

7/10/93

Possibly the most catchy, infectious pop music of this year has been provided by the Dutch outfit of 2 Unlimited who record for Pete Waterman's PWL label.

Their "No Limits" CD has been on my shelf, waiting to be reviewed for some time, and it is far too good to be overlooked.

Nearly all 14 tracks are out and out, blatantly commercial dance numbers that will have you singing along however hard you try not to.

Apart from the chart-topping title song "No Limit" and the equally good follow-up single "Tribal Dance" there are four other potentially huge hits according to my ears. These are "Maximum Overdrive" which features synthesized Grand Prix motor-revving sounds, "Throw The Groove Down" which reminds me of Techno-tronic, "Mysterious" with its powerful, driving rhythm, and

"The Power Age" with similar qualities.

Ballads are few and far between, but the well sung "Shelter For A Rainy Day" illustrates that their music is certainly not "one-dimensional".

The year of 1993 will go down in pop history as the "Year Of Ragga" - a modern, danceable form of raggae. One of its leading exponents has been the band Inner Circle whose catchy "Sweat-A La La La La Long" is certainly one of my favourites.

ingles of the year despite its rather banal lyric. Their CD album "Bad To The Bone" has been around since 1992 but has only enjoyed chart success during the second-half of this year thanks to the aforementioned hit single. The CD is one of the most broadly appealing reggae collections I have heard for quite some time and there are some irresistible tunes most

notably "Hey Love", "Slow It Down" and "Party Party".

Inevitably there has been a flood of reggae compilation releases attempting to cash in on the boom for this music, many of them duplicating several tracks. For those seeking guidance on which compilation to choose I would recommend EMI's "Inna Dancehall Style" which adequately covers the initial reggae explosion of 1969-1971, featuring The Upsetters, Dave And Ansell Collins, and best of all Bob And Marcia's "Young, Gifted And Black."

It is a shame that Harry J's "Liquidator" could not have been fitted in.

The CD also covers the "second coming" of reggae during the 1979-1981 period, featuring the brilliant "Dancing On The Floor" by Third World, and includes a broad selection of Nineties reggae hits like SL2's

"On A Ragga Tip" which introduced the word "Ragga" to many people for the first time.

Billy Joel's latest album "River Of Dreams" is well worth a listen although the familiar hit title-track is by far the best song. However, "All About Soul" with its all round appeal and guest vocals from harmony-group Color Me Badd, is also a very good song.

Other striking numbers include the melodic "Blonde Over Blue" and the ballad "Goodnight My Angel". My main criticism of the disc is that Billy tends to "over-dramatise" his vocals and even the arrangements when this is not always necessary.

Thinking back, it has often been his more simplistic work that has been most appealing, like "Just The Way You Are" and "An Innocent Man" to name just two songs.

Bob Woodhead

Very lucky to get the No.1 spot

28/10/93

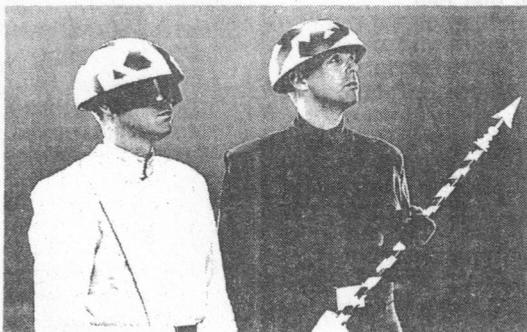
In my opinion Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe of the Pet Shop Boys (pictured) have come closer than anyone since the 1960s to matching the songwriting skills of Lennon and McCartney.

However, it is doubtful whether anyone will ever be as prolific as that pairing because it takes most major artists three years to create new albums nowadays, Neil and Chris included.

After having three No.2 albums and a pair at No.3 they have finally broken the jinx and hit the No.1 spot with their latest CD entitled "Very", and were unlucky not to have scored a fifth No.1 single when "Go West" just missed out. The promotional video which accompanied that song just has to be the best of the year.

"Very" is packed to the brim with catchy,

CD REVIEW



Pet Shop Boys unashamedly commercial pop songs - my favourite being "One In A Million" which has such a spine-tingling backing vocal refrain from Sylvia Mason James in a couple of places that I cannot understand why it was not used throughout the song.

Apart from this track the four opening numbers are the next best but there is not a bad song on the disc, which is truly a classic.

There is also an op-

portional "Limited Edition" second CD available with "Very", which is entitled "Relentless" and it features six brand new rave-orientated Dance numbers written and produced by the Boys - the best being "KDX 125" with its great, synthesized motorbike sounds.

The Manchester quintet Take That recently became the first artists since Slade in 1973 to have two consecutive Singles enter the

charts directly at No.1 on their first week.

Hot on the heels of this achievement comes the release of their second album entitled "Everything Changes" which includes the last three Singles and ten new songs.

The best of these is the title-song which is so catchy that it sounds like another Top Five hit at the very least.

Also standing out are the melodic "Wasting My Time", the danceable, atmospheric "Broken Your Heart" and the pick of the ballads - "Love Ain't Here Anymore".

The band have worked hard for their success and were close to breaking up in early 1992 when the excellent "Once You've Tasted Love" only skated along the bottom rungs of the chart-ladder.

In a month of great releases "Wait For Me" by Kenny Thomas also stands out. The CD includes his two recent

hits "Stay" and "Trippin' On Your Love" and plenty more good songs that showcase his golden, soulful voice, like "Destiny" - a great piece of tuneful funk, "Hold You Close" - a melodic, uptempo number, and the title-track, a love ballad featuring vocals by Tracy Ackerman.

Finally, the Bee Gees are another songwriting combination who have run Lennon and McCartney close over the years, and they are back with a worthy new album called "Size Isn't Everything".

Apart from the familiar "Paying The Price Of Love", the best songs are "Haunted House" a superb, slow melody with equally brilliant vocal harmonies, and "Blue Island", an acoustic, folksy number, reminiscent of their early style, and dedicated to the children of the former Yugoslavia.

Bob Woodhead