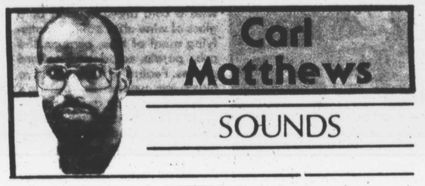


KURTIS BLOW
"Ego Trip"

Kurtis Blow has given us an album every year since 1980, and he's back with his latest, "Ego Trip."

As you would expect, it's more of his own brand of hip-hop rapping with that ever-present funky beat.

Blow's been at it for years. In the mid-70's he wus a rapping emcee at Small's Paradise and other places throughout his native Harlem. In December 1979, he released his first 12-inch single on Mercury, "Christmas Rappin'."

Here's a little trivia about "Christmas Rappin'": the 12-inch sold over a half million copies. It was later re-issued under the title "Rapping Blow." The record was also re-released in December, 1980 and December, 1981.

A shortened version of the song appeared as the opening cut of his first album, "Kurtis Blow," in 1980, and another shortened version of the song appeared as the flip side of the "Daydreamin' " 7-inch single in 1983.

And how could we forget his other big 12-inch smash in 1980, "The Breaks"?

Kurtis has also had other hits on the R&B charts such as "Tough," "Party Time," and "Nervous."

Kurtis has also kept himself busy as a producer—records that he has produced include "You Gotta Believe" by Love Bug Starsky, and "Fat Boys" by the Disco 3.

To add to the fun of his latest album, the words to all the songs appear on the back of the album cover.

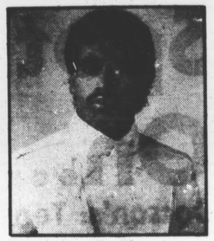
The album opens with "Eight Million Stories," the first single. The song's title comes from the introduction to the vintage TV cop show "Naked City." The beat never lets up for a moment, and guest rappers Run-D.M.C. ("It's Like That," "30 Days") put in a guest appearance. Could be his biggest social commentary rap yet.

If you like scratching (as people who buy records by Malcolm McLaren And The World's Famous Supreme Team obviously do), Kurtis introduces deejay A.J. as he works the magic turntables on "A. J. Scratch" (A. J. is Aaron O'Bryant).

"Fallin' Back In Love" is the slow number here, written by Oran "Juice" Jones, who also wrote "Daydreamin'." He ain't no Teddy Pendergrass, that's for sure.

This is the most solid Kurtis Blow album since his debut. The drum-machine-produced street beat is one of the current trends in dance-music records; this new Kurtis Blow album is a perfect example. 100% jam for rap lovers only.

Other cuts: "Basketball," "Under Fire," "I Can't Take It No More," "Ego Trip."


Kurtis Blow

RALPH MACDONALD
"Universal Rhythm"

"Universal Rhythm" is Ralph MacDonald's latest album, his debut on Polydor.

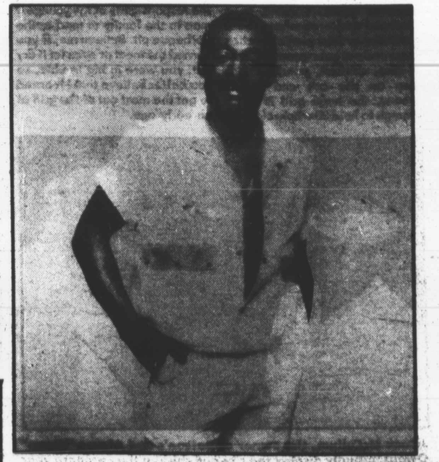
The first thing I have to tell you about Ralph MacDonald is that you shouldn't get him confused with Michael McDonald ("I Keep Forgettin' (Every Time You're Near)," "Yah Mo B There"). Ralph is the one who has acquired gold LPs and Grammy awards for such recordings as "The Path" and "Calypso Breakdown."

Did you know that Ralph also wrote big hits for Roberta Flack, namely "Killing Me Softly" and "Where Is The Love"? Ralph also co-produced Grover Washington's platinum "Winelight" album, the one in which Bill Withers sang the smash "Just The Two Of Us."

The first single from Ralph's latest album finds Ralph and Bill teaming up again—the song is titled "In The Name Of Love." All of the elements that made "Just The Two Of Us" a big hit are present on this cut.

"Park Plaza" recalls Ralph's earlier calypso style and "Play Pen" is an uptempo percussion showcase which features Steve Gadd on drums.

Other cuts: "Theme From The Outcasts (Another Time, Another Place)," "Universal Rhythm," "Tradewinds," "(It's) The Game."


Ralph MacDonald

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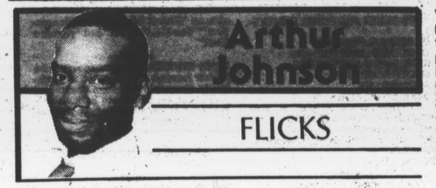

'Oxford Blues': A Breath Of Fresh Air

When a brash young American boy sets his sights on attending England's prestigious Oxford University in order to romance a titled British noblewoman he has never met, get ready for a clash of cultures and personalities titled "Oxford Blues."

Blue-eyed teen heartthrob Rob Lowe portrays Nick D'Angelo, a University of Nevada student who parks cars for extra cash at the Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas. He becomes obsessed with the beauty of Amanda Pays, the noblewoman, who he has admired in magazine photographs. Thanks to an amorous divorcee, Lady Luck at the Vegas gaming tables and the assistance of computer sabotage to advance his name on Oxford's waiting list, he finagles his way into Oxford.

But his independent, me-generation attitude puts him at odds with the group—first dynamics of Oxford life, and his obvious pursuit of Miss Pays, who is the fiancee of one of Oxford's BMOC's (big men on campus) do little to help the "ugly American" win friends among his British peers. Only his extraordinary talent for rowing (which is apparently as big with English college kids as is football in the U.S.) and the affection of another American student (Ally Sheedy) and his British roommate that get him through and help him learn the importance of putting others before himself at times.

Not a bad story, and "Oxford Blues" covers some territory rarely seen in commercial films today. The cinematography by John Stanier of the English countryside is breathtakingly beautiful at times as he renders the Oxford setting in almost dreamlike terms. The British performers are uniformly excellent, especially Julian Sands as Miss Pays' aristocratic fiance, despite Writer/Director Robert Boris' tendency to push the characterization of the Oxford administrators almost to caricature.

The weak links in "Oxford Blues" are the American leads, Lowe and Miss Sheedy. While Lowe is extremely photogenic (he looks as if he was born between the pages of GQ magazine), he simply lacks the depth as an actor to carry off his role as the determinedly individualistic, sometimes annoying American. The role seems tailor-made for John Travolta who has made a career of playing brash outsiders and is more adept at conveying several levels of thought with his face. Same blue eyes — but a much better actor. And Miss Sheedy twitches her face so much that she makes you nervous just watching her.

Still, the Americans don't completely destroy the impact of "Oxford Blues" which is a rather enjoyable respite from horror films, teen sex comedies and Clint Eastwood slasher films

Kool Jazz Festival

(Continued from page 3)

festival will resume at 8:00 p.m. with the Duke Ellington Orchestra under the leadership of his son, Mercer, a talented trumpet player, composer and arranger in his own right. Mercer, who was overshadowed by the towering talents of the Duke for many years, has always managed to do his own thing including forming a band that featured trumpeters Dizzy Gillespie and Clark Terry playing Billy Strayhorn arrangements. He was also the band leader on Carmen McCrae's debut album and recently served as the conductor of a 21-piece orchestra for the Broadway hit "Sophisticated Ladies". During Saturday night's concert, Mercer will be backing vocalists Joe Williams and Rosemary Clooney. Nevertheless, it is a certainty that Mercer will find time to lead the orchestra through a few Duke Ellington tunes like "Mood Indigo", "Caravan", "Take the 'A' Train" or "Satin Doll."

Wrapping up the festival on Sunday night, Ray Charles will be dominating the stage as he sings "Georgia on My Mind," "Oh, What A Beautiful Morning" and other tunes that he has become associated with over the years. Hopefully, Ray will find time to sing the songs that originally brought him to the national attention, especially "What'd I Say". Opening the show for Mr. Charles will be the All That Jazz Swing Orchestra, the Baltimore aggregation that won the 2nd annual Jazz Quest competition which was held August 5 at Pier 6.

Tickets for the Kool Jazz Festival are $10.00 for pavilion seating and $5.50 for cabaret and lawn seating. A discount package of $25.00 for the entire festival is also available.

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