Record Review Ratings

Excellent ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Very Good ★ ★ ★ ★ Good ★ ★ ★ Fair ★ ★ Poor ★

Carl C. Matthews

KOOL AND THE GANG

In The Heart
De-Lite DSR 8508
In The Heart, Joanna, Tonight, Rollin', Place For Us, Straight Ahead, Home Is Where The Heart Is, You Can Do It, September Love
RATING — ★ ★ ★ ★

Kool And The Gang is a name synonymous with good time R&B music —the kind exemplified by such hits as "Hollywood Swinging," "Take My Heart," "Ladies Night" and "Celebration." After several successful years working with producer/composer Deodato, Kool And The Gang have decided to return to producing themselves. The result is an LP they can be proud of. Lead singer James "J. T." Taylor makes the ballads on the LP listenable and worthwhile. The arrangements on the current single "Joanna" are a fresh twist on the "Kool" sound. I'm still disappointed with their lyrics for the most part, but they seem to have put more feeling into their writing this time out. Their playing and singing are better, and they're more "pop" sounding than ever. A solid LP—recommended for all Kool And The Gang fans—like me. 1984 marks Kool And The Gang's 20th anniversary. Good luck, guys.

CHERYL LYNN

Preppie
Columbia FC 38961
Encore, Fix It, Fool A Fool, This Time, Change The Channel, Preppie, Love Rush, No One Else Will Do, Free, Life's Too Short
RATING — ★ ★ ½

Cheryl Lynn produced, sang on, and wrote songs for her latest LP release, "Preppie." The lady who gave us such hits as "Got To Be Real" and "Shake It Up Tonight" continues with more of the same kind of R&B. She does 'em slow and fast; she does 'em disco, rock and roll, and pop. The result is a balanced, but ordinary album. Her voice sounds just as good as on previous albums.

P. FUNK ALL-STARS

Urban Dancefloor Guerillas
CBS Associated Records BFZ 39168
Generator Pop, Acupuncture, One Of Those Summers, Catch A Keeper, Pumpin' It Up, Copy Cat, Hydraulic Pump, Pumpin' It Up (Reprise)
RATING — ★ ★ ★ ½

All you Parliament/Funkadelic fans out there: this militia of urban dancefloor guerillas, also referred to as the U.S. Funk Mob, wants you as a part of Uncle Jam's Army, which is dedicated to rescuing dance music from the "blahs," as well as pumping it up and throwing down. This album was produced and conceived by George Clinton, who was the mastermind behind Parliament. The P. Funk All-Stars, which includes members of parliament, Bootsy's Rubber Band and The Brides Of Funkenstein, have put together, in typical George Clinton style, another dense mix of electronic pulsating rhythms and synthesized noise. What else would you expect from Clinton? The album includes the hits "Generator Pop" and "Hydraulic Pump" (the version of "Hydraulic Pump" on this album is different from the 45 version). Also you get "Copy Cat," which picks up where "Atomic Dog" left off. Definitely for George Clinton fans only.

THE DAZZ BAND

Joystick
Motown 6084ML
To The Roof, Joystick, Swoop (I'm Yours), Until You, Rock With Me, Straight Out Of School, Now That I Have You, Laughin' At You, T. Mata (Instrumental)
RATING — ★ ★ ½

That electric boogie band from Cleveland, Ohio, The Dazz Band (formerly Kinsman Dazz) follows up their "On The One" album with their latest on Motown, "Joystick." This LP has more of the same type of bottom-heavy grooves and sweet ballads. If you remember their top ten smash "Let It Whip," then you have a good idea of what this album sounds like. Cuts like "Swoop (I'm Yours)" and "Joystick" are played in the same style as "Let It Whip." All of this is fine production-wise, but we all know that good production alone does not a platinum LP make.

MONALISA YOUNG

Knife
Motown 6029ML
Knife, Dancing Machine, Bust My Bubble, I'll Be There, Sweet Remedy, Never Can Say Goodbye, Superstition, You Got To Hurry Boy, Don't Mess With Bill
RATING — ★

This new album by Monalisa Young, "Knife," is a chance for you folks who grew up with the Motown sound to reminisce. On this LP, Monalisa performs brand new arrangements of such Motown classics as "I'll Be There," "Superstition," "Don't Mess With Bill," "Dancing Machine" and "Never Can Say Goodbye." The disco fever of the late '70s lives again on this disk, but I was hoping for something better than the forgettable noise recorded here. The arrangements seem to ramble on without making a point. I feel there's too much slickness here.

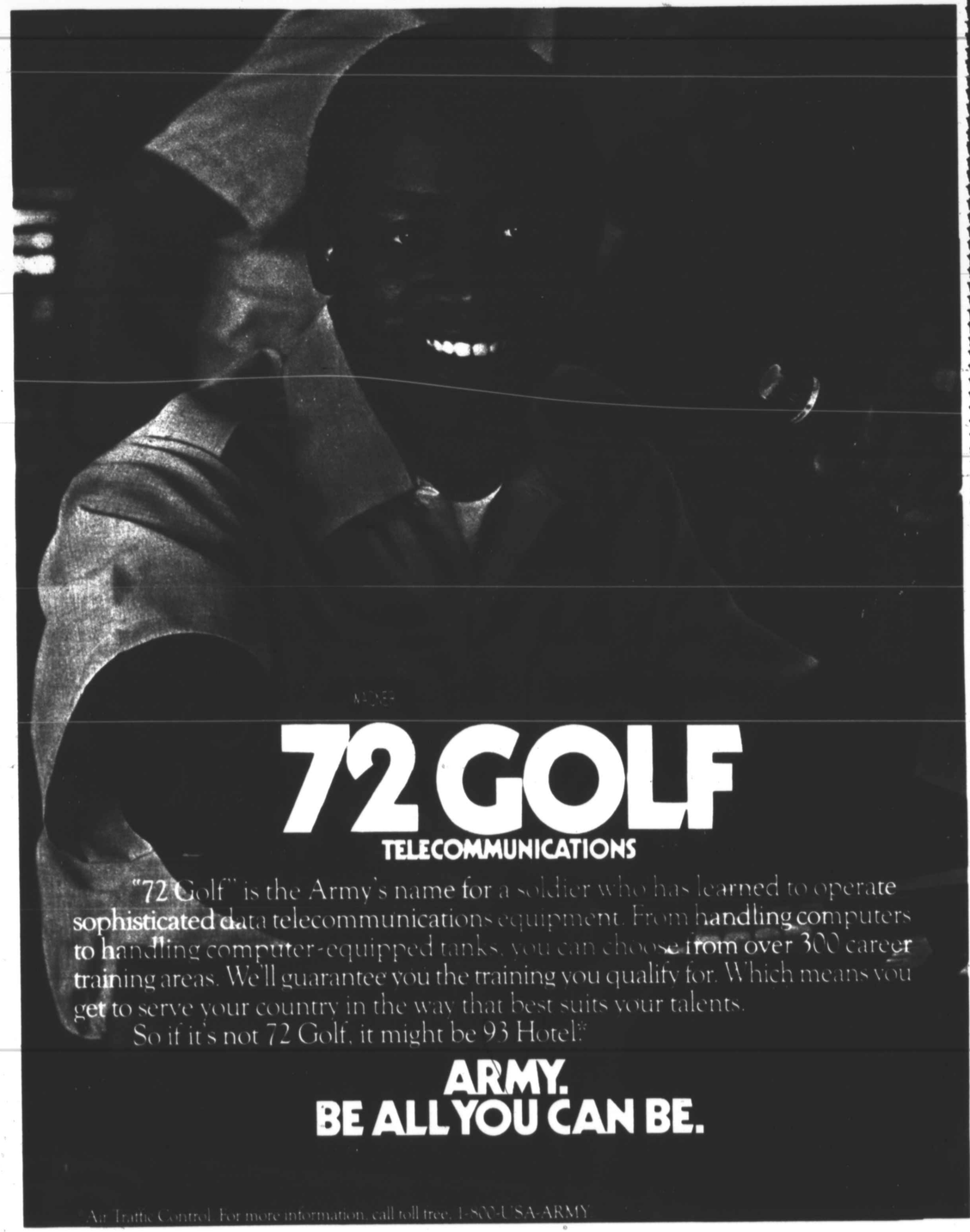
PIECES OF A DREAM

Imagine This
Elektra 60270-1
Imagine This, For The Fun Of It, It's Time For Love, The Shadow Of Your Smile, It's Getting Hot In Here, Foreverlasting Love, Tell Me A Bedtime Story
RATING — ★ ★ ★ ★

I can "Imagine This" album being near the top of the jazz charts and doing well on the R&B charts as well. The three young men who call themselves Pieces Of A Dream, Cedric Napoleon, Curtis Harmon and James Lloyd, play as good as seasoned veterans even though their ages range from 19-21. Produced by Grover Washington, Jr., their sound encompasses a wide range of jazz influences. The title cut is a mellow piece which features some pretty mean keyboard solos, and the group gets downright funky on "For The Fun Of It," a song out of the "Mt. Airy Groove" mold. No matter what type of music is your favorite, I recommend this one. Real class.

WOMACK & WOMACK

Love Wars
Elektra 60293-1
Love Wars, Express Myself, Baby I'm Scared Of You, T.K.O., A.P.B., Catch And Don't Look Back, Woman, Angie, Good Times
RATING — ★ ★ ★ ½

Here's a likeable album by Cecil Womack (younger brother of Bobby Womack) and his wife Linda Womack (daughter of Sam Cooke). They wrote nearly all of the material on this

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