New sound for Numan

Gary Numan and Shakatak keyboard maestro Bill Sharpe have teamed up to record an album together, and the combination works well on the collection entitled "Automatic".

The album is very much what you would expect to hear from Gary Numan, but different to what you would expect from Bill Sharpe.

His role has primarily been on keyboards and production, but his keyboard style is different from the familiar "tinkly" style associated with Shakatak.

The funky dance sound is where Sharpe has obviously altered Numan's electro-music, giving it an exciting new dimension.

The two highlights of the "Automatic" album are undoubtedly "Change Your Mind" which was their first hit single together in 1985, but standing the test of time, and "Breathe In Emotion".

This is a slower, soulful number on which Gary Numan sings in duet with Tessa Niles in front of a great bassline. This song has quite obviously been inspired by the work of Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, as has "Rip It Up" which could easily be mistaken for a Human League track. Tessa Niles's lovely backing-vocals are a strong feature on most of the songs.

Paul McCartney has recently issued his strongest solo L.P. for many years entitled "Flowers In The Dirt".

He co-wrote four of the tracks with Elvis Costello, but unlike most of the pop critics I only enjoyed "My Brave Face" among these numbers. This has of course already made an impression on the Singles Charts.

However, I found some of McCartney's solo compositions to be his most effective for years, particularly "Rough Ride" with its infectious rhythm and lively feel, and "Distractions" which is an acoustic ballad featuring some superb vocal harmonies by Hamish Stuart, the distinctive falsetto vocalist of the Average White Band, one of the most underrated outfits of the late-1970s.

I found Stuart's contributions to the album on guitars and vocal harmonies to be more telling than the ingredients provided by Elvis Costello.

Other tracks worthy of a mention are "We Got Married" using ideas from McCartney's early post-Beatles albums. "Figure Of Eight" with its strong rock-feel and rhythm borrowed from Marc Bolan's "Get It On", "How Many People" a clever venture into the field of "Lovers-Rock" reggae music, and "Motor Of Love" with its Beach Boy-type harmonies.

Incidentally, the Beatles last two number one hits "Get Back" and "Ballad Of John And Yoko" are available as 20th anniversary picture-discs.

These were their 16th and 17th chart-topping hits and they share the record for having the most number ones with Elvis Presley.

Single of the week is Sydney Youngblood's "If Only I Could" – a smooth, soulful sound that is taking the soulful sound which is taking the night-clubs by storm!

L.P. CHART

1 Cuts Both Ways (Gloria Estefan)
2 Trash (Alice Cooper)
3 Ten Good Reasons (Jason Donovan)
4 A New Flame (Simply Red)
5 Big Bang! (Fuzzbox)
6 Batman – Soundtrack (Prince)
7 Choices (Blow Monkeys)
8 Raw Like Sushi (Neneh Cherry)
9 The 12 Commandments Of Dance (London Boys)
10 Velveteen (Transvision Vamp)

Bob Woodhead