



Midge Ure

BIOGRAPHY

The release of 'PURE' marks Midge Ure's debut for his new record label, BMG, and carries Midge's long-running success story into the Nineties. It's the third solo album from the man who masterminded a string of Ultravox hits and has been a pivotal figure in the Prince's Trust charity concerts for which he received a Grammy.

Midge explains: "If there's a theme running through this album, it's the highs and lows of love, but different aspects of love. I was one who always said I was really bored with love songs, really banal love songs, and I thought it would be interesting to sit down and write a variety of songs about love. Not necessarily romantic slushy stuff, but about the

twists and the hard parts and the nasty bits people try to brush under the carpet".

Midge's thoughts on love are mirrored in different styles of music. Despite its title, 'COLD, COLD HEART' is bright and confident, while 'PURE LOVE' is slightly tango-flavoured, and 'WAITING DAYS' is broody and Celtic-sounding.

But love isn't the only thing on Midge's mind. It took him two years to hammer together his new material, both at his home studio in London and in the basement in his house on the tiny Caribbean island of Monserrat, once he'd cleared away the damage wreaked by a passing hurricane. During that period, momentous events were



unfolding in the world outside. Ure, was not immune from the news pouring in from South Africa, the Middle East or Eastern Europe.

Thus, the album opens with 'I SEE HOPE', a strange but powerful mixture of African rhythms and a gospel choir coupled with the Celtic sounds of Uilleann pipes (played by Paddy Moloney, from The Chieftains). "With 'I SEE HOPE', I liked the idea of the choir, something that was kind of inspirational but not about God or religion or whatever", Midge remembers. "I wanted that kind of rousing tingle-up-the-spine feel that you get from inspirational songs, but more inspirational about life rather than the afterlife. The idea of getting through difficult periods in your life and coming out the other end, feeling slightly elated". 'TUMBLING DOWN' had more specific origins. "The idea of writing a song about the dismantling of the Berlin Wall is probably very



clichéd" he thinks. "But I liked the idea of doing it in a Brecht & Weil Berlin cabaret style. It's not just the subject that's interesting, it's how you put that subject across".

So, 'PURE' contains food for thought as well as plenty to delight fans of tunes you can hum. There's no rapping or House music here, for which Ure makes no apologies. "I've never been much of a dancer, and I've never been keen on hanging about in clubs", he says. "I'm a melody-orientated person. I like melody and I like structure, as old-fashioned as that may be".

A glance back through Ure's long career bears out his claims to be a pop craftsman. His first taste of success was with the teenybop phenomenon SLIK, who roared out of

Ure's native Glasgow in 1976 to score a Number One hit with 'FOREVER AND EVER', they then rocketed into instant obscurity, burdened by the kind of crippling contract which has crushed many a young band.



But Ure had been noticed. He immediately joined the short lived RICH KIDS, ex-Sex Pistol Glen Matlock's band, and then moved on to team up with ULTRAVOX and helped to lead them to success.

Throughout the Eighties, Ure and Ultravox enjoyed a stream of chart successes, including 'REAP THE WILD WIND', 'DANCING WITH TEARS IN MY EYES', 'LOVE'S GREAT ADVENTURE' and, most famous of all, 1981's 'VIENNA'. "I'm still proud of 'VIENNA', Midge reflects. "Nobody

could see it at the time. It was five minutes long. It was electronic, it had a violin solo in it, it was a ballad. People couldn't see it being a hit".

Part from the song itself, 'VIENNA' is remembered for its atmospheric video, which borrowed heavily from Carol Reed's movie 'THE THIRD MAN'. Another important strand of Midge Ure's career has been his skill in directing pop videos, a talent he has exercised for a variety of artists including PHIL LYNOTT, FUNBOY THREE and BANANARAMA as well as ULTRAVOX. Midge also wrote and directed the stunning video for his single, 'COLD, COLD HEART', which was filmed on location in Los Angeles and Mexico.

The Eighties proved to be particularly fruitful for Midge,



since, apart from his work with Ultravox, he also hurtled up the charts with VISAGE, which he played on, co-wrote and produced. He had hits, in collaboration with Japan's Mick Karn on 'AFTER A FASHION', and with his own solo releases especially 'NO REGRETS' and 'IF I WAS'.

And in the middle of Midge's soaraway decade came BAND AID, which began with Bob Geldof's idea to do something to help Famine Relief in Ethiopia and ended up as the forerunner of a string of rock-for-good-causes events. Geldof says that without Ure's initial enthusiasm for the idea, not to mention his rapidly penned sketch for the Band Aid theme tune, 'DO THEY KNOW IT'S CHRISTMAS', Band Aid and Live Aid would never have happened.

It's a little ironic, then, that one of the songs on 'PURE' should question the idea of personal responsibility in the face of the world's mountain of problems. It's called 'LET IT GO?', and Midge explains: "I suppose it's hitting at apathy. There's a lot of flag-flying about how good 'we' are, all this talk about jumping in and helping at every turn. Everyone is saying we should do this, we should all get together, but even when you're in the middle of doing all that stuff, you can have a nagging doubt in your mind. You're thinking should I be doing this? Is it right? Is it my responsibility? And then there's just the sheer apathy of thinking "Oh well, somebody else will sort it out".



Stranger still was the fact that while Midge was writing 'LET IT GO?', unknown to him, Bob Geldof was writing The Great Song Of Indifference, which tackled the same issues. Looking back now, Ure believes he escaped from the Band Aid experience lightly, compared to what Geldof went through. While Midge was able to fulfil his familiar role of the quiet one who unobtrusively gets on with the job, Geldof became a kind of international conscience.

Midge has shied away from a career in Causes, though he has been involved in the Prince's Trust Charity, acting as Musical Director for concerts in 1987-8 featuring heavyweight

artists like Eric Clapton, Mark Knopfler, Paul McCartney, Tina Turner and Phil Collins. Once again, his skills as both musician and organiser served him well.

"The Prince's Trust things are always good fun, which is the main reason for doing them" Midge chuckles. "But I don't think a concert's the answer to anything, and I don't think making a record's the answer to anything. It might help in the short term, I don't want to be permanently tied in with all these charity things, especially the big global ones, because I think they've turned into something else".

He has other things to think about, like 'PURE', for example. Midge has gained a reputation for being a man who knows

exactly what he wants and how to achieve it, but he insists he's not nearly so well-organised. He has never had a grand career plan, and usually proceeds by trial and error. "I remember the drummer in Ultravox

saying 'I don't know what I want, but I'll know it when I hear it, which I thought was brilliant. It's like when we've got it right, I'll know it's right'".

"What I try to do is maintain standards, but which direction I'm gonna go in I've got no idea. I can't think two years ahead, but

when I can get my teeth into something I can see it right through to its ultimate conclusion."

It's a method which continues to serve him well.



