

Prince Lincoln Thompson and the Royal Rasses: 'Rootsman Blues' (Target)

U turned 'me' against I and came up with 'My'. Possession and ownership of everything down to life itself becomes the preoccupation of mankind. Producing fear as a consequence.

Prince Lincoln's music is a form of exorcism. Chasing the devil. If we concentrate hard enough it might even chase out the 'me' and the 'My'.

'Rootsman Blues' is alive with moving melodies that tie in your consciousness to words which could be shoved under a big umbrella and described as praises to good living. Good living incorporates better understanding, love the way it should be, revolution (change), reggae music and much, much more.

Lincoln's is a dancing voice, a celebration of the first breath. There's a track called 'Whopping Good Vibration', whose title I should have saved to finish the review. It's the sound of free souls and easy minds and the feeling is infectious; representing the triumph of I over me and My.

Try and understand. By way of technical information, the whole album was recorded in England, using session-players from over here. The Vibration is international and cross-cultural. Colourblind and multilingual.

Everyone expresses it some time or another although the direct ways and means of expression varies from person to person and peoples to peoples, tradition to tradition.

On a personal level, I write. Prince Lincoln sings. His singing broke the language barrier a long time ago. Music travels at the speed of sound. (Mark Kamba)

Teddy Pendergrass: 'Heaven Only Knows' (Philadelphia International)

Along with Levi Stubbs (Four Tops circa late 60s) and Detroit Spinners' one-time lead singer Philippe, Teddy Pendergrass makes up the third side of an unholy trilogy of male soul voices whose consistent aim, it seems, is to send me into a not altogether unpleasant decline. The success of heaving ideas of sexual politics and objectivity into a mass of contradictions at my feet lies in a particular approach and vocal timbre, one that follows a direct line from Bobby Bland and Otis Redding. Somewhere between the roughness of r&b and the current vogue for shimmering falsetto these voices project an image that just manages to sidestep the dangers of male stereotype. Like his contemporaries, Teddy Pendergrass combines tender and tough; demand and vulnerability; seductiveness and exaltation, so what's a girl to do? Since his days in Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes and the classic desperation of 'Don't Leave Me This Way', it's been hard not to succumb to the slice of the action Mr P has for hire; although it's not that easy to go all the way with this latest album. From 1968 the 'Philly sound' has become as notable for the rise of the string arranger and the glossiness of uptown disco as Motown was to the ironing out of r&b's edges. Much of this collection relies on that sparkling, but tantalisingly unsatisfactory, backdrop; each track individually produced by one of the many songwriters concerned, and passing your ear like an upbeat whisper. The lyrics make for a not altogether uninteresting emotional scenario — from a man about to topple into the unknown, to manipulated lover, and back again — but it doesn't result in the kind of dramatic highpoint Teddy Pendergrass is capable of. This is finally shown up, amongst the sexual cosiness, by the track 'Philly's eminece grise, Thom Bell, is involved in. Aside from the Gamble & Huff melter 'Don't Ever Stop', and 'Heaven Only Knows' is that sublime piece of confirming sensuality on which TP has Fun, his voice soaring, plummeting and growling just like you know it should. As on all the best occasions — it's worth waiting for. (Penny Valentine)

Malcolm X and Keith LeBlanc: 'No Sell Out' (Tommy Boy 12" Import)

It's unusual for a 12" single to merit a review on its own, but this is a special record which demands special recognition. Tommy Boy Records is the home of Afrika Bambaataa, Planet Patrol, Jonzun Crew and Whizz Kid — the vanguard of hip-pop culturalists. This is probably their most important release so far. McLarenite enthusiasm for ghetto youth and athleticism have ensured that even after 'The Message' the political sophistication and complexity of hip pop culture are infrequently acknowledged. For every Bambaataa there seems to be ten gangs of exuberant street kids who feed a romantic enthusiasm for New York by invoking 'West Side Story' in Reaganomic garb. Keith LeBlanc's devastating homage to Malcolm's memory is set to fracture the stereotype of mindless B Boys and



No prizes for guessing that BLACK UHURU's new album is tailored to the requirements of a US market which Sly and Robbie have plundered so successfully this year with Gwen Guthrie. The good news is that 'Anthem' (Island) marks a partial re-introduction of melody into their material. It is therefore a great improvement on 'Chill Out' even though it returns to ground that was covered with greater enthusiasm on their first three albums. At least they are playing something like reggae again. Fans who have sought in vain for worthy successors to 'General Penitentiary' and 'I Love King Selassie' will find some satisfaction in 'Try It', which reworks 'Leaving To Zion' in an '84 fashion, and 'Bull In The Pen' which adapts the tune of 'Abortion' to a more acceptable lyric. The Jamaican 45, 'Botanical Roots', is the best thing they've done since 'Garvey's Days'. A well organised horn section is featured throughout. Michael Rose's wails, and the unison singing of his photogenic sidekicks still has to contend with the possibility of being upstaged by the Dunbar/Shakespeare production team. 'Roots' is a showcase for Robbie's ever-improving bass and Sly has at last achieved a true balance between his Simmons Drums and his old-time trap set. Uhuru are a totally inappropriate vehicle for his obsession with the songs of his funky American namesake Sly Stone, whose 'Somebody's Watching You' is covered here and ends up sounding like Squeeze. I could also have done without Darryl Thompson's overblown rock guitar. That apart, the recovery seems to be underway. (Paul Gilroy)

Breakdancers once and for all. The basic idea is simple: fragments of Malcolm's speeches have been edited into the most treacherous of electro-funk rhythms and dubbed without mercy. The result is not so much a record about Malcolm, though its defence of the tradition he represents is elaborate. LeBlanc has succeeded in integrating Malcolm's ideas with the beat so that each expresses and reinforces the other. He builds a new argument for the 80s out of Malcolm's aphorisms, emphasising particular points with thunderous computer drum breaks. It becomes a double tribute, first to Malcolm and then to the creative political energies of the dispossessed.

Moments of this intensity are becoming in-

creasingly rare in contemporary soul music. It's up there with 'We're a Winner', 'Say It Loud' and 'Chocolate City'. Don't miss out. (Paul Gilroy)

Segun Adewale: 'Adewale Play For Me' (Sterns Africa)

Segun Adewale is currently referred to as the crown prince of Juju by his Lagos following, and, at 28, he's a lot younger than the king, Sunny Ade, and the high priest, Ebenezer Obey. To befit his youthful status, Segun's Juju is more pacy, urgent and verbal; he calls his system 'Yopop' within which he attempts to incorporate popular Yoruba vocal music, African percussions, and Highlife and Afrobeats Jazz references.

'Adewale Play For Me' reflects his concern that Juju music may not maintain its high popularity for long as it seldom attempts to cut across frontiers. As a result on 'Oshogbo Orobi' and 'Odaran Kan To Sa' he sets out to indigenise his music by using local sing songs updated as vibrant vocal interplay set upon traditional drum patterns.

His concerns though are steeped in the Yoruba language's folk messages, the 'proverbial lyric', unlike Fela's modern critique delivered in the very 'urban' Pidgin English. One questions though, bearing in mind Fela's success, how effective Segun's utilisation of the aural folk tradition will be in internationalising Juju music, however innovative his interpretations.

Political issues aside, the more addictive songs are the rounded musical arrangements which buzz in the light dizzy Juju mould. 'Adewale Play For Me' is that sumptuous alliance of clammy pedal steel, infectious chorus and swift dexterous rhythms built around the Maracas (Shebere), the Agogo (cowbells) and the Joo-Joo-Joo Gbedun (Talking drum). Segun's fine guitar is apparent on the glittering 'Yo Pop Music' leading a melt down of luxuriously intertwining guitars, an irresistible hot today for December's chilly dances and draughty parties. (Charles De Ledesma)

Cheryl Lynn: 'Preppie' (CBS)/Melba Moore: 'Never Say Never' (Capitol)

These two have recently been elevated to the first division of modern female r&b singers. Both produced their best work to date during the last 12 months. Their new albums successfully consolidate that promotion.

'Never Say Never' is less adventurous than 'Preppie'. Melba opts to stay within the space carved out by her recent collaboration with Kashif on 'The Other Side Of The Rainbow'. Side one is utterly reliable dance music, you can drop the needle down in the first groove and hully gully without stopping for twenty minutes. If you liked 'My Love's Coming At You' or Evelyn King's 'Love Come Down' you'll go wild over 'Love Me Right' and 'Keepin' My Lover Satisfied'. The musical moods are set, less by Melba's warm but anonymous alto than by Kashif's synclavier and Ira Siegel's crisp rhythm guitar. The latter stands out on 'Livin' For Your Love' (the killer cut).

Dayton's Rahni Harris has produced 3 out of 4 on the less satisfactory side two. He does a Tom Keating with the aural trademarks of more original producers. Next time Melba should let Kashif and pals handle the whole album.

Cheryl Lynn has a genuine, gospel scream which cuts right through Melba's supperclub polish. She has seized her career from the hands of outside producers and done the job herself. The result doesn't reach the heights of her last, brilliant album 'Instant Love' but when it is good it's very good indeed. The opener 'Encore' shares a brooding cabaret quality with Chaka's 'Ain't Nobody'. 'Fix It' features Michael Henderson's bass, and 'Love Rush' toughens up the Kashif sound with an electro-drum backbone under a long melody line. 'Preppie' and 'Free' indulge soul music post-Beat it vogue for rock sounds. Ira Siegel pops up again too, sharing guitar duties with his musical mentor Melvin Ragin. (Paul Gilroy)

Lynn Hope: 'Lynn Hope & His Tenor Sax' (Aladdin reissue)

Leroy Jones (Amiri Baraka) wrote that Lynn Hope 'would make the most perverted hopes sensual and possible... he blasted all night, crawled and leaped... and made to destroy the ghetto'. That fervour is recaptured by this LP.

Moving away from '40s bop, Hope's r&b leaned heavily on Tin Pan Alley ('Blue Moon', 'Tenderly', 'September Song'); very showbiz but every bit as popular as King Curtis and Jay McNeely.

Hope mostly shunned the raucousness of these honkers and shouters; his clearer, more sentimental tone veers towards the cocktail lounge with the vibes and open guitar chords of 'Don't Worry About Me'. 'Summertime', though, is transformed into a garish, seamy tour de force: you can almost see the twinkling nightclub lights, feel the sweat off the walls.

Like many postwar jazzmen, Lynn Hope and his band were black Muslims, wearing turbans on stage. Showmanship, certainly, but also an expression of black pride, and not restricted to the men: his sister Myriam played piano, and became Myriam 'The Black & Ethel'.

Hope was too cynical for rock and roll, and as his 'The Scorch' (1957) shows, his attempts at r&r were undistinguished. Redundant in America, his music carried to Jamaica, where Roland Alphonso and Tommy McCook slowly turned it into ska. Years later, Alphonso recorded a lovely version of 'Blue Moon', lifted wholesale from Hope. 81-1986

This French import is part of a series which includes... Working for London