



Publicity

The Human League

"We work very weird," producer James Harris (aka Jimmy Jam) said recently about his and partner Terry Lewis' methods. "The Human League left here without a cassette. They just had to trust us."

Jam was referring to the policy of Flyte Tyme Productions, as he and Lewis are collectively known, not to play demos of works in progress—even for the artist. Unusual, but it works, so the pair are arguably the hottest production team around these days. And while the Human League may not have known how well they'd done when the group left Flyte Tyme's Minneapolis studio, they certainly know now.

"Human," a Jam-Lewis tune and the first single from Crash, the Human League's fourth A&M album, looks to be the group's biggest hit since "Don't You Want Me" and "(Keep Feeling) Fascination." In its first weeks in release, "Human" became the most added song on both urban and CHR (contemporary hits) radio stations nationwide, according to Radio & Records. "Trust us," said Jam and Lewis, and they were right.

Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis simply have a knack for producing hits. Earlier this year, they had six in the Billboard Top 100 at the same time: Janet Jackson's "What Have You Done For Me Lately" and "Nasty" (from Control, her multi-platinum A&M album). The Force M.D.s' "Tender Love," Patti Austin's "The Heat of Heart," the S.O.S. Band's "The Finest" and "Saturday Love," the Cherrelle/Alexander O'Neal duet.

The Human League, however, is the first non-American, non-black pop act the team has ever worked with. Production on Crash actually began last year at the group's own 24-track studio in Sheffield, England, with producer Colin Thurston. When that arrangement proved unworkable ("We wanted to do a proper dance album this time," singer Joanne Catherall told The Face, "and Colin really isn't a disco producer"), Human Leaguers Philip Oakey and Ian Burden flew to Minneapolis to meet Jam and Lewis. Turns out the Flyte Tyme team had been fans since "Don't You Want Me" and later "Fascination," and soon after the meeting, the rest of the group (Catherall, Susan Sulley, Adrian Wright and Jim Russell, their "real drummer) were on their way to the Land of 10,000 Lakes to begin work.

Crash follows a period of some unrest for the Human League. Following the success of Dare (the 1981 album which yielded

"Don't You Want Me" and "Mirror Man") and the Fascination EP (1983), both produced by Martin Rushent, the group began work on Hysteria, the first full album since Dare, with producer Chris Thomas. When Thomas had to leave the project, Hugh Padgham took over, and Hysteria was finally released in March, '84, a year after work had started. Despite the presence of three British Top 10 singles ("The Lebanon," "Louise" and "Life On Your Own"), the group regarded the album as a disappointment. Guitarist Jo Callis left the Human League to get married, and the remaining members agreed on a hiatus in late '84.

All's well that ends well, they say, and the Human League are living proof. In Jam and Lewis, they have found a team of producer/writers (in general, Terry supplies the lyrics and Jimmy the tunes) who have taken the group, as Philip Oakey told The Face, "...closer to what we always wanted to be with the original Human League. When we started, we wanted to make Donna Summer records, but we never had the ability to do it. We thought you could do it without a bass player or a drummer, and you can't. It's like trying to write a speech and leaving out all the 'a's and 'the's. It's a language, and if you don't conform to that language, you can't expect to communicate in the same way."

With Crash, the Human League has made it clear that they can still communicate—in a distinctly "Human" way.