait" is another clever piece, which local artist Charlie Burton now includes as a regular part of his repertoire.

However, the cleverest bit of humor is contained in "Soda Poppin' Around," where Lorrie, not old enough to spend her nights honky-tonking, haunts the local soda shop:

*Ain't gonna go home
Till eight or nine rolls around
Just drowning my sorrows,
Soda Poppin' around."*

What's more surprising than the material is the fact that the Collins Kids, 13 and

15 when the last of these recordings was made, are quite accomplished singers, writers and musicians. True, the voices are a bit adolescent at points. But Larry, who sounds somewhat like Little Jimmy Dickens, and Lorrie, who has the vocal qualities of Kitty Wells, sound as if they might have evolved into fine singers. In addition, the Collins Kids wrote all but four of the songs, a feat not attempted by even the most "grown-up" musicians.

Larry is simply incredible on lead guitar. Collins was only 10 years old when most of these recordings were made, yet he plays his double-necked guitar with incredible authority. He particularly shines on "Hurricane," a duet with veteran guitarist Joe Maphis.

It's a shame the Collins Kids did not continue their career into adulthood. What became of them is a mystery. The dubious Rock Music Encyclopedia does not list them, nor, more irritatingly, does Epic Records include any biographical information to which they obviously would have access.

Regardless, *Introducing Larry and Lorrie* is an interesting album and a worthy addition to the burgeoning field of rockabilly re-issues. In addition, it is in Epic's "Nice Price" series, so it's cheap, too.

As Beaver Cleaver might say, "Gosh, neat things like this can happen only in America."

— Mike Frost

Clapton finally delivers the goods



Money and Cigarettes
Eric Clapton
Warner Brothers

Like a lot of people, Eric Clapton had his problems in the 1970s. Clapton's hey-days, of course, were with Cream and Derek and the Dominoes. Since then, things have been a bit lean.

Sure, he's had hits like "I Shot the Sheriff" and "Cocaine." But as catchy as those tunes were, you still knew that Clapton could do a lot better.

Indeed, Clapton has often been in the position of the boy prodigy who would rather play marbles than write symphonies. And because he does have such great talent, more has always been expected from him.

This album delivers it. This is Clapton at his best: playing the blues guitar as few people can.

It might sound like a cliché (it may indeed be a cliché) but Clapton has returned to his roots on this album — blues and rock 'n' roll.

There's not really a song on this album you could call bad. Some are average, though.

"I've Got a Rock 'n' Roll Heart," the single off the album, isn't the best song on the record, but it can hold its own with most of the Top 40 tripe.

Clapton rejects the glamour of the music world in the song:

*Don't need no glitter
No Hollywood
All you got to do is ya lay it down*

And ya lay it down good

"Crosscut Saw" is probably the most bluesy number of the record. It also has lyrics that are a lot of fun:

*Well, some call me Woodchopper Joe;
Some call me Woodchopper Ben
When I cut your wood baby you'll want
me back again.*

"Pretty Girl" is the ballad of the album and a nicely done one at that. It gets the point across without approaching the saccharine level to which John Denver too often dips.

The highlight of the album, of course, is Clapton's guitar playing. Clapton with a guitar is like Dr. J with a basketball; both can make it do magical things.

Clapton, also like Dr. J, has a strong supporting cast. The most notable is Ry Cooder on slide and electric guitar, but all the backup musicians do a good job.

"Money and Cigarettes" isn't the best album Clapton has ever made and it's not the best of the year, but it is better than most you'll find out these days.

— Jeff Goodwin

Albert Lee merits musical justice



Albert Lee
Albert Lee
Polydor

It is a disconcerting experience to listen to albums like *Albert Lee*. Not because the production is sloppy (it isn't; veteran producer Rodney Crowell is at his best here), not because the songs are trite (they're not; featured are works by some of pop music's most expert songwriters like Crowell, Hank DeVito, John Hiatt and Felice and Boudelux Bryant) or because the musicians are amateurs (Lee is a studio veteran and also featured as such greats as Larrie Londin, Billy Payne, Emory Gordy and Vince Gill). No, the real tragedy behind this record is that *Albert Lee* the album and Albert Lee the artist will never be popular.

Lee has great credentials. His unique picking style (based more on speed than anything else) has graced the albums of Emmylou Harris, Eric Clapton, Rosanne Cash and his own band, the defunct British group Hands, Head and Feet.

Like his debut album on A&M three years ago, Lee's latest is a collection of mostly up-tempo tunes combining the simplicity of country music with the pure abandon of rock 'n' roll. The album kicks off with Hank DeVito's "Sweet Little Lisa," a song originally recorded by Dave Edmunds (on which Lee played lead guitar, one of the few times ex-Rockpile Edmunds surrendered that position, which sets a lightning pace for the rest of the LP.)

Other standouts here include two John Hiatt songs, "Pink Bedroom" and "Radio Girl" (producer Crowell is evidently fascinated with Hiatt's impressive blend of imagery and rhythm; he used two other Hiatt compositions on wife Rosanne Cash's last LP. "Real Wild Child" and "The Best I Can" are also notable).

However, Lee is at his best on "Rock

and Roll Man," a song similar in style to Billy Joel's "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me." However, while Joel seemed to be trying to make you understand why he is the way he is, Lee doesn't care if you understand or not. He knows what he is, and he enjoys it.

The album's only real failure is Bryants' "So Sad (To Watch Good Love Go Bad)," a song brilliantly done only a few months ago by Emmylou Harris on her live LP. Also, whether Crowell's "One Way Rider" needs to be done again (Johnny Cash, Jerry Reed and Ricky Skaggs have all recorded versions of this in recent months) is moot.

Except for these minor flaws, *Albert Lee* is an impressive effort. Why then, with all these things going for it, will this album never hit the fabled "tops of the pops?"

But who can say for sure? The record business has always been strange this way. Musical airheads like Charlene, Styx, the Captain and Tenille and REO Speedwagon always seem to be successful, while true musicians like Lee, Gram Parsons, the McGarrigle Sisters, Steve Fromholz and Squeeze flounder (and often drown) in musical obscurity.

If there were any justice in the world, Lee would have the No. 1 album now, not Men At Work. But since there isn't, I suggest that when you run across this album for \$1.99 in the cut-out bins a few months from now, buy it. You won't be disappointed.

— Mike Frost

'Guts for Love': The way life is'

Guts for Love
Garland Jeffreys
Epic

The first time I heard Garland Jeffreys was when a friend played a song of his off the 1981 album *Escape Artist*. I found



that Jeffreys has the kind of voice you wish you had but knew you never would. In fact, the song reminded me a lot of Elvis Costello. With the latest album from Jeffreys, the listener finds quite a bit of the same thing. This time, on *Guts for Love*, Jeffreys goes one step further; he makes you wish you had been paying more attention earlier.

There is only one word for *Guts for Love* — great. I can say that I really enjoyed listening to this album. Jeffreys knows how to make good music, and it's not the same old thing you may be used to. *Guts for Love* contains a considerable amount of variation, but not enough to get you lost in the shuffle. Most of the songs take a fairly traditional approach to songwriting, and this accounts for the conservative feeling one gets from the lyrics.

That's not to say that every song is a rehash of someone's idea of a love affair. Jeffreys writes music that takes a certain amount of control over the listener. One cut, titled "American Backslide," is centered on the subject of suicide and the American Dream. It very well may be the best song on the disc.

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