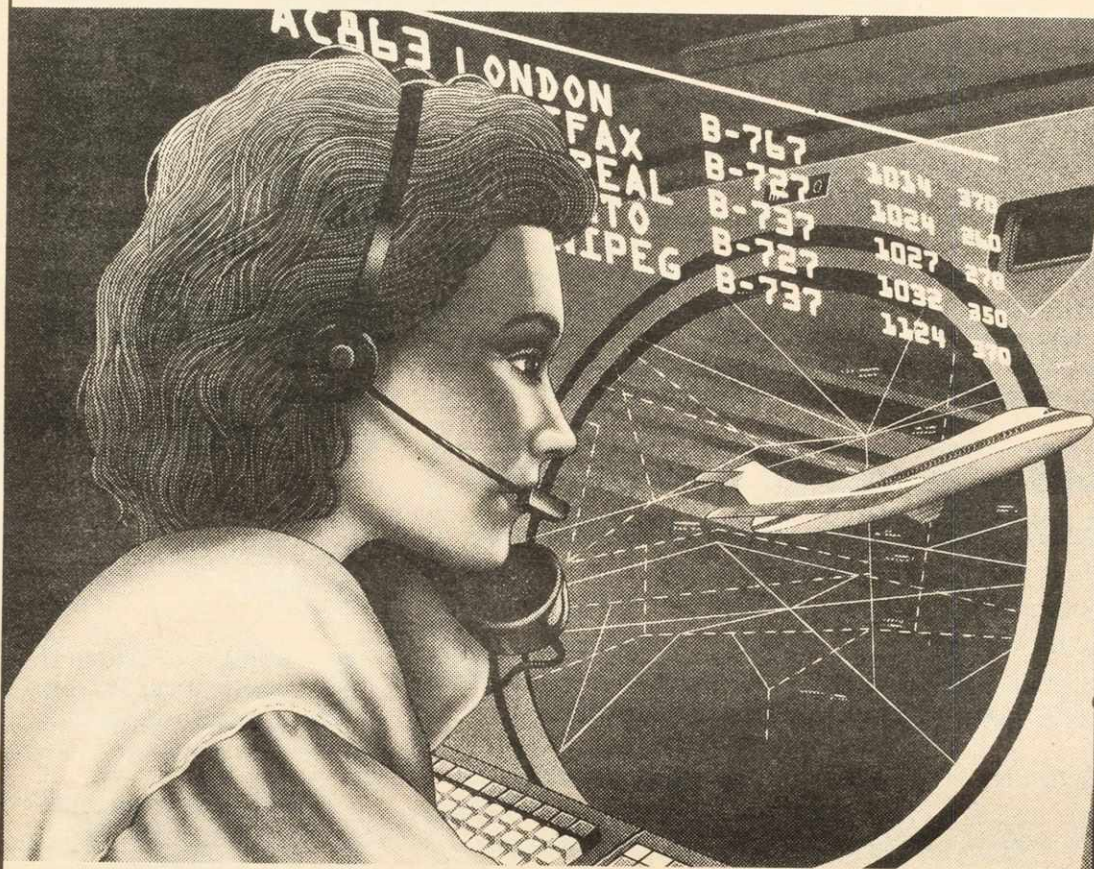


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ARTS

Duke's discs

by Andrew Duke

THIS HOUSE MUSIC compilation showcases the talents of various bands on

the DeConstruction label, the home of Guru Josh and the now-in/famous

Black Box.

Yes these two successes do contribute: Josh provides a throwaway "classical" version of his "Infinity" hit and calls it "Warehouse Requiem"; Black Box cover the Earth, Wind and Fire track "Fantasy". The latter cut serves only as a taster of what's to come from the forthcoming solo release by Black Box vocalist Martha Wash.

No, the big names have nothing new to offer here. The highlights come from Wendell Williams, N-Joi, Marina Van-Rooy, Ben Chapman, and Eden's Paradise. Williams, with some help from remixers Arthur Baker and 808 State, performs a quirky rap on top of, wait for it, samples from Black Box's "Everybody Everybody". The aptly titled, "Anthem", from N-Joi, is a sturdy house track. Eden's Paradise (DJs Frankie Bones and Tommy Musto) does a wonderful job of weaving added vocals to bits from Orbital's "Chime". Remixer Ben Chapman lays snippets of a Dr. Ruth-type therapist on a laid-back, slow-thumping groove for "Amor". Marina Van-Rooy injects some life into an airy and original "Sly One" with her interesting voice. "Freaky Dreamer" is the best track of the bunch, and comes from a band called Freaky Dreamer. The credits are sketchy, but Guru Josh helps out, and if you do forget about the music you won't be able to get the incredible vocal work on this song out of your head.

Mental Floss For The Globe
Urban Dance Squad
(BMG)

THIS RELEASE HAS been out for a long time, but it is only now starting to garner the attention it deserves. Urban Dance Squad formed in 1987 in Amsterdam. Knowing that the band has toured and appeared with Fishbone, Living Colour, Firehose, 24/7 Spyz, and the Red Hot

Chili Peppers, one could note their similarity to these bands and pass them off as wannabees.

They have the same energy levels, ability to play a proper rock song and toss off a rap or two, and musical diversity, but they have their own twisted outlook to save them. Turntables, i.e. a DJ's scratches and sample drops, are prominent in the mix. UDS is not recycling old songs to make new ones, as some artists are doing, though. The turntable is used as an instrument to enhance the songs, not used Pop Will Eat Itself-style to try to hide a lack of talent.

You have probably heard UDS before. "Deeper Shade of Soul" was their first single and is finally massive in the charts. "No Kid", single number two, is just as catchy, "mellow" (to borrow an oft-used UDS word), and inventive. This track takes a crack at the business of manufacturing packaged no-talent rappers such as MC Hammer and Vanilla Ice. "Piece Of Rock" deals with crack and baseheads, while "Famous When You're Dead" laments the loss of the now constantly-referred-to Scott La Rock. With partner Kris Parker (KRS-One), La Rock performed in Boogie Down Productions until he was shot one day four years ago on his daily trek to his day job as a guidance counsellor.

The serious topics are balanced by "Fast Lane" (a dig at The Eagles, perhaps, with its look at greed and big egos in the music business), "Prayer For My Demo", and the ingenuity of "Brainstorm On The UDS". The release closes with a bit of hygiene: "God Blasts The Queen" opens with "You need a mental floss because your head is so full of shit" and then rages on in a storm of guitars for the next four minutes while, fittingly, mutilating the official anthem of the UK, "Land Of Hope And Glory (Pomp and Circumstance march No.1)".

This compact disc comes doctor-recommended.

"takes a crack at no-talent rappers such as M.C. Hammer and Vanilla Ice"