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RECORD REVIEWS .

Kevin Ayers; Whatever she brings wesing (EMI)

Another, I think, successful album from Kevin Ayers. He is treading on safer ground than in his last LP 'Shooting at the Moon', of which half of side one was taken up with free improvisation. In fact, in the first track 'There is Loving' he seems to be following Pink Floyd's footsteps, the song being more than reminiscent, in its arrangement (strings and brass alternating with drums and guitars) and in instrumental melody line, of 'Atom Heart Mother'. The arrangement on this is by David Bedford, and a short work of his, 'Among Us', is inserted in it.

In complete contrast with the heavy orchestration of the first track is 'Margaret', the second song. A very delicate ballad with

attractive lyrics:

'And just like everybody sings when the sunshine makes them high
I sing this grateful love-song from a flower to a butterfly'.

'Oh My' is a more robust song, and has a jazzy backing of trombones and clarinets. 'Song from the Bottom of a Well' is dark and mysterious, harking back to such tracks as 'Stop This Train' and 'The Lady Rachel' on 'Joy of a Toy', Ayers' first solo album. The screeching chords and monotonous rhythm, with such lyrics as:

'I've learnt some information way down here
That might fill your heart and soul with fear,
But don't you worry and don't be afraid
I'm not in the magical mystery trade.'

produce a somewhat unnerving effect.

The title track is a very beautiful song with backing vocals from Robert Wyatt and slow, tuneful guitar solo from Mike Oldfield. The single 'Stranger in Blue Suede Shoes' comes next in which Kevin Ayers' low voice is used to marvellous effect in a kind of talking blues:

'Well I walked into this bar
And the man refused (note of surprise)
He said "We don't serve strangers in Blue Suede Shoes"'.
Contemporary Music studies authoritative performance of complex scores

'Champagne Cowboy Blues' is a slow cowboy-type song (with clapping sounds and violin) in which the intrusion of 'Joy of a Toy' from his first album adds to the nostalgia. The last track is an instrumental 'Lullaby' for flute, with waterfall backing. A satisfying album with some nice songs.

David Bowie: Hunky Dory (RCA)

'Nice' would not be an adequate description of David Bowie's songs - the melodies are attractive, but the lyrics contain untold depths that could easily trap the unwary listener. 'Changes', for instance, the first track, which has also been released as a single, and looks like being a hit, is about the passage of time, and as such is relevant to everybody. At the other extreme, a song about happiness, is not by Bowie at all, but Biff Rose - 'Fill Your Heart with Love'. This is the simplest song on the album. Almost as simple is 'Kooks' written for his new-born son, Zowie. But the rest of the album consists of such throat-grIPPING, mind-distending creations as 'Quicksands', 'Life on Mars', 'Queen Bitch' and 'Oh You Pretty Things'. The latter, strangely enough, was put out as a single by Peter Noone; it tells of children
by David Balford, and a short story of his, found in the introduction of the first
in complete contrast with the heavy archaic ballad which
track is 'Kooks', the second song. A very delicate ballad with

growing up and reflects Bowie's interest in the 'Superman' - 'Homo Superior' into which he believes, human beings will some day evolve. Bowie is also interested in Tibetan Buddhism, and this is explored in 'Quicksands':

'If I don't explain what you ought to know
You can tell me all about it on the next Bardo'

and:

'Knowledge comes with Death's Release'.

This is a very emotional song suggesting nostalgia at man's once elevated state, and the hope that we shall again reach it. In other songs he is much more down to earth, and conscious of contemporary problems, which he is content just to observe, not to solve. Such a song is 'Queen Bitch' which is about male prostitution, and 'Life on Mars':

'It's on America's tortured brow
That Mickey Mouse has grown up a cow
Now the workers have struck for fame
'Cause Lennon's on sale again
See the mice in their million hoards
From Ibiza to the Norfolk broads'.

The very heavy arrangement on this, and other tracks, is by Mick Ronson who also plays guitar on the album. There are also a couple of very appropriate songs for Bob Dylan and Andy Warhol.

This must be David Bowie's fourth album and a fifth is already in preparation. It has been hailed by critics as very important, a sure success; and it is certainly very original. I think he deserves to make it.

GRAHAM BUCK.