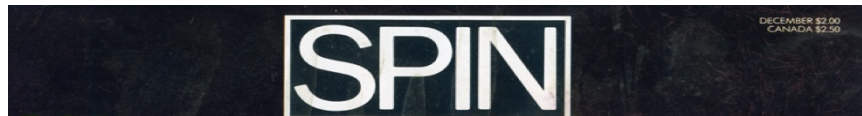


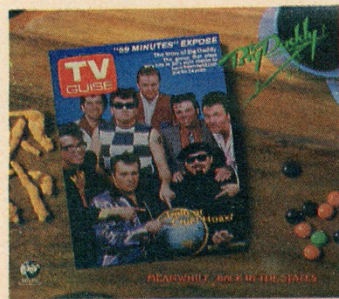
# BIG DADDY: "MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE STATES" - SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -



distinctive, idiosyncratic voices that they dominate the sound on their songs. When Stipe sings, he envelops the group in the mystical ambiguity of R.E.M., only the Palominos rock a little tougher, and Stipe's moods become a shade darker. Even the cover of Moby Grape's "Omaha" sounds—and, more importantly, *feels*—like a meatier edition of the Athens crew, with a stronger tendency toward artifice and manipulation. Lydon's Rotten-by-numbers reading of Robert Kennedy's "The Animal Speaks," *avec belch*, transforms the Palominos into a roadhouse version of Public Image. Lydon drowns this romantic pop tune in his harsh cynicism.

The generally stellar accompaniment occasionally gets buried in the blustery mix. But more often, it gets subsumed in songwriting that is sometimes just adequate. This is one of the drawbacks of not being a real band, the material gets processed, not developed. Which was fine for the mostly instrumental, largely improvised first album, but cuts into the power of a pop album like this. *Visions of Excess* is good, at times great, at times phenomenal. It coulda been better. But it's cool to hear what super players do with indifferent songs. Bands should be this inventive.

—John Leland



**Big Daddy**  
*Meanwhile Back in the States*  
Rhino Records

I think I know Big Daddy. Or at least I know his type. He's the kind of guy you meet at parties who has memorized every episode of *Leave It to Beaver*. He still wears T-shirts under another shirt. And, most important, his album collection in-

cludes nothing since Buddy Holly died.

In other words, his mind may be in the '80s, but his soul is stuck somewhere around 1958. That's a tidy way of explaining *Meanwhile, Back in the States*, a rollicking collection of recent pop hits that have undergone a tricky tune-change operation and now leap off the turntable sounding like '50s-style rockers.

It's an original idea, so it doesn't matter that Big Daddy commits massive grand larceny, stealing from everyone. "Sussudio" becomes suspiciously like "Runaround Sue." "Jump" turns into a dead ringer for "Summertime Blues." "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" is really "Duke of Earl," and best of all, "Purple Rain" becomes "Not Fade Away." You can almost see Prince's little excuse for a mustache curling up at the very thought.

Now, as any duck-tailed purist will tell you, rock 'n' roll just hasn't been the same since it started running up the electric bill. With that in mind, Big Daddy has done an amazing job of bringing the music back to its original sound. Snare drums pound away on every song, doing some serious booty stomping on those electric drums everyone has these days. There's not one single sissy keyboard within earshot. Best of all, acoustic guitars are played loud, raving on just like in the old days of sock hops and the Red Menace. Topping off the whole thing like a cherry on a chocolate malted are Big Daddy's squealing lead vocals and lots of doo-wop choruses. You know, the sort of stuff you wail along to whenever an oldie comes on the car radio.

Okay, so you're probably thinking, "Sure, it sounds like a cute idea. But isn't it really just another novelty album to play once and then stick in the dust to keep my Weird Al Yankovic company?"

Sure, "funny" records wear about as well as a leisure suit. This is a *fun* record, though, not "funny," and there's a big difference. *Back in the States* is good for an initial laugh, but once you're past that you realize that Big Daddy has actually made some recent pop pap into good stuff. "I Want to Know What Love Is" and "Flashdance," to name but two, become legitimate songs. The man isn't so much making fun of the new material as he is reveling in the old.

Still skeptical? OK, try the Big Daddy Taste Test. Have a party and put on the slick, original version of "Safety Dance" or "All Night Long." See how everybody dances sort of politely. Okay, now play the same tunes as heard on *Meanwhile Back in the States*.

It's not even close. Even the guys in the penny loafers and J.C. Penney sport shirts are out there twisting and frugging. Big Daddy may get a chuckle or two, but even better, he'll have everybody cutting loose the way all good rockers are supposed to.

—Craig Tomashoff

SPIN MAGAZINE - 12/85

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)



# BIG DADDY: "MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE STATES" - SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -

Sunday, September 15, 1985

The Pittsburgh Press

## RECORDS

# Aretha Franklin back on track with 'Who's Zoomin'

By Pete Bishop

The Pittsburgh Press

Last year was Tina Turner's comeback year. Based on the strength of "Who's Zoomin' Who?" (Arista AL8-8286), there's no reason why 1985 shouldn't be Aretha Franklin's.

"Freeway of Love," extremely danceable and closer to old Motown than the grittier Stax/Volt sound, has given "Lady Soul" her first Top-10 hit since '73, and there's more good listening where that came from.

There's ballad "Sweet Bitter Love" on which Miss Franklin proves that being on the "wrong" side of 40 is no barrier to vocal gymnastics.

There are slow-rocking "Until You Say You Love Me" and "Ain't Nobody Ever Loved You," an invitation to romance set to a happy, lilting calypso beat complete with steel drums.

There's "Push," the closest thing to "get-down" soul and a duet with Peter Wolf; he's got the feeling but not the vocal richness. And there's "Sisters Are Doin' It for Themselves," which first popped up on the Eurythmics' "Be Yourself Tonight" earlier this year.

Low spots — the mild-tempo title track, a less inspired song and more repetitious arrangement, and "Integrity," on which the disco beat is too tame and the backing strings too syrupy for the "sermon" lyrics — aren't all that low.

Miss Franklin, whose voice is smoother and less nasal than Miss Turner's, sounds

terrific throughout, with plenty of power, quality and soul, and producers Narada Michael Walden, the Eurythmics' Dave Stewart and the star herself never let the instrumental helpers put that commanding voice into second place.

"Who's Zoomin' Who?" she says, is "one of my best albums ever," and it's hard to disagree.

□ □ □

BIG DADDY'S gimmick is offering today's hits in musical modes of the '50s and pre-Beatles '60s. On their last album, their pet ploy was playing ballads as rockers and vice versa. Amusing to be sure but hardly guaranteed to nab airplay.

So on "Meanwhile... Back in the States" (Rhino RNLP 854) they've changed a tad, playing such hits not just in general styles but in ones from individual songs. And the results are excellent.

Leading the pack are "Always on My Mind" done like "Chantilly Lace" and "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" done like "Duke of Earl," especially the opening lines from basso Tom "Bubba" Lee: "Do do do do da girls, do do do da girls, do do do da girls..." Sing it yourself; it fits.

Other gem pairings (today's hit first, yesterday's second): "I Want to Know What Love Is" and "La Bamba" (with a verse in Spanish), "Sussudio" and "Runaround Sue," "I Just Called to Say I Love You" and "Whispering Bells," "Flashdance" and "Little Darlin'," "Safety Dance" and "The Twist," "Purple Rain" and "Not Fade Away."



Aretha Franklin

Shows power, quality and soul

Worth special mention are "Dancing in the Dark," which sounds very good as a ballad, and "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me" done in finger-popping, doo-wop style — and a cappella to boot.

Making it all better is Big Daddy's talent; they're as good or better than most people you'll hear on any station. "Meanwhile" proves the continuity of rock 'n' roll over three decades; a wide age range can have a lot of fun with this one.

P.S.: The "TV listings" ("The Madonna Reed Show," "Abbott & Elvis Costello," "Don Knotts Landing," "Kukla, Fran & Muhammad Ali") and disclaimer ("Warning: This album contains sax & violins") on the jacket are a howl.

□ □ □

THE OUTFIELD might as well be called "The Police Jr." Singer Tony Lewis could win a Sting sound-alike contest; he has the same high pitch, inflections and loss of diction the higher and louder he goes. The vocal harmony by guitarist John Spinks, helpers Frank Callaghan and Bill Wittman and Lewis is equally on the mark.

Spinks's songs, however, are less imaginative and poetic and far longer on regular progressions of tonic chords than the Police's. But they're OK ones nonetheless, and on "Play Deep" (Columbia BFC 40027) the core trio (Spinks on guitar, Lewis on bass and drummer Alan Jackman) plays nicely.

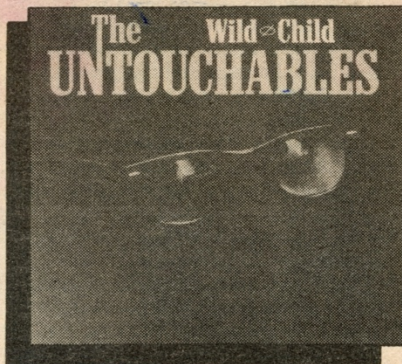
"61 Seconds" has the best words ("Can you imagine a man with no name. I can, I can, I can... 61 seconds is all it takes for the nine-to-five man to be more than one minute late"), although you wish the sad sack would rage against his lot just once a la Bob Seger's "Feel Like a Number"

THE PITTSBURG PRESS - 9/15/85

The winner in the comedy-rock sweepstakes is, without doubt, the over-age, overweight octet known as Big Daddy. On *Meanwhile, Back in the States* (Rhino/8.98 list), the group continues its basic premise: they have been prisoners in Southeast Asia since a 1959 USO tour, and, now that they're back, they're continuing to cover the hits the only way they know how. And that way is, stylistically, your basic Buddy Holly, Bill Haley, Elvis, Dion... you get the picture.

So while the record pales a bit after you've gotten the 14 musical jokes, you'll still want to rush out and play it for all your friends. "Hey, listen to this: Pat Boone singing 'Dancing in the Dark!' 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' as interpreted by Gene (Duke of Earl) Chandler! Buddy Holly doing 'Purple Rain!'" It's a gas.

Oh, Big Daddy even has funny liner notes (remember liner notes?). The sleeve mimics a page from TV Guide, combining personalities from the '50s with those from the '80s. How about "The Madonna Reed Show?" Or you can watch "Little Richard's House on the Prairie." Or "I Married Joan Collins." Now you make up a few. In fact, send your best ones to the *Pulse!* letters column; what the hell. ●



PULSE/TOWER RECORDS MAGAZINE - 10/85

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)



# BIG DADDY: "MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE STATES" - SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -

## POPULAR MUSIC

*Discs and tapes reviewed by*  
Chris Albertson  
Phyl Garland  
Alanna Nash  
Mark Peel  
Peter Reilly  
Steve Simels

**ASIA: *Astra*.** Asia (vocals and instrumentals). *Go; Voice of America, Hard on Me; Wishing; Rock and Roll Dream, Countdown to Zero*; and four others. GEFEN 24072-1 \$8.98, © 24072-4 \$8.98.

Performance: 100% recycled  
Recording: Good

If you seek safety and security when buying records, you'll love "Astra." Every note has been pretested and proved effective on albums by Toto, Journey, Loverboy, or the Moody Blues. From the lyric sheet, it seems that half the songs on this deeply mediocre record are about nuclear Armageddon, and half are about love. I challenge anyone to listen to the album blindfolded and tell me which are which. Okay, so Asia isn't the most original band in the world—but the guys play their guts out for their fans, right? Then what does John Wetton mean when he sings, in *Rock and Roll Dream*, "When I see the faces from the limousine, no chance of our survival." Hey, fans, that's you. *M.P.*

**BIG DADDY: *Meanwhile . . . Back in the States*.** Big Daddy (vocals and instrumentals). *I Want to Know What Love Is; Always on My Mind; Sussudio; Dancing in the Dark; I Just Called to Say I Love You, Girls Just Wanna Have Fun*, and eight others. RHINO RNLP-854 \$8.98, © RNC-854 \$8.98.

Performance: Priceless  
Recording: Very good

"Meanwhile . . . Back in the States" continues the charming conceit of Big Daddy's first album—that the band is an authentic bunch of Fifties rockers, imprisoned for twenty-four years by Communist rebels, who now play contemporary songs in the only style they know. It may be a one-joke act, but it has a surprising resonance. In fact, the group's demolition jobs on such recent hits as Prince's *Purple Rain* or Foreigner's *I Want to Know What Love Is* manage to show just how slight these songs are and at the same time make them far more exciting than the originals. Whether you call it art, satire, or even a taxi, this is very funny stuff. Exhibit A is the *Duke of Earl* treatment given to Cyndi Lauper's *Girls Just Want to Have*



Glenn Frey (center) with Don Johnson and Phillip Michael-Thomas

**ALTHOUGH** cop shows are not my favorite TV fare, the splendid MCA album of music from *Miami Vice* makes it easy to see why that series has become such a hit. Indeed, the music is one of the stars of the show, accompanying every calculated action, underscoring every snippet of laconic dialogue. While the particular vocal artists featured on the album—Phil Collins, Tina Turner, Glenn Frey, Chaka Khan, and Grandmaster Melle Mel—were nowhere in evidence the few times I tuned in to *Miami Vice*, they come across louder and more impressive than life on the album. Moreover, the recording lets us hear them in glorious stereo sound, something far beyond the capabilities of most television sets.

The unifying musical thread on the album and the series is the work of Jan Hammer, who composed and performs the theme music and connective instrumental material. His five tracks here weave a sonic tapestry that throbs with excitement. This is music that could not have been created before the advent of synthesizers and heavily amplified electronic effects. It is the music of "now" at the peak of its intensity, yet it is steeped in such a solid musicality that the effects always seem to serve some fundamental aesthetic purpose.

The same level of excellence is maintained in the vocal tracks. Among the

best are Glenn Frey's *You Belong to the City* with its stalking, insistent pace, Phil Collins's haunting *In the Air Tonight*, which builds to an eruptive climax, and Grandmaster Melle Mel's thunder-voiced recitation of *Vice*. Mel is a master of the staccato cadences of rap, and there is a lot of heavy meaning in his rhythmically accented allusions to prostitution, mob extortion, and the failures of our criminal-justice system. For those who have ignored rap, this track would be an ideal place to begin developing an appreciation of it as an art form.

I also cannot pass over the contribution of Tina Turner, whose performance in *Better Be Good to Me* is fully equal to her hit *Private Dancer*. Overall "Miami Vice" is not only a good album—it's probably the best compilation of its type since the soundtrack from *Saturday Night Fever* helped to breathe new life into the record industry a few years ago. *Phyl Garland*

**MIAMI VICE.** Music from the television series. Jan Hammer: *Miami Vice Theme; Miami Vice; Flashback; Chase; Evan*. Glenn Frey: *Smuggler's Blues; You Belong to the City*. Chaka Khan: *Own the Night*. Phil Collins: *In the Air Tonight*. Grandmaster Melle Mel: *Vice*. Tina Turner: *Better Be Good to Me*. MCA MCA-6150 \$8.98, © MCAC-6150 \$8.98, © MCAD-6150 no list price.

*Fun*, but I'm also much taken with the Eddie Cochranesque runthrough of the Pointer Sisters' *Jump* and the *Be-Bop-a-Lula* treatment of Michael Jackson's *Billie Jean*. In fact, there isn't a dull moment or a misfire gag on the whole

### EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS:

- = DIGITAL-MASTER ANALOG LP
- Ⓢ = STEREO CASSETTE
- Ⓢ = DIGITAL COMPACT DISC
- Ⓢ = MONOPHONIC RECORDING

(OVER)

STEREO REVIEW MARCH 1986 89

record. I hope these guys keep turning out albums like this forever. *S.S.*

STEREO REVIEW MAGAZINE - 3/86

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)



**BIG DADDY: "MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE STATES"**  
**- SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -**

# ENTERTAINMENT

## The Best of '85

The Pittsburgh Press

Sunday, December 29, 1985

My choices as top '85 albums:

1. "The Dream of the Blue Turtles," Sting: A connoisseur's album that made lyrical and musical impacts, an LP you wished wouldn't end. "Russians," "We Work the Black Seam," "Children's Crusade" and "Moon over Bourbon Street" were just as good as hits "If You Love Somebody Set Them Free" and "Fortress Around Your Heart."

2. "Brothers in Arms," Dire Straits: Led by "Money for Nothing," the year's best single, and jaunty near-hoedown "Walk of Life," the LP was just like their Mosque concert: nothing flashy and everything it.

3. "Nervous Nights," Hooters: The best "new-act" album in a year of very good ones. They're a hot, tight band, and "And We Danced" deserved to be a bigger hit than it was.

4. "Tough All Over," John Cafferty and the Beaver Brown Band: This year's "Born in the U.S.A.," blue-collar and escapist themes set to straight-ahead, no-frills, party-time rock 'n' roll.

5. "Be Yourself Tonight," Eurythmics: The year's best blend of techno sounds and hard rock. David A. Stewart's production gave Annie Lennox room to maneuver vocally,

and she took full advantage of it. "Would I Lie to You?" deserved to be a bigger hit.

6. "She's the Boss," Mick Jagger: An up-to-the-minute mix of drive, bounce, rock and dance beats and Jagger singing with fire and rediscovered conviction in a new role — she's in charge and he's the vulnerable one.

7. "Scarecrow," John Cougar Mellencamp: Straight from the heartland, straight from the heart, appropriate lyrics for a man of 34 to sing. Simple but strong melodies.

8. "Meanwhile ... Back in the States," Big Daddy: Just for fun. Today's hits played in the styles of specific oldies ("Always on My Mind" to "Chantilly Lace" and "Girls Just Want to Have Fun" to "Duke of Earl" were the best). Proved the continuity of rock 'n' roll over three decades.

9. "Under a Raging Moon," Roger Daltrey: Most of the old fire and

power were back in his voice, the music was contemporary and his performance was commanding. And, for Who fans, there were plenty of clues Daltrey's not merely reminiscing but hoping for a reunion.

10. "Whatever Happened to Fun ...," Candy: The music was standard, melodic pop-rock, but Jonathan Daniel's literate lyrics were incisive, near-brilliant expositions of how tough growing up can be.

Honorable mention, listed alphabetically: "Boston, Mass.," Del Fuegos; "Centerfield," John Fogerty; "Heart," Heart; "Jane Wiedlin," Jane Wiedlin; "No Jacket Required," Phil Collins; "Right Here, Right Now," Precious Metal; "Southern Accents," Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers; "3 Ships," Jon Anderson; "Vision Quest" sound track; "Who's Zoomin' Who," Aretha Franklin.

Trivia answer: "Rockin' All Over the World" by Status Quo, which regrouped for the occasion.

THE PITTSBURG PRESS - 12/29/85

(See other pages for more Big Daddy reviews)



# BIG DADDY: "MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE STATES" - SELECTED ALBUM REVIEWS -

*Meanwhile... Back In The States*  
Big Daddy  
Rhino

By Richard Cromonic

Two years ago, a bunch of excellent but unknown musicians came up with a brilliant idea. They'd take current songs and redo them in classic '50s musical styles. The story they concocted was that this touring band from the 1950s was held captive in Laos for nearly 25 years, and when they were finally released and returned to the U.S., they picked up where they left off, doing today's hits...but they didn't know how to play in any way other than what they did in the Fifties. Big Daddy was here.

Well. There were absolutely hilarious moments on the record: "Hotel California" as if Del Shannon was doing it; an a capella, doo-wop version of "Eye Of The Tiger"; the theme from "Star Wars" done à la the Ventures' "Telesat"; "Ebony And Ivory" done as a Little Richard rave-up. Because the mimicking of the stylistic elements of the various genres of '50s music was done with uncanny skill, matching it up with a song like the Cars' "Just What I Needed" could put people on the floor. What made it funnier was that you soon came to the realization how many songs are just songs after all; the song really does remain the same — especially if you do it as a cover in reverse. The record was a quirky work of sly genius.

Big Daddy is back, but now the effect has worn thin. Some of this might be unavoidable. Part of the joy of the first Big Daddy album was hearing for the first time such a clever



idea pulled off so well. Sequels are inevitably going to lose that element of surprise.

But Big Daddy doesn't seem to trust their audience this time around — and they use too heavy a hand on some of the cuts. They were subtle (well, relatively so) on their debut, but on this record they belabor the joke and make it too obvious too often. On the other hand, this album is not without great moments, so if you're familiar with the first one, you'll still not be totally disappointed.

For example, here, by putting a "be-bop-a-lula" vocal chorus on their backdating of "Billie Jean" they play their cards too broadly. On the other hand, they turn around in that song and put a "Green Onions" instrumental bridge in it, which is a snappy touch. Whereas they didn't overdo the Little Richard parody on "Ebony And Ivory," they run a Big Bopper parody on Willie Nelson's

"Always On My Mind" right into the ground. On the other hand, doing that song in the Big Bopper mode is such a loopy idea to begin with, you have to admire it.

Whereas in "Hotel California" done à la Del Shannon and "Bette Davis Eyes" done as a combination of Elvis Presley and the Marjels, they stayed true to the song, here they fiddle with Van Halen's "Jump" and "Purple Rain" so they can shoehorn the songs into Eddie Cochran (with some unnecessarily obvious "Summertime Blues" overtones) and Johnny Otis/Bo Diddley type versions, respectively.

But there are still moments where

they make it work perfectly. "Dancing In The Dark" is given a treatment that makes it sound like Pat Boone's "Moody River," and it's enough to make you weep. With laughter. They take "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" — Lauper, after all, took the chord progression from a million '50s hits, right? — and adroitly rub it up against Gene Chandler's "Duke Of Earl," with "Do-do-do do the girls, do-do do the girls, etc." taking over as the hook. Culture Club's "Do You Really Want To Hurt Me" is given a street-corner, doo-wop treatment that is better than the modern version. Lionel Richie's "All Night Long" goes

through a handful of correlations, including Bill Haley & The Comets and the Cadets' "Stranded In The Jungle," among others. And their version of "I Just Called To Say I Love You" is just plain better.

But their first album was just plain better too. Even if one heard this album first, thus removing the sequel-syndrome, the comparison between the two is tantamount to the comparison between satire and slapstick. Maybe they'll get it back together, because they'll probably go on doing it. After all, they'll never run out of new material, right?

## B.B. KING

continued from page 28



intonations with admirable agility. "I know I don't have much of a choice," he sings, "I'll go out of my mind or into the night."

Nothing else really jumps off the vinyl and into the ear. "My Guitar Sings The Blues" is a decent, modern-sounding bluesy shuffle, but a squealing synthesizer practically buries King's guitar. "My Lucille" (another ode to King's guitar: "You're the one I can depend on/When everybody else has let me down") has its soulful moments, but

a standard drum kit would complement the song's sound better than the electric one that's used.

It's also disappointing that King didn't write or co-write any of the tunes on his 50th album. A few choice King originals — performed in a more traditional, less synthetic manner — could have greatly improved the content of this LP.

If you're looking for a tasty B.B. King album, pass by this one. Seek out *Live In Cook County Jail* instead.

## Live In London Al Jarreau Warner Bros.

By Steve Dalton

Al Jarreau's another one of those oh-so-talented performers that made an oh-so-calculated career decision to become the smiling Ben Vereen of pop. 'Twas a time not too long ago when he was considered to be

one of the best jazz/r&b vocalists around. That was before he decided to pull a George Benson and head for the verdant pastures of crossover pop.

Depending on your point of view, Jarreau is either a singularly talented, interpretive stylist who can effortlessly bound pop, jazz and soul genres with a single scat, or a poseur whose "Mr. Wonderful" schtick is tiresome. Actually he falls somewhere between the two ex-

trems. When he wants to, Jarreau can impress with an amazingly elastic voice that weaves gracefully around a melody. Therein lies his problem. When Jarreau doesn't inject enough soulful emotion into his singing it begins to sound like exercises in a voice class.

Jarreau's performance on this record is a tug of war between his gifted side, and his high steppin' en-

continued on page 30