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Record Review

Five of the original nine members of Earth Wind and Fire have reunited and recorded their first album together since 1983, entitled "Touch The World".

The LP has been mostly produced by main vocalist Maurice White (in the centre of the photograph) with help from falsetto singer Philip Bailey (second left) on some tracks. The writing credits are more varied than on previous records but White and Bailey were involved on some tracks.

The title song is a great gospel number featuring the Edwin Hawkins Singers (famous for "Oh Happy Day" in 1969). It has strong lyrics about world poverty and the social problems associated with it.

Regular readers of this column will know that I rate Phil Bailey as the best black, falsetto singer on the scene, and his two soulful ballads on this set, "You and I" and "Here Today and Gone Tomorrow" are as 'spine-tingling' as ever! Maurice White also takes the lead on a soothing, slow song called "Every Now annd Then".

The uptempo cuts show that the quintet has moved with the times with the sound they are creating although "Thinking of You", a finger-snapping track, harks back to their musical style of six years ago and it still works admirably well.

In contrast to Earth Wind and Fire's record George Harrison's "Cloud Nine" album is a disappointment, despite the all-star guest list of Eric Clapton on guitar, Elton John on piano and Ringo Starr on drums. Jeff Lynne of the Electric Light Orchestra co-produced the LP with George and joined him on guitars and keyboards.

The obvious highlight is the number two hit single "Got My Mind Set On You" but much of the music sounds tired and dated despite the competent musicianship. However, "When We Was Fab" is worth hearing for its tongue-in-cheek look back to Mr. Harrison's days with a certain Liverpudlian quartet, in a song where he has borrowed a few ideas from John Lennon's "I Am The Walrus"! Harrison wrote most of the tunes himself with help from Lynne on some.

Re-released yet again is the classic Christmas album produced by Phil Spector in 1963, featuring his artists of the era like the Crystals and the Ronettes. Chrysalis have bought the rights to the recordings which still sound fresh, innovative annd powerful today.

The highlights "Sleigh Ride", "Winter Wonderland" and "White Christmas" are available on a 45 but it is a pity "Frosty the Snowman" could not be included.

One of the best new Christmas LPs this year is called "A Very Special Christmas". The contributors read like a "Who's Who" of rock music but the highlights for me are Madonna singing "Santa Baby" and Alison Moyet's interpretation of "The Coventry Carol".

Other impressive tracks include "Winter Wonderland" by the Eurythmics, "Do You Hear What I Hear?" by Whitney Houston and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" by the Pretenders.

There are also seasonal songs performed by Bruce Springsteen, Sting and U2 among others. Profits from the disc go to the Special Olympics Fund which provides money and facilities for people with mental retardation to develop skills in every type of sport.

LP CHART

1. Now 10 (Various)
2. Hits 7 (Various)
3. Whenever You Need Somebody (Rick Astley)
4. All The Best (Paul McCartney)
5. Bridge Of Spies (T'Pau)
6. Bad (Michael Jackson)
7. The Singles (Pretenders)
8. Best of UB40
9. Tango In The Night (Fleetwood Mac)
10. Faith (George Michael)

Bob Woodhead

Earth, Wind and Fire