

**LINTON KWESI JOHNSON
FORCES OF VICTORY
HEPTONES
PARTY TIME
ISLAND**

The racial tension that frequently turns to violence is as threatening to Britain today as inflation and industrial unrest. The black communities of areas like Brixton, Bradford and Notting Hill have been the scenes of bloody battles between black people, racists and the police. Such scenes are painted with eloquence and fervour in the musical poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson.

Johnson (28) was born in Jamaica and raised in Brixton. He holds an honours degree in sociology and earns a living as a freelance writer and broadcaster. But his passions are politics and verse. Johnson is a former member of the British Black Panthers and is steeped in the ideology of activists like Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver, adapting their visions to the British climate.

His two books of poetry, *The Living And The Dead* and *Dread Beat And Blood*, have been widely acclaimed, the latter forming the basis for his first album, as Poet and the Roots, which was released in 1978 on Virgin. Johnson says he always has a reggae bassline in his head when he's writing, and the cadence of his verse fits perfectly into the musical setting.

His new album, *Forces of Victory* (Island), is a significant progression. The music, provided by members of Matumbi and other friends, is more melodic and able to stand alone, rather than functioning simply as background rhythm. Tracks like "Want Fi Goh Rave" and "Sonny's Lettah" seethe with fury and frustration. Dennis Bovell enhances the starkness of Johnson's work with some neat dub effects.

Some say that the likes of Linton Kwesi Johnson only serve to aggravate racial strife. Those who saw the recent TV documentary on Blair Peach and the interview with Martin Webster of The National Front will think again. *Forces Of Victory* is a vital work.

Space is running short, but I must give a pat on the back to Festival for releasing The Heptones' second Island album, *Party Time*. Now sadly defunct, The Heptones' lovely vocal harmonies graced some classic rocksteady tracks on Coxson's Dodd's Studio One label, and their later signing to Island enabled them to keep pace with the birth of reggae. Produced by Scratch Perry, who leaves his unmistakable mark on everything he touches, *Party Time* is an essential companion to its predecessor, *Night Food*. Rude boy never gwan go down.

Duncan Campbell

**THE HUMAN LEAGUE
TRAVELOGUE
VIRGIN**

The Human League really started all this latter day synthesiser dance stuff (Eno, Kraftwerk and co work on a parallel plane) but they have been unable to find the balance between eccentricity and satisfying music. Their debut *Reproduction*, just missed the mark that Orchestral Manoeuvres have recently bulls-eyed, and now *Travelogue*, which emphasises the League's weakness for dressing up sociology lessons in ponderous electronics.

The idea of the League is a good one. They're humane, concerned, committed and even clever but their music fails to register as either accessible "avant garde" or as contrived synthesiser manipulations. In fact Numan, the villain of this whole genre, at least manages to concoct a keyboards tune that is difficult to shake off, something the League seem to think is beneath them on *Travelogue*. Even "Being Boiled", their pioneering single, loses its otherworldliness under a more highly-charged reworking, and only the novel "The Black Hit of Space", "Gordon's Gin" and Ronson's "Only After Dark" rise above the doldrums.

The Human League should have achieved the popularity that has been bestowed on Numan's shoulders but somewhere along the line they've had their wires crossed.

George Kay

**GENESIS
DUKE
CHARISMA**

Having staunchly defended Genesis over the years, in these pages and elsewhere, it hurts when their new product only serves to confirm many prejudices expressed by non-believers.

Duke is a mere shadow of past glories, old riffs re-hashed, and with a strong smell of depression, disillusionment and lack of ideas. I never thought I'd be writing this about a band which has given me so much pleasure.

The album seems to have a loose linking concept of love lost and dreams shattered, which makes for depressing listening. Illustrated with the peculiar drawings of French cartoonist Lionel Koechlin, it gives little clear impression of its purpose. Lyrically, it is a portrayal of loneliness and despair. The old wit and wisdom is gone.

Playing and production (David Hentschel) are immaculate as ever, with great bouts of keyboards from Tony Banks, firm and meaty bass from Mike Rutherford, and Phil Collins' ever-reliable drumming. But it's all been heard before, and there's barely a decent tune to support it.

Brightest moments in a very dreary set are the bluesy "Misunderstanding" and the serene pastoral atmosphere of "Heat Haze". The rest passes by, making little impression.

The lyrics from another track, "Duchess", could well describe the current dilemma of Genesis:

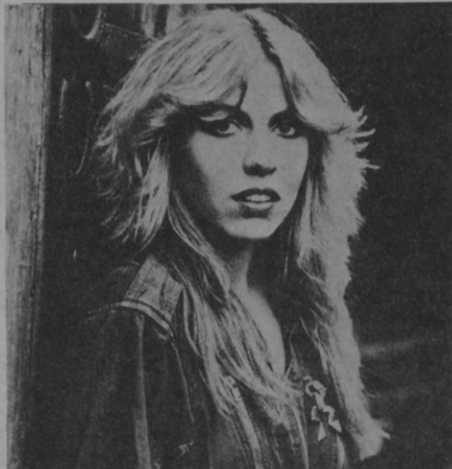
*But time went by
It wasn't so easy now, all uphill, and not
feeling so strong.
Yes times are hard,
Too much thinking 'bout the future and what
people might want.*

Duke went to number one in Britain, first week of release. Why, I will never know.

Duncan Campbell



Linton Kwesi Johnson



Judie Tzuke

**JUDIE TZUKE
WELCOME TO THE CRUISE
ROCKET**

Even the most savagely cynical would have to admit this lady's got talent. There will always be a market for pretty songs sung by pretty people, and Judie Tzuke has more resources than most of her genre.

This 24-year-old Englander is still largely an enigma, but those who've heard "Stay With Me Till Dawn" and felt the gooseflesh rising will already be fans.

Tzuke has a rich, welling voice with a husky edge that makes it unique. She evokes memories of Sandy Denny, especially on the folksy acappella of "For You". Tzuke and her beau, Mike Paxman, write songs that compliment her voice perfectly. She's at home with her material, be it a lush ballad like "Stay With Me" or the sweetly funky "Southern Smiles".

Welcome To The Cruise is an album for those quiet, private moments, but also tends to turn heads when it's played. If you have an ounce of romance in you, and like to let yourself drift occasionally, have a listen to a rather beautiful album.

Duncan Campbell

**VARIOUS ARTISTS
MAX'S KANSAS CITY VOL I & II
(NEW YORK — NEW WAVE)
CBS**

This two album set (for the price of one) is already showing its age.

Volume One, recorded in 1976, features lewd Wayne (later Jayne) County and his Back-Street Boys, contributing three songs: "Max's Kansas City 1976", "Flip Your wig" and the infamous "Cream In My Jeans". Also notable are Suicide's "Rocket USA", and cult heroes Pere Ubu, who provide the best thing on either album with "Final Solution". Cherry Vanilla's "Shake Your Ashes" is borderline, as are the Fast with "Boys Will Be Boys" and "Wow, Pow, Bash, Crash". The John Collins Band and Harry Toledo are plain dispensable.

Volume Two dates back to 1977 and is as relevant to that year as the Grateful Dead. Working on the theory of playing the best shot first, Side One opens with Phil Rambow's "Night Out" — a song later covered by Ellen Foley. The remainder of the record features the forgettable Just Water, Grand Slam and the Brats. The even more forgettable Andrew Pearson and Lance get two and three tracks respectively.

Although the first volume has a certain shambolic charm, the second part of *New York — New Wave* leaves you wondering. Did the Ramones, Talking Heads, Jonathon Richman and others really play in New York in 1977?

Mark Phillips

**BAD MANNERS
SKA 'N' B
MAGNET**

The ska revival bangwagon rolls along, and hanging on at the back, like the Keystone Cops, are Bad Manners.

There are nine of them, they formed in North London about 18 months back, and they claim little musical experience, though they are known to rehearse relentlessly for several minutes a day. Actually, they are much more competent musically than they care to claim.

They tread similar paths to Madness, with their sound dominated by loads of honking brass. Well and truly upfront is 17-stone Douglas Trendle (alias Buster Blood-Vessel), with a build and voice like King Kong. His aim in life is to eat 30 hamburgers in one sitting, a feat he nearly achieved one night, consuming 27 until the band ran out of money.

Their roots are actually closer to the Coasters and Sam The Sham (they cover "Woolly Bully") than to Jamaica. Buster is right in his element singing "The Monster Mash", while their version of "Caledonia" is note perfect and rendered with love.

Bad Manners are in it strictly for laughs. One to put any party on its ear.

Duncan Campbell

**DIANA ROSS
DIANA
COMMODORES
HEROES
JERMAINE JACKSON
LET'S GET SERIOUS
MOTOWN**

It's been twenty years since Berry Gordy, a struggling Detroit songwriter, established Tamla Motown records. To mark the occasion comes *20/20* a collection of twenty number one hits from the label. But make no mistake, this is no historical overview. This double album is weighted heavily towards the seventies, a period when the company continued to produce great records but the magic moments were becoming rarer. On *20/20* you'll find such classics as Smokey Robinson's "Tears of a Clown", the Temptations "Papa Was a Rolling Stone" and Stevie Wonder's "Superstition" mixed in together with schmaltz like the Commodores' "Three Times a Lady" and Diana Ross' "Theme from Mahogany". It makes for variable listening.

Smokey Robinson, once the label's prime songwriter and now vice-president of Motown, has had an erratic recording career since he left the Miracles in the early seventies. However, his recent hit "Cruising" has thrust him back into the spotlight and *Warm Thoughts*, his latest album, displays his continuing skill with smooth ballads. It's Smokey's immaculate singing that enables him to transcend the limitations of even the most soft-centred of his material. That's not to say this is the best album of Smokey's solo career but Side Two here hits the kind of mellow, romantic groove that was once considered perfect late-night seduction fare.

Another old Motown stalwart, Diana Ross, links with Chic masterminds Bernard Edwards and Nile Rodgers for her latest album, *Diana*. The Chic boys give Diana typically bright and rhythmic backing but the songs are too often weak and the whole project lacks the kind of urgency and soul that made so many of her singles with the Supremes classic.

The Commodores new LP *Heroes* provides few surprises. It continues their successful light funk-based style with little change except that this time round there seem to be fewer melodically interesting songs than their norm.

Last on the Motown release heap is Berry Gordy's son-in-law, Jermaine Jackson. Jermaine lacks the distinctive vocal personality of his little brother Michael, so what individualism there is on *Let's Get Serious* is on three tracks produced and written by Stevie Wonder. Two of these are lovely, wistful ballads but the third, "Let's Get Serious", is a slice of aural madness — it's an overloaded, loud piece of disco mayhem and a pleasant relief from the undistinguished fare on the rest of the album.

Alastair Dougal



Randy Crawford



Blues Brothers

IN BRIEF

The Blues Brothers, Original Soundtrack Recording (Atlantic)

The Blues Brothers' debut album was, I thought, one of those extraordinarily rare things, a recording both musical and funny in which neither the music (mostly '60s R&B) nor the humour suffered. Very funny stuff, but could it be done more than once? Apparently, because this soundtrack album from the forthcoming movie *The Blues Brothers* is just fine. Once again, most of the vocals are taken (appropriated?) by Joliet Jake Blues (John Belushi) and, if anything, he sounds more in charge of his material than on the previous record. His songs include Steve Winwood's "Gimme Some Lovin'", "Jailhouse Rock" and a blockbuster version of "Sweet Home Chicago" which allows plenty of blowing time for everyone in their fabulous band (Steve Cropper, Duck Dunn, Matt Murphy, Tom Malone etc). There is the added attraction of guest appearances by James Brown (doing some downhome preaching), Aretha Franklin, Ray Charles, and 1930s bandleader Cab Calloway ("His Highness of Hi-De-Ho") singing his own "Minnie the Mocher".

Randy Crawford, Now We May Begin (Warner Brothers)

Continuing her rewarding collaboration with

the Crusaders and lyricist Will Jennings, Randy Crawford demonstrates that the triumph of "Street Life" from the Crusaders' album of the same name was no isolated wonder. Crawford's sinuous vocals are suited perfectly to the choppy dance rhythms of Sample, Felder and Hooper, and their songs extend her range beyond previous recordings. The music is elegant, sensuous and exciting. A pleasant prospect for the future is that one of the album's most affecting tracks, the wistful "Tender Falls the Rain", was written by Randy Crawford herself.

KW

The Vapors, New Clear Day (EMI)

Guildford's Vapors seem to have their finger on commercial bouncy punk-pop. "Turning Japanese" is a hard song to get out of the way of, and their debut album is filled with songs that could do just as well given that same blanket-radio exposure. "Trains", "News At Ten" and "Letter From Hiro" are but three in that category, and when they move sideways stylistically, which isn't often, they can still score points — try "Sixty Second Interval".

RC

Malcolm McCallum, Victim In Paradise (Epic)

McCallum is another ex-patriot local making professional albums in Australia, and *Victim In Paradise* is nothing if not thoroughly professional in every respect — musicianship, production (Mike Harvey) and arrangements all ooze taste and panache.

As a writer McCallum also covers most bases ranging from the crisp more aggressive angle of "The Fugitive" to the more laidback sumptuousness of "I Don't Care" and various degrees of slickness, the title track and "Forever" standing out.

This album would fit snugly beside Felix Cavaliere's last effort and lose nothing in the process.

GK

Al Jarreau, This Time (Warner Brothers)

I have felt, and many will disagree, that the potential of Al Jarreau was probably enormous, but that, on record at least, it fell short of fulfilment. Until now, he has been unable to achieve an entirely satisfactory balance between voice, material and accompaniment. Until now, that is. Producer-guitarist Jay Graydon has created the perfect vehicle for the imaginative flights of Jarreau's vocal phrasings (his control on Chick Corea's "Spain" is remarkable). This time, indeed. Al Jarreau has been too long in the wings.

KW

John Cooper Clarke, Snap, Crackle (&) Bop (Epic)

A droll nasal satirist from Manchester, Clarke has lasted and remained pertinent since his slight emergence in 1978 probably because he manages to combine biting perceptive humour within the framework of direct competent music.

His I've-seen-it-all dry North-of-England pub delivery stands him in good stead through another album of irony, imagery (try the epic "Beasley Street") and overstatement ("Evidently Chickentown").

GK

Rory Gallagher, Deuce, Tattoo (Chrysalis)

In the wake of Rory Gallagher's tour we have re-issues of two of his most enduring early albums, *Deuce* from 1971 and *Tattoo* from 1973. *Deuce* features the trio line-up Gallagher has reverted to, while *Tattoo* has the addition of keyboards by Lou Martin. Hammond Gamble used to be partial to the songs on *Tattoo*, and the albums probably represent the best of Gallagher's earlier studio recordings, although choosing between one Gallagher album and another can be a task.

KW

Tommy Tutone, Tommy Tutone (CBS)

New York band Tommy Tutone must have sore necks from looking over their shoulders at the likes of Parker, Seger, Springsteen and to a lesser extent the Cars.

The songs contain hallmarks of the above thanks mainly to the authentic vocal delivery of Tommy Heath and Jim Keller's economical guitar style which commits the songs to the borrowed but safe fringes of streetwise pop.

This is an enjoyable debut with songs such as "Rachel" and "Sounds of a Summer Night" suggesting that if they are around long enough then their best is yet to come.

GK

Mike Auldridge, Blues and Blue Grass (Takomallage)

This mainly instrumental album demonstrates the art of dobro playing, and in Auldridge's hands it is an art. The dobro has been largely superseded by the pedal steel guitar, but few pedal players can match the emotional range of Auldridge's steeling. The album was recorded in 1974, so one is able to enjoy once again the electric slide guitar of the late Lowell George who sits in on a tour-de-force called "Everybody Slides". Other noteworthy contributions come from multi-instrumentalist David Bromberg and the ace country fiddler Vassar Clements.

KW

Herbie Hancock, Monster (CBS)

Most disco music is a shame, but jazz musicians trying to play disco is a downright tragedy. I thought Herbie Hancock would have better things to do with his time. His recent live acoustic piano album with Chic Corea was a joy, and in his younger days he laid down some superlative tracks on Blue Note.

Monster has a credit list a mile long, including His Holiness Devadip Carlos Santana, Alphonse Mouzon, Wah Wah Watson and Ray Parker Jr. Even his lineup can't relieve the tedium, as cymbals hiss and everybody makes a lethargic effort to get *fonky* and *paarty*. Disco is declining, and the sooner Hancock learns this the better. Graham Wilson, the guy who draws macabre cartoons in *Playboy*, makes the most valid contribution with the cover.

DC

Chrome, Red Exposure (WEA)

London's Beggar's Banquet label has already foisted Gary Numan and Duffo on an unsuspecting public and with those two I thought the pits had been reached.

But no, because now we have Chrome, a duo, Helios Creed and Damon Edge, of pretentious learnings who are full of their own importance and the belief that their garrish tasteless muted nightmares are extending the frontiers of rock'n'roll.

Indecent exposure.

GK