

NUGGETS

No. 11

35p

**ROBERT PALMER
RACHEL SWEET
NO DICE
SUICIDE
and more**

JUICE NEWTON

A WELL KEPT SECRET



A little over a year ago I heard the debut album from Juice Newton and Silver Spur. Sometimes with me it takes several plays for me to accept a new artist but as soon as this lady's vocals emanated from the speakers I was knocked out. Juice Newton is a beautiful lady although she's had to wait for the third album for the liner photographs to do her justice. Born in Virginia she performed traditional folk music in acoustic duos and trios during her high school years, moving to Los Gatos in Mid California to attend college. Here she started getting into some new sounds. It seemed the music on the West Coast was more open and creative. My accent made everyone think I was singing country, but my influences at that time stretched more into rock and country rock.'

Silver Spur, the band she fronted up to the time of the latest album, consisted of two guys - Otha Young who sang mainly background vocals and played lead guitar and Tom Kealey who also sang back-ups and played electric bass. Juice herself handling acoustic guitar along with Otha. Young was born in Texas but moved to Northern California while he was still young. While at college in St. Louis (Southern California) he began playing guitar and at night he'd tune into San Francisco FM stations where he picked up on the new style of rock that city pro-

duced in the late 60's. After leaving college he moved to Los Gatos where he met up with Juice and in the early 70's they began singing together in coffee bars and the like.

Tom Kealey was born in San Jose, California, but was raised in the little town of Lakeport on Clear Lake in the northern part of the State. As a youngster he played trumpet and later majored in music for two years at Santa Rosa Junior College. His college weekends were spent playing in jazz orientated trios for a couple of years but in the late 60's he picked up the electric bass 'to be more contemporary,' moved back to San Jose and began playing fulltime in a variety of bands. He met Juice and Otha in the Grog & Sirloin Pub in '72 and Silver Spur was formed. In late '73 they moved their base to Los Angeles and began to add a drummer on occasions. At first they performed all kinds of tunes including various obscure Willie Nelson and Dylan songs but by '75 their act consisted almost entirely of self-penned material.

By 1975 they were also beginning to attract record company interest, eventually signing with RCA. Their first album, 'Juice Newton & Silver Spur,' was recorded at Wally Heider's studio in Hollywood in June of that year under the auspices of Bones Howe. Of the ten songs on the album eight are Young compositions, the remaining two being by Kealey. The album also features guest appearances by Rusty Young on pedal steel and both Hal Blaine and Jeff Porcaro on drums with piano/organ played by Mike Melvain.

The songs are mostly based on the male/female theme with stand-out cuts being 'Just Remember Who Your Friends Are' and 'The Sweetest Thing' (and I'd add 'Cat-willow River.' MD) and Otha Young takes the vocals on the up-tempo 'Roll on Truckers,' probably the weakest song on an otherwise excellent debut.

The following year saw the release of the second album. After The Dust Settles, again recorded with Bones Howe but with Alan Abrahams as producer. By this time the band had added two regular back-up

players in Micky McGee on drums and Robbie Gilman on piano/synthesiser and both are featured on the album.

Standout tracks are 'Slip Away' and 'If I Ever' and overall the album has a heavier feel to it. Both albums received FM/AM airplay, especially with songs like 'Won't You Stay (Just A Little Bit Longer)' and 'If I Ever'. During this period the band also showed their versatility by touring across the country and opening for acts that ranged from Loggins and Messina to Hot Tuna. Having played with the latter at the Electric Ballroom in Atlanta they were invited back as headliners. Public conceptions of the band were not strictly in line with how the band themselves saw their music. 'For various reasons some people thought we were a country band at first, but we've never been a straight country act. All sorts of influences are reflected in our music. When we toured through Nashville everyone thought we were pop. We did take a pedal steel on the road with us for the first tours, but we've never used one on stage since.

Because of poor sales the band were cast adrift by RCA but were soon signed up by Capitol who issued their third album (and last as Silver Spur) 'Come To Me' the first to secure a British release. It was produced by Elliot Mazer who became interested in the group after having heard a demo they'd made, watched them live and immediately offered his services.

For this album the band still retained two back-up men although they brought in a new drummer in Buzzy Buchanan. In addition session men on the album included Teddy Irwin on guitar and ex-Winger Denny Seiwell on drums. As before there are ten songs on the album, two being Bob Seger numbers (Silver Spur meets Silver Bullet): the highly sexual 'Fire Down Below' and the never before recorded 'Good Luck Baby Jane,' Seger's answer to Helen Reddy's 'I Am Woman' emancipation number. Seger had heard a lot of good things about the band and when he heard they intended to record 'Fire' he quickly made a piano demo of 'Baby Jane' and offered Juice the song. Apparently the song had been written some years previous but Seger had never found anyone he thought could do the song justice until he heard Newton. She does.

The remaining numbers are band penned and range from the powerful rocking 'Low Down and Lonesome' to slow emotional cuts such as the title track and 'Crying Too Long.' The latter song being the ace in the pack as she milks the songs for

everything it's got.

According to Juice, at the time of release, the album 'has much more depth and sophistication than the first two. This is the first album to really capture our sound. We've learned a great deal as we went along and now we're beginning to present our music right.' However, one year later, Silver Spur is 'no more' and the fourth album, 'Well Kept Secret' sees Juice in a solo capacity with only Young playing on all the backing tracks, plus a couple of appearances from former drummers Buchanan and McGee.

The country rock influence of the first three albums has been pushed into the background here, especially when songs like the old Ike and Tina Turner gem 'A Love Like Yours' and Bruce Channel's 'Hey Baby' are featured. Overall the material is well up to previous standards and on the up-tempo numbers she delivers the goods with a lot more balls than before, notably on 'So Many Ways' and 'Tell My Baby Goodbye.' The nearest to the old sound, and probably the stanput track for me is, 'If There Could Be' which has a climatic orchestral finale. Production credits are shared between Juice, Young and John Palladino.

As a semi-self-produced album she's avoided making a self-indulgent product but with the demise of Silver Spur it seems a pity that the Newton/Gillman and Young/Gillman songwriting partnerships have been broken up since they wrote some excellent numbers on the second and third albums. Earlier this year Juice recorded a version of Bonnie Tyler's 'It's A Heartache' at the recommendation of her manager Ed Leffler, probably in an attempt to widen her market but unfortunately Tyler's original beat her to the hit market.

It is of course a well known fact that Juice Newton played the 5th Annual California State Long Beach Banjo and Guitar Festival in late May 1977 with none other than John Stewart (eat your heart out Omaha Knox).

Arthur Wood

Discography:

Juice Newton & Silver Spur	RCA
APL1 1004 - deleted	
After the Dust Settles	RCA
APL1 1722 - deleted	
Come To Me	Capitol
EST 11682	
Well Kept Secret	Capitol
EST 11811	

JUICE NEWTON

& SILVER SPUR

It was great

*Juice
Newton*



**NEW ALBUM
WELL KEPT
SECRET**

EST 11811