Carl Matthews

SOUNDS

KOOL AND THE GANG
"Forever" (Mercury)

The latest album by the top-selling black contemporary group of the 1980's has arrived. After 25 years with De-Lite Records, Kool And The Gang have released their latest album on the Mercury label, "Forever."

Robert "Kool" Bell, his brother Ronald, George Brown, Charles Smith, "Dee Tee" Thomas, and "Spike" Mickens have been a part of Kool And The Gang since their first chart single and album, both entitled "Kool And The Gang," was released in 1969.

Kool And The Gang first hit the pop singles chart in 1973 with "Funky Stuff" and first hit number one on the pop charts in 1980 with their platinum "Celebration" single.

Since then, there has been a steady flow of hits coming from Kool And The Gang — chart singles like "Big Fun," "Joanna," "Tonight," "Straight Ahead," "Misled," "Fresh," "Cherish," "Emergency," and their latest single, "Victory."

Kool And The Gang trivia: "Victory" marks the fifth Kool And The Gang single in a row with a one-word title that appeared on side one of an album.

As much as I hate to admit it, I am quite disappointed in this latest disc.

The easiest way for me to describe it, overall, is "more of the same." You'll find this another collection of the same commercial, slickly produced formula music that helped their last album go platinum.

A close listen to their last couple of albums will reveal how much of Kool And The Gang's material is falling more and more into a "hit-factory syndrome." These newer recordings use the same rhythms, vocal stylings and overall arrangement that have given Kool And The Gang pop chart hits in the past, but the way I see it, there are nearly a hundred other currently popular artists that could have made this stuff.

Mellow songs such as "Broadway" and "Special Way" on their new album are very nice to hear, and fans are sure to love them — even country music fans could get into them. But there's nothing new about them. The sort of spontaneous, raw energy that made older Kool And The Gang records special is simply not there.

"Holiday" is one of the better dance numbers on the album, with some of that ol' Kool And The Gang style, but we've heard enough "celebration" songs from these guys, and I'm afraid the sax sounds a trifle tired this time out.

Perhaps the group's intention was to make a completely inoffensive, "adult contemporary" album that would sell millions of copies. They have succeeded in doing that. What they have failed to do, in my opinion, is to progress, communication-wise, from their last effort, "Emergency."

Therefore, I would rate this album as "fair."

Other cuts: "I.B.M.C.," "Stone Love," "Forever," "Peace Maker," "God's Country."

Kool and the Gang

ATLANTIC STARR
"Secret Lovers... The Best Of Atlantic Starr" (A&M)

Many of Atlantic Starr's biggest hits, including the big hits that made the pop charts in the 80's, are included in this new single-disc compilation package.

The group's been around 10 years now. The main members are still the Lewis brothers, David, Wayne and Jonathan. This album includes the classic vocal performances of Barbara Weathers ("Secret Lovers") and Sharon Bryant ("Circles").

While being a good representation of the band's current sound, this compilation is by no means complete — it does not include "Stand Up" or "Let's Rock And Roll," their first chart hits.

Instead, the album centers on Atlantic Starr's 1981-1986 period. Three tracks on the compilation are from their last album, "As The Band Turns" ("Silver Shadow," "Secret Lovers," and "Freak-A-Ristic").

Atlantic Starr

V-103's Top Twenty

1. Shake You Down	Gregory Abbott
2. A Little Bit More	Melba Moore & Freddie Jackson
3. Typical Male	Tina Turner
4. Word Up	Cameo
5. Tasty Love	Freddie Jackson
6. I'm For Real	Howard Hewett
7. Human	Human League
8. Nail It To The Wall	Stacy Lattisaw
9. Lady Soul	Temptations
10. Jealousy	Timex Social Club
11. Love Will Conquer All	Lionel Richie
12. Old Friend	Phylis Hyman
13. Don't Think About It	One Way
14. When I Think Of You	Janet Jackson
15. Talk To Me	Chico DeBarge
16. Going To The Bank	Commodores
17. Love You Down	Ready For The World
18. Kiss Away The Pain	Patti Labelle
19. Hot! Wild! Unrestricted! Crazy Love!	Millie Jackson
20. Heaven In Your Arms	R.J.'s Latest Arrival

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Choral Arts Society opens season

The Baltimore Choral Arts Society opens its 1986-87 season on Saturday, November 15 at 8 p.m. in Kraushaar Auditorium at Goucher College.

The chorus will be accompanied by the Concerto Soloists Ensemble of Philadelphia. Soloists for this performance include Margaret Cusack, Alteouise DeVaughn, Michael Austin and Kevin Maynor.

Alteouise DeVaughn, mezzo-soprano, has attracted attention as one of the stars of an exciting new generation of American singers. In 1984, she was the focus of widespread press attention for her starring role in Gluck's **Orfeo and Euridice** at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Last season she made her European debut and was part of the World Premiere cast of Thea Musgrave's **Harriet, The Woman Called Moses** at the Virginia Opera, which was heard on nationwide broadcast. In October, 1985, she was named a winner of the Pavarotti International Voice Competition.

Michael Austin, tenor, was named Outstanding Apprentice Artist in 1979 by the Santa Fe Opera Festival. He has appeared with the oprea companies of Lake George, Omaha, Memphis, Anchorage, Charlotte and Miami, as well as such orchestras as the Rochester Philharmonic, Vermont Symphony, Baltimore Symphony and the Opera Orchestra of New York.

In 1984, Mr. Austin made debuts with both the Houston Grand Opera and the New York City Opera. He has been performing with Stuttgart's Wurttemberg State Theatre and will return to the United States for his performance with BCAS. Austin is married to mezzo-soprano Alteouise DeVaughn.

Kevin Maynor, bass, is a Fulbright Award winner and the first apprentice artist from the

Continued on page 7

Alteouise DeVaughn

Bob Matthews

...AND ALL THAT JAZZ

Dropped into Ethel's Place to catch the opening night set of **Joe Williams.** Was a bit late arriving. The show was already underway, and since our view was partially blocked by a TV crew, couldn't see the piano player.

He sounded familiar, however, so I moved to a different location where the pianist was visible, and lo and behold, it turned out to be Baltimore's own **Ellis Larkins.**

Seems Ellis was in town on a family visit, and was asked would he take a 5-day gig at Ethel's Place with Joe. He agreed, and will be at the club through Sunday night.

Got a chance to chat with him following the performance, since he was such an institution in New York, having played seven straight years at the Carnegie Tavern as a solo piano act, being on the road again is a radical departure for Ellis.

But, he says he has been moving around since the tavern has been closed during the renovations going on at Carnegie Hall, so the opportunity to do some different things came — and he is taking advantage of it.

Joe Williams is in fine voice, and swinging as heartily as ever. It was really fascinating to hear the byplay between Jo and Ellis, since this was a brand new alliance — but when two topflight artists get together — it doesn't take long for things to mesh.

Rest of the group included **Henry Johnson,** guitar, who has a new LP out on Impulse; **Garrick King,** drums, and **Bob Batchley,** bass.

Did get a chance to chat with Earl and Ethel while there, and must report the distressing news that the big New Year's Eve gala, which was such a delightful success — telecast live on most of the PBS stations — will not happen this year.

Seems that PBS will be telecasting an opera on New Year's Eve, so that the earliest a show of this type could go on the air would be about 11:45 p.m.

At this, Maryland Public Television, would handle the logistics of such a show, pulled out. Seems they would have difficulty in lining up a corporate sponsor for a program beginning that late.

So don't let anyone tell you that public television is commercial free. Those billboards which announce things such as "... this program is brought to you through a grant from the X corporation ..." is indeed a commercial, and vital to PBS broadcasting.

Ah well, we thought, since there won't be that great jazz on television, will there be the usual hopskotching across the country on National Public Radio on New Year's Eve.

In previous years, it has been possible to celebrate the new year in each of the time zones as NPR broadcast live from various jazz clubs.

Robert Ford of WBJC-FM was around, so checked with him to see if perhaps he had some word on the coverage. Seems that WBJC will cease its affiliation with NPR on Dec. 1 — so he had no knowledge of the plans.

Mike Juliano of the Hopkins station, WJHU-FM was on hand, so checked to see what he knew. He could tell me that WJHU would be carrying the NPR lineup in town, but although New Year's Eve was just over a month away — NPR plans were not yet known.

Do you know that there will be a new Year's Eve celebration at Ethel's Place, with Ethel the featured performer. They are putting together the package for the evening, which is expected to include a full dinner and show.

Ethel, incidently, will be performing with **Tim Eyermann** and the **East Coast Offering** Nov. 26-29. They'll be doing a live recording on Nov. 28.

For future planning, **Freddie Hubbard** will be at the club, Dec. 4-7 and **Wynton Marsalis,** January 2-4.

Will be off on vacation by the time this article appears. So we'll be missing for a couple of weeks. After all, if you got a chance to go to Hawaii and Jamaica while the weather is like this — wouldn't you.

Ellis Larkins joins Joe Williams at Ethel's Place. They will be appearing through Sunday night.

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