



Tracey Thorn, Ben Watt, *Everything But The Girl*. Womack & Womack



## Records

### Womack & Womack Radio M.U.S.C. Man Elektra

Be warned! This record ain't tough sounding but it's very modern. Womack & Womack have a peculiarly 80s sound, not unlike Luther Vandross, in that they construct their old-fashioned sweet soul melody/vocal on top of a mean machine, a tough and funky rhythm chassis.

The master/inventor of sweet soul was the late Sam Cooke, father of one half of W&W, Linda Womack. Her partner/husband is Cecil Womack, brother of Bobby Womack (who was Sam Cooke's guitarist). Another "name" in the Womack Congregation listed on the sleeve is Mary Wells ('My Guy') Womack, wife of another Womack brother.

After being initially sceptical, sustained exposure to the Womacks' debut album *Love Wars* prompted me to become an irrational fan. Turn it up, 'Love Wars' is a dancefloor monster, play it soft and it's a lounge lizard's delight.

Once again, Womack & Womack have produced a dauntingly melodic album with an enthrallingly funky bottom end — 'No Relief', 'Strange and Funny' and the title track are the fastest

funkies and the mid-tempo 'Night Rider' is ominous — more atmosphere than Francis Coppola with a dry ice machine.

On 'Love's Calling' a co-writing credit is given to Sam Cooke — whether it is based on one of his songs or whether it is acknowledging his achievements, I don't know, but somehow with this new album, the Cooke legacy lives on: Sweet Soul Music! Yeah! Yeah!

Be warned! Just a little exposure and you too, like many a rock writer, will have Womack & Womack in your Top Five.

Murray Cammick

### Everything But the Girl Love Not Money Blanco y Negro

This is *Everything But the Girl's* second album, the follow-up to *Eden*, which won a place in many people's 10 Great Riffs, despite its stiff and self-conscious stylism. *Love Not Money* is in a similar (albeit paler) vein; jazzy radio toons, the sort of music now deemed as new and progressive despite its blatantly MOR origins (that's old MOR, as in *hip*, as opposed to *new* MOR, as in *conformity*; maybe we should save all our Nik Kershaw records) and chart aspirations.

*Love Not Money* is above all, dutiful. It is simpler, more straightforward, less derivative. Songs such as 'Are You Trying To Be Funny' and 'Sean' are stripped to the point of

being bald, a furrowed brow of integrity shining for all the world to see. Songs are penned for a moral purpose; hunger, poverty and social injustice have brought weight to bear on the bossanova grin of *Eden*. The first album's swirl peeks through on the opening track, 'When All's Well', reminding us why they were so likeable and hinting at a richness which remains hidden at the end of the album, consigned forever to the ditch of "things not important in LIFE."

Tracey Thorne's church-girl may beg for alms, but I beg to differ. *Everything But the Girl* are now better off than ever yet have grown into sullen, moralising adolescents. I am reminded of a guide to travelling in foreign places: "Do not feel obliged to change your manner of speaking or your dress; people will not respect you for it."

Chad Taylor

### Gil Scott-Heron The Best Of Gil Scott-Heron Arista

Gil Scott Heron's first novel, *The Vulture*, was published when he was only 19. He followed that with *Nigger Factory*, one of the most incisive novels on black consciousness ever.

His poetry and music carries the legacy of black radicalism, the writings of George Jackson, Eldridge Cleaver, Huey P. Newton and Frantz Famon. And the strug-

gle of civil rights workers, the Black Panthers and the burning glow of Watts, 1969.

On this album we begin with the strident optimism of 1975's 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised' and ends with the cynicism of 1984's 'Re-Ron': "Will we take Jessie Jackson? / Hell, we'll take Michael Jackson!" To Scott-Heron, America lives in a perpetual 'B-Movie', with the icons of white Amerika waiting in the wings to 'Save The Day'. But, as his song 'Ain't No Such Thing As Superman' tells us, there is no sense in believing in imaginary securities.

The closest thing to Scott Heron on vinyl is the very hard Last Poets — both are essential listening for those of you interested in radical black perspectives. Scott-Heron is the best place to start, with this collection of cutting social criticism your viewpoint may never be the same.

(PS: Don't stop there. Check out the autobiographies of Malcolm X and Angela Davies, Huey P. Newton's *Revolutionary Suicide* and George Jackson's *Soledad* prison writings.)

Kerry Buchanan

### Gwen Guthrie Just For You Island

Ms Guthrie has one of those super fine voices, one that has been used on sessions for just about

everybody who's anybody. On her first two albums she had some great songs and with the interesting rhythm production of Sly and Robbie things really hit the groove.

On *Just For You* the groove is aimed directly at the mainstream, there's nothing new or fresh on this vinyl. The production and arrangements by a slew of people have a flat, bland feel — definitely something missing here.

Only 'Love In Moderation' and 'Feel It No More' have a good sense of urgency and rhythmic intensity — perhaps if someone other than Deodato was in control it would be a better album. This one is obviously intended to be Guthrie's "big one" and it's a shame that this means it has to be so mainstream-orientated. Rather than giving her the big break she so deserves, it comes on like a kiss of death for her artistic future.

Kerry Buchanan

### B.B. King Live At the Regal MCA

Many of the most stimulating records released today are reissues. UK indie specialise in repackaging old USA soul music and even the majors are getting involved. Welcome local releases this year include Billie Holiday, Junior Walker, Little Richard, Fats Domino and Wilson Pickett.

This album, recorded live at the

Regal Theatre, Chicago, in 1964, is the ideal B.B. King album to reissue as King is at his best live and though he has released numerous live albums, *Live At the Regal* is still the crucial blues set.

It has been a pleasure to hear B.B. King embrace various soul and funk grooves in recent times but it's good to go back to the coolness of his early 60s sound.

King defined the big band blues sound — the sophistication, the swing, the percussive qualities, the subtleties that are so rare in modern blues where the guitar is king. B.B. King is capable of expressing infinite moods and feels with his playing, from anger to good humour.

On *Live At the Regal*, King sings of providing for his wife's well-being, then finishes with the line:

*I gave you seven children*

*Now you want to give them back*

This album sounds like it was recorded yesterday — it shows how B.B. King is rightly termed King of the Blues, whether rapping, playing or singing. The perfect blues record.

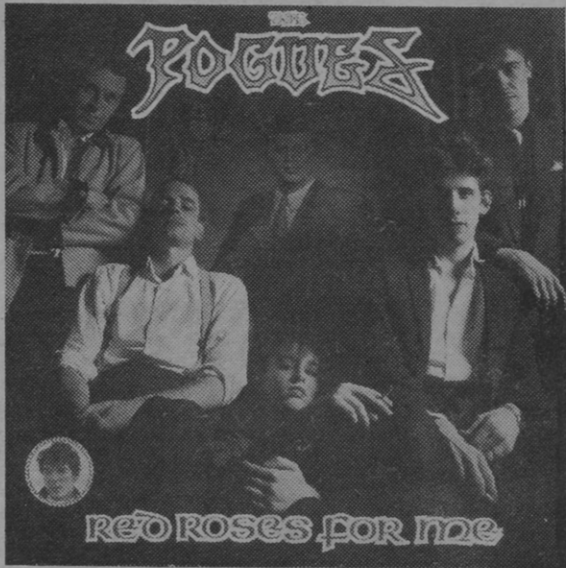
Murray Cammick

### Paul Hardcastle/Universal Funk Zero One (Virgin)

This comes before Hardcastle's big success with '19' and shows the influence of the popular electro sound amongst English funk fans. Side two is the work of Universal Funk, featuring the mixing and scratching of Mastermind Herbie. Good minimalist beat box stuff, similar to the work of Aleem Productions, the people behind Captain Rock. The Hardcastle side features the American hit 'Rain Forest', which "borrows" the rhythm track of 'Planet Rock', with Hardcastle's style of jazz-funk floating on top. Personally, I'm not too hot on his style — for sure he is this year's big thing, his remixing of Third World and Ian Dury I like, but his overall sound is nothing new. The drum sound is pure Arthur Baker (listen to 'Forest Fire') and the melody is similar to 'Jellybean' Benitez, with the main ingredient being that English fascination with smooth jazz-funk, a la Level 42 and Shakatak. *Zero One* is an interesting dance album, but I think I prefer the selection of American Electro available on the *Streetsounds* collections (Volumes One to Eight and still no end in sight).

KB

# THE ROGUES



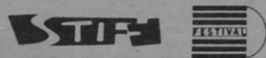
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