Record review

15/3/90

The year of 1986 was undoubtedly the year of Madonna. It was certainly the best of her three years of total chart domination, and she became the quickest artist to notch up a dozen top five hits, ahead of the Beatles and Elvis Presley, doing so only 33 months after her January, 1984, debut with "Holiday".

In America Whitney Houston was queen of the charts becoming the first female to have three successive number one hits. She also made a big impression here, but even greater success awaited her the following year. The Jackson family again proved themselves as an endless source of talent with the emergence of Michael's young sister Janet responsible for a superb debut album "Control" packed with floor-filling dance tunes and shimmering ballads. She outshone the other members of her family in 1986. British talent was also emerging thick and fast on the soul scene at this time, with singers like Jaki Graham, the Cool Notes, Loose Ends and the family group from Romford – Five Star. I always found the latter's music rather banal and was disappointed that the more sophisticated styles of the Cool Notes and especially Loose Ends never received widespread acclaim.

Earth Wind and Fire who had created some of the finest jazz-funk music of the late 1970s and early 1980s, had more or less dismantled, but their falsetto singer Philip Bailey was making some excellent albums at this time – the best being "Inside Out" from this year – but again, he was not achieving the success he deserved. Soul music was leaning towards the Detroit "Rap" and New York "Hip Hop" sound more and more, and by 1987 the Chicago "House" sound was also predominant.

A new British duo, the Pet Shop Boys, described by one newspaper as "the thinking man's Wham" were having their first hit records. Ex-pop journalist Neil Tennent and architecture graduate Chris Lowe incorporated the Hip Hop sound into their discs like "West End Girls" and used new keyboard technology to full effect. They became one of the most important and successful influences on the British scene for the rest of the decade. Other newcomers who really stamped their mark on the charts included Simply Red, the Housemartins and the Communards who released the year's finest album that had a highly sophisticated, almost tongue-in-cheek, Eastern feel to it.

Controversial

The Manchester band, the Smiths, featuring controversial singer Morrissey and the brilliant guitarist Johnny Marr, were releasing some of the most original, inspired, and lyrically stimulating music at this time, including the great album "The Queen Is Dead", but sadly they split up the following year. George Michael and Andrew Ridgeley of Wham! parted company after four successful years, but there was more solo success awaiting George. Tina Turner issued her best album "Break Every Rule" and Peter Gabriel took video to its greatest heights with the promotional tape for his song "Sledgehammer" featuring some breathtaking special effects.

Consistent

There was still a place in the charts for heavy metal – the most popular exponents of this art in 1986 being Bon Jovi, but the most consistent groups of the decade in this field were Iron Maiden and Status Quo displaying the more acceptable face of heavy rock. Other noteworthy events were the success of the all-girl group the Bangles and Paul Simon's success with "Gracelands". Radio Victory closed on June 28, to be replaced by Ocean Sound on October 12. These were positions 51 to 60 in the top 80 of the 80s (all number one hits unless stated):

51. Every Loser Wins (Nick Berry) 1986.
52. Shaddup You Face (Joe Dolce) 1981.
53. Like A Virgin (Madonna) No. 3 in 1984/85.
54. I Want To Wake Up With You (Boris Gardiner) 1986.
55. Reet Petite (Jackie Wilson) 1986/87.
56. D.I.S.C.O. (Ottawan) No. 2 in 1980.
57. Frankie (Sister Sledge) 1985.
58. I Want To Know What Love Is (Foreigner) 1985.
59. The Tide Is High (Blondie) 1980.
60. Let's Dance (David Bowie) 1983.

Bob Woodhead.