

'Staring at the Sun' close to an eclipse

6/10/88

Eighteen months after the release of their classic "Running In The Family" album, Level 42 are back with a new line-up and a new long-player "Staring At The Sun."

Towards the end of last year, drummer Phil Gould left the band and was quickly followed by his guitarist brother Boon. Their replacements are drummer Gary Husband and guitarist Alan Murphy, formerly a member of Go West, but Boon has maintained strong links with the band, having

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written most of the lyrics on this new package.

"Staring At The Sun" took the quartet only four weeks to record and mix in the South of France, and it has to be said the end product is not as polished as "Running In The Family" or its predecessor "World Machine". On first hearing I was very disappointed but the songs are less commercial so they need several airings to become appealing.

There are certainly enough good tracks to keep the album in the charts for the remainder of the year, especially "Take A Look" which sounds like a future Top Ten hit single. The song is performed at a slow pace with an attractively rhythmic verse and wonderfully tuneful chorus.

I also enjoyed hearing "I Don't Know Why" which is more rock-orientated but still has their characteristic punchy bassline and catch melody, "Tracie" an exhilarating dance number with a tune that will have you hooked, and "Two Hearts Collide", a more straightforward pop number with the group's powerful instrumentation. The title track is a downbeat ballad that needs listening to a few times before it becomes enjoyable.

The album also featured the Top Twenty hit of last month, "Heaven In My Hands" which once again required a few plays before I took a liking to it, but it seems to have an enduring appeal which is always the trademark of a quality record. "Gresham Blues" which was the instrumental B-side of "Heaven In My Hands" has been chosen to be the bonus track on the Compact Disc version of the album.

Level 42 will be completing another world tour with British dates in the New Year, including an-

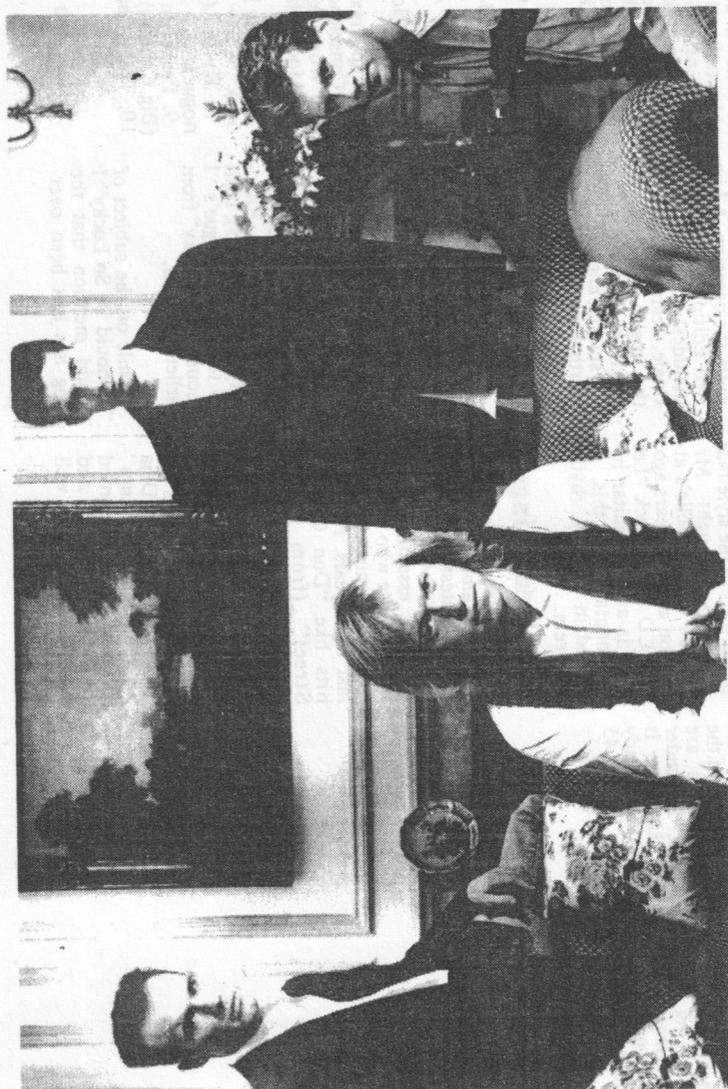
other concert at the Brighton Centre. They promise more of their "flying above stage" antics (in harnesses) as well as some new surprises.

Single of the week is Will Downing's silky smooth version of "Free", the 1977 chart-topper by Deniece Williams. This is one of the highlights from his outstanding debut album released in the spring, on which he creates a unique atmosphere adding a whole new dimension to the song. It is also a pleasure to see Erasure's "A Little Respect" performing well in the Singles Chart. This is also lifted from one of the year's finest long-players, namely "The Innocents."

LP CHART

1. New Jersey (Bon Jovi)
2. Staring At The Sun (Level 42)
3. Rap Trax (Various)
4. Conscience (Womack And Womack)
5. Hot City Nights (Various)
6. Buster (Original Soundtrack)
7. Kylie (Kylie Minogue)
8. Sunshine On Leith (Proclaimers)
9. Tracy Chapman
10. BAD (Michael Jackson)

Bob Woodhead



Level 42.