



JAZZ

Trio shares the improvisational load

Monty Alexander / John Clayton / Jeff Hamilton: *Reunion in Europe* (Concord, \$8.98)

We say: **Triple entente**

Typically, a piano/bass/drums trio is led by a renowned keyboardist who carries most of the load, occasionally allowing his sidekicks to steal a short solo. Such is not the case with this outfit — as the individual billing (and accompanying liner notes) point out.

Although Jamaican-bred pianist Alexander handles most of the opening melodies, the improvisational space is distributed quite liberally. More important, the three-some interacts with an acute sense of togetherness — building momentum, reaching crescendos, and punctuating each other's work with an accent here or a space there — to make *Reunion* much more than just two guys backing a soloist.

The band presents a long (close to 50 minutes) and varied program — incorporating originals and cover material, both classic and unusual. The funky swing of *Got My Mojo Working* and Clayton's *Blues For Stephanie* stands in contrast to *Ben* (Theme from *Willard*), which begins chamber-style, featuring Clayton's arco bass, and evolves into a slow samba. Alexander's two originals, the Latinesque *Eleuthra* and moody ballad *That's Why*, close the LP in fine fashion. Throughout, these musicians display their versatility as they move easily through the various styles within the mainstream jazz form.

— Eric Snider

fascinated by a chord, moving it around harmonically and, almost as an afterthought, laying a melody fragment over the chord merely as a vehicle for presenting the harmonic focus. The result is a modern, haunting work, warmed by Towner's almost flamenco guitar. The tightly arranged pieces are not so much tunes as they are piano and synthesizer presentations of harmony with the guitar and cornet floating above.

This is very pretty jazz guitar playing, although not Wes Montgomery, swinging, improvising type stuff. How it can be considered jazz at all, under these circumstances, presents an interesting definitional morass. Listening to the music provides the lovely answer.

— Larry Kleinfeld



POPULAR

John Lennon and Yoko Ono: *Milk and Honey* (Polydor, \$8.98)

We say: **Not half bad**

The price we have had to pay for listening to John Lennon in recent years has been to listen to an equal amount of Yoko Ono. And while Ono can be pleasurable in her own right, at times, one wishes that Lennon had followed Paul McCartney's lead in how to keep a spouse's involvement in the recording studio within bounds. Difficult as it is to ignore half of this record (Lennon and Ono tracks alternate), I shall



YOKO ONO and JOHN LENNON

out of first gear. Still, *I'm Stepping Out*, a house-husband's lament, and the single *Nobody Told Me* would not be out of place on any earlier Lennon album.

One listens to *Milk and Honey* with a sense of regret: for the death of Lennon, of course, but also for the dilution of the spirit of his music on the final two albums. Lennon may not have been a happier man in those frequently Ono-less days when he was writing songs such as *Mother*, *Imagine* and *Instant Karma*, but he was more richly entertaining.

— Neville Green

John Hammond: *Live* (Rounder, \$8.98)

We say: **Play with fire**

A John Hammond concert album is a thing to relish. Alone on stage with just his guitars, harmonicas and voice,