

The Music Beet

By Paul Bradley

- Legend
 ***** - Excellent
 **** - Very Good
 *** - Good
 ** - Fair
 * - Awful

****1/2 Shot of Love - Bob Dylan**

After Bob Dylan's last two albums, anything he does now could only be an improvement. Extolling the virtues of his born-again Christianity on Slow Train Coming and Saved was a commendable moral exercise on Dylan's part, but it made for two of the worst albums in recent memory. In not necessarily taking a shot at the man's themes - rather, that Dylan got carried away with ideals and simply neglected to inject any lyrical or melodic quality into his efforts.

I am pleased to report that Shot of Love is an improvement - and a relatively substantial one. Dylan appears to have taken a cue from the

scathing criticism which Slow Train and Saved received. The fire and Brimstone, revival meeting mood has been toned down significantly.

Far and away the best song on the album (and one of Dylan's best in years) is "Lenny Bruce" - a stirring tribute to the controversial legend of satire who did for comedy what Dylan did for PoP music. Dylan and Bruce have something very important in common - when each was at his respective peak, he was hated by the establishment. Dylan writes: "Lenny Bruce.. never robbed any churches/ never cut off any babies heads/ he didn't commit any crime/ just ripped off the lid before its time../ Lenny Bruce was bad/ .. he was the brother you never had."

"Every Grain of Sand" also features Dylan at the best we have heard in some time. Sure, the song is spiritually influenced; yet it is delivered in a quaint, introspective and very

listenable manner.

The title track, "Shot of Love", has potential but it never quite gets off the ground - possible because it sounds a little too much like "Gotta Serve Somebody" from Slow Train. The remaining tunes have that recorded-in-the-basement feel about them and have too many rough edges to be accessible to anyone but a devoted Dylan fan.

If you have never thought much of Dylan's past work, this l.p. will do little to change your opinion. For the rest of us, Shot of Love is evidence that the man still has some good music in him.

*****1/2 Pirates - Rickie Lee Jones**

With Pirates, Rickie Lee Jones has established herself as one of the premiere female artists in music today. The immediate temptation is to accuse Jones of imitating Melanie Safka (they sound that much alike). However, this

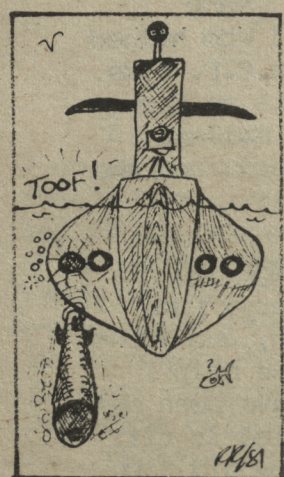
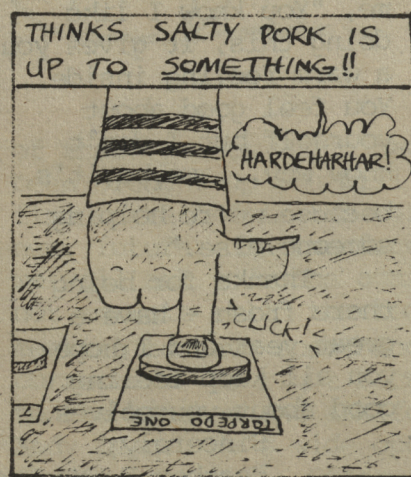
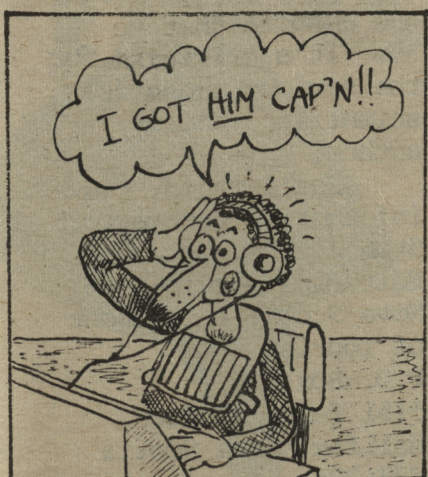
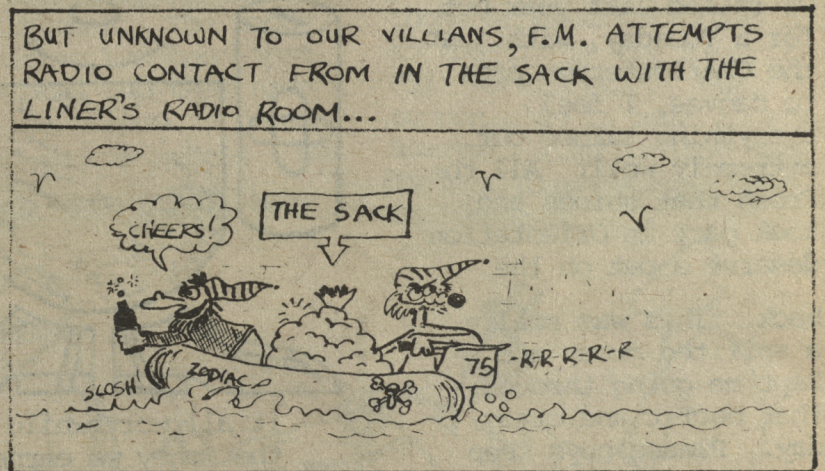
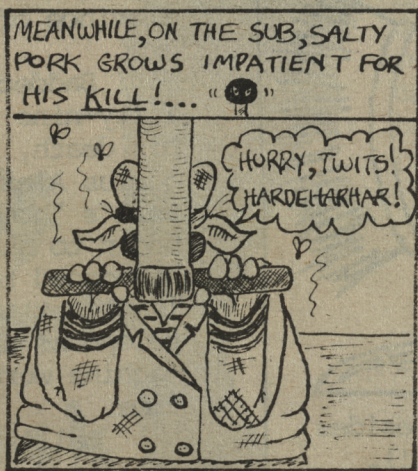
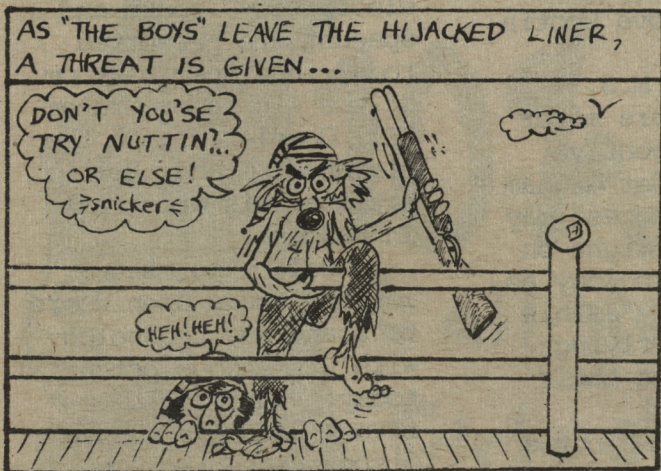
lady has too much talent to need to imitate anyone.

Like Melanie, Rickie Lee Jones' voice has the range and pitch that make everything from a whisper to a scream sound good. Unlike Melanie, Jones' songs have an air of sophistication that the former could never achieve (as in the splendid "Live it Up").

It is difficult to categorize the music on Pirates into any particular genre. Jones has struck an effective balance of R&B, jazz, and a little bit of soul; and she moves quite nicely from one style to another (Contrast the laid-back "A Lucky Guy" with "Woody and Dutch on Slow Train to Peking"; a jazzy, up-tempo number).

None of the songs on Pirates bear any resemblance to her hit "Chuck E's in Love". That's another reason why I like this album so much. Recommended cuts: "Living It Up", "Skeletons", "We Belong Together", "A Lucky Guy", and "The Returns".

DEXTER T. GNOME



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