

Top Albums of the Decade: a Gateway series (IV)

The Arts Department drives on in its survey of people's opinions on the "Top Albums of the Decade." Readers are invited to submit comment and contribute their own opinions.

This week the funky opinions of staffer Richard [Name] [Name].

When I began to compile this list, I didn't think I could come up with ten "classic" rhythm and blues albums. Not that this is meant to be a put down on the music, but I wanted to list albums which were artistic breakthroughs at the time of their initial release and which had survived the ultimate test — that they're still enjoyable to listen to. Another question was whether these albums are still in print or at least available as an import. Disco-oriented albums are not included in this list because disco did not come a force unto itself until 1974 and it was not fair to divide R&B albums from disco until quite late. Unfortunately, many of the old style R&B albums have opted for disco or faced musical oblivion in the delete bins. Hopefully, the eighties will breathe new life into this dying art form. Anyway, here's my list of the top ten "soul" albums of the seventies.

1. Marvin Gaye *What's Going On* 1971.
A radical departure for Gaye and Motown at the time of its release, this album represents an ecological awareness of man's physical environment, which had been attempted before this time, avoided or halfhearted. Such classics as "Mercy Mercy Me (The Ecology)", and "What's Going On", make this the best album of the seventies.

2. The Isley Brothers *3 + 3* 1973.
The three original Isley Brothers are joined by two younger brothers and a cousin on this set which could be termed "Rock 'n Soul". Heavy use of a moog and electric guitars set this apart from the regular R&B albums of the time. Many of today's younger funk acts owe a debt to the Isleys for breaking ground.

3. The Spinners *Spinners* 1973.
Few soul albums have generated four-million selling singles. On this, their first album for Atlantic, after leaving Motown, the Spinners hit paydirt and their smooth harmonizing sets a new standard for male vocal groups in the seventies. Although successful throughout the seventies, the Spinners never topped this initial effort.

4. Aretha Franklin *Spirit In The Dark* 1970.
Although Aretha has had some shining moments in the later seventies, this is her standout recording. Writing five of the tracks herself, Aretha smokes with the aid of her tight rhythm section. Strings are mercifully kept to a minimum.

5. Labelle *Phoenix* 1975
While not containing any sure fire AM radio fare such as "Lady Marmalade", this album contained eight tunes written by Labelle member, Nona Hendryx, proving once and for all that a female group could have balls. Perhaps the most original and innovative black music ever created. Too bad it never caught on commercially.

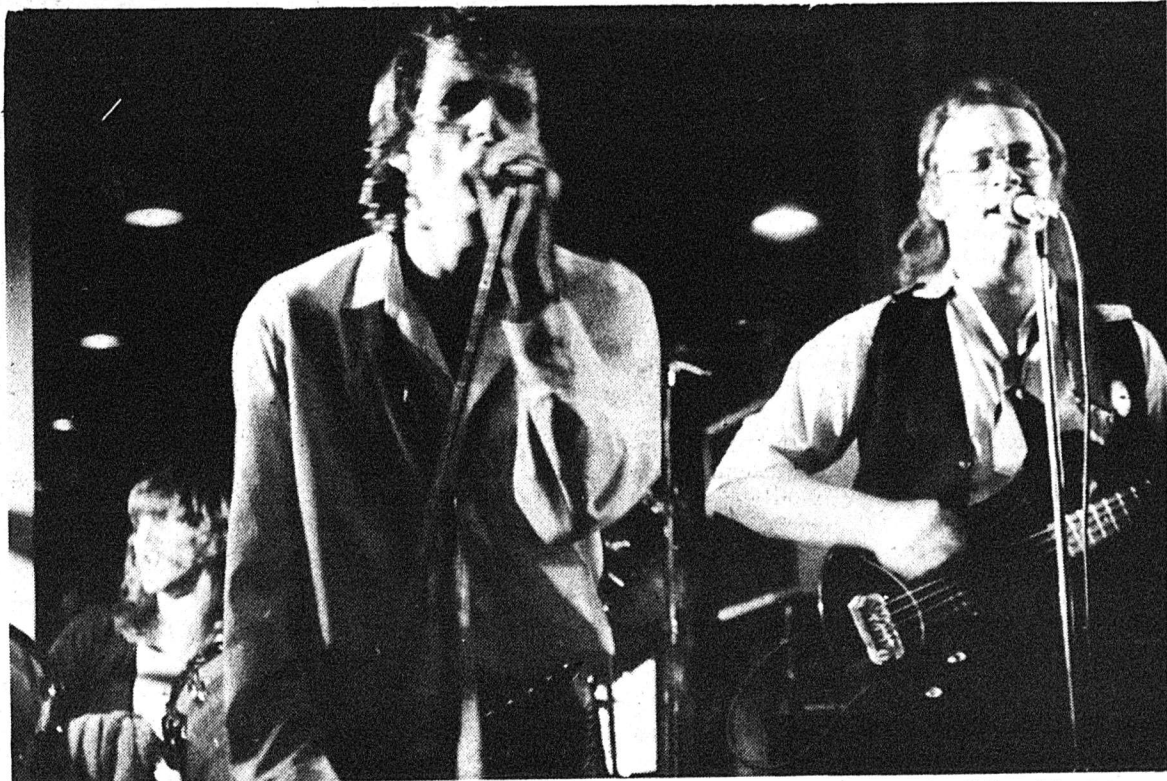
6. Stevie Wonder *Talking Book* 1972
While any Wonder album is good enough to place on a list such as this one, *Talking Book* signals Wonder's emergence as a composer to be reckoned with. Highlights include "Superstition" and the grammy award winning, "You Are The Sunshine Of My Life", already considered a modern day standard.

7. Millie Jackson *Caught Up* 1974
This "concept" album chronicling the two sides of love as seen by a mistress and a wife was the earthiest album at the time of its release and won a Grammy for best R&B album of the year. Millie's compositions have maintained their ragged-edged vitality.

8. Ann Peebles *I Can't Stand The Rain* 1974
Playing the "wronged" woman to the hilt, Ann scores with this Memphis style, "cry in your beer music" the likes of which has not been heard since Otis Redding. Beware of the current disco version of "I Can't Stand The Rain". The original is dynamite. Musical direction provided by Willie Mitchell, the genius behind Al Green.

9. Isaac Hayes & Dionne Warwick *A Man And A Woman* 1977
Though this choice may raise a few eyebrows, this two-disc live performance recorded in Atlanta, Georgia, is the best thing Hayes and Warwick have ever recorded. Perhaps the strange coupling in conjunction with a live audience drew out what many suspected was there, but never expected to hear. Truly a classic performance.

10. Commodores *Commodores Live* 1977
The "Black Beatles"? Perhaps a somewhat optimistic claim, but this self-contained band delivers the goods on this double live disc. "Easy", "Brick House" and "Just To Be Close To You" point out the Commodores' versatility and why they are the top R&B attraction today. The Commodores have the potential to be the first black band to bridge the "soul-rock" division in music.



The Nerve, who shocked, schlocked, and rocked RATT last weekend. Pub patrons were distinguished guests at the Nerve's last gig. Oh well, we hate long goodbyes...

photo Peter Nagainis

Arts calendar

The following student recitals will be given in Recreation Hall, free of admission, on the dates listed. Persons wishing to attend are asked to contact the Arts Department office, 432-3263, as the schedule is subject to change.

- March 20, 8 pm. University of Alberta Stage Band will perform.
- March 21, 5 pm. Heather Klassen, pianist. 8 pm. [Name] Bowen, pianist.
- March 22, 5 pm. Lynn Piening, flautist. 8 pm. Gilbert [Name], violinist.
- March 23, 5 pm. Joanne Boychuk, pianist.
- March 25, 3 pm. Students of the Art Song Interpretation Class of Alexandra Munn will perform.

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