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NEW YEAR TOURS MAHAVISHNU, BACHMAN TURNER, BLACK OAK

MOTT SPLIT CONFIRMED

THE LEGEND OF THE 12 DEADLY T-SHIRTS

Starring the Sensational Lucia and the Sensuous Roy Carr in a special no expenses spared (or paid) NME production: The Armpit Revue of 1974. Starts page 15

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SANTANA

Lookin' Back

OF ALL the really big American bands perhaps Santana remain the most enigmatic, the least publicised — yet, ironically, enduring the test of time and favour which affects even the most resilient of their peers.

An aura of mystique shrouds the group's initial formation, a cocoon of silence which gold albums and rapturously received performances did little to dispel.

Even Lillian Roxon's otherwise exhaustive *Rock Encyclopedia* omits all mention of them.

Much of the factual dearth was self-induced. Organist Gregg Rolie explained their opinion of the press: "Very trite... we've nothing much to say, we aren't personalities".

The discernable admixture of aggression and humility epitomised not only their music but Carlos Santana's own humble origins. The son of a Fariachi musician born in Autlan, Mexico, he began playing violin but progressed to the headier delights of club-trooper, forming a blues band that got to perform (sic) in every red light district around and then some.

The young guitarist paid his proverbial dues with enough panache to attract attention from the hottest gringos.

His predilection for the Afro-Cuban pulse and ethnic Latin rhythms naturally coincided with the tastes of Central America's award winning percussionists, Jose Chepito Areas and Mike Carraballo, both suitably steeped in the hypnotic excursions of ace Chicano Tito Puente and the broader swing that Ray Barretto's band peddle in the plush Down-town dinner clubs.

Carlos had been working his butt off with bassist Dave Brown and Rolie since 1962, so they were easily neat enough to assimilate the sizzling skins and struck a working relationship which spanned such delicacies as "Chim Chim Chere" in 6/8, uptempo of course.

The power and drive of their distinctive approach owed little debt to the dull ashes of flower power; they were genuinely different, and Columbia won the headlong rush to sign them in 1969.

An auspicious debut album ensued, showered with superlatives, deservedly. On reflection "Santana" is Gregg Rolie's finest hour, his dominant sullen chords and spiky solos putting the sophisticated seal on triple layers of superbly textured rhythm.

The band's talent was immediately proven in the product, Carlos adding telling lead at sparse intervals, prickly as a cactus then as the Mojave.

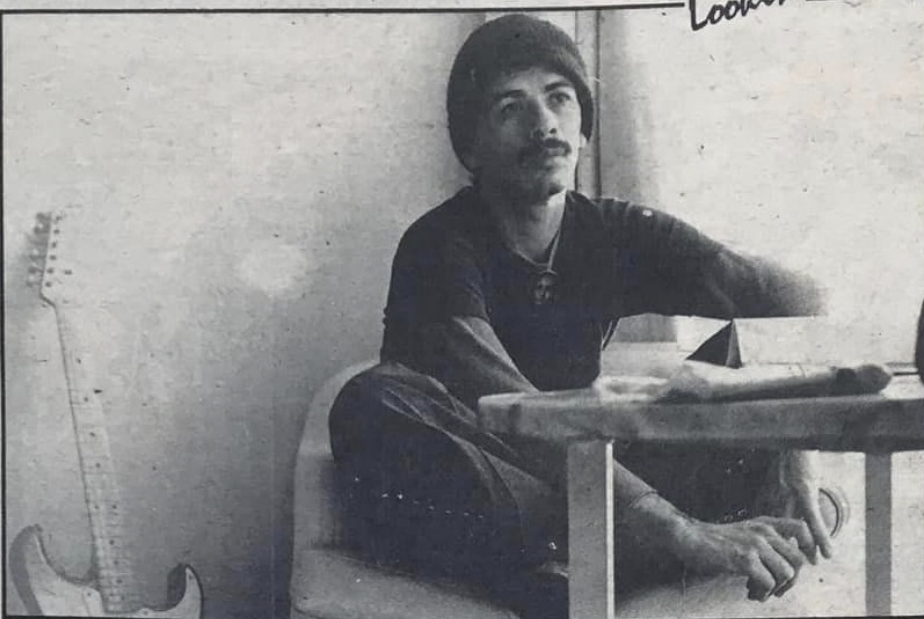
"Evil Ways" benefited particularly from their quintessential approach, crisp conga intrude rapidly becoming a swirling wall of funk.

Although they were a distinctly foreign element on the Frisco sound, hints of John Cipollina and Kaukonen permeated the acid-tinged "Waiting", otherwise chicos 'n peyote all the way; late-night dancing and dangerous limbo over hot coals on every track from "Savior" to "Treat".

The resources of the band were tremendous. Apart from the synchronised finger-tapping of Areas and Carraballo, Santana boasted the precocious talents of 16-year-old drummer Mike Shrieve, who had onlookers reaching for their Elvin Jones technical log books.

Lyricaly Santana were, and still are, naive — but no-one cared about that when there was so much else to enjoy. "Live" concerts were literally riotous: fans waging running battles with the police in Paris, destruction in New Jersey. Carlos described them as "Raw and basic love-ins" which he surveyed from the back of the stage, hunched like a midget Pamplonian, all moustache and shut eyes... 'guru fodder' writ loud.

Meanwhile he pulled off runs of startling treble pitch, clusters of high notes, piercing harmonics and sustain without a trace



Latin limbo dancing over hot coals

Like, it's dangerous if you slip — and at times they've done it — but since Santana pounded through the dull ashes of flower power they've created some supremely exciting moments, claims MAX BELL

of feedback — the new pleurum king.

At Woodstock Santana kept the frenzy quotient ticking over with "Soul Sacrifice" amongst others, but the new album "Abraxas" indicated a softer approach. Restatement without drastic change in direction which they didn't need.

Still no intellectualising from group members. Carlos explained tactics: "We are aware that, within the group, each one of us has an individual talent that the others don't possess, therefore we listen very closely to each other and try to produce good music together."

"All we want to do is play something everyone can understand."

BY NOW Santana were everyone's favourite band. No party could be complete without their records. They seemed intent on educating their audience too — Puente's "Oye Como Va" was included and they moved towards the boundaries of a softer jazz rock fusion. "Abraxas", despite Carlos' claims that it was "music to make love by", suffered a fraction from too many cooks and not enough broths. The sensual rhythms were more laid back.

Part of the reason for a diluted sound on "Singing Winds" or "Black Magic Woman" was Shrieve's unaccountable relegation to a back seat; when he emerged flailing fit Brown shone too, and "Mother's Daughter" with its Spencer Davis riffs showed them to scintillating advantage.

The third album marked the biggest switch in attack, though still within the confines of logical progression. In came teenage wizard Neal Schon on additional guitar, fresh from preliminary Dominos auditions with an impressed Clapton.

The result, rather than letting Carlos relax, forced him to get mauling, and the finished work is their nearest to a heavy metal

offering — very electric orientated.

The old format whereby a basic beginning meant stated motif followed by relevant members soloing frantically took on variations. "Toussaint L'Overture" dispelled any doubts that they could only do one thing well, a perfect conglomeration of the elements. Santana weren't gonna end up as background muzak on any Benidorm beach — No Sir. They beat alchemers out right to occupy the risky zone between culture rock, "Taboo" and neo-jazz "Guajira" — they intended to remain on Olympus.

Chirpy Chepito fell sick around this time so Coke Escovedo — Desi Arnez lookalike and Gerry Rivera bull from the Escavado Bros. — took over at the tomtoms. The latter had been a nurturing ground for brass proteges from Kenton to Buddy Rich, and Coke himself had pummeled with Gillespie. So the inclusion couldn't fail.

Santana brought in Tower of Power's horn section into the fray for "Everybody's Every thing" and exotic Spanish names littered the credits like a roll-call on the Madrid tele-

phone directory.

Even so, some critics felt compelled to temper approval and wonder if there weren't limits to the Latin beat. Massive world-wide acceptance remained however; the band were filmed at Montreux and Hamersmith (a mystery movie that never left the cutting room) and returned to the roots for an African documentary, "Soul To Soul".

Suddenly Carlos was worried too; he'd shouted "I'm a whore" at the Albert Hall but perhaps he needed to change them evil ways, drop the dropping, start to be taken seriously. In other words, his integrity was showing.

An outcome of the reassessment was the awful "Live" album, recorded with Buddy Miles at Diamond Head Crater and subtitled "Energy For The Universe From The Centre Of A Volcano". It was no such thing and apart from an acceptable rendition of McLaughlin's "Marbles" the excesses of the venture dealt quite a blow to Carlos' reputation.

Miles had just played an equally abortive set with Hendrix, which made him

drummer-to-be-seen-with number one, but the practical evidence of his invention is well hidden. Side two's horrible "Free Form Funkified Filth" needs no improvement — it spews on endlessly in what is perhaps the grossest example of self-indulgent meandering perpetuated in the name of meaningful art.

To make matters worse, the assembled multitudes clapped at irregular intervals whenever Carlos grimaced or Miles fell off his stool. Respected front line jazzers Mingo Lewis and Hedley Caliman also disgraced themselves, but Brown and Carraballo opted out by getting back to the Bay, thereby missing out on their brothers' most impressive offering ever.

IF AN album ever justified a group's presence and vindicated past errors, "Caravanserai" was it. Previous work had been recognisable for small-scale but steady progression with the occasional surprise. This, however, was all surprise. "Caravanserai" indicated the options and subtleties available not only to Latin but to any rock time signatures, particularly when ingenious use was made of momentary silence.

As Rolie puts it: "It's not so much what you play... it's what you don't play, the spaces count."

Unbelievably the percussion improved, notably with the addition of wily Armando Peraza from Mongo Santamaria. More significantly Shrieve reached an established and deserved elevation, not only fitting in exactly alongside the rhythm section but also contributing to the widest spectrum of songs — from the understated mystic "Eternal Caravan Of Reincarnation" to the gloriously melodic "Just In Time To See The Sun" and the album's tour de force, a mind-blowing "Every Step Of The Way".

"Caravanserai" stopped any hints of a rut, it's power lying in being conceptually complete, immaculate. They were no longer a superior band with unrealised pretensions.

Think about it, being rock's answer to Herb Alpert has its disadvantages. Now they had produced a single statement of group intent where the collective parts were superseded by the whole.

As one extended idea, the music relies on formalised classical structure, with false cadences similar to those exploited in Ravel's "Bolero"; thematically it follows a journey, a literal pilgrimage towards metaphoric acceptance, with titles indicating the state of mind en route; the placid "Waves Within" or the cathartic "La Fuente Del Ritmo" and finally Shrieve's climax where the main percussive and bass lines are brought to a thunderous build-up behind extended guitar and organ solos, guaranteed to shatter a bottle of tequila at 50 paces and most likely kill the worm too.

Mood and tone are exploited within the music, obviously eclectic and often simple, but when the pieces are fitted together — instant karma — no artificial preservatives. "Caravanserai's" performance at Wembley's Empire Pool received a rapturous reception.

Like the album an unrepeatable experience of disciplined religious intensity, albeit of vague Buddhist/Christian origin.

BY NOW Carlos was moving in the circles where a white suit is compulsory; Mahavishnu John McLaughlin introduced the aspirant to Ceylonese Sri Chinmoy's teaching, based around a small following in New York, advertising regularly in Village Voice.

A working partnership and album "Love, Devotion, Surrender" soon emerged, and Carlos took to the road with the Mahavishnu tour.

The record is very heavy (as in loud) but unfortunately Santana is put badly in the shade by the Pennine prophet. Included is a chaotically bastardised version of Coltrane's so-called "A Love Supreme" which is actually part one of that work, "Acknowledgement", performed with no more sensitivity or resemblance to the above than a just about common bass figure.

It was almost too easy to be cynical about the motivation here. The usual 'failed guru' replaced by fraudulent guru gibes piled up. I don't doubt Santana's faith myself, though he looks distinctly uneasy on the cover... a typical convert.

While Vish and Chinwar are beaming like they've been given extra brown rice pudding, Carlos looks a little distraught. On the back, John has his mitts clasped in reverence; Carlos is doing the hand jive; Sri's impersonating Father Christmas, white socks and red nylon curtain.

Oh yes, they're all outside an affluent looking house — makes you wonder.

It is reasonable to voice disapprobation when the faith in question alters our empathy with the artist, which is what happened here and later. Moreover, though Coltrane's religion was not necessarily any more 'right' than Santana's, it was long and deeply ingrained, whereas people could remember "Abraxas" with ease.

Unfortunately for Carlos, he lost out when aiming too high, and sounds like he's impersonating McLaughlin impersonating Coltrane — when it's impossible for any of these dudes to evoke him properly anyway. Proper pioneers like Zawinul or McCoy Tyner wouldn't bother with anything so fruitless or unoriginal.

By October 1973 he was no longer plain of Carlos but De-vadip the lamp, light and eye of God. Shrieve was Maitreya and they all sounded Divine. When asked about meditation Carlos was unusually forthcoming: "My soul has come forward, surrendering my is-

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SANTANA

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norance to him gives me light and peace. Now I'm more relaxed than ever."

The new Santana album, "Welcome" (guess who wrote the title track), had little of the previous rock element left. Rolie and a disgruntled Schon were gone, string bassist par excellence Tom Rutley replaced by Muscle Shoals star Doug Rauch, while keyboards virtuosi Tom Coster and Richard Kermode's strong contributory influence kept it down to straight jazz.

But, if older members of the band found the religious aspects hard to take, what hope for the audience? A lack of internal abrasiveness written into the rhythm section meant they were integral but not as blatantly exciting as had been past combinations, with Areas sounding more lacklustre than I can ever remember.

Only "Flame, Sky" and when "I Look Into Your Eyes" excel, as does Jules Broussard's elegant sax throughout, particularly the Mulligan inspired passage on Mann's "Mother Africa".

Alice Coltrane lent a hand too and surprise, surprise, recorded with Carlos. The outcome, "Illusions", veers from the sublime to the ridiculous, takes a tremendous amount of listening to and has no inherently logical appeal to fans of the older work.

Sri puts in an appearance doubling as Peter Sellers for a quick 'Ommmm' but Carlos seems too awe-inspired to contribute meaningfully.

Alice tinkles her harp to effect but it's Jack de Johnette and Dave Holland who get down to the grits. The more inventive sections, such as "Angel Of Air And Water", are spoiled by Alice's over-blown sugary arrangements, modal and gutless.

THE SIMPLE fact that most people preferred Carlos when he got off on his music and not his deity is reflected in the commercially based decision to drop the Devadip and Maitreya and get back to the fiery rhythms.

"Borboletta" gives the nudge to Leon Thomas, soul vibes minus ten, gains Leon Paullo, a much more interesting character and welcomes back Brown. Chick Corea luminaries Flora, Airo and the great Stan Clark muck in on Santana's first record since 1972 which is neither bombastic nor solemn.

Peraza, Areas, Carlos himself, are back to their creative best, "Fisherman" and "Give And Take" affirming a glorious heritage and optimistic future.

Maybe the disappointing sessions after "Caravanserai" were a necessary spiritual breather. Carlos has certainly realised that you can't always expect to take your audience with you; maybe his cleaning bills were too big.

One constantly borne out claim is that the group are far more exciting 'live' than on record (an assertion given credence by listening to "Hot And Alive") thus making them an obvious choice for an official CBS release — Wembley preferably, rather than the accurate but highly unnecessary "Greatest Hits" compilation.

At their peak Santana gave the rocking rumba market cornered although the original hope that Puente might materially benefit has been largely suppressed by Carlos' own idiosyncratic development detracting from the acceptance of the ethnically purer forms.

"Borboletta" indicates that he's back to those flights of glass clear, razor sharp melody; but even if they called it a day tomorrow, which they won't, those first four albums deserve the highest evaluation.

Critics who deride them now often apply unfairly the criteria one can legitimately use for deploring the unfortunate miscalculations that followed "Caravanserai". At the moment, however, Santana are rising again, though with the tasteful class of the very strongest bands. You can depend on them every step of the way — Eh mis amigos?

Soul

EDWIN STARR has a rather special place in the British soul scene, since none of America's top soul acts can match his record of some 30 tours over here, nor his continued popularity as a stage performer.

This is very much Starr's second home.

"I'd seriously consider setting here permanently if it wasn't that the soul music business revolves around what happens in the States. I prefer to work here, I like the way of life and the people too," he told me.

Starr also has an abiding passion for British cars: "When I first came over here I got interested in cars like the Alvis, the Bristol, the AC, the Lagonda and so on."

"In '67 I bought a Marcos sports car, which I've still got, and now I've added a '67 Rolls Royce Mulliner-Park Ward coupe which is all acres of wood and leather."

Despite such apparent affluence, Starr keeps close to his roots — thus his successful "Hell Up In Harlem" movie score album which graphically illustrated what the ghetto is all about.

He is now moving into the film world in a big way — as an actor.

"I'm now doing serious acting as opposed to just cameo roles and while I might do the theme songs, it's the acting I'm really interested in."

Immediately he finishes his current UK tour, Starr will jet back to LA to start filming "Force of Pride", in which he co-stars with Clint Walker. "It's a tremendous script and the cast is first-rate, in fact I'm just about the least experienced member."

"The story is set in modern-day California and is about the way two men come into conflict with each other over a matter of pride. You know, people will fight hard in anger but when they fight to defend their pride then it's even more bitter."

After that, Starr will go straight into "Fancy", a story set in India, in which he will co-star with Jack Palance, all of which shows somebody out there in Hollywood must rate his potential as an actor pretty highly.

Music-wise, Starr is still do-



It sure is hell up in Harlem with a Rolls-Royce Mulliner-Park Ward coupe.

ing his thing and also fighting to wrest more artistic control from the Motown machine.

"I've an idea things might begin to change soon though," he told me. "The company have had a big shake up of staff. They've brought in more than two-dozen people from Atlantic Records. They scooped one of the big wheels there and he brought his staff over to the West Coast with him."

"Motown has always been a singles' orientated company, while the industry as a whole has been moving more and more into albums."

"These new people know how to package and sell albums and that'll help a lot. In the past, Motown have always strung together a bunch of singles to make up an album. Now they'll get into producing albums, then lifting singles out of them like everyone else does."

"Hopefully, I'll have a freer hand in my things in future, but Motown still have some old-fashioned ideas. They are very loathe, for instance, to let their artists get into production."

"They'd rather pay an artist, a writer, a producer, an arranger separately than have one guy

do all those jobs and then be in a position to dictate his own terms like Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye can."

Starr's relationship with Motown has always been a rather fragile one.

He had originally been signed to the Ric-Tic/Golden World label, but then got back to the States from a British tour to find the company, and his contract, had been sold to Motown.

"It was like looking out of a winter window — it was just dark, man. I was just sold. It was very uncomfortable for me at Motown for the first couple of years."

"I wasn't part of the 'family'. I felt like an orphan stepping into a family where he'd never really been at home."

"It was a shame that Ric-Tic/Golden World came to an end. The guy who owned it was wealthy outside the record business, he treated it like a hobby really but he had some good, very good artists and I'm convinced that had he stuck with it Golden World and not Motown would have become the sound of Detroit."

"Let's face it, it was the fear of just that which led Motown to buy him out."

"If I started a record company of my own I'd like to relaunch the Golden World name and run it like it used to be run."

Golden World made some mistakes though. You may remember a catchy record by the white group Shades of Blue called "Oh How Happy". The composer credit reads "Charles Hatcher", which is Starr's real name: "Golden World only had one white group, the Reflections (who did "Just Like Romeo & Juliet") so I took Shades of Blue to them."

"The boss told me the group stank so instead I gave the record to Harry Bulk, a friend of mine who had a little independent label and within a couple of weeks it was at number one on the pop chart."

"I'd based the tune on the German national anthem which has a very catchy melody."

Starr feels too much talent gets thwarted by such management mistakes: "It's like I feel every artist should be able to control his own destiny."

"Motown have got lots of things of mine in the can, unreleased, which I believe would have been hits. The artist should have more say in what is or isn't released — and in how it's recorded too."

"After all, nobody knows you better than you know yourself. If an artist has the ability to produce then he should be allowed to produce himself if he wants; that way he is controlling his own destiny, making his own mistakes — not having someone else do it for him."

Starr is still working with his funky eight-piece band T.C.U.

ROGER ST. PIERRE

The thespian anglophile and the Motown machine

EDWIN STARR reveals his thoughts on England, acting and Motown

("Total Concept Unlimited") who won such rave reviews when they came here with him last year, but they aren't on this tour: "They are all still at school so it was a parental situation, their studies had to come first but I'm really getting it together with them."

Starr's next album will feature one side with the band, most of it cut here in England, while Johnny Bristol is getting together the material for the other side which will be cut in LA with Bristol producing: "Since he's got himself outside the Motown organisation, Bristol has been able to bring out his own creativity the way he feels it."

"As an independent, even though Motown will be picking up the tab, he'll be able to work with me in that manner. I've worked a lot with him in the past and I'm sure we'll be able to mould our two talents together."

Britain will continue to figure prominently in Starr's career: "I'm confident the movies will get released here and that will help but in any case, I'll still be over for tours three times a year as usual. Actually, I can remember one time when I went back to the States and was back on a plane for London within 24 hours — you see how hard it is to keep me away from the place!"

SOUL NOTES

BLACKPOOL MECCA, one of the top Northern Sounds venues, is at present seeing a major change in record programming with a gradual shifting in emphasis from oldies to contemporary soul imports of a somewhat slower tempo, though the emphasis will still be on rarities.

With the stock of undiscovered Northern Sounds oldies drying up, this move seems to be an attempt to maintain the Mecca's role of breaking unknown records before anyone else gets onto them.

NEWS COMES from Steve Alaimo at TK's studios in Hialeah, Florida that there is a welter of activity following the breakthrough of their sound onto the international market via George McCrae, KC & The Sunshine Band, Little Beaver and others.

Alaimo tells me that KC are finishing their second album and that Little Beaver's "Party Down" and Robert Moore's "Miami" albums are in the final mixing stages.

Betty Wright, Latimore, Timmy Thomas, Lynn Williams, Jimmi "Bo" Horne, Warren Thompson and Betty Wright's brothers Phillip and Milton are working on new albums.

Phillip, who formerly played with King Curtis, is currently laying down backing tracks for his solo debut while Milton, a practicing lawyer in Boston, is nearing completion of his set, produced by Willie Clarke.

Currently, Latimore's "More, More Latimore" album is fast approaching gold status and he is embarking on an extensive West Coast tour besides being set for an appearance on the "American Bandstand" TV show.

I REMEMBER Al Wilson from the fine "Searching For The Dolphins" album he cut years back with Johnny Rivers and which included an amazing version of Oscar Brown Jr's "The Snake".

Now the man is suddenly

back, thanks to the success of his cover version of O. C. Smith's "La, La, Peace Song".

Titled, naturally, "La, La Peace Song" (Bell Bells 247), it is unfortunately disappointing. It's all much of a muchness and, in this setting, even the tide cut doesn't stand out that stunnily.

The H. B. Barnum arrangements and Johnny Bristol production are first rate, but there's something too mechanical about the whole exercise for me.

THINGS ARE really swinging down at the Goldmine, Canvey Island. The Tamla Motown Christmas Party was a great success and so was the Contempo Funk Party. More record company promotions are planned for the near future, reports the club's DJ Chris Hill.

WHILE IT'S disastrous to loose Radio One's specialist black music show, most soul fans were never really happy with it anyway. DJ Dave Simmons departed from the format set by Mike Raven by substituting rather boring Caribbean and African obscurities for the blues content, while even the soul content was sparse and not too well programmed.

Radio One should really have taken a leaf out of Piccadilly Radio's book and given us something resembling the superlative "Soul Train" show which Andy Peebles beams out to listeners in the Manchester area.

AS THE YEAR draws to a close, let's hazard a few predictions for 1975: The "Miami Sound" to get even bigger; a return for the Atlantic/Stax '60s sound via re-releases which this time round will make the chart; star status for black London band Trax; a general breakthrough of "made in Britain" soul, recorded both by locals and visiting Americans; a revival of Tamla Motown's fortunes against those of the Philly Sound.

US IMPORT SINGLES

"Never Die"	Mandril (Polydor)
"Ladies' Choice"	Bobby Franklin (Fee)
"You Better Watch Out"	Gwen Owens (Casablanca)
"You Got Me Believing In You"	Leonard Kaigler (Sunburst)
"Love Factory"	Eloise Laws (Music Merchant)
"At Last"	Temples (We Produce)
"Betcha If You Check It Out"	Quadruphonics (Innovation)
"Uptown Saturday Night"	Bill Harris (Warner Bros.)
"Dreams"	Nell Carter (RCA)
"Feel The Need In Me"	Graham Central Station (Warner Bros.)

US IMPORT ALBUMS

"Introducing"	Rosell Anderson (Sunburst)
"Winter In America"	Gil Scott-Heron (Strapa East)
"Caught Up"	Millie Jackson (Polydor)
"Black Rhapsody"	Little Beaver (Cap)
"Greatest Hits"	Linda Jones (Turbo)

UK SINGLES RELEASES

"The Telegram Song"	The Outriders (Dart)
"Doctor's Orders"	Carol Douglas (RCA)
"California"	Dynamic Concept (Power Exchange)
"Each Morning"	Major Harris (Atlantic)
"She's All I Got"	Freddie North (Contempo)
"In The Bottle"	Brother To Brother (Philips)
"As Long As I Can"	Free Spirit (Chess)
"Do It Fluid"	Blackbyrds (Fantasy)
"Promised Land"	Johnny Allen (Oral)
"Linda Lu"	Ray Sharpe (Epic)

GOLDEN OLDIES

"Just Another Heartache"	Little Ritchie (Sound Stage Seven)
"Love Bandit"	Kenya Collins (Kenya)
"We Got Together"	Jewels (MGM)
"You Got Me Where You Want Me"	Larry Santos (Evolution)
"I'll Always Need You"	Dean Courtney (RCA)

Listings supplied by David Milton, R. E. Cordis, soul specialist shop, 819 Sadler Gate, Derby. (Tel: Derby 42715).