

mula, but increasingly the results had less urgency. In 1967 Holland - Dozier - Holland left Motown and new tricks had to be found to fuel the Supremes. Social comment was tried with "Love Child" and "I'm Living in Shame", and though undoubtedly sincerely felt, lines like: "Came the telegram/Mama passed away while making home-made jam", sounded more artful than heartfelt. And Diana was already being groomed for greater things and left the Supremes for the movies and the middle of the road.

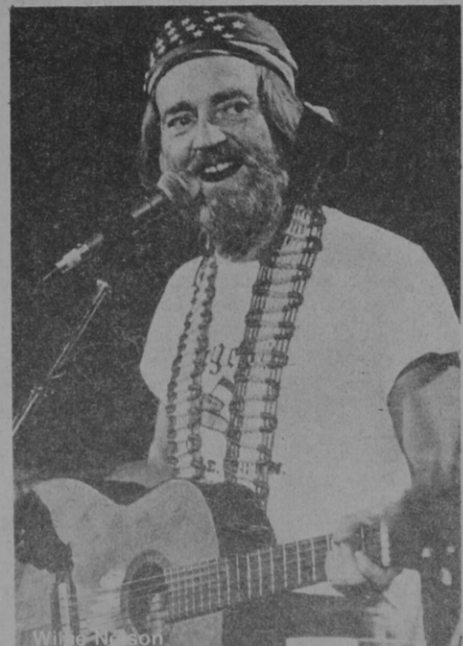
Happily the recorded evidence of that productive period remains, and this intelligently compiled album contains all the classic Supremes cuts and few more besides. Indispensable stuff. If only Abba had been born in Detroit.

Alastair Dougal

**Daryl Hall and John Oates
Livetime
RCA**

The inevitable "live" album. This time from two of the best purveyors of blue-eyed soul. Is this the result of a slide in creative ability? Certainly nothing startling is offered here. In some ways, it makes an effective sampler to the duo, although it doesn't chart their peaks.

There's nothing wrong with the album. It's very competent, but only on occasion is it



Willie Nelson

more. "Sara Smile", "The Emptiness", "Abandoned Luncheonette" and "Do What You Want" are exhilarating, with the vocal interplay on the latter a particular highlight. The band is skintight: Caleb Quaye on guitar, Kenny Passarelli on bass, Roger Pope on drums. But, again, only sporadically do they do more than simmer sympathetically (the soaring intro to "Sara Smile" is a notable exception).

The eight minute "Sara Smile" lifts Side Two to a level not achieved on the previous side, but the delicate mood set up by the following "Abandoned Luncheonette" is shattered by the clamour of an anonymous rocker, which seems redundant here. Its aggression seems forced, and the band swings better at slower tempos. Still, I suppose concerts are meant to end on a big bang, although despite the sound of applause there is little of a live "feel" about the record.

Ken Williams

**Willie Nelson
Stardust
CBS**

Willie's been saving this one up for a long while. *Stardust* is a treatment of the old singer's ten favourite standards. Nelson says the songs on the album are all pieces from youthful days and all have a special attraction for him.

He also confesses that until recently, the songs being mostly sophisticated ballads from the forties, they were too complicated for him. "They have a lot of chords in them," he maintains. Consequently he sought the help of Booker T. Jones to do the arrangements. Booker T agreed and the album went ahead.

Covering classic material is not new to Willie Nelson. His much touted *Red Headed Stranger* album included ten country standards, and took in his brilliant version of "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain". What is new is the Broadway territory Nelson explores.

For all that he's still securely Willie Nelson in his gentle, understated versions of numbers like "Stardust", "Georgia on My Mind" and "Unchained Melody". *Stardust* is a tender but persistent record. The backings are sparsely effective relying on guitar and the quiet emphasis of a harmonic line or piano.

It's all very tasteful. But I can't help thinking that a man of Nelson's intense talent should have more fruitful ways of spending time than playing around as a musical curator.

Bruce Belsham



Althea and Donna

**Various Artists
The Front Line II
Althea and Donna
Uptown Top Ranking
Virgin Records Front Line**

The Front Line label was created by Virgin to exclusively promote reggae acts.

In one trip to Jamaica, aided by Jah Johnny Rotten, self-confessed reggae freak, they signed up about a dozen acts, many of which appear on this new sampler.

The first *Front Line* collection was an intelligent assembly, giving the uninitiated a chance to hear reggae acts that might otherwise have escaped them, including the Mighty Diamonds, U-Roy and Johnny Clarke.

This second volume is again an education to those who know of Marley and Toots, but have probably never heard of Poet And The Roots, The Gladiators or Prince Hammer.

Jamaica is a dangerous country, the bastion of the Third World, where violence is ever-present, and the man who carries no protection in Trenttown is a fool. The music reflects this life-on-the-line existence. Just listen to Prince Fari's "Foggy Road", mon, an' feel de chill.

Other goodies herein include a track from Culture, the vocal trio whose *Two Sevens Clash* was voted the reggae album of '77 by the British rock press, and will we ever see it here?

Front Line also offers an introduction to dub artists like Ranking Trevor and I-Roy. Listen to Roy's rendition of "Rivers Of Babylon" and you'll see where Boney M get off. Even better are toaster Tapper Zukie's righteous "Tribute To Steve Biko" and Big Youth's "Love We A Deal With."

But what must be remembered is that such

collections are merely a taste of what the complete product is like. With that in mind, when will we see some of the albums used here released in their entirety? I, for one, would like to see the release of albums by The Gladiators and U-Brown, along with more product from The Diamonds.

Althea and Donna also get a track on the sampler, but they alone have had their album released here on the strength of a hit single albeit a foreign one.

"Uptown Top Ranking" was a surprise Number One in Britain, but didn't even get airplay in this country. For Althea Forrest and Donna Reid it must have been a surprise too, since they did the song only to prove to the rather chauvinistic Rastamen that women too could compose.

Both come from affluent Jamaican backgrounds, but say their sympathies are "strictly roots". The album takes a mild political stance, but this is not where their strength lies.

It's singing agonised teenage love songs (self-penned) where these girls shine. If the Shangri-Las had been born in Jamaica, maybe they would have sounded like this: "He's my dreadlocks boy and I love him so."

If they can write more like this, maybe they can continue the success of "Ranking." When they try to talk of the Rasta faith, they get out of their depth.

Meanwhile, New Zealand's Jah contingent waits anxiously for further developments to satisfy our craving for Rastaman vibrations.

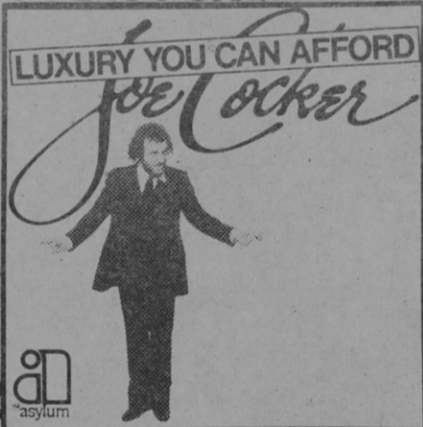
Duncan Campbell

**Larry Carlton
Warner Brothers**

Fans of Joni Mitchell, Steely Dan or The Crusaders will be familiar with the work of Larry Carlton, one of L.A.'s most sought after session guitarists. His style is smooth and flowing (as befits the L.A. ambience) and much admired for its clean economy. Joni Mitchell called it "admirable editing". Not for Carlton the intense flurries of notes a la McLaughlin; his emphasis is on sparseness and subtlety.

The slight pity with this album is that, while it showcases Carlton's talents, the quality of basic material is somewhat desultory. Consequently, unless one is tuned into his fine soloing, the music tends to become aural wallpaper. Sometimes numbers sound like pale references to work the musicians have done elsewhere: "335" recalls Aja's "Peg", elsewhere drummer Porcaro uses a beat from Scaggs' *Silk Degrees*.

JOE COCKER



LEON RUSSELL



VAN MORRISON



**SPRING BRINGS
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