

Records

Grace Jones Inside Story EMI

The conundrum of being Grace Jones — how to stay hip when simply being Grace Jones is not enough?

Grace has long since lost her capacity to outrage. She is an image as much as a face, a concept as much as a person. Yet only UK satirist Lenny Henry has dared to imitate her. Grace Jones is unique. That is her strength and her weakness. So what does she do which is now?

To start with, she develops herself as a songwriter, which she displayed in the brilliant *Living My Life*. She teams up with an accomplished tunesmith in Bruce Woolley and an accomplished producer in Nile Rodgers. She produces music which supplements her visual image, gives it substance. The videos are, of course, dazzling. Grace Jones is one of the ultimate video artists.

The fortunate thing about *Inside Story* is that it functions without the visuals. Jones supplies the words which are interesting and just slightly, fascinatingly naughty. 'Scary But Fun' expresses the Grace Jones attitude perfectly, as does 'I'm Not Perfect', a typically self-effacing Jones statement which retains an equally typical arrogance. Love in the Jones world is still dangerous, check 'Crush,' and 'Hollywood Liar' is another sharp putdown of the very world Grace Jones has entered. In the movies she's made so far, she's only had to play extensions of her public persona, despite her insistence in interviews about artistic in-

tegrity.

So, is Grace Jones a slave to her own rhythm? There's a great deal about this LP which is very familiar. That she is unique cannot be denied. That she is in danger of drifting into self-parody is equally undeniable. The record is okay. It will sell. Like a dozen eggs. But is Grace Jones, the person, just another commodity?

Duncan Campbell

OMD The Pacific Age Virgin

I wrote a review of OMD's excellent *Crush* album and their dreadful *Crush* video last year and everyone managed to get them mixed up; this is a review of the album and I like it, although not as much as the last one, okay?

Once more a tour of books and cities and once more a collection of 18-carat pop songs. Like all products of careful thinking it remains most enjoyable when you don't analyse it too much — even a very straightforward interview with OMD (last *RIV* issue) managed to make this album a little duller. 'Southern' is probably the best track, with 'Watch Us Fall' and 'The Dead Girls' running a close second; the whole thing holds together pretty damn well, actually.

What *The Pacific Age* does lack, however, is a standout single; something of the calibre of 'Tesla Girls' or 'If You Leave' to turn people's heads just that much more. It lacks a focus-point, which makes me worry about what Andy McCluskey described as the band's "new-found democracy". One thing which the interview did reveal was that the spectacular 'If You Leave' was recorded in only a few days — if they set themselves the same limits for an album, is



there any end to what OMD could achieve? Probably not.

I'm looking forward to them live for the same reason.

Chad Taylor

Kraftwerk Electric Cafe Kling Klang

A friend of mine OMD, frightened when I told him about this. "But do they still sound the same?" he asked, an impossible question when one considers how nebulous Kraftwerk's influence has become. Black and white, soulful and stilted, danceable and dull; all have been touched by Hutter and Co. When they released the 'Tour De France' single in the interim between *Computer World* (1983) and *Electric Cafe* it reaped the seeds they had sown years before; a new generation of electric hip-hop was justifiably theirs.

In comparison to 'Tour De France' and *Computer World*, *Electric Cafe* is minimal. A puristic assemblage of sampled voices and clean, simple songs as reminiscent of Rapping as anything else (eg. Pumpkin, King of the Beat or

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, *Gettin' Money*) results in an album both old and new — but again, it's impossible to say. Kraftwerk could say they were Arthur Baker and we'd be obliged to give the thought some consideration — a lot in fact.

Electric Cafe is a fine album. Beautifully assembled and maintained, it chugs along like a shiny new toy. Worth the wait.

Chad Taylor

Tina Turner Break Every Rule Interfusion Huey Lewis and the News Fore! Chrysalis

Apart from the fact that they're very different, these two albums have a lot in common. Each is the follow-up to a mega-platinum monster that spawned four Top 10 singles and took a middle-aged rocker (though Tina's got a good dozen years on Huey) from circuit slogging to superstardom. It's therefore reasonable to assume that both albums under review were conceived under similar pressures and expectations. The aim was surely to consolidate success by giving the public what (as was perceived) it wanted rather than to try anything new and risk blowing the booty. Sound cynical? Sound marketing!

Of the two albums, Turner's *Break Every Rule* shows the clearer signs of calculation, though perhaps that's just because Lewis and co write most of their own material and so aren't expected to be capable of more variety.

Turner again employs a brace of writer/producers, most of whom worked with her on *Private Dancer*. Terry Brittain, who wrote 'What's Love Got to do with it', has

supplied the new album's first hit, the infectious 'Typical Male'. He also supplies the rest of side one and unfortunately fills it up with considerably inferior material. Mark Knopfler again provides a good custom-made song, though it lacks the distinction of the previous album's title track. The vastly under-rated Rupert Hine has two strong contributions, although again, neither has quite the impact of his 'I Might Have Been Queen'. The new boy aboard is Bryan Adams with one of his typically catchy rockouts. (Of notable omission is the team of Martyn Ware and Greg Walsh who were responsible for initially reviving Turner's career with their BEF project and the single 'Let's Stay Together'.)

At least Turner hasn't recycled her 1985 movie theme hit, which is more than can be said for Huey Lewis. 'The Power of Love' is typical of his band's best work — unpretentious R&B influenced, goodtime music that transcends its formulaic nature through sheer exuberance and a damn good hook. That such bar-band trad rock can enjoy extraordinary success in the mid 80s is a tribute to the News' writing and performing skills. With *Fore* we know pretty well what we're going to get and it's delivered as well as expected. While it remains doubtful whether the album will yield another four Top 10 singles, 'Stuck With You' has made a promising start.

The band's traditionalism is worn very much on its sleeves; two tracks invoke 50s doo-wop singing, one even sung unaccompanied. The Tower of Power horn section also appears to reinforce the soul connection. Lewis the wry hornsmith is again in evidence, even if 'Hip to be Square' may not be quite as smart an observation

as the last album's 'Bad is Bad'.

Overall then, both *Fore* and Turner's *Break Every Rule* provide a solid, if safe, follow-up that should pretty much satisfy their legions of expectant fans. And while neither album may have quite the same number of high-points as its predecessor then that's simply the way things usually are with sequels.

Peter Thomson

Womack & Womack Starbright Manhattan

Those of you who found the last album lacking that certain thrill can rejoice that this is a return to the purity and passion of *Love Wars*. *Starbright* is a record of such warm intimacy that it's a bit like looking through someone's personal photo album. A lot of today's soul albums sound lifeless and cold, a void where the silicon chip has replaced the human heart. To the Womacks' credit, their sound comes straight from the heart, an affirmation of traditional deep Southern soul.

There's not a bad track in evidence, the only one not quite making it is their 'New York City', a song about their love/hate relationship with the Big Apple. Everything else just sparkles, especially the up-tempo celebration of 'Soul Love/Soul Man'. There's true beauty in the grooves of 'Take Me' and 'Find Yourself Another Girl', just classic love songs with a sense of melody that really flows. Their strength is in that particular vocal style, that is still powerful, even though they never scream and shout.

In many cases records operate as a back beat to your particular lifestyle; owning this record could change it. A winner in all respects.

Kerry Buchanan

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