
THE METAPHYSICAL REVIEW

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I HOPE I'M STILL TALKING TO MY FRIENDS

As you can see, this is not the 100-page issue of The Metaphysical Review that you've been expecting hourly. That giant issue exists... 30 pages of it on stencil, some of it on diskette, and 40 pages of it in the letter file.

However, you won't be seeing No. 11/12/infinity for a few months because I cannot afford to publish it. My sources of credit have dried up. I'm over-extended. Broke. I owe large sums of money to several people, including various credit-card agencies and my wife. My next tax bill has arrived, and I can't afford to pay it. Meanwhile, I have enough ink and paper to publish this issue, and that's all. I'll have to make believe I have the money to pay the postage.

It's a familiar story. I wouldn't bore you with it if it were not for the post-office-boxesful of letters I've received during recent months from engagingly naive people who think the next issue is about to appear. Sorry; please wait.

And then there are the contributors -- Russell Blackford, who sent me an article in the first few days of 1986; Lucy Sussex, who sent me a review not long after that; Robert Day, whose long article on Shostakovitch is lurking at the bottom of a file waiting to lurch onto stencil; and scads more. All I can say is: if you want me to send back your article, you need only ask. I'll probably grouch a bit, and scratch and bite when you tear it away from me, but I will give it back.

Enough of that. Patient readers can go back to sleep for six months, or get in touch with some of the fine Australian fanzines that are flitting around at the moment. Impatient readers can send thousand-dollar donations.

1986

1986 was quite a pleasant year for me, despite my chronic lack of money -- which of course, was my own fault. Although I knew I would be hit by an income-tax-plus-provisional-tax bill, I kept buying CDs, records, and books. Worse, I published TMR Nos. 7/3 and 9, a total cost of \$1500, and put that on Bankcard. The poor little bit of

plastic has never recovered. I borrowed the \$2000-plus tax slug from Elaine, and still haven't paid it off, nearly a year later.

I've been trying to earn the dollars that would pay the debts. I found this quite difficult until my boss made me an offer I could hardly reject: I would go back to working at home, but would do the same kind of work as I had been doing in at the office. The company would buy a word processor, and I would pay it off (more debt!) in hours of work over a year and a half.

This should have been an ideal scheme. In one way, it has been. It's much easier working at home than travelling regularly to South Melbourne. The troubles came when the company went to buy a new word processor for me to use at home.

One Melbourne fan recently gave to another Melbourne fan two buttons. The first button said, 'Nice computers don't go down.' The other button said, 'There are no nice computers.' My employer gave to the computer dealer a list of specifications and a price to be met. The dealer sold us a machine (its brand name is Rhinoceros; nobody's heard of it) which broke down five times in the first month and a half I had it. Eventually the dealer replaced a disc drive. Since then, the keyboard has gone down as well. When I asked the I Ching its opinion of the computer deal, it said: 'Lamenting and sighing, floods of tears.' Never has an I Ching reading been more accurate.

Since Space Age Books closed, I've almost stopped buying science fiction books. The dizzying drop in the value of the dollar pushed up the price of CDs, records, and other books disastrously. Now I try to stay out of record and book shops as much as possible, and hope that I can keep earning money. My fingers and toes hurt from much crossing.

January was the eighteenth anniversary of the beginning of SF Commentary, and in a few days' time I turn 40. Maybe soon I should find something worthwhile to do with my life.

In the light of all that, why do I say that 1986 was a pleasant year? Because at last I found a chiropractor who could help my back. He administered manipulation and massage and, more importantly, ordered me to swim three times a week. This is not the first time I've been told to swim. This is, however, the first time I've been able to do as I was ordered (because of working at home). Highly recommended, if you can find a time in the day when the pool isn't overcrowded. I don't say I can swim well. Probably I swim very badly, but nobody notices. I still can't dive, or swim more than one lap without taking a breather. But it's fun.

BEST OF 1986

A few years ago, I listed my Favourite Thingies for the Year, and people complained because I didn't write a commentary to explain my choices. In TMR 7/8 I went into vast and tedious detail about all my choices, and few readers liked that, either. (Let's face it, Gillespie. Whatever you do these days, it's wrong. So do what you feel like doing. Okay.) So here is as much as will fit in a slender fanzine.

Favourite Novels 1986

- 1 The Secret Journey
by James Hanley (year of first publication: 1936; edition read: Chatto & Windus; 569 pp.)
- 2 The Furies
by James Hanley (1935; King Penguin 14-005440; 395 pp.)
- 3 La Bete Humaine
Emile Zola (1890; Penguin Classics 14-044327; 366 pp.)
- 4 Le Grand Meaulnes
Alain-Fournier (1913; Penguin Modern Classics 14-002466; 206 pp.)

- 5 A Room with a View
E. M. Forster (1900; Penguin 1054; 223 pp.)
- 6 Lost Illusions
Honore de Balzac (1843; Penguin Classics 14-044251; 682 pp.)
- 7 Lady Chatterley's Lover
D. H. Lawrence (1923; Penguin 1484; 317 pp.)
- 8 Emma
Jane Austen (1815; Signet Classics CQ705; 386 pp.)
- 9 The Wings of the Dove
Henry James (1904; Dell Laurel 9581; 512 pp.)
- 10 Empire of the Sun
J. G. Ballard (1984; Gollancz; 221 pp.)
- 11 The Neverending Story
Michael Ende (1979; Penguin 14-007619; 377 pp.)
- 12 Dorothea Dreams
Suzy McKee Charnas (1936; Arbor House; 308 pp.)

In the middle of November, I discovered that A Room with a View was the best novel I had read all this year, and I said to myself: 'This will not do. Where can I find some novels that are really worth the No. 1 spot?' A Room with a View is a fine and funny book, and it's certainly a lot better than the James Ivory film, but it was not a No. 1.

In my search, I found the best English writer of the twentieth century, James Hanley. Nobody knows about him (although The Furies is in a King Penguin edition, which must mean something). He's not even listed in the Oxford Companion to English Literature. I've called him the English Emile Zola -- but Hanley can be better than Zola. His Irish-Liverpudlian working-class characters have a ferociously independent view of life. Hanley is almost the only highly articulate English writer who is not condescending to the 'lower orders'; instead, he lives inside his characters, showing their experience in a series of dramatic scenes. The Secret Journey is the sequel to The Furies, but is a more complex and free-flowing piece. I hope I can find some more Hanley. (All I've been able to find so far is a book of collected short stories and a critical study published by, of all organizations, Melbourne University Press.)

But when I wanted contenders for the No. 1 spot, I turned to the French, of course. There they are, those nineteenth-century French novels, funny, acerbic, stylish, unputdownable, and with a commitment to putting the knife into a whole society, not just one bit of it. That's over-generalization, of course: Victor Hugo does not read much like Emile Zola. But compare nineteenth-century French novels with those from Britain published during the same period, and you'll see why I did not reach for Dickens, Scott, Trollope, or George Eliot when I wanted a good munched read.

So I picked out one book by Balzac (Lost Illusions: a bit tedious in spots, but it does provide a funny and comprehensive anatomy of a whole society and way of thought), one Zola (La Bête Humaine, a mad multi-murder thriller set around the French railway system; the only novel I've read with the true Hitchcock feel to it), and a French classic, Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes, which has also been titled in English as The Wanderer or The Lost Domain. Le Grand Meaulnes, a richly romantic metaphor for the decline of France itself, was published just before the author lost his life during World War I.

Other novels on the list are surprises of one sort or another. Most surprising of all is that they are English, not North American, South American, or European. (Okay, James was American, but it is hard to think of him as anything but English.) Elaine was going to throw out Lady Chatterley's Lover, but I found it had a rich blend of zest, bitterness and (surprise!) sensuality. Emma was a surprise, in that I liked it at all. My last encounter with Jane Austen, 22 years ago, was not a happy one. Emma caught up with me, although I still don't find Austen an unputdownable writer. On the other hand, The Wings of the Dove shows how far James's dramatic powers declined during his last years -- all

the most important scenes take place offstage, and some of the sentences make no sense at all. But somehow the James magic works, especially during the final chapter.

Empire of the Sun is perhaps the most memorable book on this list, although it is written in a very plain, almost throwaway style. (More comments next issue.) The Neverending Story is a richly baroque Jungian fantasy, one that throws up more images than it can possibly draw into its pattern. I wish I had been a teenager when I read it. And Dorothea Dreams is a thriller with a touch of fantasy which dips its hat in the direction of Ursula Le Guin.

The only other genre sf/fantasy books to impress me much during 1986 were Russell Griffin's The Blind Man and the Elephant (1982; Timescape 671-41101; 295 pp.) and two Robert Sheckley novels revived by Gollancz: Dimension of Miracles (1968; 190 pp.) and Journey Beyond Tomorrow (1962; 189 pp.).

And the most welcome novel of the year? Gollancz's first publication of Philip K. Dick's In Hilton Lumpy Territory (213 pp.). Not entirely a success, especially towards the end, but haunting and memorable.

Favourite Books 1986

Where a Favourite Novel appears in this list, I haven't listed its details again; I just write '(see above)'.

- 1 The Secret Journey
James Hanley (see above)
- 2 The Furies
James Hanley (see above)
- 3 The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society
Lionel Trilling (1950; Oxford University Press; 284 pp.)
- 4 Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning
Lionel Trilling (1965; Oxford University Press; 204 pp.)
- 5 The Whitsun Weddings
Philip Larkin (1964; Faber & Faber 571-09710; 46 pp.)
- 6 High Windows
Philip Larkin (1974; Faber & Faber 571-11451; 42 pp.)
- 7 Blood and Bone
Philip Hodgins (1986; Angus & Robertson; 60 pp.)
- 8 La Bete Humaine
Emile Zola (see above)
- 9 The Stories of Elizabeth Spencer
(1981; Penguin 14-006436; 429 pp.)
- 10 Dance of the Happy Shades and Other Stories
Alice Munro (1968; King Penguin 14-006681; 224 pp.)
- 11 One Human Minute
Stanislaw Lem (1936; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; 102 pp.)
- 12 Le Grand Meaulnes
Alain-Fournier (see above)
- 13 A Room with a View
E. M. Forster (see above)
- 14 The Terminal Beach
J. G. Ballard (1985/1964; Gollancz; 221 pp.)
- 15 The Voices of Time
J. G. Ballard (1985/1963; Gollancz; 197 pp.)
- 16 Lost Illusions
Honore de Balzac (see above)
- 17 Lady Chatterley's Lover
D. H. Lawrence (see above)

- 10 Emma
Jane Austen (see above)
- 19 The Wings of the Dove
Henry James (see above)
- 20 Empire of the Sun
J. G. Ballard (see above)
- 21 The Diaries and Letters of G. T. W. B. Boyes, Vol. 1, 1820-1832
edited Peter Chapman (1986; Oxford University Press; 687 pp.)
- 22 The Reverending Story
Michael Ende (see above)
- 23 Dorothea Dreams
Suzy McKee Charnas (see above)
- 24 Wonder's Child: My Life in Science Fiction
Jack Williamson (1984; Bluejay; 276 pp.)
- 25 Fire Watch
Connie Willis (1985; Bluejay; 274 pp.)

Gillespie reading entire volumes of poetry? I was pretty astonished, too, but Philip Larkin and Philip Hodgins are not just any old poets. They are that rarest of the breed -- the unputdownable poet. Of course, both are a bit gloomy, but I like a bit of deep satisfying melancholy from time to time. Hodgins has written most of his poetry since he was told he had incurable leukemia a few years ago; with a strong theme like this and a brilliant capacity for fine-tuning words, he's turned out some of Australia's best poetry in the last three years or so. Philip Larkin had no incurable disease except life itself; his viewpoint seems a bit wet compared with Hodgins' scornful anger about dying and unstoppable love of life. But Larkin had time on his side -- time to observe the whole range of life; time to perfect his craft. But the talent that Hodgins shows in Blood and Bone is startling; I trust he has some valuable years left.

I've known about Trilling for many years, but have never been able to buy his most famous collections of criticism. While working at Oxford University Press, Elaine discovered that the venerable institution reprinted all of Trilling's work in hardback a few years ago. What a pity that they didn't tell anybody! With inside information and a bit of luck, I've been able to get all but two of this series; the others are out of print. Trilling is not as readable as my hero, Edmund Wilson, but some of the essays in The Liberal Imagination and Beyond Culture are richer than most of Wilson's work. Wilson's specialty was introducing the reader to individual authors; Trilling stretches beyond the individual author to explore insights about changes in culture itself. On the one hand he would seem a bit reactionary: he exposes the debilitating effects of the Progressive movement on American culture after World War II, and defends that idea of remorseless high culture that I, for one, find liberating. On the other hand, I've read no other author who has so lucidly explained why Freud is very important to literary culture during the twentieth century. Particularly fine essays are those on Jane Austen's Emma, Freud, and 'The Meaning of a Literary Idea'.

It's tempting to say that the list descends rapidly after Hanley, Trilling, Larkin and Hodgins. But I was surprised to find at Nos. 9 and 10 two books which, in other years, might have been Nos. 1 and 2. Elizabeth Spencer is at her best when she writes about the Deep South, which she knows well. In the middle of her collected stories are some rather flat mock-Jamesian pieces about Europe; evidently they were the product of a mid-career crisis or too much European travel, as Spencer returns successfully to home territory at the end of the book. Munro never gets far from her chosen territory, back-country Toronto. Look at the formal properties of her prose, and you see that she is better than Spencer; but Spencer is better at telling a ripping yarn.

One Human Minute is not, as Locus claims in its most recent issue, a book of short stories. It is a collection of three essays that shows what can be done if you let your mind play with scientific ideas, and you happen to be Stanislaw Lem and not, say, Isaac Asimov or Larry Niven. Lem doesn't just play; he runs an idea out on a lead until it

flies like a kite. What will actually happen to the current arms race? Lem's speculations are rather different from any others I've read. Why is human life unique to this solar system, and probably unique to this galaxy? Lem shows us. This book actually delivers the thoughtfully speculative sf ideas that have virtually disappeared from science fiction novels.

I've included the first volume of Boyes' diaries because, if you can afford its \$176 and are willing to order it directly from OUP, it's a good read. I know about it because I copy-edited it. Nearly sent me bonkers, mainly because of Peter Chapman's voluminous footnotes. Don't worry about the footnotes: Boyes, who was sent by the British army to New South Wales before being sent to Van Diemen's Land, speaks for himself quite well, in that robust, all-observant, unaffected tone which disappeared from English letters in the 1840s. It's a pity that, because of the book's outrageous price, only the Aust. Hist. buffs will ever know about Boyes and his world.

Favourite Films 1986

- 1 Peeping Tom: directed by Michael Powell (1960)
- 2 The Small Back Room: Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (1949)
- 3 The Bitter Tea of General Yen: Frank Capra (1933)
- 4 Three Strangers: Joan Negulesco (1946)
- 5 The Furies: Anthony Mann (1950)
- 6 You Can't Take It With You: Frank Capra (1938)
- 7 The Quiet Earth: Geoffrey Murphy (1984)
- 8 99 and 44/100 Per Cent Dead: John Frankenheimer (1974)
- 9 A Tree Grows in Brooklyn: Elia Kazan (1945)
- 10 The Sun Shines Bright: John Ford (1953)
- 11 Cat People: Jacques Tourneur (1942)
- 12 Where the Sidewalk Ends: Otto Preminger (1950)
- 13 Laura: Otto Preminger (1944)
- 14 Twilight's Last Gleaming: Robert Aldrich (1977)
- 15 A Question of Guilt: Robert Butler (1978)
- 16 Night Must Fall: Richard Thorpe (1937)
- 17 Caught: Max Ophüls (1948)
- 18 In Skeffington: Vincent Sherman (1944)
- 19 Repeat Performance: Alfred L. Werker (1947)
- 20 Seance on a Wet Afternoon: Bryan Forbes (1964)

Either I talk about each film in detail -- but I don't have the room -- or I make remarks that are so generalized that they will annoy Joseph Nicholas. Well, everything in my fanzine seems to annoy Joseph Nicholas these days. Here I go.

The trouble is that you've heard it all before -- how I have this little black-and-white telly which you will find me watching at midday or late at night when I should be doing other things, and how I find these wonderfully beautiful films at these amazing hours, and how I never go to cinemas because usually the films they show at cinemas are made after 1947. So I won't bore you by saying it again. I saw five films at the cinema during 1986: The Jagged Edge, which was slack, A Room with a View, which was slack for quite different reasons (nobody ever told James Ivory that you don't make a film beautiful merely by pointing your camera at beautiful people, scenery and objects), and The Quiet Earth, the New Zealand sf film which is a ripper film and which should be seen by all film and sf buffs. That makes three. The other two were Laura and Where the Sidewalk Ends, both by the enigmatic Otto Preminger, and both made before 1953.

1953 is the average year of release of my Top 10 Favourites. It is also the a.y.o.r. of my Top 20. Not that 1953 itself was a great year for films -- it was the first year of real decline in Hollywood movies. But it's a workable average. One of the Michael Powell movies, Peeping Tom, is on this side of the divide, and The Small Back Room is on the

other. I want to see all the other Powell or Powell/Pressburger movies. Surely he's the best British director! (Hitchcock only became really great after he migrated to America.) Peeping Tom is certainly the creepiest, most ingenious psychological thriller ever made -- yea verily, perhaps even better than Vertigo? The Small Back Room must be the most watchably suspenseful movie ever made, with David Farrar sprawled out on the beach sand waiting for that bomb to blow his head off. (There are plenty of movies that are suspenseful, but most of them I can't bear to watch.) I'm rather annoyed that (a) I couldn't attend 1986's Melbourne Film Festival; (b) three restored Powell movies were imported for the Festival; (c) the same three movies left the country immediately after the Festival.

Little room left for the others. But I must point to The Bitter Tea of General Yen, because it was made before Capra and script-writer Briskin made all those maddeningly heartwarming movies (of which You Can't Take It With You is a nice example), and yet it shows all the unique features of the Capra style -- especially his astonishing ability to make complex patterns of human movement, either among crowds or among smaller groups of people. The Bitter Tea of General Yen is a rarity: a Hollywood movie that is also a tragedy; a film that takes its characters seriously. You watch it and say to yourself, 'Well, that's what film-making is all about', then say to yourself, 'But why has much of that been forgotten in the last fifty years?'

Two other highlights: The Furies, a particularly epic Western epic, with Barbara Stanwyck riding roughshod over people and landscapes; and Three Strangers, which has Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre (already you're annoyed you missed it), and Geraldine Fitzgerald (hero/villain), but the real star is John Huston's fabulously ironical script. Three strangers have shares in a sweepstake ticket that Fitzgerald's Oriental goddess has guaranteed success; but the three strangers soon determined to ruin their own lives before they have a chance to share the loot. One of the great fantasy classics, although I haven't seen it mentioned much.

A few oddities:

- * Where the Sidewalk Ends is dark and suppressed, self-searching and self-hating, and makes a nice contrast with Laura (same stars: Dana Andrews and Gene Tierney), which is all bravura suspense and Hollywood black-and-white baroque.
- * John Frankenheimer's very funny 99 and 44/100 Per Cent Dead didn't get a theatrical release in Australia, as far as I can remember. With its Mafia crazies, funny lines and gags, and unexpected high jinks -- and Richard Harris and Chuck Connors -- this is one of those loony films that somebody must show at a convention some time.
- * Robert Butler's A Question of Guilt was shown during yet another week of Azaria-frenzy. Ron Liebman acts as the prosecutor who is determined to convict a woman (Tuesday Weld) of murdering her young child. Liebman's character disintegrates under the force of his own hatred for the mother, even while the evidence for and against her becomes more and more ambiguous. The viewer is still not sure of the truth by the end of the film. This is a curiosity because it's a stylish made-for-television movie, and the acting is first class.

Most of the other films are famous. If you want to discuss them with me, send a letter of comment for the issue that I hope I'll have the money to publish in July.

Favourite Recorded Music 1986

It was great to get a letter from Frank Denton confessing that he, too, has been made bankrupt by compact discs. Music has become my obsession during recent years, and much of this obsession has to do with the superb golden oldies that are at last appearing on CD. None of this shows on the popular music listing. Almost all the pop CDs I've bought have been replacements for wornout classics: Supertramp's Crisis? What Crisis?, Elton John's Honky Chateau, the Rolling Stones' Sticky Fingers, Exile on Main Street, Goat's Head Soup, It's Only Rock 'n' Roll, and Tattoo You (all in the one week), Fresh Cream,

and Rod Stewart's Gasoline Alley. And think of all the records I can't afford, and which have disappeared already! Madness, madness. And when the Jacqueline du Pre record of Elgar's Cello Concerto turns up, and I buy it, and a week later the CD appears, but a month after that the CD had already disappeared from the shelves...

The world's treasures are in front of me, and I can have only one gain a month. How about a bit of sense? Here's some lists -- with the reminder that they show records or CDs bought for the first time during 1986; asterisks indicate records that, as far as I can tell, were also first released in 1986.

- * 1 Graceland: Paul Simon (Warner Bros.)
- * 2 Cocker: Joe Cocker (Capitol)
- 3 Gravity Talks: Green on Red (Bigtime/Slash)
- 4 Johnny 99: Johnny Cash (CBS)
- 5 Beneath the Double Egg: Kinky Friedman (Sunrise)
- * 6 Biograph: Bob Dylan (CBS) (3 CDs)
- * 7 Rainbow: Johnny Cash (CBS)
- 8 Centerfield: John Fogerty (Warner Bros.)
- * 9 State of Our Union: Long Ryders (Island)
- * 10 Like a Rock: Bob Seger (Capitol)
- * 11 Johnny Comes Marching Home: Del-Lords (EMI America)
- * 12 Landing on Water: Neil Young (Geffen)
- 13 Truth Decay: T-Bone Burnett (Line)
- * 14 Street Language: Rodney Crowell (CBS)
- 15 Behind the Iron Curtain: John Mayall's Bluesbreakers (GNP/Crescendo)
- * 16 Live 1975-83: Bruce Springsteen and E Street Band (CBS) (3 CDs)

Other records released during 1986 that I recommend are (in the order I bought them):

Repo Man (soundtrack) (San Andreas)

13: Emmylou Harris (Warner Bros.)

Fervor: Jason and the Scorchers (Slash)

Who Knows Where the Time Goes?: Sandy Denny (Carthage) (4 LPs)

Tribute to Steve Goodman: various (Red Pajamas) (2 LPs)

Lost in the Stars: various (A&M)

Blue City: Ry Cooder (Warner Bros.)

Crossroads: Ry Cooder (Warner Bros.)

Song X: Pat Metheny, Ornette Coleman, Charlie Haden, David Coleman (Geffen)

We Love You... Of Course We Do: Sacred Cowboys (Ian Wade)

Cover Me: various (Rhino)

Revenge: Eurhythmics (RCA/Ariola)

Big Daddy (Rhino)

Power Case (Geffen)

Highlights of a Dangerous Life: Johnnys (Mushroom)

Lonely Street: Arlen Roth (Flying Fish)

Bring on the Night: Sting (A&M) (2 LPs)

Eye of the Zombie: John Fogerty (Warner Bros.)

The Art of Excellence: Tony Bennett (CBS)

Gossip: Paul Kelly and the Coloured Girls (Mushroom) (2 LPs)

Feargal Sharkey (Virgin)

Out of the Grey: Dream Syndicate (Chrysalis)

Partners: Willie Nelson (CBS)

Unsung Stories: Phil Alvin (Slash)

T-Bone Burnett (Dot)

Get Close: Pretenders (Sire)

Suzanne Vega (A&M)

Think Visual: Kinks (HCA)

Looks like I've been spending a bit too much money on records again, doesn't it? I must

keep up with what's going on -- that's what I tell myself. And what's going on? Not the great takeover by country punk that I hoped for in THR 7/8. The radio stations play synthesized slush, so the gritty bands are unplayed. The Blasters seem to have broken up. (Phil Alvin recorded the quirky Umsung Stories, and Dave Alvin is reported to have joined X, a Los Angeles band.) Green on Red didn't produce a record in 1986, but 1983's Gravity Talks, discovered in 1986, is as good as anything else they've done. Not that the record companies have given up altogether. The Long Ryders' State of Our Union was a zinger of a record, and the Dream Syndicate's Out of the Grey was released on CD. Still, with radio dead set against you, it must be hard for a mean'n'ornerly country punk band to reach the big time. Last year's hopefuls, Lone Justice, solved the problem by yielding to synth power (Shelley, which has some tracks that are made listenable by Maria McKee's song-writing and singing).

The highlight of 1986 was Paul Simon's Graceland, which I bought on CD, so it won't wear out when we play it once a week. Perhaps it doesn't take genius to record South African bands in South Africa, or even to record some of them in New York, or even to pinch their music -- but Paul Simon had the wit to use their music, to combine it with his own music, and write brilliant lyrics as well. This record does not merely have a beat to it; it has a mighty pulse of syncopation, melody, and merriment. And those lyrics! They keep echoing in the mind, picking up resonances and connections, delighting the listener in the way that good poetry does. How many other albums with listenable lyrics have there been during the 1980s?

Cocker is Joe Cocker's best album since Mad Dogs and Englishmen (which I was able to obtain on CD, thanks to Terry Hughes). Yes, there's a synthesized backing, but it has power and melody. More importantly, there's Cocker's voice flattening listeners into the carpet.

Johnny Cash never tires or retires, and in Johnny 99 he chooses a whole album of good songs, which are played by a gutsy little band. Two Springsteen tracks done well, plus lots of other good things. Brian Ahern produced it. Rainbow is a bit mushier, with more strings and things, but Johnny Cash still knows how to choose a mournfully melodic song. Kinky Friedman was a new voice to me, but I heard one of his songs on 3RRR's program 'High in the Saddle', and I knew I had to buy the album. The songs are all equally good: very tuneful, very restrained, some quite amusing. Now I discover that most of Friedman's albums are out of print.

The best singles for the year were Paul Simon's 'Boy in the Bubble' (from Graceland), Joe Cocker's 'You Don't Love Me Anymore' (from Cocker), and Feargal Sharkey's 'A Good Heart' (from Feargal Sharkey, of course). A pity that the rest of the songs on the album are not as good. Lots of other albums were not as interesting as their best songs; perhaps only the Top 12 are consistent albums. CBS's two blockbusters for the year, Springsteen's Live 1975-1985 and Dylan's Biograph (both of them 5 LPs or 3 CDs), were spotty, of course, with Springsteen spottier than Dylan. There should have been more of Springsteen's stage monologues than there are, and far more of the famous cover versions and far fewer Springsteen standards. On the other hand, when Dylan does an alternative arrangement of one of his famous songs, he makes the song seem new.

And here's the classical record list:

- 1 Gluck: Orfeo ed Euridice
Kathleen Ferrier (cont.), Greet Koeman (sop.), Nel Duval (sop.), Charles Bruck (cond.), Netherlands Opera Chorus and Orchestra (HMV/HRC) (2 LPs)
- 2 Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 5, Op. 73 ('Emperor')
Claudio Arrau (piano), Sir Colin Davis (cond.), Staatskapelle Dresden (Philips) (1 CD)
- 3 Schubert: String Quintet, Op. 163, D. 955
Fitzwillian Quartet plus Christopher van Kampen (cello) (Decca) (1 CD)
- 4 Haydn: Symphony No. 35, Symphony No. 100 ('Military')
Bruno Walter (cond.), Columbia Symphony Orchestra (CBS) (1 CD)

- 5 Beethoven: Missa Solennis, Op. 123
Otto Klemperer (cond.), Koin Rundfunk Symphony Orchestra (Memoria) (2 CDs)
- 6 Brahms: Four Serious Songs, Op. 121
Kathleen Ferrier (cont.), Sir Malcolm Sargent (cond.), BBC Symphony Orchestra plus songs by Bach and traditional Christmas songs: Boyd Neel String Orchestra (Decca) (1 LP)
- 7 Schubert: Lieder
Margaret Price (sop.), Wolfgang Sawallisch (p) (Orfeo) (1 CD)
- 8 Donizetti: Lucia di Lammermoor
Joan Sutherland (sop.), Luciano Pavarotti (tenor), Richard Bonyng (cond.), Orchestra of Royal Opera House, Covent Garden (Decca) (3 CDs)
- 9 Chausson: Poeme de l'amour et de la mer, Op. 19
Kathleen Ferrier (cont.), Sir John Barbirolli (cond.), Halle Orchestra plus songs by Brahms and Bach (Decca) (1 LP)
- 10 Mahler: Symphony No. 1 ('Titan')
Bruno Walter (cond.), Columbia Symphony Orchestra (CBS) (1 CD)
- 11 Elgar: Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85
Jacqueline du Pre (cello)
Elgar: Sea Pictures, Op. 37
Janet Baker (cont.)
Sir John Barbirolli (cond.) London Symphony Orchestra (HMV/WRC) (1 LP)
- 12 Beethoven: Symphony No. 7, Op. 92, 'Coriolan', Op. 62, 'Egmont', Op. 84
Vladimir Ashkenazy (cond.), Philharmonia Orchestra (Decca) (1 CD)

Not much I can say about these except that they are all exceptional versions of music that is otherwise well known. Kathleen Ferrier is the greatest recorded voice of the century, and she sings during most of Gluck's Orfeo ed Euridice, so this record had to be No. 1.

Unfortunately, it was recorded in 1949, and can be hard listening at times, despite the best efforts of record engineers. By contrast, the resurrection force at CBS is performing miracles with Bruno Walter's recordings, and the Haydn record sounds more vibrant than digitally recorded versions of the 1980s.

I'm grateful to Terry Hughes for finding in America a CD release of a 1955 recording that Klemperer did of the Missa Solennis. The recording quality is bad (sounds as if taken from old 78 rpm records), but the version is mighty, although rather sweeter and slower than Klemperer's later, greater EMI recording (which has still not seen the light of CD release). Don't get the latest Karajan CD of the same work; it is a dire insult to Beethoven, and likely to put people off the Missa Solennis for life.

The Arrau/Davis/Staatskapelle Dresden version of Beethoven's Concerto No. 5 will remain the benchmark for some years -- the only one to buy, although many are around on CD. I would like to know when Philips will release in Australia the same combination's version of the Concerto No. 4. The Fitzwilliam Quartet's version of Schubert's String Quintet may not be the benchmark version, but I haven't heard better.

Enough, enough. If I want to write a 100-page fanzine, I'll tell you about the CDs that got away: Berlioz' The Trojans, now out on 4 CDs (\$112!), various stunning versions I've heard of Schubert's Quartet No. 14, the Hogwood/Schroder versions of Mozart's symphonies, Walter's version of Mahler's Symphony No. 2, which I will have to buy the next time I see it, no matter how broke I am. For the music listener with a million dollars, it's a wonderful world out there.

Enough. My Favourite Short Stories list will have to wait until next issue. Keep those letters and cards (and cheques) coming in. Seeyuz.

Late, late note (18 March): Elaine Cochrane and Yvonne Rousseau proofread this issue -- thank you very much -- and Del at Macmillan arranged for the vile Rhinoceros to be swapped for a Profound -- also thanks very much.