

JAGGER'S LIP SERVICE

It's a mean season. Did you catch the Grammys? Unspeakably dull. They actually made me nostalgic for last year's coronation of **Michael Jackson**. That little Jehovah's Witness with the trick knee is no fool. He knew all the real dressers were going to give this year's show a miss. He stayed home to play strip poker with his emu and try outfits on his mannequins. Last year's ceremony looked like a cotillion drag ball. This year the top candidates for androgyny awards were **Laurie Anderson**, sporting a gray flak jacket and spiked hair, and **Steve Wonder**, looking like he had two beaded pom-poms stapled to the back of his head.

The performance highlights were **Pop Staples**, moaning 12-bar gospel as he accompanied himself on a battered Fender guitar, and **Tina Turner** (turning 45 this year), whose prancing around in a slip made of orange Saran Wrap made Joan Collins and Jane Fonda seem positively dowdy. The show's biggest problem (aside from Bruce Springsteen sitting there like a stick, with his hair marcelled, strapped into a brown vinyl suit that Wayne Newton threw out) was the ubiquity of videos. The presenters didn't get a chance for any banter because every nominated song was accompanied by a tired clip. It felt more like a three-hour K-Tel ad for rock videos than a live show. I say: Ban the videos and let the presenters dish a little.

Last year Michael Jackson formed a bulwark against the Limey invaders. This year, with Michael barely getting his silver glove in the ring, America pretty much swept the boards. To confirm that current shift in the wind, check out the hired guns on ace opportunist **Mick Jagger's** solo LP; there's hardly a Brit on board. Guitarist Jeff Beck got the token slot, decorating about half the cuts with brief, barbed explosions. Jagger had two Yankee producers alternate cuts: lush-funk master **Nile Rogers** (David Bowie, Madonna) and beat-box wiz **Bill Laswell** (Nona Hendryx, Herbie Hancock).

Ultimately Jagger is in charge on *She's the Boss* (CBS). He wrote all the songs, and with the exception of one tune co-authored with Keith Richard, they'd be substandard on a Stones' album — well, a decent Stones' album. What's missing here is the patent Chuck Berry wallop — so you know it's not the Stones — but little is added or risked. Jagger vamps through a series of unconvincing, eminently danceable riffs, constantly charging that he is desperate, lonely, hungry or broke. Astonishingly, the claims never ring true.

This travesty clicks only when Jagger goes completely around the twist into bug-eyed minstrelsy on two cuts co-written with Carlos Alomar. "Lucky in Love" presents Mick as a geeked-out gambler who can win only with the women. Mick closes the song bellowing preposterously as he loses his entire bankroll. The title cut finds Mick, the beleaguered male chauvinist, playing a crazed step'n'fetchit to his lady, with Jagger braying, "She's got the pants on. Now she's the boss! You want to what! Not right now baby, I got a headache. . . It's my time of the month. OK! OK! I'll do what you say. You're the boss!"

This is an LP with plenty of sheen, a dollop of humor and endless empty gestures. Mick, go back to Keith.

If Jagger has been threatening for a decade to do a solo album, **John Fogerty** hasn't put out even a single in that time, but with *Centerfield* (Warner Bros.), the voice of Creedence Clearwater is back, and the brash swamp rock and keening tenor on his current hit, "The Old Man Down the Road," sound terribly familiar. The song also sounds a bit flimsy by the standards of the classics it recalls ("Proud Mary," "Who'll Stop the Rain"), songs that made Fogerty one of pop's most respect-



Jagger: Endless empty gestures

ed and successful songwriters in the '60s. As one friend said of the new LP, "It sounds like a demo tape for a comeback album."

The LP is spare, nostalgic and touching, but it's a set of sketches by a man who made his name with explosive canvases. If Fogerty is really ready to play center field, he had better put together a team. On this LP he did it all himself, and it shows. He's made it to second on a punt, but lots of folks remember when he used to slam them out of the ballpark.

Fogerty's album is selling. In fact, it's being *outsold* by only one LP in Rockpool's current chart of "new music" outlets. That disc happens to be the latest from **Husker Du**. That's doubly surprising: first because they're on an independent label. Next: They're not exactly due for an album. Last year the trio put out a double LP, *Zen Arcade* (SST), which came in at #7 in the recent *Village Voice* critics' poll, and a cover of "Eight Miles High," which ranked as the poll's #4 single. This lot run on ferocious optimism, plunging headlong at breakneck speed into wonder, and seemingly, into the studio. The ink wasn't dry on the poll before their latest disc arrived.

If you want a dose of full-throated yawp, find *New Day Rising* (SST) and drop the needle on the title cut. Then marvel as the lads marry remorse, rage and celebration on the careening, caroling tune "I Apologize" or shift gears into loping country harmonies for a love song worthy of Otto in the film *Repo Man*, "Books About UFOs." Husker Du are a terrific band. They are not for the faint of heart.

Finally, if you have never really liked rock 'n' roll, if you treasure your recordings of **Judy Garland**, **Peggy Lee** and **Billie Holiday**, or if you are laboring under the delusion that **Linda Ronstadt** is a great torch singer — there is governmental assistance available to you. The Smithsonian (which also offers peerless anthologies of blues, jazz, country and big band music that you can ask about) has just issued *American Popular Song: Six Decades of Songwriters and Singers*. That's 150 tunes, stretching from Sophie Tucker's 1910 rendition of "Some of These Days" to Barbara's Cook's 1980 rendition of "Some Other Time." A lavishly illustrated accompanying booklet explains and documents the choices of the three pop historians who made the selections. The seven-LP package comes for \$50.85 from Smithsonian Recordings, P.O. Box 23345, Washington, DC 20560. Are you listening, Michael? Put down that emu and send those folks a check.

— Adam Block