

July 1991

BLACK

"People have asked me why the music I do is so melancholic. As someone suggested recently, it's because I write about the way people really feel, not how they'd like to feel." **BLACK** performs music that is hard to categorize: Honest, thoughtful, moody, and introspective come close to describing his art. While his music isn't really defined, it is clearly personal and possesses an accessibility which results from vivid lyrical imagery coupled with memorable melodies.

On his third self-titled A&M album, the Liverpool native continues to express himself succinctly and with intensity. From the poignant, warmly soulful "*Too Many Times*" to the moving "*Learning How to Hate*" (which features guest artist Robert Palmer), Black uses his music to reflect his personal observations. "One of my favorite songs on the album is '*She's My Best Friend*.'" Harmonically, it's different from what I've done before and the lyrics are positive. I fell in love and got married." "*Let's Talk About Me*," he continues, "is from a group of songs that I wrote as a result of living in London. But really, it's about the self-obsession and paranoia that seems to come from living in any big city in the Nineties."

Produced and arranged by Robin Miller (whose credits include hit albums with Sade and Everything But The Girl, and who produced "*I'm Not Afraid*" on Black's 1987 A&M debut and co-produced material on Black's second album, **COMEDY**). The new **BLACK** album captures the melancholy that has characterized much of Black's music while taking him to a new musical plateau: "*Sweet Breath Of Your Rapture*" is unabashedly sensual while "*Fly Up To The Moon*" (a duet with British vocalist Sam Brown) is soft and soothing, adding further dimension to Black's evocative musical style.

In the three years since the release of **COMEDY**, Black has sharpened his skills as a songwriter. "My approach is always the same when I'm writing: the melody is my prime concern and I make the lyrics as interesting as I can. In some ways this album feels very much like a debut album because I have a proper idea of what I'm aiming for now. I'd say I'm more focused musically."

Black originally started out working with two other musicians in 1981 but the following year he shortened the line-up to include only himself and partner Dace Dickie. Immediately they were picked up by WEA and went on tour with the Thompson Twins. In 1985 Dickie left to concentrate on production work. A year later, the single "*Wonderful World*" was released on a Liverpool independent label. The song was described by one enthusiastic critic as "melodic, poignant and ironic, one of those songs you can play and play over again and never tire of...one of those sad songs, that perversely, makes you feel better."

The attention resulted in a contract with A&M and "*Wonderful Life*" subsequently became a Top 10 hit in over a dozen countries. Black's debut album also entitled **WONDERFUL LIFE** sold over a million copies worldwide. Follow-up singles "*Everything's Coming Up Roses*" and "*Sweetest Smile*" (another Top 10 U.K. and major European hit) helped establish Black as an important new musical force. The release of his second album **COMEDY**, he continued to broaden his appeal among

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European audiences, bringing his tally of album sales to two million worldwide.

After a self-imposed hiatus, Black began to develop material for his current album which he describes as “a quantum leap forward from a writing viewpoint.”

“I’m interested in what makes something that’s great, great,” he comments. “I used to think that it comes from an appropriate form of mistake rather than perfection. In working on this album, I ended up using one out of every five or six new songs I’d written. We cut fifteen songs in all, out of which we picked ten. One of the values of success—which is something that I think doesn’t solve problems but simply creates its own set of new ones—is that it gives you the freedom to spend time writing, creating new music. I’ve heard people say that there’s nothing left that’s original and there musically, but I feel there’s a whole universe of music still to be discovered.”

While U.S. audiences have begun to discover Black and his distinctive music through his previous work, “I’ve been getting a growing volume of mail from people in the U.S. who say my music is becoming a part of their lives which is the supreme compliment.” **BLACK**, an intimate, witty and beautifully crafted album promises to establish this gifted singer/songwriter as one of the most potent and insightful artists of his time.