



Photo courtesy MCA records

Jerry Jeff Walker, MCA recording artist whose latest album, *Ridin' High*, is climbing toward the top of the charts.

Hot Licks

by Deb Gray

Labelle/Phoenix/Epic/\$6.98

No doubt about it: these chicks have pizzazz. There isn't anything on this album that has the impact of "Lady Marmalade", but that song is unbeatable. Zager and Evans after "In the Year 2525" could have wished for such an album of strong follow-up material as this one.

This album is best taken as an entity rather than a separation of the parts. What makes Labelle so entertaining is their overall sound. It gets you up, moving your feet, and, what's more, it's fun listening. Best of all, Labelle is a gust of originality—something distinctly different in a music scene which is in a period of consolidation.

Labelle sounds like a group that has plenty of room to grow. Nona Hendryx's songs are more interesting than the group's previous effort "Nightbirds." My favorite tune on the album is Bob Crewe's "Far As We Felt like Goin'." It's refreshing to hear a "Baby, don't get hooked on me" theme from the other side of the bed.

Jerry Jeff Walker/*Ridin' High*/MCA/\$6.98

There is something so honest and unpretentious about Jerry Jeff Walker, you can't help but like him. As in the past, Walker has recorded several songs written by his buddies. The poetry is colloquial, straight forward and very

appealing. The images gain power from their simplicity.

The most infectious song on the album is Walker's paean to the music business—the title wouldn't make it past the copy desk, but it's another example of Walker's dry wit. The other nine songs are guaranteed to bring a smile.

Neil Sedaka/*The Hungry Years*/Rocket Record Co./\$6.98

There's something about seeing Neil Sedaka's TV appearances that turns me off, but at least he doesn't offend me musically the way Paul Anka does. When listening, I don't have the distraction of watching him, I can enjoy Sedaka for what he is—the best exponent of the middle-of-the-road sound.

All the tracks on this album seem geared to AM airways—the cuts are all about three minutes long, with plenty of melodic hooks to keep you humming through a morning full of boring classes.

Among the best cuts here are "When You Loving Me," which breaks into a gospel-inspired fast chorus, and yet another interpretation of "Breaking Up Is Hard To Do." This rendition, which is performed at a slower tempo conjures up images of smoky nightclubs and creates a feeling of transience.

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