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SIMPLE MINDS

New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84) is Simple Minds' first album for A&M. This quartet of young Scotsmen are no neophytes, however. In fact, after nearly five years together – along with six albums, numerous singles and tours of the United Kingdom and such distant shores as Canada and Australia -- Simple Minds is a group of seasoned veterans. With *New Gold Dream*, they hope to make America the latest and perhaps most impressive notch in their collective belt.

The roots of Simple Minds go back to 1977. At that time, vocalist Jim Kerr and guitarist Charlie Burchill were members of a Glasgow group with the unlikely name of Johnny and the Self Abusers. While the Self Abusers were entertaining and outraging Glasgow audiences, bassist Derek "Big Dan" Forbes was working in Spain. Upon his return to Scotland, Forbes joined a group called the Subs. Shortly thereafter, Kerr, Burchill and drummer Brian McGee disbanded the Self Abusers and founded Simple Minds. They recruited Forbes and keyboardist Mick McNeill, and by the spring of '78, Simple Minds were on their way.

A recording deal abroad was secured in late '78 and Simple Minds' first album, *Life in a Day*, was released in April of '79. A second album, *Real to Real Cacophony*, followed that same year, but despite a strongly positive critical reaction, Simple Minds found themselves struggling for commercial acceptance in the United Kingdom. They turned to Europe instead, touring there extensively and enjoying considerable success.

Simple Minds returned to Scotland to work on *Empires and Dance* (released in September, 1980), their third album. The critical acclaim continued --- *Empires and Dance* was voted one of the year's best albums by the English rock press --- but commensurate record sales continued to elude them, so Simple Minds signed a new contract with Virgin Records. It was through Virgin that they came to the attention of A&M in America, a similar route to that followed by one of 1982's biggest success stories, the Human League.

Simple Minds' next album, released in August, 1981, was actually two LPs in one; entitled *Sister Feelings Call* and *Sons and Fascination*, the two were issued as a double-album package. For the first time, Simple Minds found themselves in the Top 20 of the British album charts. Along the way, such dance-oriented-rock singles as "Sweat in Bullet" and "Love Song" established themselves as dance floor favorites throughout the U.K.

Jim Kerr, Charlie Burchill, Derek Forbes and Mick McNeill were on hand through Simple Minds' first five albums, and they remain the group's nucleus. Only the drummer's chair has had different occupants, with Brian McGee succeeded by Kenny Hyslop, Mike Ogletree (the drummer on *New Gold Dream*) and Mel Gaynor. As of this writing, Simple Minds prefer to make a go of it without a permanent drummer.

The British press is unanimous in its opinion that *New Gold Dream* is Simple Minds' crowning achievement to date. Nearly every review has talked in glowing terms of the simpler, more emotional sound and attitude the album represents. Wrote Record Mirror, "The old caginess is gone, and in its place stands a more human, heartfelt Simple Minds . . . In *New Gold Dream*, they've conquered their fear of feeling and come out shining." Melody Maker agreed, describing the album as "a majestic, haunting step forward, probably this year's finest."

Other writers have been equally impressed. Sounds described Simple Minds as "a smooth seduction," and then added, "Like the very best of music, (*New Gold Dream*) has a momentum and energy all its own --- pulsing, coursing, flowing . . . At its best, this music --- with its similarities to Bowie, Roxy Music, Ultravox, Japan --- ceases to be fixed into a category of 'music vinyl' and becomes much more elemental."

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New Musical Express noted that “Promised You a Miracle” and “Glittering Prize,” the first two British singles from *New Gold Dream*, typify Simple Minds’ new penchant for simplicity and understatement. Aside from those two songs, the album’s key tracks include the opening “Someone Somewhere In Summertime” (described by NME as “absolutely gripping”); “Hunter and the Hunted,” which features an appearance by American piano virtuoso Herbie Hancock; and “Somebody Up There Likes You,” a “completely satisfying instrumental” (NME). The remaining tracks are “Colours Fly and Catherine Wheel,” “Big Sleep,” “King is White and in the Crowd” and the title song. All in all, *New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84)* is a worthy introduction to Simple Minds, a group that Melody Maker has called “absurdly classy, infinitely assured (and) still reaching out.”