

## SHALAMAR: 'Gold' (Crimson)

Written by Charles Waring

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It's 42 years since this much-loved US vocal trio made their recording debut with the percussion-driven Motown medley, 'Uptown Festival,' for Don Cornelius' Soul Train label. Despite sounding like a disco novelty single, the tune became a Top 10 US R&B hit back in March 1977 and also, significantly, landed in the UK Top 30 and began the group's long love affair with the British public that is still going strong. Indeed, between 1977 and 1986, Shalamar racked up eighteen chart smashes in the UK, and hit a particularly rich vein of form during March '82 and June of the following year when they scored four Top 10 singles. The first decade of their career is chronicled by this fabulous new triple CD, which besides containing all the hits features near misses and prized albums cuts as well - in fact, here, you'll discover all the Shalamar tunes you'll ever need.

Unsurprisingly, the collection begins with the group's biggest UK hit, 1982's unforgettable 'A Night To Remember': the record that truly immortalised the classic line-up of Howard Hewett, Jody Watley and Jeffrey Daniel. Watley sang the lead on that but it was mostly Hewett (a replacement in 1979 for Gerald Brown who had taken over from original singer, Gary Mumford) who stepped out front, his soulful tenor impressing on the hits 'The Second Time Around' - the group's only US R&B chart-topper - 'I Can Make You Feel Good,' 'There It Is,' 'Make That Move,' and the anthemic dance floor burner, 'Friends.' More hits followed in '83 - namely 'Dead Giveaway,' 'Disappearing Act,' and 'Over And Over.' All three tracks were taken from the group's seventh album, 'The Look,' which showed them moving in a rockier, new wave-like direction. Even so the LP was a Top 10 UK hit but by that time cracks had begun to appear in the group's relationships with each other and their record label and management.

Consequently, at the very apex of the group's fame in 1983, Watley and Daniel left under a cloud to pursue solo ventures. Howard Hewett, however, soldiered on with new recruits Delisa Davis and Micki Free and scored hits with the synth-heavy 'Dancing In The Streets' (which featured on the hit movie *Footloose*) and the electro-flavoured 'Deadline USA.' The latter also graced a film soundtrack (the quickly forgotten Irene Cara movie, *DC Cab*

) while 'Don't Get Stopped In Beverly Hills' appeared on the Eddie Murphy-starring blockbuster,

*Beverly Hills Cop*

. All those tracks are included on 'Gold' and some of them you'll find in 12-inch form on the third disc of this 3-CD set alongside long club mixes of favourites like the evergreen 'A Night To

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Remember 'The Second Time Around,' and 'Right In The Socket.'

If you're looking for a time machine guaranteed to take you back to the mirror-balled dance floors of the late '70s and early '80s and the heady days of your youth, perhaps, then 'Gold' is unquestionably the album to get. (By the way, for vinyl fans, 'Gold' is also available as an 8-track LP).

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