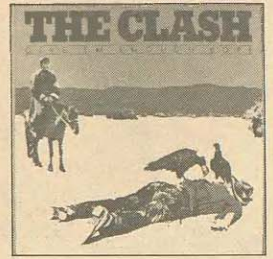
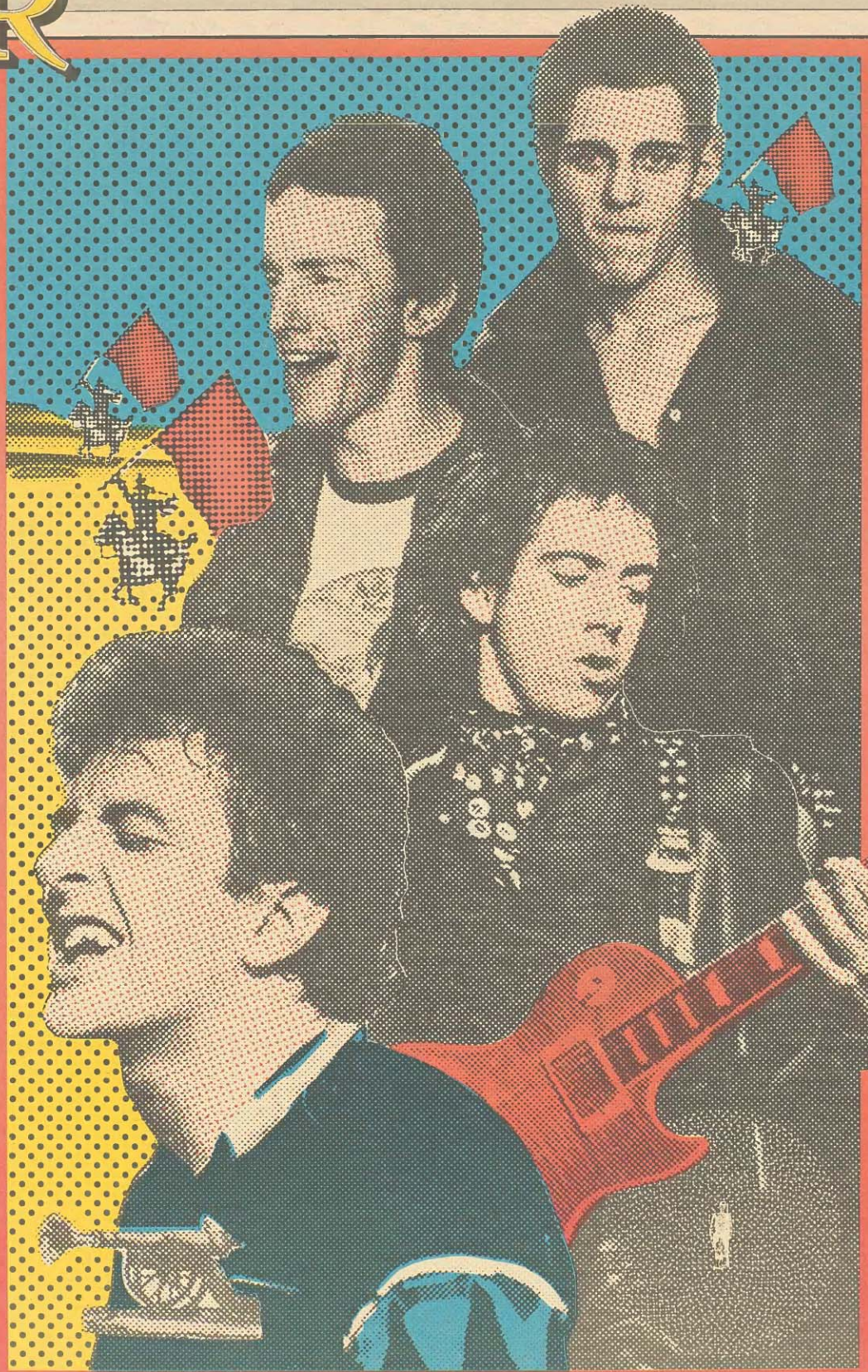


# R

ECORDS



*Last gang in town*

## The Clash stay free

Give 'Em Enough Rope  
The Clash  
Epic

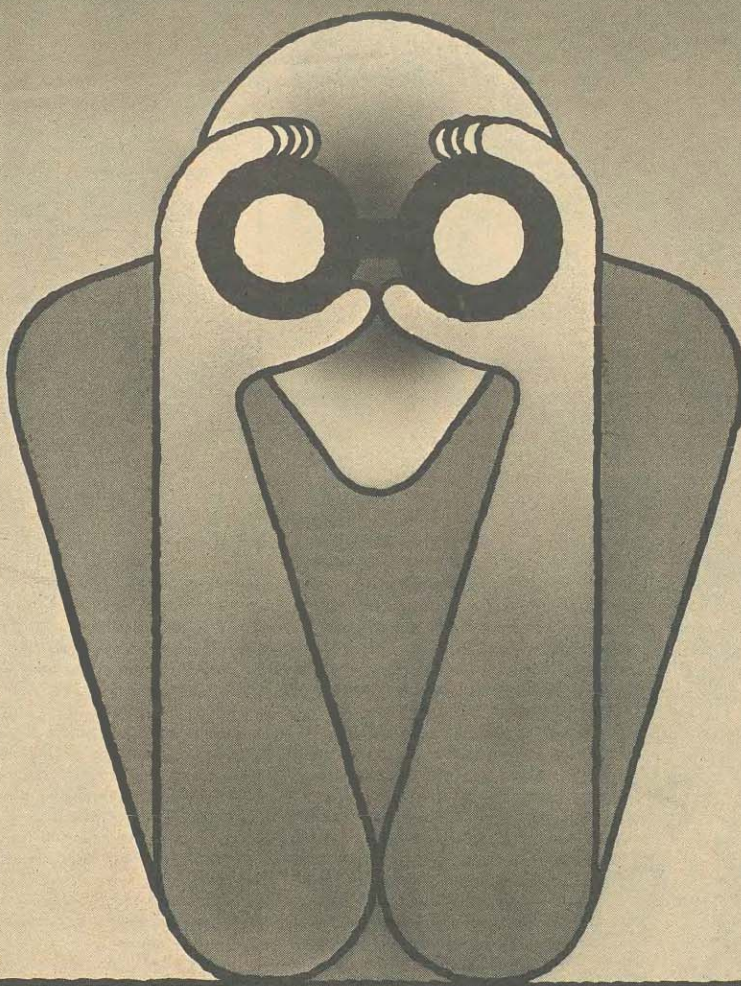
By Greil Marcus

THE Clash rain fire and brimstone—with a laugh. *Give 'Em Enough Rope*, their second album (*The Clash*, released in the U.K. in 1977, remains unissued here, as do several remarkable singles that appear on neither LP), is a rocker's assault on the Real World in the grand tradition of *Beggars' Banquet*, *Let It Bleed* and *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols*.

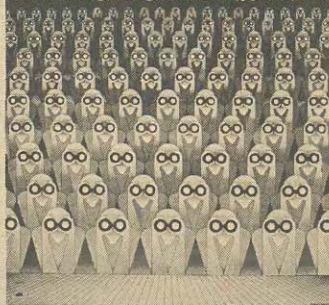
Produced by Sandy

# "EQUINOXE"

FROM JEAN MICHEL JARRE, CREATOR OF "OXYGENE."



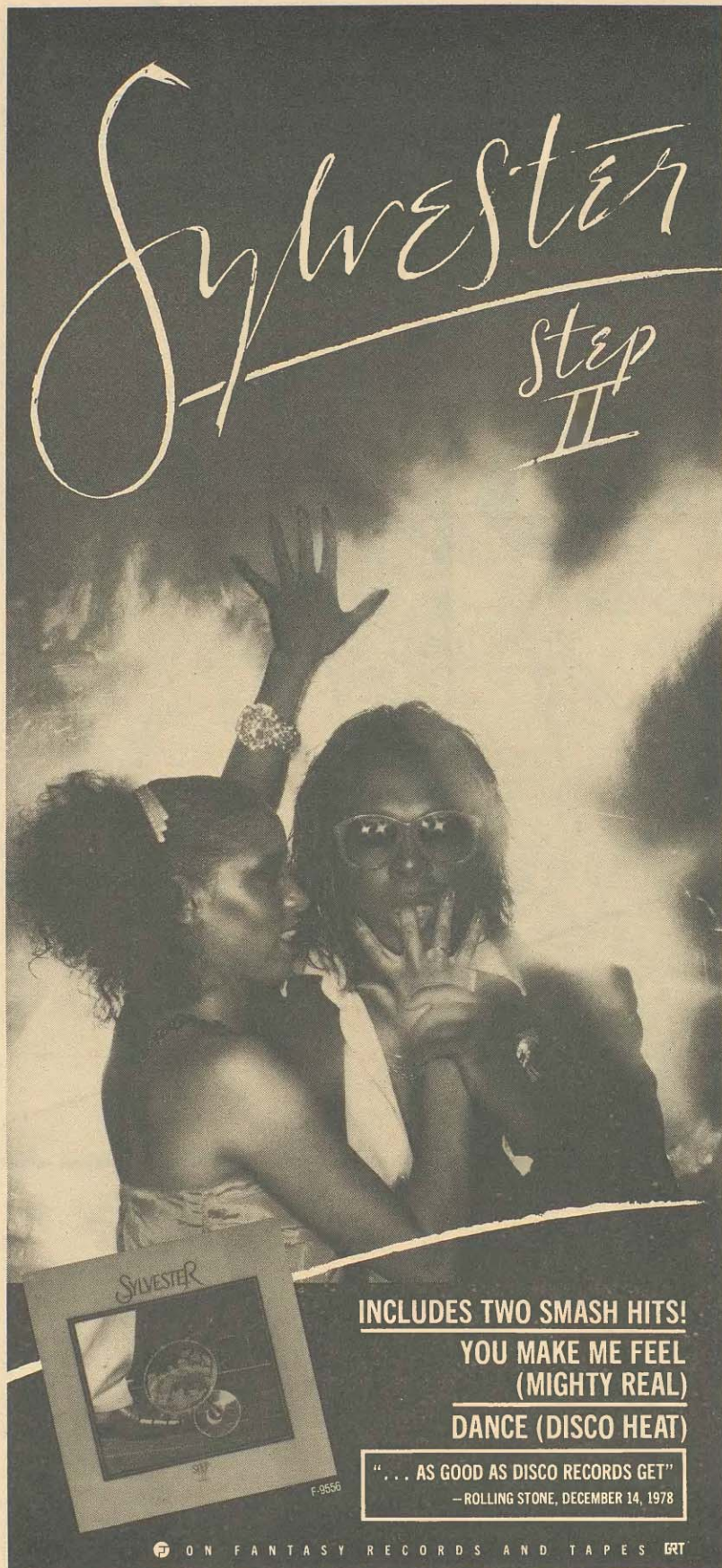
JEAN MICHEL JARRE EQUINOXE



Jean Michel Jarre created a new, rarified musical environment with "Oxygene."

Now Jean Michel Jarre has created anew. "Equinoxe." An album whose music takes you to a place where time stands still.

**JEAN MICHEL JARRE. "EQUINOXE!"  
IT ISN'T JUST HEARD, IT'S EXPERIENCED.  
ON POLYDOR RECORDS AND TAPES.**



# Sylvester

## Step II

**INCLUDES TWO SMASH HITS!**  
**YOU MAKE ME FEEL (MIGHTY REAL)**  
**DANCE (DISCO HEAT)**

"... AS GOOD AS DISCO RECORDS GET"  
 —ROLLING STONE, DECEMBER 14, 1978

ON FANTASY RECORDS AND TAPES ERT

Pearlman, an American brought in by CBS and who's best known for his sometimes muddy work with Blue Oyster Cult, *Give 'Em Enough Rope's* sound seems suppressed: the highs aren't there, and the presence of the band is thinner than it ought to be. The record doesn't *jump*. But the producer's concept comes through—accessible hard rock—and nothing has been gussied up. The Clash's attack is still fast and noisy (straight English punk), but with lyrical accents cracking the rough surface (straight English punk with a grip on the future). The band's vision of public life—the sense that there's more to life than pleasure and safety—is uncompromised, and so is the humor that keeps that vision from degenerating into a set of slogans, that keeps it full of questions and honest doubt. Imagine the Who's "I Can't Explain" as a statement about a world in flames, not a lover's daze, and you've got the idea.

Formed just after the emergence of the Sex Pistols, the Clash, from their first gigs, were second only to Rotten & Company as punk headmen. Where the Pistols pursued nihilism, the Clash affirmed rebellion; if Johnny Rotten really did sound like the Antichrist, Clash lead singer Joe Strummer railed in the voice of a streetfighter. It wasn't Armageddon he called up, simply the next battle. The point of the Clash's early "London's Burning" wasn't just to cheer the fire. Despite the thoughtfulness that had to go into "White Riot" and a cover of Junior Murvin's reggae hit, "Police and Thieves"—both cut in 1977 as attempts at solidarity with the angry West Indians of England's slums—there was a certain intentional dumbness to the Clash's style: a way of saying they knew no more than anyone else, but it hadn't stopped them from stepping out to take the heat and give it back. They defined punk populism—they made it sound at once like a test of valor and a real good time.

Today, in England, the Clash are something of a myth: perhaps the last band to promise that something other than the fate of their own career is hanging on a new release. *Give 'Em Enough Rope* entered the U.K. charts at Number Two. Though a sniveling backlash has hit them in the British pop press, there's no question that a lot of hopes, symbolic and otherwise, are riding on the group: If the album sells, does that mean the spirit is there to make society change a little faster? If the album is good, does that mean life will be a little richer? In the U.S.A., the Clash remain no more than a potent rumor—wary of the Sex Pistols' fate, yet intrigued with the possibility of turning what they see

as a moribund scene around.

*Give 'Em Enough Rope* is a confident piece of music. The storm begins with the first note and lets up only in snatches. The reality the Clash convey is that of a world upside down, a world in which no one can be sure of where they stand. Lines are drawn between oppressors and victims, killers and targets, but it isn't meant to be clear who's who, and there's not a hint of self-righteousness, of political purity. What you hear in the clatter of guitars (the Yardbirds passed through Captain Beefheart, reggae and Mott the Hoople, all anchored by a big beat) is a reach for drama and passion: the Clash are out to catch the most dangerous moods and fantasies of their time, not to stake out a position. Their field of action—on a rock & roll record, a fantasy in itself—is the world. The terrorists of "Guns on the Roof" could be, are, anywhere; the out-of-step march of "English Civil War" is based on "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," a song from the American Civil War, and it's a prophecy that has nothing to do with borders.

The LP begins with its most spectacular cut, "Safe European Home," a furious and funny account of a trip Joe Strummer and Clash lead guitarist Mick Jones (who, with Strummer, writes the songs) made to Jamaica. What might have been a nice Patti Smith-style ode to Rasta Consciousness ("Jah speak to me, too, man—uh, mon?") turns out instead to be a hard-rock version of 10cc's "Dreadlock Holiday." Would-be soul brothers Strummer and Jones report back from "a place where every white face was an invitation to robbery," where Natty Dread is drinking at the bar in the Sheraton Hotel. They looked for Bob Marley's punky reggae party (he even sent them an invitation!), but no one knew where it was, and Bob was out of town. The feeling of displacement is hilarious, but what makes the song more than a good joke on the Clash, what tosses you right into the middle of it, is the pure power of the performance: Strummer's outraged and self-mocking vocals, Jones' wonderfully sardonic chorus ("Where'd you go?" he keeps asking Strummer) and the careening caterwaul of the band. The music pushes harder and harder, and finally the two Englishmen flee—right back to their safe European home, to the safety of a land where Jamaicans are treated with the same scorn Strummer and Jones were offered in Jamaica. And then "English Civil War" kicks off, and home is a crueler joke than paradise.

*Give 'Em Enough Rope* moves strikingly—from heroic fanfares ("Drug Stabbing Time") to an

almost wistful look back on adolescence and the different paths friends took ("Stay Free," with a lovely Keith Richards-like vocal from Mick Jones) to pure fear ("Guns on the Roof") to a good slap back at an audience that won't allow a band a false step ("Cheapskate"). Amid all the force and momentum, melodies slip through, are buried, surface again. Lyrics peak out and disappear just as you're sure you've made them out, as they did on "Brown Sugar" or any Stones 45. The tracks grow with each listening; after a week with the record, you only think you know what's on it.

As one tune after another kicks in—as you find yourself rooting for the political killers (Left? Right?) in "Guns on the Roof" and then running from them; cheering the Jamaicans in "Safe European Home" and then feeling nervous; fitting yourself into Jones' gang in "Stay Free" and then realizing why he had to leave it behind—the basic theme of the album becomes clear. Stated in a dozen different ways by Mick Jones' guitar (the pulse of "Tommy Gun," the "I Can't Explain" riff in "Guns on the Roof," the soaring opening lines of "Cheapskate") and driven home by Joe Strummer's singing (blasted in "English Civil War," possessed in "Guns on the Roof," amused in "Julie's in the Drug Squad"), the theme is that of making choices in a world organized to close choices off. When Jones bids his pals a final goodbye with the simple admonition, "Stay free," the line hurts: you know the odds are they'll never make it—and that he might not make it, and that you might not. The chances of finding the right choices may be slim at best; the odds of being wrong if you don't choose at all are 100 percent.

Whatever the Clash are after, it isn't peace of mind. *Give 'Em Enough Rope* means to sound like trouble, not a meditation on it. The band's vision of a world strangling on its own contradictions hasn't changed, but their idea of their place in that world has. The sleeve of Junior Murvin's *Police and Thieves* (which must have inspired the Clash) showed cops and robbers in a snake dance, picking each other's pockets; the back cover of *The Clash* was a shot of London's riot squad rioting. The contradiction perceived here was one a primitive rebel would catch: the authorities weren't just bent, they were backwards. Give 'em enough rope, and they'd hang themselves.

Today, with the Sex Pistols gone, the punk movement scattered and rebellion receding, the contradictions buried in 1977's ideology of righteousness have emerged. Despite Bob Marley's seal of approval, a good reggae

collection and a long and noble stand against Britain's send-the-blacks-back-where-they-came-from National Front, the Clash were brought up short by those contradictions in Jamaica. Whatever sympathy they might feel for terrorism isn't going to do them any good when a bullet picks them out of a crowd. If the possibility of a final crunch seems more real than it ever did, the prospect of blood running in the streets is no longer romantic: "You'll be dead," Strummer mutters, if one can mutter a shout: "The war is won." Sure, "give 'em enough rope" is still partly a brag—time is on our side, and all that. But there's an unbroken sense of uncertainty on this record, an uncertainty that at times shades into panic, and those emotions are a lot truer than a brag is to the stories we have to read in the papers, and read in the eyes of our friends.

The punks didn't cease power. But they did seize—create—a measure of freedom, the chance to make choices that weren't even there before. That means the punks too—the Clash among them—now have enough rope: they no longer live in a world they never made.



**Roberta Flack**  
*Atlantic*

By Don Shewey

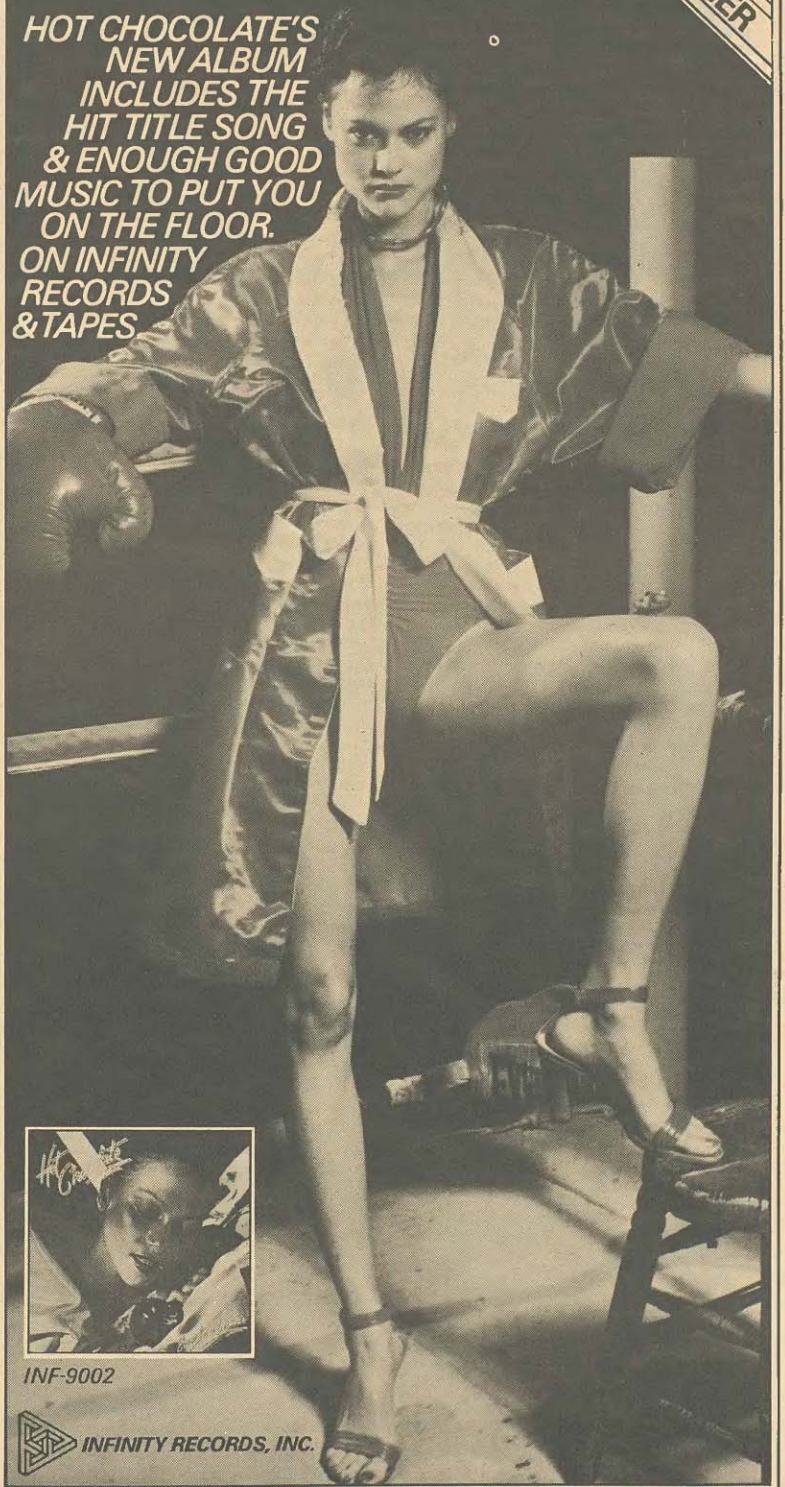
**I**F SOMEONE HAS TO sing songs by Joe "You Light Up My Life" Brooks, it might as well be Roberta Flack. At least she makes "If Ever I See You Again," "Come Share My Love" and "When It's Over" sound like three different numbers, which is more than can be said for the original versions.

But Flack's return to mushy movie music is a severe disappointment. Last year's *Blue Lights in the Basement* got her out of a mellow, murmuring rut and into some snappy, even trashy, arrangements—and she never sounded better. On *Roberta Flack*, she's back doing quiet, tasteful little tunes that require nothing from her except mournful, elegant purring, which she probably could do drunk, asleep or underwater. Why?

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