Record Review

by Bob Woodhead

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To mark the sad demise of one of the most consistent hit-makers of the last 16 years EMI have released "The Very Best Of Hot Chocolate." They were the only group to have a hit single every year from 1970 to 1984 inclusive.

Sixteen of these chart hits have been put together on this terrific album, providing the perfect testimonial to one of the best British pop bands. The record traces their chart career from the 1971 hit "You Could Have Been A Lady" through to their final chart outing "I Gave You My Heart" in 1984.

Also included is the Ben Leibrand remix of "You Sexy Thing" which has returned them to the charts this year. This track is now available on a limited-edition 12-inch single featuring a "Froggy" megamix of Hot Chocolate hits that is not to be missed!

The group's lead singer Errol Brown is one of the most instantly recognisable vocalists in pop and his distinctive compositions (a unique combination of danceable, romantic pop music) will remain favourites for many years to come. My two favourites on the LP are the summer smashes "It Started With A Kiss" (from 1982) and the unusual "No Doubt About It" (from 1980). Of the earlier numbers "Brother Louis" and "Emma" (both message-songs) really stand out.

Last Thursday the soul quartet Fat Larry's Band made an appearance at Thursday's Nightclub. They performed to backing tracks of their hits like the classy ballad "Zoom" (No.2 in October 1982) and "Looking For Love Tonight" (August 1979), and songs from their latest album "Nice". There was great applause when sax player Avenie Adams returned to the floor to play along with a Luther Vandross record.

Afterwards I spoke to their cheerful leader Fat Larry who is responsible for the writing and production as well as percussion, and he told me that the band is about to move from its present label Omni (part of the Pinnacle group) to either EMI or A and M. They have been together for ten years, having first charted in July 1977 with "Center City". Although they did not perform this Larry said they might re-record it in a more up-to-date style.

No effort

The only disappointing aspect of the night was the poor attendance. With so little "live" entertainment in this area it is a shame that people do not make the effort to appreciate performances like this. Forthcoming attractions at Thursdays are likely to include Rose Royce, Skipworth And Turner and a return appearance of Edwin Starr in April.

EMI continue their policy of issuing Beatles' singles in picture-bag and limited-edition picture-disc formats on the 20th anniversary of their original release-dates. The latest to receive this treatment is the double-A-sided "Strawberry Fields Forever" / "Penny Lane", which was the group's 14th single and the one that ended their all-time record run of 11 consecutive chart-toppers. It was held off the top by Engelbert Humperdink's million-selling "Release Me". John Lennon's "Strawberry Fields" is in my view one of the best Beatles songs. The final cut of this was achieved by editing two versions together, as explained by George Martin on "The Compleat Beatles" video which is, quite rightly, still selling in large quantities, more than four years after its release.

Other top singles this week are "Weak In The Presence Of Beauty" by Alison Moyet, "The Great Pretender" by Freddie Mercury and "Everything I Own" by Boy George.

L.P. CHART:

1. Phantom Of The Opera (Soundtrack).
2. Very Best Of Hot Chocolate.
3. Gracelands (Paul Simon).
4. August (Eric Clapton).
5. Silk And Steel (5 Star).
6. Picture Book (Simply Red).
7. Live Magic (Queen).
8. Different Light (Bangles).
9. Give Me The Reason (Luther Vandross).
10. Final Countdown (Europe).

● **Hot Chocolate, whose latest album provides the "perfect testimonial to one of the best British pop bands."**