

**T**he thing about Slade is that the band was around for a long, long time before it started producing those glam rock-inspired hits in the early seventies. They began in the mid-sixties as a soul-rock outfit and then, after a suggestion by Hendrix manager and ex-Animals bass guitarist Chas Chandler, shaved off all their hair and produced skinhead-friendly rock music. Eventually, the band grew their hair again and had their first hit in 1971, the No.16 ditty, 'Get Down and Get With It'.

This 1972 album was released before the classics really started to flow. As such, the release of a live album at this stage of their career could be seen as a bit odd. Normally, live albums are released later in a working artist's successful career. They serve as pseudo greatest hits releases...but with manic crowd noise stuck on

the side.

The reason for this album though surely reflects their deserved reputation as a superb live band. Way before Slade ever had a hit, the group was entertaining appreciative fans in live arenas. This album lumbers about – but in a good way. Big bass, big drums, big beats and big vocals, lead singer Noddy Holder screams the place down and gets his teeth right into the soul of the fans. Encouraging, supporting and cheering them on just as much as they do the same to him and the rest of the band as the band tear a gamut of their own songs and covers (e.g. "Born to Be Wild") to pieces.

As for the mastering? There's no obvious or irritating compression here and plenty of air around the soundstage that enhances the band's presence in the live arena. A 'proper' live album, and no mistake.



**SLADE**

**Slade Alive!  
Union Square**

AUDIOPHILE VINYL

**A**pioneer of country soul but known more for his deep vocal delivery, Sledge will be forever known for his hit, 'When a Man Loves a Woman', the source of more karaoke gurning than any other song known to man.

This LP was originally released in 1967, around a year after that hit broke on the music world. It features eleven songs, covered and made famous by other R&B artists. Sometimes, when collections of cover songs are released in this way by a known talent there's a revelation, as the singer transforms and then owns these songs, surpassing the original singers in sheer artistry. To be absolutely frank, I don't think Sledge does that here, with any of the featured songs but, actually, that's not a negative critique. I don't deride Sledge in any way when I say that. He may not offer the definitive

version of the included songs here but what he does do is 'Sledgify' them all. That is, he pushes them all through a Percy Sledge filter that produces a significant and attractive version for each – reimagining the songs. He offers an alternative viewpoint. So, when Sam Cooke sang 'You Send Me' in his measured, easy going manner, Sledge doesn't improve upon the song but he does deliver a more impassioned performance, infusing it with tearing emotion. It's not better. It's different. Sledge obviously thought hard about each song and wondered if they could be seen in a new light. That's his talent. Sledge the thinking man's singer.

Meanwhile, Sledge's backing band is filled with pure class. Spooner Oldham and Jerry Weaver on piano and organ. Eddie Hinton, Jimmy Johnson and Marlin Green on guitars, David Hood on bass and Roger Hawkins on drums. Lordy.



**PERCY SLEDGE**

**The Percy Sledge Way  
Bear Family**