

Nelson is an adroit guitar player with a limited voice, but as the listing of artists he has influenced might indicate, he is best known as a master of the synthesizer. On 1984's *Vistamix*, a collection of previously released and unavailable tracks, Nelson demonstrated his ability to create a unique sound. It was cool and self-consciously sophisticated, but the music had an undeniable verve.

However, *On A Blue Wing* finds him exploring a more standard pop setting, and it is disappointing to those who know what he can do.

The music focuses almost completely on guitar and saxophone. While Nelson's guitar work is adequate, the saxophone playing is utterly soulless and uninvolved. Furthermore, he indulges his penchant for vocal flourishes, sometimes seeming to break into falsetto on every other line. It is ineffective as much for its repetition as for the fact that Nelson can't convincingly *hit* the high notes.

All of this places more emphasis on the lyrics, which is something Nelson should avoid at all costs, for they have long been his weakest point. The songs in *On A Blue Wing* are remarkably consistent in containing lyrics that are almost exclusively sophomoric.

In "Because Of You," he sings, "So hard to say the things I mean/ It's up to you, it's down to me/ Don't be so sad, don't make me blue/ I'm nailed to the cross of love because of you." And "Rise Like A Fountain" says, "Rise like a fountain/ Reach for the stars/ Thy kingdom come/ Thy will be done/ This much is true." And so on and so on.

Nelson's inherent flaws (limited voice, weak lyrics) have been easy to forgive when couched in the wonderful musical settings he can create. But, with *On A Blue Wing* there is nothing to forgive.



On a Blue Wing
Bill Nelson

For the past 12 years, Bill Nelson has remained one of the more important minor figures in British pop music. As both a solo artist and a member of Be Bop Deluxe, he has had a profound influence on the likes of Eurythmics and, to a lesser degree, the Human League.