Record Review Ratings

By Carl Matthews

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

ARETHA FRANKLIN

Who's Zoomin' Who?
Arista AL8-8286
Freeway Of Love, Another Night, Sweet Bitter Love, Who's Zoomin' Who, Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves, Until You Say You Love Me, Push, Ain't Nobody Ever Loved You, Integrity

Rating — ★ ★ ★

"I wanted something kids could really get into," says Aretha of her latest album, which is somewhat of a departure from her previous releases: it's more rock-oriented. You've heard her work with producers Arif Mardin and Luther Vandross; now we'll hear the production talents of Narada Michael Walden, Dave Stewart, and Aretha on this latest LP. The album opens with "Freeway Of Love," a sure hit that's upbeat in the soul tradition of such notable folks as Ashford And Simpson and the like. On Van McCoy's "Sweet Bitter Love," a ballad, the Queen still reigns. The title track is the same kind of fluff Walden has in the past graciously given such artists as Stacy Lattisaw, who proceeded to record wonderful gems that are now floating in the waters of relative obscurity. Aretha's made some fine albums in the past, and with a hit single already going for it, I'll not complain about this latest. But it doesn't sound like a classic to me — just another decent rock and roll LP.

LISA LISA AND CULT JAM WITH FULL FORCE

Lisa Lisa And Cult Jam With Full Force
Columbia BFC 40135
I Wonder If I Take You Home, You'll Never Change, All Cried Out, This Is Cult Jam, Can You Feel The Beat, Behind My Eyes, Private Property, Take Me Home (Rap)

Rating — ★ ★ ★

The six-man group known as Full Force have already had success as the producers of UTFO's "Roxanne, Roxanne" and their own "Girl, If I Take You Home." On this album, they've teamed up with the trio known as Cult Jam, including lead singer Lisa-Lisa, to produce this album of fresh beats. The big hit single, "I Wonder If I Take You Home," first came out last year on Personal Records. And now, here it is on an album with seven other cuts that are all typical of the Full Force sound, a sound that never fails to provide the right mood for breakdancing or whatever. After 6:45 of "I Wonder If I Take You Home," we get into "You'll Never Change," with a similar beat and lyrical theme. "All Cried Out" is a ballad that will bring to mind every good female crooner (who sings in the upper ranges) that has hit the R&B charts in the past three years (Angela Bofill, Whitney Houston, you name 'em). The cut "This Is Cult Jam" is exactly what it says. If you're into all of those "Roxanne" and "yo" jams then this one's for you. The album closes with "Take Me Home (Rap)," for those who didn't get enough of "I Wonder If You Take Me Home" on side one. A decent party album.

DURELL COLEMAN

Durell Coleman
Island 90293-1
Somebody Took My Love, Run To Me, I Should Have Known Better, Take Me Back To My Love In China, Do You Love Me, One False Move, I Had A Sure Thing, Tender Blue, When A Man Loves A Woman

Rating — ★ ★

Here's a debut album by a young male vocalist from Roanoke, Virginia. It's not a bad album, but in this setting Durell sounds like Jeffrey Osborne at times and Peabo Bryson at other times, and doesn't outshine either one of these famous names. The album's opening cut, "Somebody Took My Love," is the first single — a mid-tempo number that is typical of such current artists as Billy Ocean. "Tender Blue" is one of the better showcases of Durell's voice, and the one song here you may have heard before, "When A Man Loves A Woman," is also worthy of note. "When A Man Loves A Woman" hit number one on the pop charts when Percy Sledge released it on Atlantic in 1966.

DOC McKENZIE AND THE GOSPEL HI-LITES

Count Your Blessings
GosPearl PL16033
Count Your Blessings, How Sweet The Name (Jesus Is), Rest For The Weary, When My Soul Gets Home, People Is A Funny Thing, Glad I Found Him Pt. 1, Glad I Found Him Pt. 2, If It Wasn't For Our Father, Run On

Rating — ★ ★ ½

When people talk about music being "fresh," it often means that it's the kind of thing street folks will dig. But what we have here is a different kind of "fresh" — a variety of moods, feelings, expressions, the sort of thing that makes a gospel disc something more than just a piece of plastic to the music listener. Doc's speaking ability makes the opening song "Count Your Blessings" a worthwhile recording. And he's not a bad songwriter either, with such originals as the uplifting "People Is A Funny Thing," one of the best cuts here. It has crossover potential — I can actually imagine The Temptations doing this song.

JIMMY CLIFF

Cliff Hanger
Columbia FC 40002
Hitting With Music, American Sweet, Arrival, Brown Eyes, Reggae Street, Hot Shot, Sunrise, Dead And Awake, Now And Forever, Nuclear War

Rating — ★ ★ ★ ★

In case you've never heard of him, Jimmy Cliff is a reggae artist. The fusion of reggae, R&B and pop that is the essence of this album should be most welcome to the longtime Cliff fan or for the listener who's looking for something new. The upbeat "Hitting With Music" is livened up with the Kool And The Gang horns, and the funky "American Sweet" sounds like a classic already. The single, "Hot Shot," with its danceable beat and anti-nuclear-war message is a fine candidate for a "serious re-mix." "Nuclear War," the album's closer, is more traditional reggae.

THE BOOGIE BOYS

City Life
Capitol ST-12409
Runnin' From Your Love, Do Or Die, Break Dancer, A Fly Girl, City Life, Party Asteroid, You Ain't Fresh, Shake And Break

Rating — ★ ★ ★ ★

For the "yo jam" crowd this album by Boogie Knight, Romeo J.D., Lil' Rahiem and the crew can't miss, for it contains previously released hits plus fresh new stuff that will keep 'em hippin' and hoppin' (if you know what I mean). The Boogie Boys come up with some memorable raps on this set, often in conjunction with vocal melody lines that are actually closer to mainstream R&B, as in the album's opener "Runnin' From Your Love," for example. The hit single "A Fly Girl" is included here.

THE POETRIE GALLERIE

SPLIT TIME

Things didn't work out
between us,
and both of us were
to blame,
it's just too bad from this
day on,
our kids will bear the shame.

For this certainly wasn't in
our plans,
the day we said "I do,"
we gave our vows, and told
each other,
forever we'd be true.

To think what God has joined
together,
let no man put assunder,
will be dissolved as it
never was,
like the love that we slept under.

This week it's your turn,
next week it's mine,
now our kids are divided,
in a world of split time.

We'll meet once more for
the settlement,
then go our separate ways,
and wonder where did we
go wrong,
until our dying days.

It takes two to start
an argument,
and one thing led to another,
so you packed your bags,
and off you fled,
to move in with your Mother.

Before we didn't take the
time,
to spend and enjoy each other,
so now our kids will have
to settle,
with a part time Father & Mother.

Life used to have a meaning,
coming home from work
was fun,
for I had a lot to look
forward to,
with my wife, and our three sons.

We took their sense of
security,
and the importance of family ties,
then replaced their lives
with confusion,
and unanswered questions of why.

We spend our weekends buttering
up the kids,
and promising them the sky,
just to get even with each other,
we fill them full of lies.

'cause everything in life's
too easy,
we find it hard to try,
so instead we'll call our
marriage quits,
as we say our last good-bye.

CAROL ROOT,
Concord Twsp, OH

WE WISH NO MAN TO CRY

We've gown strong, we've survived,
Against odds unjustified,
No vengeance against stupidity;
Those who were driven by cupidity.
Our minds are cultivated;
And our spirits elevated!
Now we divide the pie,
We wish no man to cry.

DAVID RICHARDSON,
Detroit, MI

BROTHER MAN!

You hang on The corner just
hanging out, With nothing to do
but get drunk and shout. You —
make no sense in what you say
but you think you're cool and you're
really a fool if you had any sense
you would of finish school.

Now you're crying you can't find
no work, with no experience don't
That hurt. you better get smart brother
learn the game quit crying be-
cause brother man's doing his thing.
You try to raise money so you
rob and steal, now you in jail
cause you had a heart to Kill.

You got a life sentence for what
you did never to be with your
family, woman or kid. Time is
one thing you got plenty of,
get yourself together brother rise
above. Don't settle for no mere
existence the dumb things in life
put some distance.

Get off your behind get some class
and respect yourself if
nothing else. You got to look
Out for No. 1 you don't need that
Lady and the game she runs.

All of that mess can wait
for later
Get your life together brother
Walk a little straighter,
You don't have to be no whiz
Kid just have something and
say look what I did.

You just might want to travel
the land just stand up
Brother and be a Man!

WILLIE A. JOHNSON,
Oakland, CA

I NEVER KNEW THAT I WAS POOR

I never knew that I was poor
And that I should feel bad
Because I had about as much
As all my neighbors had
I didn't know I was underpriviledged
Until they told me so
My life was full and happy
How was I to know?
Then somebody pointed out
That I was a minority
But most all of the people that I knew
Were also black like me
Then they called my home a ghetto
They said it was a slum
They said that we should get out
And let urban renewal come
They said that my religion
Was just a weight to hold me down
If I had my mind on Jesus
I'd miss the injustice all around
They said that I should wake up
To the real world around me
And that I should join the struggle
To set all people free
They told me so many things
I can't remember any more
But I know I liked life better
Before I knew that I was poor.

N. NORRIS
Chicago, IL

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