

2 artists return to scene —1 weak and 1 strong

By WILSON LINDSEY
"Martha Reeves" (MCA)
Martha Reeves' long absence from the recording scene has puzzled many people who remembered and enjoyed the many fine recordings she made with the Vandellas for Motown.

It's an all too familiar question regarding artists who leave Motown. Several past hit-makers have faded away, and then again, some has risen to even further heights, for example the Four Tops and Spinners.

Martha Reeves has undergone a change in direction no doubt brought about by her producer

Richard Perry of Tiny Tim and Ringo Starr fame.

Richard Perry is a rock producer and his heavy hand is every where in this LP. Martha rocks all right, and the band breaks on some of these pieces absolutely burn.

There is a definite mechanical feeling in several of her vocals that detract from the solidity and direction of Perry's hand-picked musicians.

I get the feeling from listening to this LP that Martha was only into half of the songs chosen for her. I don't think it is a coincidence that one of Martha's finer performances is "Facsimile," the only song she co-wrote for the album.

Perry's presence in this LP is as obvious as Martha's, and his pop-oriented heavy use of "hooks" throughout the arrangements sometimes intrudes upon what she is doing.

I think one of the main differences in the production of R & B songs and straight rock is what degree the singer is emphasized in proportion to the back-up.

In this rock LP, the musicians and the arrangements compete with Martha rather than complement her on many of the songs.

Perry's choice of musicians was excellent. Everyone turned in fine energetic performances. This LP could literally have been released as an instrumental effort. Furthermore, Perry's decision to re-qualize Martha's voice gives it a tinnny sound that sounds great on a

car radio but leaves a bit to be desired on a full range stereo.

This LP has many fine points, my only major criticism is its lack of feeling. I know Martha Reeves can do better. "Storm In My Soul," "Wild Night," "You've Got Me For Company," and "Sweet Misery" are the stand out tracks.

"Bad Company" (Swan Song)

This LP features one of the finest rock singers in the business—Paul Rogers. Paul was the lead vocalist of Free, and he hasn't lost his touch in Bad Co. This LP contains some of Free's feel, lacking only the melodic influence bassist Andy Fraser contributed during his stay with Rogers' old band.

Bad Co. is the first LP released for Led Zeppelins new recording company Swan Song. Zep's influence is noticed immediately in the sound Simon Kirke obtains from his drums, the inimitable Led Zeppelin think.

Bad Co. is a heavy rock group whose technique again revolves around the vocalist Rogers. The band doesn't exactly lay back, they just don't feel that the vocalist should compete with a lot of guitar noodling.

This approach for a band with their sonic impact is unconventional and much more effective, for they draw their audience to listen to what Rogers is saying, rather than just hearing a band.

Bad Co.'s first LP is an admirable effort for a company's first release and it's really fine to hear Paul Rogers singing again.

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