



Tower of Power are a proper soul and funk institution. The Oakland outfit are currently celebrating 50 years in the crazy music biz and their last album – the fulsome 'Soul Side Of Town' ( a #1 Billboard album) was every bit as polished, soulful, funky and rewarding as any of those early classics like 'East Bay Grease' and 'Bump City'. Over their half century existence TOP have had plenty of personnel changes, especially in the vocal department, but marshalled by the twin striker partnership of Emilio Castillo and Stephen "Doc" Kupka, the band have remained true to their core soul and funk values. Though not as complex as tracing TOP's membership, the band's recording history has had its share of twists and turns with the band working for a number of labels. This new 2 CD TOP reissue from SoulMusic Records focuses on the group's tenure with two of those labels – Columbia and Epic.

Tower Of Power were with Columbia between 1976 and 1979 and there they issued three albums – 'Ain't Nothin Stoppin' Us Now', 'We Came To Play' and 'Back On The Streets'. CD 1 of this double pack offers a selection of 19 tracks from those LPs. The second CD contains 16 cuts from the band's 1991-1997 Epic tenure where they cut four albums – 'Monster On A Leash', 'TOP', 'Souled Out' and 'Rhythm & Business'. Despite the time difference and the use of different producers (Steve Cropper and Richard Evans, for instance, were amongst the producers at Columbia), the overall sound and album format is remarkably consistent... though

## TOWER OF POWER: You Ought To Be Havin' Fun (SoulMusic Records)

Written by Bill B

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TOP fans would think that obvious. What you get is a big, brassy, brash soul sound with the musical fare fluctuating between driving funk and sweeter, more melodic material.

There are countless highlights across the 35 tracks and maybe it's an age thing but the sweet soul cuts offer more attraction right now and there's none sweeter than 1976's 'You Ought To Be Havin' Fun' which gives the reissue its overall title. It's one of those great songs that, well, just makes you smile. Little wonder that it was a US Hot 100 hit. Equally gorgeous is the slower 'Am I Fool' – an introspective ballad that, like all TOP slowies, avoids any hint of cloying sentimentality. That clever gambit is maybe summed up in another album winner... 'Bittersweet Soul Music' – exactly what Tower Of Power craft... always have done, still do and, hopefully, will continue to do.

(BB) 4/5