

'ARRY: Letter to ...

Dear Terry, 'Ow's the weather over there in the UK? I 'ope it's bloody snowing because that might stop you 'aving so much fun and make you think about the dry entertainment scene over 'ere. Mainstreet was finally knocked down by Maggotty Anne and the Cot Death Babies, so that leaves only two live music venues, the Windsor and Stringfellows. You'd probably remember the Windsor, but Stringfellows is a different story. Beer is \$5.00, yes, \$5.00 a jug and everything 'as got 'Stringfellows' written on it, including the waitresses. Bands like Body Beat and Peking Man play there, so that says it all. Oh yeah, ya remember those old farts Hello Sailor? Yeah, well they've reformed. And the banner on the tour poster reads 'One Taste And You're Hooked' — does that really apply to Coruba? Some bloke called Cammick ('oo's 'e?) 'ad

a special on RWP last week and played bloody Michael Jackson! What's the world coming to? Last month was a full-on Australian invasion; some of 'em packing venues and some getting only eight at the Windsor (and four were bar staff). But there was this really wally called Smilovici 'oo toured, telling jokes about as old as a pie in the face. 'E packed the venues and thought he was laughing all the way to the bank — but ha ha George, those are New Zealand dollars. And speaking of dollars, Chris Knox, Rick Bryant and Don McGlashan went in and recorded an Ethiopia song — but none of them knew bugger-all about geography and the ended up somewhere near Johannesburg. Anyrate, I've got to go and mix some more concrete in Ponsonby, so keep smiling and I'll be over as soon as I can afford the gas. 'ARRY

Funky Street

The Staple Singers Turning Point

Just as the Kane Gang released the old Staple Singers classic, 'Respect Yourself', the Staples themselves returned to the UK charts with their superb version of Talking Heads' 'Slippery People' — a perfect pairing of song and singer; Mavis Staples storms through the lyric of spiritual fervour as though a frenzied participant, while David Byrne contributes his guitar licks.

For *Turning Point* the Staple Singers return to Memphis, the scene of their early 70s Stax label success, to record six songs by local writers, produced by brother Pervis Staples.

But although they achieve the Memphis sound (it's great to hear Mavis Staples' rich voice up front in the mix), lyrically they merely recycle what were once vital socio-political sentiments as cute platitudes. 'Hate Don't Live Here Anymore' and 'Bridges Instead Of Walls' are pleasant but vague notions, without adequate substance for Mavis Staples to lay down a truly classic vocal.

Ironically, it's 'Slippery People' (not from the Memphis sessions) which is the best vehicle for Mavis Staples — a gospel singer has to have something to shout about. They are taken back to their roots by David Byrne.

But whatever the sentiments, *Turning Point* is an album with a consistent southern soul sound, and one by a truly unique entity, which still retains its own sound. Rare these days.

Murray Cammick

Rufus and Chaka Khan Stompin' At The Savoy

This double album — three sides live — is Rufus's farewell. Recorded in 1982 and released overseas in 83, its appearance here now indicates the record

company's belated faith in the lead singer's solo career. Khan's powerful voice was always the band's centrepiece, and while *Stompin'* contains nothing as remotely hi-tech as her recent 'I Feel For You', it nonetheless makes a worthy retrospective of an occasionally great band.

Over the years, and possibly under Khan's influence, Rufus's original funk and soul became tempered by jazz inclinations. But the selection recorded at the Savoy Theatre rests largely upon their roots, with over a third of the tracks being drawn from 1974, Rufus's first year of operation. The performances are mostly uptempo and uniformly first class. Khan is in fearsome form and the excellent five-piece band is augmented by two backup vocalists and a further five crack studio musicians. The result is a state-of-the-art modern showband funk, fully faithful to the original recorded versions while often enhancing them.

Although Rufus was always its own main writing source, the group was never reluctant to seek outside material. Stevie Wonder provided their first hit song, Bobby Womack contributed 'Stop On By' and here they do a sterling cover of Smokey Robinson's 'Ain't That Peculiar'. The group's co-writers have included the likes of Ray Parker Jr, and one of the new studio numbers is credited to Jeffrey Osborne. But it is Rufus keyboard player Hawk Wolinski who contributes the pick of the studio cuts, their last great single, 'Ain't Nobody'.

So overall, *Stompin' At The Savoy* is a considerable success, both as a live set for the longtime aficionado and as an introductory sampler for the newly interested.

Peter Thomson

Grandmaster Flash They Said It Couldn't Be Done

First couple of times I gave it a spin I thought the Grandmaster had lost it. Too many show things, throw-away tracks, repetitions of past glories and a really bad ballad, 'Paradise', with strings and drippy vocals. But certain things begin to stand out enough to get me liking it.

The rap and the horn section of 'Sign of the Times' make it one

tough song. The turntable work on 'Girls Love the Way He Spins' sounds fresh and subtle and even their attempt at outdoing the metal sounds of Run DMC in 'Rock the House' sounds cool. There are some nice dance grooves in the old-style rap of 'Alternate Groove' and the electric boogie beat of 'Larry's Dance Theme' and the slow 'Who's That Lady' is a nice change of pace.

However the Grandmaster was not able to stop me listening to Run DMC's *King Of Rock* album, the toughest and freshest rap around. But since there doesn't seem much chance of a local release, the Grandmaster is your next best choice.

Temptations Truly For You

This album is the Temptations' first with new lead vocalist Ollie Woodson. On the NZ tour last year Woodson appeared to be a lively, talented addition to Motown's legendary vocal group.

The single 'Treat Her Like A Lady', composed by original Temptation Otis Williams and Woodson is a killer modern dance number, as is the opening track 'Running' — but neither is indicative of the overall sound of *Truly For You*.

The majority of the tracks are more conservative; the Tempts appear to have chosen to excel in old-fashioned harmony and leave the further adventures of super-funk to others.

From the ornate title ballad to an excellent strut through the Whispers/Solar label sounding 'Set Your Love Right', the Temptations set out to differentiate between the men and the boys — old style sophistication rules.

Though some may be disappointed that only three tracks are uptempo funk, you can't deny that this is the best Tempts album since Norman Whitfield days.

Murray Cammick

Dazz Band, Jukebox (Motown)

'Let It All Blow' has to be the standout club hit of the year so far, such a great slab of dance noise. Nothing else on the album comes close to matching it, but there are some nice surprises. 'Undercover Lover' has a groove reminiscent of 'Let It Whip' and 'Dream Girl' has some fine vocals from Sennie 'Skip' Martin.

What I like about the Dazz Band is the good combination of funk thumpers with immaculate playing and good taste in soul ballads like 'I've Been Waiting' and 'Main Attraction' which never become too sweet.

The sort of album I can play without jumping tracks — one of the better releases this year. KB

Philip Bailey

Chinese Wall (CBS)
A record for the New American Conservatism; I bet Ronnie Reagan just loves it. It's your basic all-American rock album, a lot closer to Foreigner than Luther Vandross. But it gives the people what they want — four songs about how funny women are, going around breaking men's hearts and stuff, and how we men suffer so much. All set to the flat snare thump of Mr Phil Collins (the voice of a generation) and ex-Genesis guitarist Daryl Stuermer. Bailey has done some great work for Earth Wind and Fire, but on this album to show intensity his voice goes up and to show tenderness it goes down. There are no real subtleties, just loud or quiet. Buy if you like Phil Collins and wimp rock but stay away if you like good black music. KB

Various Artists

Beverly Hills Cop Soundtrack (MCA)


Great movie and there's some good stuff on the LP. Wisely, the producers sought a coherent sound — modern dance music. Though they chose good artists, several (Junior, System, Shalamar) have turned in substandard material. However, the singles are here — Glenn Frey 'Heat Is On', Patti LaBelle 'New Attitude' (my fave, great 12") and the Pointer Sisters' 'Neutron Dance'. Funky but weak.

Ashford and Simpson

Solid (Capitol)

The single 'Solid' has been the big international breakout for this highly talented soul songwriting duo. But the album that accompanies this breakthrough is a disappointment. It's hard to spot what's wrong — the songs are immaculately crafted and intelligent as usual but the gospel fervency that has fired their best recordings is missing. Put this together with a less than stellar collection of songs and the result is an album that is often diverting and refuses to kick its way into your consciousness. Solid it may be, but startling it ain't. AD

If we do have any answers to the question "what is Duran Duran?" it is to be found in our words, our music and our aspirations — and that is what you will find in this book.



This deluxe 96 page book features the lyrics of 32 Duran Duran songs (from 'Planet Earth' to 'The Wild Boys'), a foreword by Simon Le Bon, a history of Duran Duran by Kasper de Graaf, an interview with Simon Le Bon about his songwriting, a talk with Nick about video, an essay about their U.S.A. tour and 100 photos (colour and B & W). Price \$23.95.

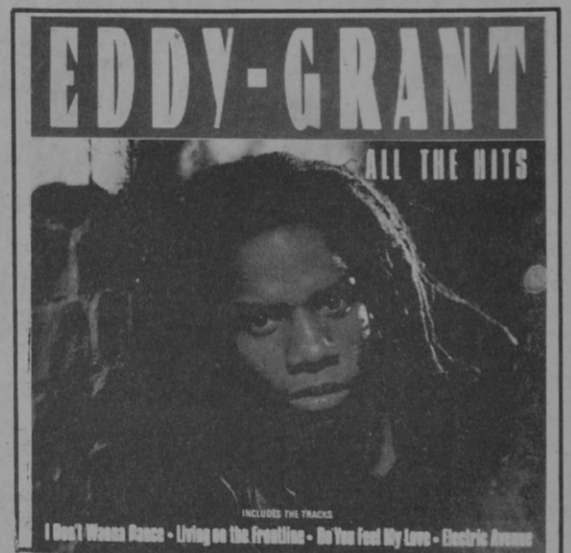
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