



POP MUSIC

BY ADAM BLOCK

It's 15 years after Woodstock, and the only stars of that historic festival with a record on the charts are the **Jefferson Starship** with *Nuclear Furniture* (RCA). But the group has gotten so terminally boring that the group's leader, **Paul Kantner**, finished the LP and bailed out. And **Stephen Stills** (formerly of CSNY) stumbled into the Hot 100 with his soporific single, "Stranger" (Atco). The heroes of Woodstock are all dead, defunkt, silent or turning out flimsy re-treads of their former glory. So, where will **Michael Jackson**, **Cyndi Lauper** and **Prince** be in 15 years?

They can look to the cautionary careers of the burnouts that preceded them, but also to the persistence which has lately paid off for **Tina Turner**.

She barely had a pop following in 1969 and is now at a career peak with her stunning LP, *Private Dancer* (Capitol), ranking as the first Top Ten LP of her career. Everything dovetailed for Turner as pop barriers to blacks and strong women shuddered and techno-pop and funk opened ears.

Ace funk-rap producer Arthur Baker says we are seeing "the acceptance by American artists and producers of the urban/black electronic sounds of 1982—which were knocked off by the British bands in 1983." Turner's success helps make that argument.

Turner, who headlined at the Gay Games, has long been a rock singer, but her current success is growing out of the dance clubs and leaning on segregated radio. These kinds of crossovers can bring people together. **M+M**, (formerly **Martha and the Muffins**), have a big hit with "White Stations/Black Stations," with lyrics that demand "break down the door . . . This is 1984." The message is righteous, and the album, *Mystery Walk* (RCA), is rambunctious and worthy. Another righteous and irresistible release comes from the **Specials** AKA: "Free Nelson Mandela" (Chrysalis) is an infectious calypso devoted to freeing the anti-apartheid leader who has been in jail since 1962. **Elvis Costello** and former members of the **English Beat** lend vocal support here on a song that you could be jailed for singing in South Africa.

Techno Bush (Arista) is another cross-cultural surprise by South African horn player **Hugh Masekela**, whose last hit was "Grazing in the Grass" back in 1968. Working with producer **Stewart Levine** (**Crusaders**, **Womack & Womack**) and a slew of African musicians, Masekela has put Afro-Caribbean rhythms on the dance floor with "Go Lose It Baby," a Top 5 hit in Billboard's dance music chart, but the whole LP makes for delightful audio home decor.

The feminists at Olivia Records, taking a page from gay disco labels, have issued a 12-inch by **Alicia** ("I Love the Nightlife") **Bridges** called "Under Cover of Darkness" b/w "Not Ready Yet" (for monogamy, by the way) on its subsidiary label (Second Wave). The notion of disco divas springing from a feminist label is delightful.

Meanwhile, **David Lasley**, a sweet soul singer falsetto white boy, delivers the follow-up to his winning debut LP, *Takin' Twenty Grand*. The new album, *Raindance*

(EMI-America), is—if anything—more openly gay (it's dedicated to his lover) than the first forthright LP. His vocal style is somewhere between **Sylvester** and **Laura Nyro**. Lasley could put a more gutsy claim on his "lead singing," and someone should take his tough gay rap ("Don't Smile At Me. I Already Know") over to Sugarhill for a remix with a truly funky bass line. Lasley is one of the only artists in pop who hasn't made a media event out of his sexuality while expressing it so freely in his lyrics. Check him out.

Cyndi Lauper released a 12-inch remix of her outrageous song "She Bop" (Portrait), which finds her masturbating to a *Blue Boy* magazine. Can't wait for the video. The timing is just right for the release of *Wonder Women Vol. 2* (Rhino Records) continuing their history of the girl-group sound; selections range from **The Angels'** classic "My Boyfriend's Back" to an early solo performance by **Ellie Greenwich**, recording as **The Butterflies**. Liner notes are first-rate. The truly perverse will swoon to hear about *The Best of Annette* (Rhino): 15 cuts, a killer cover, plus a bio and interview. Funicello fans, you know who you are.

Romeo Void have returned to producer **David Kahne**, (after their lackluster, *Benefactor* LP) for *Instincts* (CBS). The voice is **Deborrah Iyall**, but the arresting hard-edged assault she brought to "Never Say Never" has softened into intrigues more seductive and spooky. Check out the stand-out dance cuts "Out on My Own"—a Pretenders-tough cautionary tale—and "Just Too Easy," a **Marianne Faithfull**-worthy kiss-off with etched, accumulating accusations that implicate Iyall as she succumbs to them. On the B-side, find the LP's closing title cut, a hypnotic love ballad and, like the LP, a strong step forward for the band.

The Bangles also turned to producer **Kahne** for their new LP *All Over the Place* (CBS). They have suffered long enough the line that they sound like a cross between the **Go Go's** and the **Mamas and the Papas**, and on this record they come closer to claiming their own voice—casting Merseybeat country licks against soaring harmonies on "James" and the poignant "Going Down to Liverpool." The songwriting is still a bit green and studied, but their verve is winning.

The record that I'd like to see give Prince a push is *Ice Cream Castles* (Warner Bros.) by **The Time**. The band are buddies of Prince's, and lead singer **Morris Day** plays Prince's rival in *Purple Rain*,—where, curiously, they don't perform any of the material on this wickedly winning LP. Here, **The Time** move from blowzy, ingratiating pop to sparse funk, kicking up hilarity en route. Check out "Chili Sauce" with Day turning a devilish eye on the musical and macho pretensions of **James Brown**, **Rick James**, and protégé Prince: hilarious and deadly.

Maybe the survivors don't peak too soon. **Morris Day** may be wily enough to try to hang back—for a triumph 15 years down the road—but if he keeps making records this outrageously good, he'll be hard pressed to keep the success off. ●