

Instant brilliance: Join the Club

by David Lutes for CKDU

Colour by Numbers is sure to secure Culture Club's position as the music industry's next big thing. Their wonderful mixture of soul, light weight funk, and pure pop is the perfect vehicle for one of the most exciting and beautiful instruments in pop today - Boy George's voice. And the Boy knows how to use it. Unlike much of the new music emerging from Britain, Boy George seems unafraid to let emotion creep into his voice.

Whereas *Kissing to be Clever*, the Club's first album, was filled with island-calypto sounds, *Colour by Numbers* owes a heavy debt to Motown. From the occasional gospel overture to the vocal interplay between the Boy and the wonderful Helen Terry, the influence is obvious. The change seems to have its origin in the secret single at the end of *Kissing*. But on *Colour*, the seed has taken root and grown.

Side One opens with "Karma Chameleon", an up-beat song of love and confusion with some

neat harmonica parts. The next cut, "It's a Miracle", sounds like something from an old Gladys Knight album, but twice as nice. On "Black Money" we receive our first hint of the range of possibilities for Boy George and Helen Terry. The band lays a beautiful quiet background for a duel between the two voices. The love-struck lyrics that the Boy sinks into are counterpointed by the sassy gospel wail of Terry to create an impression of the depth of the song. "Changing Every Day" slows things down and helps set up the lovely hymn-like "That's the Way".

"Church of the Poison Mind", the first single on the North American charts, opens Side Two on a jump-up note. "Miss Me Blind" is a synth-pop dance cut that hearkens back to the sounds of "Kissing to be Clever". The dark "Mister Man" is pointed at the ugly street tough and is brought alive with the bright horn section of Steve Grainger and Terry Bailey. "Storm Keeper" is simply a slowed-down version of "Miss Me". The album closes with "Victims", which at first

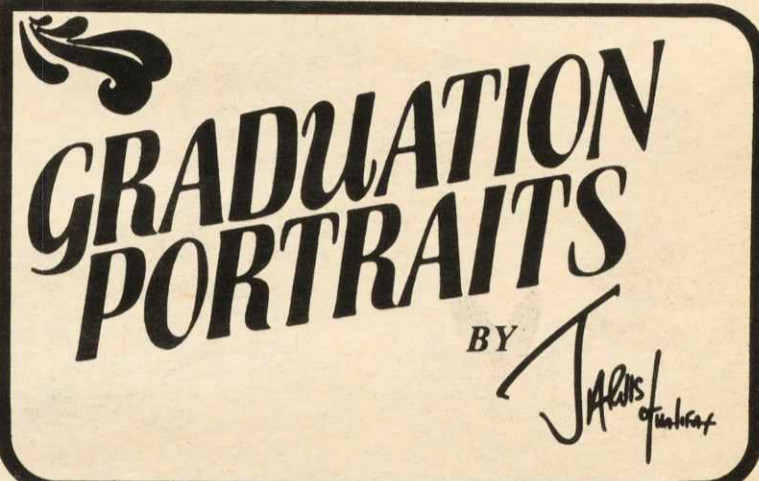
sounds like some smaltzy Lionel Richie remake. But the difference is that Boy George can put intelligence and passion into the superior lyrics of the song and the band plays with feeling and not just for effect.

It may sound like the Culture Club is simply a showcase for Boy George. In fact it is far from it. Though the Boy would surely brighten any group he touched, it is the solid support of the rest of the Club that makes the combination click. With guitarist Roy Hay, drummer Ian Moss and bassist Mickey Craig sharing in the song-writing, the album is definitely a group effort.

When *Colour by Numbers* was released in Britain this year it entered the charts at Number One. Though I doubt the Club will see the success of their British endeavours repeated in music-conservative North America, they will still make quite an impression. Not only is Culture Club one of the best new bands around, but Boy George has also created a sensation with his romantic androgyny and a fascination with the secrets that he has yet to answer.



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