Simply Red

Simply Red win back their fans

The Manchester band Simply Red have released their third and best album entitled "A New Flame." Their first two efforts "Picture Book" from 1985 and "Men And Women" from 1987 both reached No.2 in the LP charts but "A New Flame" has placed them at No.1 for the first time, and it is enjoying its fourth week at the top this week.

On this latest LP Simply Red have returned to the white soul style that shot them to fame with the first album, and they have employed the production services of Stewart Levine who produced that record too. On "Men And Women" the group attempted to branch out into a variety of musical styles that they were less suited to, and this alienated some of their original fans, but judging by the success of the new LP they have won back their support.

Mick Hucknall composed most of the songs and two of them were co-written with Lamont Dozier, the famous Motown composer in the 1960s. They were recorded in Montserrat in the West Indies last summer. The best two tracks are those at the end of either side of the record. At the end of Side One "More" is a gentle-rolling soul number brilliantly vocalized by Mick Hucknall, while "Enough" which closes Side Two, is another soulful cut built upon a powerful, deep bass-rhythm that creates a superb atmopshere. The other highlights include "Turn It Up," a funky, guitar-based, dance track reminiscent of the Chic sound of ten years ago and featuring some fine brass passages, "She'll Have to Go" a bouncy, uptempo cut, and "If You Don't Know Me By Now" a credible cover-version of the Harold Melvin And The Bluenotes hit of 1973.

The album also features "It's Only Love" the popular Top Twenty hit ballad from February, and "A New Flame" itself, which is hotly tipped to be a future 45 release.

It is six years since Paul Weller formed the Style Council, and a greatest hits package is now in the shops, entitled "The Singular Adventures Of The Style Council." Looking down the list of hits, Weller did most of the songwriting with help from Mick Talbot on some of the numbers. Followers of the band will know what to expect from this collection, and will no doubt have their own favourites, but the tracks I would select for a special mention include the 1984 hits "You're The Best Thing" and "My Ever Changing Moods" with their catchy tunes, the 1987 hit "Wanted" that has another strong melodic refrain, and the infectious "Have You Ever Had It Blue" which was featured in the 1986 movie "Absolute Beginners." "The Lodgers" was one of the Council's lesser hits which I had almost forgotten, but it was a pleasure to be reminded of what a good song this was. Dee C. Lee's vocals are prominent on the tuneful chorus.

In my opinion "Long Hot Summer" was the Style Council's best record, with its great slow bass-line evoking memories of the hot summer of 1983, but the re-mixed version on this LP is not as good as the original.

LP CHART

1. A New Flame (Simply Red).
2. Anything For You (Gloria Estefan).
3. Singular Adventures Of The Style Council.
4. Stop (Sam Brown).
5. Ancient Heart (Tanita Tikaram).
6. Don't Be Cruel (Bobby Brown).
7. Greatest Hits Collection (Bananarama).
8. True Love Ways (Buddy Holly).
9. The Raw And The Cooked (Fine Young Cannibals).
10. Hysteria (Def Leppard).

Bob Woodhead