

Records

Grace Jones
Living My Life
Island

Just when we thought 1982 had done its best, this one comes shooting out of the blue. It's the same music and production crew which worked on the last two albums. The big event is the maturity of Grace Jones, the songwriter. She's had a hand in all but one track, Melvin Van Peebles' 'The Apple Stretching'. Taken from the musical *Waltz of the Stork*, it's more a poem than a song, a captivating portrait of New York.

Grace has always been a peerless interpreter of other people's music, but now she shines on her own. My Jamaican Guy is a solo composition, a mean and slinky piece of exotica, depicting the utterly cool personality of the dread. He's laid back, not laying back. The rest of the tracks are co-written with either Barry Reynolds or Sly Dunbar. Nipple To The Bottle is already a major dancefloor hit and would have been my single of the year, but for Grandmaster Flash.

Everybody Hold Still is another story, this time the victim of a holdup wishing they'd stayed in bed. The smell of New York pervades this album, an almost claustrophobic urgency. This is no better conveyed than on 'Cry Now, Laugh Later', a viciously strong dance track with lyrics that are little pictures of despair. 'Inspiration' is a contrast, with its quiet, rich textures. One relationship had died, another is starting, and it's a strain. 'Unlimited Capacity' is basically a morbid

4



Joni Mitchell



Grace Jones



Depeche Mode

song, but is still tinged with a certain unshakeable optimism, a belief that there is an innate goodness in the human race.

This album will not be denied. You won't hear much better dance music, but the words also give pause for thought. Grace Jones comes on like a winner, but she still spares a thought for the victims. No one else is making music quite like this.

Duncan Campbell

Joni Mitchell
Wild Things Run Fast
Asylum

There's a fair few of us out here who've been carrying a torch for this lady since 1968. Catch us at our most passionate and we'll claim that there's really only two sorts of singer-songwriter: Joni Mitchell and the rest. Mind you, maintaining that argument got a little dodgy there for a while, what with the overblown excesses of *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* and the portentousness of *Mingus*. No matter, because here she's returned with her strongest and most accessible album since *Court And Spark* eight years back.

There's nothing particularly innovating about it mind you. What may strike some folks as 'new' is that on two tracks — the title one and Elvis Presley's 'You're So Square' — she positively rocks out. No, what Mitchell has basically done is take many of the best things about such albums as *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns*, *Hejira*, *Don Juan*, *Shadows And Light* and combine them in one stunning package.

Far more tangibly melodic — i.e. there's lots of hooks — than her last two or three albums of new material, the music here is underpinned by the exemplary basswork of Larry Klein, the only backing musician to feature on every track. (Klein is definitely post-Pastorius — Mitchell's previous bass player — yet identifiably his own man.)

As one might expect after *Mingus* and *Shadows And Light*, a cool, flowing jazz style dominates the arrangements. Everyone performs beautifully, never overreaching or simply indulging themselves. (Even Lionel Richie wails like a real soul man.)

Mitchell's own vocal flexibility

has been evident for years — check her reworking of 'Both Sides Now' on 74's *Miles Of Aisles* — but never has it sounded so relaxed and assured. She has without doubt matured into a pop-jazz singer of exceptional polish and taste. (Keep practising Rickie Lee Jones.)

If the lyrics — always an obsessive point with we cultists — remain on Mitchell's favourite themes, her introspection is by and large less maudlin now and often laced with humour.

After 13 albums Joni Mitchell is not resting on her laurels. Rather she is an immensely sophisticated artist who can ignore trends and 'waves' because her talent, at its best, transcends them. *Wild Things Run Fast* is an album of the very highest order.

Peter Thomson

Depeche Mode
A Broken Frame
Mute

Although *A Broken Frame* is Depeche Mode's second album, it is, in a roundabout manner, still their debut. In 1981, when *Speak And Spell* hit the shops, fringe

freak Vince Clarke was the motivated writer, penning all but one song on the album. That one tune, 'Tora Tora Tora!', was written by Martin Gore and when Vince packed his songbag and left for Yazoo, Martin stepped into his shoes. *A Broken Frame* is 10 pieces of Martin Gore.

You only need to have heard 'See You' to know that Depeche Mode are going through metamorphosis. Melody rather than danceability has become the over-riding factor, though the *beat* has not been forgotten.

This is perhaps the only common ground between the songs on *A Broken Frame*, an apt title for works from all walks of life. It seems perfectly natural for the lurid poppiness of 'A Photograph Of You' to be hastily rebuffed by the Gothic marching tones of the anti-political 'Shouldn't Have Done That'.

Then of course there are the singles, 'See You', 'Meaning Of Love' and 'Leave In Silence', three of the best electronic 45s of the year. Sounding even better in context, among a total, if fractured, canvas. David Gahan

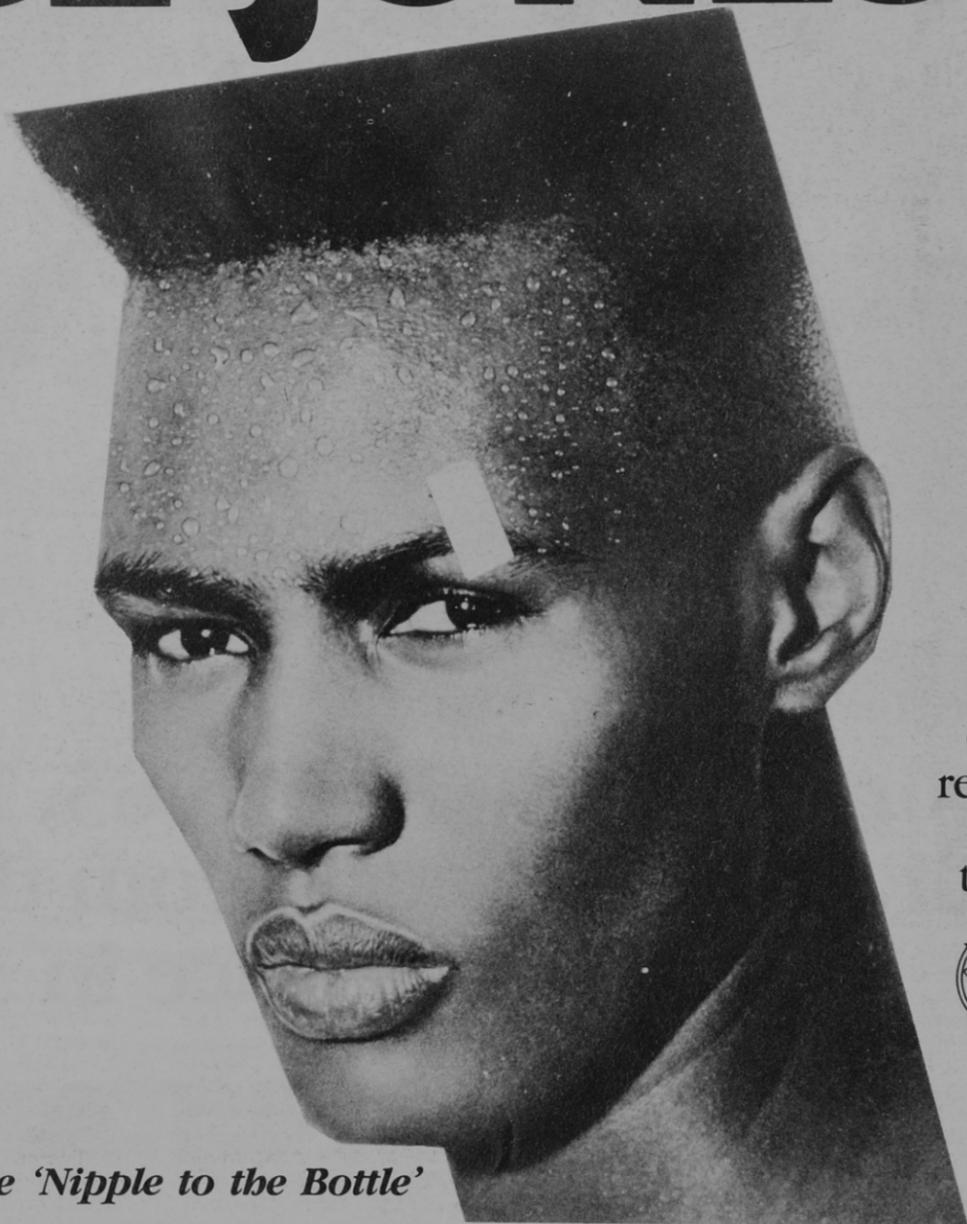
has developed considerably as a vocalist, now being able to tailor his voice to the needs of Gore's melodies, adding warmth to instruments that can sometimes sound cold. Multiply that by superb sonnets such as 'My Secret Garden' and 'The Sun and the Rainfall', throw in a Daniel Miller production and you are left with something that can be only described as a euphoric aural experience. Or in laymen's terms, bleedin' great, mate!

Mark Phillips

3

GRACE JONES

the new album
Living My Life



records
and
tapes



Released January 17. Includes the single 'Nipple to the Bottle'