



MAY 1984

## THE HUMAN LEAGUE

**F**our albums into their career, the Human League has proved conclusively that good songwriting outlasts mere musical trends. Because of songs like "Don't You Want Me" and "(Keep Feeling) Fascination," they have been able to transcend whatever ephemeral fashion they may have been linked to. Now comes the latest installment in the Human League's catalogue of superior material: *Hysteria*, their fifth album overall and third for A&M.

"The Human League is not a one-hit wonder," wrote one columnist last year. "They're an interesting, very adept outfit with a feel for melody in their arrangements . . . Couple that with the fact that they do write songs, not just vehicles for a lot of synthesizer/keyboard wizardry, and you have a successful formula carried out by talented individuals."

Those individuals first came together in 1977, when computer operators Ian Craig Marsh and Martyn Ware teamed up with Philip Oakey. Shortly thereafter, Adrian Wright joined as visual director. Although none was trained in music, they were united by a common desire to pursue electronic adventures within the pop context. In 1978, after playing their hometown area of Sheffield, England, the Human League signed with Fast Records and released the singles "Electronically Yours" and "The Dignity of Labour."

In 1979, after signing with the Virgin label, the band's first album, *Reproduction*, was released to positive critical acclaim. The Human League's next outing, the double-pack single "HOLIDAY 80," featured an updating of Gary Glitter's "Rock 'n' Roll" which landed the band on the charts in England, as well as on "Top of the Pops." A second LP, *Travelogue*, followed in April, 1980.

Differences over the musical direction split the Human League in October, 1980. Philip Oakey (vocals, programming, keyboards) and Adrian Wright (now an occasional keyboardist) retained the band's name and regrouped. When the League returned, the new line-up included Oakey, Wright, Ian Burden (bass, keyboards, guitar) and vocalists Susanne Sulley and Joanne Catherall. That line-up enjoyed several hits abroad, including "Sound of the Crowd" and "Love Action." And with the recruitment of former Revillos leader Jo Callis on guitar, keyboards and vocals, the Human League's present-day line-up was complete.

*Dare*, the Human League's first American album, was released by A&M in February, 1982. Led by the singles "Don't You Want Me" (a Number One hit in the States) and "Love Action," the album went gold in the U.S., reaching the top spot on Billboard's Album Chart in the process. *Dare* also helped establish the Human League as "one of the most radically innovative bands of the current generation," in the words of one writer. Rolling Stone, in the meantime, described *Dare* as simply a "ravishing synth-pop album."

*Fascination!*, a five-track EP released by A&M last year, helped cement the Human League's reputation here, particularly by way of the singles "(Keep Feeling) Fascination" and "Mirror Man." "The songs are crisp and fast-paced, and the strong vocalizations that are characteristic of the League make all the tracks very enjoyable," said one critic. "*Fascination!* . . . should help to establish the Human League as a major force in modern rock."

*Hysteria* was recorded at AIR and Townhouse Studios in London. Aside from the Human League itself, the album's producers were Chris Thomas (Sex Pistols, Pretenders), who oversaw the preparation of basic tracks, and Hugh Padgham (Police), who applied the finishing touches. The League has noticeably expanded their sound by adding guitar (e.g., "The Lebanon") and continue to explore new horizons on synthesizer. And while *Hysteria* is a progression forward instrumentally, essentially it confirms that the Human League's biggest talent and appeal lies in their ability to create pop classics.



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