

September 1990

THE HUMAN LEAGUE

In 1982, the Human League made a worldwide splash with their pop classic hit, "Don't You Want Me," from their album, **Dare**. The release of "Don't You Want Me" coincided with the early days of MTV and the dawn of music videos as we know them today; the song as well as the band's modern/retro look was indelibly branded in our collective consciousness.

Dare was a number-one LP in the States, and yielded several more hit singles, including "Mirror Man," and the band's success continued into 1983 with the release of another hit single, "Keep Feeling Fascination." It seemed as though you couldn't go into a club anywhere in the country, or turn on the radio or TV, without hearing the Human League's distinctive techno-pop throb, along with their savvy lyrics and solid vocals.

Hysteria, the follow-up to **Dare** was released in 1984, with a slightly modified sound (more guitars; less synth), featuring hits like "The Lebanon," "Louise," and "Life On Your Own." In 1986, the League hooked up with dance-music masters, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis to record the smash ballad, "Human," followed by the release of the album **Crash**. In 1988, a greatest-hits record was released, marking the end of one era, and ushering in another.

With their new record, **Romantic?**, original band members Philip Oakey, Suzanne Sully and Joanne Catherall (who were also the vocal backbone of the group) continue their ten-year tradition of impossibly well-crafted songs, songs which you can't help but sing along to. The band's quirky charm is intact, as is the League's ability to craft a catchy song.

When the band first formed in 1977 in Sheffield, England, it was a bit of a lark: Founding members Oakey, Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh set out to prove that absolutely anyone could become a pop star. In true Dada-ist fashion, they wanted to turn music on its ear. They believed the guitar to be redundant, that a band could perform with completely synthesized music and by technology. Coming out of the bang-and-crash two-chord punk era, the Human League created memorable music that was sleek with a supple, driving beat, complete with well-crafted lyrics and harmonies.

Their look was as important as their sound. Taking cues from German Expressionism, the band wore their hair assymmetrically cut (the better to set off their multiplicity of earrings), severe black clothes and "Cabaret"-like make-up. Thanks to video, the look became a craze overnight, all inspired by Oakey's offbeat sense of self-adornment.

Ware and Marsh soon left the band; enter vocalists Joanne Catherall and Susanne Sulley, whom Oakey discovered dancing in a club. They joined the band, recorded their landmark album, **Dare**, and the rest is modern pop history.

On **Romantic?**, their seventh studio release, Sulley and Catherall have expanded roles in the band, and guitarist Russell Dennett and Keyboardist Neil Dutton, who played on the 1986 **Crash** tour, have joined the band to fill out the sound even further. The result is a record that rivals **Dare** as far as potential hit songs go, as well as a record that showcases a band that's been able to grow, change and weather the varying tides of trends to endure and continue to make terrific music.

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