

Twelve inches of fun

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BY DR. TANTALUS

Those of you looking to extend your summer fun beyond the standard seven inches might well consider the twelve inch single. Typically, the twelve inch contains additional rhythm, vocal, or instrumental tracks not found

Music

on the album version and remixed to enhance your dancing pleasure. It also is a source of songs that are otherwise unavailable from your favorite artist.

Convincing the "average consumer" to purchase the same song in a slightly different format is what capitalism is all about. However, at \$3.99 a pop (\$4.99 if you don't know where to shop) twelve inches can easily break your budget and your heart if they fail to live up to their promises. Here again, the adage that bigger is not necessarily better comes into play.

Some extended versions add material which is simply trivial or which actually detracts from the quality of the original. Others appear to offer extended listening time, but are merely the seven inch version in a twelve inch package.

Getting less than you expected is no fun under any circumstance. On one notorious occasion, Dr. Punkenstein of the College of Musicology, reported a one second variance between the original version and its twelve inch cousin. Sometimes there is simply less than meets

the eye.

For those who are not in the position to evaluate the current market, either because of time or inclination, the following list is proffered as a place to begin in the summer of 1987.

Perhaps the season's biggest surprise has been George Michael's "I Want Your Sex," a positive tribute to humanity's favorite pastime before the invention of television.

Marketed as a paean to monogamy, the record just sizzles off the turntable and clocks in at around twenty minutes. George displays more of a vocal growl than we have heard before and actually breathes fire into a record that demands it. This is certainly a long way from the wimp that gave us "Wake Me Up Before You Go-Go." Pay particular attention to the "Rhythm and Lust" mix.

If, as the late Lester Bangs once said, the quality of a record should be determined from the amount of time that it spends on your turntable, then ABC's "When Smokey Sings" must be high on the Doctor's list. Martin Fry turns in another smooth as silk vocal reminiscent of Brian Ferry in this tribute to the indefatigable Smokey Robinson. The "Miami" mix is the smoothest of the versions you will find here, but set your stylus down on the "Detroit" mix and enjoy the punchier rhythm section and additional horns. It may not be soul, but at least our boys have their hearts in the right places.

Old hits are also proven feeding grounds for "new" updated dance tunes. Unfortunately, this trend has begun to feed on itself as we now



have remakes of songs that originally were dance hits in the first instance. Pseudo Echo's "Funkytown" comes to mind, as does Bronski Beat's "Don't Leave Me This Way" as examples of songs that did not need further air time. Either makes the Doctor reach instantly for the nearest bedpan.

Of more interest is the remake of the Supremes' "You Keep Me Hangin' On" by Kim Wilde. At least this has some new urgency.

Although Madonna's "Who's That Girl" is not a remake, it is so strikingly similar to "La Isla Bonita" that you need not buy both. You may not have even noticed that one has been substituted for the other on the radio unless you have been paying close attention.

Whitney Houston has also entered the dance fray with her recent release of "I Wanna Dance With Somebody" which contains six different versions of the song, including one that is com-

pletely a *capella*. Such variety is a blessing for DJs starved for ways to turn the same old sow's ear into a silk purse, but lately the Doctor has noted that the transitions between songs at local dance bars sound more like train wrecks than anything else. (In addition, all of the songs are played so fast that it sounds like a greatest hits album by Alvin and the Chipmunks.)

Other recommended songs include Fleetwood Mac's "Big Love" and Bananarama's "I Heard a Rumor." In contrast the Doctor recommends that you treat "Contenders" by Heaven 17 like poison ivy. How sad to see this once progressive group shipping out records like steer manure.

Finding the perfect twelve inch isn't easy. But like they say, it's a tough job and somebody has got to do it. It might as well be me — and of course, any of you who want to kick up your heels and join the fun.

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