

19/11/92

Having been a chart regular for five years now, it comes as no surprise to see that Belinda Carlisle has released a disc featuring all her hits, entitled "The Best Of Belinda, Volume 1".

This disc has already hit the top spot in the Album Charts and when you look down the list of tracks it is hardly surprising. From the haunting strings and key changes on "Summer Rain" to the mellow tones on "Vision Of You" there is something to please everyone.

Belinda has undoubtedly recorded some of the most essential pop in recent years and this disc comes as a timely reminder of that fact.

On the theme of essential pop, this year's top-selling album over Christmas is almost certain to be "Pop! - The First 20 Hits" by Erasure, who finally reached No. 1 in the Singles chart in the summer with their 20th attempt - the "Abbaesque" E.P. Released this week, "Pop!" features every single released by Vince Clarke and Andy Bell, from 1985 to present. For me their golden period was in

1988 with songs like "A Little Respect" and "Chains Of Love".

With the renewed popularity of the 1965 television series "Thunderbirds", EMI have issued a CD featuring the themes and incidental music by the late Barry Gray. Entitled "Thunderbirds Are Go" it also includes the four tracks recorded by Cliff Richard and The Shadows.

After many years in the doldrums Mike Oldfield has been back in favour with the record-buying public with his "Tubular Bells II". As usual, he composed all the music and played nearly all the instruments, and this time he called upon the expertise of Trevor Horn and Tom Newman to assist him on the production side.

On this disc Mike has reverted to many of the ideas he used on the original "Tubular Bells" released in 1973, but with the more advanced instrumentation that technology has provided in the intervening period.

There are few good melodies but the disc is disappointing, despite being a brave effort.

Bob Woodhead

14.1.93

For two years in succession Simply Red, led by the flame-haired, singer-songwriter Mick Hucknall (pictured) have outsold everyone in the album charts with "Stars". I am therefore pleased to report that the band have now released a video entitled "A Starry Night With Simply Red" which I thoroughly recommend.

It features 12 songs recorded in concert in Hamburg in 1992 and includes interviews with members of the group between each song. Six of the songs are from "Stars" and the remainder are taken from various stages of their career.

Following up their awesome debut of two years ago, the soul band Innocence have released an equally inspired second CD entitled "Build". Gee Morris's send a shiver down the spine on nearly every song, and in my opinion she is the finest female singer to emerge in the 1990s. The best numbers are probably the single releases "I'll Be There" and "One Love

In My Lifetime", but close behind are "Family Ties", which is a rhythmic, slow-groover, and the title-song, a soulful ballad.

EMI have issued a compilation of Gary Glitter's finest moments, entitled "Many Happy Returns".

This release comes at an appropriate time of year, as many of Gary's hits make ideal party records with their distinctive, stomping sound. His strongest songs are the earliest numbers from 1972 and 1973 like "Rock And Roll Part I".

On the subject of ideas for spending those Christmas Record Tokens, "The Greatest Dance Album In The World" on the Virgin label, is a disc that certainly lives up to its title. It features 20 of the very best dance-orientated records released between 1988 and 1992.

These were my favourite singles and albums of 1992:

Singles

1. Rhythm Is A Dancer (Snap!)
2. My Hand Over My Heart (Marc Almond).
3. Your Mirror (Sim-

ply Red).

4. For Your Babies (Simply Red).

5. Barcelona (Freddie Mercury and Montserrat Caballe).

6. I Found Heaven (Take That).

7. The Best Things In Life Are Free (Luther Vandross and Janet Jackson).

8. Take A Chance On Me (Erasure).

9. Someday, I'm Coming Back (Lisa Stansfield).

10. I'm Doin' Fine4 Now (Pasadenas).

Albums

1. Stars (Simply Red).

2. Barcelona (Freddie Mercury and Montserrat Caballe).

3. Build (Innocence).

4. The Greatest Dance Album In The World.

5. Tenement Symphony (Marc Almond).

6. The Best of James Bond - 30th Anniversary.

7. Kylie Greatest Hits.

8. Thunderbirds Are Go!

9. Yours Sincerely (Pasadenas).

10. Cher's Greatest Hits, 1965-1992.

Bob Woodhead

Record Review

4/2/93

The charts are now 40 years old and in 1992 there were only 12 number one singles - the lowest total since 1962.

Only in 1954, when there were 11, have we seen fewer chart-toppers. 1992 has also been the first year since 1971 that no record has spent just a single week at No.1.

These statistics hint at great quality in the singles released, but in my opinion the cause has been a lack of strong challengers to the most popular tunes.

There have been a few exceptions, particularly when the outstanding

Euro-dance hit "Rhythm Is A Dancer" by Snap! was top, holding for six weeks at No.1.

It is a great loss to the dance music scene that the charismatic Turbo B has now parted company with the band.

John Lee Hooker's "Boom Boom" made him the oldest artist (at 75) to enjoy a British hit, and The Wedding Present equalled Elvis's record of 12 hits in a year, although none of their hits reached the Top 5.

In America Boyz II Men enjoyed the longest spell at the top since Jo Stafford's "You Belong To Me" in 1952. Their song "End Of The Road"

was No.1 for 13 weeks.

The album charts were dominated by Simply Red's "Stars" which spent 47 consecutive weeks in the Top Ten - the longest spell since "Brothers In Arms" in 1985 and 86.

It also hit the top spot on five different occasions - a feat no other album has achieved since "Bridge Over Troubled Water" 20 years earlier. With British sales of three million "Stars" is now among the top five selling albums.

The most negative trend of 1992 has been the abundance of old songs (both originals and cover-versions) featuring in

both charts. For example, a recent Top Ten album listing included only one album consisting wholly of new songs (R.E.M.).

A collection of Abba songs enabled them to equal the Rolling Stones record of nine number one LPs. Only the Beatles (with 12) have had more chart-topping LPs. Abba are also second only to the Beatles in the category of total weeks at the top of the album charts.

These were the 12 chart-topping singles of 1992: 10th Jan: Goodnight Girl (Wet Wet Wet) 4 weeks; 16 Feb: Stay (Shakespears Sister) 8

weeks; 12 Apr: Deeply Dippy (Right Said Fred) 3 weeks; 3rd May: Please Don't Go (KWS) 5 weeks; 7th June: Abbaesque E.P. (Erasure) 5 weeks; 12th July: Ain't No Doubt (Jimmy Nail) 3 weeks; 2nd Aug: Rhythm Is A Dancer (Snap!) 6 weeks; 13th Sep: Ebenezer Goode (The Shamen) 4 weeks; 11th Oct: Sleeping Satellite (Tasmin Archer) 2 weeks; 25th Oct: End Of The Road (Boyz II Men) 3 weeks; 15th Nov: Would I Lie To You? (Charles and Eddie) 2 weeks; 29th Nov: I Will Always Love You (Whitney Houston).

Bob Woodhead