



Donna Summer *Back For The Future*

Like no one else, she made you feel like dancing. Armed with a string of hits, Donna Summer epitomised the simultaneous kitsch and glamour of the disco era. Time and again, Summer outshone the stunning Marilyn McCoo on *Solid Gold Hits*, and was always first choice for inclusion on the best disco compilations.

During the mid to late 70s, Summer hogged the charts worldwide. She climaxed all over 'Love To Love You Baby', raced her way through the hedonistic 'Bad Girls', and neglected a cake left in the rain, to score a number one single with 'MacArthur Park'.

But when the Pistols arrived in America, in 1978, disco music took a blow to the groin and only the strong survived. Summer triumphed again with 'On The Radio', the Grammy Award winning 'Last Dance', and 1983's 'She Works Hard For The Money'.

Despite working continuously in America and Europe, the years since then have been largely barren for Summer. Only a couple of ill-conceived projects, including a track on the autobiographical video of Pope John Paul II, have brought her back to the strobe light. But with the recent (and still current) worldwide fascination with the 70s and 80s, it was inevitable that Summer would come around again. She

doesn't quite say it, but you figure she's glad of this taste for nostalgia.

"These kids who are into disco now were babies when the disco era was happening, and their parents were playing the music or it was on the radio. In their psyche they remember it, and I think the kids that were too young to go out dancing had a sense that things were going on around them, and they were missing out on it. So now they're saying: 'I wanna go do this.'"

"In the 70s, when the music was new to everyone, it was a very exciting time. In one sense it was a very amazing time to be a part of, but life goes on and you learn. I think in a strange way, through all of the things that have gone on in my life in the last few years, I think I have far more to give as a performer."

Summer's US record company has just released *Endless Summer*, a greatest hits compilation featuring two new tracks, 'Melody Of Love' (written with C&C Music Factory), and 'Any Way At All', a tune recorded in Nashville, Tennessee. Like a rock musician recording an album of jazz standards, a disco artist recording in the home of country music appears the last bastion of a scoundrel, but Summer insists it's the place she prefers to hang her hat.

"I love Nashville. It's a very refreshing place to be. In fact, I'm going to live and record there.

In terms of my music, songwriting is one very important aspect of my creative life, and there is no place like Nashville in the United States. It's proved a writer's heaven with this new record."

Summer plays the sly dog when it comes to details of her forthcoming solo project. As yet it's untitled, and she'll say little else on the matter.

"At the moment I'm trying to catch the feeling and presence that music had in the 70s. When you went to see Gloria Gaynor or Thelma Houston, there was a real command that they had. People have changed that approach now, and I'm trying to get that feel back into music with my new record."

One thing's for sure, she won't be recording with C&C Music Factory again. One half of the duo, David Coles, died of an AIDS related illness last month. Almost 10 years ago, the born-again Summer was rumoured to have said AIDS was God's punishment on homosexuals. These allegations were never proven, and Summer fervently denied the charge. Nonetheless, she lost the gay following that came with being a disco queen. Ain't it funny how things work out?

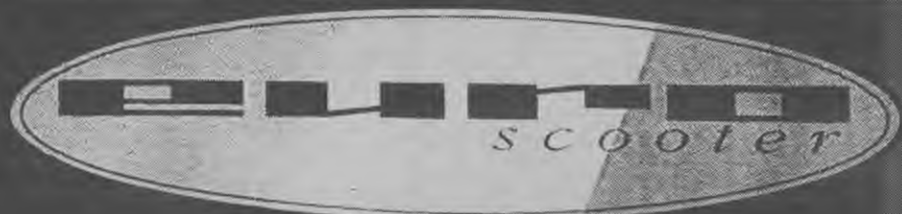
"There's a lot of gay kids in the audience now. I have a pretty good relationship with

everybody. I'm not feeling anything strange. I think people finally got on top of all those awful rumours that somebody started, and I think they finally realised that they just weren't real. But that was 10 years ago, so I think we can stop talking about it at this point. It's just very sad that David Coles is not here. I really wanted to work with him again on this new record."

So, on the comeback trail she is. Now into her fourth decade of performing, Summer says she won't do anything different this time round, and that includes never providing the freak-show on her own dancefloor.

"Well I'm dyslexic, so I have a very hard time with co-ordination, and that's one of the reasons why I decided it was not in my best interests to dance on stage. It's a shame because I think there's a certain element of joyfulness dancing brings to you. In a tribal sense, if you look at some of the ethnic groups of the past, music and dance was generally a form of enjoyment and was something that was done with great relish. Dance music should be fun. It should be something that makes you want to shake loose from whatever's keeping you down, and get up and boogie."

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