

then without hesitation I'd have said somewhere between zero and bugger all.

How strange and pleasing it is, then, to do a sharp about-turn and suggest that in 1988 there have been few better — dare I say nicer? — albums than 'The Lilac Time', where plain Stephen Duffy now passes his days.

Even odder is that this very piece of work first saw the light of day about 18 months back on the Swordfish label. But someone from Phonogram must have got hold of a copy, decided it was too good to disappear down the plughole, with barely a gurgle to its name, and decided to tart it up a bit.

And, hey presto, an absolutely shimmering pop record that is totally English in content and character; crammed with blissful tunes full of sad, sensual and playful imagery and possessed of a sound that languishes on rock's softer edges. It daintily fingers its way from a delicate 'Black Velvet' to the Home Counties 'n' Western lilt of 'Return To Yesterday' and 'You've Got To Love', to name but three.

The perfect accompaniment to long, hot summer afternoons. And a quite delicious surprise.

PETER KANE

THE LILAC TIME 'The Lilac Time' (Fontana SFLP6)

IF SOMEONE had asked at the turn of the year, what the chances of me scribbling a few glittering words in praise of a man who once went by the name of "Tin Tin" were,



THE LILAC Time: sensual