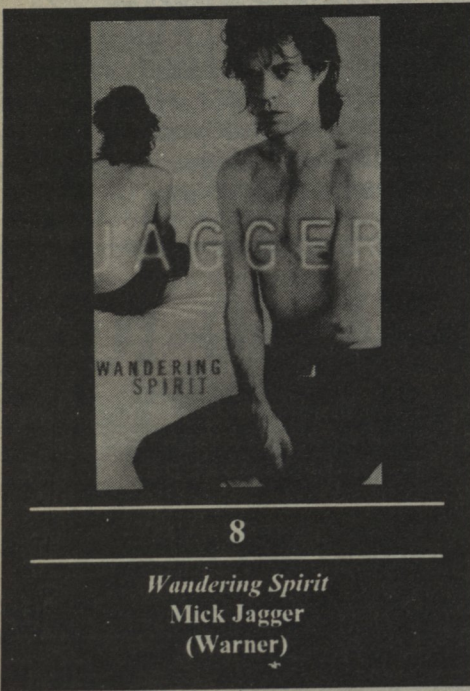


5  
**Off the Ground**  
 Paul McCartney  
 (Capitol)



8  
**Wandering Spirit**  
 Mick Jagger  
 (Warner)

by Kirby Ferguson

After reacquainting himself with oldies and Beatles' faves, experimenting with full-fledged classical music and collaborating with Elvis Costello, Paul McCartney has been pushing the envelope in recent years. Unfortunately, the high aspirations of *Off the Ground*, his latest release, are squandered by bland production.

A lack of melodies certainly isn't the problem with *Off the Ground*; nor is it the album's ambitious, pop-symphonic sweep. It's undoing lies entirely in the toothless, boringly tasteful production which drains each instrument of any character and melts them into one chilly mass, rendering the proceedings obtuse and monotonous. Not that this is a tragic waste; *Off the Ground* consists largely of hopelessly jolly pop trots, unconvincing rockers and dippy social commentary (climaxing with "and don't forget to be... Cosmically Conscious," yeah whatever, Paul). Even the two Costello collaborations fail to provide some punch. Though these

objections apply to all McCartney's solo albums, a rootsier production could have hidden his cloying cuteness and left the pop hooks to stand on their own. Though Paul McCartney still seems to be an artist of potential and daring, he obviously needs someone else to bring some passion to the equation. In the end, *Off the Ground*'s craftsmanship should satisfy fans. Others should direct themselves to any of the albums on the opposite page.

Far preferable is Mick Jagger's *Wandering Spirit*, by far the strongest of his three solo albums. Without Keith Richards, Jagger has seemed as incomplete as McCartney, but here he adds producer Rick Rubin (something other than a yes-man), whose beefy production and contemporary sounds add a new dimension.

In the past, Jagger's attempts to catch up with the mainstream have been embarrassing. He obviously has no intention of growing old gracefully; he's gonna fight it every step of the way, just like the Oil of Olay lady. But Jagger scores a victory over Old Man Time with this

"...compared to  
**Off the Ground**  
 it sounds  
 especially rocking."

one, a surprisingly fresh and varied work. "Sweet Thing" (not the Van Morrison song) is a modernized "Miss You" and an attempt to be contemporary that works. Covers of James Brown's "Think" and Frederick Knight's "I've Been Lonely For So Long" are inventive and fun. Jagger seems willing to tackle anything here, trying his hand at Celtic folk with "Handsome Molly" (and mangling it rather badly) and dueting with Lenny Kravitz (and getting blown away). Add the tough riffs of Richard's *Main Offender* and we could have had a masterpiece. Still, *Wandering Spirit* is more exciting than one could have possibly predicted, and compared to McCartney's *Off the Ground* it sounds especially rocking.

While both are up around that 50 mark, Jagger and McCartney seem revitalized, though McCartney needs a Rick Rubin (or Elvis Costello, or John Lennon) to stop him from being so cute. And perhaps he knows this -- rumour has it that McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr are going to reunite (but don't count on it). Which reminds me, Cream are definitely going to record another album together real soon. You can also expect newbies from Living Colour, Sting and a Tin Machine-less David Bowie any time now. Also, a couple weeks ago I forgot to give number ratings to my reviews: Elvis Costello's *Juliet Letters* got an 8, while Jesus Jones' *Perverse* landed a 5. ●



**Inside Out**  
 Sue Medley  
 (Polygram)

by Carol Schneider

On this her second album, Sue Medley takes some of her adventures and turns out an album for real life. The title comes from the fact that Sue Medley looks inside herself and gives us what she found there.

The first single from this album, "When the Stars Fall", is Sue's own ideas on "what a crazy business we're in, and how the support of friends makes a difference." If you've listened to any top 40 radio lately you've probably heard it since it was a fairly popular song.

But this soft, sentimental song is not the only type of song on this album. Sue medley mixes a fairly heavy rock sound, "The Sound and the Fury" with the bitter humor of "Forget You" and the sensitive but harsh "Jane's House" to put together an album well worth a listen. ●

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