

# Records

## The Best Of The Crusaders MCA

The Crusaders, or the Jazz Crusaders as they were originally known, have gone through three separate phases of evolution since their first sessions were recorded by Blue Note around 1961. The three founder members, Stix Hooper, Wilton Felder and Joe Sample, were at high school together in Houston, Texas. They started out playing R&B, but were introduced to bebop by a local DJ. Their early recordings were in the bebop format but in 1968 they moved to Los Angeles, where they returned to R&B. However, the jazz influence has remained in their work, diluted and convoluted though it is.

The Crusaders have remained on the fringes of stardom, their

closest shot being 1979's *Street Life*, the title track of which gave them a crossover pop hit, largely due to Randy Crawford's vocals. They've since tried to repeat that success using other guest singers such as Bill Withers and Joe Cocker.

In recent interviews the Crusaders have been highly defensive about their style, which jazz followers have given a mixed reception. *The Best Of The Crusaders* covers their work from 1972-76 on Blue Thumb and includes most of the 1974 release *Scratch*, widely regarded as a seminal fusion work.

History may not judge the Crusaders a major force, but their influence on contemporary jazz-rock is undeniable, especially in the keyboards of Sample. 'Keep That Same Old Feeling' has become something of a standard and even when they veer towards MOR, eg: Carole King's 'So Far Away', there's still enough inventiveness to avoid being tagged bland.

A mellow collection, the emphasis being on professionalism rather than virtuosity. For some real fire, try and check out another Blue Note collection, *Young Rabbits*, where the youthful Jazz

Crusaders blow some hard bop with considerable credit.  
**Duncan Campbell**

## Various Artists Sunshine Reggae K-Tel

Following on from their highly successful first reggae compilation of about four years back, K-Tel issue another 15 tracks of varying quality (depending on your outlook), which doubtless filled a few festive socks.

The sleeve admits that there has been some editing "to ensure maximum quality and content",

emphasis on the latter rather than the former. Reggae, being the best dance music in the world, needs to stretch out, let the dancers find their rhythm. These tracks are so tight you've hardly settled down before the pace alters.

There are no surprises in the selection, culled from various albums released locally over the last two or three years. The inclusion of Herbs' 'Long Ago' is pleasing, the two Bob Marley tracks bizarre. 'Reggae On Broadway' is Marley's nadir, a metallic hatchet job left over from sessions salvaged by a former business manager.



Sideway Look

'One Love' is an early rock steady version, with little more than historical significance.

Also present are pop crossovers 'Don't Look Back', featuring the giant egos of Tash and Jagger, and Jimmy Cliff's appalling 'Reggae Nights'. Cliff gets two other tracks as well, a definite overkill. Eastwood and Saint seem to be slipping down the revival road with 'Last Plane (One Way Ticket)', while Third World continue to seek American disco success on 'Try Jah Love'.

Best of a rather indifferent lot are Dennis Brown's 'Money In My Pocket' (a criminally underexposed singer here), Canadian combo Messenjah's rootsy 'Shagnatty Dread' and Bunny Wailer's 'Roots Radics Rockers Reggae'. But there

are better compilations to be had, including the predecessor to this one and the Greensleeves *Forward* compilation.

**Duncan Campbell**

## Sideway Look (Virgin)

It's quite probable that without the success of the likes of Big Country and the likes of their nobility-of-man music, bands like Coatbridge's (just outside Glasgow) Sideway Look would still be chained to the clubs, sans recording contract. But here they are with a debut that has crystalline sound courtesy of producer Ian Taylor and a handful of songs and sounds which, although borrowed from various heroic sources, are hard to reject entirely. 'Knowing You From Today' and 'Spring Again' soar quite pleasantly and the realism of 'Freetown' is well handled. The rest is ordinary, despite an accordion being added for colour. Clean-cut socialists should love it. GK

## Joe Walsh You Can't Argue With A Sick Mind (MCA)

A re-release of Joe's 1976 live album, ie: post-James Gang and pre-Eagles. Walsh always was an intense, exciting live performer but here the band sounds lacklustre. The material primarily comprises his best songs from *So What* and *The Player You Drink*, *The Smoker You Get*. Joe always did have neat titles but pass up this album for the better versions on the prosaically named *Best Of...* PT

## Hoagy Charmichael 16 Classic Tracks (MCA)

My mum shocked her straightlaced relatives by getting a Hoagy Charmichael song played on the radio request session when she was but a girl. Charmichael, who died just over three years ago, penned a string of popular melodies spanning three decades and also made a mark in the movies. Many of his songs have

become standards and this is a fair cross-section. Historians, nostalgia freaks and my mum, queue here. DC

## The Who, Who's Last (MCA)

And not before time either. Creatively the Who were pretty much shot by the end of the 70s. Since then Townshend's desultory energies have been largely focussed on his solo projects. Consequently, such group albums as *Face Dances* and *It's Hard* were frequently little short of embarrassing. But now it really is all over. So if you saw the band on its 1982 North American farewell tour then this double live set may serve some purpose as a memento. Otherwise, if it's a greatest hits compilation you're after, there are a number of better alternatives. Wish they'd died before they got old. PT

## Apollonia 6 (Warner Brothers)

The story goes that Vanity walked out after seeing the film script so Prince held auditions before choosing lookalike, Hispanic Patty Kotere as his female lead in *Purple Rain*. So Kotere, renamed Apollonia, now gets to front the two other women in the trio. Trouble is the newcomer is only going through the motions and faking it. *Vanity 6*, for all the sexual come-on, had three or four good tracks — danceable, trashy and funny too — for which Vanity herself was largely responsible. *Apollonia 6* is never more than the elpee equivalent of an *Electric Blue* video — all provocative packaging and flaccid unfulfillment. PT

## Level 42, True Colours (Polydor)

The problem with too many musicians is that they think they can write songs. Level 42, a British legacy from the muso days of the early 70s, fit that bill. *True Colours*, no relation, can be divided into stiff funk ('True Believers'), turgid sensitivity ('Hours By the Window') and social windbreaking ('The Chant Has begun' and 'Hot Water'). Good musicians make bloated, dumb music. Secended. GK

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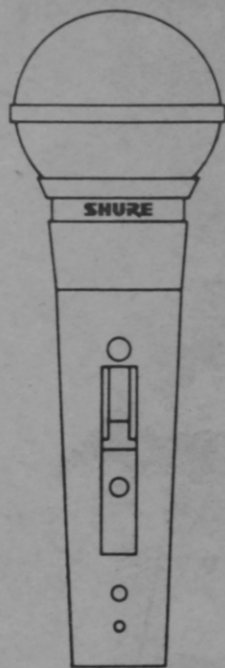
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