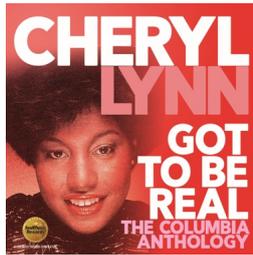


CHERYL LYNN: 'Got To Be Real: The Columbia Anthology' (SoulMusic Records)

Written by Charles Waring

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Big-voiced Los Angelino **Cheryl Lynn** (real name Lynda Cheryl Smith) burst onto the US music scene like a tornado in September 1978 when her debut single, 'Got To Be Real,' topped the US R&B charts. She was only 21 at the time and had come to the attention of record company bosses after a stunning performance on the amateur TV talent contest,

The Gong Show

, in 1976 where she received perfect marks. Atlantic Records seemed in pole position to sign her but when the label's boss, Ahmed Ertegun, missed a scheduled meeting with the singer, Columbia stepped in and made an offer she couldn't refuse. She spent eight years with the company and her time there is chronicled by this excellent 2-CD retrospective which contains 31 of her best tracks.

The set begins with Lynn's cameo on rock band Toto's catchy hit, 'Georgy Porgy,' from 1978 (the band's keyboardist, Marty Paich, went on to her debut LP) and then proceeds to explore the singer's back catalogue. A perennial dance floor favourite, the anthemic 'Got To Be Real' still stands out as the defining song in Lynn's repertoire though this compilation includes many other moments of high quality - in particular, the five tracks taken from 'Instant Love,' her album produced by Luther Vandross and Marcus Miller, show Lynn hitting a giddy artistic peak. That album's dance-oriented title song and the funky 'Look Before You Leap' are superb while the ballads - the dreamy, flute-laced 'Day After Day' and an impassioned duet of Marvin Gaye's immortal 'If This World Were Mine' with Luther Vandross show that Lynn was much more than a mere disco singer.

'Instant Love' came out in 1982 and two years later, Lynn dramatically changed her sound after hooking up with two rising R&B songwriters/producers from Minneapolis, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, for the album 'Preppie.' She scored her second US R&B chart-topper with 'Encore,' which is presented here in its extended dance version. The 12-mix of 'Preppie's' title cut - a curious fusion of electro and new wave styles - is also featured and there are also a couple of rare, non-album soundtrack items: the mid-tempo ballad 'Goodbye For Now (Theme From "Reds"),' where Lynn joins flautist Hubert Laws as a guest, and the MOR slow jam 'At Last You're Mine,' from the soundtrack to *Heavenly Bodies*. For those that think that Cheryl Lynn

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was a one-song wonder, this stellar collection - showing that she was not only a great singer but also an artist of real depth - will put them right.

(CW) 4/5