

Record review

8/6/89

The three and a half year wait for a new studio-recorded album from Simple Minds is over.

The Scottish trio are back with their finest effort to date in the shape of "Street Fighting Years". Jim Kerr (vocals), Charlie Burchill (guitars) and Mick MacNeil (keyboards) composed most of the songs themselves and recorded them in their native Scotland between March 1988 and March 1989 with the "maestro" producers Trevor Horn and Stephen Lipson.

The title track provides an atmospheric opening, being an anthemic, mega-production rock number, leading into "Soul Crying Out" which has a good rhythm and vocals although these are somewhat swamped by the production. "Wall Of Love" is a superb rock tune with

quiet verse building into a singalong, crescendo chorus, and this is followed by the most recent Top Ten hit single "This Is Your Land". The most striking features of "Take A Step Back" are the great guitar-passages. Opening the second side "Kick It In" is an appealing rock number that is likely to perform well in the singles charts if it is chosen to be released on the smaller format. This leads into three masterful ballads "Let It All Come Down", "Mandela Day" and "Bel-fast Child".

Dull

The latter two appeared on "The Ballad Of The Streets" EP which shot to Number One in February but for some reason the stronger song "Mandela Day" was rarely heard on radio, and was not featured on TV promotion. It was originally written especially for Simple Minds performance at the 1988 Nelson

Mandela 70th birthday concert last June, and I rate it as their best song ever, even bettering "Don't You Forget About Me" and "Promised You A Miracle". Rather a dull attempt at Peter Gabriel's "Biko" closes the album but this should not detract from what is a very fine album indeed. I have always thought more highly of Simple Minds than U2 as they seem to have more variety in their repertoire.

Smash hit

I can envisage "Street Fighting Years" fighting it out with Jason Donovan, Madonna, Queen and Kylie Minogue (if she issues a new LP) to become the best selling album of 1989, although none of these would be my own personal choice for best album.

As predicted in this column Jason Donovan's version of "Sealed With A Kiss" has smashed straight into the charts at Number One to give Stock-Aitken and Waterman three successive chart-toppers as producers - the first time this has happened for 25 years.

Mitch Miller achieved the hat trick twice in the 1950s, and Norrie Paramor twice in the early 1960s, but they were overtaken by George Martin who produced a hat trick of Number Ones on three occasions - the last being in 1964.

Four?

It will be interesting to see whether Stock-Aitken and Waterman can now break new ground by producing four consecutive chart-toppers!

This year has been a poor year for soul records - up until now - but the warm summer weather always seems to bring with it some great sounds in this category.

The best of these is Donna Allen's version of the Maze classic "Joy And Pain", closely followed by Joyce Sims's brand new release "Looking For A Love".

Bob Woodhead

Record review

15/6/89

Living legends play to packed houses

The legendary hit duo the Everly Brothers entertained a packed audience at the Portsmouth Guildhall with two shows last week.

The demand for tickets was so great that they added a second show on the same night. I was lucky enough to witness the first of the two performances, knowing that 52-year-old Don Everly and his 50-year-old brother Phil from Kentucky are just about the only remaining original rock'n'roll stars from the late 1950s to still be touring and recording. One sensed that it was a great privilege to see a performance like this in our area, and to witness such an historic and vital slice of our pop culture.

The Everlys were on stage for an hour, backed by one of the finest bands of musicians you could hope to see, namely Larrie London on drums, Mitch Humphries on keyboards, Phil Cranham on bass, Buddy Emmons on steel-guitar, and, really standing out, Albert Lee on guitar. Don and Phil were playing their usual, matching acoustic-guitars as well as singing.

In the early part of the show Don's voice sounded fragile and strained at times, but Phil carried him through and it did not detract from their unique country harmonies fronting the rock and ballad beat to such songs as "Walk Right Back," "Claudette", "Crying In

The Rain," "All I Have To Do Is Dream," "Wake Up Little Susie," "Cathy's Clown" and their favourite ballad that always closes the show - "Let It Be Me."

They also included some newer songs like "Brown Eyes" and a fabulous interpretation of Mark Knopfler's "Why Worry," not forgetting their encore which was "On The Wings Of A Nightingale."

Albert Lee, Buddy Emmons and the band showed off their musical pedigree when Don and Phil took a five minute break in the middle of the show.

The stage lighting also deserves a mention, particularly the amazing way that the brothers were made to look like black and white "cardboard cut-outs" in front of the "technicolour" band! All in all it was a great show.

Fantastic

The Everlys have just released their fourth album together since their momentous reunion in 1983 after ten years apart. It is available on the mercury label and is entitled "Some Hearts."

They produced the ten tracks themselves and were also heavily involved in the writing. The best of these new songs is "Be My Love Again" which has a slow verse building into a strong chorus with good vocal-harmonies.

Also worth listening out for are the tracks "Angel Of Darkness" a really good

rock number with strong instrumentation, "Brown Eyes" a tender ballad showing off those harmonies again, "Three Bands Of Steel" an interesting Country number, and the acoustic, folkly title-track. Another track to note is "Don't Worry Baby" written by Beach Boy Brian Wilson who they met on a TV show in Hawaii.

If you are looking for Everly Brothers' back-catalogue on Compact Disc, then look no further than "The Reunion Concert - Highlights" featuring a digital recording (digitally mixed and mastered) of that fantastic Albert Hall concert in 1983 which was their first performance together for ten years, in which they really excelled themselves. The disc features hit after hit from "Love Is Strange" to "Temptation," and it runs for 68 minutes.

LP CHART

- 1(2) Ten Good Reasons (Jason Donovan)
- 2(1) The Miracle (Queen)
- 3(-) The Other Side Of The Mirror (Stevie Nicks)
- 4(4) When The World Knows Your Name (Deacon Blue)
- 5(6) Don't Be Cruel (Bobby Brown)
- 6(5) Street Fighting Years (Simple Minds)
- 7(7) Past Present (Clanad)
- 8(3) Tin Machine
- 9(10) Club Classics, Vol One (Soul II Soul)
- 10(16) Appetite For Destruction (Guns 'n' Roses)

Bob Woodhead