If reggae has an "acceptable" face, it's the one Third World presents. Mugging on the cover of this new album like the latest funk sensation out of Philly, Third World is unquestionably the most Americanized reggae band. And, reggae being the symbol of the downtrodden that it is, this squeaky-clean image is laid upon the band open to smug from more militant quarters. Like much socially conscious music criticism, such attacks are beside the point. Third World isn't any less authentic for being accessible or less worth hearing for wanting to be widely heard.

"You've Got the Power" is a tight, seamless album of the band's characteristic reggae-disco-soul synthesis, and it's all the defense the band need make. But, as if to drive the point home, guitarist Cat Coore has written an archetypical Third World song aimed at the group's critics, a cool, sublime funk number called Low-Key Jammin'. "We ain't got to be no rude boys/We none political/But we serious/. Low-key, laid-back/But we jammin."

In addition to strong material from members of the band, "You've Got the Power" sports two songs composed, arranged, and produced by Stevie Wonder. Try Jah Love and a reggae-rap version of Us To Close Both are excellent, totally convincing and idiomatic.

To Third World's credit, references to Wonder's contributions are not plastered all over the jacket. After all, their own original, such as the upbeat Inna Time Like This with its clever dub send-up intro, easily stand up to the Wonder tunes. "You've Got the Power" proves that reggae can be "palatable" and powerful.

CONWAY TWITTY: Southern Comfort. Conway Twitty (vocals); vocal and instrumental accompaniment. Slow Hand; The Clown; The Boy Next Door; Love and Only Love; Southern Comfort; and five others.

TECHNICS EK-7; $89.95. ES-6005 $98.98. EB-6005 $98.98. Performance: A bit moody. Recording: Average.

One of the titles here, Something Strange Got into Her Last Night, tells you a fair amount about Conway Twitty's taste in songs. I must say that most of these aren't as gimmicky as we've come to expect in his albums, but the bedroom factor is as high as ever. Twitty sings this stuff as if he means it, these days showing off the bottom part of his voice in particular. But we serious/. Low-key, laid-back/But we jammin."

AUGUST 1982

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