

# Airwave artists try the big screen

By Stew Magnuson

At first glance, Mark Knopfler, guitarist and writer for Dire Straits, and singer Joe Jackson have little in common.

However, both write about the same idea — male and female relationships — and both have recently penned a soundtrack to a motion picture. Knopfler scored the soundtrack to the Scottish film, "Local Hero," and Jackson wrote the music for a soon-to-be-released movie, "Mike's Murder."

Soundtracks can be tough to look at within the context of a musician's career because they tell someone else's story and subsequently, don't always contain the thoughts of the writer. Also, the music must fit into certain scenes in a movie, restraining the writer's creativity. As a result, it is difficult to relate to these as "normal" albums, and their poor sales can be attributed to that fact.

So the question is, should those who like Joe Jackson or Dire Straits (let's face it, Mark Knopfler is Dire Straits) go out and spend their hard-earned bucks on an album that may not necessarily be as good as their past works?

The answer to that question is yes for the new Joe Jackson soundtrack. The first side of *Mike's Murder* contains five new songs whose quality is as good as last year's best selling *Night and Day* LP. But buyer beware: the second side consists of three instrumentals that are not particularly interesting at all, chiefly because of the absence of Jackson's fascinating lyrics. This isn't a criticism of Jackson; he obviously had to provide some background music for certain scenes.

Without seeing the film one can begin to get a feel for the setting of the movie. Jackson begins the narration from a first person, female point of view in the first two songs, "Cosmopolitan," and "This Town's a Fairground."

The character Jackson describes is a woman in her early 20s who feels lost in a big city, probably Memphis. I could be wrong. We'll find out when and if the movie is released.

The movie itself is scheduled to be out during the Christmas season, but its opening date has been set back many times, which angered Jackson. He decided to go ahead and release the album before the movie was playing.

It would truly be a shame if this album went unheard by Jackson's fans. Hopefully the movie will be popular enough to get the LP some recognition. Debra Winger is the lead actress in the movie which should draw some people to the film and, perhaps, thus draw some people to the album.

Songs such as "Laundromat Monday," possibly the best song ever recorded for people who like to listen to music while sorting through dirty clothes, should not go unheard.

On the other hand, Mark Knopfler's soundtrack, *Local Hero*, could go unheard by the listening public and even Mark Knopfler fans. With the exception of one song, all of the pieces in this LP are instrumentals, which, at first glance seems all right since Knopfler is one of the finest guitarists in music today. However, only two of the cuts on the entire LP really show off Knopfler's skill with the guitar, and those songs are marginal at best.

Most of the album is comprised of short instrumentals performed by Alan Clark, keyboardist for



Dire Straits, and faster Scottish folk music played by a group called the Acetones.

Again, it is difficult to criticize Knopfler since, obviously, he had to write the kind of music which would fit the movie. But Dire Straits fans should be warned that this LP doesn't, in the least sense, sound like a Dire Straits album and it is not recommended for those who feel they must buy the record because it is written and produced by Knopfler.

In short, people who like Jackson and particularly *Night and Day*, should not be afraid of buying *Mike's Murder*. However, Mark Knopfler's soundtrack to *Local Hero* isn't recommended even for hardcore Dire Straits fans.

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Featured in the cast are Luciano Pavarotti as Ernani, Leona Mitchell as Elvira and Sherrill Milnes as Don Carlo.

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