

RECORDS

**Jerry Harrison**  
**The Red And The Black**  
 Sire  
**Tom Tom Club**  
 WEA

While David Byrne has been dabbling academically in African culture, his fellow Talking Heads have been working on their own projects, resulting in two very different albums.

Harrison has teamed up with ex-Labelle Nona Hendryx, Labelle, Bernie Worrell and Adrian Belew, George Murray (who's worked with Bowie), and New Yorkers Yogi Horton, John Cooksey and Steve Scars.

The shadow of David Byrne hangs over *The Red And The Black*, with Harrison, consciously or unconsciously, imitating his vocal styles. The songs have obviously come together over a long period, so that while 'Things Fall Apart' mirrors the complex, percussive styles of *Remain In Light*, 'Slink' is closer to the jerky, transitional approach of *Fear Of Music*.

But Harrison is still his own man, and his album is just brimming with fine songs.

The lyrics are a chronicle of a world that's falling apart. Urban violence, everyone carrying a gun, living in tension, a warmongering actor in the White House. Harrison asks: What are you going to do?

*So there's a way out of that corner you've painted yourself into.*

*And maybe you're just going to have to dig that ditch a little bit deeper before you can get out of it.*

The red and the black. Fire and death. Jerry Harrison is not out to soothe people.

The Tom Tom Club, on the other hand, are so soothing they'll make you nod off. It's a loose collection of people, headed by Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth. Belew comes along for the ride, so do Tina's three sisters, Wailer Tyrone Downie, percussionist Sticky Thompson, and a few other



Jerry Harrison

lesser persons.

Frantz says they wanted to make a 'musical anti-snob record'. The Weymouths handle all the vocals, and none of them can really sing. Tina does the vocals on 'Woody Rappinghood' (a hit single overseas), sounding like a half-liberal schoolmarm.

If this is new-age funk, I can take or leave it. It's mindless, repetitive, and barely a step ahead of the old disco. Tom Tom Club sound like a bunch of spoilt brats, living it up in the Bahamas, and recording a little something to amuse themselves. Give me Jerry Harrison anytime.  
**Duncan Campbell**

**The Human League**  
**Dare!**  
 Virgin

It is strange, almost ironic that a band that started life as depressing, synthesised futurists could split down the middle and form two lightweight pop/disco units. Such is the fate of Human League.

When Martyn Ware and Ian Marsh left to form Heaven 17, Phil Oakey and Philip Wright roped in occasional member Ian Burden, ex-Rezillos leader Jo Callis and two disco dancing singers, Joanne Catherall and Susanne Sulley — the new Human League was born.

*Dare* is essentially a commercial album. It's stuffed full of songs in the same vein as 'Love Action'. Songs that demand dancing, singing and bouncing about. The only time it strays is for 'I am the Law', a meander-

ing song reminiscent of 'Circus of Death' from the first album.

That 'Hard Times' is absent, yet the album still strong, illustrates the Human League's current strength. There are no weak links on the album. Cuts such as 'Seconds' and 'Do or Die' weave and bop on some of the best synth hooks you'll hear in a long time.

Produced by Martin Rushent, *Dare* has the lush feel that only he can give to synthesisers. Couple that with the fast-developing abilities of Oakey, Wright and Burden and you have a fine album.  
**Mark Phillips**

**Heaven 17**  
**Penthouse and Pavement**  
 Virgin

This one's been long overdue. The original Human League had ambitions that fell well short of actuality. They wanted to synthesise the abstract, be ahead of their time and yet collect a cheque at the end of the day. This dichotomy meant that they remained unsatisfying and consequently they split, leaving Phil Oakey and Wright with the name, and Ian Marsh and Martyn Ware the freedom to establish the British Electric Foundation aka Heaven 17.

With new vocalist Glenn Gregory in tow, Heaven 17 have produced *Penthouse and Pavement*, an extraordinary debut.

The *Pavement* side is shrewdly devoted to a contemporary funk-a-long encompassing their renowned kick at the National Front ('We Don't Need This) Fascist Groove Thang', an



The Human League

exhilarating six minutes-plus title track, the abbreviated smack of their new single 'Play To Win' and the suitably named 'Soul Warfare'. And the fun and political topicality has just started.

The *Penthouse* side offers more items but none of them armchairs. 'Geisha Boys and Temple Girls' is the British-based Eastern imagery that they almost got right with 'Being Boiled'. The



Heaven 17

self-explanatory irony of 'Let's All Make A Bomb' (it's time to designate your fate) is pavement funk re-visited and 'The Height of the Fighting' and 'Song With No Name' are compassionate protest songs with a rare touch of melody.

*Penthouse and Pavement* is an album of (a)cute business acumen. Its current affairs concern and funk gradients mark it as obviously in vogue, but the whole deal is presented with such clarity, incisiveness and sheer emotional endeavour that you can't deny its place as one

of the finest albums of the year.  
**George Kay**

**Renee Geyer**  
**So Lucky**  
 Mushroom

Renee Geyer has struck gold with her new album, *So Lucky*. It's the first record, she says, with which she has been totally satisfied — and she's not easy to please. Recorded in California with some top session people — Ian McLagan, Ricky Fataar (ex-Beach Boys), Bobby Keys — it is the fine singer's finest achievement.

The phenomenal success in New Zealand of the first single from the album, 'Say I Love You', augurs well for the album's public reception. The Caribbean feel of 'Say I Love You' is echoed in her remake of Lee Michaels' 'Do You Know What I Mean', the second single. Elsewhere, the music is searing soul ballad or plain, old-fashioned rocking.

Renee Geyer has a remarkable ability to find good, but forgotten, songs and turn them into diamonds. Rod Stewart once had this gift; Ry Cooder still does. Consider a song like 'I Can Feel The Fire'. On Ron Wood's first solo album, it seemed a pretty good, but rather unfinished piece. Renee makes it into a monster. Or Chuck Berry's 'Come On' — obscure even as the Rolling Stones' first single. She tears up the highway on this one. And breaks hearts on 'You Don't Know Nothing About Love', a forgotten song by a forgotten soul singer, Howard Tate. The

title song, written by Ian McLagan, would have perished in the hands of a lesser artist. Miss Geyer makes it a classic.

The recording is easily her best, most cohesive work. Her voice and performance seem to have gained maturity and subtlety. She is one of today's great singers. I'll go so far as to nominate this my album of the year.

**Ken Williams**

**Elvis Costello**  
**Almost Blue**  
 WEA

Costello recently hasn't been selling nearly as many records as he should be doing. Possibly the man's prolific output works against him, but more likely it's the musical area he inhabits — where such stylistic lieutenants as Graham Parker and the truly excellent John Hiatt have fared even more dismally. One wonders then how much this Nashville-recorded country album is a crystallisation of Costello's oft-expressed love for George Jones and Gram Parsons, and how much it is an attempt to climb back into the charts.

The main surprise is that Costello hasn't written any of the songs — he has, after all, written a country gem or two in the past. The reports are he felt his writing was becoming too 'precious and introverted', hence he decided to lay his singing reputation on the line. Unlike some, I've always thought Elvis was a pretty good singer, but there are tracks here which will definitely enhance that vocal reputation — the ballads most of all. Producer Billy Sherrill seems to put more into these songs (the fine single 'Good Year For The Roses', 'Sweet Dreams' and Sherrill's own 'Too Far Gone') and it's when Costello, Sherrill and band are all shooting for the same thing (not always) that the record works best.

Check out too, the two Parsons songs 'How Much I Lied' and 'I'm Your Toy'. Very nice.

*Almost Blue* is only intermittently a great country record, but as a collection of sensibly-paced well-chosen country songs for a rock audience, it could conceivably do very well indeed.  
**Roy Colbert**

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