

4/5/89

Holly set for promising solo vocal career

When reviewing Frankie Goes To Hollywood's disappointing second album in November 1986 I gave the opinion that a promising solo career awaited Holly Johnson should he decide to move in that direction.

I based that view on Mr. Johnson's vocal strength and his songwriting ability, and those elements have come to fruition on his first solo album called simply "Blast."

He has composed all ten songs and his vocal technique is strong throughout.

He has also chosen to work with a good team of producers - Andy Richards, Steve Lovell, Stephen Hague and primarily Dan Hartman who is famous for his disco sounds of ten years ago including "Instant Replay."

"Blast" includes Holly's first two solo hit singles "Love Train" and "Americanos" both of which made the Top Five, and Frankie-styled epics like "S.U.C.C.E.S.S." and "Atomic City" on which he sings about "Green" issues including the destruction of the ozone-layer.

The emphasis is very much on Hi-NRG dance rhythms, but variety comes with the melodic "Love Will Come", the Prince-inspired "Perfume" which is a great piece of lyrical-funk, and

"Feel Good" which is a fine slow song performed in a similar vein to "The Power of Love".

I will not be surprised to see "Blast" living up to its name by smashing straight in at No. 1 on next week's LP chart.

The exciting new dance band Soul II Soul have released their debut album entitled "Club Classics Volume One".

This interesting work features a fusion of live instruments (courtesy of the Reggae Philharmonic Orchestra), and the latest technology, creating a unique sound.

Smooth

The front-man in the outfit is Jazzie B whose career began deejaying on the north London blues circuit in the 1970s.

He moved into dance music in London's West

End at the Africa Centre in the 1980s, but on this LP the tunes draw from reggae, soul, hip-hop and house music scenes, mixing up dance styles with effect and creating the Soul II Soul sound.

The best track is the recent Top Five hit single "Keep On Movin" - a smooth, soul ballad featuring the voice of Caron Wheeler.

The pick of the faster tunes is "Happiness" which has a great rhythm and an "atmospheric" production.

The vocals on this number are delivered by Do'reen who also contributes with some amazing wailing, vibrato vocals on "Feel Free". The trembling voice really suits this Afro-blues fusion. The most striking element throughout this collection is the strong African influence.

Newcomers When In Rome have also released their self-titled debut album which is available on the 10 Record label.

Great

They have already made an impression this year with their 45 "The Promise" which is performed very much in the style of Ultravox and is the best track on the LP.

Other numbers to listen out for include "Heaven Knows" a good mid-tempo pop tune dominated by a powerful drumbeat, "Wide Wide Sea" with strong vocals and "Everything", a mid-paced affair with fine vocal-harmonies.

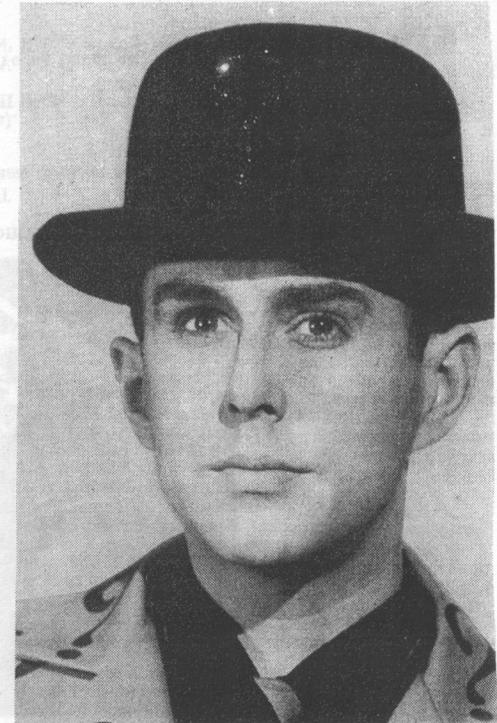
However the LP sounds too similar to many other late 1980s offerings and is perhaps lacking the necessary adventure to make When In Rome stand out.

Single of the week is another great pop offering from Kylie Minogue, "Hand On Your Heart." In Saturday's Eurovision Song Contest the U.K. is represented by its strongest song for many years, "Why Do I Always Get It Wrong?" by Live Report.

LP CHART

- 1 A New Flame (Simply Red)
- 2 Anything For You (Gloria Estefan)
- 3 When The World Knows Your Name (Deacon Blue)
- 4 The Raw And The Cooked (Fine Young Cannibals)
- 5 Club Classics, Vol One (Soul II Soul)
- 6 Like A Prayer (Madonna)
- 7 Everything (Bangles)
- 8 Doolittle (Pixies)
- 9 Appetite For Destruction (Guns 'n' Roses)
- 10 Kick (INXS)

Bob Woodhead.



Holly Johnson.