Record review

25/1/90

Looking back upon the 1980s I could hardly begin with anyone but Madonna – the Artist of the Decade – who enjoyed six No.1 singles, placing her behind the Beatles, Elvis, Cliff, Abba and the Stones in this category of achievement. Her closest rival is George Michael who featured on eight No.1 hits, but these have included records with Wham, Band Aid and Aretha Franklin. Madonna is well ahead of George in the category of Top 5 hits. Her total of 20 places her behind only Elvis, Cliff and the Beatles.

Michael Jackson outsold Madonna in the album charts with just two huge selling LPs, but this success never quite translated to the singles charts. Jackson's "Thriller" (1982) is the best selling album ever, but in this country it was outsold by "Brothers In Arms" by Dire Straits (1985) which became the first album to sell more than three million in Britain. It was helped by the advent of CD, patented in 1982 and available to the public in 1983. Vinyl now accounts for only 18 per cent. of album sales, CDs for about 30 per cent. and cassettes more than 50 per cent.

In the mid-1980s promotional videos became more important than the song they were promoting, but thankfully there has been a reversal of this trend recently. The top selling single and the only 45 ever to sell more than three million records in Britain was Band Aid's 1984 charity record "Do They Know It's Christmas?" Little did we realise it at the time but the record sitting at No.7 in the first chart of the decade, in January 1980, gave a hint of what was to come – "Rapper's Delight" by the Sugarhill Gang was the first "Rap" record, with vocals consisting of black American street-talk. Years later many others followed suite!

Shankin' Stevens enjoyed the most hits in the 1980s. The Welsh, Elvis-lookalike specialized in rock 'n' roll remakes, and I was lucky enough to see him performing at Bishop Otter College here in Chichester in 1975 – five years before his first hit. He had 29 hit singles and was the only artist to have a Top 30 hit in every year of the decade.

There were no correct entries to the competition question I set on this subject, but Jane Haskins of Heron Close, Lavant, was very close, and she has won "The Greatest Hits Of The 80s" triple CD that sells for £19, featuring 50 Number One records, including one by Shakin' Stevens.

Jane's answer was Cliff Richard who had a Top 30 hit every year, but only if you count his 1986 guest-vocalist appearance on "Living Doll" the Comic Relief record by the Young Ones. Jane thought Band Aid's record best summed-up the 1980s because "it shows that in the 80s, more 'well off' Westerners are aware of the poverty in the Third World; more importantly they are prepared to do something to help" – a happy note to welcome in the 1990s. Congratulations Jane, and thank you to Telstar Records' Media Mailing company for donating the great prize. These were my favourite Tracks and Albums of the decade:

TRACKS

1. It's Over (Level 42) 1987.
2. Last Christmas (Wham!) 1984.
3. What Have I Done To Deserve This? (Pet Shop Boys and Dusty Springfield) 1987.
4. The Sleepwalkers (Level 42) 1987.
5. Gold (Spandau Ballet) 1983.
6. La Isla Bonita (Madonna) 1986/87.
7. A Love Supreme (Will Downing) 1988.
8. Heaven Knows I'm Miserable Now (Smiths) 1984.
9. Careless Whisper (George Michael) 1984.
10. Never Gonna Give You Up (Rick Astley) 1987.

ALBUMS

1. Running In The Family (Level 42) 1987.
2. Hearsey (Alexander O'Neal) 1987.
3. Tango In The Night (Fleetwood Mac) 1987.
4. Communards – 1986.
5. Will Downing – 1988.
6. The Real Chuckeeboo (Loose Ends) 1988.
7. No Parlez (Paul Young) 1983.
8. It's Better To Travel (Swing Out Sister) 1987.
9. World Machine (Level 42) 1985.

equal 10. Guilty (Barbra Streisand and Barry Gibb) 1980.

equal 10. Give Me The Night (George Benson) 1980.

Bob Woodhead

Bob Woodhead presents Jane Haskings, of Lavant with her triple CD prize.