

Arts & Entertainment

Album Reviews

'Party Party' defies logic



PARTY PARTY Various Artists A&M Records

Fact A: Movie soundtrack albums since the great '50s and '60s musicals, with few exceptions, suck.

Fact B: *Party Party* is a movie soundtrack album.

Thus C: *Party Party* probably sucks. HAH! The laws of logic proved wrongo again.

I found *Party Party* (or "Party 2," as us esteemed insiders are like to say) to have at least three things going for it:

1) The 13 cuts are material not found on the 1981 *Times Square* soundtrack, for instance.

2) It is a good opportunity to hear songs from some less familiar bands like Altered Images and Bananarama.

3) It has Elvis Costello on it. It looks like it's a categorical kinda' day, so let's go with it.

List No. 2: Three things that *Party Party* is:

1) A combination of old covers and new material. Much like my own bed, I might add.

2) A good vehicle for promoting interest in director Terry Winsor's movie "Party Party."

3) A chance for Randy Wymore to hear his first Sex Pistols song, even if it is performed by three pretty girls.

List No. 3: Three things *Party Party* ain't:

1) A K-Tel collection (too bad).

2) A cohesive unit of songs that slowly unravels a movie plot.

3) The last you've heard out of Bananarama.

List No. 4: The 13 cuts on *Party Party* from best to worst:

1) "Party Party" — Elvis Costello's rockin' plea for hedonism with honky-tonk piano and a great horn arrangement.

2) "No Feelings" — Bananarama's excellent cover of the Sex Pistols' masturbatory paean to the "Me Generation."

3) "Band of Gold" — The group Modern Romance goes Motown, and quite well, thank you. A great song and sure disco hit.

4) "Little Town Flirt" — Great bass sound and greater vocals by Altered Images' lead singer with the little girl voice.

5) "The Man Who Sold the World" — Midge Ure's cover of David Bowie's tune does it justice and then some.

6) "Run Rudolph Run" — Dave Edmunds does it his way, as usual.

7) "No Woman No Cry" — by Pauline Black. Great vocals, but little else.

8) "Driving In My Car" — by Madness. Quirky, but not enough.

9) "Elizabethan Reggae" — by Bad Manners. Reggae without the bite.

10) "Tutti-Frutti" — Stick to the original. For Sting (of the Police) fans only.

11) "Need Your Love So Bad" — Ditto.

12) "Yakety-Yak" — by Bad Manners. Another cover that adds nothing to the original. Bad Manners should excuse them-

selves for this one.

13) "Auld Lang Syne" — from Chas. & Dave. Lose this one.

List No. 4:

1) Pay the gas bill.

2) Call Jim Ja . . . whoops, wrong list.

Glossary

1) "cuts" — lingo for "songs" in the recording industry.

2) "go with it" — to abandon reserve, cooperate

3) "covers" — when an artist redoes a "cut" by a previous artist. Usually a stupid move.

Buy this record if:

1) You make big bucks and have poor friends with musical taste who want to record it.

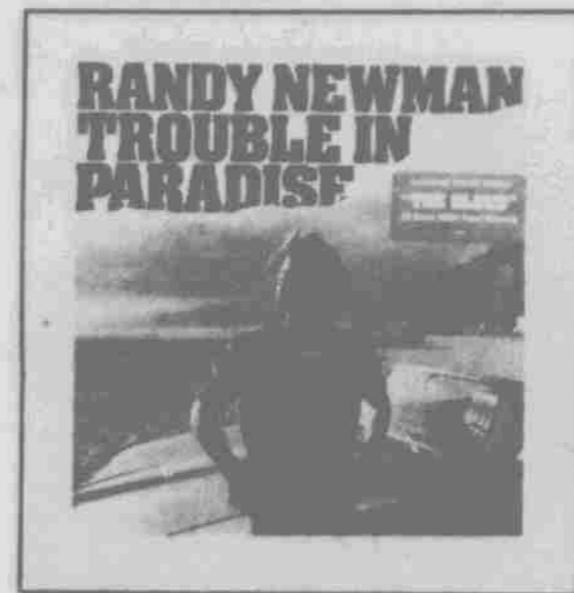
2) You are a record collector.

3) Your student loan just came in and you feel like spending some money.

— Billy Shaffer

Editor's note: Watch this space for a review of the movie "Party Party," if it ever comes to Lincoln.

Singer needs straight face



Trouble in Paradise Randy Newman Warner Bros.

Poor Randy Newman. He tries so hard to create concepts, yet seems unable to stick out to their logical conclusion. For example, in "Short People," his most famous piece, he brilliantly constructs "A Modest Proposal"-like framework, only to destroy it midway by parenthetically admitting "Hey folks, I'm just kidding, short people are just the same as you and I." On his *Ragtime* soundtrack, Newman's moving vision of turn-of-the-century music was ruined by the inclusion of "Change Your Ways," which was a fine enough song, but simply did not belong on that album.

Newman continued to suffer from this malady on his latest album, *Trouble in Paradise*. In interviews, Newman had been saying that this album, his ninth, was going to be a pure pop effort; he was tired of being the sole purveyor of intellectual rock music.

But Newman had a trick up his sleeve. *Trouble in Paradise* is not pure pop exercise. Rather, what Newman has done in effect, is create a pop music character, whom he then manipulates for the purpose of satire.

The effect is brilliant. Frank Sinatra may like "New York, New York" because it is a city that doesn't sleep, but Randy Newman's pop star likes Los Angeles ("I Love LA") because it's warm and has lots of freeways, and "Miami" because all the buildings look the same.

The Newman pop star also ventures into "Creep Rock" (practiced most openly by John Cougar) in the song "Take Me Back." He begs for mercy because he "spent four years at Stanford," and his wife is making his life miserable simply because he had a summertime affair. Jeez.

The fun continues. "I'm Different" is a jab at Broadway musical numbers. "There's a Party At My House" parodies neo-rockabilly, while "Mikey's" pokes fun at funk music. "The Blues" (a duet with Paul Simon) satirizes the morose

nature of blues lyrics by combining them with spry, pop music.

Newman's pop star speaks out on his own as well. "Christmas in Capetown" pleads for understanding for the perpetrators of the apartheid, because "they love our music." "My Life is Good" is unabashed snottiness, with the pop star flaunting wealth, power and prestige in the faces of those who have none.

Yet after constructing this perfect satiric framework, Newman destroys it by deserting it at crucial points through the album. "Real Emotional Girl," "Same Girl" and "Song for the Dead" are all beautiful pieces ("Song for the Dead" being the most touching song on Vietnam recorded for many years), certainly befitting the Randy Newman of *12 Songs or Sail Away*. But the Randy Newman of *Trouble in Paradise* would never record songs like these; he wouldn't even understand them. At best, they don't belong, and at worst, they kill the entire effect of the album.

Oddly then, despite the fact that all the songs on *Trouble in Paradise* are strong, the album ultimately must be viewed as an ineffective effort. It's a shame Newman could not keep a straight face for the entire album. It could have been the most effective musical statement since the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* opus. Perhaps Newman's pop star will surface again someday. Until then, it's some consolation to know that singers as wonderful as Randy Newman the artiste and Randy Newman the pop star can exist in today's musical world. It will be even nicer when Randy Newman the performer decides which one he wants to be.

Mike Frost

Technology wrecks 'Trans'

Trans Neil Young Geffen Records

Sometime between his last album *Reactor*, and the recording sessions of his latest album *Trans*, Neil Young must have heard somebody use a Vocoder.

A Vocoder is a device which, when spoken or sung into, computerizes and distorts the user's voice.

Young must have loved the sound and gotten his own little Vocoder. In any event, he commits electronic overkill on *Trans*.



The album starts out with a pretty good rocker titled "A Little Thing Called Love":

Only love puts a tear in your eye
Only love makes you hypnotized
Only love makes you choose
Only love brings you the blues

Maybe it's only a coincidence, but "A Little Thing Called Love" is the only song of the album in which Young uses his real voice and it's also the best cut.

Probably one of the most radical tracks is "We R In Control." Again heavily electronic, the song is about computers,

supposedly by computers:

We control

We're controlling

We control you floor to floor

We control you door to door

We're controlling while you're asleep

You get the idea.

In order to save time and not be redundant about electronics on *Trans*, I won't even mention tracks like "Computer Age," "Transformer Man" and "Computer Cowboy."

The only other respectable cut is "Mr. Soul," a remake of the song Young did with the Buffalo Springfield years ago.

Again, the Vocoder is used, but this time it works. However, this version of "Mr. Soul" could put off some long-time Young fans who are used to the rougher, older version.

Trans is obviously a message to us all from Young. The bad part is that he just didn't know when to quit.

The newest by Young is a must if you happen to be an avid follower of his music. Too bad that a couple of good points don't outweigh a few bad points, or this might have been a classic.

Let's hope that Neil was just going through a phase.

— Randy Wymore



Bofill changes soul formula

Too Tough Angela Bofill Arista

Angela Bofill's name isn't instantly recognizable with the other top jazz singers of this era, yet. When Bofill, a native New Yorker of Latin descent, released her first album four years back, she was hailed as the next Dionne Warwick or the next Nancy Wilson, among other things.

Unfortunately, despite her excellent *Angel of the Night* in 1980, which followed the stylings of her debut *Angie*, the mass adulation she and her backers expected never came — that is, until last year's *Something About You*, which was a big step away from her previous direction.

With *Too Tough*, Bofill makes it clear she plans to go after the Diana Ross-Stephanie Mills crowd instead of the Nancy Wilson contingent.

Beginning with the thumping, overbrassy title track, the album rocks along with the familiar beat of what we've come to expect from today's soul.

Fortunately, Bofill is a good enough and still a unique enough singer to carry it off and retain some identity. The first claims about Bofill's unequaled singing range are still verified.

What is totally lost from the first two efforts that lingered on *Something About You* is the jazz styling and innovation. Now, Bofill, has turned completely to the electronic and dance age.

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