

Panama Red are too progressive for West Sussex

16/3/89

Record Review

The local country music band Panama Red have a new cassette available, which is entitled "Back In Town".

They are not, as many country music fans think, a new band. However, they are new to the Country circuit. The original group was formed in 1974

by two members of the current line-up, Phil Roberts and Derek Ray. They played country, rock 'n' roll, rhythm 'n' blues and the pop tunes of the time, but disbanded in 1975.

In recent years they reformed as the Fridge Brothers, whose two tapes I reviewed in this column, but for some reason they liked to be known as Panama Red when performing "live." Happily the confu-

sion is now over because their new cassette is available under that name too. With a new line-up Panama Red's first Country music club performance took place at the Stars And Bars in Littlehampton in April 1988, and by June the new formation had stabilized to Phil Roberts on guitar, Derek Ray on drums, Eddie Rolfe on guitar, Phil Turnbull on bass and Rob Smith on pedal steel.

As well as covering the more traditional styles of Hank Williams, Jim Reeves and Don Gibson, the band now cover a whole wealth of Country music, particularly from the early 1970s and even some of the current favourites from the likes of Dwight Yoakam.

Williams classic, but "Long Way To Nashville" is not so inspired. The closing "Nashville Cats" is a disappointing version of the John Sebastian hit that he recorded after disbanding the Lovin' Spoonful at the end of the 1960s. Having seen Sebastian perform the song in his rainbow-suit on stage in Hyde Park in 1970, I think it would be difficult for any other version to better his original.

The band are playing in London, Wiltshire and the Home Counties as well as more locally in Hampshire in the next few months. However, they are regarded as too progressive in West Sussex which is a sad reflection on country music in the local area.

LP CHART

- 1 A New Flame (Simply Red)
 - 2 Anything For You (Gloria Estefan)
 - 3 Ancient Heart (Tanita Tikaram)
 - 4 Don't Be Cruel (Bobby Brown)
 - 5 Stop (Sam Brown)
 - 6 Mystery Girl (Roy Orbison)
 - 7 The Raw And The Cooked (Fine Young Cannibals)
 - 8 True Love Ways (Buddy Holly)
 - 9 Wanted (Yazz)
 - 10 The Legendary Roy Orbison
- Bob Woodhead



Panama Red - alias the Fridge Brothers - Phil Roberts on guitar, Derek Ray on drums, Eddie Rolfe on guitar, Phil turnbull on bass drum and Rob Smith on pedal steel.