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# Hendryx's 'The Heat' transcends ordinary 'disco pop schlock'

By Scott Harrah  
Staff Reporter

Nona Hendryx, "The Heat," RCA Records.

Remember "The Cher Show" back in 1975? Cher minus Sonny became notorious for flamboyant guest stars like Elton John, Liberace and Bette Midler. One of the most outrageous acts on her show was a soul threesome called LaBelle who had a song out called "Lady Marmalade." The song, with lyrics like the French pick-up line "Voulez-vous coucher avec moi ce soir?" catapulted the group to short-lived stardom.

After LaBelle broke up, singer Nona Hendryx joined The Talking Heads as a back-up vocalist and was one of the many eerie voices on the classic Heads LP "Remain in Light."

## Record Review

Since she has been known as a first-class funk vocalist with four solo albums and such dance-club smashes as "I Sweat" and "Boys Will Be Boys,"

The most remarkable thing about her latest opus, "The Heat," is her voice — a ballsy, soulful megaphone that easily rivals the pipes of Tina Turner and Chaka Khan.

The lyrics to the songs, all penned by Hendryx, are above average for disco music but they don't do her voice justice. For example, look at the words to side-one's opener, "Revolutionary Dance."

*The Revolutionary Dance/It's a dance of circumstance/The rhythm has its own demands/In the revolutionary dance.*

Musically, however, Nona and cohorts burn with passion on "The Heat." Her studio band is made up of some of New York's best guitarists and back-up vocalists, and Keith Richards of the Stones even helps out a few times.

There are a few platitudes present, like "The Heat Part 1," a convivial rehash of the melodic patterns from



Hendryx

Courtesy of RCA Records

her old hit "I Sweat."

But in general, the songs are painstakingly orchestrated and hazardous to the feet — even the most adamant anti-disco advocate will find it hard to resist dancing to these tunes.

So when Hendryx gets a bit too caught up in her lackluster lyrics, you can instead savor the exploding drums, slamming back beats and Motown choruses.

poorly produced cuts, including "A Girl Like That," a paean to feminine independence, which drowns Nona out with a phased echo and a distorted beat. Also

poorly produced is "I Need Love," a bluesy ballad that would be a flawless cut if it weren't for a chorus that is even more repetitious than the one on "We Are The World."

With "The Heat," Hendryx danceably experiments with the sound she's known for — a blend of Philadelphia soul and New York techno-funk. She hasn't perfected this unique musical combination yet, but she makes great effort on music that transcends most of the disco pop schlock around, making "The Heat" a rare treat.  
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