Sunshine On My Shoulders

**I See You Live on Love Street – Music from Laurel Canyon 1967-1975** is kind of weird in the way it leaves out the bad bits of LA and pretends everything is and was hunky dory. Considering how much actual space America has, it's kind of weird that everyone pretended, and still pretends, that the hillside suburbs directly above Hollywood are idyllic countryside, despite the fact they are on the edge of the whirl of smog that tends to hover over the city.  
  
Now of course, it's all luxury condos and big houses, with swimming pools and garages and decking and whatever. (Check out Google Maps: you know you want to.) Back in the day it was more ramshackle wooden house with swimming pools and whatever. Musicians and artists, would-be musicians and would-be artists, moved in and then hung out with their stoned friends at endless parties. Apparently it was perfect: everyone was welcome, everyone sang and lived in harmony together in the endless sunshine and a free love utopia.  
  
Kind of weird then, how this 4 hour, three CD set from Cherry Red takes the rough edges off anything. The Doors could get into a mellow groove, sure, but they were drunken leather demons, intent on summoning spirits and sex through their peculiar blues. Barry McGuire made some great hippy albums, but they also contained political and social declamations, not least on his hit single 'The Eve of Destruction'. Steppenwolf were biker heavy rock, but not here; just as Love were acid-fuelled acid-rock weirdos and Captain Beefheart was just plain weird, but again, not here.  
  
It's a pleasant enough anthology but it pretty much ignores the interesting musical stuff in favour of charting how Sixties harmony pop moved to singer-songwriters, country-rock and on into the dangerous land of M.O.R. (The collection ends with a Fleetwood Mac track!) It also ignores the dark side of Los Angeles, Charles Manson and other cult groups, an extensive range of mass killers, endemic poverty, institutionalised racism, not to mention the downside of homeless teenagers succumbing to addiction, exploitation and prostitution, as documented by Joan Didion and William Volmann. But if you think being a rebel is wearing a fringed leather jacket, growing your hair, skinning up and sitting in the sunshine, you'll love this shallow missive from the Golden State.

Rupert Loydell

(390 words)