

# Arts & Entertainment

# Album Reviews

## Gayle solo album an awful 'dud'



Some albums courtesy of Pickles Records and Tapes

**True Love**  
Crystal Gayle  
Elektra

If one accepts the premises that Crystal Gayle is a capable singer (I accept that premise — I find her voice quite special), has a good ear for a song (her past albums prove this is true) and has a smart producer (Allen Reynolds has produced some of Nashville's best works in the last decade), then a schlocky album like *True Love* becomes totally unacceptable.

Gayle has been plagued by inconsistent records for years. This album, for example, follows a delightful joint venture with singer Tom Waits entitled *One from the Heart*. Before that, she released the feeble *Hollywood, Tennessee* LP, which followed the moving *These Days*, which was preceded by the incompetent *Miss the Mississippi* and so on and so forth. The pattern is clear. Every time Gayle releases a brilliant album, she and Reynolds seem to feel obliged to follow it up with a dud.

*True Love* is Crystal Gayle's latest dud. Although not as bad as some of her worst efforts, it is, nonetheless, a disappointing departure from the artistry we saw developing on *One from the Heart*. Some truly awful material is featured here, such as David Gates bar-band standard, "Everything I Own," which Gayle should have known better than to record. Other disappointments included "He is Beautiful to Me," and "Our Love is on the Fault Line," which fails with the use of some horrendous metaphors.

Rodney Crowell's "Till I Gain Control Again" is here (surprisingly, featuring Crowell on harmony vocals). However, it's been recorded so well so often (Emmylou Harris, Jerry Jeff Walker, Willie Nelson and Waylon Jennings, most notably) that Gayle's plebian reading of it pales in comparison. Additionally, the title song, "True Love," is as silly a song as the name implies.

However, there are moments here where Gayle manages to maintain a modicum of musical integrity. "Deeper in the Fire" is a fine song, for which the singer's unique voice is well suited. "Easier Said than Done," "Baby What About You" and "You Bring out the Lover in Me" are all poorly written songs, yet Gayle's ability as a singer overcomes them and turns them into solid pieces of music. However, one wonders why she just didn't save herself the effort and pick out decent songs to begin with.

Gayle shows moments of both crossover absurdity and genuine feeling on *True Love*. Why does she suffer from this kind of frustrating inconsistency? Several possible explanations exist. One is that she isn't as talented a performer as she sometimes appears (as a Crystal Gayle fan, I reject this hypothesis outright). Another is that these poor showings, often recorded at career high points (this, for example, comes on the heels of Gayle's first charting pop single for several years, "You and I," a duet with Eddie Rabbitt), just reflect a kind of laziness that is as much producer

Reynolds' fault as her own. Another possible explanation is that Gayle, who has been on three different labels in the last five years, has allowed her legal hassles to overshadow her recordings.

Whatever the explanation, the bottom line is Crystal Gayle is capable of recording fine albums and has failed to do so on *True Love*. However, there is some consolation. She will probably release another album in nine months or so, and, if her pattern continues, it should be an effective LP, highlighting Gayle's talent and musical sensibility. I suggest you wait until then before buying a Crystal Gayle album.

—Mike Frost

## ABC: Fine tunes for dance fans

**The Lexicon of Love**  
ABC  
Mercury

The past nine months or so have shown an amazing growth in the acceptance of



new British music. Nearly every type of music has been represented in the flood of new musicians and groups making big things out of British ideas.

One of the classes of music that hasn't been overdone by the English immigrants has been that of the "funk"-type dance music. Until now, most of the attempts have been poor copies of American dance groups. The relatively new group ABC has come up with a serious counterpart to those groups with *The Lexicon of Love*.

*The Lexicon of Love* sums up a lot of what this debut album is about. It is a fresh sound for the basic theme of relationship songs that dominate the disc. Lead vocalist Martin Fry provides an energetic approach to each cut, and gives it the feeling of a winner through and through. All the songs on the album were written by the group as a whole, and all are interesting enough to keep your attention for the length of the track.

The most outstanding part of *The Lexicon of Love* would be the sound of each song on its own. Every cut has a different approach that seems to be well thought out. The album is consistent with its clever lyrics, decent melodies and near-perfect production. The same factors that make this an enjoyable album provide the reason ABC has had three singles in the British Top 20, as well as a gold debut album. Much of this sudden success can be attributed to the production of the disc.

*The Lexicon of Love* was produced by Trevor Horn, who was once with the Buggles. Horn has had past success with his production techniques exhibited with another popular British group, Dollar. Horn's hand in this album has a lot to do with the listenability you will find here. ABC's lack of experience is virtually nonexistent with Horn at the helm.

The lack of experience is not necessarily a factor one should consider with this album. As I mentioned, the production covers absolutely every possible chance for a mistake, and the talent ABC seems to have is an element that provides even more for entertainment.

This album could be termed "slick" for many reasons. One is the method ABC uses to project their ideas of music. Another is the fast-paced music they have had fine-tuned for every listener looking for a dance-oriented album. In any case, ABC has made a disc that succeeds in its attempt to make the listener enjoy the sound of nearly every cut. This isn't Duran Duran, and it isn't Flock of Seagulls. It may just be the British counterpart to Earth, Wind and Fire.

—Todd R. Tystad

## 'Cow Jazz' verifies Walker's demise

**CowJazz**  
Jerry Jeff Walker  
MCA/Southcoast

The so-called "hippies" from the 1960s received a number of shocking jolts in the late '70s. Heroes (or perhaps more appropriately anti-heroes) from the anti-war era like Tom Hayden, Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin had grown old. But only did they now trust people over 30, but often, they hired them as their personal agents to peddle their latest book to the corporate giants' publishing houses.

Well, the '70s' redneck/cowboy contingent area now in store for the same shock. *CowJazz* proves what many have suspected for the last few years: Jerry Jeff Walker has grown old. Now, with Willie Nelson singing old Elvis Presley love ballads, Waylon Jennings doing the "Dukes of Hazard," Tompall Glaser reunited with his brothers and Ray Wylie Hubbard opening for Porter Wagoner, it appears the so-called "outlaw" (a better term might be progressive country music)



is now just a piece of nostalgia. A pity. A pity because these musical rebels with a cause were an interesting lot. Bucking musical norms, they lived on the fringes of giant labels' artist rosters. Their music embodied the traditional elements of country, while at the same time, exposing it to a certain frankness it had never experienced before. Occasionally, they would place a record on the pop or country music charts, but usually they just sort of hung around, playing bars and waiting for a label to be naive enough to think their music might have commercial potential.

Jerry Jeff Walker seemed the titular leader of the movement. Walker, with the assistance of his Lost Gonzo-Band, turned in a sparkling collection of LPS in the '70s — starting with *Viva Terlingua* and culminating with *A Man Must Carry On* — that let the world in on what was happening in Austin, Texas. The albums were fun to listen to, yet at the same time, you knew these were musicians — professional and capable, especially when sober.

But then, in 1977, the Gonzos deserted Walker in favor of obscurity. Walker floundered, making sadly spirited albums while experiencing marital woes, alcohol rehabilitation and uninterested record companies. In short, Walker disappeared.

In 1981, Walker recorded *Reunion* on long-time friend Michael Brossky's tiny Southcoast Records. The album was

a hopeful sign — perhaps Walker wasn't really finished yet. However, *CowJazz* is sad confirmation that indeed, Jerry Jeff Walker is quite finished.

Even on *Too Old To Change*, Walker's worst LP of the late '70s, there seemed to lurk some semblance of enthusiasm, vigor and will to survive. *CowJazz* has none of that determination. Walker has given up. He has lapsed into a second childhood (witness the cover art) and plays his music as if it were just something to do between naps.

None of that old spirit is there. The best songs are ones that others have done better before: Bob Dylan's "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" and Hoyt Axton's "Greenback Dollar." But the rest are just sort of an illustration of what "burn-out" means. It is hard to remember that such incomplete thoughts as "Tangee," "Wind" and "Loving of the Game" were written by the same guy who wrote "Mr. Bojangles." To be fair, Walker didn't write all the material, but still, the basic impression prevails: Walker is tired. He wants to go home.

Even more than Willie Nelson or Waylon Jennings (the media's favorite "outlaws") Jerry Jeff Walker was the true king of progressive country music. His great albums like *Riding High*, or *It's a Good Night for Singing* come the closest to capturing the true spirit of the entire movement, if it can be called that. These LPs are classics, but now, at least on vinyl, the king is dead.

Long live the king.

Mike Frost

## Adams' 'Knife' has sharp edge

**Cuts Like A Knife**  
Bryan Adams  
A&M

If Canadian rockers who are hitting it big in the United States could be used as an alternate energy source, James Watt and Saudi Arabia would be out of their jobs.

Enter Bryan Adams.

With his second album — *Cuts Like A Knife* — Adams has burst onto the scene in the same breath as groups like Loverboy, Triumph, April Wine and Chilliwack, to name a few.

Don't get me wrong — Adams' only similarity with the other bands mentioned is the common homeland. His music is much better. The tracks on this album have a well defined edge to them. The gravelly voiced Adams is backed by a tight band that belts out the 10 songs presented here.

The title song is the best on the record.



*Drivin' home this evening  
I coulda sworn we had it all worked out*

*You had this boy believin'  
Way beyond a shadow of a doubt  
Then I heard it on the street  
I heard you mighta found somebody new*

*Well who is he baby — who is he  
And tell me what he means to you*

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