

classes all the standard keyboard sludge with a sense of motion that is a byproduct of his rock & roll background. The prime examples ("Sunrise," "My Girl," "Never Gonna Fall in Love Again" and "Last Night") suggest an affection for the Beach Boys which looks beyond the obvious recycling currently fashionable ("Help Me, Rhonda") to the heart (*Pet Sounds*) for inspiration. He doesn't ape the Beach Boys stylistically; he simply recognizes the most pleasing qualities of their approach—simple sophistication, tight control and harmonic infectiousness—and integrates them into a unique, personal vision.

The album impresses with the latitude of that vision. "All by Myself," the seven-minute centerpiece, is a dramatic and heavily orchestrated ballad that works because it, like all Carmen's pop, delivers more passion than pretense. Along with the four numbers mentioned above, it establishes Carmen's songwriting maturity. For the first time, his songs seem bound to attract extensive coverage by other artists. "That's Rock & Roll" and "No Hard Feelings" continue the flirtation with autobiographical commentary which began with "Overnight Sensation (Hit Record)" and are just hard enough to hold at bay the few who'll want to attribute his new direction to a softening of the arteries.

Carmen plans to maintain the six-piece unit that accounts for the excellent harmonies and sympathetic playing. It's therefore safe to assume that greater familiarity will result in more band-oriented material on the next album, cancelling out the need for the pleasant but ultimately unnecessary studio exercises ("Great Expectations" and "On Broadway") that are this record's only flaw.



Streetwalkers
Mercury SRM-1-1060

by Charley Walters

Streetwalkers is a new British quintet founded by Roger Chapman and Charlie Whitney, the leaders of the talented but now defunct Family. After the group's breakup in 1973, the two recorded their own album (*Chapman-Whitney Streetwalkers*, never released in the

United States) and late last year formed a permanent band.

With this album the duo's composing—seven of the record's nine cuts—receives basic two guitars/drums/bass/vocal arrangements with few embellishments on the side. Chapman and Whitney write intriguing music which, though definitely rock, usually disguises its sources and influences. ("Ace of Spades," an acoustic blues treatment, is an exception.) They can be soft without being pretty—conversely they can be almost melodically rough. Whitney often uses a slide on his guitar but he steers away from flashiness: Preferring slow and moody notes and chords, he shuns soloing.

Roger Chapman is the focal point of Streetwalkers—he is arguably rock's finest vocalist. His wilder moments make Joe Cocker sound tame and his steadiness equals that of Paul Rodgers. Chapman's vibrato is almost frighteningly intense, reaching its greatest urgency on higher notes. Perhaps the best description of Chapman is that he sings with abandon. Remarkably, he can be smooth and reserved as well—on "Miller" it's difficult to believe the same person is singing.

All of which makes the inclusion of Bob Tench puzzling indeed. Tench followed Rod Stewart as singer in the Jeff Beck Group several years ago and presently is a member of Hummingbird, another British group. He is a good though not a great singer in the throaty, bluesy tradition, but he doesn't compare to Chapman. Even so, it's a mystery why his voice is all but invisible here. Tench's best moments come when he and Whitney combine for a different texture, as in the start of "Raingame" where they mix six- and 12-string guitars.

"Walking on Waters" utilizes the full spectrum of Streetwalkers' strengths. Whitney begins with slow and lumbering chords, creating a dark atmosphere—Tench slips in a note or two, playing higher up on the neck to contrast Whitney. They alternate this section with a quieter interlude, Whitney cautiously sliding stark chord changes while Chapman eases his onslaught. Toward the close they employ Max Middleton (a companion of Tench in Hummingbird) for some chilling string synthesizer, and as the song finishes, Chapman unleashes an awesome display—growling, bending and shaking notes with every bit of power he can muster. With further utilization of Tench, Streetwalkers should become even more of a force to be reckoned with.

