

SUMMER TRACKS X 20

By Adam Block

Summer is definitely *not* a time when one should have to make unaided such crucial life choices as what records to buy. It's a season when the quest for the proper numbered sun-screen has been known to leave sturdy souls paralyzed with indecision for days at a time. With that in mind, we've auditioned the new audio recruits, hazing the legions down to the sturdiest specimens.

1. *Little Creatures*, **Talking Heads** (Sire). These art/rockers' version of American folklore comes as a soulful, unhinged return to their spare roots, laced with echoes of the safaris they've been on since.

2. *Around the World in a Day*, **Prince** (Warner Bros.). From salacious to psychedelic? This is a mischievously assured successor to that blockbuster, *Purple Rain*, and probably the only album Prince could make to clear himself some space amid the suffocating bad-ass splendor of last year's coronation. There are at least three stellar songs; "Temptation," in which he enacts his dilemma, is one of them. . . . Of course, "Am I straight? Am I gay?" it's *not*, but Larry Kramer would probably approve.

3. *Low Life*, **New Order** (Quest). After Joy Division discovered Booker T., the angst team learned how to dance. Arthur Baker taught them how to seize the floor. For Quincy's label they're ready to light it up. The appropriately titled last cut, "Face Up," successfully insists that they haven't lost their sense of irony or humor.

4. *Can't Stop the Love*, **Maze** (Capitol). While Stevie and Michael count their money, don't despair. Check this out. It's suave, sexy, funk—both elegant and outstepping: a find both wicked and sweet.

5. *Be Yourself Tonight*, **Eurythmics** (RCA). OK, it's *not* a soul-triumph, but whether joining forces with Aretha, on "Sisters," or with Elvis Costello, on "Adrian," or throwing a stax-volt torque through "Would I Lie to You," Lennox and Stewart celebrate the territory with an exhilarating pop craft that illuminates the title's dare.

6. *Fables of the Reconstruction*, **R.E.M.** (IRS). With British producer Joe Boyd (Nick Drake, Fairport Convention) on the knobs, the sound is crisper. The songs still sound like thundering, lush dreams.

7. *Empire Burlesque*, **Bob Dylan** (CBS). Dylan is still rock's *idiot savant*. The news is that after silly bombast, fundamentalist creeds and jingoistic jingles he has put out his most engaging, entertaining, even touching album since *Desire* back in 1975.

8. *Funny How Time Slips Away*, **Willie Nelson** and **Faron Young** (CBS). The obscenely prolific Nelson hitches up with the Hank Williams sound-alike who all but discovered him, for the most soulful country LP of the year. Celestial pedal steel by Buddy Emmons.

9. *Suzanne Vega*, **Suzanne Vega** (A&M). Is she the next Joni Mitchell or just a female Paul Simon? Well, she's gutsy and pristine, even sophomoric, when she's not hoisting the licks of a real original, which she does often enough to make this list. She gets winning support from a rugged little folk-punk combo. A comer.

10. *Elegant Machinery*, **Data** (Sire). Move over Thomas Dolby; meet studio-wizard George Kajanus. Like the Eurythmics, another boy-girl team, but here Abba-cum-McGarrigle harmonies humanize the impeccable technopop settings. This is the best band yet to emerge from Germany, with, of course, the unparalleled exception of Nina Hagen (but she often seems to deserve her own planet).

SUMMER DANCE SINGLES

1. "Freeway of Love," **Aretha Franklin** (Arista). Hallelujah! The bitch is back!
2. "19," **Paul Hardcastle** (Chrysalis). Squeaky-clean agit-funk.
3. "She Sells Sanctuary," **Cult** (Beggars Banquet/UK). What U2 should sound like.
4. "Busted Up on Love," **Fiona Franklin** (Virgin UK). A show-stopping import.
5. "Thinking About Your Love," **Skipworth and Turner** (4th & Broadway). Pump city.
6. "I Hear Talk," **Bucks Fizz** (RCA/UK). What Big Country should sound like.
7. "In My House," **Mary Jane Girls** (Motown). Rick James' comeback.
8. "Save Your Love for #1," **Renee & Angela** (Mercury). Duet heaven.
9. "Secrets," **OMD** (A&M). Ear-perking pop from their best LP to date.
10. "You Turn Me Round," **Dead or Alive** (Epic). A song that refuses to die.

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ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE

Talking Heads: a soulful, unhinged return to their spare roots and American folklore