# Trouser Press

April 1978
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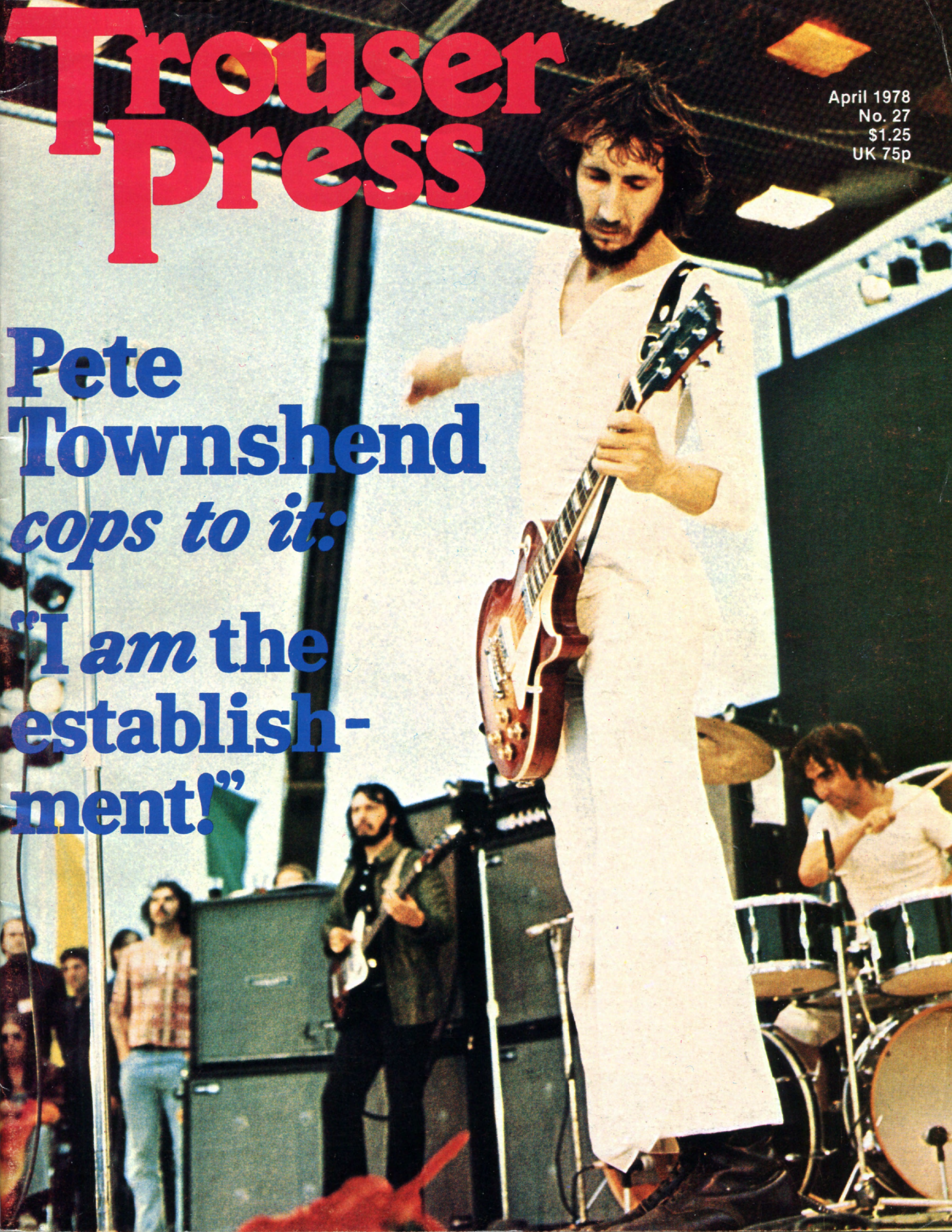
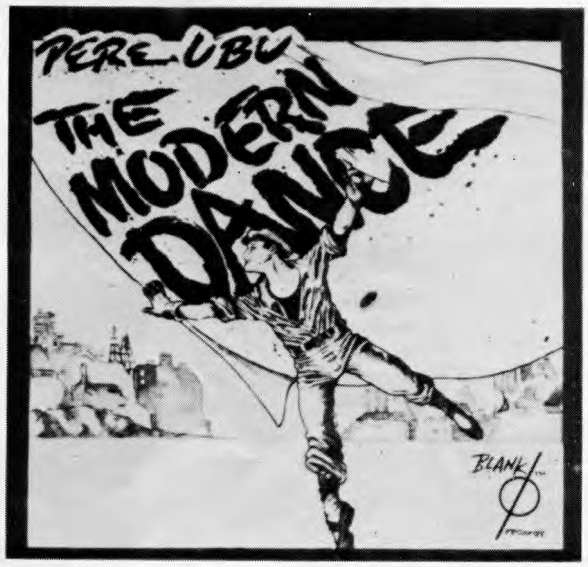


## Pete Townshend *cops to it:*

## "I *am* the establish-ment!"

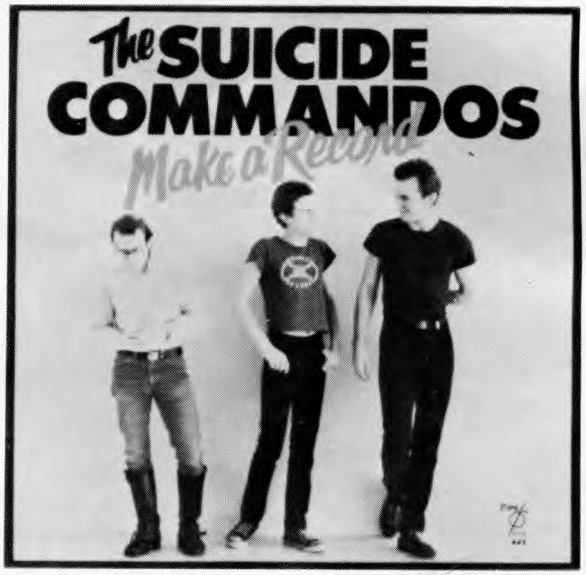
# HERE AT LAST . . .

From Cleveland,
Beyond the New Wave




**PERE UBU**

From Minneapolis,
15 Songs; No Waiting

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Feb. 21 Marble Bar, Baltimore
Feb. 22 - 23 Psychedelly, Washington, DC
Feb. 27 - 28 The Hot Club, Philadelphia
March 2 - 4 CBGBs, New York
March 5 Lakeview Inn, Southwick, MA
March 8 University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH
March 9 - 11 The Rat, Boston

Coming Summer '78: The Bizarros from Akron

BLANK records

# Trouser Press

April 1978 • Volume Five, Number Three
Whole Number 27

**America's Only British Rock Magazine**

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Okay. I know we've got some explaining to do. This issue is dated April. Last issue was dated February. So what happened to March? We cancelled it, that's what. (Trust us—you didn't miss anything.)

When Trouser Press first went monthly we decided that 10 issues a year would be a good idea for both editorial and business reasons. Looking back on previous experience, we chose June and August as the two best candidates for off-months, but we were wrong. As we found out, there were quite a few factors we hadn't been able to foresee, and we agreed that something better change. So that's what we did.

The new plan calls for the same 10 issues, but instead of taking off in June and August, TP will not be published in March or September. To keep it all from being too understandable, bear in mind that TP appears on stands the middle of the month before the cover date; that means the October issue will come out in mid-September. Got that? None of this is too important to anybody but us, the hale and hearty staff of Trouser Press. We apologize for any inconvenience, confusion or grief caused by the sudden nature of this schedule shift. Thanks for bearing with us.

In any case, this issue contains the long-threatened Pete Townshend article (as you may have guessed from the cover). In the interests of completeness, we're running it in two parts, the second of which will, with no chance for change, appear in the next TP (May, on the stands mid-April), by which time (maybe) the Who album will be out.

Trick question of the month: Do you notice anything different about TP? Well, this is the biggest issue ever; we've added another eight pages in an attempt to relieve some of the editorial congestion we've been feeling lately. The extra space will give us a chance to try out some new things as well as to let us bring you more of the same old TP stuff.

—Ira Robbins

*212-354-4196*

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# Hello It's Me

### SO PUNKY WE HAVE TO REACT

Please continue your great coverage of new wave music. I have not been so excited about music since my mother gave me the Beatles' white album for my 11th birthday. What I can't understand is how middle America can call Peter Frampton, Boston, Foreigner, etc., rock. That's e-z listening rock. Johnny Rotten may not change the world, but he's sure made my life more exciting.

Please do not allow Scott Isler to review any more punk records. He's obviously an unimaginative asshole who thinks the Stones are God. His shitty review of the Heartbreakers' **L.A.M.F.** did not catch the essential sound of Johnny Thunders. "Born to Lose" catches all the excitement of the N.Y. Dolls and more. His review of Eddie and the Hot Rods was even worse. **Life on the Line** was the best album released in '77. Fantastic energy with good melodic pop hooks and searing guitar work from Graeme Douglas.

John Buckwalter
Des Moines, IA

*Mr. Isler replies: Mr. Buckwalter, in his enthusiasm, fails to notice I liked both the Heartbreakers and Rods albums. The only thing the Stones have in common with God is they're both dead. Trouser off, dingo.*

### THE RAMONES HAVE LEFT THE HALL

If punk rock is such hot poop, then why is every vaguely punkish band in the world going out of their way to tell everyone that they most definitely, most emphatically, are NOT punks? At least it'll be fun to watch what the Ramones do when they're rolling in Cadillacs (buy a glue factory maybe?). Will the Pistols turn into jet-setters like the Stones did?

Then again, the new wave so far has been plenty of smoke and not much fire. 'Til several of these bands break high into the charts, nothing much will change. The next few months will tell.

I loved Jim Green's hidden dig at Bomp in "Green Circles." Greg Shaw finally got around to carrying TP in his store a month or so ago. The mere mention of TP used to give him a minor fit. It still might, but I haven't seen him for a few months.

Bob Morris
Van Nuys, CA

### LOW BLOW

Now come on, give the Pistols a chance. Were you this destroyed when you were informed of all the major bands who used session musicians prominently without notifying the faithful? How about the fine art of riff stealing? Make ELO give back the melody from "Showdown" (to "I Heard it through the Grapevine") and what do you have? A stolen chorus, that's what. And while we're on the subject, would someone tell REO Speedwagon to stop calling "Satisfaction" "Riding the Storm Out"? The Jam made a record I can appreciate when I hear it, but the Pistols have made a record I *play*. The sound is full, not tinny. It's very danceable music, the lyrics are important, never self-serving or cliched.

Malcolm McLaren told Rolling Stone something to the effect that rock critics feign knowledge of every melody and riff as if they invented rock, instead of vice versa. So much for tired old Robbins' tired old criticisms. I am alarmed at Trouser Press' headfirst backsliding. Yes, you may not be making any money, but with such style! Jetting to the Coast in the Starship to interview Jimmy Page, and "I haven't had a suntan in years!" What a scream! The next step is champagne brunches with Elton and going onstage with Kiss. If you can't come up with better excuses for decaying, don't bother. You aren't R. Stone, so why steal their stale excuses. (See, even you steal riffs.) No future for you, Trouser Press, but don't you get sick of the past, even once in a while?

Name and address withheld

*Look, buddy: We gotta eat. We think we're doing a pretty good job for a bunch of 45-year old men putting their kids through law school. —Ed.*



### IT'S A WONDERFUL TOWN

Your "America Underground" article (TP 24) was great. I'm from Chicago, and I've seen Skafish; he's absolutely the most innovative and sincere performer in rock 'n' roll. By exposing the tragedies that he's lived in, he makes it possible for the audience to perceive their own problems and to face their lives realistically, leaving everyone with a glimpse of hope. By the way, I will give you a date! Remember August of 1979 and Skafish; the rest may be history.

Bonzo Fan
Chicago, IL

### FAMILY OF MAN

Just wanted to thank you all for the beautiful article on the Man band (TP 24). Man was ignored and unheralded by most, loved ardently by few, and produced the most spiritual and lively music in the commercial world.

What if they ever made it big as so many feel they deserved to? I, for one, was glad to see that success not destroy their uniqueness, and I can now sit back and enjoy over 20 albums that have been culled from the Man family. Their eight years of jamming has been a blessing to us all.

H. Samuel
L.T.A., US

### DRAKE TRIBUTE

Thanks for the article on Nick Drake (TP 25). In the seven years since I first heard him, I've never seen anything about him in print that was more than a passing reference. Frank Kornelussen has done an excellent job.

It's sad in a way that more people weren't listening to Nick when he was around; but considering the effect his career had on him, it seems that any amount of wide popularity would have drastically altered his music—and the images in his songs seem too fragile for that sort of change. It's good that Nick was able to enforce his need for privacy.

Perhaps shedding light now on the life of a man who tried so hard to be private in life can help us, through his music, to learn more about ourselves. Even if we do no more than discover the beauty in Nick's songs, we will have gained so much.

Larry Looney
Wichita Falls, TX

### CALLING ALL WOMBLES

How's this for splitting hairs? For the second time you have incorrectly named the womble with the Flying V guitar as Chris Spedding (TP 24). I'm sure there's a picture of Chris as a Womble somewhere, but the person in that particular Womble suit is Robin Le Mesurier. He also plays a Flying V, but only Robin has that hand-beaded guitar strap. He left the group after a small misunderstanding with local authorities which did not agree with the group's image—Too Wicked to Womble. Robin is now with the Australian group Air Supply, and has been in the British groups Strider and Limey.

D. J. Villarreal
St. Louis, MO

# Trouser Press

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# Take Your Pick: Bowie or Bowie

An intriguing subscription deal this time around. We've acquired copies of two indispensable Bowie items. If you subscribe or renew before April 30 you can choose between the following:



**Heroes.** Bowie's latest RCA LP, and one of his best. Joined by Eno and Robert Fripp, Bowie has created a triumphant blend of stark power and rich imagery. Contains the hit single "Heroes," as well as "Beauty and the Beast." A must-have album.



**"Beauty and the Beast" 12" 45.** A collector's item –not being offered for public sale –this is a dj 12" which features an extended version of "Beauty and the Beast" b/w "Fame." The sleeve is the same as the LP cover photo. A very desirable item.

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**TP 9** (June/August '75)
Stones on film; Gong; Quo; Sparks; Entwistle; Brinsley Schwarz.

**TP 11** (November/December '75)
Alex Harvey; Fairport Convention; Ducks Deluxe; Them; Pink Floyd; Be-Bop Deluxe.

**TP 14** (June/July '76)
Keith Moon; Genesis; Free; Lou Reed; SB&Q; Michael Brown.

**TP 15** (August/September '76)
Dr. Feelgood; Boxer; Roy Harper; Russ Ballard; Nazareth; Streetwalkers.

**TP 16** (October/November '76)
Queen; Kevin Ayers; Graham Parker; Steve Hillage; Peter Bardens.

**TP 17** (December/January '77)
ELP; Grimms; Be-Bop Deluxe; Easybeats; Tommy James; Ariel Bender.

**TP 18** (February/March '77)
Bowie 1; Entwistle; Eddie Jobson; UK New Wave; Little River Band.

**TP 19** (April/May '77)
Thin Lizzy; Bowie 2; Spedding; Gentle Giant; Dave Stewart; Australia 3.

**TP 20** (June/July '77)
Peter Gabriel; Genesis; Eno; Bowie 3; Wakeman; Damned.

**TP 21** (September '77)
Jimmy Page 1; Heavy Metal; Kevin Ayers; Pete Hammill; Dave Edmunds; Deaf School.

**TP 22** (October '77)
Sex Pistols; New Wave R.I.P.; Page 2; Small Faces; Nick Lowe; Phil Manzanera.

**TP 23** (November '77)
Bryan Ferry; Page 3; Gentle Giant; Collectors' Stones; Blondie; Twilley; AC/DC.

**TP 24** (December '77)
Elvis Costello; Boomtown Rats; Be-Bop Deluxe; Man; John Martyn; Motors.

**TP 25** (January '78)
Winwood/Traffic; Graham Parker; Jam; Rods; Horslips; Nick Drake; Kevin Coyne.

**TP 26** (February '78)
McCartney; Clash; Cheap Trick; Syd Barrett; Tom Robinson; Phillip Rambow; Diodes.

**TPP 2**
Definitive Who discography: 12 pages of 45s/LPs/films/covers/foreign/etc.

**TPP 3**
The Greatest Hits (1974-76): Best of early TP w/Who/Nazz/Beck/Yardbirds/Idle Race/more.

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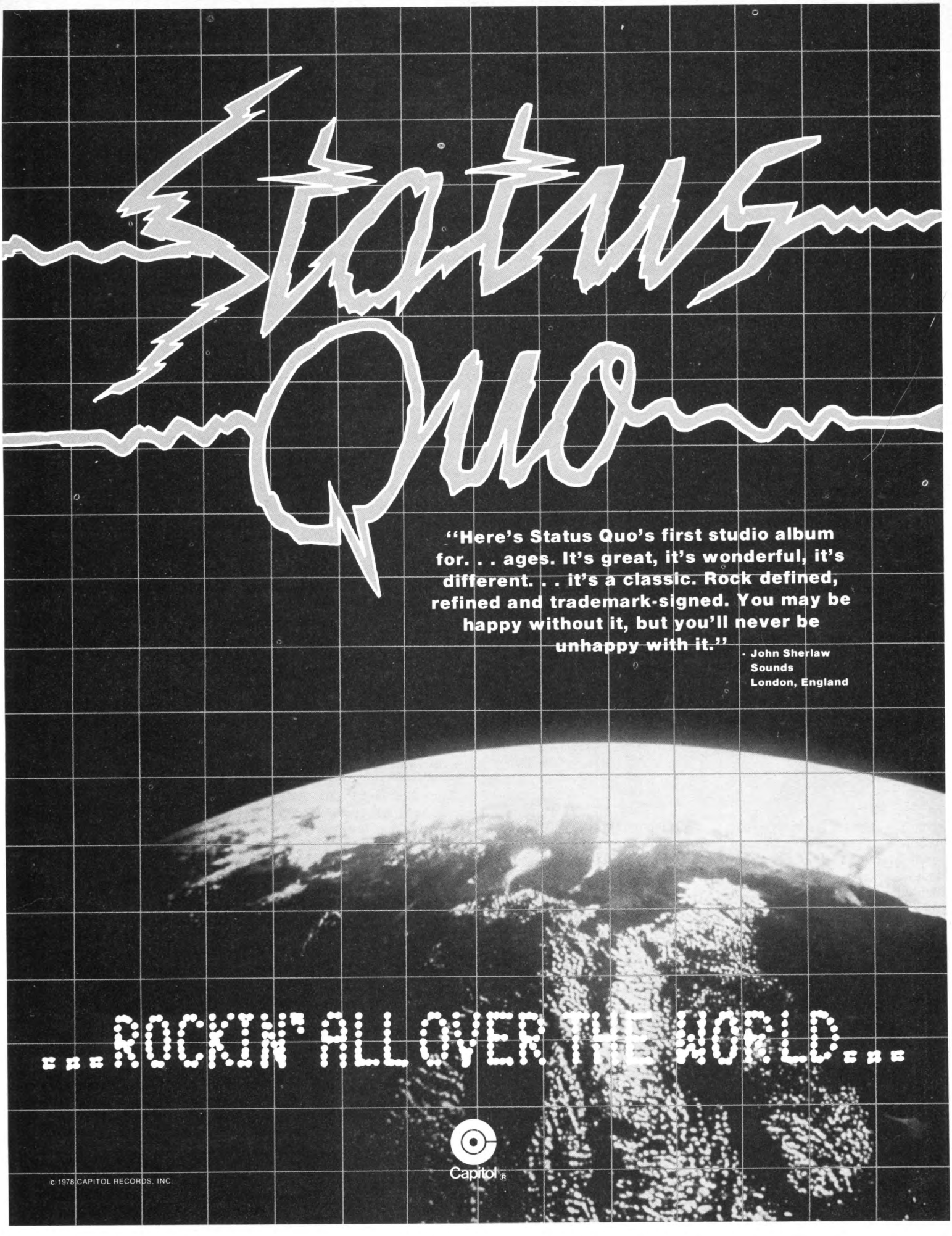
# raving faves

The topic of RF #3 was guitar solos, studio and live. There were too many to list them all, so we decided to chuck the live entries. The following are all dead. (Sorry for all the work you live ones went to.) The list is in no particular order, but the first three each received two votes. Guess what the rest got!

LOU REED/Velvet Underground "I Heard Her Call My Name" (**White Light**)
STEVE HACKETT/Genesis "Firth of Fifth" (**Selling England**)
PETE TOWNSHEND/Who "I Can See for Miles" (**Sell Out**)
ROBIN TROWER/Procul Harum "Devil Came From Kansas" (**Salty Dog**)
"Whaling Stories" (**Home**)
"Simple Sister" (**Broken Barricades**)
JOHN PORTER/Bryan Ferry "Don't Worry Baby" (**These Foolish Things**)
TONY PELUSO/Carpenters "Goodbye to Love" (**Now and Then**)
KAZUHIKO KATO/Sadistic Mika Band "Sumie No Kumie" (**Sadistic Mika Band**)
ULRICH ROTH/Scorpions "Drifting Sun" (**Fly to the Rainbow**)
GARY GREEN/Gentle Giant "Peel the Paint" (**Three Friends**)
ROSS FUNICELLO/Dictators "Next Big Thing" (**Go Girl Crazy**)
JIMMY PAGE/Led Zep "Communications Breakdown" (**1st**)
ANDY POWELL/Wishbone Ash "Sometime World" (**Argus**)
BILL NELSON/Be-Bop Deluxe "Crying to the Sky" (**Sunburst Finish**)
DAVE EDMUNDS/Love Sculpture "Sabre Dance" (**Forms and Feelings**)
JIM MCGUINN/Byrds "8 Miles High" (**5D**)
CHRIS SPEDDING/Roy Harper "The Game (**HQ**)
MARC BOLAN/Tyrannosauraus Rex "Lofty Skies" (**Beard of Stars**)
ROBERT FRIPP/Eno "Baby's on Fire" (**Warm Jets**)
"St. Elmo's Fire" (**Green World**)
JAMES WILLIAMSON/Stooges "Shake Appeal" (**Raw Power**)
"I Got a Right" (45)
RON ASHETON/Stooges "I Wanna Be Your Dog" (**Stooges**)

Question #6

What's the worst band name can you remember? We'll take five suggestions from any area of rock 'n' roll. The only rule is that the name's got to be bad. Stinkeroo!! Deadline is late May 1978.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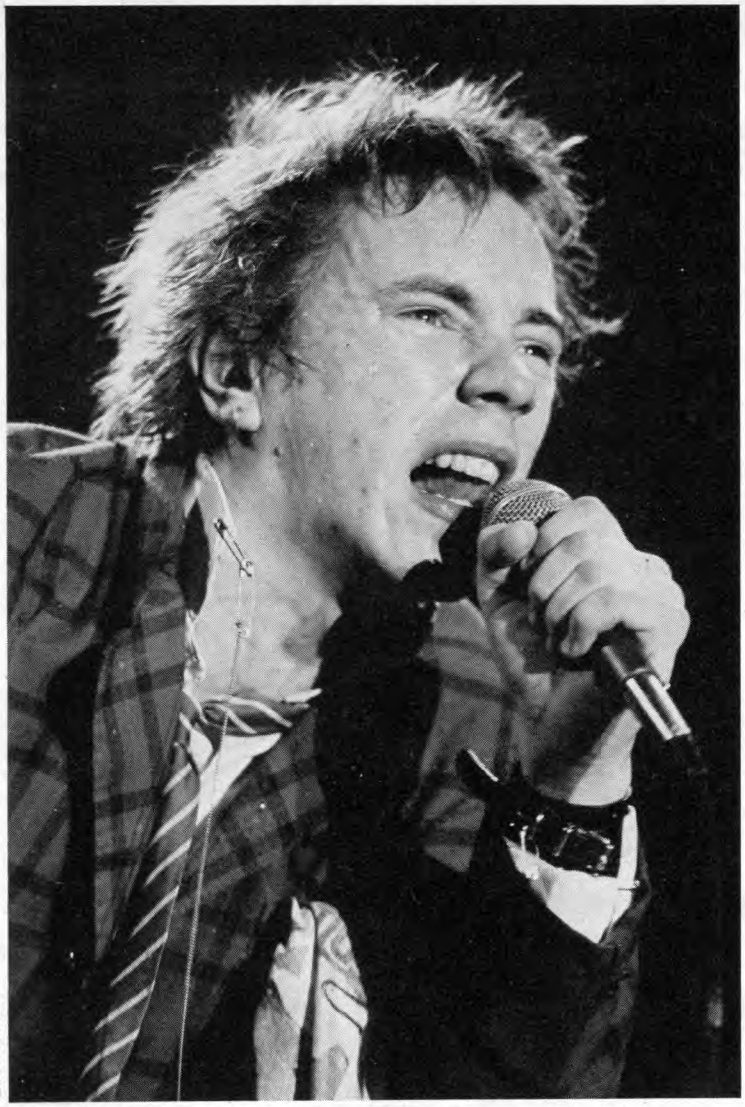
# FAX 'N' RUMOURS



Ebet Roberts

## Pistols: Came, Saw, Split

In what has to be one of rock 'n' roll's looniest episodes ever, the Sex Pistols have completed what appears to be their first, last and only tour of the colonies. Several days after the tour (which closed January 15 in San Francisco) Johnny Rotten appeared in New York, went to CBGBs, opened his mouth, and the rumours began flying. In consecutive order: Rotten announced he had quit the group; Sid Vicious turned up in Jamaica (New York) Hospital's emergency room, trying to pull through an airborne OD; Steve Jones and Paul Cook flew to Rio De Janeiro in order to be with British refugee/train robber Ronald Biggs; Rotten and Vicious both got snowed in courtesy of New York's blizzard. Round two opens in London, January 24, when Rotten and Vicious arrive home suggesting that the whole episode has been a publicity stunt. Talk around London has the Pistols, intact, trying to book some London dates instead of going on a scheduled European tour. Then it is revealed in the press that Rotten and Sid had been fired either by the other two Pistols, by the group's notorious manager Malcolm Mclaren, or both. Apparently plans were afoot to fire bassist Sid, but somewhere along the line the axe fell on Rotten as well. Reasons given varied between egotism, failure to be outrageous, unwillingness to join the others in a trip to Rio, destructiveness, and a host of other complaints voiced either by Malcolm or the group.

At this date the absolute truth of the matter is totally unavailable. Two weeks after the controversy erupted, no official statement has been issued by either Virgin, Warner Brothers, McLaren or anyone in the group. We await further developments.

### New Old Bands Appear

Out of the ashes have risen a few new agglomerations that may or may not prove to be interesting over the next few months. The most likely to make money would have to be "UK," which includes Bill Bruford, John Wetton, Edwin Jobson and Allan Holdsworth. One supposes that the group will sound like a cross between Yes, Uriah Heep and the Mothers of Invention. Or maybe King Crimson, Family and Roxy Music.

Alex Harvey has returned from his overreported retirement (which he claims he never announced) with a new group scheduled to debut in London on March 5. Meanwhile, former SAHBers Cleminson, Chris Glen and Ted McKenna have become the nucleus of a band called Zal. There will be one or two other members announced shortly.

Violinist Urban Blitz (and they started before p**k names like Rotten and Vicious) has left the Doctors (of Madness). The band will continue as a trio and are scheduled to release their third album, **Sons of Survival**, before long.

Steeleye Span has apparently broken up for the last time. After a farewell tour the group intends to go their own ways. After 10 albums, they deserve a break. Solo projects expected.

### Peter Green Redivivus

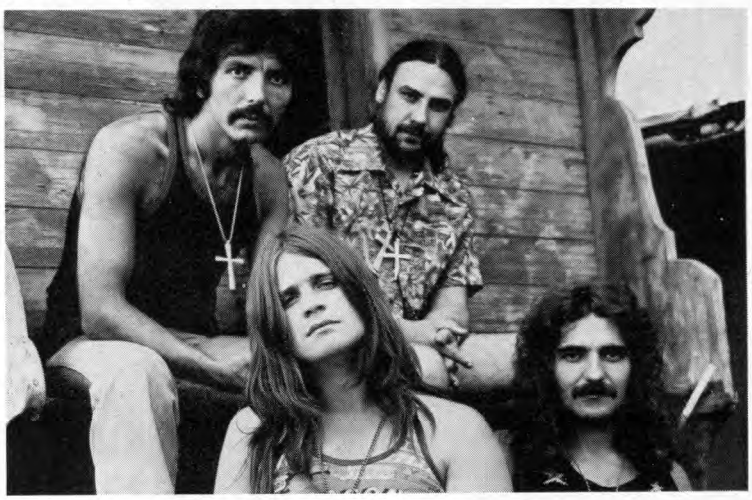
Despite the current popularity of Fleetwood Mac, few current fans of the group would have any idea who Peter Green is. The guitar whiz who made Mac what it once was (a great band that didn't do too well commercially) becoming a major rock casualty in the process, has returned from the land of the certifiably untogether to get back into music. Recent reports from London confirm that Green will soon be recording (in the US) under the managerial guidance of Mick Fleetwood (who also manages ex-Mac Bob Welch). In a rather curious reentry to the world of the sane, Green was married in January at Fleetwood's Los Angeles abode only a few hours after announcing his attentions to the sleeping superstar. Recording should begin shortly. Welcome back Peter!

### Dic's Bassman Walks

Mark Mendoza, bassist of the Dictators, has left the group just before they entered New York's Record Plant to record their third album. The split was mutually agreeable, and the 'Tators will proceed as a five-piece, Adny Shernoff taking over bass chores in exchange for keyboards. The album should show a side of the band not in evidence on **Manifest Destiny**.

### Return to Paranoia

The short-lived split between Black Sabbath and singer Ozzie Ozbourne has ended with the fringed one crawling back to the group. Apparently unhappy since leaving the Sabbs several months ago, it was the decision of the group to dismiss Dave Walker (his replacement) that gave Ozzie a clear field to take back his old gig. For what it's worth, the group has just begun recording their umpteenth album, to be released in May with the title **Never Say Die**. It wasn't us, honest.



# FAX 'N' RUMOURS

## Record News

In the interests of minimal confusion, here are the hot new albums scheduled for release as we go to press. Most of them should be out by the time you read this, so we've arranged them by prospective month. You can fend for yourselves.

**February:**
Sham 69; **Tell Us the Truth** (UK Polydor); David Coverdale, **North Wind**; **Stiffs Live Stiffs** (UK); Robert Gordon and Link Wray, **Fresh Fish Special** (US Private Stock); XTC (UK Virgin); British Lions; Tuff Darts (US Sire); Dusty Springfield, **It Begins Again** (UK Mercury); Strawbs (US & UK); 999's debut on British UA.

**March:** Buzzcocks (UK UA); Wreckless Eric (UK Stiffs); Doctors, **Sons of Survival** (UK, Polydor); T. Dream, **Cyclone** (UK Virgin); Patti Smith, **Easter** (Arista); Lou Reed, **Street Hassle** (Arista); Kinks (Arista); Jolt (UK Polydor); Nick Lowe; Elvis Costello, Russ Ballard (US CBS); Vibrators, **V2** (UK CBS); Boys (UK NEMS/US Sire).

**In the not-too distant future:** Jam's third; Dictators' third; Clash's second; Mr. Big's second; Television's second; Ramones' fourth; Neo's first; Who's overdue; Daltrey's fourth; Generation X's first, Strangler's third; McCartney's next; Eric Burdon's next solo; Stones' studio; T. Heads' second (produced by Eno); Bethnal's first; and undoubtedly hundreds from the disco parade of timeless taste. Rock on Everybody!!!!

## Biz Doings

Despite late-'77 suggestions that few new groups would be signed this year, CBS UK has inked two more new wave bands (to go along with the trio they already have); the Only Ones and the Cortinas. Both are expected to record and release CBS "product" shortly.

A new label, Radar Records, has been formed in England by top A&R man Andrew Lauder, who left UA for just that purpose. Considered to be the most important new British label, the dust cleared with signings by Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, and Wilko Johnson. The label is also releasing the Iggy out-takes album **Kill City**. Elvis and Lowe will both be releasing on Columbia in America, with a first from Basher and a second from McManus due around March. Confirmed reports say that the US and UK versions of both LPs will differ slightly in content.

### Hard at Work

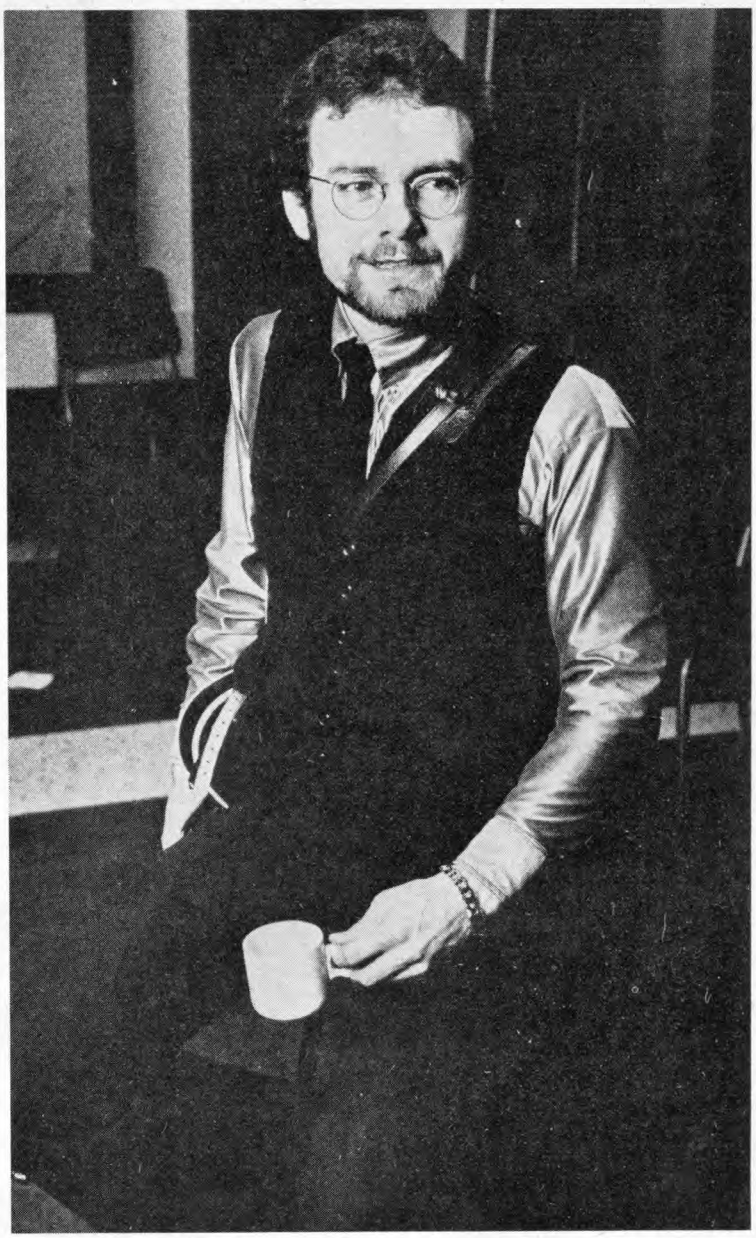
Cheap Trick spent February recording in Los Angeles with Tom Werman producing; the Clash did the same in London with Sandy Pearlman (Dictators/Blue Oyster Cult).

### Tom Robinson Fans Unite!

As a public service, let it be known that the TRB fan club is located at Number 8, 69 New Bond St., London W1. Send them an SASE and ask for the bulletin. Tell them who sent you. It's nice to be loved.

**CORTINAS: Album due shortly.**





### More Punks in the Apple

Robert Fripp, Crimsonite and Bo-Eno collaborator, played a solo concert in a tiny New York club early in February. Unadvertised and unannounced officially, the concert was well attended, with fans waiting an hour in the cold to buy tickets. Despite rumors concerning the possible appearance of one or more Fripp-related rock stars, none were in evidence, and the show was Fripp's alone.

### Hudson Rock

According to the British rock press, punk was last year's thing. The trend of 1978 is Thames Beat, the outcry of frustrated Londoners who wish they'd been born near the Mersey River (that's in Liverpool, stupid) instead of the Thames (that's London). But several bands have decided to make the best of their situation (or is it position?), and are bringing matched suits, semi-acoustic guitars, and Beatlesque vocal delivery back to the world of pop music. Rising stars in the Thames talent brigade are the Boyfriends (three-piece), Pleasers (four-piece) and Stukas (five-piece), all of whom are considered candidates for the Beat Awards to be held later this year in Xanadu. (No, that's made up.)

Meanwhile, rockabilly is back in England with the release (on Chiswick) of an LP by a new group called Whirlwind. Drape jackets, pegged pants, zits—just like 1956. Whoopee! And we thought the Jam were a mite nostalgic.

# Willie Alexander Plays Devil Music



Willie Alexander flanked by (l to r) David McLean, Billy Loosigian and Severin Grossman.

Live, Willie Alexander and the Boom Boom Band is primal, spontaneous off-the-wall rock at its rawest and most original. Imagine a cramped, smoke-filled Boston snake pit mistakenly named the Paradise. The Boom Boom Band is playing a jagged, hard-edged firestorm of unrelenting rock while the maestro is staggering around the stage like a madman. Willie is talking/stuttering/singing/mumbling a wild ode; with a sly grin he grabs the mike stand and slowly sinks to the floor where he collapses into a crouch. The band lurches forward towards a photofinish of sound, the crowd is screaming their heads off, and Willie's sly grin still remains. Just tell them Willie Boy is here.

In Boston Willie Alexander has been king of the hill for some time now—at least a decade—going back to early days with the Lost and the Bagatelle (both from the Bosstown Sound era), and the last remnants of the Velvet Underground. Willie has been in a vacuum that has left him totally out of the mainstream; he's popular in Boston but obscure elsewhere. With an MCA album just released, though, the rest of the country can now catch up.

Boom Boom bassist and spokesperson Severin Grossman dissects Willie's personality: "Willie never had a real childhood. His father was a minister and Willie had to be the model child. He couldn't goof off and have a fun time; he always had to be proper." Rock music was, of course, excluded from young Willie's life.



"When Willie was 14 or 15 his father died, and Willie went crazy. He took the so-called Devil's Music to his heart. It's his life now. I don't think he'll ever grow up totally. Nobody can say Willie's a pose or a charade; he's the real thing."

Severin is eager to clear up some misconceptions about the band. "People think we're just a back-up band, and Willie's the star or something like that. He did name us, but we were a band before Willie joined; we all work on the songs together. Willie will come to us with an idea for a song—I call it a head—then the rest of us add the body, arms and legs; so far it's worked real well. At first we didn't even want Willie; we all thought he was some burnt-out guy. Then one day we were jamming, just the three of us [Severin, drummer David McLean and guitarist Billy Mercer]. Willie sat in to sing, and before the first song was over we knew we had to have him.

"At first we couldn't get any jobs 'cause we told the booking agents we did two one-hour sets of original music. We didn't have our own sound system, lights or roadmen. They just laughed and said we were fools. We played the Rat, but that was a heavy scene 'cause the owner wouldn't always pay. Nobody plays there anymore.

"MCA saved us. We were all broke and in debt. Our producer, Craig Leon, really helped us land that contract."

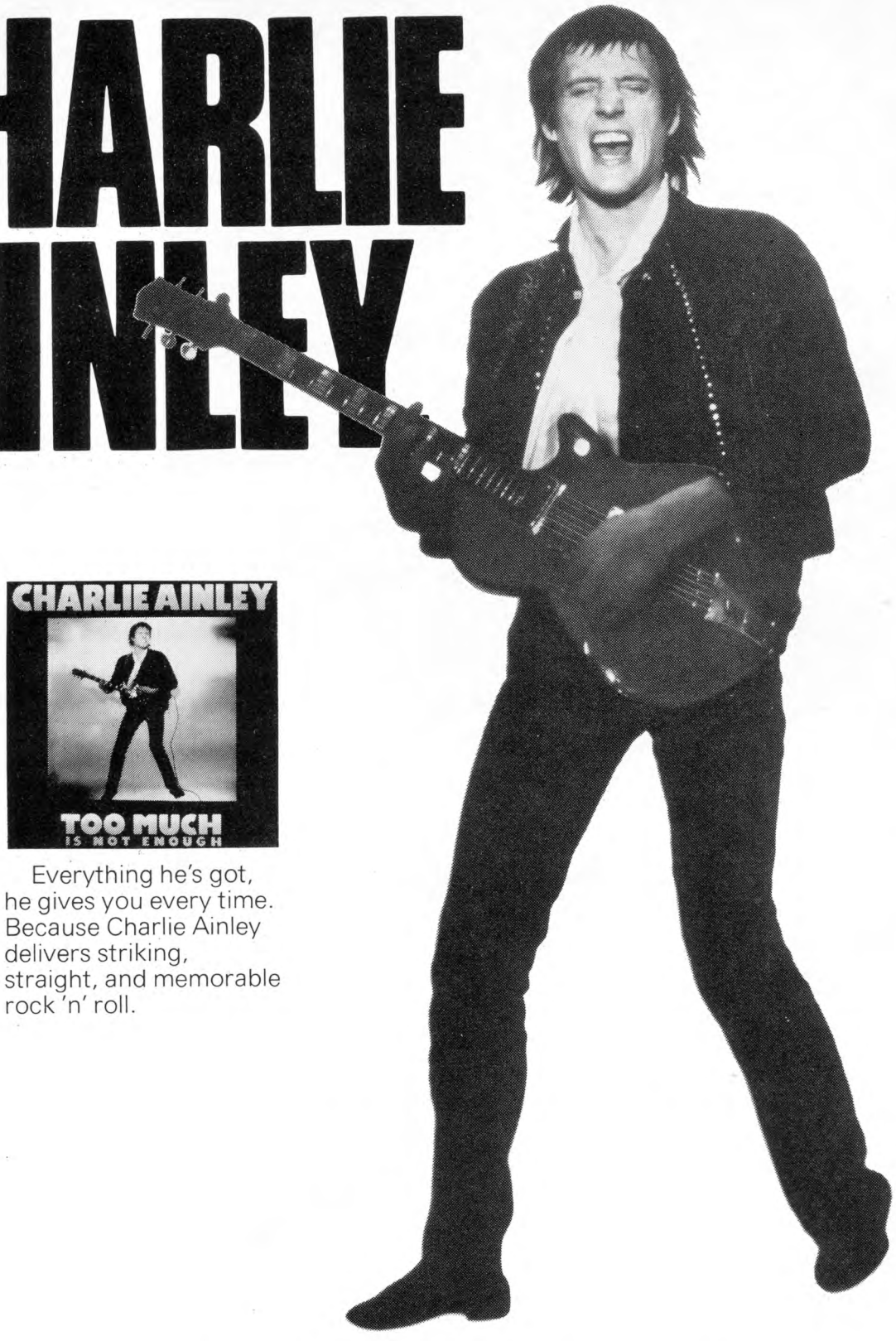
Willie and the band are managed by Charlie McKenzie, who also manages Boston. "All of Charlie's backers think he's gone off the deep end, like he's senile or something. They think we have no commercial appeal, at least not like Boston. I know the members of Boston don't think we have any kind of appeal. I admit I don't like Boston's music; they sound like a lot of others—Queen, Traffic, Joe Walsh. If you had heard their early demo tapes you'd realize how much they sounded like Queen."

What about the Boom Boom Band's own influences?

"Our sound is based firmly on the frustrations of everyday life, sexual hangups and problems." Alexander himself is very big on beat authors Jack Kerouac and Charles Bukowski. "He has more books by Kerouac than I've ever seen anywhere else."

Severin is aware of his peculiar position as mouthpiece for the childlike, eccentric Alexander. "Willie's problem is he is so sensitive. He's real hyper and very defensive; at times he can be very hostile. I think Willie comes on hostile to some people because he's basically a very shy, insecure person; his hostility is a mask for this shyness. Willie also tends to rise up against adversity—he defends things on principle even if he doesn't believe the things he defends. Sometimes he can blow things up, defend things that are small and petty and unimportant. But Willie's a sharper character than most would understand or comprehend. Willie's Willie; he won't change now and we all love him." **—David Koepp**

# CHARLIE AINLEY



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Distributed by CBS Records.
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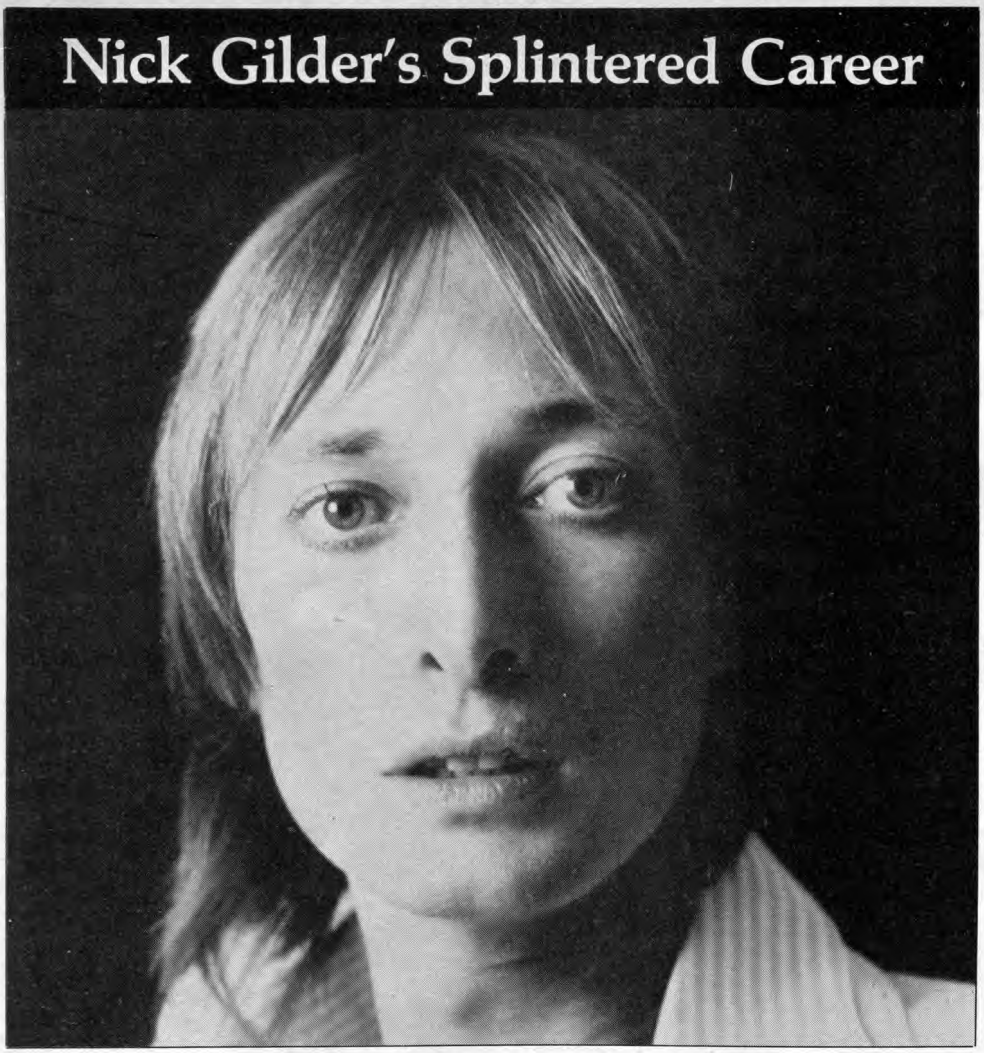
# Nick Gilder's Splintered Career



Nick Gilder should probably be singing the blues instead of the buoyant, optimistic pop he's committed to. After his Vancouver-based group (Sweeney Todd) came from nowhere with a Canadian number one single in 1976, Nick left for California to build a career as a solo artist. Since then nothing has worked out the way it should have. But never mind; undaunted, Nick and his guitar playing partner James McCullough (not little Jimmy) are getting a band together so they can come to your town and lift your spirits.

But why, you may ask, should this young upstart in his mid-twenties be any better off than he is? After all, he's got his album out and will be touring soon. Listen, then, to a story of great expectations and many disappointments.

In 1971 Nick Gilder came to Vancouver from London, where he had been going to technical college and was not into music at all (or so he says). What happened then is a classic boy-meets-rock tale.

"Somebody was doing a trip in their basement. They invited me over and I said I could sing. We won a local talent contest and started working in some clubs and high schools; the record companies started coming and we started writing."

Sweeney Todd was named after a fictitious barber who slashed his customers' throats. After a false start with a company that soon folded, the band signed with London Records and put out a couple of singles that had local success, but no more.

Then "Roxy Roller" came out and things changed dramatically. Nick and James had written the song as an impromptu throwaway, but it went to number one in Canada for three weeks. "Roxy" was a natural for success, with growling power chords worthy of T. Rex and a strutting nasty beat. What really made the record work, though, was Gilder's bratty, mock-tough delivery, which most resembled Brian Connolly running through "Ballroom Blitz." The sleazy lyrics were a perfect complement to Nick's insinuating vocal in the way they conjured up images of teen decadence: "Five-bob job, she gets/Bubble-gum on her knees./Down between the seats/Sometimes, she'll pass you the keys."

As the single was taking off, Nick and James decided to leave the band. When asked why, Gilder's initial response is a terse "there was a lot of friction." But when pressed for an explanation, Nick detailed what is a rather common predicament for many groups.

"We'd had a lot of record companies come up and see us. There'd been offers before and I'd ignored it. It had come to the point where I thought I'd better do something. I said, 'Jimmy and I write, this is the unit.'" Another case of talent carrying deadwood, it seemed.

Nick and James signed solo contracts with Chrysalis in the US and ditched a band then receiving awards for "Roxy," a song they had created. But Nick's troubles were only beginning. When Chrysalis signed him they also bought American rights to the masters he and James had done with Sweeney Todd. But some crafty little sneak at the old company got the bright idea of putting out a new Sweeney Todd version of "Roxy" in the states. Only it wasn't really new; London had taken the old instrumental track and put a new vocalist over it. This version became a big hit in Detroit and Cleveland before Chrysalis caught on and had the record halted by court order. To counter, they also put out the original they now owned. To counter **that** London put out a totally re-recorded Sweeney Todd version with yet another vocalist. The result was predictable: confronted with such confusion, most stations refused to touch any version and the song died an unfortunate death.

Would "Roxy" have been a hit without the chaos?

"There's no doubt in my mind that that's a hit single. In the markets it was played in it did very well. I can understand radio stations not wanting to get involved in the politics of record companies. But I think with the success that 'Roxy' achieved in the Detroit and Cleveland area, if there hadn't been any choice for the programmer, the song would have been a hit. I feel very confident of that. But it's behind now and I don't even like to think about it because it's kind of depressing for me."

Having lost his ace, Gilder was nevertheless free to begin recording from his new base in Los Angeles. Still a hot property, Nick began recording with George Martin and Martin's associate Peter Sullivan. But nothing from the collaboration with Martin ever came out and only two tracks recorded with Sullivan were released: "She's a Star (In Her Own Right)" (by Philip Rambow), which was a Canadian single only, and one track which surfaced on Nick's album, "Tantalize." What happened?

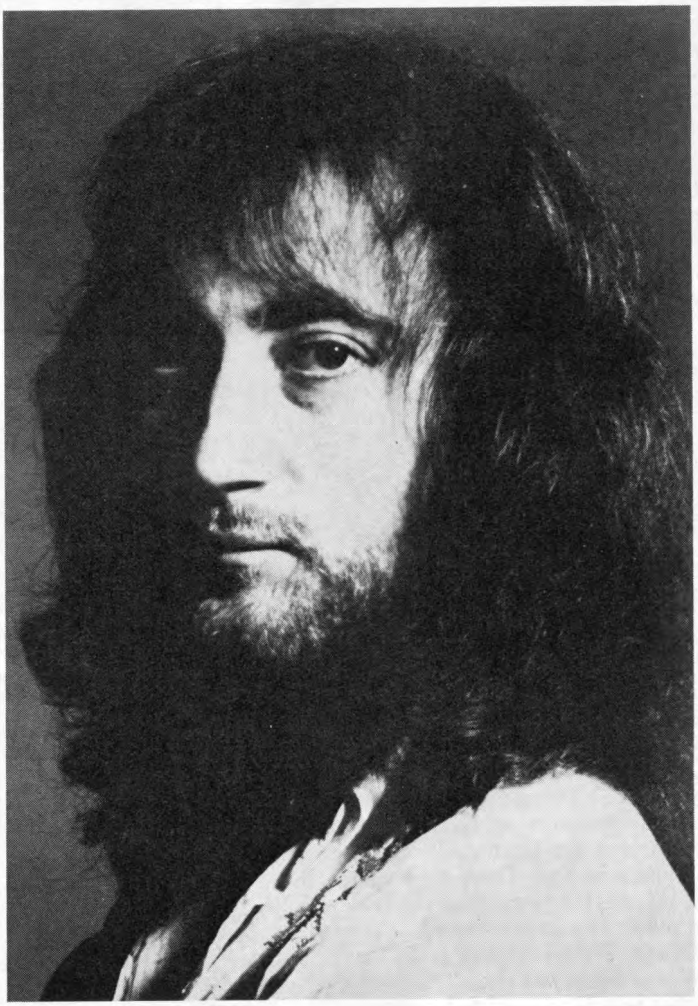
"A lot of confusion, a lot of misunderstanding between myself and the record company from square one. Chrysalis were throwing songs at me. I did a few things with George, none of my own material, and it was difficult for me to put my heart in it. There's something about doing your own songs, especially if you have a style of your own, that doing somebody else's songs—it just didn't work, that was the bottom line. George Martin is a great guy. . ."

This would seem to have been a greater disaster than Nick would care to go into. Nonetheless, Nick forged ahead and finally did an album of his own songs his own way. **You Know Who You Are** came out last fall, about a year after the domestic release of "Roxy."

The album shows that Nick is indeed worthy heir to the British pop flash tradition of T. Rex and the Sweet. A majority of the songs, like "Backstreet Noise" and "Runaways in the Night," come closer to recapturing that glitter-era toughness and exhilaration than anything else I've heard in a long while. Balancing out the album are a few sweet ballads that could be done by either middle period Kinks or any dumb MOR singer and still be likeable.

Continued on page 54

# Elements, my dear Watson.



This is the inimitable Roger Glover. He was the bass player for Deep Purple and he has produced classic LPs for Status Quo and Nazareth.

Now he has come up with a progressive rock masterpiece of his own: *ELEMENTS.*




*ELEMENTS:* One man's view of creation as channeled through rock 'n' roll.

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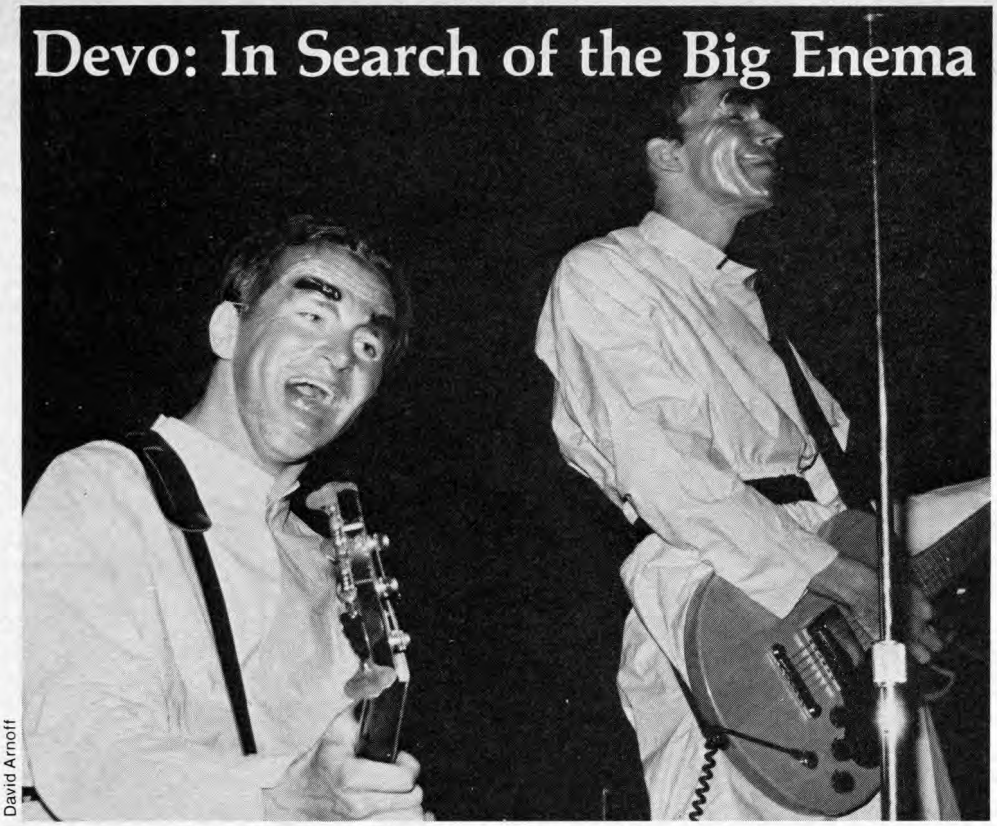
# Devo: In Search of the Big Enema



David Arnoff

Devo #1 and #2. Below, Devo #3 and #4. These are not men!

There is a five-man computer-rock band called Devo who plan to take over the world, or at least to transform it. The group members are natives of Akron, Ohio, but they say they felt like aliens growing up there. In the industrial rubber wasteland of Ohio they were surrounded by misinformed egocentric human beings. They even sussed that they themselves were human beings. But they didn't like human beings. They liked machines. They say they felt like robots. They wanted to be robots. And they wanted other people to want to be robots.

Soon they will get the chance to spread their mechanistic message—they call it "de-evolution"—to our unsuspecting fellow Americans. Devo is dangerous and must be stopped.

There is only one way to stop them: we must understand the mutated history of their music and the twisted logic behind their diabolical plans. Here is a concise chronology:

Devo has been together since the turn of the decade, but it is only with the advent of so-called "new wave" music that they have been able to gain a small but growing stranglehold on an appreciable audience.

Their first single was the clever "Mongoloid" b/w "Jocko Homo" on their own Booji Boy label. In its deceptively restrained way the record was more outrageous and seditious than even the pukiest and bloodiest of punk rock's offerings.

Devo sent Iggy Pop a demo tape. Iggy liked it so much that he hyped the group to David Bowie, who became their mentor and producer. Iggy became so friendly with the Devo-tees that he asked them to call him "Jimmy."

The band got a major contract from Warner Brothers, and have recently released another single on their private label. It's "Satisfaction" b/w "Sloppy."



David Arnoff

Now for the rest of the story. This testimony was extracted from Jerry Casale, alias Jerry Devo, following a Max's Kansas City gig in December. Casale had just finished conspiring with Brian Eno, who, as everyone knows, is a subversive alien. Casale was nestled in the corner of Max's owner Tommy Dean's office, seated across from Devo comrade Mark Mothersbaugh, the group's keyboard player.

According to Casale:

"The human condition is something so pathetic and obnoxious that the only shock reaction is laughter. That's what the punk-rock movement is based on, and it's valid. That's the way Devo has felt for a long time.

"As a group, Devo was never really formed; it happened. A lot of people get the idea that we were contrived, that we were put together. But it is the element of spontaneity that created the group. People from Kent, Ohio and Akron, Ohio, who just happened to be there by some random perversion of birth, found each other over the years. Somewhere around 1970 the people in the group, except for the drummer Alan Myers, all met each other.

"Mark and I more or less had the idea for the group. We're both visual artists, and we had a similar attitude. We didn't like anything that was going on. You have to understand, we grew up in an area where art is subjected to ridicule, where anybody who doesn't pursue a factory job is suspect. When you come from an area like that, you have to end up being real strong. It's like going to Catholic school when you don't buy the Catholic rap. Either they get to you and brainwash you, or you escape. We escaped, so there's no middle ground with Devo. It's on/off, "O" and "1," just like a computer. Ours is not a middle-of-the-road aesthetic.

"It wasn't until the Tubes came along that a group like us could get jobs. Before that everything on the music scene was slick and derivative. Wherever we got to play we had to sneak in and lie about what we were doing. Or we had to play art festivals, where people would throw beer bottles at us and offer to pay us to quit. It was at that point that we knew we had something good.

"Rubber workers used to get off from the factories near us and come see us play. Our peers related to the suburban-robot image we were trying to convey. It wasn't a hip thing. It was real. You have to agree that Akron was not hip. The kids weren't coming to see us because they were into the new wave. In fact, when the Dead Boys first played with us on New Year's Eve 1976, they tried to beat us up because we put them uptight. They were new wave, but there was no way they could believe where we were at.

"Where are we at? Listen to 'Jocko Homo.' It's all in that song. It says, 'They tell us that we lost our tails.' You see, people think, 'I'm important, I'm at the center of the universe.' And they have to think that way because if they don't, it's too frightening. But in reality, humans are just an element in the system. If only they realized that!

"The people in Devo feel like robots. We perceive the world as a mosaic, like one of those computer mosaics that do the portraits that break down information. We don't see any war between technology and humanity. If anything, it's a war between stupidity and sanity."

Mark pipes up from across the room: "A merger between man and machines is not only acceptable, but unavoidable. Man without technology is like a human being

Continued on page 54

# A NEW LEVEL FOR SWEET...
# HEAR WHERE ROCK IS HEADED

Capitol RECORDS







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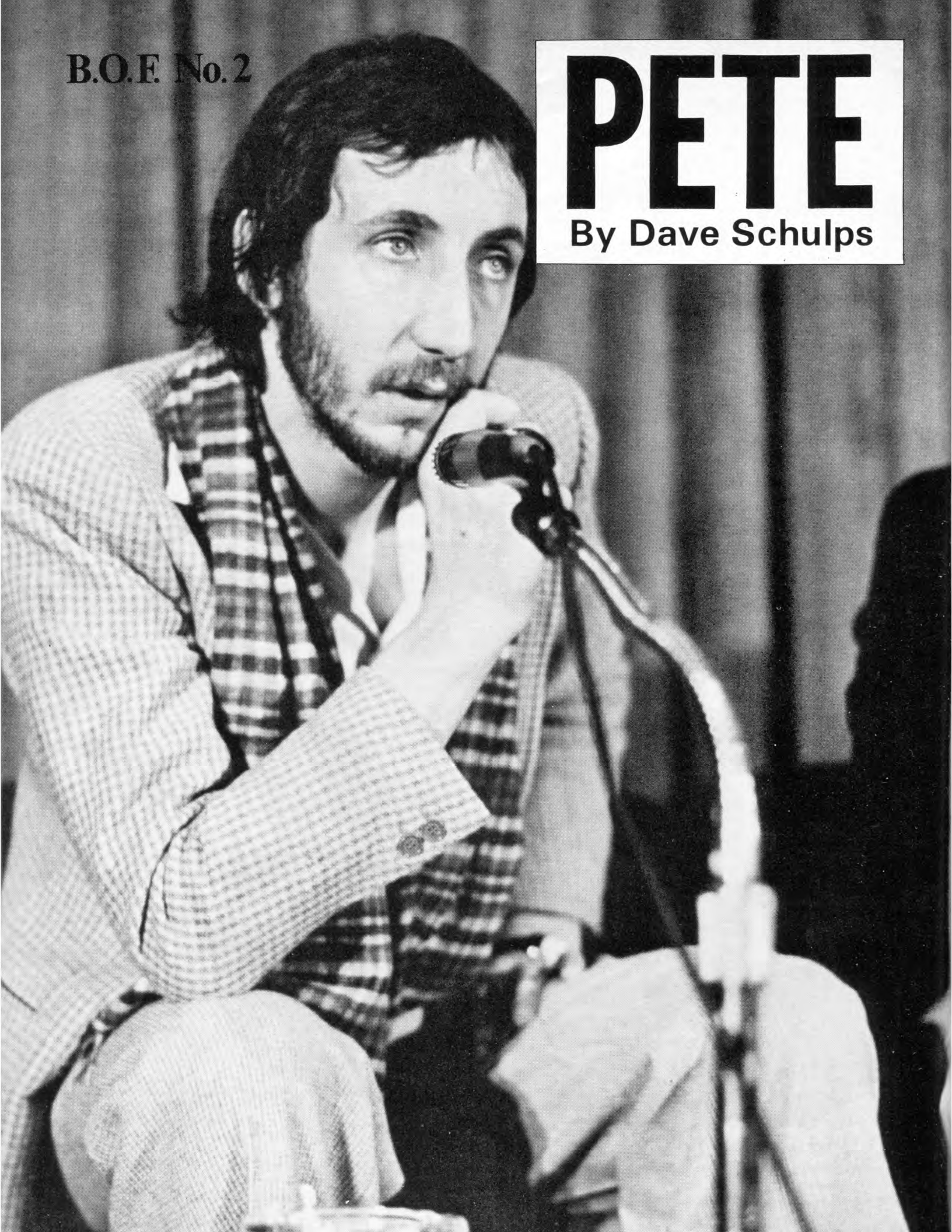
B.O.F. No. 2

# PETE

## By Dave Schulps



# "We don't want to play anywhere anymore."

Karen Townshend answers the door wearing a puzzled look.

"Hello. I'm here to see Pete. We've got an interview scheduled for ten o'clock."

The puzzled look remains. "Pete was supposed to see you at his office."

"Well, you see..."

It's hardly an auspicious way to start a long sought-after interview with Pete Townshend—an interview which became possible only when, after efforts through the normal channels had seemingly failed, a letter from Mr. T. himself arrived at TP's doorstep, in which he agreed to an interview should we find our way to Britain in the near future. Now I'm standing at the front door of his home in the London suburb of Twickenham trying to explain to his wife how a slight direction mix-up has landed me there instead of at his office in the nearby Meher Baba Oceanic Centre where we're actually scheduled to meet. It's a slightly embarrassing introduction, but after a couple of seconds' pause she decides it's all right to let me in and asks me to have a seat while she goes upstairs to get Pete.

The house is located on the bank of the Thames directly across from Richmond, the Surrey town which was the center of the entire British R&B scene in the mid-'60s. It is quite modest, certainly not the opulent quarters one might expect from a rock star of Townshend's stature, although I'm told his weekend home at the seaside town of Goring is a bit more lavish. The downstairs area here consists of a rather normal-sized living room area—filled up, not with the usual furniture, but with synthesizers and other keyboards—and a kitchen. A pedal steel guitar greets you as the door swings open and, as I recall, is the only visible guitar save one hanging on the wall above the keyboards. In all, it is a decidedly unassuming abode, yet owns a kind of warmth and aging charm common to any three-centuries-old English home.

Within a couple of minutes Pete Townshend stumbles downstairs. He obviously has not been awake for very long, but after a quick introduction he explains the real cause of his disheveled appearance: a night out drinking with Keith Moon at the Vortex, the London club which sets aside Monday and Tuesday nights for a continuous stream of punk bands. While Pete fixes a much-needed pot of coffee we chat about the bands he had seen the night before—and he admits to having enjoyed nearly all of them. He also mentions having been asked by members of Generation X to produce their debut album, but obviously hasn't made a decision about it yet. All in all, he agrees, the scene over here is very healthy indeed, reminiscent perhaps of the bygone era which spawned the Who.

Ever since I started taking Rock seriously, the Who have been my favorite band; or rather, when the Who became my favorite band I started taking Rock seriously—started thinking about it as more than just another form of entertainment, more than a couple of hours a day spent in the company of a radio or record player (I didn't have a "stereo" then). Pete Townshend was responsible for that. He approached Rock not only as a musician but as a critic with a finely honed sense of what Rock was, is and could be. Mainly, for me, he made it seem so very important. So in a way Townshend's vision of Rock has very much helped put me where I am today and, yeah, shaped my life.

*"And yet I've lived your future out, by pounding stages like a clown."* Right. I'd go on more about what it's been like being a Who freak for the past decade, but I've neither the time nor the space (and besides, Ira's magnificent "Whosade" which first appeared in TP3 and was later reprinted in TPP3 says it all for me anyway). Suffice to say that I had only one hero as an adolescent and that this interview probably means more to me than you'd want to know.

(Whew!) Anyway, when Townshend recently broke his public silence of over two years it seemed a good indication that something was once again astir in the Who camp. Townshend's last interview (the one that inspired a less than cordial rebuttal by Daltrey in another paper a few weeks later thus leading to the aforementioned long-term snub of the press) had taken place months before the release of **Who by Numbers**, a record which, more than any other Who album, could have stood an explanation from Townshend. From that time up until Townshend's Rolling Stone piece and his two recent interviews in connection with the **Rough Mix** album, there has been no communication at all between the Who and their public.

At long last, though, word started coming out as to the group's activities: the album they are currently recording, the "Kids Are Alright" film now in its cutting stages, and some possible plans for future film projects. The Rolling Stone piece, if a bit vague and oddly oblique at times, at least let us know that Townshend had made it through his period of desperation and was ready to get down to business once again. In fact, after the interview today, he tells me, he'll be heading into the studio to do some more work on the album.

As we sit down and prepare to begin the interview, we are both wondering exactly what tack we're going to take in our discussion. In the letter I received from Townshend in which he agreed to the interview he mentioned his interest in having us do something on his demos, perhaps sitting down and listening to all of them while he commented on each. This seemed like a great idea and we were anxious to pursue it. Unfortunately, Pete says, the tapes are in his other house and unless I'll be in London for a while longer he won't be able to do it. As I'm leaving in a couple of days, it'll have to wait for awhile.

"I just thought it would be a drag if the first thing that Trouser Press actually did with me was just a hard-nosed interview. It would be nicer if it was more something special, something one wouldn't normally do with any other paper," Townshend offers as he sits down with me at a small wooden table by a window, coffee in hand.

As I look at my notebook, in which over the past week I've been scrawling out hundreds of questions and topics, I realize there's no way we'll be able to cover it all anyway, so I decide to abandon it entirely and instead ask one straightforward question, letting the discussion proceed from there. I figure the present is the best place to start.

What are the Who up to right now?

Townshend, rubbing his still half-asleep blue eyes, and trying to act as awake as one possibly can the morning after a night of boozing, replies: "We're recording; that's going very well. We've got the Jeff Stein film ('The Kids Are Alright') on the board. We're also planning a revival of the 'Lifehouse' film which we're hoping will get moving in the middle of next year."

'Lifehouse,' for those unfamiliar with it, was a film project the Who were involved in back in 1970 which included a series of concerts to a small invited audience at the Young Vic theater in London. The idea was to create an interaction—through the intimacy of the theater and the familiarity of a returning audience—that would surpass anything that had come before it, creating a situation where not only would the audience feed off the band, but the band would feed off the audience.

Unfortunately the project never shaped up quite right. Especially depressing to the Who were the results of the Young Vic shows, in which the audience refused to accept the all-new songs the Who were playing and called out mercilessly for old favorites. Those new songs, by the way, later went on to constitute most of **Who's Next** and Townshend's **Who Came First**.

Will this 'Lifehouse' stick to the same concept as the original film?

"Roughly. What fell apart with it before was that I actually tried to make this fiction that I'd written happen in reality. That's where I went wrong, actually trying to make a perfect concept, whereas this time it'll be done like a film script."

Then he drops the bomb.

I ask about the persistent rumors that the Who don't want to play in America anymore.

"We don't want to play anywhere anymore."

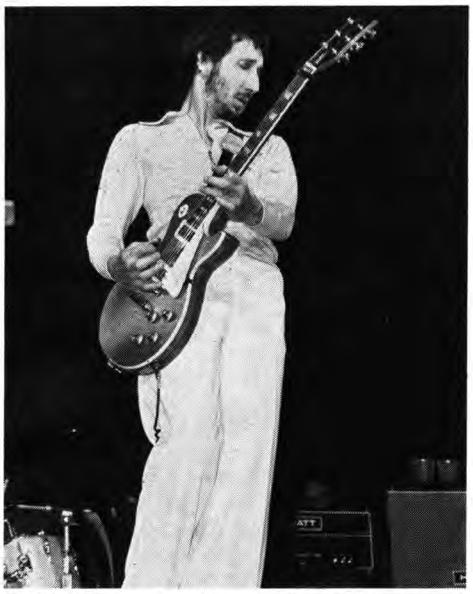
I ask why.

"With the live gig thing I'd just reached a point where I don't really think—as things stand at the moment—that things are that promising for people who want to see the band because basically we've been doing the same live act for such a long time now. We've had two albums worth of material which..." His sentence trails off. He begins again.

"I've always tried to make sure there was material which would work live and it's

Chuck Pulin

never been used. **Quadrophenia** and **Who by Numbers** had a lot of raunchy material that never got on the stage. All that seemed to work was a couple of the old singles, the stuff from **Tommy**, a few rock 'n' roll numbers and finish. That was the act we went out and did again and again and again. That was the act that we were acclaimed for. That was the list. And really it wasn't a list, it wasn't an act, it wasn't a group, it wasn't anything. It was a fuckin' celebration of our history. I'm fed up of doing it. I'm as much a Who freak as any other Who freak, and I like what the band has done. I don't think there's anything as exciting as going into 'My Generation' and seeing people go crazy, but after awhile it's automatic



Chuck Pulin

it's like being the Queen. People wave and shout just because you're there, they don't really care what you're doing. I've ceased trying to analyze that. I think that in itself it's a wonderful thing, but in the end for somebody like myself, when you realize the price you have to pay emotionally—with your family and with everything else—to actually go and hawk your body on the road for six weeks at a stretch twice a year in the USA, I don't think it really gets the right results anymore. I know it's going to make a lot of people angry. I've already had a lot of letters from kids that maybe haven't seen the band yet who are really pissed that we're not touring."

"That's probably why you've had to do the same act for so long," I suggest. "You get a new audience each tour in addition to the regulars."

Townshend looks up. His face seems older, more lined and careworn than I'd imagined it. He continues: "I don't think by any means that it's the audience's fault. I think what I've described is something weird that has happened to quite a lot of people. Maybe I've appeared to blame the audience, but I don't think that's really what it's all about. I think it's much more something that we've created. We've created a straight-jacket of our own making."

Did he think that if the Who had gone on three or four years ago and refused to do the old material it would have gotten them out of it?

"I think it possibly could have, yeah. I think it would've stood for what we actually were at the time, as the records did. I mean, the weird thing is that **Why by Numbers** was an extremely effective record in putting across what was in my head at the time and I think to some extent really what was happening to the band at the time. But despite the fact that the record went out, people listened to it, people enjoyed it musically, and people—some—were disturbed by the lyric content, nonetheless, when it came to going out and doing a gig the Who went out and went"—he raises his arms and imitates a child making loud machine gun-like noises—"nah-nah-nah-nah-nah. Same old stuff. Despite the fact that they'd already sort of done it all before. And in **Quadrophenia** as well, which we worked on for two years, we then went out and played **Tommy**."

I remind him that when the Who first performed **Quadrophenia** on stage they didn't do any of **Tommy** except "Pinball Wizard" and "See Me, Feel Me." Could it have just been a question of touring the States too soon after the album had come out, before the audience had a chance to get acquainted with it?

"With **Quadrophenia** we did tour too soon. **Quadrophenia** was an extremely slow album. In fact, it still hasn't sold very well in America to this day. It's a very good seller in this country because I think people are able to identify with it more, but it did very badly in America for a Who album. I think the answer is that we weren't prepared to work to gain our audiences' reactions. We wanted it instant and pat and the way to do that is to go on and play something that they recognize, which whips people up immediately.,"

I mention how strange it seemed during that first **Quadrophenia** tour when he and Roger tried introducing the songs; nobody in the crowd seemed willing to pay attention.

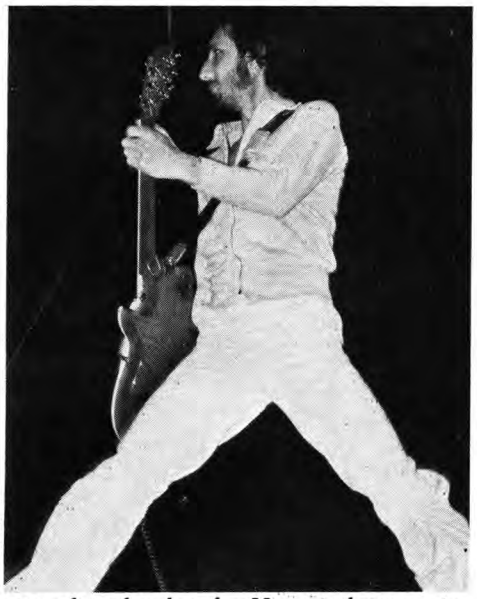
Townshend, obviously, was never very happy with the introductions. "I could never work out quite what was going on there. Roger thought that **Quadrophenia** wouldn't stand up unless you explained the story—and he's not the most verbose character. It was done sincerely, but I found it embarrassing and I think it

Townshend, obviously, was never very happy with the introductions. "I could never work out quite what was going on there. Roger thought that **Quadrophenia** wouldn't stand up unless you explained the story—and he's not the most verbose character. It was done sincerely, but I found it embarrassing and I think it showed, so I was glad when we dropped it. I couldn't really work out what must be going on in the audience's mind when they were being told, 'There's this kid and he's just like you and me. . .' and then the music began; and then, 'Then this kid he. . .' The whole thing was a disaster. Roger ended up hating **Quadrophenia**—probably 'cause it had bitten back."

"You must have been very disappointed," I speculate. "Here was this double album you'd worked on for two years that you couldn't even do on stage."

"Well, I suppose with that album, and with **Who's Next** as well, I was disappointed by the lack of good stage material to come out of it. When we went to rehearse **Tommy** we went to some little rehearsal hall in Southall and ran through the whole album, everything on it; it all felt great, we couldn't believe it. **Quadrophenia** didn't work that way. Neither did **Who's Next**; just a couple of tracks came out of it. They were recording studio efforts, whereas the amazing thing about **Tommy** was that it was very organic, very simple, very pure, and it did work very well on stage."

He pauses. He has finished his coffee, now picks an orange from a bowl of fruit sitting on the table and begins to roll it



Chuck Pulin

around in his hands. His mind seems to wander for a few seconds, but he returns to explaining his lack of desire to continue touring.

"It may seem, in a sense, that I'm groping for a reason, but there are a lot of other reasons. As I sit here now my ears are screaming." He puts his hands on his ears and notes sadly, "I've really fucked my hearing completely.

"The other thing is that to some extent I've fucked a lot of other things for the Who tours and I'm just not going to do it any more. It's as simple as that. I can't really give rational reasons. It's not because I don't enjoy it, not because I don't think it's fantastic, not because I'm bitter, it's got nothing to do with that. You've got to draw a line somehow and I think that what would be awful would be if the Who did just crash on and on and on until they became seedy and plastic. I think the trouble is that we're in a rut which is just so bloody deep that you couldn't step out of it easily. I don't think it's a nasty rut, a rut like a nine-to-five office job or anything, but I mean as far as stage material goes Keith has actually had his list of numbers printed on one of his drums. That's the list that we use. It hasn't been altered for the last two years. I think I'll miss it terribly. I think I'll miss playing with the band on the road, I'll miss live appearances, I'll miss the contact; but for me it was starting to become very much a non-event anyway. I'd almost prefer to stand with a guitar in the pub up the street."

# "I'm as much a Who freak as any other Who freak."

Has he ever done anything like that?

"No, I haven't 'cause I wouldn't."

Why's that?

"I dunno," he smirks. "Perhaps I'm not that desperate yet."

"What about the group?" I wonder. "Let's say you've given up live performances, what's in store for the future of the Who?"

"Up to a couple of months ago we didn't even know we had a future," he admits. "I thought the only way I was going to get off the road was to leave the band. I thought what would happen is: We'll do an album, we'll go in, Bill Curbishley [the Who's manager] will book a tour, and I, like a puppy with a Pavlov bell ringing in my head, will get on the airplane and go. So I said to Bill, 'The only way I'm going to get around it is to quit. I'll get me demos together, put out an album of my own and leave it at that.'

"Then I spoke to Roger. And it was amazing because he felt the same way I did. I couldn't really believe it. I was expecting him to be in accord with me to some degree, but I didn't expect him to be quite so sympathetic. Not only to me as a human being, but also on his account. He felt very similarly to the way I did."

I wondered if this was the incident Townshend described in the Rolling Stone piece.

"No, this happened quite recently; two months ago. We sat down and I said, 'Listen, I'm not up to doing any more tours, etc., etc.' Roger said, 'I feel the same way.' John's face fell because John loves touring. And Keith, believe it or not, also was quite pleased. He'd been getting incredibly nervous and that had partially been the cause of his emotional problems that had led him on to drinks and drugs—he was getting so hyped up over concerts.

"Keith's a funny guy," Townshend says, his voice revealing a great deal of warmth toward the subject. "On the outside he's all brash and confident, but when he goes onstage to a Who concert he's often sick as he climbs up the stairs. Sick with fright."

"How is he doing these days?" I ask, having heard rumors of the aforementioned drinks and drugs.

"I was with him last night and he was still here. He was dressed in a dinner jacket down at the Vortex." He laughs loudly, then returns to explaining how the Who stuck together.

"We ended up with, I suppose, a choice as to whether to let everything slide or to carry on. I felt very, very strongly that I wanted the band to continue if possible as a working unit and to confront head-on what it was really supposed to be doing at this point. We were more now than just a rock 'n' roll band, we were—are—probably the only group in the world capable of being both a rock 'n' roll band and raising $7-million to make a film by snapping our fingers. And so I felt that we should be making a film. I thought, too, that the Who are really the only band that's lasted with any kind of integrity whatsoever.



How does he define integrity?

"Well, having a track record, to use hackneyed phrase, which is pretty clean. We haven't made too many of the obvious mistakes. Nobody has killed themselves off with dope, nobody has done anything wildly dishonest, nobody has killed anybody [he laughs]. We never put out what I feel was a dishonest record, we've never deliberately gone out to exploit large numbers of people, we've toured and worked hard whenever we could. Perhaps the only thing we've done wrong is focusing too much on America and not enough here. Really that's because America to me is the workplace. I tend to think of Britain as the control room and America as the studio.

"Anyway, I rate the band and its past pretty highly. I feel maybe we should try to prove to people and to new bands—particularly since the new wave bands are so assertive in their attitudes—that it is possible to grow within the rock business; to grow old gracefully and to evolve in a way that doesn't lose the spirit of things. One constant criticism of successfully established bands by younger up-and-coming groups—especially new wave groups—is that they have not been putting money back into the industry that gave them their enormous takings, that they've been content to take the money and run, to become tax exiles." The Who have certainly escaped this kind of criticism, but I wondered what Pete's feelings were on putting money back into the business.

"I think it's weird, really, because . . . well, I don't want to end up talking about tax, but . . . the only way you can avoid giving your money away to tax people is to pour it back. If you pour it back it's acknowledged as an investment back into the business. Just as if you were making doorknobs and you went to the tax people at the end of the year and you said, 'I've got $50,000 profit but I don't want to pay tax, what 'd like to do is put it into an investment program.' It's allowed. This is really what prompts us to put the enormous amounts of money that were earned on the 'Tommy' film into Shepperton, into new bands, into record labels and things like that. To some extent it's not necessarily what we really want to do."

What do they really want to do?

"I think we really want to work. Record and continue to communicate. There's part of me that really still wants to go crashing around on the road, but I just don't think it's on. I think boardrooms and business meetings are a big part of our life now, like it or not, because that is what the responsibility is all about: not doing what we want, but doing what is necessary. I think when people say that money should be poured back—when a young guy says, 'When I get rich and famous I'm gonna pour my money back into the industry'—what

they don't realize is that it's no good just getting the money and throwing it somewhere; you've got to be responsible for it, you've got to do something with it. Money on its own doesn't do anything; you've got to make it work."

I suggest that certain things can obviously be done, such as rehearsal halls for young bands who can't afford them.

"Yeah, I've got one. The only trouble is that one rehearsal hall is packed solid all the time. I'm building another one down at Shepperton. Myself, not the group. That'll probably be snapped up just as fast. We don't charge the bands that come and work. I don't know, I don't think the rehearsal hall is the most important thing. The most important thing is that when a band is ready there should be someone to guide them."

He uses as an example John Otway and Willie Barrett. Four years ago Townshend produced some tracks for Otway, then totally unknown except in his home of Aylesbury. Townshend was even able to talk Track Records into putting two of the tracks out as a single, but it was not pushed at all and died an immediate death. Last year, Otway (along with Barrett) reemerged via an album that he had pressed himself and was selling mail order from his home. The album got such good reviews and sold so well that Polydor became interested and picked up the rights to distribute it. They then released a single from it, "Cor Baby, That's Really Free," which made the Top 10 in the British charts. Otway was heralded as a genius by many members of the press here as well.

"Look at the scrubbing and scrapping that they've been through," Pete says. "It's partly the public who didn't have the sense to see that Otway was a genius and has been a genius for the last few years. He hasn't changed in my mind since I first met him. I can see. I can look at a man like that and know that he's good." His voice raises queruously. "Why can't anybody else?" he chuckles.

"It's rock 'n' roll. Either somebody has got it or they haven't. It's not something you debate; if somebody is it, they are it. It's not whether they're good or bad, they're either rock 'n' roll or they're not, and he is. So eventually he's going to do something marvelous. That's the way I felt years ago," he smiles, "And I'm still crowing about it to some extent.

"What I'm getting at is that when that moment comes—this is the important part of any band's career—then what they need is guidance, the kind of guidance we had from Kit Lambert, the kind the Stones had from Andrew Oldham. Behind every band is some sort of mentor figure, some Svengali. This is the thing. That can't be provided without love, care and full-time attention. At the moment I think John Otway manages himself. He sends out newsletters to all his fans and stuff. He's got a Polydor deal, but how his career goes from now is in the hands of the gods."

What does he think of the veritable explosion of new bands on the scene right now?

"I think it's incredibly exciting, I must admit. I feel in perspective again. It's great. We get letters constantly from kids who say, "I'm in a band and blah, blah, blah.' I must have a thousand letters from kids in groups sending me tapes and things like that. And a lot of them are really amazing. Their attitudes are amazing, you know: "We're gonna make it..." Of course they never do. But what's nice now is to see that people are realizing that you don't have to 'make it.' You don't have to make anything. You either are it or you're not. You make your own scene. This is what's happened in this country. A whole scene has developed from in and around. In a sense there's enough new bands to not only entertain one another, but also to be one another's audience. Down at the Vortex last night everybody was in a band."

I mention that musically the young bands I've seen here in England seem to be developing at an incredible rate. Townshend shrugs, not in disagreement but in a gesture that says he's not concerned.

"I must admit that I like the basic starting point. It's where we started exactly. They make exactly the same noise we used to make, and so, for my money, practically every record I put on I love. I love the noise of it. I like the use of the English accent a lot because it's comical but it's also ferocious."

"And more honest," I add.

"Yeah, it's more honest, really. It's a bit difficult to sing in an English accent, though; sometimes it's more contrived than you'd think. I suppose it's because for so many years we've lapsed into the American accent to sing that it just feels natural that way."

The discussion moves to the area of Townshend's own musical evolution, particularly the noticeable movement on **Rough Mix** away from straight-ahead rock 'n' roll into more subtle but equally powerful stuff like "Street in the City" (on which Townshend is, for the first time on record, accompanied by a full orchestra). Pete continues playing with his orange as he expounds on the subject.

"I just find it so easy to make the cliched noises. I can do it in my sleep. I just know the Who can play the Who's type of rock 'n' roll better than anybody else. We can do it very easily, and as a result it tends to fall off the end of the guitar without any strain; also without any real care somehow because we're not really testing ourselves, stretching ourselves. I've stopped being

## DALTREY'S SIDE: "NOT SO FAST, PETE"

Pete Townshend's pronouncement that he does not want to tour anymore may come as a bit of a shock to Who fans hoping to see the band (again) in the future. Take stock, though, in the fact that things are subject to change—especially with the Who.

Townshend himself prefaced his remarks with "as things stand at the moment," an indication of the possibility of a change in heart. Then there is this conversation with Roger Daltrey which took place stageside at London's Gaumont State Theatre where the Who were filming live footage for the upcoming "Kids Are Alright" film (see TP 26) the day after I interviewed Townshend.

Daltrey, friendly and effusive, approached me during a break in the activity and began talking about the Who's laser show, which was being filmed that day for the movie. After a short chat about lasers and holograms (which Daltrey expressed a particular fascination with), he asked me what I thought of the tracks from the new album I'd heard in the studio the day before.

I mentioned that I thought it sounded a lot more cheerful than their last one (as if anything could sound less cheerful than **Who by Numbers**). "Yeah," he exclaimed, "but I love that album. I listen to it all the time. Maybe you've got to reach a certain age to appreciate it. I didn't like it when it was written. I argued a lot with Pete over it, but I've been through what he describes now, and I understand what he was writing about." The new album, he said, is "incredible. Pete's still the best writer there is. I mean, the new wave's given everybody a kick in the ass"—it was incredible to see Townshend, Daltrey and Entwistle sitting around the studio discussing what Paul Weller of the Jam was doing—"but this is amazing; it's got so much."

His next statement, though, took me by surprise.

"I can't wait to get back on stage again," he said, almost bouncing on the floorboards of this stage.

"You mean you're planning to go back on tour?" I asked.

"Every time I get out on a stage I want to go back. That's what rock's about, 'specially the 'Oo. I mean, Pete has bad problems with his ears, it's true, but we all want to go back. We'll work on him."

Finally I mentioned I was glad to hear that the Who were finally going to get to do the "Lifehouse" film (after our interview Pete told me they had already secured $7 million to make the film, and that either Nicholas Roeg or Alan Parker would probably direct it). Daltrey, however, didn't think it was going to happen:

"I don't think we're actually going to do it," he said. "The story's not really strong enough for a major film. 'Tommy' was a bit naive, but we want to follow it up with something a bit stronger. Maybe we'll buy the rights to a classic."

A classic?

—DS

# "YOU'VE BEEN DUPED."

*"For years you've been duped. You thought you were getting real rock `n' roll..you were just getting cabaret."*
**Eddie.**

*"There are bands today who are making music which is very relevant to 1968. The Vibrators' music is relevant to 1978."*
**Knox.**

*"Knox is the best songwriter of the late seventies. The Vibrators are the best band of the late seventies."*
**Gary.**

*"We are people."* **John.**




**The Vibrators aren't kidding.**
**"PURE MANIA"**
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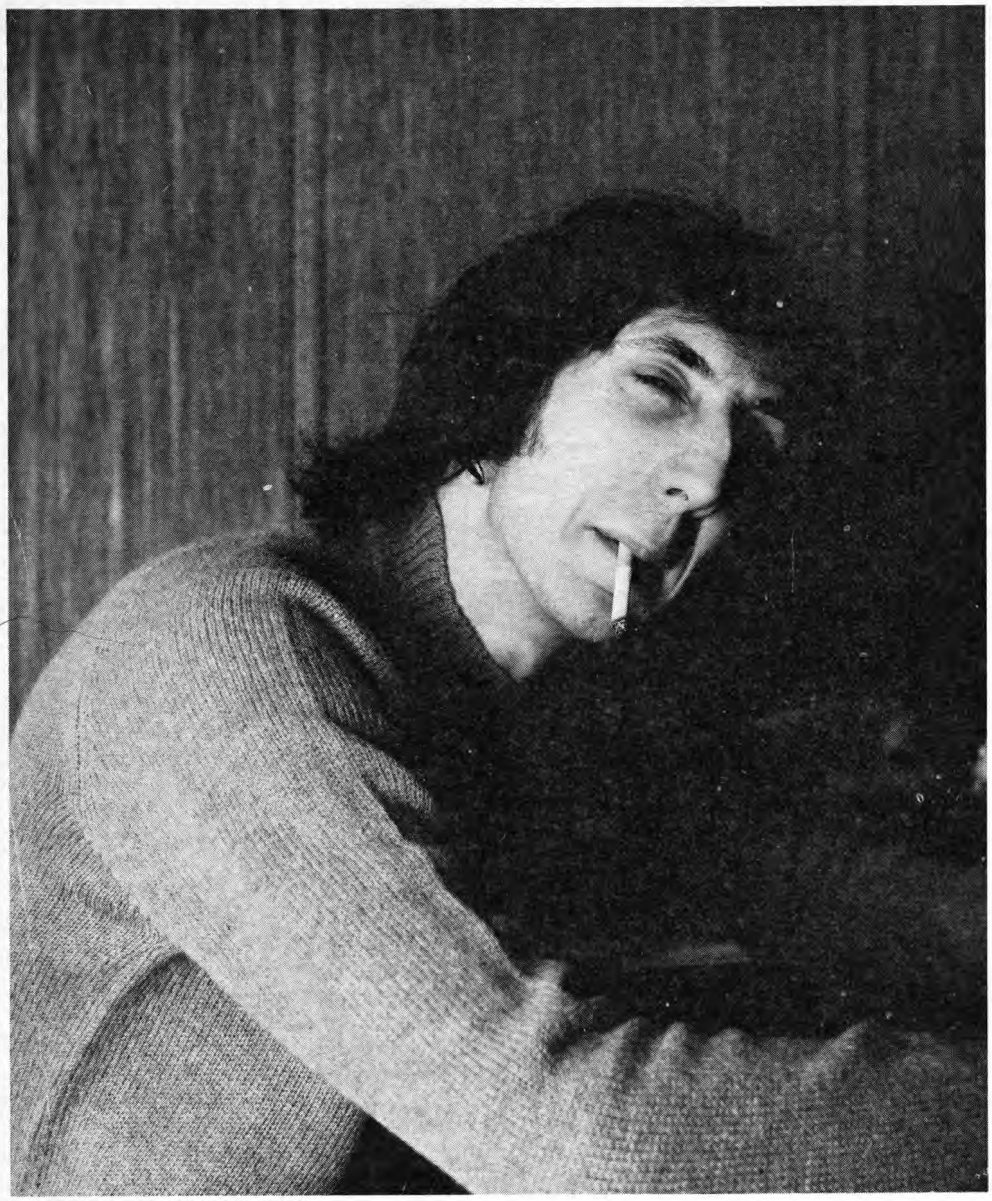
# "Boardrooms and business meetings are a big part of our life now."



afraid of parodying myself, beoming a caricature—these rich cliches I invented five years ago. Actually Tommy Smothers invented that. He said to me, 'It's very weird what being on TV every week does to you. When I asked him what he meant he said, 'Week after week I sit and watch myself. I study my face, I study my actions, I study what I say, and then I edit it mentally, remove everything I don't like and keep everything I like. In the end I'm an increasingly evolving, edited version of what I think is best about me. I've ended up being a copy of myself.'"

But, Pete, isn't that how any artist evolves?

"I suppose so, but I'm fairly keen to keep away from that. That's why I like working with Glyn Johns in the studio. He's got an incredibly open mind and he's always on the alert to do something new. He knows that the easy way to pep up a particular passage of a song is for Keith to go blam-blam-blam-blam-boom-boom-boom, and for me to go takka-takka-ta, and for Roger to scream his primal scream. If we did that on every track it would be a bit pat."

Suddenly and very humorously, Pete blurts out an admission. "Christ! My breath is on fire! I must've drank about four pints of vodka last night." He excuses himself and gets up to brush his teeth, while I use the opportunity to turn my tape over.

During the pause I remember a question I'd been meaning to ask him. "You've spoken more about the meaning of rock 'n' roll than almost anyone else around," I start. "What does rock 'n' roll mean to you now?"

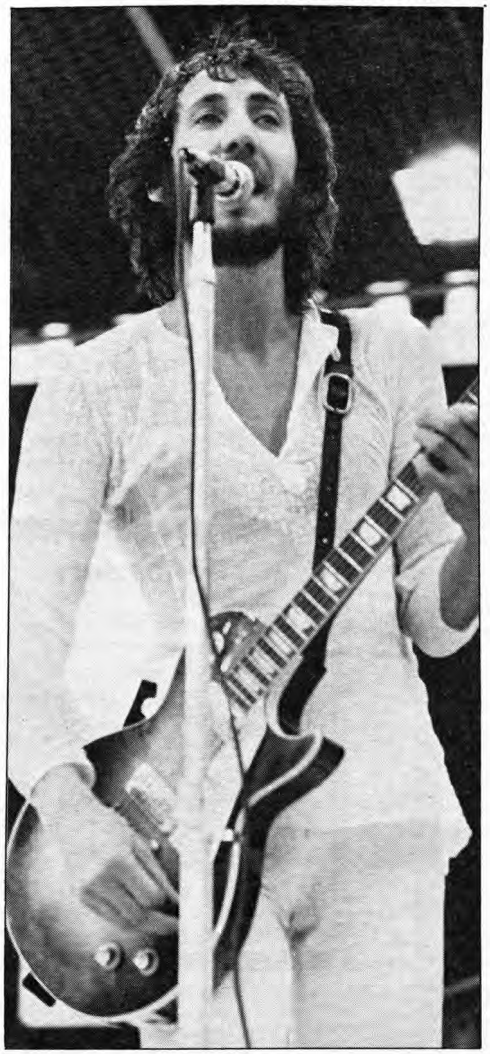
"The theory of rock 'n' roll? What it is and whatever? I still think I'm one of the few people who really knows what it is, but I think there's a lot of people now who are learning. It's been around long enough in its current form for people to know what it is. When I talk about rock 'n' roll, I'm only talking from my vantage point. I don't speak as a journalist, I don't write as a journalist, I don't write as a composer. When it actually comes to the moment where you sit down and somebody asks you a question like this, you try to answer from feeling like you've got some authority on the subject. Rock is not definable, really. Without becoming maudlin, Rock is really very much a reflection on life like anything else.

"Look at everything. If you look at the ocean you can draw a parallel with everything else, with God; if you look at a leaf you can see the whole cosmos in it. I think, funnily enough, rock has now become society. It started off being an alternative, an expression of a new society, and now it is society, it **is** you and me. I'm in my 30s, I'm not only part of the establishment, I *am* the establishment. I *am* this country. People come to *me* to get money for their charities, people come to me to do this or that. It's a strange feeling, but that's what Rock is.

"I've always known that Rock would do it. I'm not talking from a money point of view, I'm talking about the fact that it would eventually take over. What we do with it now I don't know. We've demanded the responsibility, we've screamed out for it, we've accused, we've attacked, we've criticized, we've said, 'You've never done it right, you're all fuckin' wrong,' we could do it better. Now we have the chance.

"I'm not saying we're politicians, although Roger has said that we will all inevitably become so someday. I think there's a lot of potential truth to that, actually, but I

Continued on page 35



# "HORSLIPS IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO RESIST"

Circus Magazine

"Horslips is the most popular band to emerge from Ireland in many a year... synthesizes traditional, Irish folk melodies with good, hard rock...rousing...irresistable..."
The New York Daily News

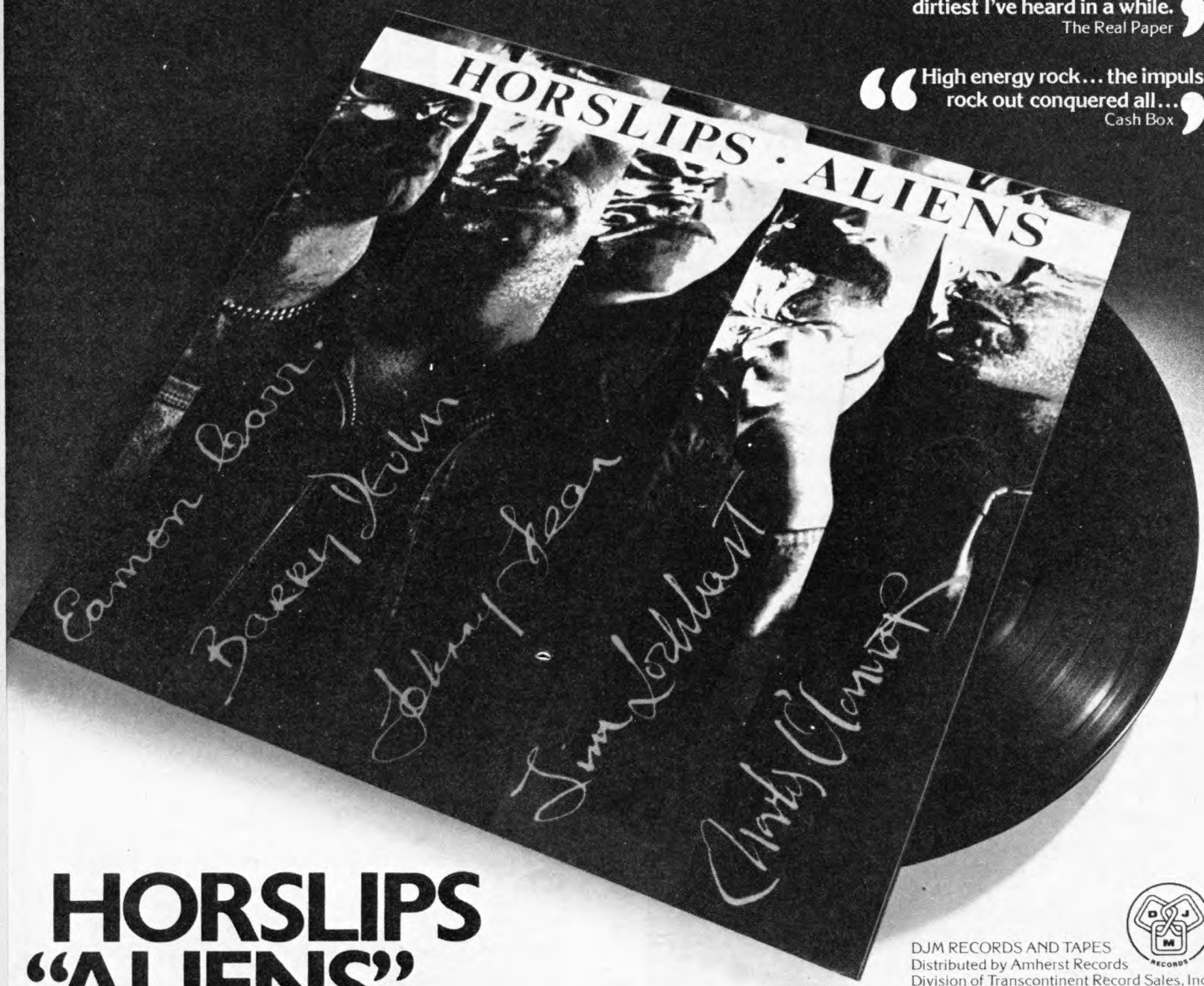
"...stirring rock 'n roll, nicely flavored with touches of jazz and Irish folk music."
The Los Angeles Times

"Melodic...hard driving...highly inventive, something needed in rock these days..."
Variety

"Remember when Jethro Tull used to be fun? Horslips still are."
Good Times

"Lovely and joyful...The powerful, raw passion of their music blasted forth, unchecked by studio walls... They performed movingly, and the guitar was the sweetest and dirtiest I've heard in a while."
The Real Paper

"High energy rock...the impulse to rock out conquered all..."
Cash Box




# HORSLIPS "ALIENS"

DJLPA-16

Watch for Horslips' tour in February, March and April

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If one may hazard an absurd guess based on no real information, it will probably be around November of this year when some smart punk rocker will wake up and realize that a change has occurred since the inception of the new wave. In place of similar sounding four-piece noise machines, groups that used to be called punk are replacing hoarse shouts with melody, and volume with a sense of dynamics. Not that groups have abandoned their instruments or ideals, just that a new influence has been taken on. At that point, the renaissance of power pop will have officially occurred.

Not that power pop is anything new. A few groups have always managed to hold on, even during the roughest trend, to the notion that ideal music blends songs, lyrics and energy into a form where catchy hooks find the strength of blaring guitars a help, not a distraction. That's power pop—rock with hooks. Not tepid chart stuff like Gary Wright that uses studio musicians to lend rock credibility. Not Led Zep riff rock. Not overblown, gas-filled balloons like ELP. Not wimpy ballads like Debbie Boone. Just hard rock with a beat and a melody—something you can sing on the subway or rehearse with your band. Music that'll stay with you a while, but not too long.

Already, in fact since the beginning, there have been new wave bands devoted to power pop. Although a large segment of the bands is more blam-blam oriented, the general trend so far has been towards power pop, not away. Groups that were unheard names in the British press a year ago are turning out to be, with fair regularity, more or less pop groups that joined in the fun and got swept along by the excitement before they had a chance to explain what they were about. Generation X, Advertising, Yachts, Gorillas and Motors are all incipient pop bands. Larger names like the Clash and Vibrators are forging strong pop/punk connections, and in America the Ramones are becoming young Beach Boys in leather jackets.

With any luck, 1978 will be the ultimate power pop year, and may prove to be a means by which new wavers and old farters will be able to realize that music's music, regardless of fashion styles or the posturing of performers. It may seem surprising that some of the groups presented here are power poppers, but give it some time and some thought. You may find out something you didn't already know.

What we're doing here is running down the groups of 1977-78 and judging them for their relevance to the world of power pop. By no means is this a complete list; T. Rex and Tommy James and the Shondells have been left off because they are no longer around. Many other groups are missing for the same reason; this does not purport to be a history of the genre. For what it's worth, here's...

# A Power Pop Primer

## By Ira Robbins

### Pre-History

Some of the best all-time American pop groups have broken up, but their influence and perseverance (especially during a period in rock when pop was generally dismissed as garbage) warrant their All-Star Power Poppers status. Big Star, led by Alex Chilton in Memphis between 1971 and 1974, released two monumental albums before breaking up. Milk 'n' Cookies, who almost made it in England during Sparks' reign, posthumously (through no fault of their own) released an album of pure power pop marred only by the unfortunate choice of vocalist. Then there was the Nazz. Philadelphia's contribution to the world. Still nonpareil in their blend of rock and Rundgren, their LPs are collectors' items worth paying for.

The Raspberries, between 1970 and 1974, were THE power pop band: not only did they continually strive to recreate sounds of the '60s, but they actually succeeded in getting on the radio and in the charts. Their unwavering commitment to a style of music finally killed them, as the confusing issue of nostalgia plagued their artistic credibility, but they encouraged a lot of beginning groups who might otherwise have given up and learned to play "Dark Star."

Going back ten years, the origins of power pop lie somewhere between Revolver Beatles and the Bubblegum bands of 1966-67. Despite the fuzzing of distinctions, US psychedelic bands—Strawberry Alarm Clock, Blues Magoos et al—were basically playing power pop, with some modification. But this is all getting too complicated and arcane: the groups that follow are those who are still functioning, and have released an album. Not all of them currently produce power pop, but they've done so in the past, and might do so again.

### Abba

At one time these Swedes were a dynamic pop machine, turning out wonderfully hummable ditties with strong guitar and a good backbeat. Chart success has dizzied them, and they've gone in for melodramatic tweedle like "Fernando" and disco baloney like "Dancing Queen." Not a good prospect for future triumphs—their outlook it almost totally money money money. Best catalogue item is the Waterloo LP on Sweedish Polar Records.
Pop Consciousness Rating: falling
Listenability Rating: used to be better
Disco taint: faint but growing
Songwriting: deadly

### Bachman-Turner Overdrive

When these boys from the North were good, their records couldn't be topped by anything on the continent. Barring heavy metal dum dum tendencies, Randy and Fred could whip up something you'd be whistling for two days on end without even trying. It's too bad Randy left, 'cause it seems unlikely either half will be able to match the Best Of—So Far LP. What did the



trick for BTO was a mixture of mongoloid chords with strained pop vocals. Not a singer in the band, but it never mattered. Those retreads had it all.

PCR: tip top
DT: zip
LR: about 70%
SW: not original but perfect

### Bay City Rollers

Instead of writing their own, the Rollers (and a few other preferred unmentionables) have proved the strength of a number of classic pop tunes by doing everything possible to mess them up, yet still having hits all over the place. It's reassuring to know that whoever runs the Rollers knows a good tune when he hears it—salvaging "Rock 'n' Roll Love Letter" from Tim Moore (handclaps to drum rolls), their debut was all rocking pop. The second record promises a little more of the West Side Story




melodrama hinted at the first time. More Broadway means less pop, so it's wait and see time.

PCR: a bit nostalgic
DT: not a whit
LR: high
SW: strong and hummable

### Boston

What these guys have done (besides earn more money than the president of ITT) is to take the two components of power pop—melody and metal—and grease them up to make a slick product with more hit potential than Muhammad Ali's fist. Granted they're a bit crass and lightweight in the long-term importance stakes, but they do know all the necessary moves to bridge the gap between twee kiddie pop and dirty rock 'n' roll. Who else could appeal to 12-year-old girls from Scarsdale as well as dirty punks from Bensonhurst? Interesting to note: What makes Boston's sound is the combination of electric and acoustic guitars, something pioneered years ago by Pete Townshend (try "Magic Bus" or "I Can See for Miles") but more recently perfected by Bowie (in the Ziggy days) and Tull. There's no way a strong melody backed by wailing lead and acoustic rhythm can miss. A wonder that Boston was the one among many to figure that out and make it pay off. To a certain extent Boston's success cemented the importance of pop rock in 1977 by proving its commercial potential once and for all.

PCR: better than average
DT: none
LR: decreases with overexposure
SW: dumb but catchy

### Eric Carmen

Without a doubt, Raspberries were the US standard-bearers for pop rock in the early '70s. When everyone else was heavy and serious, Eric and the boys from Cleveland remained steadfast popsters, ripping off evey major pop group they could think of. By and large successful musically, the Raspberries' end was a major disappointment to power poppers everywhere. Eric's reemergence via a solo career was largely welcomed, and his first album (1975) had a few great songs mixed in with painful Barry Manilow mush. The second album, **Boats against the Current**, was full of mush and marks the end of Eric the pop singer. Oh well.

PCR: currently zero
DT: not yet
LR: used to be high
SW: credible but boring

was a stroke of benificence not often paralelled. Although it's sometimes hard to sympathize with them (their "Rebel Rebel"



takes all the steam out), little gems like "Yesterday's Heros" show they can't be totally vacant.

PCR: great when they're not too wimpy
DT: incipient
LR: ditto
SW: better choosers than composers

### Blondie

Quite a few out-of-towners were surprised to discover New York punks could be a latent pop team. Blondie's first album, containing gems like "In the Sun" and "Little Girl Lies," revealed Debbie Harry as a great "girl group" singer capable of everything from surfing songs to cutesy-poo Shangri-las turf. With a producer aware of every trick in the pop handbook



Kate Simon

## Cheap Trick

Exactly how a pop rock band should sound. CT comes off at different times as a straight pop group, hard rockers with melody, or dumbo heavy metal mavens. Their chameleon abilities are surpassed only by their innate talents, wit and lack of seriousness. The best.

PCR: there when they want it to be — DT: not these guys
LR: 100% — SW: ace

## City Boy

At first this was a good strong rock band with a sense of timing and melody. Their progression on two subsequent albums defines them more as a lightweight 10cc/Procol Harum outfit with neither the strength of rock nor the simplicity of pop. While Supertramp can get away with it sometimes, City Boy doesn't have what it takes to be memorable.

PCR: more Brodway than 42nd Street — DT: doesn't really matter
LR: fair, nothing exciting — SW: intricate but not exciting




## Clash

Hardly a pop rock band, but with strong pop sensibilities. Careful listening to their first LP will reveal great melodies and guitar hooks immediately evident. These touches make the Clash special, much more than an ordinary new wave band. Their new material seems to aim between reggae and pop, so their status may change. It's still too early to judge for sure where they're going, but it should be good.

PCR: there if you look for it — DT: they couldn't if they tried
LR: absolute — SW: tip top

## Dictators

Some people think of the Dics as a metal band; they're the ones who've seen them live. Some people think of them as a punk band; those are image freaks who've only seen pix and articles. Only those of us who've followed this band since its inception know the truth: they're a pop band with big amplifiers and a super hot lead guitarist. It's easier to hear on the first album, but there are enough songs on *Manifest Destiny* to be convinced. Adny Shernoff whips out great melodies, and their West Coast send-up ("Cars and Girls") is an all time classic. It's not surprising they covered "California Sun" before the Ramones got together—these guys are ever Lovin' Spoonful fans from way back. Despite their tough image, songs like "Sleeping with the TV On" and "Heartache" show them to be softies after all.

PCR: always available — DT: not on your life
LR: real good — SW: budding genius



## Eddie and the Hot Rods

Until Graeme Douglas joined the band, pop was alien to these hard rocking boys. Now they've got it down but good. Regardless of anything else they might ever record, "Do Anything You Wanna Do" is a superb piece of power pop. Nuff said.

PCR: budding — DT: nah
LR: a bit boring in large doses — SW: getting better all the time



## Flamin' Groovies

Former rock band gone Merseybeat. The Groovies have taken off and are again recording with Dave "I'm not a producer" Edmunds, if reports are correct. The results are anybody's guess; time warp into the future with Cyril "I'm a punk" Jordan.

PCR: at times, total — DT: never
LR: at times, total — SW: at times, great



### The Jam

If power pop needs a group to define it, the Jam might be that group. With blazing Rickenbackers and short hair, the Jam are lost in the world of Britain's long-dead Mod movement. Their songs are pop ditties—singles—intended to please. The only thing wrong with the Jam is that they're a decade too late, but it really doesn't matter. Weller is a gifted songwriter and can't fail. Lots of spunk.

PCR: immersion
DT: none
LR: pretty good
SW: great at times

### Kiss

It's hard to like Kiss seriously, but who else would have the nerve to cover the Dave Clark Five's "Anyway You Want It"? Somewhere, mixed in with all their obligatory metal sludge, Kiss (all noted pop suckers) are capable of whipping out a great piece of power pop like "Tomorrow and Tonight" or "Strutter." If you think you hear traces of the Move on the first LP, don't



be surprised; a Kiss fan would be shocked to find out how much the musical taste of his idols differs from his own.

PCR: it's there
DT: too smart for disco
LR: rare
SW: not too amazing

### Nick Lowe

Aside from releasing the world's all time best double A-sided power pop three-chord masterpiece, Nick Lowe hasn't been outwardly visible as a power popper. His other 7" Stiffs show varying degrees of his commitment to other musics (like rockabilly and reminiscence) but his credits are impeccable; there's no way that his solo album (due soon on the newly-founded Radar Records) won't have more "pure pop for now people" than anything else due this year. Go get 'em, Nick.

PCR: everpresent
DT: neverpresent
LR: everpresent
SW: an all-around ace

### Tom Petty

Petty proves that Florida isn't only the home of KC and the Sunshine Band. With one good album under his belt and already a star in Great Britain, Petty seems to have a bright future as a premier American power popper. "American Girl" stands as a great anthem, covering all the right lyrical and musical bases, and suggesting to Roger McGuinn (who produced a superior cover of the song) a path the Byrds might have followed instead of country rocking.

PCR: rocky
DT: no sign
LR: good
SW: the ability's there

### Piper

The stinkbombs of power pop. Wards of Kiss' corporate management. Piper has been given the best of everything; too bad nothing can turn the artistic trick like talent, which wasn't in the package. However, (and this is the sticky part) each of their two albums contain a track which is pure power pop at its wonderful best. While most of the material is just crappy hard rock, their infrequent bouts of quality are impressive. Billy Squier has the perfect nasal whine to deliver angst-ridden pop lyrics, but his vocal excesses also mire much of Piper's poop into tedium.

PCR: underutilized
DT: they re cvean
LR: only in spots
SW: the good comes in spurts



### Ramones

Whatever else the Ramones may pretend to be, when the facade is stripped away they have as high a power pop consciousness as Eric Carmen used to. Ditties like "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend," Sheena Is a Punk Rocker" and "Swallow My Pride" show how catchy punk pop can be. In the area of cover versions, the boys from Forest Hills have shown the excellent taste to revive classics like "Let's Dance" and "Do You Wanna Dance." The affinity between poppy Ramones and poppy Dictators is amazing, considering how divergent the two groups generally are. The Ramones are developing in a direction that will keep them at the forefront of the power pop struggle in the next few months.

PCR: tough but cute
DT: not until discos get hip
LR: better in short blasts
SW: capable of pop at its simplest

## Rubinoos

These Beserkley stablemates of Jon Richman (whose sense of cute pop has overpowered his former taste for rock) won brownie points last year with a minor hit, "I Think We're Alone Now." In terms of historical wonderfulness, TJ and the Shondells deserve a major plaque in the power popper's hall of fame. The Rubinoos have the fresh faced enthusiasm to make it in the teenybop stakes, but they've been weaned on enough artistically sound performers that it's unlikely they would stray if fame struck. Jon Rubin and TV Dunbar are young enough to face a long struggle to stardom, and with them goes the future of power pop.

PCR: 100% DT: fat chance
LR: inconsistently great SW: not as good as Tommy James

## Todd Rundgren

The former king of hard rocking pop melodies. Whatever it is Todd enjoys doing these days doesn't have much relevance here. Come back Todd!

## Shoes

Four young guys from Zion, Illinois who home brewed the power pop album of last year. With breathy vocals and multi-tracked guitars, they resemble Pilot in their heyday, but with less of that group's sterile conceptualization. No major label has picked up the Shoes yet, but it's only a matter of time. Their songs are great, their style distinguished, and they look nice. On to 1978 with the Shoes.

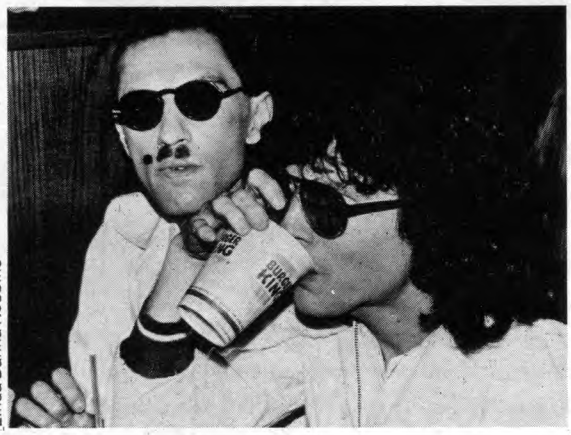
PCR: immersed DT: are you kidding
LR: quite SW: good and getting better



## Slade

Interesting career these yobbos have had. In the beginning they mixed BeeGeesy pop with incipient heavy electric tinges. By the time Slade became superstars in England they were churning out nonpareil Top 10s, thundering guitar/bass/drums backing up Noddy Holder's shredded shriek. Always able to produce a stomp-along sing-along, their best was crude but effective. A few years back they toned down their albums in favor of more refined pop (i.e., lots of Beatles references). Even though they've always been a pain in the ear live, Slade's studio work has been consistently infectious. Their most recent, Whatever Happened to Slade, marks a certain retreat into hard rock credibility, but doesn't work very well. There's no indication of another Slade wave, but in their prime they could really do it right.

PCR: never lost it DT: not bright enough for disco
LR: records yes, live no SW: deadly



Linda Danna Robbins

## Sparks

Another former glory from England's pre-punk days. Ron and Russell did more to pioneer a sound and style in power pop than any other group outside of Roxy Music. The mixture of California brains and British rock talent made Sparks an irrefutable force of twinky pop and rampaging electric guitar chords. Dinky Diamond's drumming helped set a sound for lots to follow, and the group acted as training school for a few latter day power pop stars (Radio Stars and Jet). Unfortunately, since returning to the States whatever spark the brothers had has been lost. Not much can be expected from the Maels in the future, but they could surprise everybody.

PCR: imbued with the spirit DT: unh unh
LR: from great to terrible SW: can be tops in wit

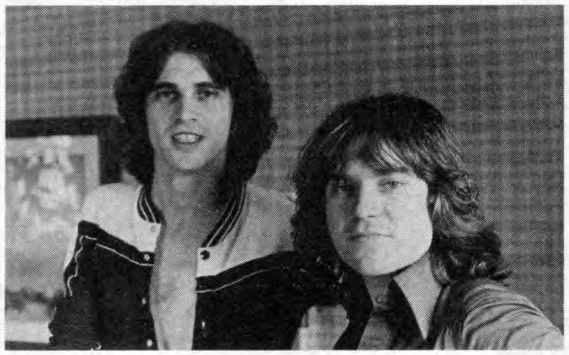


## Sweet

Former champions currently sliding down the talent pole. Sweet lived the life of superstar puppets for a while. Their career was almost totally controlled by the Chinnichap team of rock stardom: the result was an impressive string of sophisticated power pop singles. Without the prissy cuteness of Sparks or the embarrassing simplicity of Slade, the Sweet were well-produced, had great songs (with dumb lyrics), and packed more hooks to the line than almost any other group in the field. From the early "Wig Wam Bam"

to the sophisticated "Fox on the Run," the Sweet consistently proved they could do anything they set out to do. Brian Connolly's voice and Andy Priest's guitar playing combined to bridge that gap between pop and metal. Their last three albums have been total washouts, possibly the result of the group's giving Chinn, Chapman and Wainman the heave-ho. Their own writing/production doesn't have the appeal to keep them afloat, and their distasteful dabblings in disco are the final insult.

PCR: not their own
DT: spreading
LR: at their peak, tops
SW: feh!



Marc Mayco

### Dwight Twilley Band

Best known for their chart success single of 1976, "I'm on Fire," Dwight and cohort Phil Seymour began their career by carefully assimilating every British influence starting with the Beatles. The progression over their two LPs has unfortunately been toward over-arranged and over-produced schmaltz, which seems to be leading them out of the power pop arena.

PCR: a bit shlocky these days
DT: too twinky to bump
LR: the more lead guitar the better
SW: getting a bit pompous



### Vibrators

Thought of more as a British Ramones than anything else, there's more to the Vibrators than mere imitation. Their debut album shows a distinct ability to put together quick little songs that keep repeating long after the record is back on the shelf. Too old to be punks, the Vibrators aren't as good on melodies or production as the Ramones, but their chord patterns show a lot of originality and spunk.

PCR: subtle
DT: too punky for disco
LR: high and noisy
SW: neat neat neat



### Wings

Ignoring the Beatles for the moment, Macca has come up with a few gems among the ruins. Despite such putrid rot as "Let 'Em In" and "Silly Love Songs," the adorable Paulie has shown off his latent talents in such great tunes as "Jet," "Helen Wheels" and "Junior's Farm." Unencumbered by the "respectable" restrictions of the Beatles, Paul has let loose some real rockers heavily tinged by this unavoidagle sense of pop. That makes him unconscious power pop—the guy can't help it!

PCR: often outweighs his rock sense
DT: too much for comfort
LR: usually terrible
SW: ya gotta ask?

### A Few Loose Ends To Tie Up

**Chris Stamey**, former leader of Sneakers, has continued producing his super twinky sounds as a solo artist, releasing the only good summer single of 1977 ("Summer Sun"). A lot of potential, but no current plans have been announced.

**Pezband**, from Illinois, are good friends with Cheap Trick, although their approach is more blatantly British than Tricks's. They have a new album due shortly, and seem to have something going for them musically.

**Michael Stanley Band** is another Midwest Outfit hampered by an unbecoming pomposity. Their three albums reveal an ability to craft large pop works punctuated by strong guitar playing, but their reliance on tired formulae hurts their chances in the big league.

**The Quick**, LA's answer to Sparks, is still at it out on the West Coast. They have lost the recording contract that generated an album in 1976, but are reportedly working hard to launch a second assault on the pop masses of America.

**Kursaal Flyers**, who gave Graeme Douglas to the Rods, were an ace power pop team until their recent disbanding. Future plans of the members are not yet known.

**Radio Stars** hail from such noted British pop bands as the Jook, John's Children, Sparks, Jet and Ian North's Radio. Great live, they combine witty lyrics with arty power pop arrangements for a strong challenge in 1978.

# EDDIE and the HOT RODS are so BORED with the USA



Keith Morris

Looking unimpressed are: (sitting) Graeme Douglas, Barry Masters, Dave Higgs; (standing) Steve Nicol, Paul Gray.

By MT Laverty

One couldn't help but wonder whether the patrons at Max's Kansas City weren't frozen to their seats. Onstage were Eddie and the Hot Rods, one of the tightest, fastest, most successful live bands to come out of England in the past few years, but only about thirty kids in the packed house at Max's bothered even to stand up and cheer them on, much less dance. As guitarist Dave Higgs complained later: "You'd think they were watching television rather than watching a band."

At the end of the tour, which lasted seven weeks and spanned 35 cities, the Hot Rods agreed to talk about their first (close) encounter with the United States. As the first English new wave band to complete an extensive tour of the country, they have achieved moderate success. Boston's WBCN radio gave their excellent anthem "Do Anything You Wanna Do" lots of airplay, and even New York's WNEW noticed the record.Yet the Hot Rods seemed confused and disappointed over their reception here.

Gathered in manager Ed Hollis's hotel suite, the Hot Rods watch the "Gong Show" on TV as they joke about the position of their second album, **Life on the Line**, in the American charts. "It's 189 with a feather," laughs guitarist Graeme Douglas. An Island Records publicist corrects him: "No, it's 174."

Hollis joins in the joviality when he's not mockingly complaining about how everyone in the group takes advantage of him. Meanwhile, Dave Higgs squats in the corner with his friend Mandy, amused at the two-headed-man singing act on the tube. He is aloof from the others in the room, who include wasted-looking bass player Paul Gray, a roadie nicknamed Meaty (short for Meathead) and several young women.

Higgs doesn't talk a lot. His speech and movements have an incisive edge to them, and at one point, just when the interview is about to get underway, Higgs gets up and leaves the room with no explanation. He is shy. And he is also rumored to be just a little bit upset over the amount of notice newly-added guitarist Graeme Douglas is getting in the band.

Across from Higgs sits Douglas, a former Kursaal Flyer who has been with the band since February. Graeme likes to socialize more than Higgs does. He'll talk about most anything, and seems to take pride in being articulate.

As the "Gong Show" comes to a close, Higgs, Douglas, Island publicist Margret Lapiner and I filter down to the hotel bar in search of a quiet place to talk. Alas, there aren't tables in the bar. We are thus forced to Graeme's room, where the two Rods clam up the moment the tape recorder is switched on. Higgs is suspicious of the press in general and Douglas dislikes tape recorders in particular.

TP: What was your favorite city of all those you visited on tour?

Dave Higgs: I can't remember where we were.

Graeme Douglas: I don't know, Frisco, maybe.

TP: Where were the fans best?

GD: New York, I suppose. They were a little more into us here than other places.

DH: Playing America was like going backward two years.

TP: What impression of American fans did you get from your first couple of nights at Max's?

DH: Well, the kids just sat there. They didn't stand up or move or anything. The first night we thought, "Oh, another night. We'll play better tomorrow." But after about a week of playing here, we decided it was the audience that was the problem, not us.

TP: But they were warm to you, in comparison with how they are to a lot of the bands. You should see how cold the fans are to most acts.

DH: We have seen it. We've seen bands come onstage and everyone just sits there, not standing or anything. It's got something to do with the New York way of life, I think. You'd think they were watching television.

TP: One of the English journalists who was over here to see you at Max's said that the kids in America aren't "sufficiently bored" to get into rock and roll. What do you think of that?

GD: I think it's a load of shit. You've got

to put something into rock and roll to get something out of it. Someone who's bored is certainly not going to get into rock and roll. They'd just as soon watch "Charlie's Angels."

TP: It looks as though some of the people who go to rock concerts in New York would just as soon be watching "Charlie's Angels." Do you have any idea why this is so?

DH: No, I've got no idea at all. All my illusions about rock and roll in America have been shattered. I don't think America would know a good rock and roll band unless they were advertised on TV.

GD: I'd like to go on record as saying I'm totally freaked out by the whole tour. You have all these visions of what America should be, and when it's not like that it's hard to understand what it is. There have been times on this tour when I've hated America as much as you can possibly hate anything, and other times when I loved it as much as you can possibly love anything.

TP: Do you care that you haven't knocked over American audiences the way you have English ones?

DH: Well, we're quite concerned 'cause there's a lot of money over here.

TP: How do audiences in other places compare?

DH: French audiences are crazy. Before you start you know you've got a bunch of lunatics on your hands. It doesn't take much to spark them. We've played Finland, too, which was strange because they've hardly ever seen rock and roll there. They didn't react at all to us. They didn't even clap. And we played a gig in the north of Holland where not one person clapped through the whole set. They just sat there. So we got offstage and went back to our dressing room. Then two guys go up to our sound man at the mixing board and say to him, "What do we have to do to get the band back?" So he told them to clap. They went back to their seats, started clapping and within five minutes the whole house was clapping. So we came out and did another number; after that they just went wild, started breaking up chairs and all.

TP: What did you think America was going to be like?

GD: America is the place where any kid can grow up to be President. There is as much myth-making about America as there is about rock and roll.

DH: We thought all the New York bands were going to be as good as Eddie and the Hot Rods. But when you come over here, you find out they're rotten. The English bands that are worth seeing—like us, the Stranglers, the Jam, the Pistols and the Clash—are much better than the New York bands. But I don't think America could really get off on a band like the Clash. They're too English, I think. They're too political. I don't even know how long they'll be around in England. The punk thing is sort of withering right now.

TP: Do you think some of the English bands' politics will keep them out of America?

DH: The politics are entirely different over here. In England you've got a lot of 18-year-old kids who can't get a job and don't see that they ever will. They think that their generation is different from the ones that went before. But in America everyone's satisfied, aren't they? Every time you turn on the TV, there's someone saying how wonderful things are.

## "Playing this country was like going backward two years. . . America wouldn't know a good rock band unless it was advertised on TV."

TP: Did people here think you were going to be a punk band?

DH: Americans don't even know what a punk band is. And until they've seen some English bands, they won't. New York bands are just New York bands. They're not punk. Over here, they seem to use the label to talk about musical ability. Like, "Oh, that band can't play their instruments. They must be a punk band." But Eddie and the Hot Rods don't have anything to do with punk, and they like us and come again. But other kids, when they find out we're rock and roll, they leave.

GD: Some of the kids have to be told what to like. They have to be told what to do. The punk thing is like any scene. You've got some people who understand the concept—they do what they want to do. Then you've got the people who don't realize that they've got it in themselves to decide. So they look to other people.

TP: What do you think of the American clubs you've visited. How about CBGB's?

DH: I don't think CBGB's is a punk club. It's just a rock and roll club.

TP: What American bands have you liked?

GD: Uhhh. . .

DH: Ask us about the ones we don't like. Actually, I think most of the bands are quite amusing. The New York bands—I think they've totally got the wrong end of the stick.

TP: What do you mean?

DH: I don't know what I mean. And I'm not sure they know what they mean, either.

TP: Did you like any of the bands that played support for you on the tour?

DH: I can't even remember the names of them.

TP: What did you think of the Ramones?

GD: The Ramones are scared shitless of us. We can play and they can't.

DH: It's like comparing a Cadillac to a dustcloth. I suppose for a New York band the Ramones are good. But none of the New York bands can play.

TP: What are they lacking, as far as you're concerned?

GD: Insanity. Real insanity.

DH: New York bands don't realize they all have to play the same song together. They don't realize you all have to tune your guitars with one another. They don't realize that the drummer has to be playing in time with the bass player, that the rhythm guitar player has to play in time with the rhythm section, or that the singer has to sing in the same key the band is playing in.

TP: Aren't there any bands you saw here that you liked?

DH: Well, there was a terrible band in Washington. They came onstage and played the second side of **Abbey Road** note for note. Then they ended their set by doing rock and roll.

GD: That was the band we were throwing peanuts at.

DH: We did see a little blues band in Pittsburgh, though, that could wipe any New York band. And we saw another band in California—Leila and the Snakes. They were like the Tubes. They were good.

TP: Were there any surprises on the tour?

DH: One gig we got to and found out it was an Italian restaurant. I think it was in Philadelphia. Or maybe Pittsburgh.

TP: What good came out of the tour?

DH: I'm glad we came over here. Because now I'm sure what I always thought was true. And that's that the best rock and roll bands came from England.

TP: Success came pretty quickly to you in England, didn't it?

DH: Yes, maybe because we didn't want it. In England there's a lot of bands who just want success; if they don't get it after three or four months, they go and form another band. And they'll go on doing that all their life. They don't realize that you have to stay together for a couple of years, usually, before anything happens.

TP: What do you think is going to have to happen before you get the kind of success you want in America?

DH: We've just got to come over here a couple of times, get people to know us. We're not going to judge from one tour.

TP: What will have to happen before people get up and dance at your shows here, as they do in England?

DH: They'll have to stop being afraid to be normal. They've got to stop thinking, "What's the person next to me thinking?" Our whole thing as a band is to make the punters think they're just like us. They could do what we do onstage if they were willing to serve an apprenticeship at it. We don't want them to be afraid to have a good time. We don't want them to sit there and idolize us as if we're some rock stars or something. Of course, America is a big place. I'm not confident that when we come back to tour again we'll be a smash hit in America or anything.

TP: Is there anything you are confident of in regards to America?

DH: Yeah. That's that we'll blow all the New York bands right off the stage.

# RICH KID$: Sex-Pistol goes straight

By Brian Hogg

We don't talk about punk anymore. Power pop is the new phrase, the new big thing. (Mind you, I always thought that's what punk was anyway. Ah well.) Yes, power pop, and I guess the best place to start is with the Rich Kids.

The Rich Kids were formed by Glen Matlock after he was fired from the Sex Pistols. Glen had been a founding member of the Pistols, long before Johnny Rotten, but with the singer's arrival temperaments clashed and Glen was out, just after A&M dropped the band. The Rich Kids were to be more of a pop band; Glen's love for '60s groups was one of several reasons given for his exit. He brought in Steve New, a guitarist who'd played in the Pistols, and drummer Rusty Egan. All he needed now was another singer/guitarist, a strong front for the group. Glen approached Paul Weller of the Jam but was told no. Mick Jones of the Clash played a couple of London dates with the band, but it was all temporary because Glen had someone else in mind anyway: Slik's Midge Ure.

The story of Slik is similar to that of the Herd. Slik was formed in Glasgow with Midge Ure, Billy McIssac, Jim McGinlay and Kenny Hyslop; they first called themselves Salvation. Slik began with a change of image as each member adopted a style or fashion. There was nothing adopted in their music, though; Slik was a tight, hard band live. Like the Herd, when the hits came (in Britain and Europe only, of course) it was instant stardom, faces everywhere, along with another image change: baseball shoes and Yankees sweaters. Their singles were factory stuff, written by a songwriting team (Coulter/Martin) trying to make sophisticated pop—respectable teenage bubblegum (yeah, just like the Herd again). They weren't bad records. "Requiem" in particular was good, and Slik had a bigger potential.

But the hits dried up fast and Slik was left with an image that worked against their fabulous live sound. So the image went but still no one really cared. At that point Glen asked Midge to become a Rich Kid.

It wasn't quite out-of-the-blue. In 1975, before Slik began their climb, Midge had been asked to join the then unnamed Sex Pistols. As in all good rock movies he was stopped in the street, carrying a guitar; the "hey kid you look great wanna be a star" syndrome. Midge was stopped by Bernard Rhodes, now manager of the Clash, then working for the Pistols with Malcolm McLaren. But he declined, saying he was happy with Slik. Eventually Malcolm found Johnny Lydon (Rotten, to you), but Glen always wanted Midge in the band.

By late summer 1977, Slik being shackled by their image, Midge was ready to join the Rich Kids. At first he could not get out of his contract, and stayed with Slik to record three songs (on a Revox in an empty nightclub) released on Zoom Records, a small independent Scottish label, under the name PVC2. "Pain," "Deranged, Demented and Free" and the excellent "Put You in the Picture" were Slik the way they saw themselves. The identity of PVC2 was supposed to be a secret, but when Slik did all three live, well, it was kinda obvious.

Eventually Midge was able to leave and he joined the Rich Kids late last year. The last Slik gig in Edinburgh was a sad affair. The group was marvelous and it was a shame they were about to split. By a strange coincidence the first Rich Kids date in Edinburgh took place at the same club as Slik's last. This time, though, everybody was up.

Glen has taken a long time to get this

Rich Kids Steve New, Midge Ure, Rusty Egan and Glen Matlock bare their fangs.



group just right, and it's been worth it. The Kids are a group, not a name and some passengers. Midge is the perfect front man, assured and confident; his voice gets stronger every gig. Rusty's drumming is powerful, Steve's guitar (rhythm and solid lead) cuts in and out, and Glen's bass is just fine. The Rich Kids are loud and incredibly tight. They have a burning enthusiasm, working, flashing, crashing through the songs, building one upon the other.

The best thing about the Rich Kids, though, is their songwriting. "Rich Kids" is the single, but live it's so much better; on record the song sounds weak, the power of the guitars getting lost somewhere in the mix. "Young Girls" is brilliant, with some strong staccato drumming on the verse and a perfect hook chorus. That says it for all of the songs: perfect pop, pure pop—okay, power pop—instantly memorable, catchy and fun.

But the live show has a definite highspot. Midge introduces it with, "Here's a song Glen wrote with some friends." And in come the intro lines to "Pretty Vacant," the stage in total darkness, only Rusty's drumsticks crossed above his head being visible. The intro is three times the length of the Pistols's, and maybe four times as effective. Glen's vocals don't quite match Rotten's, but it's the guitars and drums that make it. And halfway through they do the intro bit again! If the Rich Kids can capture the power of their live show on plastic, they really can't fail.

*Trouser Press caught the Rich Kids at a rehearsal just before they were about to embark on their first British club tour (described above). After running through a set the band found their way into a slightly cramped cubicle adjoining the rehearsal studio and commenced a slightly drunken interview. Due to a lack of time on their part (which created some unhappiness over the prospect of having to answer the same questions twice) there were two interviewers on hand at the same time: TP's Dave Schulps and a reporter from an Australian music paper (whose questions are attributed here to "Q").*

## Interview by Dave Schulps

Q: Did you leave the Pistols or were you sacked?

Glen Matlock: It was a mutual sacking. They thought they were sacking me, but really I was quite happy to get out.

TP: We heard you were sacked because you liked Paul McCartney.

GM: There's a lot more to it than that.

Q: When the crunch finally came, was it as though you were on your own and the three of them together?

GM: No, not really. Johnny was on his own; he always is.

Q: Did you write all of "Pretty Vacant"?

GM: Yeah, everything.

Q: Don't you feel cheated that they got credit for a song you've written alone?

GM: Not totally. I'm getting money for ones I didn't have so much to do with. We agreed that everyone in the band should split four ways.

Q: How do you feel being with EMI right now?

GM: Pretty good. Everybody gets it wrong. EMI was really most peeved to lose the Pistols. Everybody knew they were going to be really big. It was just the old guys up in the board room that had us sacked.

Q: You had offers from other companies. Was EMI's the biggest?

GM: Not the biggest, but the best. We feel that we can work with them.

Rusty Egan: We'll sign to A&M in America! [*All laugh.*]

TP: Is it true Steve was actually in the Pistols at one time?

GM: Steve New played with the Pistols for a short time as lead guitarist. For about a month. McLaren at that stage thought Steve Jones might not cut it as the only guitarist and wanted to add another. Paul Cook was upset with the way Steve Jones sounded alone and wanted to leave—he didn't want to go on stage with Steve Jones. We never played as five-piece, though, because Jones began to improve. They kept Steve New's presence quiet and then were able to sack him before anyone knew about it.

TP: How did you first meet Glen, Rusty?

RE: I first got into it by doing a three-month audition with the Clash. I never got accepted and I never wanted to accept them because they were a punk band and I wanted to play in a rock 'n' roll band. I met Glen at a pub and had a chat with him just before he got sacked from the Pistols. I told him I was a drummer, that I wouldn't join in any punk bands, about dealing with the Clash and how I wasn't into it. He said, "Well, why don't you join my band?" Just then the band that was playing at the pub came on and I went to watch them 'cause I thought he was still in the Pistols and was just joking. Then the papers came out and said he'd left the Pistols. Soon after he got in touch with me.

Q: Who contributes the material?

GM: I had a few songs left over from the Pistols. Midge had a few songs left over from Slik: "Rich Kids," "Young Girls," "Put You in the Picture."

TP: How did you hook up with Mick Ronson as a producer?

GM: He likes us! Pete Walmsley, our manager, used to share a flat with him. He's a nice chap. When he came down to look at us, I said, "Bring your guitar down," and he did. We just hung around with him for two weeks and we were pretty impressed.

Q: [*to Midge*] Didn't you turn down the Rich Kids to start with?

Midge Ure: Yeah.

Q: Why?

MU: Didn't like them [*laughs.*] No, Slik ended up being like a nine to five job.

TP: Were you pretty much stuck into a mold with Slik?

MU: Nobody would let us out of the bubblegum tag, though we were nothing like that at the end. One of the last gigs we got a rave review, but nobody would give us a chance to prove ourselves.

TP: "Forever and Ever" was a nice pop single.

MU: It was okay for what it was, but nobody would let us progress from that at all.

Q: Do you think you'll come in for criticism for saying you're a rock 'n' roll band and you don't want to know about punk?

GM: We didn't say it just for the sake of being outrageous—to be unfashionable so we'll become fashionable when the wind changes in the next five minutes. It's just that there's so much nonsense going on, so many terrible bands around that people are saying are good. They're just making excuses, they're just blind. When the Pistols, the Clash and the Damned started, that was a racket because they couldn't play. Everyone's putting some good musical ideas together now. Look at the Damned: they put some new musical stuff together and they just got slagged off.

TP: Which do you think are the more musical bands around now?

GM: The Clash are getting more musical. The Yachts, the Rezillos. I think the Pistols are pretty musical . . . but I haven't actually seen them.

TP: What do you consider the main difference between playing with the Pistols and the Rich Kids?

GM: I enjoy it. Before it was a big chore. You had to have a certain attitude, a certain frame of mind and if you didn't have it you had to put it on. Not just for the pose, mind you, but in order to make the idea work.

TP: [*to Midge*] How about with Slik?

MU: We were very tight. We'd played together for five years.

TP: Talking about the attitude part of the played the second side of Abbey Road note other than just go out and have a good time?

GM: If you have that attitude all the time it becomes very constricting. If you can't see outside that and break out of it, it's no good. Our only attitude is to see that we don't have the same attitude all the time.

TP: Do you have any political stance at all?

GM: Our songs are more on a personal level. If you hear the words to the songs, though, they're not just pop songs. There are good words there.

TP: Are you interested in coming to America?

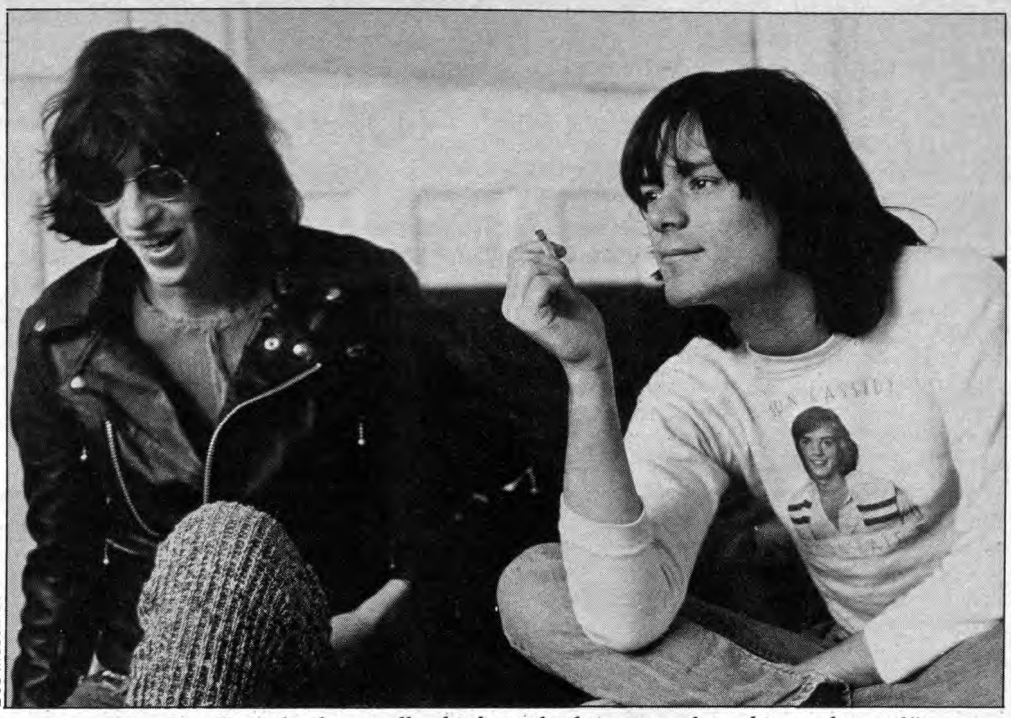
GM: Sure.

SLIK: Midge Ure, upper left.



# green circles

By Jim Green



Bob Messineo

**"Hey Dee Dee, do they really think anybody's gonna buy this punk crap?"**

It was a freezing January day in downtown Manhattan, hardly a stone's throw from City Hall, the World Trade Center and Wall Street. I emerged from the subway only to be nearly blown halfway down Chambers Street by an icy blast of wind rushing from the Hudson River. I hastily entered the building where Ramones manager Danny Fields has his apartment/office, and where I'm about to spin records with Joey and Dee Dee Ramone.

Joey was late, so Dee Dee and I shot the breeze about underground comics and such, eventually meandering onto topics more germane to the matter at hand, touching on the Ramones' recent British tour.

"We couldn't even go out of the hotel," said Dee Dee, apparently amused and still surprised that the fans' reaction was so intensely favorable.

"We sold out *everywhere*. They pogo and go *crazy*. I dunno how they stand bein' in the audience. In the States we get a real good response in California and Texas. New York, it's always been more reserved."

I mentioned that I couldn't speak for the whole Paladium the previous Saturday when the Ramones topped the bill, but roughly half of the loge was so frenzied that its very foundation seemed to be moving.

"We played the Apollo in Scotland, and the balcony looked like it was gonna go. You could see it moving. They said that once they had a Status Quo concert there and then the next night they had a Slade concert, and the balcony caved in. Everybody compares us to Status Quo over there."

I admitted that musically there was some general basis for comparison.

"They say that's the audience we get. Status Quo's the biggest group there. They'll sell out the Apollo three nights. We were told it was great that we did it for one. The new wave doesn't draw that well over there, they play, the Clash or someone like that, before 1000 people a night.

"We've seen the Clash twice. They're real good. The problem with the Pistols is they don't know what to do onstage, so they huddle together, freaking out. The Clash have been working live a long time. They have a confidence, you can tell. They have a chemistry that works. I love their album, I play that all the time. They wanted to put 'em on an American tour with us, but I think us and the Runaways are a better package. We wanna be sure we can fill up the places. I don't know if America's ready for them yet. They're real nice guys, though, Joe Strummer's real nice. All those guys are. We really get along well with the Sex Pistols, too."

Around this time Joey arrived, wearing woolen leg warmers but only over his knees (Joey has huge holes in his jeans, uncovering his knee-caps). "Fashionable," said Dee Dee. Joey mumbled a bit, his way of saying hello. Both he and Dee Dee were tired out from having played the night before (and from contemplating the gig the next night, to which they would be driving for seven hours over icy roads). While Dee Dee was amiable, if a bit languid, Joey was reticent at first; he's by nature diffident, anxious for acceptance but too unsure to seek it. We got into the swing of things by playing "Orgasm Addict" by the Buzzcocks (United Artists UP 36316).

Joey: "All right, nothing special. It's the Buzzcocks? I like them. 'Boredom.' I liked **Spiral Scratch** [EP]. This just sounds like another English record, y'know."

"Sounds too cluttered, too many lyrics," chipped in Dee Dee.

"Voice sounds a bit like early Bowie. Nothing special, though [Laughs] I'll give it ''Z!'"

Dee Dee was puzzled. "I think the Buzzcocks are good, though. They have better songs than this. We've seen 'em. I don't understand why they used this."

I put on "Mannequin" by Wire (Harvest HAR 5144), which had a striking picture sleeve. The latter half of the song consists vocally of repeated "tell me's," "oo's" and "la-la-la's."

Again Joey put his oar in first. "I like it. It's all right."

"I think they shouldn't'a had any other lyrics except 'tell me.' They should'a called it that. Would have been incredible. I liked the break. The bass player sounds good. It [**Pink Flag**] should be a good album."

Next up was "Wild Youth" by Generation X (Chrysalis CHS 2189).

"Sounds a lot like Slade," remarked Dee Dee admirably. Joey agreed. "A little long though," said Dee Dee. "How long is it? About three minutes? They should have cut out a half minute. I think it could make the charts. They're really going all out pop, that band, their image. That's supposed to be the next big thing this year in England, going back to pop instead of punk."

I decided to throw them a curve and trot out some genuine pop. The next track I played was the Dead End Kids (Roller sound alikes) doing "All My Love Always" (CBS 5826).

Dee Dee was enthusiastic: "Sounds like a hit! I like it—but," looking over at Joey, "Joey doesn't like it..." Joey thought it was much too wimpy. We discussed the influence of the Rollers on Ramones music, and Dee Dee admitted he was a fan ("...and they really *can* play live!"). Joey said he liked some of it a lot, but that the Dead End Kids just weren't up to the better Rollers stuff. In the meantime I put on a gen-u-wine new wave hit, the Banned's remake of "Little Girl."

They recognized it at once, having been in England while it was in the charts. And they didn't think much of it either. Dee Dee: "Really stiff. They sound like metronomes." Said Joey, "I don't like the way the guitar sounds." Limp, eh? "Yeah. Doesn't flow, man. The Dead Boys did it, then *these* guys..." he added, decrying the vapid trendiness of bands who, in ressurrecting old songs, "butcher" them. Not at all like the Ramones and "Do You Wanna Dance." I was about to say, when Danny Fields announced that coffee was ready, and we scrambled into the kitchen.

"I couldn't live without it," said Dee Dee, "but in England they serve this stuff that's not real coffee, and it's awful." Postum? Chicory? "I don't know, but it's not coffee.

But they drink tea a lot. All the roadies, they have vats of tea."

Then it was back to the listening room, and I put on "Just Another Teenage Anthem" by the New Hearts (CBS 5800). Joey thought the title was all too accurate. "It's amusing, but that's about it. Maybe if I was isolated for about three weeks . . ." He thought that a lot of the new wave stuff was getting better, but most of it seemed just to be reaching mediocre competence. The remark was all the more telling after we ran through three singles in quick succession without finding much to get excited about. "Lipstick" by Advertising (EMI 2710), which I thought resembled primitive Roxy, was judged by Joey to be boring and too calculated. Upon hearing Celia and the Fabulous Mutations run through "You Better Believe Me" (United Artists UP 36318), Dee exclaimed, "All these singles sound alike!" "Lovers of Today" by the Only Ones (Venegeance VEN 001), who have among them ex-Spooky Tooth drummer Mike Kellie and who were just signed to CBS in England, brought no response from the pair except Joey's "I wish I could say I like it" (he seemed a bit embarrassed that I was pulling turkey after turkey out of my bag of singles).

I countered with "Living on Dreams" by the Depressions (Barn 2014 112), a cut John Rockwell might describe as neo-folk-punk-pop-rock. This fizzled too: "They coulda had more substance behind it. Sounds like they sold out before they started," said Dee Dee. Joey said it reminded him of filler on mid-'60s albums.

Only slightly daunted, I turned the record over and played the flip, "Family Planning," which I thought was not bad. Eureka! "Best record you've played us. Going in the right direction," declared Dee Dee. Joey agreed; it was a bit more forceful, more muscular than the A-side. "Great sleeve," he noted (head shots of four guys with grimly ugly mugs and spiky white hair on a black background). Nevertheless the band's dour name got Joey talking about a particular gripe he had with the English scene.

"In England, it's like a fad to be depressed and miserable, y'know." He could understand the anger of the scene's first groups, like the Clash and the Pistols, "but now it's pretentious, you walk around and everything out of their mouths is like that. It's just the thing to do. But the kids aren't like that. I don't think they give a shit about that, they just wanna have a good time. Everybody's a fuckin' poser now, man. Like, the Clash are great, but a lotta groups, they can't play, the songs stink, and all they talk about is how bad things are."

Said Dee Dee, "When you get a bunch of new wave singles, you have to really sort through them." On the British tour before this last one, "we went out and bought about 30 singles, like everything that was out at the time. Out of 30 records there was maybe three that were really good."

Why do you think the Ramones are so popular?

Joey was getting into talking now. "The music's good, the songs are exciting, it's our humor, the way we look, our show. It's us, man, nothing we put on. It's completely different.

"There's a second or third generation [of new wave bands] in England and maybe a third or fourth here in New York, and the groups coming out now are just—Like, Suicide are great, I think the Cramps are good, and that's all I've heard of the later generations in New York that I like. The Sic F-cks are kinda good. It's amazing that they started out just as a joke, and now they could get signed tomorrow. They're just above everything now, they take it as a joke. That's good.

"Things are looking up, though. There are some great records. 'Watching the Detectives' is a great song, and it's nicer to hear [even the records he and Dee Dee had reckoned to be just "all right"] than all this progressive crap, with long guitar solos. It's affecting the bigger groups, too. Things are becoming more rock oriented, songs are getting shorter. Nazareth's got this song, 'No Mercy,' y'know, the Kinks got 'Father Christmas.'"

Dee Dee, who'd been looking up from his comic book to give his tacit agreement every so often, mentioned that the Ramones had seen the Kinks recently.

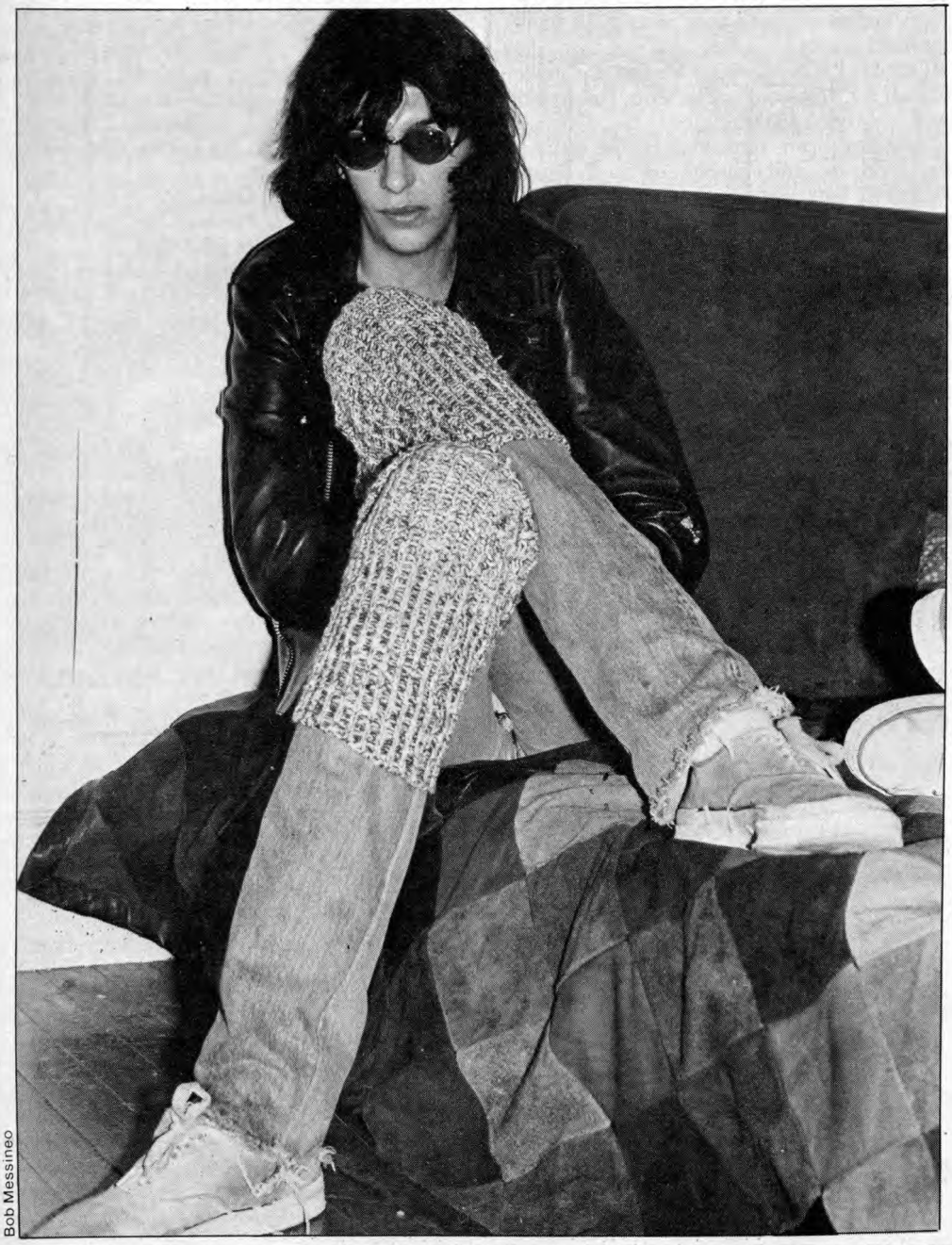
"Ray Davies invited us to the Christmas show in London," explained Joey. "They were great."

The Ramones are far more astute than their detractors—and even many of their fans—give them credit for. Even before Dee Dee offered his lone criticism of the Generation X single, I realized that many bands would profit by employing some of the economy by which the Ramones are habitually characterized. Loud, short and simple rock isn't all there is to it, of course, as anyone who's listened to, say, the Users will testify. In any kind of music there are a few greats, a slightly larger portion of goods, barrels full of "all rights" and bargeloads of bilge. No matter how much you like the genre.

After all, there's only one band of Ramones.

* * *

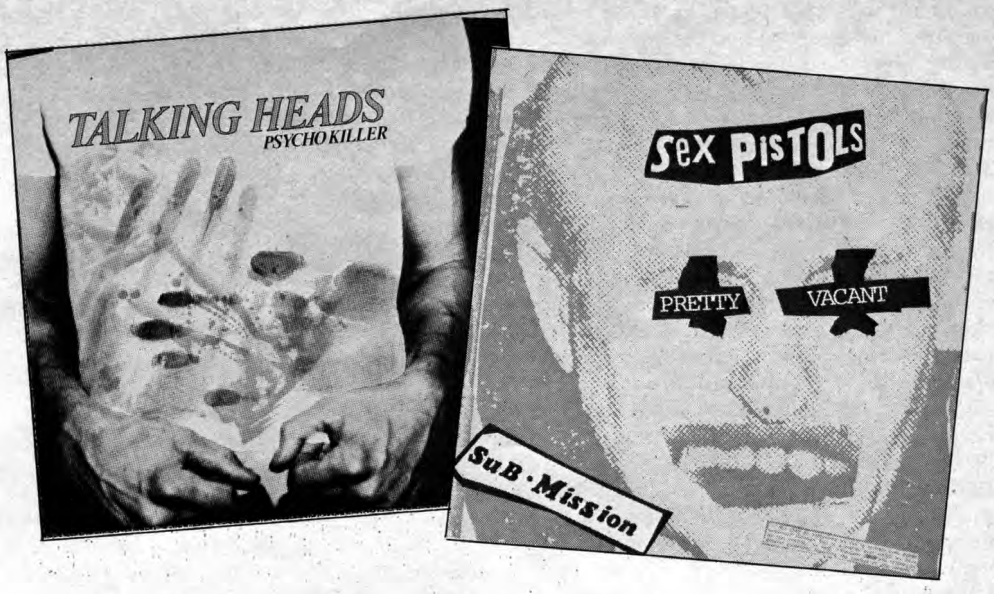
**Joey Ramone tries to figure out how to uncross his legs.**



Bob Messineo

...Thought you'd get off easy, hey? Sorry, you poor sods, there's more records I've yet to make note of than Joey and Dee Dee got to hear. All seriousness aside, did you like the Ramones reviewing some singles? Would you like to see other rock 'n' rollers take a turn at it? If so, write in and let me know; we'll see what we can cook up along those lines.

Meantime, here are some rekkids for your delectation. Stores carrying the Trouser Picks (records released on national labels of particular value) this time around are: Discophile (26 W. 8 St.) and Golden Disc (228 Bleecker St.) in New York; Rather Ripped in Berkeley (1878 Euclid, 94709); Rhino Recs. in LA (10461 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica); the Sounds Good stores in the Chicago area; and Peaches in Frasier, Michigan.




**TROUSER PICK: "Pretty Vacant" b/w "Sub-Mission"—The Sex Pistols—Warner Bros. 8516**

Yeah, I know both sides are on the album, and that neither is as great as "God Save the Queen" or "Anarchy in the UK," but they are fine sides nonetheless. You may be able to get a copy with the neat picture sleeve, replete with a "letter" on the back from an outraged citizen (or bored in-house writer at WB) decrying how naughty Johnny and Co. are (were). Besides, "Sub-Mission" was not on the UK pressing of the LP, nor a flipside there either; if you bought that pressing, this is for you. (In England one-sided 45s of the song were given away with the LP, but no imported copies have them. Some stores, however recently bought copies of this single to give away with their imported copies.)

**TROUSER PICK: "2-4-6-8 Motorway" b/w "I Shall Be Released"—The Tom Robinson Band—Harvest 4533**

This has been reviewed before as an English release, and was high on the Trouser best-of-'77 lists printed last issue. But just in case you weren't listening I'll tell you now that Tom Robinson is a STAR; this bouncy, good-time driving song with the irresistible chorus deserves all the praise it's gotten and more. And all the sales. Which is why, now that it's out here, I'm encouraging all you laggards—and those who have found it hard to obtain imported records—that there's no excuse for being without it any longer.

**Big Deals**

**"Psycho Killer" b/w "Psycho Killer" (acoustic)—Talking Heads—Sire SRE 1013**

From totally unexpected quarters, an interesting track reminiscent of Roxy Music. I've always found T. Heads difficult to listen to: the vocals unappealingly amateurish, the music pointlessly disjointed, the lyrics pretentious. Here the singing is OK, if not stellar, and the music straightforward, with a good hook; the lyrics are not so bad, though uninspiring. The best vocals are the non-verbal ones, the "ayayays" and "fafafafas"; the latter make the best bits of the track, a vocal backed only by crisp drums and menacing, minimal-Motown bass. I wouldn't quote it but you can dance to it; so much for Art (Art who?). Producer Tony Bongiovi deserves high marks for the snappy and full sound (nice touch, adding the Roxysaxes).

**Rising Free...TRB (EP)—The Tom Robinson Band—EMI (UK) 2749**

I told you the man's a star. Exactly how much of a star I had no idea until I heard this live EP. He's got depth, power and heart. Substantial and multi-faceted. "Don't Take No for an Answer" starts things off with a band; whiplash drums, Tom's ominously thumping bass, taut guitar chords and white-hot organ rippling around Tom's dark, fierce vocals. Next up is "(Sing If You're) Glad to Be Gay." Tom is gay. He didn't have to say so (you'd never know otherwise), but he's not the mincing type—in steps or in words. He's angry and the song pulls no punches, yet doesn't once preach. Not maudlin or self-pitying, the insidious lyrics get you into the song as music, then into the issue (sexual oppression) at hand; no matter what your sexual preference, I defy you to resist

## GET AN ASSOCIATE DEGREE IN TROUSER PRESSING!

In TP 25 we asked to hear from people around the country who would be interested in acting as field reps for America's Only. So far the response has been pretty good, but we'd like more people to get involved. If you're a college student, that's ideal; if not, we don't discriminate. The basic idea is for you to sell subscriptions and talk stores into carrying TP. It ain't a glamor job, but the more people that read Trouser Press, the better the magazine can become. Plus you can make some money on the side. If you think you'd like to become a Trouser Press Associate, drop us a line and we'll send you all the poop. That's 147 West 42 St., New York, NY 10036.

singing along. Absolutely commanding. Next is "Martin"; earthiness and crackling good humor make this pub singalong childhood reminiscence jolly and moving, yet save it from cloying nostalgic excesses. And get the audience shouting the chorus as if they knew Martin firsthand. As for the rocking finale: When was the last time you were ready to rock to a number containing all the—in other contexts, anyway—hackneyed cliches connected with supporting the women's movement? I was surprised to find myself caught up with the infectiousness of "Right On, Sister." It's Tom Robinson's secret: If the music can rock people, they may get caught up in the tide of a political new wave. Helluva band. Helluva man. BUY THIS RECORD.

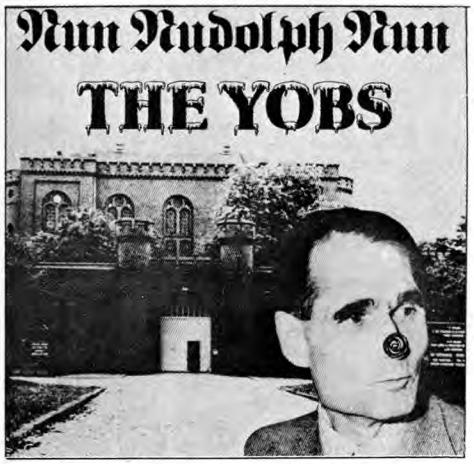
**Oddballs and Sodballs**

**"Give It to the Soft Boys" (EP)—The Soft Boys—Raw (UK) Raw 5**

The Canterbury progresso-rock scene meets punque roque. If that sounds strange to you, imagine how it sounded to me. Almost made it in spots but yielded to pretensions of Art (Art who? Puts his two cents in in all the wrong places).

**Another Close Shave (EP)—Mr John Dowie—Virgin (UK) VEP 1004**

Sometimes silly, sporadically funny and moderately amusing. Samples: Viv Stanshall meets Phil Spector on a $19 GE Record player; the answer to the musical question, "How many of your limbs and organs will you sacrifice to love?"; a twinky time-traveller.




**"Run Rudolph Run" b/w "The Worm Song"—The Yobs—NEMS (UK) NES 114**

I know it's a bit late for this, but just in case...It's actually the Boys surpassing most of their debut LP, singing Chuck Berry's yuletide rocker backed with their own punk version of that hallowed toon: "Nobody likes me/Everybody hates me/'Cause I eat worms all day." Sorta like Johnny Rotten at age 9.

**No Way, Mate!**

**"Chelsea 77" b/w "Ain't No Legend"—The Maniacs—United Artists (UK) UP 36327**

Bull pschitt. These wankers demonstrate how even well-meaning sods (I'm being too generous) can contravene the spirit of the new wave. Formulaic boredom.

**"Just One More Night" b/w "Up in the Balcony"—Yellow Dog—Virgin (UK) VS195**

Lou Reed meets Mud, or the Rubettes walk on the wild side. A group of not untalented popsters (Kenny Young, Herbie Armstrong et al.) wasting time—theirs, mine and yours (if you buy this).

☐ Great ☐ Awful ☑ Other

**"Statue of Liberty" b/w "Hang on to the Night"—XTC—Virgin (UK) VS201**

An amusing ode to the metal maiden of NY harbor ("You've been the subject of so many dreams since I climbed your torso"). Andy Partridge's hilarious vocalizing is as herky-jerky as the syncopated rhythm, potently purveyed with the aid of Be Bop Deluxe cohort John Leckie's sleek production. Hotcha!

**Screwed Up (EP)—Mick Farren & the Deviants—Stiff (UK) LAST 4**

What can you say about a guy who'd write a song called "Let's Loot the Supermarket Again like We Did Last Summer"? With help from old mates like Paul Rudolph and Larry Wallis (who produced), Mick resurrected the Deviants for this disc and an aborted tour a coupla months ago. The best from MF in recent memory; not exactly classics but a quartet of enjoyably offensive raunchoid ditties.

**Short and Curlies**

Both sides of the final **Damned** single are on their LP—but I can see all you vinyl vultures salivating at the thought of its pink plastic. ("Don't Cry Wolf" b/w "One Way Love," BUY 24)...Nice way to sample a super Scot on **Frankie Miller**'s recent EP, "Frankie Miller...That's Who!" Three choice tracks from his LPs plus a previously unreleased rendering of Randy Newman's "Sail Away" (UK Chrysalis CHS 2184)...See ya later, sport.

TOWNSHEND/Continued from page 20

think we're definitely part of the establishment and can't wiggle out of it now."

I mention that Britain seems extremely politicized right now. Everyone over here seems to be talking politics in one way or another, especially the young bands. In many ways, to an American it feels like slipping back 10 years in time.

"I think a lot of the punk bands are a lot more political than I am; because I think politics is trite. I don't think politics has anything to do with anything. I think it's a game. It's like religion, which has nothing to do with God; it's very, very necessary, unfortunately, to large amounts of the population. How South America would manage without candles, I don't know. That's a nasty thing to say; I don't really mean it in that sense. I mean that Roman Catholicism holds South America together by giving simple people a connection with something grand, rich and beautiful. But does it really deal with spirituality? Does it really help them? Does it improve them or does it just make their week a bit more bearable? In the same breath, do politicians—though they organize to get the roads swept, which somebody has to do—actually improve the country and the way we live?"

Doesn't he think, then, in that sense, that rock 'n' roll has failed?

"No, because now it's got its chance. The Who are one of the first—we're probably in the mainstream, aren't we?—to last enough time to make a lot of money, to have the ability to become part of the establishment. Plus the fact that we've still—up to quite recently—been doing road work; we're in close connection with our fans, have a tremendous amount of direct feedback; we know what's going on in the streets; and suddenly we're there. We're a rock and roll band that's in the midst of society with the ability to change things. What do we do? Do we do it within the capitalist framework? Do we try to initiate a revolution? Do we have ourselves crucified? What do we do? That's really what we're saying now: 'What do we do?' We've asked for it, we've gotten it, and we've got to do something about it.

"This is what I was saying about a lot of the punk bands. They really do care about what the Who do. They don't necessarily love our music or feel they'd die without it, that they couldn't carry on without it. They've created something which exists within itself, that takes our music and other bands like us as its basic roots. But there the similarity ends because this is '78, not '63."

In 1970, though, you said, "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss." Was that meant to be about yourselves?

"I don't like to try to explain 'Won't Get Fooled Again.' That song grows old quite gracefully—like 'My Generation.' I don't know. I think that if we can manage another couple of years and still maintain our integrity and honesty, we'll be over the hump. Then we can all look back and see whether or not rock 'n' roll has been properly manifested and, rather than just being words, has become real life.

"It's easy to sit and write songs. You can write anything, you can say anything, you can do anything. The Who are on stage singing 'See Me, Feel Me, then 15 minutes later they're smashing a hotel room to bits. Not that I care about inanimate objects. I suppose I care about the effect it has on the cleaning lady when she comes in the next day—the deep shock, the abhorrence, the horror, the fear it creates. I certainly don't attach any importance to a lump of wood known as a guitar, or a piece of plaster known as a lamp; on the other hand I know the effects go much deeper than that.

"When I was talking about the Who's integrity, I think we've come through on a razor's edge, because we could have made terrible, terrible mistakes. There have been a lot of occasions where any one of us could've killed somebody, there were a lot of occasions when we could have easily been killed or easily have been part of a nasty drug scene. But we haven't and we've been very lucky. Very, very lucky. And we're lucky to be together today, to be the same four blokes we always were. Because when you've known and worked with four people for 15 years, in the end you've got a power no one else can get unless they wait 15 years."

**Coming next issue:** Pete "I'm old fashioned" Townshend talks about life, love, marriage, sex(ism), responsibility, fascism, Woodstock, books, doorknobs and—just to keep things honest—rock 'n' roll and a band called the 'Oo.

# TP GOES DEAF!

*Way back in TP 23 we ran a contest asking for suggested captions to go with the covers of the two Deaf School albums. Well, we didn't find any incipient Woody Allens, but there were quite a few responses we had a giggle over. In any case, special Deaf School EPs have been sent to the following twenty lucky souls.*

P. Carson, Orangeville, Ont., CANADA
Steven Nowak, Philadelphia, PA
Jeff Weiss, Evansville, IN
Richard Bartkowski, Middleton, CT
Jerry Grindstaff, Woodville, OH
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"What a way to end it all . . . in a 2x4 restroom."—DWP and TO
"Sure it's painful, but it's either ten minutes of this twice a week or listen all the time to dumb big ears jokes."—DW
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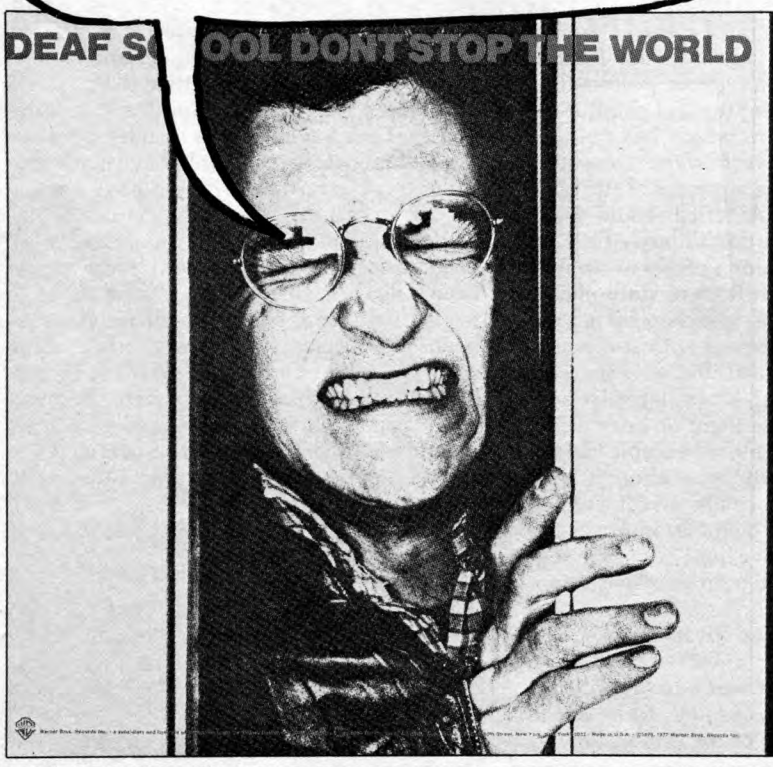
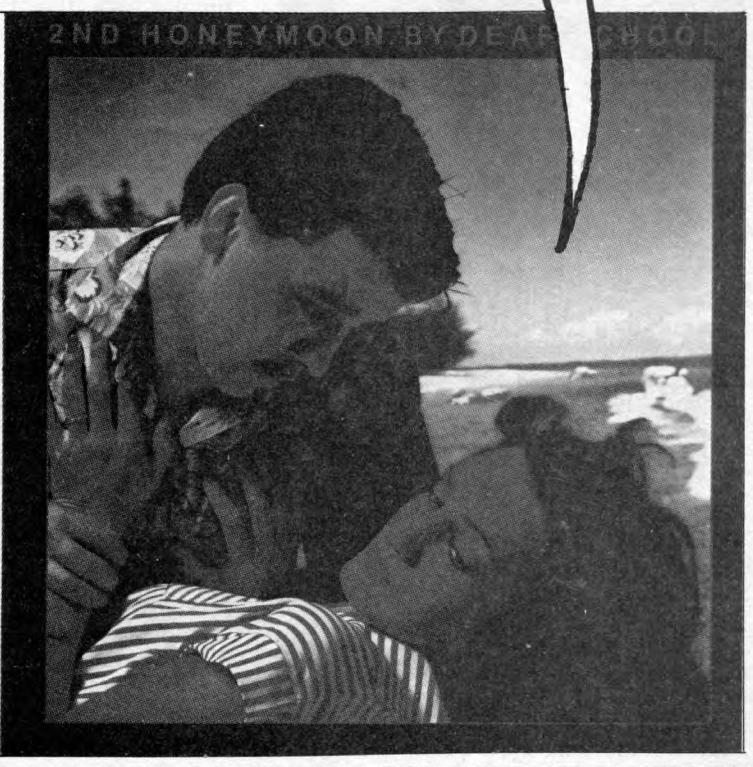
"I never thought coming out of the closet would be this difficult."—PG
"Before you go, Joe, I think it's only fair to tell you that I think I have the crabs!"—BL
"Bruxism."—JE
"Lemme in! I just gotta get backstage to see Donny and Marie!"—DQ
"Geez, I hate these small clubs!"
"Tune in next week to see if Enrico escapes the dreaded brain mush machine of Dr. Bong."—JG
"Excuse me. Is this the Thin Lizzy dressing room?"—RB
"Can I talk to you about diarrhea?"—JW
"Wait till I get a hold of the guy who told me those Ex-Lax were candy!"—SN
"These new 'surround yourself' earphones are driving me crazy!"—PC

"Maybe if I light a match he'll go away."—SN
"But dear, I've *never* respected you."—HS
"My God! His left breast is bigger than mine!"
"Gee, Jerry, you're just gonna have to stop eating those garlic and limburger sandwiches!"—JL
"Satyriasis."—JE
"Right Here in Capaldi's Cafe?"—TO
"My heart belongs to Eno."—CC
"I'm sorry, I just can't do it. You're not Mr. Average."—DHT
"No, Roger! I thought you said, 'Let's have a great night BOWLING!!!'"—BL
"Good. Now let's check the other ear."—RW
"When this sap said he had a Stiff for me, I thought he meant an Elvis Costello record."—WH
"Look, either you pay attention or you fuck the TV."—DWM
"I may be deaf, but I'm sure your breath is singing 'Green Onions'!"—DWP



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# RECORDS

## U.S.

BE BOP DELUXE
**Drastic Plastic**
Harvest SW 11750

For a while there, Be Bop was one of the great post-glitter hopes from Britain. The first trio of albums displayed Bill Nelson as a peerless guitar whiz spinning a web of conceptualized rock music that both beguiled and bewildered. Despite a tendency towards saminess, the switches from staff producer to Roy Baker to John Leckie kept the three different enough to be fully satisfying, singly and collectively. The group always seemed to be at odds with itself over direction: would more of the same do, or was change a necessary motivator? Critical acclaim notwithstanding, that the three albums died the death in America might have had something to do with their musical insecurity; it's hard to say for sure.

**Modern Music** was released last year to both presold critical applause and better-than-ever airplay and sales. Unfortunately the songs were totally derivative of the band's previous work, leaving lifetime fans with a slightly fetid sense of deja vu and frustration. Musically the only thing wrong with **Modern Music** was the suppression of Nelson's fiery guitar work in exchange for an overblown vocal presentation that overextended his capabilities. What had been exciting and fresh became hackneyed and needless. Be Bop seemed awash in self-induced confusion. Then came the live album, and the situation became more grave. Just when a bold step forward was needed Be Bop chose to stand still, with only two mediocre studio tracks from the cutting room floor to prove that they weren't totally out of it. When the group toured in support of the live album, a new twist had been added: in the interests of lowest common demoninator appeal, Bill Nelson had become a Guitar God, and the stage show a framework for Bill's incessant riffing. Make no mistake: The guy can play as well as just about any other lead guitarist, but 10-minute solos went out with Cream. (There's a time and a place...) As far as I could tell, Be Bop's career, integrity and creativity were in the past tense and fading fast. So what's their next move? **Drastic Plastic**, that's what.

Sometimes any change is for the better; such is the case here. This record is such a major departure for the group that it's nearly impossible to consider it in terms of their previous recordings. The images are the same—futuristic morality and cosmic consciousness—but the music cuts broad swaths of new ground, and the experiment must be judged a success. In place of samey dynamics, melodies and guitar solos, Nelson has done a Bowie—discarded what was tried for what could be. Some tracks are interesting, some aren't, but the main thing is that Be Bop is back among the living and they have a future. Congrats due all around.



**Be-Bop gets tough: Messrs. Fox, Nelson, Clark and Tumahai sink or swim with *Drastic Plastic*.**

The album leads off with a '60sish pop tune done '80s style. "Electrical Language" has a lot of "It's All Too Much" and a little "Epistle to Dippy," making for something Donovan might have recorded if he had collaborated with Jan Hammer instead of Jeff Beck. In a definite Bowie-mechano vein, "New Precision" hypnotizes with accurate repetition but is not boring. The guitar chording is very Who but the synthesizer is all Andy Clark. (Nelson admits to an interest in **Heroes**, so the reference is more than imaginary.) The next track, "New Mysteries," shares more than a similar title; it too is based on the repetition of a theme but proves that redundancy can both succeed and fail. "Surreal Estate" mixes jangly percussion with fanciful melody. The Donovan reference recurs but construction is more complex than the lead song. The side closes with a strange device: "Love in Flames" apes the Stranglers down to a T. I have no idea why Be Bop should do such a thing—but I'm glad they did.

Side two contains the anthemic single, "Panic in the World," and the single that preceded it, "Japan." The British LP replaces "Japan" with a Mike Oldfield-esque guitar tape exercise called 'Visions of Unending Hopes.") Both are quirky and strange: The former shows further Bowie influence (not the first time the Thin White Duke has proved useful to Nelson; check **Axe Victim** for details, while the latter is totally onomatopoeic. The album closes on a familiar note: "Islands of the Dead" sounds quite a bit like **Sunburst Finish's** "Crying to the Sky." It's a pleasant memory, serene and gentle.

**Drastic Plastic** shows a side of Be Bop that was never there before. Some of it is very intricate; other parts veer towards minimal production. The songs also wander between quality and chaff, but the overall impact is of a band too talented to repeat themselves anymore. Win or lose, it's a pleasure to see Be Bop Deluxe trying again. That's all we can ask.

—Ira Robbins



**BLONDIE**
**Plastic Letters**
Chrysalis CHR 1166

It would be a laughable understatement to say that lots has happened to Blondie (the group) since their previous album appeared slightly over 12 months ago. Besides the group's extensive touring and promoting (first US new wavers to break in Australia and Japan), the most startling events have had to do with personnel and label, both of which have been shuffled around. The 1978 Blondie sports two new members (and the absence of one former member), a new record company, and a forthcoming new producer for album #3. Put in perspective by the release of **Plastic Letters**, Blondie shows what a year can do: age and improve.

Not only is Debbie Harry a stronger and more capable vocalist, she and the band sound more sophisticated and self-assured than on the last outing. Even producer Richard Gottehrer shows more subtlety and taste (although it's always hard to judge where a group's influence ends and a producer's begins). The group's songwriting, divided between Debbie, guitarist Chris Stein and keyboard whiz Jimmy Destri, shows the same development. Wherein lies a certain amount of the problem.

Except for a few moments of top rank pop melody and spunk, much of **Plastic Letters** is more competent than memorable. The slower the song, the less room there is for Debbie to be at her frolicsome best. Repertoire songs like "X-Offender," "In the Sun" and "Little Girl Lies" all possess the bounce to be really good pop tunes, whereas the slower, languid tracks fail to excite. The group's new refined sound makes it easier for them to finely craft songs at an unexcited tempo, but their failure to balance the album between ballads and ditties makes it hard to differentiate the good from the moderate.

The standout track here is a transexualized oldie, "Denis" (formerly "Denise" by Randy and the Rainbows), that shows an overdubbed Debbie at her alluring best. Instead of Shaun Cassidy types redoing pop classics without the slightest hint of their original charm, Debbie and the band give "Denis" the full treatment, including a verse sung in French—only fitting, since the revised title is a French name.

The group often displays considerable talent, either through ace arrangements or instrumental prowess. Chris Stein executes some fancy guitar moves on the opening of "Bermuda Triangle Blues (Flight 45)," and Clem Burke's drumming shines throughout, although too-true-stereo makes for some bizarre aural motion when he swings from one tom tom to another, changing speakers in the process. Jimmy Destri, in love with a large electronic keyboard instrument he discovered in the recording studio (you won't get me to say huge organ!), swirls and arpeggiates in top form, especially on "Youth Nabbed as Sniper"; he also reveals a talent for ye olde tubular bells via the lead track, a Destri composition entitled "Fan Mail."

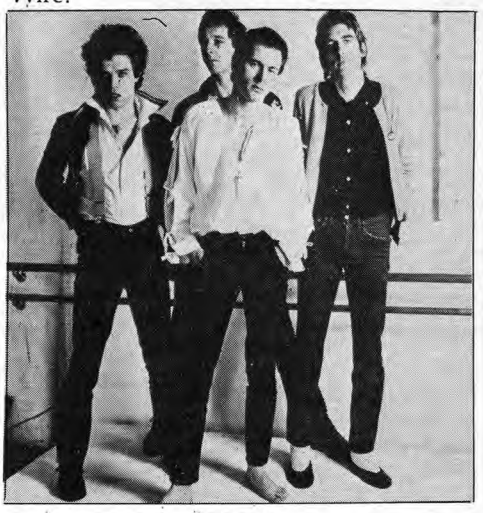
Of the original tunes on the album (some of which are real good; each listening improves the sound of the entire record), it's strange to note that the most impressive song is the parting gift of ex-bassist Gary Valentine. "(I'm Always Touched by Your) Presence Dear" is a haunting pop song with lots of melody and a great drum break. At 2:40, it would make a great single. After "Denis" tops the charts. Are you listening, America?

—Ira Robbins

**WIRE**
**Pink Flag**
Capitol ST-11757

As the fallout from new wave continues to turn up on plastic, a few gangs of rockers have chosen (wisely I suppose) to see how far the limits of the recorded medium can go. It takes guts (or gall) to dare to be different, but that's the only way music will progress. So my thanks to Wire for pushing minimalism to new heights. (Contradictory? Methinks not.)

Wire dredges up images of Kerouac and Ginsberg—beat poetry—short fragments of impressions set to music. In 1953 the accompanying instrument would be bongos. 1978 bongos have six strings and make lots of noise. They have drum kits and bass guitars. They have volume. They have lots of loose ends and rough edges. They be Wire.



WIRE

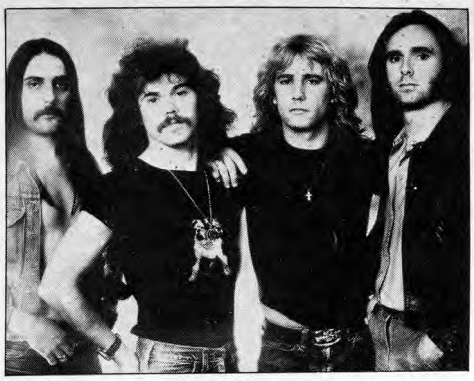
**Pink Flag** has 21 titles. Each is self-contained and distinct, with lyrics and music. But they're not songs. They're capsule visions spoken or shouted or sung over a combination of guitar, bass and drums. There's no easy structure or meter. Each explores or describes or electrifies or challenges. There's no easy listening.

"Our own correspondent is sorry to tell, of an uneasy time that all is not well. On the borders, there's movement, in the hills, there's trouble, food is short, crime is double. Prices have risen since the government fell, casualties increase as the enemy shell, the climate's unhealthy, flies and rats thrive, and sooner than later the end will arrive. This is your correspondent, running out of tape, gunfire's increasing, looting, burning, rape." That's known as "Reuters." It opens the album.

"Saw you in a mag, kissing a man, I got you in a corner." That's known as "12XU" It closes the album.

Wire is a challenge. Just like Roxy Music was a challenge. Just like King Crimson was a challenge. Just like the Pistols are a challenge. Just like the Clash is a challenge. You may not like Wire. I can't say this is an enjoyable album. Maybe it's just a stupid bit of rubbish. But you won't know unless you find out. This is your correspondent, running out of tape...

—Ira Robbins



STATUS QUO
**Rockin' All Over the World**
Capitol ST-11749

"What'd you do last night?" "Oh, I was reading the Sunday Times." "I went to see this great exhibit at the Whitney." "I was down at CBGB arguing the merits of Patti Smith and Talking Heads with 'Rat' Shapiro." "Say, Jim, what were *you* doing?" "Well, uh, I was listening to Status Quo..." Unison: "STATUS QUO?? YUUUCHHH!!!"

Admitting to an affection for Status Quo sometimes makes you feel you've been caught reading Spiderman comics in English Lit 112. But I love that band; for me they can do no wrong (or not much anyway).

Nevertheless, complaints that the band hadn't obtained a suitable sound producing themselves evidently induced Quo to retain a properly credentialed producer in Pip Williams; it's hard to see why they bothered. Why meddle with a sound that produces instant hits throughout half the world? Obviously, they have yet to break out in America, but then Quo themselves seem to care little for the touring requisite to success in the US.

The resulting LP may well be the most commercial and accessible to American ears that Quo has yet released. Williams has lightened and diversified Quo's sound, making each track sound full and more richly textured. Even hard-core Quo freaks (all three of us—Stateside, anyhow) would have to admit (once having adjusted to the slight reduction of overdrive) that they have not put out a more consistently pleasing album than this one, with nary a bum track on it.

There's busloads of boogie abounding, but much of it is enriched by the various keyboards manned by former Frampton cohort Andy Bown, and the guitars are multi-textured. There are also a few surprises for those used to Quo as they've been for the last few years: "Baby Boy" sounds like Frank Rossi's been listening to "Those Were the Days" by Mary Hopkin; "For You" is a softer side of Quo unheard since **Dog of Two Head**; and "Dirty Water" melds Quo's pop sensibilities with any folk/country roots (rhymes with "schmutz") they may have hanging out. "Let's Ride" trots out a rare usage of the revered Bo Diddley backbeat. Most strikingly successful of all, "Who Am I" (written by producer Williams) conjures images of Todd Rundgren circa **Something/Anything** sitting down to write Quo a "toon" (certainly preferable to Todd's current Cosmic Charlie-isms). Despite being slowed down a hair, the band's trademark shuffle doesn't plod but takes on a stridently demanding and emphatic tenor, enhanced by contrastingly wistful slide guitar.

But, dammit, I miss the manic intensity of classic tracks like "Rain," "Is There a Better Way" and "Ring of a Change"—stuff that gets the adrenalin pumping, great to hear whilst leaping wildly about. As for America, we all know that in Hot 100 country "heavy music" is *heavy*, pop music is pop, and never the twain shall meet (except maybe in Boston). In-betweeners have a tough time of it.

Maybe what Status Quo really needs is a new advertising campaign: Boogie with a Bounce or (with apologies to Nick Lowe) Pop with Pep for Now People. Who cares anyway? I don't. There are few groups in my book got the status of Quo. Be a reg'lar Joe, go Quo!

—Jim Green

SWEET
**Level Headed**
Capitol SKAO 11744

When Sweet first announced they were sick and tired of being teenybopper idols, they seemed to face an impossible task of living down cyclamatic weenybop like "Wig Wam Bam" and "Alexander Graham Bell." Not that those weren't great to listen to; apparently it was the silly costumes and makeup that went along with being masterminded by Chinn and Chapman



SWEET

that made our not-getting-any-younger heroes worry about their long-term credibility in the rock world. So, come 1975, the group figured it was time for a change, and waved bye-bye to Nicky and Mike. Writing and self-producing wasn't a bad idea at the beginning. The group was able to maintain their sound without the Chinnichap machine looking over their shoulder. Some of their best tracks were their own doing—"Fox on the Run" is as good as Sweet ever was—but at the same time they began farting around with different musical approaches, all in the name of proving how good and diverse they could be.

As they say in children's books, that was their first (and last) mistake. Both **Give Us a Wink** and **Off the Record** attained a modicum of success ("Action," "Lies in Your Eyes" and "Fever of Love" are the sum total of good between the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two), but the large picture is one of talented goons looking for a style that isn't theirs. Funk, production pieces, dumbo rock, Queen overdubs—none of it worked on those two LPs. For this new one Sweet goes out in the woods again, looking for a new angle. It must be tough going from chart commandos to lost fossils.

The menu for **Level Headed** includes symphony orchestras, studio fiddle-faddle, acoustic guitars, and whatever muck they can pile on. The only thing missing is the point. Sweet is still capable of imitating anybody ("California Nights" is so close to being Led Zep's "Ramble On" that it hurts), but that art form should be left for cheap cover version LPs. There's no need to waste talent (which the group certainly has, playingwise) on such unimaginative junk as this. Some of the groups invoked on this disc are Sparks, Moody Blues, 10cc, Pink Floyd and Eagles. Isn't that lovely?

—Ira Robbins

JOHN MARTYN
**One World**
Island ILPS 9492

What the hell, God made Palisades Park *and* the DMZ; John Martyn threatened new extremes long ago. Who else could be totally immersed in love, then slice his way out of the mood between tracks and emerge seething like a squire who's had shit rubbed on his head?

Oddly enough (considering the title), **One World** was supposed to dish up the nastier side of John Martyn; but the nasty tracks just don't seem to carry the conviction of their more idealistic counterparts. In fact, most of the nastiness is presented not as something to promote but to escape from. It's hard to be nasty on the run.

The title track is the token cut (present on every Martyn album) on which John surpasses all previous achievements. "One World" is truly one of Martyn's panaceas, useful for calming nerves, lovemaking or explaining existential angst to a toddler. The peak of the platter and in no way falsely so merely because it precedes the low point. Low point?! Well, only as these things go. "Smiling Stranger" is one of those bubble and boil numbers and, in the long run, the riff has seen better days in the form of "Root Love" (from **Sunday's Child**) or "Dreams by the Sea" (**Solid Air**). Sorry, dear boy, but even lava lamps gave out after three years.

The day is saved by "Big Muff," the LP's clear winner in the non-pastoral category. Martyn has totally purified and rejuvenated the boiling oil approach to rhythmic integration by letting the music loose under water and recording it as if floats to the top. That's my guess. The lyrics are a true joy and can even be used as a dandy lecture on the perils of nose candy for those still young enough to prefer their lessons in allegorical form. Co-written by Lee Perry, this track probably had its seeds (or roots) planted during JM's now-legendary Jamaican sabbatical (though there's nary a trace of reggae to be discerned). In terms of sheer power the track is one of Martyn's finest, and its excellence is clearly rooted in

Martynian finesse.

As always, Martyn hits new highs with specific tracks, though as a whole the album lacks the consistency of **Sunday's Child**. Despite being his first studio effort in three years (the Island ads say two but we can blithely side-step either senility or discretion), **One World** sounds rushed in execution. After three years the temptation to rely too often on the tired and true is understandable, and when Martyn knocks the rust off the result will be 100 percent genius and new ground. Of course the neophyte will probably think the album a motherfucker. I just hope the next one doesn't take three years. ("More gruel?!!!" shouted Martyn, incredulously . . .)

—John Walker




THE RUTLES
Warner Bros. HS 3151

Bonzophiles will rejoice that Neil Innes has turned up as the musical mastermind behind this operation. Falling in with the Monty Python crowd sure didn't hurt Neil's foundering solo career; the Rutles, a Rutland TV Weekend spinoff also include Eric Idle. But Innes wrote all 14 numbers, produced the record, and (barring a few vocals) could well be the only performer on the album—he's certainly the only distinctive one.

For newcomers, the Rutles are a very close parody of a well-known 1960s British group. Why we need a parody of this group in 1978 is best left for some future sociologist to figure out. The "originals" here are close enough to their obvious inspirations to give the copywright lawyers a run for their money. Too bad Innes's satiric sence isn't as strong as his musical caricature (Neil wrote the Bonzos' love songs, remember?); after one side **The Rutles'** joke has run its course. What to do with the second side? You could slice the record in half and give it to a friend.

—Scott Isler


DUCK STAB!

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By now you've heard about The Residents, right? By now you know that they are "different" somehow, right? Also you are curious a little bit and have enjoyed the ads and reviews you have seen. But, alas and alack, you are still scared that that very same "uniqueness" also means you won't like it. No need to be defensive. You are probably right. At least until now.

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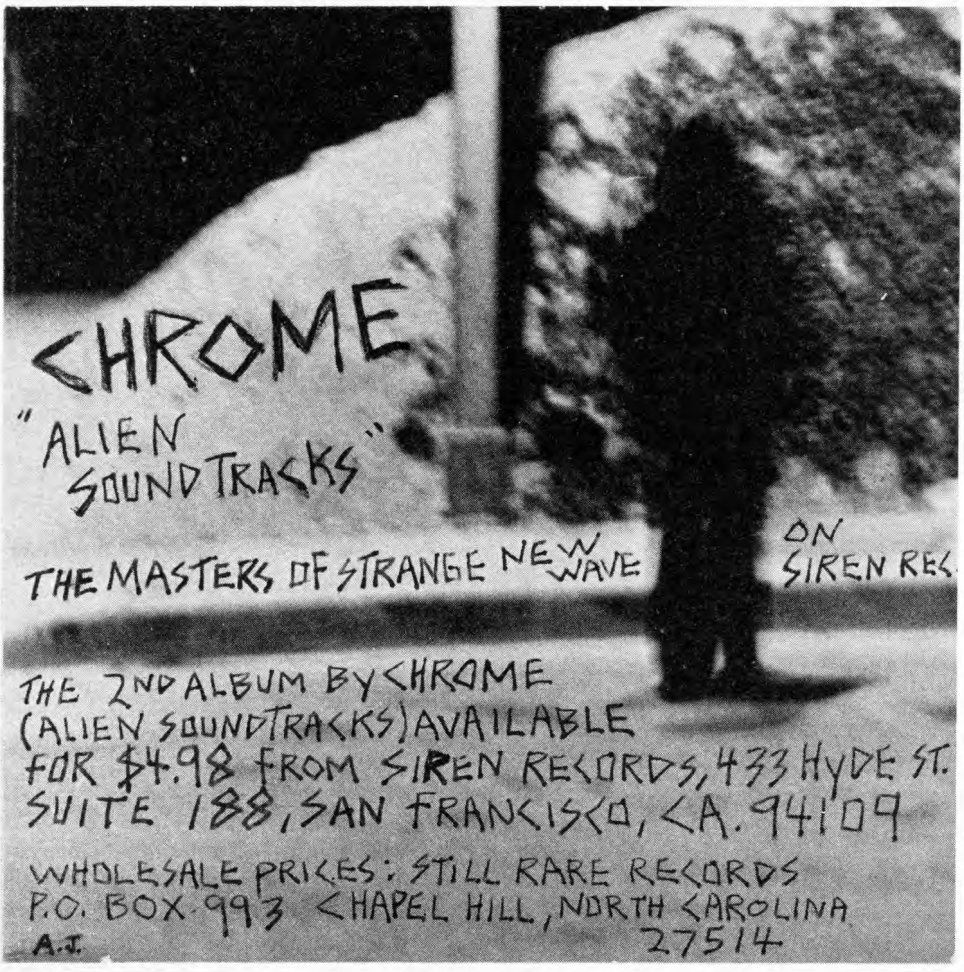


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THE REAL KIDS
Red Star RS2

This Beantown bunch was distinctly unimpressive when I saw 'em perform some months back and heard 'em on the **Live at the Rat** LP. Nevertheless, instead of the half hour or so of tedium I expected from this, their first properly constituted recording, they deliver mostly good new wavish (i.e. simple and energetic) rock 'n' roll—not particularly original but consistently entertaining.

Their lyrics often border on out-and-out insipidity and banality: consecutive songs proclaim "She's Alright" and "(I'm All Right in) My Baby's Book." But who said there was anything wrong with a little dumbness in a good old-fashioned rock 'n' roll tune? A classic example is "Roberta," as cliche-ridden as they come, yet catchy and thus often covered, as it is here by the RKs in a rollicking rendition (with piano accompaniment by Mono Mann of DMZ).

Although they trivialize Buddy Holly's "Rave On" and Eddie Cochran's macho "My Way" (live tapes of the Who in '68 and the Planets 10 years later provide superior versions of that song), the Real Kids' own material takes up the slack. "All Kindsa Girls" is an instant favorite, "Better Be Good" and "Solid Gold" are snappy rockers; "Just Like Darts" catches the lads in a more somber, subdued light. There are echoes of the Stones, the Byrds and the Flamin' Groovies, occasionally reminiscent of the Boomtown Rats, but seldom grave; but for "Darts" the album is two sides of, dare I say it, good-time new wave music.

—Jim Green

# U.K.

MODERN LOVERS
**Modern Lovers Live**
Beserkley BSERK 12

As a result of a fairly ridiculous chain of events, the "Home of the Hits" has relocated (at least for the time being) from Berkeley, California to Kingston-upon-Thames, England. The hottest little label in America has managed to find itself without a distribution arrangement here, but that hasn't stopped headkeeper Matthew King Kaufman from plowing ahead with his 10-year master plan to paint the universe yellow and black. Not only has he signed the label's first British band (the Tyla Gang), but the linch-pin of his roster, Jon Richman, has been inveigled into recording and releasing a live memento of his September British tour.

One would have to be blind and deaf to ignore the fact that Jonathan Richman's conversion to neo-infantilism has left quite a few of his long-term fans befuddled, frustrated and unhappy. What began as a ray of wonder amid a cloud of bitter despair has grown into a full-fledged attachment to whimsy and froth. **Rock and Roll with the Modern Lovers**, with the added inconvenience of silly production, seemed a bit too much for many; the faithful hordes thinned ranks, leaving Jon to dawdle in his daydream fantasy world of Martians, dinosaurs, airplanes and Good Humor men. Live, the group restored the faith a lot of us were in danger of losing, but it was mainly through Jon's choice of repertoire, including not only "Hospital" and "Roadrunner," but "She Cracked" and "Important in Your Life." That Richman hadn't lost his ability to attack and incite was quite a reassuring notion; unfortunately, none of those songs are on this record (although a live "Roadrunner" did turn up as the B-side to a single drawn from the album). The evening's program includes, along with a few silly skirmishes with the audience, "Little Dinosaur, Airplane, Insect, and Kookenhaken," "Ice Cream Man" (with eight reprises), "New England" and a few others of less importance. The total impact is somewhat lighter than that of, say, Slade, but the album does have a certain charm and adorableness to it. Of course, if adorableness makes you vomit, this may not be an ideal birthday present for you.

Jon Richman's approach to music, although a bit lower on the decibel scale, is basically the same as that of any aspiring punk outfit. His music refuses to conform, and he is totally oblivious to the wishes of his audience. Not rude, just dead set on doing things his way. For Richman, being twinky during a period of wildly chaotic music is just as honest as being dark and dismal during an era of optimistic folkie shit. Being out of step isn't the same as being wrong, and I'll always respect Richman for it. If his former fans can't adjust, that's not his problem. Making it easy isn't part of the bargain.

—Ira Robbins

RADIO STARS
**Songs for Swinging Lovers**
Chiswick Wik 5

Despite Stiff's claims, Chiswick Records has been the most adventurous of the new British storefront labels. While Stiff has relied for the most part on experienced acts (acid casualties and pub rock piss artists alike), Chiswick has taken real flyers on bands from places way beyond the jaws of hell, e.g. Skrewdriver (Blackpool) and Johnny and the Self Abusers (Scotland). Okay, so neither of them are the next Beatles; they're still a hell of a lot better than the jerkoffs some of the major British labels have picked up on (the Jolt, Slaughter and the Dogs, the Maniacs).

When it comes to bands with longer track records, Chiswick has been just as astute. Motorhead, unable to get a deal elsewhere, deserved to be recorded; their album, a heavy metal classic, proves it. Radio Stars features Andy Ellison, late of John's Children and Jet; ex-Sparks and Jet bassist Martin Gordon, and guitarist Ian MacLeod.

When I first heard the Stars I realized why Chiswick had signed them but they had as much effect on me as a vinyl shortage in Mongolia. Hearing this album, though, has made me a convert to their pop-with-guts approach: lots of neat tunes balanced with stinging guitar and rampant rhythm section. And the words—these guys have the sickest sense of humor around. "Beast of Barnsley" is about a murderer; "Arthur Is Dead Boring (Let's Rot)" and "Macaroni 'n' Mice" are self explanatory.


Chris L. Urca

**Radio Stars' Ellison emotes.**

**Songs for Swinging Lovers** is a 1967 pop album wedded to modern day sensibilities and techniques. Not all the songs are as strong as minor classics like "Beast" and "Good Personality," but even the less attractive ones (and a version of "Talking 'bout You") have charm. On "Nervous Wreck" they even manage to use "electro-encephalograph" as a chorus line and get it spot perfect. There's no arguing with talent like that.

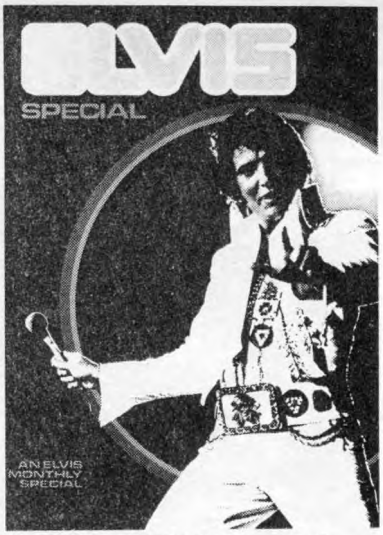
—Pete Silverton

THE HOLLIES
**A Crazy Steal**
Columbia (Canada) PES 90444

**A Crazy Steal**, replete with lush arrangements, is not at all tailored to the tastes of rock reductionists. The Hollies' collective nose for catchy ballads is as strong as ever, and their eight-part arrangements sound fuller than their separate sections would appear to add up to. The Hollies' bent is for chord layers—guitars or keyboards playing inversions of the same chord. Added tone color is provided by a small but moody horn section, a few congas and some fingerwork from the unassuming Peter Wingfield.

These five vets have more than formulas in their limey skulls. Imaginative guitar and bass, deft verbal elisions in the vocals, more measured-sounding songs than in the post-**King Midas** past, and a keyboard style best described as trampoline synthesizer are some of the novelties the disk has in store. If you don't mind a gloss on your rock or some fiber to your pop, give **A Crazy Steal** the outside shot.

—Richard Hogan

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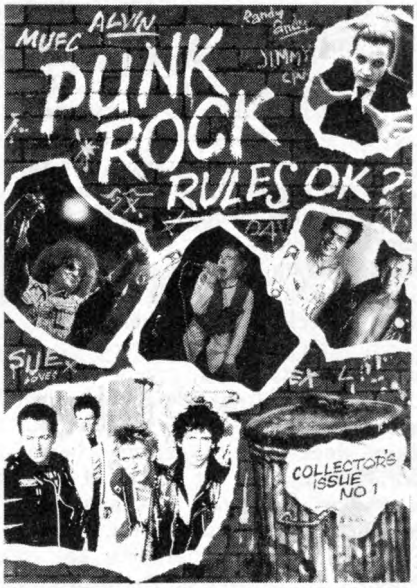


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**STREETWALKERS**
**Live**
Vertigo 6641 703

Well, they've done it again. For the second time the team of Chapman and Whitney, one of the most inventive rock duos ever to grace a piece of plastic, have called it quits. After 11-plus years in the music biz (first with Family, then with Streetwalkers) their lack of recognition is downright appaling. It's hard to say just what happened.

On the basis of **Streetwalkers Live**, I think we can dump all the blame on the record companies. Not only did Warner, UA and Phonogram deliver an amazing lack of support, but to top it off, in the era of sophisticated live recordings, we are given a double live album with sound quality only marginally better than King Crimson's **Earthbound** or the Stooges' **Metallic K.O.** Both the engineer and his assistant are given co-producer credits, probably to lay the onus on them for the large amount of hiss and distortion in the tapes.

But such was the power of this band that they still shine through these misfortunes. **Streetwalkers Live** is a terrific piece of rock and roll, filled with the hard pounding rock and bittersweet ballads we've come to associate with the guys. If you're a 'Walkers fan, I'm sure you'll find all of your favorites here—mine include "Dice Man," "Run for Cover" and "Mama Was Mad"—as well as two Family songs thrown in for good measure.

The arrangements are similar to the studio versions, and there are no new songs, but the spark of performing in front of a small fanatic audience is definitely present.

—Steven Schechter

**THE DAMNED**
**Music for Pleasure**
Stiff SEEZ 5

Like their debut album, the Damned's second album suffers from two basic problems. First, it demonstrates the limitations of the group's musicianship. Second, and more damaging, it proves the group doesn't have much to say. This is a near-fatal combination, and **Music for Pleasure** lives up to its title in only a few spots. The Damned may have developed their technical abilities in the year since their last LP, but collective songwriting talent is still sorely lacking.

The bulk of the record's 11 cuts are a disappointing pastiche of lunkhead hate slogans supported by aggressive, predictable arrangements. Exceptions: the light teeny-bopper punk of "Problem Child," and "One Way Love," whose tasty slide and rockabilly guitar make it one of the most musical songs the Damned have done yet. "Don't Cry Wolf" and "Idiot Box," however, are characteristic of the group's off-putting bent for self-righteous accusations. And, though it does benefit greatly from the saxophone wanderings of Lol Coxhill, the Doors-ish "You Know" still exposes Dave Vanian et al. in a pose of self-satisfied macho jive. This album should have been much better.

—MT Laverty

**SKREWDRIVER**
**All Skrewed Up**
Chiswick CH 3

The only extraordinary thing about this record is its marketing plan, which includes the availability of four different color album covers, two slightly different song collections (one selling at a slightly higher price than the other) and two suggested playing speeds—both 45 and 33 rpm. Aside from these variations Skrewdriver's debut album is sadly ordinary, showing them to be the most uninteresting new wave band recorded. The group combines nasty, screaming vocals (Ian) with instrumentals (Ron, Grinny and Kev) that cop styles from the Who to the Damned to the Sex Pistols. The 12 original songs here are straight from cliche city with titles like "Government Action," "I Don't Like You" and "(Too Much) Confusion." And Skrewdriver's unimaginative, unsympathetic rendering of "Won't Get Fooled Again" does terrible injustice to the song. If they are smart, the people involved in the making of **All Skrewed Up** will find ways to deny their implication on the record. It's the kind of association that could hurt one's career.

—MT Laverty


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# AMERICA UNDERGROUND

By P. Gregory Springer and Jim Green

When Randy Newman sings of Cleveland as a "city of lights," he must be referring to the huge flames that jet from steel mill stacks. Cleveland is no Clichy, yet an aesthetic blooms from the industry and air of northeast Ohio. Like the desert flower or the ghetto pigeon, new urban rock is endemic to the blighted environment, taking shape and substance from hostile elements. Dead Boys emerge as a snarly thorn; Devo could be a microcosm of the surreal, machine-like aspects of Metropolis; Pere Ubu may usher in a musical age of brimstone. It all issues from Ohio.

Akron should perhaps be distinguished from Cleveland. It lies about 40 minutes south, doesn't have Erie, and is less diversified industrially. Akron is a womb of rubber, home of steel-belted radials and the Goodyear blimp. On summer nights one can inhale the black aroma wafting through the streets. Akron is one third the size of Cleveland, and has a markedly lower crime rate; insiders claim that musicianship varies between cities. Once, when the Crypt was still operating, a metaphoric slug-out occurred between Cleveland's Dead Boys and Akron's Devo. Interrelationships between bands today are fairly cooperative, and musicians have been sharing space at Suma, the bucolic ranchhouse Ken Hamann converted into a platinum disk studio (used by Grand Funk and Wild Cherry).

Akron isn't "the new Liverpool" primarily because of lack of club space. Pirate's Cove in Cleveland bills itself as "the home of the new wave" but only allots one night a week to such acts; bar bands play the rest of the time. In Kent (the neaby campus) JB's has live music every night, usually provided by 15-60-75 (the Numbers Band). Numbers is the oldest active band around, dating from Kent's activist days. The seven-piece combo runs a musical gamut from blues to jazz to extended rock 'n' roll jams. One night a week the Gong-like precision of Tin Huey is allowed inside JG's, turning the place into a mini-asylum with their attuned weirdness.

Once upon a time the Crypt provided a showcase for new bands; this liquorless free-for-all den was run by the Rubber City Rebels. Today many groups scrape for gigs or don't try at all. Others break down and learn "Help Me Make It through the Night" before applying at the Holiday Inn. The Bizarros prefer to record but gig about once a month. The Waitresses have yet to be identified despite their wax impressions ("Clones" and "Slide"). The Belvederes also exist only in recordings (and may actually be the Waitresses in another guise), but they keep getting calls from major labels. Johnny and the Dicks don't even exist but their cardboard and paraffin record album is available in local stores and it will ruin your needle. If the Dicks have ever appeared at any of their scheduled concerts they almost certainly didn't play, because they can't. Kent influence exists (philosophy faculty comprise most of Human Switchboard), but the involved take their rock seriously, if also conceptually.

The hub of Cleveland's musical consciousness is, in the absence of a club, a record store, Hideo's Disco Drome. It features declasse decor, brims with new wave disks and magazines, and the workers off-handedly play the Residents or "Piss Factory," driving the only customers with money out into the streets. Some dedicated collectors work here, and you're as likely to find early Outsiders albums (Cleveland's contribution to the '60s) as the Clash.

Band members gather at the Drome (if only to restock their albums) and Gary Mollica also shows up. Mollica, disk jockey for WRUW-FM, has two new wave radio shows to keep Cleveland on the edge of consciousness; one is prime time Sunday nights. Interviews are likely to occur, such as a recent tape of Roky Erickson, late of 13th Floor Elevators.

A legible and intelligible new wave magazine, CLE, is edited locally by James Ellis. Article collages and interviews seem anarchically semi-articulate; a closer look reveals minds at work, in particular Charlotte Pressler's structuralist discussion of Devo, or nostalgia for the Mirrors, a lost Cleveland band. Band members also write, and CLE is threatening to go glossy with the next issue.

The most striking dimension of the Ohio scene is the multi-faceted talents of the involved. Bands write and make movies. Pere Ubu may hide from cameras, but lead singer Crocus Behemoth prints poetry and conceptual writings. Devo is a veritable storehouse of 300-page manifestos, movies and devolution propoganda, and will almost certainly exploit the mysterious potato cult that has permeated the scene. Even Devo's manager writes poetry published in local literary magazines. Stiv Bators's conceptual contributions to music are well known, and Johnny and the Dicks have already been mentioned. Chris Butler, bassist for 15-60-75, puts out (blank) newsletter, which most recently featured a cartoon of a befuddled potato trying to put on its glasses.

To tone down the artsy angle, the Bizarros' new EP on Clone Records includes "It Hurts, Janey," "Laser Boys" and "A New Order," three of their best-constructed songs. This working-class band has toned down the Velvets influence and increased their drive, to good results. Rubber City Rebels, on the verge of a deal in LA, haven't seen much of Akron lately. The Rebels/Bizarros album was rated 15th of 1977 by the Village



Voice, right behind **Lust for Life.**

Tin Huey has a new single, "Squirm You Worm" and "Robert Takes the Road to Leibernawash"; their popularity gives the lie to Zappa's "no commercial potential" aesthetic. Meanwhile, the Waitresses single on Clone is schizoid: half is machine-shop sound paranoia of the future, half is syncopated hooks you can dance to.

With Devo's album imminent and Pere Ubu recycling searing death into sound, Cleveland/Akron should reciprocate on a more intensified scale to its long-suffering troubadors. Not only is this range of music and musicians dedicated and unique, it is area-linked unlike any other grass roots region.

—PGS

* * *

**Duck Stab (EP)—The Residents—Ralph RR 1177**

The weirdest weirdos in the whole wide world are back again with a record more accessible—and thus more intensely immediate in its anti-popitude—than their output prior to the last 45 ("Beyond the Valley of a Day in the Life"), a scathing vivisection of the Beatles. **Duck Stab** (five compact cuts) dissects the vagaries of "romance" and "love songs" ("Your words are the empty hollow bleatings of a mental crutch...A coma with a sweet aroma is your only dream"), among other things. "Laughing Song" contains little to laugh about but its absurdity, the very sound of the word groups as grotesque as the images they conjure; instead of "Goin' to Kansas City," the Residents go to "Constantinople," where they devastate the white American Big Band sound of the '30s and '40s; they even take a cockeyed peek at the Stax/Memphis sound of the '60s in "The Booker Tease." You may think it's music to squirm to, but I think it's brilliant. ($3.24, $6.50 with a swell T-shirt—specify size—from Ralph Records, 444 Grove St., San Francisco, CA 94102.)



**"You Make Me Shake" b/w "We're Too Young"—The Boys—Outrage 112**

These ain't the Boys what put out that album on NEMS, or even the Bosstown Boize that backed up Marc Thor, or the Chicago Boyz...These are indeed the "originals," who put out a single in '75 ("She's My Girl"/"I'm Not Satisfied," Outrage 111). It had new wave raunch before there was much of a new wave (it certainly hadn't ridden into Lincoln, Nebraska); it was fun, even if it was in spots too adulatory of its English influences. This time out, some of the ragged edges have been cut off but the energy levels maintained. Exultant guitars and punchy, insistent rhythmic propulsion frame fine, high, piping vocals; it's the kind of stuff that immediately gives you a lift (like as not over to the amp to turn your stereo up). Straight-ahead pop-rock with the excitement usually missing from similar radio fare left in. ($1.75—and I think there are still copies of the first 45 available at the same price—from Outrage Records, PO Box 82823, Lincoln, NE 68501.)

**"Little White Lies" b/w "I Can't Tell You Anything"—The Romantics—Spider SPDR 101**

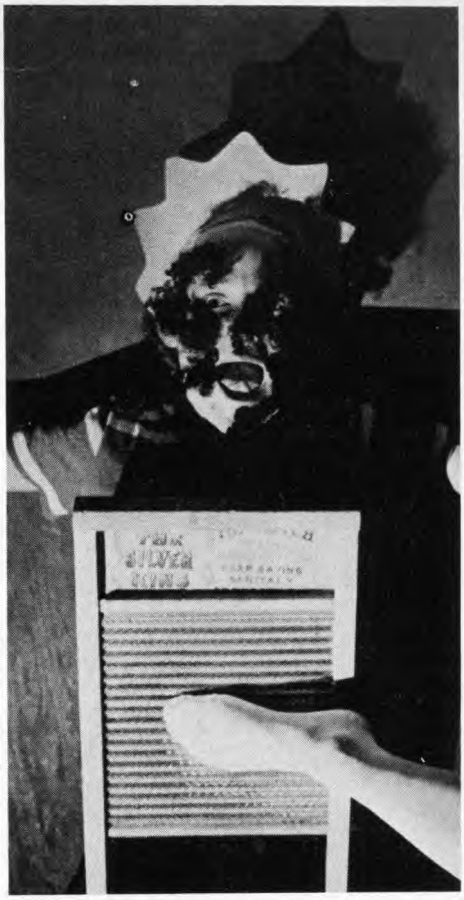
Similar to the Boys' disc in that they are tight, energetic and evince Angloid tendencies, although the Romantics seem more drawn to the Mersey ravers of the early/mid-'60s. There is a more American strain in their music as well. The material is not so catchy as the Boys' but they show promise, especially with the flipside, a vocal melody line strung out over Bo Diddley syncopation ($1.75 from Spider Recs., 20780 Winchester, Southfield MI 48076.)

**"On Our Way Back Home" b/w "Main Idol"—Killerwatt—Brainchild 007-KW**

Well-played hard rock at a doubletime pace and with (what else?) an Anglophilic slant. Well produced by Sputnick Spooner of the Tubes. Killerwatt would profit from a more distinctive identity. ($2.00 from the band at 1370 16th Ave., #1, San Francisco, CA 94122.)

Lastly but not leastly, something for all of you who love fan clubs and power pop. Parenthetically, please suspend any negative prejudice against the latter, despite the ascendance of new wave music. "Power pop" sounds like a hype for spinach soda guaranteed to put anchors on your forearms, like Popeye ("Spin-Ray"?). Anyway, it can be used as a generic term; as Ira sez, bands like Generation X are as much power pop as, say, the Boys (from Nebraska).

Or the Quick—who happen to have a nifty little fan club. For $3 you can join and get neat newsletters and whatnot, plus, at cost prices, buy stuff like handsome T-shirts and records for members only. Their recently issued 10" 45 RPM disc issued by the club (demos for Elektra) shows that power pop need not be power poop. While I admit I found the Quick's version of "Somewhere over the Rainbow" a corny move (if a stately rendering), on "You Yeah You" they bawl a declaration of love like choirboys drinking holy wine spiked with dexedrine, brandishing electric fists to make sure you take 'em seriously. And on "Pretty Please" they positively pummel you into agreeing that potent punks need not call themselves new wavers. Cut "live in the studio," it's got snotty vocals and super-raunchy guitar (that Jimmy Zero'd give his third leg to be able to pull off), and decisively transcends the Sparks-simulators tag they earned from their Mercury LP. The record is $3, for members only—so join. Write to Lisa Fancher, 7826 Cleon Ave., Sun Valley, CA 91352.



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GILDER/Continued from page 10

Not too surprisingly the album got zilch attention; a third single from the album (the raunchy "Rated X") has flopped. But I believe Nick will ultimately overcome his own difficulties through his great attributes. With a voice as arresting as Russell Mael's (only without the shrillness), he vacillates between wimpiness and toughness without going too far in either direction. Similarly, he is androgynously pretty, but adds an edge of nastiness in his visual expression to balance this out.

So while Nick seems to have the prerequisites for stardom and sounds optimistic when he speaks about his plans, it is perhaps indicative of a certain weariness that his favorite song on the album is "Tantalize" ("Tantalize you,/Mesmerize you,/Trick you with a smile,/Captured with a style . . . /Bitten once, twice shy,/Beware the lies . . .").

Although Nick had been elusive about influences from his London days, they were so obviously there that I couldn't resist pursuing the subject.

"I've always dug the English pop era though it never really broke here. It would be silly to try and deny influences [though he would probably like to]. There's no way you can avoid bringing up things you've heard in your past . . . I don't think it was intentional. Music gets recycled in different forms."

All right. This genuinely genteel guy was starting to make me feel boorish. But I had to press on. How did he feel about playing music that's five years out of sync with these rotten times? A brand of pop that never really made it here in the first place?

"I think I've always been new wave except now they've stuck a tag on it. I think bands like the Sweet were ahead of their time. What I'm trying to do is more timely now than perhaps whenever an attempt was made at it before. To me punk rock is so negative that there's got to be some sort of alternative and what I'm trying to do is offer an alternative. I've listened to the Sex Pistols and the Damned; on Rodney Bingenheimer's show he plays the Sex Pistols and all those punk rock groups as well as my stuff, which is really a contrast. I like to think there is hope. The minute you cash in your chips and say there is no future, that's the old ball game."

As I write this, Nick, James and band are in LA ("I try to ignore where I am or it would sound like stoned-out music") rehearsing for a tour ("It can't happen soon enough; I'm just itchin'") that will hopefully capture the cheery power pop glory heard occasionally on record and more rarely on stage ("Solos definitely are out!").

"You don't get many cracks at it, do you? People are quick to put labels on you, but when they see you they can clarify. Just thinking positively is the best thing I can think of."

If you believe that singers like Brian Connolly and Marc Bolan can offer worthwhile alternatives to Johnny Rotten and Joe Strummer, look into Nick Gilder when he tours soon. He means it, maaahhhn!

—**Jon Young**

DEVO/Continued from page 12

without a skeleton. It's human systems you should be afraid of. it's people who use other people for their own ends."

Mark's interruption leaves breathing space for a question: What kind of human system does Devo form, and why do all five of them dress alike and act alike on stage? As futuristic android quintuplets, Devo's personnel are almost impossible to differentiate onstage.

Says Jerry: "That's good. You see, the whole music business encourages everyone to look at everybody else as an expendable character that you can step over on your way to the top. The business looks for one individual image that customers can identify with. But we're trying to show a collective image. We want to show that the beehive isn't a bad model to work from. We prefer to have individual personalities emerge gradually, rather than set up some artificial definition of them.

"We want to free people from artificial notions and definitions. In our music we're looking for the big enema, the big catharsis. In our performances we'd like to break barriers down. We want to infiltrate our audiences with liquid rhythm, to inject it into their bodies. They need it, they really want it and they're looking for it. That's why they like punk rock. It's so direct and aggressive."

What kind of effect do they think their weird appearance onstage has on Devo's audience?

"We don't intend our costumes to have any sort of effect. We just like them. We grew up with it, all the industrial wetwear, the rubber suits and all. The yellow stuff is protective chemical wear for people who work in the tire companies in Akron. The white suits are maintenance suits. What we wear is what we see in the clothes stores around where we live. We aren't rock stars with shag haircuts and hairy bellies that we let show. We don't wear pants with rhinestones in them. We don't feel like artists who have an ego involvement in the music. To us, we're just processing what we see into a musical statement. We let it flow through us like a sieve."

With that, Jerry and Mark Devo begin to fidget. They joke and holler, signaling they are ready to end the discussion and slip into the cover of night. Perhaps they don't know it, but they have glibly disclosed much of their blueprint for rock revolution via reductive synthesis.

Even if you don't know or care about what Devo says, rest assured of this: Devo intends to dismember the conceptual framework that has produced all those truths we hold so dear. They are subversive. Jerry admits, "We love quack information. All the Devo rules are absurd tautologies. They are self-contradictory negatives."

Do you want these wiseguys to continue to spew out their visionary brand of digital rock and roll? If you don't: beware. Devo have a lot of ammunition with which to blast themselves into your heart, mind, body, soul and commercial awareness.

- According to Jerry Devo, the group has a repertoire of 60 or 70 songs, 20 of which they feel comfortable enough with to perform live. They expect their debut album on Warners to be available by spring.
- They have celebrities helping them out. David Bowie is presently serving as "enlightened traffic cop." Brian Eno is being considered as a possible co-producer for Devo's first LP. Iggy Pop and choreographer Toni Basil are talking them up. And Bob Mothersbaugh's father let them use his employment office for the filming of their movie.
- They will stop at nothing to achieve their ends. As Jerry says, "We have done all the things you expect people to do when they have to scramble to keep creativity alive."
- Their original songs have suspicious titles like "Mr. DNA," "Blockhead," "Smart Patrol," "Too Much Paranoia" and "Uncontrollable Urge."
- Jerry claims there is a genetic factor at work. Lead guitarist Bob Mothersbaugh, "the one who shakes and goes into fits," is keyboardplayer Mark Mothersbaugh's brother. Bass player Jerry also has a brother in the band—rhythm guitar player Bob Casale.
- Last but not least, Bob Casale used to be a radio physicist.

Sounds dangerous, huh?

If you want to send them discouraging letters, or inquire about the purchase of their records, write to:

Devo (in Spudland)
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—**MT Laverty**

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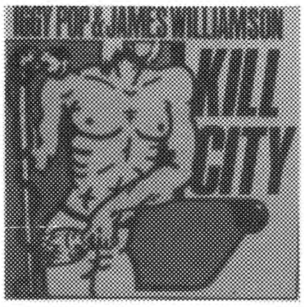


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