

## **THE LILAC TIME**

### **Paradise Circus (*Fontana LP/Cassette/CD*)**

CRAP TITLE, nondescript sleeve, damn fine record. With mature melodies and determinedly retro sounds, Stephen Duffy examines adult relationships and our great nation through lilac-tinted spectacles. And everything doesn't come up smelling of roses.

The sparkling 'American Eyes', a lightweight but refreshingly left-field sideshow to the chart circus several months back, kicks off on an unobtrusively folkly note. 'The Lost Girl In The Midnight Sun' flirts with ethnic noises in a lazy late-'60s way, its tune lifted from 'Matchstalk Men And Matchstalk Cats And Dogs' but still sounding great.

Once you reach the Simon & Garfunkel strumming of 'The

Beauty In Your Body', Duffy's solid tunesmith talent has seeped in; he's unearthing faded holiday snaps and you're gratefully drinking in every detail. 'If The Stars Shine Tonight' bounces on a steel guitar twang. 'The Days Of The Week' gallops joyfully while 'She Still Loves You' sighs across shimmering summer fields.

The Lilac Time prove that old-fashioned songwriting can still be surprising, beautiful, and infinitely superior to pre-programmed mediocrity. **(7)**

**Stephen Dalton**