Record Review

Bob Woodhead

8/5/86

Reading David Jensen's pop column in a recent Sunday newspaper I was annoyed with his criticism on the influx of disco-remixes in the charts. He said they are keeping promising new soul artists out of the best-sellers.

My view is that he and his colleagues on radio could rectify this by playing more soul and dance music instead of dated rock sounds. Mike Read, who rarely featured soul records, has thankfully been replaced on Radio One's Breakfast Show by Mike Smith, who will hopefully feature a more balanced format.

As reported a few weeks ago, the most entertaining show on the airwaves at present is Tony Blackburn's soul programme on B.B.C. Radio London (206 Medium Wave) from 9 until noon on weekdays. Robbie Vincent's Soul/Funk special on Stereo Radio One, 9 until 11 on Sunday evenings, is the best week-end listening.

Fast and furious

On TV, "Solid Gold" (Channel 4, Fridays at 6.30) is proving to be good entertainment, but "The Chart Show" (at 5.30) is far too fast and furious. Likewise "Revid" (at 6.15) needs to be longer. These two programmes can only be described as irritating, but Rock fans will be pleased with the return of "Whistle Test" (B.B.C. 2, Tuesdays). This is well presented and informative.

Before this column becomes a media-review, let's get down to business with this week's best new single, Philip Bailey's "State Of The Heart" (on C.B.S.). He sings this dance number in his natural vocal range, just giving it a hint of those familiar falsetto tones at the end. Also new on the singles' racks is Imagination's "Sunshine" — possibly the fastest sound they have ever recorded — and not one of their best.

Lennonesque

I am disappointed that ELO have released "So Serious" on a 45; the best choice from their recent "Balance Of Power" album would have been "Sorrow About To Fall." On the subject of ELO, there is a compilation L.P. in the shops entitled "First Movement" featuring the best tracks they recorded during the years with Harvest Records, 1971-73.

Apart from their three hit singles in that period, the record features the Lennonesque "Queen Of The Hours" and "First Movement" itself which resembles Mason Williams's "Classical Gas" too closely for comfort. "Mr. Radio" offers hints of what was to come, with its corny, staccato feel. It could be fairly described as the "grandfather" of songs like "Horace Wimp." My overall opinion is that these tracks all sound too dated for enjoyable listening.

Recently the charts have had a "royal" flavour to them with hits by Queen, Princess and Prince. All we need now is a new release from King!

L.P. CHART

1 Street Life (Bryan Ferry and Roxy Music).
2 Hits 4 (Various).
3 Whitney Houston.
4 Brothers In Arms (Dire Straits).
5 Hunting High And Low (A-Ha).
6 Once Upon A Time (Simple Minds).
7 The Greatest Hits — Shalamar.
8 Heart To Heart (Various).
9 The Man And His Music (Sam Cooke).
10 Rendez-Vous (Jean-Michel Jarre).

Record Review

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15/5/86

New from Polydor Records is the album "Moonlight Shadows" by the Shadows. It is their first release for two years and features their unique interpretations of sixteen contemporary hit songs, including "Moonlight Shadow" itself. This was a big hit for Mike Oldfield in 1983 and is already available as a Shadows' single.

I am always wary of records featuring cover-versions so was not particularly looking forward to hearing these tracks. However their handling of tunes like "Every Breath You Take," "Hello" and "Walk of Life" is admirable to say the least. Hank, Bruce and Brian also treat us to a skilful rendition of Jennifer Rush's "The Power Of Love", not to mention "Memory" and "I Know Him So Well" which were made famous by a lady with local connections, Elaine Paige.

The Shadows are currently involved in a 25-date national tour, but I often wonder why such gifted musicians do not spend more time writing their own material as they did so successfully in those never to be forgotten days before the Beatle invasion.

Also new on the album front is "Sister Sledge — The Greatest Hits" (on Atlantic). Their "Lost In Music" recorded in 1979 is my favourite dance record of all time, but unfortunately the version on this collection is the 1984 remix.

Nile Rodgers placed his own superb guitar-playing much lower down in this mix which is a great pity. I am also disappointed that there are no tracks taken from 1980s "Love Somebody Today" (also produced by Chic), which was their best LP to date. Instead we have to endure the second-rate "Dancing On The Jagged Edge" and "When The Boys Meet The Girls."

Also featured is the ultra-bland "Frankie" . . . although they could hardly omit it, being a former No. 1. Nevertheless, the album does stand up as a fair introduction to those four sisters for those of you not already in possession of a Sledge album.

At the time of writing, the "Brothers In Arms" album by Dire Straits is about to register its two millionth sale in this country, and is on its way to overtaking Michael Jackson's "Thriller" as the best seller ever. Having spent 14 weeks at No. 1 it has already become the longest chart topper of the Eighties.

Recently, I suggested to MCA that they should release Bobby Womack's romantic "Gypsy Woman" as a single, and it looks as though other people have done the same because it is now available on a 45. This is one of the smoothest soul sounds of the year and has to be the best song he has ever recorded.

LP CHART

1. Street Life (Bryan Ferry And Roxy Music)
2. Love Zone (Billy Ocean)
3. Brothers In Arms (Dire Straits)
4. Whitney Houston
5. The Earth Wind And Fire Collection
6. World Machine (Level 42)
7. Hits 4 (Various)
8. Hunting High And Low (A-Ha)
9. The Man And His Music (Sam Cooke)
10. Comic Relief Utterly Utterly Live