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Trouser Press

September 1979
No. 42
UK 75p $1.25



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Trouser Press 42

Volume Six, Number Eight **September 1979**

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Trouser Press (ISSN 0164-1883/USPS 309-470) is published monthly for $12 per year by Trans-Oceanic Trouser Press, Inc., 147 West 42 St., New York, NY 10036. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY and at additional entry points. Postmaster: Send address changes to Trouser Press, 147 West 42 St., New York, NY 10036. Entire contents of Trouser Press are © copyright 1979 by Trans-Oceanic Trouser Press, Inc. All rights reserved; nothing may be reproduced without written consent of the publisher. Unsolicited manuscripts, photos and artwork are welcome but must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope; in any case, TP takes no responsibility for their return.

FAX 'N' RUMOURS

Back in Business





Reunion time: Blue Cheer (top) bones up, Canned Heat poses au naturel.

They said it couldn't be done, but the past few months have seen the return to active duty of three bands many thought had played their last note long ago—the **Pretty Things**, **Blue Cheer** and **Canned Heat**.

The rebirth of the Things, who had broken up officially at the end of 1976, after 13 years of slogging it without much success, was due mostly to the staunch efforts of their Dutch fan club, and a fellow named Pete Demoet in particular. Last year, Demoet organized and paid for a reunion gig by the Pretties at a club in Holland. The show reunited the two leaders of the original band, Phil May and guitarist Dick Taylor (the original Stones' bass player), plus long-time stalwarts Wally Allen, John Povey and Skip Alan for an evening of dirty, boozy blues. The show was recorded and released on a small Dutch label (review next ish), though the sound is bootleg quality. Apparently the band enjoyed working together again enough to want to get together again on a more permanent basis. Adding another ex-Pretty guitarist Pete Tolson and replacing drummer Alan with ex-Them/Cochise John Wilson, they've since gone into the studio with Pink Floyd's Dave Gilmour, with an LP expected soon.

Metal mongers will be glad to know that the notorious Blue Cheer has returned to (and we quote the press release here) "give the punk scene in San Francisco a kick in the ass." The new edition of the band was the brainchild of original bassist/vocalist Dickie Peterson, after some old friends persuaded him of the necessity for a new Cheer. Peterson brought in a couple of young Bay Area musicians—Tony Ranier (guitar) and Mikael Fleck (drums)—and they've already recorded updated versions of classic Cheer songs like "Summertime Blues" and "Out of Focus." Stock in the hearing aid industry has risen since the announcement.

Finally, Canned Heat, the original purveyors of the "boogie 'til you puke" ethos, are back and boogyin' once more. Spurred by the success of George Thorogood and the Destroyers (again, that's what the press release says), they have an album out on Takoma/Chrysalis, their first in many a moon. Unlike the Pretties and Cheer, Canned Heat had never actually broken up, but the fact that a major label like Chrysalis deems them important enough to release must signifiy something. Mustn't it? Answers should be sent c/o this column.

We Kid You Not

Since by now it's apparent that just about *anybody* can beat Jimmy Carter in 1980, expect just about anybody to run for president. The following "official announcement" was received by TP sometime in early July. As we feel it is our civic duty to let our readers know what's happening in every area of the rock'n'roll world, we bring you, ladeez and gents, the next President of the United States, Alan Baker Schultz. Don't say we weren't first with the news!

I, Alan Baker Schultz, born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1939, would like to announce my colors and my candidacy for the office of the President of the United States.

I will be running on the third national party ticket, with this announcement of the formation of **The Rock'n'Roll Party**. *Headquarters will be in Cleveland, Ohio, USA.*

If elected to Office I promise never to wear a tie or cut my hair! I also promise not to take any shit from anyone who wants to take our great nation down—within our country or outside of it!

If elected I will try to enact legislation to limit the time a President can serve in the Office of President of the United States to one four-year term. I sincerely believe, if you can't do it in four, you can't do it—and you should get out before it kills you!

My official campaign slogan will be: "Schultz Ain't Dead!"

P.S. Mr. Schultz also informs us that his home is the office and that he has no phone.

Personnel Shifts

We get so busy at times reporting on the comings and goings within rock'n'roll bands, that we neglect to report on changes in our own little world of Trouserdom. This month, we have two significant changes—the departure of Louise Greif after nearly two years in the TP organization, and the arrival of assistant art director Judy Steccone, formerly of *Search & Destroy* magazine. Goodbye, welcome, and good luck to everybody involved.

FAX 'N' RUMOURS

New Band in Town



The Who blew into New York (sans Roger) recently for some press work, including interviews for all the biggies in the magazine world, and a bunch of radio doo-dahs. The fearsome threesome—Townshend, Entwistle and Jones—all seemed in good spirits and looking forward to getting back in swing as a rock band again.

The five dates announced for Madison Sq. Garden sold out instantly, or as fast as mail order only can be said to go, and the shows aren't until September. In the meantime, gossip in England has them doing an English outdoor festival in August, and a huge affair (with Cheap Trick also on the bill) in Germany later the same month.

While Daltrey is off making the *McVicar* film, Townshend is finishing up work on his first solo album for Atco. In New York, he mentioned that he had contemplated engaging Todd Rundgren to produce but ultimately had thought better of it, and may have picked Chris Thomas for the chore. A one-off benefit concert for Rock Against Racism with "Friends" that will probably include Kenney Jones and other Who-related individuals, is scheduled for late July. We'll try to report on it next issue.

Better Times Aren't Coming

According to numerous reports from the field, the American record industry is in big trouble, money-wise. The sales of musical product are apparently way off from this time last year, and no improvement is expected in the forseeable future. On a rough guess, one executive used 20% as an estimate of how much the reduction amounts to. Variously attributed to the general inflation, problems associated with the gas crisis (people are not going out to shop in suburban areas as much), the price of records (which will probably go up another dollar as a result), and excessive spending in the administrative side of the industry, some of the effects noted include serious staff cuts (and threatened cuts) as many of the big record giants. CBS recently sacked several dozen publicity employees in a budget measure, and other companies have hinted at pink slips to come. For the associated media, the cutbacks include important areas like fancy press parties and free trips to the French Riviera, as well as minor matters like advertising budgets. Well, it's time to tighten those belts and hold on...

Shafts, Dribs and Drabs

The new drummer for John Lydon's **Public Image** outfit is Richard Dudanski, replacing Jim Walker, who left for parts unspecified a few months ago. PIL is about to make a new album, and there's always the possibility of their debut waxing being rush-released by Warners here. **XTC**, who lost keyboard whiz Barry Andrews to a solo career recently, have engaged the services of guitarist Dave Gregory as his replacement and reports suggest that all's well once again on the White Music front. **The Rich Kids**, whose very existence seems thoroughly unclear, have been busy as individuals lately—Glen Matlock did a tour with Iggy Pop, and has recently been joined by Midge Ure in Bette Bright's touring band, the Illuminations. The others—Rusty Egan and Steve New—have done various musical things with various musical people. There is, however, always the possibility of the Rich Kids carrying on... **Sham 69** has called it quits in its present form. After playing a farewell date in July, the quasi-talented foursome have gone their separate ways, with Jimmy Pursey and possibly one other Sham still tossing about the possibility of a union with Steve Jones and Paul Cook. We await further developments... The **Count Bishops**, who lost guitarist Zenon de Fleur to a car crash several months back, have been dealt another rough blow. Their drummer, an Australian, has been ordered home due to a work permit problem... The **Cramps** are recording their debut album at Sam Phillips' Memphis Sun Studios for Illegal Records...The **Clash** are still looking for a manager, claiming to be in serious debt. Meanwhile, their long-delayed first album is finally being released by Epic this month, tour or no... **National Health** will be making their debut US tour beginning this October. The band, which now has Alan Gowen replacing Dave Stewart on keyboards, will be supported by Zu, and Yochk'o Seffer's Niffish Music...**Showaddywaddy** recently became the first western group to be televised in Cuba. The historic musical moments came live via satellite from a show in Prague, which was simultaneously beamed to all the countries in the Eastern bloc as well as Cuba. Will *Happy Days* reruns be next?...Virgin Record Shops has just opened "the largest record store in Europe." The new shop is on London's Oxford Street, next door to the site of the original Virgin shop, which began the immensely-successful Virgin chain (which later branched out into a record company, booking agency, import/export business, film company, etc.). The opening was attended by Irish mega-



Motorhead behind bars!

stars, the Boomtown Rats...The members of **Motorhead** were arrested as they were leaving Helsinki, Finland, where they'd just appeared at the Midnight Sun rock fest. The boys were charged with wrecking a hotel room (yawn...), but were able to obtain bail and were allowed to return to England. And that, as they say, is the Finnish.

Admirable Nelson?

Apparently heartened by the success of the Skids single he produced ("Masquerade"), Bill Nelson is now setting up an independent production company called Domestic Science Productions, and is sorting through tapes of new bands to sign. To record his new charges, Nelson plans to build a compact 24-track studio in his new country home in Yorkshire. He's also in the process of recording a second Red Noise LP, but the band is without an American label, since Capitol dropped the group immediately after releasing **Sound on Sound**. EMI-America has first option on the next LP but, according to Nelson's manager, "they want to hear it first."

And you have problems with your parents

HELLO IT'S ME

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VIVA VIV!

Your succinct exposition on Viv Stanshall (TP 40) was long overdue. In fact, an entire extravaganza issue devoted to the Bonzos would probably be more appropriate. However, no existanshalliste would refute Ira's cultured insight into this genre's most prolific pretzel as its prime exponent.

Ira's appreciation of the Bonzos' eloquent precocity finds sporadic mention throughout various issues. Perhaps next time you'll expound on Viv's substanshall experiences with terrapin breeding and his recently acquired 1914 German U-boat chaser.

Ray Ehmen
Orlando, FL

BOFs ROOL?

Who cares about Van Morrison (TP 40)? I mean, he's OK but there are so many more important people with new ideas in rock—new faces like Brian James, Lu of the Edge Band, Steve Jones and Johnny Thunders. These people are fresh, current! [*Johnny Thunders?—Ed.*] Your best features are "Fax'n'Rumours," "Green Circles," and import reviews. You have a good magazine; don't blow it.

Tom Walker
Tampa, FL

LIVING ON THE SLUG LINE

Ira Robbins's review of John Hiatt's **Slug Line** (TP 40) was right on. Actually, there is a whole lot more to California music than L.A./S.F. schmaltz-rockers who sell records by the carton. TP readers who are interested in "talented songwriter[s] in the Elvis/Graham Parker/Joe Jackson mold" might also want to check out Californian Dirk Hamilton's view of the world. The West Coast lives! Or at least we get by.

Joe Fusco
San Francisco, CA

Thanks for your coverage of John Hiatt. He's written several minor hits for other people including "Sure as I'm Sitting Here" by Three Dog Night and "A Little Romance" by Tracy Nelson. His first album, **Hanging Around the Obervatory**, is good, but **Overcoats** is a real gem. The latter came out in early '76 (not '78), I believe, and shows that Hiatt was definitely ahead of his time. I think he was the victim of Epic's inability to promote (or perhaps lack of concern for) their smaller artists.

Hiatt has been writing and performing for years as a solo with acoustic guitar and piano; his manic yet genuine performing style predates and in some ways overshadows even EC's. His best songs, ranging from bitterness to the outer limits, have yet to be recorded. Congratulations for being able to spot a winner.

Trip Aldredge
Dallas, TX

PASSION IS NO ORDINARY SLAG

I'm confused and dismayed that such an intelligent magazine as Trouser Press would publish Steven Grant's pitifully shallow review of Graham Parker's **Squeezing Out Sparks** (TP 39). It was without a doubt the most blatantly unperceptive hackwork I've read in a mainstream magazine.

First of all, Grant's worrying over a Parker/Rumour rift is ludicrous. As a matter of fact, they've never been closer. It's plain to see Grant knows nothing about the band and their managerial and record company arrangements. All this could be resolved by taking the time to find out instead of jumping right in and asserting knowledge he obviously doesn't have.

If this album is so "forgettable" (as Grant puts it), why can't I sleep some nights for hearing/seeing Parker's Technicolor phrases forever unreeling in my mind? Why can't I stop tingling whenever I hear "Passion Is No Ordinary Word," or bopping to "Saturday Night Is Dead"? And why can't I stop feeling so torn up every time I hear "You Can't Be Too Strong"? Forgettable, my ass.

I hope in the future TP has the common sense to print only well-thought out album reviews and not the petty bitching we are too often subjected to. Everyone's entitled to their opinions but that's no excuse for puerile ignorance. **Squeezing Out Sparks**, in my humble opinion, is unquestionably Parker's best, and the most exciting LP of 1979 so far—a landmark in musical and lyrical honesty.

Susan Sutton
Ventura, CA

Steve Grant replies: "OK. There is no real rift between Parker and the Rumour. But I still think the album is dull and, especially compared to the live show, uninspired and flamboyantly aimed at a mass audience. It may bring Parker and the Rumour popular fame but I don't see it doing much for his art.

"I fail to see why people get so irate about a bad review of an album they like. My attitudes and interests are different from yours, Susan. That's all. As much as I try to approach an LP with an objective viewpoint, I'm still restricted by my perspective to some extent. If you enjoy an album, fine. That isn't an insult to me. And if I don't enjoy the same album, please do not consider it an insult to you."

BIONIC BOO-BOO

Pete Frame's "'Pub Rock' Afterglow" chart (TP 39) states that **Bionic Gold** with Philip Rambow appeared on Ork. **Bionic Gold** was and is a Big Sound release.

Robert DeRosa
Big Sound Records
Wallingford, CT

Continued on page 51



So you move up to London town

Trouser Press

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New York, NY 10036
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TP 26: McCartney; Clash; Cheap Trick; Syd Barrett; Tom Robinson.

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RAVING FAVES

RF #18: Better B-Sides

The subject was singles whose B-sides are preferable to their top decks. As is the norm, readers' memories dwelt on recent releases. The few oldies that cropped up included Donovan's "Atlantis" (flip of "To Judy on the West Coast Waiting") and the well-remembered Monkees tune listed below. Sometimes obscurity took precedence over musical values; is the Yardbirds' "Puzzles" really a better 45 side than its accompanying "Little Games"? Looking at the current crop, Elvis Costello shapes up as a master of the (non-album) B-side. The Clash also rates; Billy Yanecko III suggested "1-2, Crush on You" as not only superior to "Tommy Gun" but the whole second album as well. And do we detect some Pistols/Lydon revisionism? Most creative nomination (from Eli Attie): Village People's "Macho Man" and "YMCA" together on a one-sided pressing.

(A-sides listed in parentheses.)

Clash, "Pressure Drop" ("English Civil War")
Elvis Costello, "Big Tears" ("This Year's Girl")
"Tiny Steps" ("Radio Radio")
"Talking in the Dark"/"Wednesday Week" ("Accidents Will Happen")
Fleetwood Mac, "Silver Springs" ("Go Your Own Way")
Kinks, "Low Budget" ("Superman")
Nick Lowe, "(What's So Funny 'Bout) Peace, Love and Understanding" ("American Squirm")
Monkees, "Goin' Down" ("Daydream Believer")

More Grade-A Bs

Beatles, "Day Tripper" ("We Can Work It Out")
"I'm Down" ("Help")
"Revolution" ("Hey Jude")
Kinks, "I'm Not Like Everybody Else" ("Sunny Afternoon")
Led Zeppelin, "Hey Hey What Can I Do" ("Immigrant Song")
John Mayall's Bluesbreakers, "Out of Reach" ("Sittin' in the Rain")
Public Image Ltd., "Cowboy Song" ("Public Image")
Sex Pistols, "Did You No Wrong" ("God Save the Queen")
Wings, "Girl's School" ("Mull of Kintire")

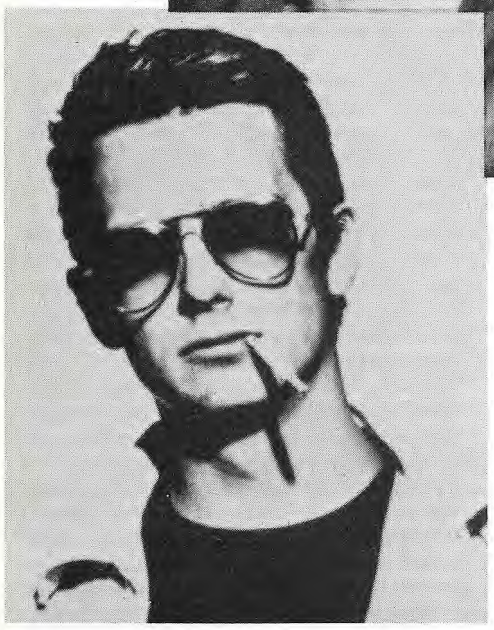
Question #21

Favorite song over seven minutes long. Three per customer, please. Deadline is September 30, 1979.







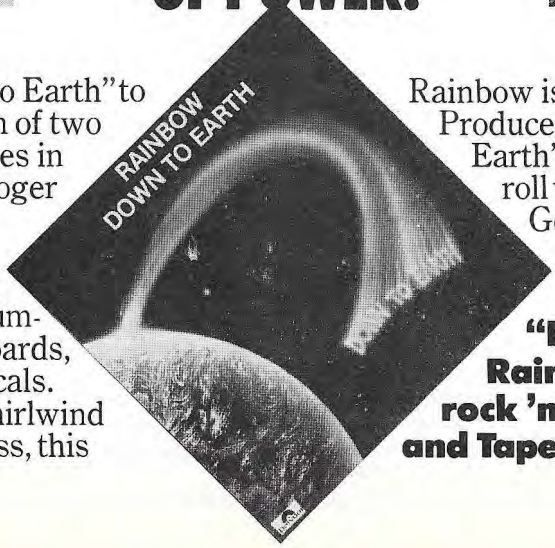




RITCHIE BLACKMORE, ROGER GLOVER, COZY POWELL, GRAHAM BONNET AND DON AIREY, ARE A RAINBOW OF POWER.

Rainbow touches "Down to Earth" to triumphantly mark the reunion of two of the most colorful personalities in rock: Ritchie Blackmore and Roger Glover.

Here are seven new powerful Blackmore/Glover songs; Cozy Powell's machine-gun drumming, Don Airey's driving keyboards, and Graham Bonnet's fiery vocals. Together with Blackmore's whirlwind guitar and Glover's vibrant bass, this Rainbow is more powerful than ever.



Produced by Roger Glover, "Down to Earth" captures roof-raising rock 'n' roll with cuts like "Since You've Been Gone." Ritchie Blackmore, Roger Glover, Cozy Powell, Graham Bonnet and Don Airey together.

"Down to Earth." The new Rainbow in brilliant colors of rock 'n' roll. On Polydor Records and Tapes.

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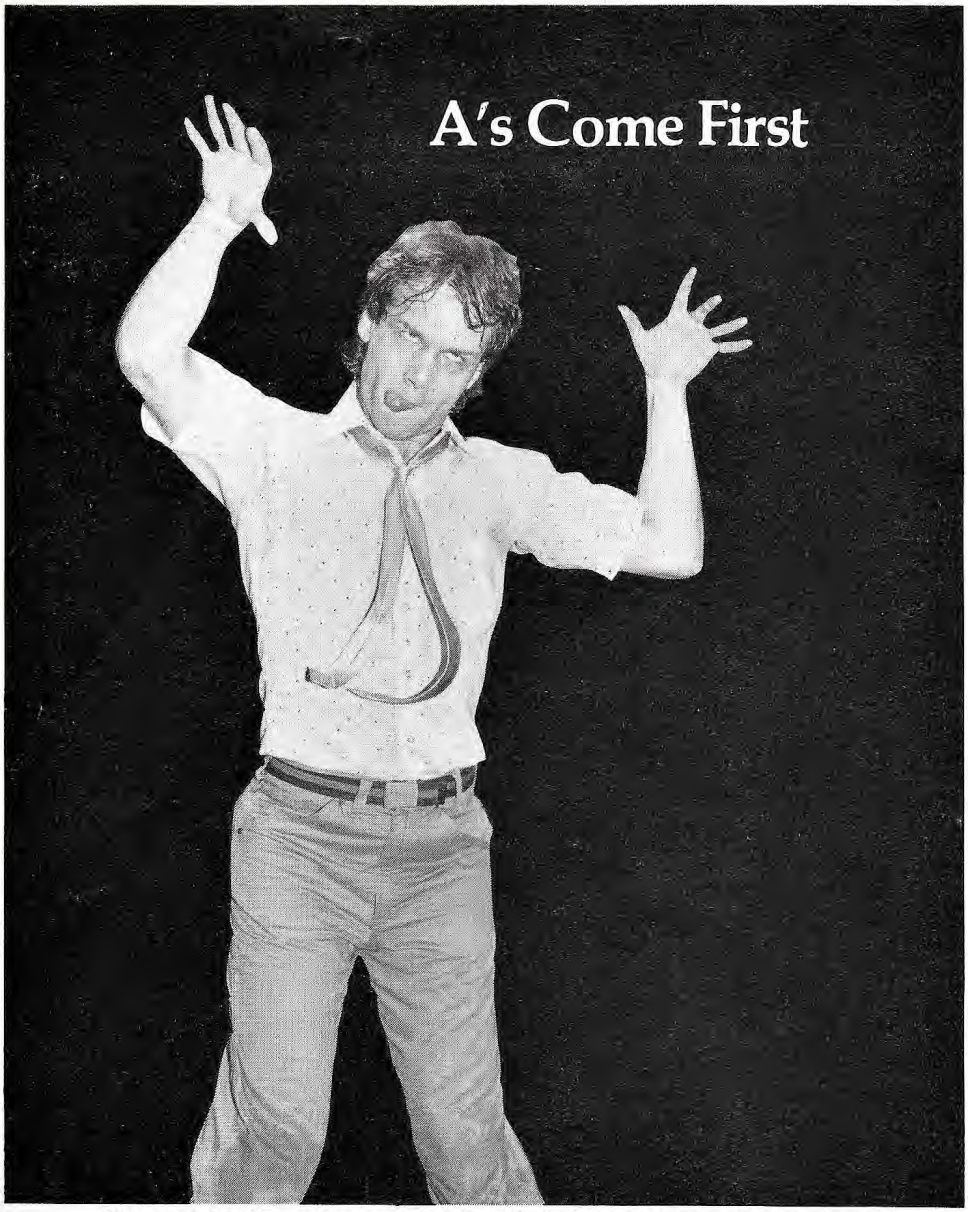

Ebet Roberts

Singer Richard Bush demonstrates the effect of too many tunafish hoagies.

By Ruth Polsky

When Pete Townshend wrote, in "Baba O'Reilly," about teenage wasteland, he might as well have been referring to Philadelphia as to London; like Springsteen's South Jersey and Billy Joel's Long Island, the Philly area is a stifling place to grow up in. (Ask David Brenner—*Ed.*) The only way to escape the inertia and tedium of a middle-class community is through a compatible, easily obtained combination of ingredients known in popular verse as sex and drugs and rock'n'roll.

Unfortunately, the bands that emerge from the housing development/shopping mall belt tend to be "cover" bands who gain popularity by duplicating other people's hits. Lacking the initiative or inspiration to produce original material, such bands can never achieve more than regional success.

Over the last two years, in the wake of punk repercussions from London via New York, a handful of Philadelphia bands have dared to break out of the unhealthy, "covers only" tradition. The A's, a five-member outfit with a soon-to-be-released album on Arista, are living proof that a band can refuse to play "Hot Blooded" and go on to win the wholehearted approval of Clive Davis.

Sitting in their Gramercy Park Hotel room the day after a showcase gig at Hurrah, the A's' fair-haired, boyish lead singer, Richard Bush, and tall, slyly humorous keyboard player, Rocco Notte, spoke about the problems of being a new wave pop band on the South Jersey/Philly bar circuit.

"It's the worst club scene," said Bush. "There's not any market for original material. We snuck our tunes in little by little, until we had enough of a following to satisfy the club owners and prove that they wouldn't lose money by having us. We were able to keep that going and build up a little bit, but it took time. The first time we tried it, we got fired and for two months we couldn't get bookings."

Despite such setbacks, the A's—who also include Notte's childhood friend, Rick De Fonzo, on guitar, bass player Terry Bortman, and drummer Mike Snyder—continued to create and develop their fetching pop sensibility, a musical attitude that contains references to the Beatles and mid-'60s British bands in general, as well as the New York Dolls, the Ramones, and, at least on a superficial level, the Cars. This last comparison was obviously a familiar one, and drew a slightly irritated response from the otherwise charming Bush.

"I saw the Cars on TV—they were pretty boring," he shrugged, defensively. "They don't have any sort of stage show. We write short pop songs, like they do, but that's where the comparison ends. Most of our songs were written before we heard the first Cars album."

Bush's physical resemblance to David Johansen is also dismissed, but playfully. "Wanna see my David Johansen impression?" he asked. Then he tilted his head back, pushed his nose up, and pulled down the corners of his mouth. The effect was startling. "He *is* David Johansen," Notte remarked, straight-faced.

What sets the A's apart from other new pop bands is the humor and self-parody in their lyrics. Songwriting is a collaborative effort for Bush and Notte, and both agree that they don't want to be taken too seriously. "Teenage Jerkoff," for example, concerns a high school misfit who is taunted by his classmates. "He's a teenage jerkoff," the chorus goes, and Bush replies, "I am *not*," in a suburban-punk whine. But the mocking voices persist, until he shouts out in desperation, "I'm a sensitive individual!"

Another of the album's strongest songs, "Parasite," captures the doldrums of middle-class youth: "All my friends want to settle down/Get married, move to Levittown." This same territory is ironically explored in "Grounded," an infectious homage to "Twist and Shout" whose title evokes oh-so-traumatic teenage memories of parents' punitive restrictions on going out, watching TV, using the family car, getting the weekly allowance, and so on.

Obviously, these topics bear little relation to dole queues and white riots, regardless of the A's' punkish energy and presence. "Well, we *are* American, we don't have that whole class system to be upset about," commented Bush. "Kids have it so easy in the States, they're just fighting boredom."

"It's really a harder existence in the States," Notte adds dryly, "because you really have to struggle to find something to complain about."

The A's themselves have nothing to complain about these days, with their album scheduled for July release. "We tried to make the first album really basic and straightforward, so that we'd have room to grow. We never know what we're going to do next—we want to say a little bit enigmatic," Bush concluded. Though the band has a definite capacity for experimentation (Notte, for instance, used synthesizer lead lines for some of the songs), the A's album seems destined for extensive radio play, not to mention commercial success.

Immediate plans for the A's include a full schedule of dates in major East Coast cities, to build a reputation. Then it's off to England for a quick, two-week tour, followed by some West Coast engagements. "We don't want to stay in L.A. too long—one night and out!" Bush said emphatically. "Yeah, I'm not sleeping there," chimed in Notte. "Body snatchers..."

And after that? "I want us to have our own TV show," Notte declared. "A weekly serial, like the *Partridge Family*." ■

Traveling on the tube train

New Moon Rising



Ebet Roberts

By Jon Young

Few would deny that the pop scene has gotten considerably healthier in the last year. Whoever your faves are—Elvis C., Ian Dury, the Clash, Blondie, etc.—it's a good bet that more people are listening to them now than at any previous time. Yet however "enlightened" things get, somebody's always gonna get slighted. For example, take John Moon Martin, a veteran rocker whose 1978 debut **Shots From a Cold Nightmare** went almost completely unnoticed here in the States (typically, Europe was more responsive). Now what could be better than this: a bit of rockabilly spunk, heartbreak melodicism, urgent singing, and above all, a real lowdown rock'n'roll guitar groove. You can play Martin's first LP after a Dave Edmunds record without breaking the spell, and that means he's hot. Yet his main claim to fame is still that Mink DeVille did Martin's "Cadillac Walk."

Now Moon's back with a second effort; **Escape From Domination** is more of the wonderful same. Except for "Dreamer," a sweet tune that could charm almost anyone, it's his version of the Chuck Berry/Beatles groove that counts.

For sure Martin's due for some recognition. He goes way back and has been touched by every development in American rock'n'roll since the ascendance of Elvis (Presley). John grew up in Oklahoma "in a little town called Altus, which is on the Red River about five miles from Texas. It's just flat as a table and real dusty, about 30 miles from where *The Last Picture Show* was filmed." He adds that for most of the time he was growing up, this town of 8,000 or so had unpaved streets.

After an abortive, parentally-urged career on the flute, Martin saw Chuck Berry do his duckwalk in a movie and was won over. Against his parents' wishes he conned an acoustic guitar from a pawnshop owner. "It didn't have any tuning pegs on it; I had to tune it with a pair of pliers."

"Actually," he reflects, "I'd say my main influence was Jerry Lee Lewis. I could have made 'Cadillac Walk' sound a lot like Jerry Lee if I'd wanted to. I can play piano. I just like the guitar better 'cause you can play it loud."

Martin continues, "I picked guitar up real fast and soon I was playing in a country and western band. They were all about 50 and I was 12. We played the VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] halls and the Moose Lodges, real honky tonk places."

From there he went to two years as bass player with Lou Vargas and the Orbits, a hard-core rockabilly band and then onto leading a neighborhood group with friends.

"The only thing I enjoyed doing was playing music. I really hated school," Moon recalls. So by his senior year in high school Martin was commuting 60 miles each day after class to Lawton, an army base whose many bars gave bands steady work.

This unscholastic attitude did not bode well for his college career at the University of Oklahoma. And sure enough, Martin soon found himself in another band at school called the Disciples, which he recalls with fondness. "We were really good. We were doing rockabilly, Beatles, a lotta Chuck Berry done real fast, *real* fast."

The next summer the band got gigs in Colorado and then, somehow, ended up in Wisconsin, where Moon and the band discovered the realities of the musician's life. "We couldn't play anywhere 'cause we weren't union. It got real bad. On night on Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, we were trying to find someplace to sleep so the police wouldn't harrass us. We took a dirt road down into a bunch of thickets and went to sleep. The next day we woke up and there's some guy with a waiter's jacket on knockin' on the car door. It was surreal, almost like a Fellini film. In this oval shaped driveway there must have been 10 limousines, and to the left of that was something like a castle, and to the left of that long rows of white tables with tons of food and people milling about. It was the summer home of Wrigley's chewing gum.

"We met Ken Adamany [now Cheap Trick's manager] right after that and he got us in the union." Martin and his fellow Disciples were only good for one more semester at Oklahoma, after which Adamany got them a booking in Detroit, where they shared a club bill with Doug Brown and the Omens. "Doug, who later became Fontaine Brown, produced a lot of the early Bob Seger records, though he never got any credit. Seger was making records on his own and playing bass and organ in Fontaine's band."

Brown knew Mickey Stevenson, a former Motown exec who was going to California to start his own label, and convinced the Disciples to go out there to cut an LP. Stevenson's Venture Records did not turn out to be a happy experience: "It was a black company and we were the only white guys in it. At the time hippie days were takin' over and they didn't understand the psychedelic guitars. We had five different producers. It was the way Motown works; the producer is king. They take the idiot artist in, tell the guy to sing, and get the fuck out of the studio." The band, now rechristened Southwind, did get an album out, though. Moon summarizes by saying, "It's bad."

But all was hardly lost. Fontaine joined the band, bringing out more of the country/rockabilly sensibilities Martin favored, and they signed with Blue Thumb Records.

Their first LP for the label, **Ready To Ride** (1969), was a hard country-rock effort not unlike the Grateful Dead's more down-home side and it was highlighted by a rollicking version of the Sun classic "Rock and Roll Ruby."

Martin recalls the next misfortunes well: "At one time **Ready To Ride** was getting airplay all across the country, but Blue Thumb did not have any money to put us on the road. We only did one tour and that was financed with our road manager's mother's credit cards."

So **Ready To Ride** never took off and **What a Place To Land**, released two years later, barely came out at all. Southwind bickered with producer Tony LiPuma, and even worse, they could only record for short stretches when the label could scrape up money for studio time.

"It was a bad business move for us to sign with Blue Thumb, as nice as the guys were. We turned down a gigantic offer from Warner Brothers; it was real stupid. At the time it was hip to be anti-establishment." He laughs.

Until he was "discovered" by Mink DeVille, Martin spend the '70s biding time. Southwind broke up; Fontaine produced a Moon solo album, but nobody wanted it. He "started workin' around town doing odd jobs, drivin' trucks, stuff like that, waiting for the sensitive singer-songwriter era to

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John Cale: Sabotage on Sunset Strip



B.C. Kagan

By Barry Alfonso

You've heard the story before—a newly-formed East Coast band itching for the Big Time hits the national rock club circuit, building its rep and perfecting its show while logging the miles. Finally, an album is recorded for a major label, and the group hopes for the best. This time, though, the classic scenario has a twist—the leader of the band in question is John Cale, avant rock veteran and one of the patron saints of the new wave. After all these years as a performer, composer and producer, the Spring of '79 found Cale rebuilding his career in America seemingly from scratch.

Well, not quite. Cale has always enjoyed a limited but loyal following in the States. When I spoke with him during his Los Angeles stopover he seemed eager to discover just who those fans were. "I have no idea who my audience is. I'm hoping to win some new people over with this tour." Certainly it's long overdue that Americans got more acquainted with Cale's neglected *oeuvre*, which runs the gamut from reflective piano recitals to devastating rock screamfests.

Cale soft-pedals his criticism of the labels (CBS, Warners and Island) that failed to break him in the US, but still a muted tone of frustration can be detected in his subdued British manner when he speaks of the music industry, "It's very difficult to promote everyone fairly," he concedes, "to be extremely fair to record companies. You're fighting the Fleetwood Macs and the Stevie Wonders all the time." With the problems of the American starmaking machinery in mind, Cale has established his own label, Spy Records, and embarked on a concert expedition keeping him on the road through September, after which he'll launch yet another tour in Europe.

Along the way this spring and summer, Cale met with warm response in some seemingly unlikely places. Texas, for instance, treated him well, though the local club crowds took some adjusting to: "There were people there waiting for me to do 'Dirtyass Rock and Roll' and 'Heartbreak Hotel' and my other songs, but watching well-dressed guys in suits walk in with .38s under their armpits was really something."

Supporting Cale has been a six-member band comprised of fresh, gifted New York area talent. The touring line-up includes Mark Aaron (guitar), George Scott (bass), Joe Bidewell (keyboards), Doug Bowne (drums) and an otherworldly female vocalist named Deerfrance. Except for Scott, formerly with the Contortions, none among the group was part of a well-known band prior to joining up with Cale. The young blood has proven rejuvenating to Cale's music—the group has been composing songs while on the road.

Any discussion of Cale and his sidemen necessarily leads to the infamous chicken-killing incident some years back that led to a mid-concert walkout by his band. "A whole bunch of people walked off—they were all vegetarians," Cale recalls philosophically. "They wanted to know before it happened, 'what are you gonna do, are you gonna hurt it?' I said no and afterwards they told me I'd lied to them. I said, 'I didn't hurt it, I killed it.' It didn't feel a thing." The resulting brouhaha has, incidentally, been immortalized in a tune called "Chicken Shit," that appears on Cale's **Animal Justice** EP.

Given his fondness for the dramatic stage gesture, many who turned out for Cale's performances no doubt expected to see a few acts of mayhem. During his engagement at L.A.'s Whisky, however, Cale was notably restrained, intense in his vocal delivery but refraining from the violent seizures and abandoned raving that once characterized his concerts. Instead, he focused his energies upon debuting his latest songs, nerve-jangling compositions that were powerful enough to speak for themselves.

The Whisky crowd, a mix of punks and Sunset Strip scenemakers, greeted Cale with a cult hero's welcome as he led his band onto the stage, ominously decorated with female mannequin torsos. Dressed in mirror shades, yellow hard-hat, white shirtsleeves and black vinyl trousers, he presented a series of paranoid narratives accompanied by rumbling synthesized guitar riffs, shrieking feedback bursts and similar atonal touches. Keyboardist Bidewell doubled on mouth harp at times to add to the pulsating screech, which was nicely counterpointed by Cale's own lilting piano runs, sweetening the band's threatening roar.

Further up the concert trail in June, the Cale ensemble finished taping a live LP during an engagement at CBGBs, tracks of which will be combined with others recorded during their Austin, Texas, appearance. **Sabotage '79** is the first album to appear from the fledgeling Spy Records, distributed by the Independent Recording Syndicate under the auspices of A&M. "Spy has been a toy of mine for a long time," Cale explains. "I was really happy when we first put it together, but then we had a disagreement with our backer. We've been trying to put the whole thing back together for about a year."

Spy's roster generally reflects Cale's interest in the more experimental fringes of rock. "We've got a single out by Lester Bangs (pop music critic turned vocalist) and an EP by a New York rock band called Model Citizens (now signed to Warner Brothers). I'm trying to get this tape of a four-tune jam I did with Mick Ronson, Ian Hunter and Corky Laing. I don't know if it's going to work out—there's going to be a lot of legal baloney to settle." Cale is also set to produce the San Francisco-based Dils and is considering projects with chanteuse Judy Nylon, a band annoyingly named the The and longtime associate Nico.

Ironically, Cale's several-year hiatus from recording has been concurrent with the growth and flowering of the new wave. Cale doesn't feel entirely comfortable as a punk rock progenitor: "I don't understand it, 'cause a lot of people who talk about the Velvet Underground never even heard us." The reverence of new wavers for that seminal band is not shared by its co-founder. "I think the Velvet Underground is dead and well underground by now. We had a chance to do it and we blew it, we didn't deliver."

With the Velvets and subsequent activities behind him, Cale is doing his best to claim his share of the '70s rock market. Despite his image, the idea of a John Cale Top 40 single doesn't bother him at all. In fact, I suspect many of his fans would be quite shocked by Cale's respect for well-crafted mainstream rock. When he expressed admiration during our chat for certain current groups, I was about to bring up the Talking Heads or a similar band. Cale, however, wanted to discuss the artistic merits of the *Doobie Brothers*.

"Their single ["What a Fool Believes"] is really amazing," he said with genuine enthusiasm. "I can imagine all these bands that play covers in clubs sitting down and listening to that record and trying to figure out where the bass part is. It's very intricate and well-done—like a Renaissance drawing, full of detail. It's extraordinary."

Unlike many of his rock contemporaries, Cale is not depending on past successes to sustain his career, but active creativity and plain hard work. "The fact that you make an effort and try is the whole thing," he'll tell you. "If you've got a lot of expertise and you're not trying, nobody gives a shit." ■

Working all day long

Shapes of Wings to Come



Laurence Juber and Steve Holly; the 40th and 41st Beatles.

By Lee Moore

If you think the members of Blondie are finding it tough to avoid being obscured by the shadow of Debbie Harry, consider the plight of Wings's new members, Steve Holly and Laurence Juber—two unknown but talented musicians who just happen to be playing with a rock'n'roll legend.

Drummer Holly and guitarist Juber joined Wings early last year—Holly from Kiki Dee and Elton John and Juber from sessions with everyone from Cleo Laine to Cerrone. Both are fresh-faced types in their mid-20s with excellent credentials but little reknown—but if Wings has its way, that'll change soon.

"Since we're new members," says Holly, "we haven't as yet established our identities within the band. Paul is very definite, though, about the idea that Wings should be a band instead of Paul McCartney's back-up group. Obviously, that's difficult for all of us simply because of the man himself and all that he's done."

"It puts a great responsibility on us in the studio," says Juber, a Patrick Moraz look-alike who sports a Nick Lowe button on his lapel. "We have to come up to his level musically."

According to the pair, composing and arranging is becoming a group effort, beginning with their work on **Back To the Egg**. "There are numbers on the album, like 'Old Siam Sir,' which were definitely group creations," Juber adds. "We all contributed to it."

"I think **Egg** just begins to touch on what this group can do," Holly says. "There's a lot more material kicking around. Everybody in the group writes, and Paul's coming up with some dynamite stuff at the moment. So's Denny Laine."

"**Egg** could have been a double set," Juber adds.

Both agree that the next logical step for Wings is to hit the road and show what they can do. "We'll be putting the icing on the cake in September, rehearsing extensively, and we should be out on the road soon after that."

It's possible that Wings will do some surprise dates in the States, much like their impromptu tour of England in the band's early days—just tossing some gear in the back of a van and taking off.

"The logistics are a problem with a situation like that," Juber says, "but the desire is there. We could play Madison Square Garden one night and some little club the next."

Juber's Nick Lowe button—and their kind words for artists like Ian Dury and Elvis Costello—suggest that Wings may have received a long-needed injection of new blood. The tentative rock'n'roll forays on **Back To the Egg** are promising—maybe

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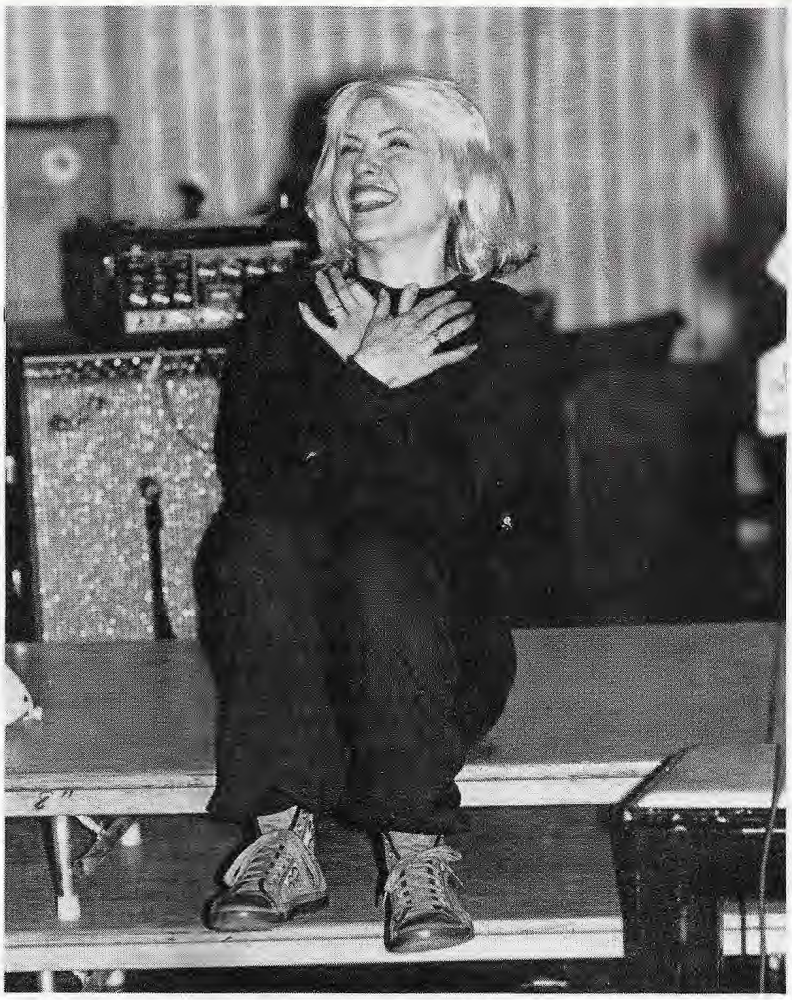
BLONDIE: PROGRESS REPORT FROM THE POWER STATION



DEBBIE HARRY by Roberta Bayley

By Jim Green

A brassy orchestra plays a Grand Guignol gurgle. A deep voice ominously intones, with a faint echo, "The time: early spring, 1975, The place: a dank and dingy bar called CBGB, on the Bowery in Manhattan. A young man, in search of musical adventure, has dared the depths of this urban jungle. Little does he know what is in store for him: Blondie and the Banzai Babies."

Of course, now would be the proper instant for an organ sting, except that the sextet now on stage doesn't have one to sting with. What it does have is a guitarist, a bass player and a drummer, desultorily pulling and pushing at their instruments while a front line of two brunettes and a blond are hully-gullying, frugging, singing and exuding a rare mixture of innocent exuberance and raw, kittenish energy.

"Good grief," thinks our hero, "they can't do that!" What they're doing is an unholy hybrid of raunchy, almost Velvet Underground-ish instrumental work backing up '60s "girl group" pop tunes and vocal stylings. But then again, they are indeed doing it, and in no time at all our hero has to admit he's impressed, even excited by it.

He watches the guitarist, who somehow seems like a maestro, conducting it all while casually strumming distortion-heavy chords from his Stratocaster. But more often, his eyes are on the girls, particularly the blonde. She sings more than the others, but that's not why. It's not even because she sings better than they do—with this sound system it's hard to tell. She has the most extraordinary face—like a cross between Tuesday Weld and Sandra Dee, he thinks. And there's something intangible about her, an attraction, that he can't quite put his finger on...

...Four years later, our selfsame protagonist is seated in front of a recording mogol whose credentials, in terms of sheer success, are phenomenal. In a clipped, mongrelized Australian/English accent, this musical magnate is saying things like, "The music industry was waiting for something like us to come along. They were hoping that each thing that came along would be the next Beatles, and all that bullshit, but what they overlooked was that the next Beatles could actually be a group with a girl in it." Our lad is sitting trying to keep his eyes from bugging out, listening to these grandiose proclamations and remembering that night at CBGBs, marveling that the embryonic band he'd seen four years ago had now evolved into this, and that the two members on whom he's first focused are the only ones left from that original model.

Kind of corny, right? But this isn't some hokum excised from a grade-B late, late show. This is reality: I am the listener, attempting to assimilate these weighty words from the mouth of producer Mike Chapman. Chapman scored a coup last fall when his productions of Exile ("Kiss You All Over") and Nick Gilder ("Hot Child in the City") held down the #1 and #2 spots, respectively, at the same time, two weeks running, in the trade singles charts. ("Hot Child" then went to #1 as well.) The same thing very nearly happened to singles he cut with the Suzi Quatro/Chris Norman team-up ("Stumblin' In") and Blondie's "Heart of Glass," both of which topped the charts within weeks of one another.

The Blondie album that spawned "Heart of Glass," **Parallel Lines**, is about the pass the platinum mark in sales (1 million units) and is still selling like ice cubes in the Sahara. At the same time, the LP's follow-up single, "One Way or Another," released just before the conversation at hand, is making noises like it'll be another mega-hit. Chapman and I are seated in the control room of the Power Station, the New York recording studio where he's getting ready to begin another long day (and possibly night) pursuing the next milestone in Blondie's campaign, cutting the group's fourth album, **Eat to the Beat**. What a way to start such a day: Chapman neatly sums up the thrust of his discourse by saying, "Blondie *are* the superstars of tomorrow."

Fairytale come true, rags to riches, la-de-da...except it's not that simple. The success wasn't overnight, in fact the rags are only just beginning to show signs of golden stitching, and yes, Virginia, life can be very taxing on the way to the top, to say the least. Personality conflicts (the Artist vs. the Label, vs. the Manager, vs. Themselves), huge debts incurred, the mounting pressures of accelerating commercial expectations, and an often unsympathetic, even hostile press.

Which last point brings us to the genesis of this piece. After initially welcoming the prospect of a Blondie story with open arms, the representative of the independent

publicity firm hired by the band suddenly became less than encouraging, speaking in a language of ifs, maybes and I-don't-knows. Soon after adding a few we'll-sees and I'll-have-to-get-back-to-yous to her conversational repertoire, she announced that the band were not doing any interviews. Something was said about trouble with *Rolling Stone*, and they weren't talking to *Newsweek*, either, only to people that they know, sorry. I *know* them, I protested to no avail.

So I called up Chris Stein, and he said, "Yeah, sure, we're gonna be in the studio, come on over."

At the Power Station, Chris said he saw this article as an opportunity to set the record straight on a few things, and to get an in-depth profile of the band without having to fence with a self-serving journalist harboring *a priori* antagonisms and licking lips at the thought of shooting the band's image full of holes at the twist of a phrase.

I hadn't just caught Chris with his paranoid tendencies showing, either. I'd heard this before from him (not to mention several other bands besides). The British music weeklies have seemed as eager to take potshots at Blondie—apparently, mainly because they've become successful—as they are to print photos of Debbie Harry. Certain of the American press have been less than friendly also, and Chris was particularly peeved with the group's encounter with the man from *Rolling Stone*. The piece had yet to come out at that time, but Chris knew it would be a disaster: the guy knew little about rock'n'roll or the pressures it can bring—hadn't even seen the band play—and, demanding his interview at an unexpected juncture, was evidently armed with eager skepticism. "We gave him a hard time."

On the other hand, I knew Blondie, and they know *Trouser Press*. I'd been in a band for a short while with Jimmy Destri just before he joined Blondie, and have been on casually friendly terms with Chris, Debbie, and Clem Burke after having done an article on the band for another magazine when they were recording their first LP. Since then I'd done a pair of pieces on them, including one for *Hit Parader* about which Chris and Debbie had been particularly enthusiastic. So I had the stamp of approval—but while I wasn't out to dig up dirt, this wasn't to be for *Hit Parader*—no facile, glossy puff piece this. Chris acknowledged as much when I told him so.

The idea was to go into the studio and talk with everybody in the band and soak up what I could of what making an album—specifically a Blondie album, this particular Blondie album—entailed. I entered into their schedule, the limits of which, while testing the stamina of various members at various times, were determined chiefly by the necessary work foreseen by Mike Chapman, whose endurance was astounding. Most of the basic tracks (i.e., drums, bass and some guitar and/or keyboards) had been done; remaining were overdubs on most of the lead and background vocals, more guitars and keyboards, extra percussion and so forth.

The band, then, was working under the high pressure that playing for high stakes can bring to bear. Adding to the pressure-cooker situation was the wear and tear of overdubbing, usually a tedious and drawn-out process in which many parts are built up into dense and deep textures. The manifestations of the resultant annoyance and ennui were many, both large and small. Even as Chris explained the *Rolling Stone* debacle to me, after I'd just arrived at the studio for my first look-see, he sat there tossing a small razor blade at the wooden wall of the recording chamber. Inside the control room, the air was thick with talk of the trials and tribulations of arriving at a working understanding with Terry Ellis, the head of Chrysalis Records.

At moments like these, a bit of light diversion helps dissipate the tension for those in whom it is amassing in intolerable increments. So, when Jimmy Destri walked in with his latest acquisition, a digital delay sequencer, he was met with playful jeers of "Oh no, a new toy!" and—this from Chapman—"Manny's [the top musical instrument and accessory store in town] must be making a mint out of you guys!" Jimmy had everyone in stitches as he related the group's business manager's "Oh no, what next?" response to Jimmy's call to requisition funds, and showed Chris how the gizmo worked. The sequencer was to see a good deal of use in the coming days of keyboard overdubs.

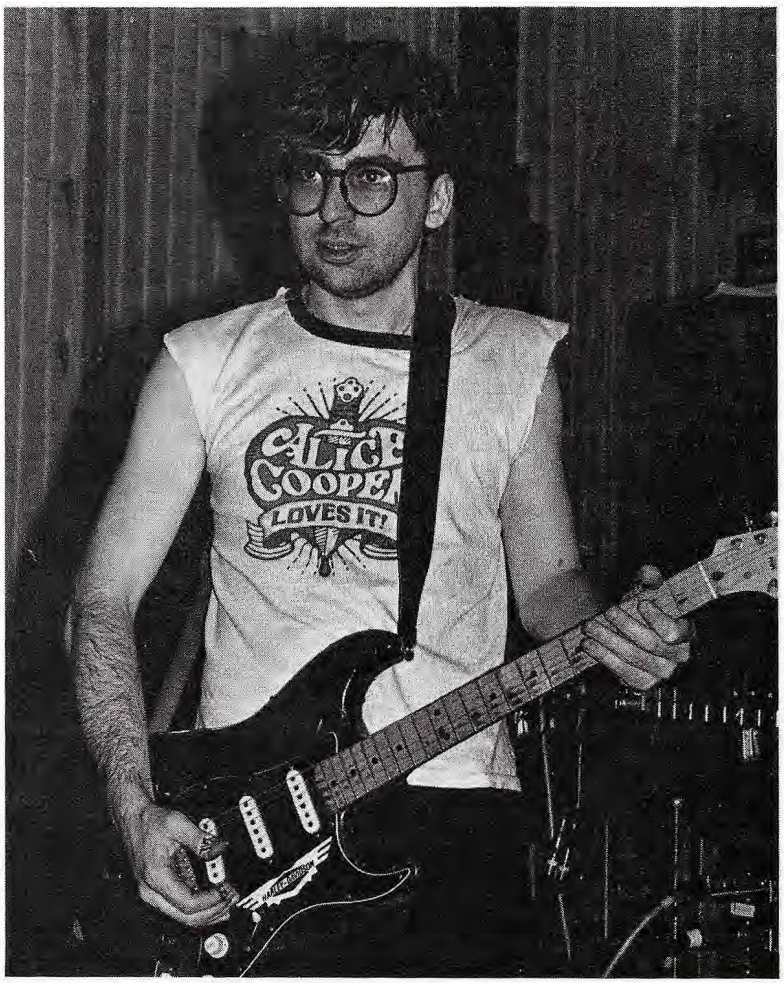
Chris had some spare time before he was needed for his next overdub, so we retired to a mini-kitchen alcove to talk.

"We were gonna do **Jack Lee's Greatest Hits** this time, but we decided not to," he cracked, alluding to the author of "Hanging on the Telephone" and "Will Anything Happen" from **Parallel Lines**, and possibly to the eyebrow-raising in some circles over the inclusion of two songs on one album by someone outside the band. But that was nothing, especially compared to the cries of "sell-out."

"One of the things I really resented was all the people who said we'd sold out because 'Heart of Glass' was disco." In Europe, they'd already ascended to near-superstar status on the basis of a string of huge hits, of which "Heart of Glass" was merely the next in the series (which had kicked off a year prior with "Denis"). "I know full well that if it hadn't been a hit, nobody would have said anything negative about it—maybe 'Oh Blondie did a disco song, isn't that cute.' The reason it's a hit is because it's a good song. We used to do it a long, long time ago as a funky song.

"It also has to do with the sound, which is a sophisticated, Euro-disco sound, a little like Kraftwerk and some Giorgio Moroder stuff—it's kinda novel here. Hey, Marty Thau [friend and former mentor] said he was at this disco convention and he heard the song and thought, 'This is cute, really hip, it's punk-disco,' not having realized at first that it was us."

We spoke of the specialization of rock in the '70s, Chris referring to the "egocentric consciousness of the '70s as opposed to the socialistic consciousness of the '60s." This past decade has spawned groups which watered down rock'n'roll, removing it further from its former spirit and energy, diluting, over-intellectualizing and depart-



CHRIS STEIN by Roberta Bayley

mentalizing it. "Everything is bullshit in the '70s," Chris added morosely.

Jimmy had wandered in and interjected, "I think our band will probably be responsible for bringing everything, like disco, heavy rock, everything we do, into just one genre, a pop genre. In England and in Europe the kids just look at these as parallel aspects of one overall form, but they don't here.

"...A lot of people think it's hard to crack America because of its size," Destri continued, "but the real reason is that it's the only country in the world where every art form is just a backdrop to sell a product; all of it, including rock'n'roll, is there to sell Ivory Soap on the radio."

"Anyway," said Chris, "I don't think we're gonna release another disco single here." There will be a disco song on the new album, with the tentative working title "The Spaghetti Song" (so called abecause it reminds Chris of the movie soundtrack music used in Italian-made Westerns), but it simply doesn't sound like a single, at this stage.

Talk wandered to the last album, and I suggested that **Parallel Lines** seemed somehow too disparate, the individual parts strong but taken as a whole not fitting together well. Chris agreed, and said he thought that that would be remedied on **Eat to the Beat** with a more unified sound. "The last album was so technically perfect, everybody executed their parts very well, but I think there was a lack of personality..."

Destri: "I myself was sort of absent while we recorded the album. It's a very, uh, technical album and Mike pulled it out of us. Personally, I was going through the trauma of asking myself whether or not I wanted to be a pop musician anymore. It was a difficult period for all of us, though; we were under management we didn't feel comfortable with..."

Chapman wandered past, towards the men's room, and broke the mood by tripping over the tape recorder, picking it up and yelling "Fuck fuck fuck" into it. Everybody broke up laughing (Clem Burke had stuck his head in too, by now).

Back to **Parallel Lines**. Chris commented that he thought its cover "stinks" and Clem, he reported, had had an idea for a montage which Chrysalis had simply not found acceptable. Clem and I fell to talking as Jimmy and Chris drifted off to the control room after Chapman emerged from the men's room.

"Sometimes we're so unhip that we're hip; iconoclastic, in a way. When we did 'Heart of Glass' it wasn't too cool to play disco, at least not in our social set, but we did it anyway 'cause we wanted to try it." But what for the group was somewhat of an experiment could not be handled casually, if indeed anything could have been at that time. "Mike was conducting me as I played, there was a lot of eye-to-eye contact. The emotions were different, more intense, on that album than on this one," said Clem.

Chris had said that Chapman had been more involved in creating on **Lines**, sacrificing some energy perhaps, but "getting it right, more mechanically perfect." Clem explained that the band was building confidence in itself as a working unit and in its identity as a band. "I think we look at our stuff now more like, 'Is it good as a Blondie song?' rather than 'Does it sound good?' We've found our own little niche, we've got our own standards now, instead of using the standards of what others do.



CLEM BURKE by Roberta Bayley

"We're not as inhibited now about playing or songwriting in that regard," he continued. The old "We've-done-it-before-so-we-can-do-it-again" philosophy? "Yeah. And also we're more aware—I certainly am—of how a drum roll or a guitar lick will translate onto record, how it'll sound when I put the record on six months from the time it's done. I've gained a kind of looseness; about the only thing I'm worried about these days is trying not to repeat myself from past things.

"I'm into the idea of being as good as I can be—the regeneration of the mod thing is like that, the opposite of the original punk ethic of 'I can't play but I don't care.'"

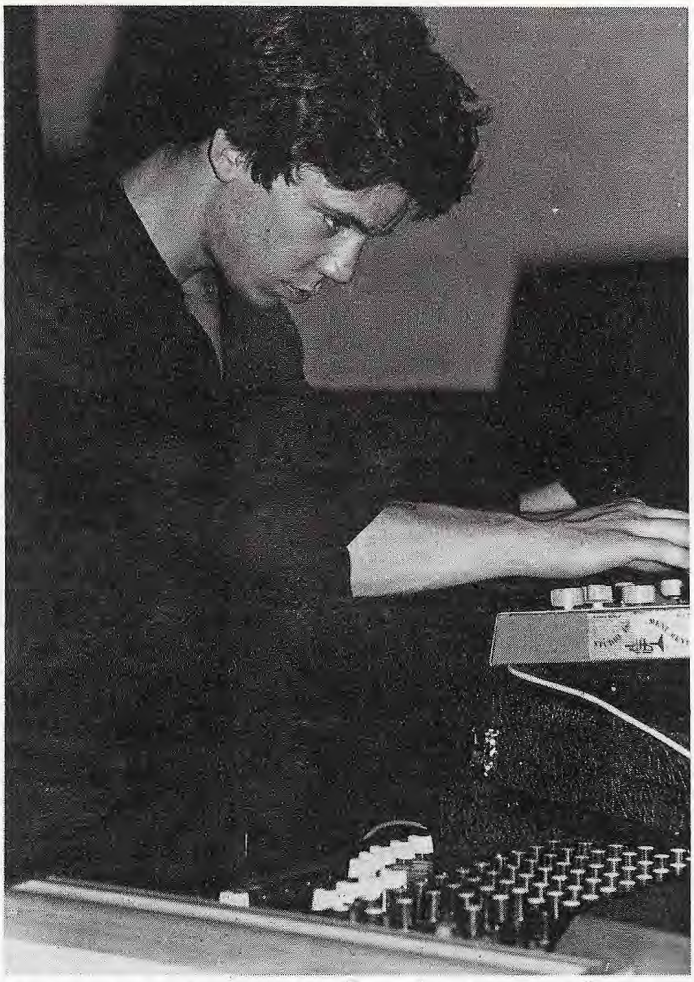
Back when Clem and Gary Valentine had first joined, it had seemed to me that the band's reach far exceeded its grasp. "Well, I've always sensed that Debbie is a great frontperson, singer/stylist, songwriter, and I've always had faith in the band," Clem continued. "Chris is a little more the avant garde-ist and I'm more of the pop type, and his interest rubbed off on me and I got him to like the Bay City Rollers—who I don't like anymore, I like Rosetta Stone.

"But we've never wanted to be 'underground.' People toss around terms like 'sell out' about us, but in my eyes we never have. I don't want to get into defending the band," he said, in a fairly matter of fact tone. "What we always wanted was to be pop oriented and have hit records. What I've always liked about the group is that focus, and now other things can rise to the top, too," he said, referring to cross-breeds of various pop forms, like Chris' artier tendencies.

But Chris, who'd wandered back in, made sure to differentiate experimentation from "sterile, over-intellectualized groups like ELP." "Some people are arty," responded Clem, "some people are pop, some people try to imitate Jimmy Page."

I recalled that after the period of flux four years ago which left only Chris and Debbie from the original band, fleshed out by Clem and Gary Valentine, I'd seen them and thought that their reach exceeded their grasp. Chris and Clem chorused in agreement, with Clem citing "Man Overboard" and "Attack of the Giant Ants" as two numbers that were more ambitious than the band could handle properly at the time—exactly the ones that had come to my mind. I further ventured that at that time an awful lot of people were putting down Blondie as hopeless and worse. Chris remembered it all too well.

"That we got a negative reaction was better than none at all, but on the scene, there was a feeling of conspiracy against us—all kinds of fucking cliques. What happened in the New York scene was that for a year or so it was great, everybody shared their amps, their guitars, we were palsy-walsy. As soon as the first record company, the first dollar showed up at CBGB, the whole thing began to change—the whole scene was blown, everybody was dead competitive and that was it. Everybody was in a rush to sign a record contract."



JIMMY DESTRI by Roberta Bayley

"It's really hard to get started now," said Clem, "with so many band imitating and emulating everything and one another. Thank god, nobody sounded like us, nobody did what we did, or what Talking Heads did, for that matter."

"We were innovative in being a synthesis," said Chris. But Blondie had a tough time convincing people that their synthesis was worthwhile.

The next day was the Saturday of Memorial Day Weekend. The Blondies—as they're referred to by people around them—were off on Sunday, but would come in on Monday, Memorial Day, and Chris was the main man in the studio with Mike Chapman and Dave Tickle, Chapman's *wunderkind* engineer and production protegé (Tickle's only 19). Chris was dubbing guitar parts until every note was just right, and then going back over each again to double them up. The song primarily receiving the benefits of this labor was "Shayla," a quiet, lullaby-like track, and after sitting and watching and waiting for Chris to take five for a quick chat, I was amazed that hours of this careful, painstaking repetition, dubbing increment by tiny increment, didn't put them to sleep! Especially on such a quiet number. Little was I prepared for the final result, as the track evolved a gentle force of its own.

Memorial Day was strange, as friends and ladies of people connected with the studio had the day off and came to visit. The Kinks, who were hurrying through their own sessions in the next studio (Power Station has a pair of control room/recording chamber units) in order to meet their deadline, were unused to alien bodies sitting and flitting about while they cut their tracks, being used to the privacy of their own Konk Studios. Even a seasoned veteran of rock'n'roll writing was put slightly on edge by being in the studio at the same time with both a group that has long been a legend in its own time and one that soon may become one.

Chris again was doing a lot of overdubs, this time for an obvious standout track, "The Hardest Part." Chris was layering guitar riffs over Frank Infante's basic rhythm guitar. These layers would intertwine with Jimmy's keyboards and another Frankie riff. Over this foundation Debbie's vocal and Chris's solo would sit, the end result containing all the quintessential funk licks, and calling to mind "Fame" and "Miss You" and "Superstition." This, however, ended up as a hard, chunky rocker, driven by the inexorable force of Clem's bass drum and tom-toms, as unstoppable as the "25 tons of hardened steel" armored truck which the tune's singer is urging her compatriots to hijack. All of the guitar and keyboard parts eventually would be doubled, a device Chapman believes gives richness to Blondie's trademark sound—superficially unnoticed yet subtly effective. "Union City Blue," a melodiously evocative uptempo number, got the same treatment next.

Chris having done his fill for the time being, Jimmy and Mike Chapman took a listen to a playback of "Die Young, Stay Pretty," a reggae tune that's been on the shelf since Blondie's early days (about as old as "Heart of Glass," i.e. dating from early to mid-'75). Mike got a flash: "Let's do backing vocals for it!" So, leaving Tickle at the controls, he and Jimmy went into the sound chamber and, trotting out their best Jamaican yes-men poses (Jah-men?), "sang" (the word is used lightly) answers to Debbie after lines like "deteriorate in your own time" and "dilly near senility." Mike subsequently experimented by, having put the heavily echoed voices on a separate track, removing the actual voices and keeping only the echo-voices. These will later be redone, but they will be re-cut after this fashion, an idle amusement becoming a recording reality.

I snuck off to have a few words with the newest member of Blondie, British-born bassist Nigel Harrison, who confessed he had done few interviews and hadn't thought of himself as the "interview type." Harrison's first major band was Silverhead, and his tenure with them started on a rather strange note:

"When you're looking for gigs in the back of *Melody Maker*, if it's a large block advert, then there's money behind it. I'd answer any of those, even if it was for a topless go-go band or whatever and there was one that wanted 'erotic relaxers.' I didn't know what that meant, and it turned out to be Michael des Barres"—previously best known in the States for his portrayal of the class punk in *To Sir With Love*—"getting a band together. There seemed to be a mysterious godfather figure behind it, and after a week it came out that it was Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice [of *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Evita* notoriety] backing it."

The band's music was ballsy rock'n'roll just this side of heavy metal, and the image was *trés* glam—"but it wasn't glitter, it was 'cock rock,' that was our 'thing.' We'd go on tour with Deep Purple and steal all the girls from 'em...It was a good band but after two albums it hadn't really made it." It continued after des Barres left, recording a third, more blues-rock album—Nigel's previous background was bands in the blues boom, "y'know, Savoy Brown, Chicken Shack, Fleetwood Mac-type bands"—which went unreleased save for Continental Europe.

Nigel wound up playing with Ray Manzarek, ex-Doors keyboard man, who he'd gotten to know during Silverhead's L.A. days. He played on Manzarek's **The Whole Thing Started With Rock'n'Roll** LP and stuck with Ray through the well-intended but misconceived Nite City band. After that folded, Manzarek and Nigel were involved in putting together a band with Iggy Pop. Regrettably, Iggy backed out, evidently feeling he was coming too close to doing a resurrection of the Jim Morrison persona, and this dismayed Ray.

Subsequently, after the Ig had allied himself with Bowie, Ray and Nigel went to see the touring band, which featured Bowie on keyboards, backing vocals and behind-the-scenes direction. "Ray became quite overcome with feeling—'That was all I ever wanted,' he said, meaning what Bowie was doing." There was also talk of Nigel and Ray hitching up with Paul Cook and Steve Jones of the Sex Pistols, but of course that never happened.

Not that Nigel minded so very much; Blondie was the opening band for Iggy on

that tour, and Nigel was knocked out. Through mutual friends, he was contacted and asked to come down to the Whisky to play with the band at a sound check, where he found out that they were interested in his joining them on bass. "But I'd seen Frankie on stage playing bass with them, and he looked so cool, and I thought, 'What do they need me for with someone like him?'"

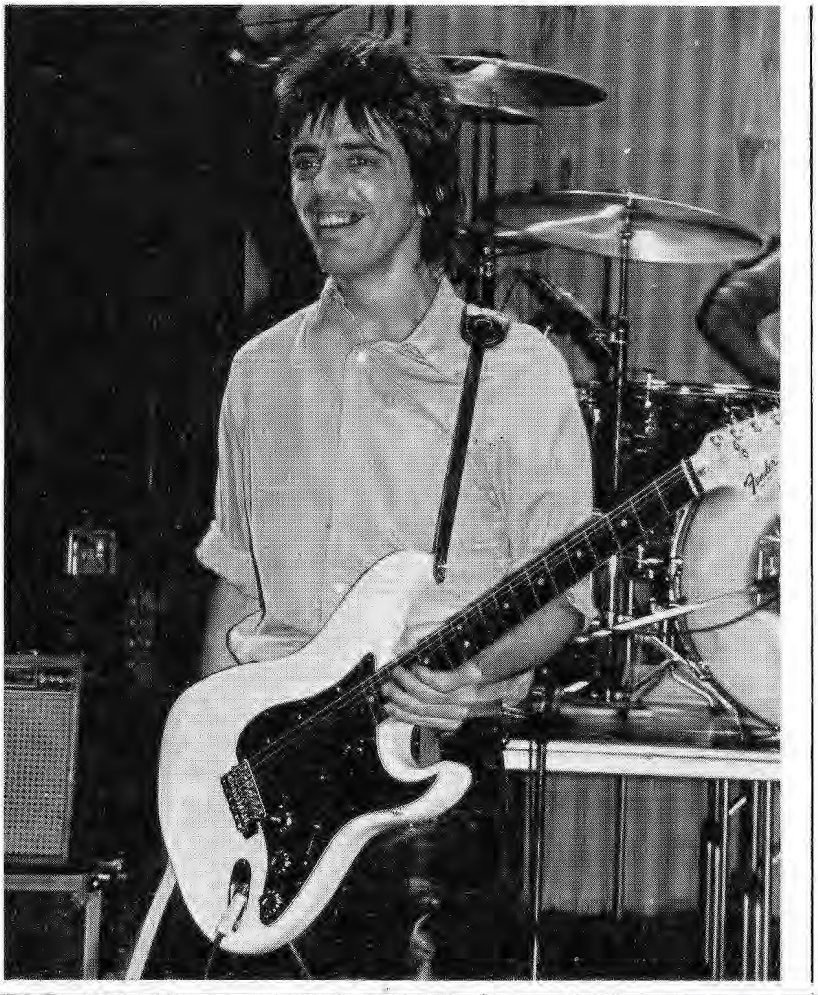
But things happened so fast that there was almost no time to think. He was back in New York with the band before fully realizing he was going to leave Manzarek and join Blondie. Then, before he knew it, he was flying to England for the start of Blondie's European tour, even before he knew any of the material. This all happened in a matter of days, and somewhere in there he and Frankie (who was the bassist when Nigel joined) realized that they would both stay, with Frankie just shifting over to guitar.

He actually did know a lot of the material somewhat, having admired the band previously, but it was a bit of a shock to realize his first gig as a Blondie would be in Aylesbury, near where he grew up. "It went great—the papers said 'Local Boy Makes Good.'"

Nigel didn't actually talk that much about his writing; despite the fact that he wrote very little prior to joining Blondie, he penned the music for "One Way or Another" and the new album's title song. Perhaps it's because he hasn't previously envisioned himself as a creator, but the fact of his creative blossoming isn't to be denied, though he spoke of Blondie's outpourings in general terms: "The ultimate thing to me would be to have an album out every month and a single every Friday—it used to be that way almost, in England, in the '60s."

The next day I spoke with Chris briefly while the Kinks blasted away in the background, pulling together a track that eventually became "Captain America." "There's volumes of shit about Blondie in the press, and reams of it are superficial drivel and misinformation," he said disgustedly. I mentioned that there was a bottleneck of sorts: now that the person in the street was beginning to know Blondie, more than ever his/her conception of the name meant Debbie. Debbie was the spokeswoman for the group, yet people focused on the "dumb blonde" image, and how could a dumb blonde speak with words instead of body language? Plus, often Debbie was not the perfect public personality; she hadn't developed the aplomb to be a glib Merv Griffin talk show guest, and that only confused things further.

"People aren't really willing to take her seriously and accept it when she talks straight to them. Everybody thinks what she is publicly [both the dumb blonde and the straight-talker] is an act. Debbie's a genius. When she gets into it she's great to talk to, but she's also very natural, and can't turn herself on and off." We chatted about Marilyn Monroe, a bright woman doomed by the public's non-acceptance of her as anything other than a dumb blonde.



FRANK INFANTE by Roberta Bayley

The Kinks were still blasting away, people were coming and going, there was a television on, and Chris got up to make sure his presence wasn't required in the control room (all of his overdubs were done with him sitting by Chapman at the board, playing either through the amps in the adjacent chamber or straight into the board itself).

Chris returned, and we went back to discussing Debbie and the group's image. "People say that Debbie gets all the money in the band, but it's just not true. All she gets extra is on the merchandising of stuff that's only Debbie Harry stuff, like posters of her alone. Otherwise she gets the same as me and Clem and Jimmy. Frankie and Nigel get a little less because they joined much later."

Chris went on to say that, besides, Blondie owes a huge amount of money in addition to the amount still owed Chrysalis. "Chrysalis—Terry Ellis—got the money together to buy us from Private Stock." (Some rumors placed the price tag in the seven-figure bracket.) "The band has to repay Ellis." This led into a discussion of the band's management situation, which was sticky, as the band wanted to cut loose from Peter Leeds, who still managed them on paper but was no longer involved in the day-to-day affairs.

Chris let off a lot of steam about the group's displeasure at Leeds' conduct. One major gaffe Chris felt had been committed by Leeds and his cohort, publicist Toby Mamis, was the "Blondie Is a Group" campaign, but Chris spoke of other things which can't be discussed here because of legalities.

We spoke of the possibility of a concept album (which he, Debbie and Jimmy had mentioned at various times) that will have to wait due to time commitments and commercial considerations. We talked about writing songs and how writing hits had to do with tuning in to a collective cultural consciousness. We didn't get too far into any of these due to interruptions, and eventually gave in and drifted off to check on what the rest of the Power Station was up to.

In the control room, Frankie and Jimmy were listening, with Chapman and Tickle, to a playback of Frankie's solo, or rather solos, on Jimmy's tune, "I'm Not Living in the Real World." Confronted with the task of coming up with a solo on the spot, Frankie had first been bewildered as to which tack to take, but after some experimentation, he came up with a satisfactory solo, a chaotic Pistols-y raver, and was promptly told by Chapman to double it. "I didn't know what I was doing, I just played it," said Frankie, so Chapman told him to do more or less the same thing again, and not worry about the variation. When played together, they sounded fabulously wild.

But for Chapman, that wasn't enough—he wanted to put a huge electro-metallic crash at the end of the solo, which he proposed to do by simply banging the echo amplifier at the end of the final feedback note of the solo. Everybody had a laugh, Mike included, as he repeatedly struggled to drop the amp head at the exact moment. Nigel grinned, and said, "For this we pay a fortune per hour?" Jimmy's comment: "Look what they done to my song, Ma."

At some point I spoke to Jimmy at length. We avoided distractions by camping out on the stairs and then in an unused office up-

stairs. Before settling on keyboards, Jimmy had tried and dropped drums, bass, and acoustic guitar, driving the Destri clan nuts in the process. When his father bought a piano, he'd jumped on it, surprising his family, who intended the instrument for younger sister Donna ("I was gonna become a doctor or a lawyer, right, but the cute little one should learn how to play the piano.") Donna became a classical musical prodigy of sorts while Jimmy tried to teach himself rock solos off records. Donna's own interest flagged; in spite of some academic approval she lacked confidence in her playing and "clammed up." She did, however, stay with it long enough to instruct Jimmy in some of the basics. He never did learn the proper way to play, though, which is why he uses the synthesizer so much ("I don't have a good, independent left hand").

This, of course, didn't deter his interest in playing in bands, and he went through the usual neighborhood combo scene, but was soon hanging out with an older crowd. He acquired an old Farfisa organ, but it soon went into disuse; he became intrigued by visual arts, and threw himself into that academic world. He flirted with the notion of playing in several New York club bands, but it wasn't until he saw Blondie for the second time that he was knocked out. Watching Blondie (then Chris, Debbie, Clem and Gary Valentine) intently, it was love at second sight.

"They remembered me because I was the only one in the audience with short hair and a black suit," said Jimmy. "I was standing at the bar drinking, and Debbie came up and said, 'We heard you're quite a piano player.' I said, 'I don't have a piano, all I have's this tinny old organ.'" But she persisted, asking him down to rehearsal. "It wasn't an audition, it was, 'Would you like to try it?'"

We touched on the subject of Gary Valentine, and it was an emotional one for Jimmy. Gary'd been a friend of Clem's who was picked to replace Fred Smith when the latter left to join Television, not because he was a good player—he could barely play bass at all—but because of his attitude: charming, exuberant, very "up." But although he and Jimmy became close friends, "I was the reason Gary left the band. We were going through another tough period, all of us fighting with one another. But Gary is such an idealistic nut, brilliant as he is, he would never bend like we all did toward one another to solve a problem. He was just driving me crazy, so one day I walked into Peter Leeds's office and said, 'It's either him or me.' They fired him the next day."

Before heading out to L.A. and forming his own trio, the Know, Gary left the band with a parting gift, "(I'm Always Touched By Your) Presence, Dear," which became a huge hit for Blondie in Britain and Europe.

Jimmy offered a shrewd assessment of the contrasts of the band's components: Frankie, who approaches guitar from a musician's point of view, and Chris, who is more "picturesque" and concept-oriented, Clem and Frankie, who love the road and playing out all the time, Nigel, who enjoys that but has other interests besides, and Chris, Debbie and himself, who enjoy performing immensely but would stay in New York to pursue outside projects when not recording or gigging—"but as Clem says, and we all know it, Blondie has at least two more years of heavy touring until we determine whether or not we've reached the point where we can afford not to tour frequently."

Before Jimmy got up to go add some keyboards, he made a final statement about the work at hand: "What makes me proud of this album is that when the kids hear this album, after 'Heart of Glass' being number one, when my friends hear it, when Gary hears it, they'll say, 'Thank god, they haven't lost it, they still have the feeling.'"

Catching up with Clem proved difficult. His father had been ill, and he was spending as much time as possible with him. When I did manage to sit down with him, he seemed a bit lethargic and perhaps distracted, thinking about his father, the work to be done, and various other band problems. Clem, as Destri had observed, is a realist in his own right. "We're only now learning some of the things that the kids on the street still don't realize—the truth of the Kinks's 'Tops of the Pops,' where they say, when you've gotten to Number One, 'now you can make some real money.' I'm concerned with selling records now where I wasn't before, not so much in terms of real financial success, but in terms of artistic survival. However many records you sell, you have to sell more, or by industry standards you're slipping." Asked about his playing he had little to say other than that perhaps he was helped by the open-minded structure of the band; his "exaggerated style" (his term) was developed by having to fill holes in the sound while Gary was learning to play. His striking visual stage persona was laughingly ascribed to his sense of "show biz"—"I always liked showmanship, but I have to sit down."

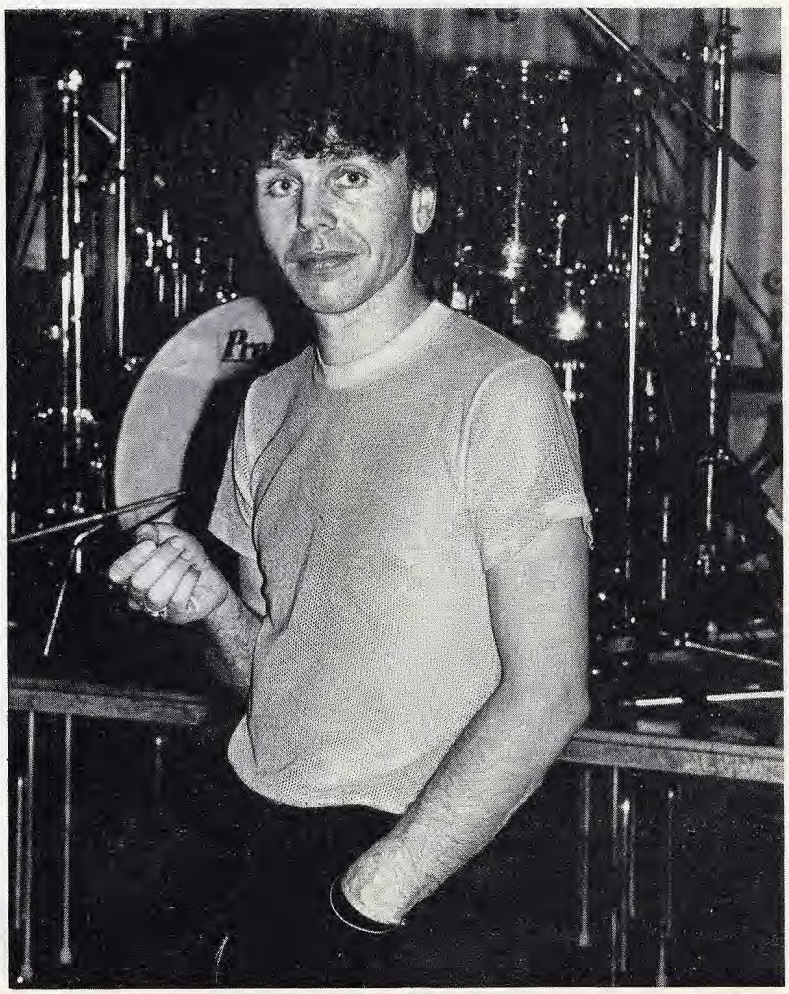
Frank had even less to say. He doesn't share a lot of the others' concerns, and hasn't had what he considers a colorful past. He knew Clem and Gary; used to hang out with them when they played CBGBs. One time, when calling to see when they were playing next, Clem told him Gary'd left the band and they needed somebody to play bass on the album. Frank volunteered. Period.

"Nothing was definite, there were no heavy commitments. Even then I sometimes switched off on guitar and bass with Chris on stage. When Nigel came, it all sorta worked out, even though no one told me what was supposed to be happening." Frank just went with the turn of events.

Frank wasn't able to describe how he'd gotten the inspiration for "Defectors," an incredible mix of a heavy metal rondo and Cossack music; but when I heard it, I didn't think to ask questions—I just sat in the control room with my jaw on my chest. Phenomenal!

Wednesday, Chapman was prepared to start at noon, but no Blondies had arrived yet, so I took the opportunity to get him into the act, which he welcomed. He was brimming with optimism and energy; little did we know how much of it he'd need to get him through the day.

Chapman has known about Blondie for a while before he met them; having been



NIGEL HARRISON by Roberta Bayley

tipped that he ought to see them, he caught them at the Whisky in Los Angeles and was enchanted with their songs. "I went right out and bought their first album on Private Shock"—his term—"and within three or four plays, knew every song; it's a classic album." On meeting Jimmy and Clem for the first time in London his first words shocked Jimmy, who'd idolized him: "Oh, you wrote 'Look Good in Blue.'" Chapman then sang him a snatch of it. "Some Blondies came down to the studio when I was in with Suzi Quatro, and I was trying to suggest a producer for them, throwing out all these names when all the time I wanted to say, 'Can *I* work with you?'

"Nicky Chinn and I have, in the last nine or 10 years, written 50 or 60 hit songs; I've produced about as many hit records—we've sold 300 million records worldwide." But working with Blondie is a learning experience; their whole artistic outlook is fresh and new to him, "an invaluable experience, and I'll continue to produce them as long as they want me."

Blondie's songs, he feels, are classic pop, something the public desperately needs. "Blondie could sell 15 million of one album; not this album—it'll probably do six to eight million—but the next one...New wave's been an art form that a little too abstract for the general public to understand. The basis of Blondie is their songs, which are totally accessible; what we've done is to take that art form and not tamper with it, just make it a little cleaner, a little more accessible, put Blondie's ideas in, and the public loves it." He admits that it's just starting, "but it'll take off to astronomical heights.

"These kids are brilliant...never in my life have I come across a group that has such amazing expression. I know all of their frustrations and all of their ambitions and I'm able to use that by helping them to put all their feelings on their records." What works stays on the record, what doesn't, comes off. He admitted that **Parallel Lines** was "an album of discovery...the sound is too precise," and he wouldn't do it quite the same way if he had it to do over again. "But the concepts were correct," he maintains.

If Blondie succeed, contends Chapman, they'll open up a door in the industry that many other groups will be able to pass through—a hope and a belief shared by the band. "Somebody has to kick the industry in the ass," Chapman vows. And he has the hits to back up his judgment. And the seemingly indefatigable energy too—in that session he worked with various Blondies from around 1 PM, until 8 AM the next morning, with only a few brief breaks.

Debbie couldn't do the vocal she was scheduled for, there'd been a mistake in the recording of the track, so while Chapman and Tickle tried to work around it Debbie and I took off for one of the sitting areas.

Debbie is shy sometimes, and doesn't speak freely unless she's relaxed. However, she warmed to the discussion fairly easily this time, as we touched on the film she had acted in, *Union City*, a high-budget underground production based on a short story by the fellow who wrote *Rear Window*; it's a psychological suspense drama in which Debbie plays opposite an accomplished "legit" actor, Dennis Lipscomb.

"I'm not really an actress"—although, as Jimmy and Chris had mentioned, she very much wants to be—"but I have a good sense of timing, which the cameraman remarked at. It's like an automatic instinct. I photograph well"—even in motion, on a movie set—"and I was able to project a certain personality. At certain points I really felt like the scenes were happening to me, and it was a rush, just like doing a good show."

Having broken the ice, I suggested that I wanted to go over some historical background, and Debbie agreed. "Those were hard times," she says of the days she spent struggling with the Stilettos, and the early Blondie. Patti Smith and Television were the attractions and Blondie was "at the bottom of the barrel." Not that there was even much of a barrel in 1974-5; Blondie played CBGBs frequently for seven months, and the audiences consisted mostly of "a few friends and three Hell's Angels at the bar." Then, all of a sudden, there was competition, and as tough as it had been to make ends meet, "everybody [in the various groups] was supporting one another and digging this very private, small, clandestine rock'n'roll world." The new climate of money and rivalry was somewhat of a shock. "I didn't have a career motivation, I had a personal motivation. I had fantasies of becoming a pop star, but that was so removed from what I was doing. I just wanted to write good songs and perform good music."

The band almost broke up at one point, but Clem wouldn't let the group waste away. "He kept calling us up and saying we had such a good start, and he kept prodding us to continue." Chris and Debbie got a break when they got a deal on a loft they could move into together and use for rehearsals as well, and Clem supplied the keystone to those rehearsals by enlisting friend Gary to play bass. "We got banned from CBGBs for eight or nine months. Hilly booked us in and then threw on four other bands, and Gary yelled at him. But I admired Gary for it, not taking anything from anyone..."

But Blondie weren't getting any more gifts, either, after that loft. They had to play out-of-the-way places with poorer drawing power. Recalling that edition of Blondie, Debbie could only say, "we were really a mess."

Later, the acquisition of Jimmy began to have its effects, as did the growing sense of stability among the rest of the group. As the band developed material and tightened up, their enthusiasm rose. "We were so excited, in such a rush to do our songs," said Debbie. Of course, when they went into the studio to record their first LP with Richard Gottehrer, they were still amateurs. "We were so unprofessional—we discovered that we'd never stopped to break down what we'd been doing, and sometimes we were all playing different chords!" But they started learning fast.

Debbie only wished she'd gained more from her earlier experiences in Wind and the Willows (however meager they may have been: "I just wasn't paying attention") and the Stilettos ("We were without a real manager and blew possible deals with RCA and Bearsville"). Blondie's had to come a long way, the hard way.

* * *

The album will be out a few weeks after you read this. Meanwhile, the band, on tour, have hit Central Park's Wollman Arena. Oddly, they seemed more unsure and less powerful on both the newer material (understandable) and even on songs from the second and third albums (hard to figure) than they did on the numbers from the first LP, which seemed to dominate the second half of the set. By the time they got to their last encore, ("Bang a Gong") however, they were smoking hot and the crowd had risen to a fever pitch, and didn't want to let them go. Add to this the fact that local newspapers blasted Blondie's triumph in drawing 20,000 in the Toronto indoor arena playing the same night as a bill down the street of Ted Nugent, Aerosmith, Nazareth, Johnny Winter and the Ramones, all of whom put together drew 50,000 in an open-air stadium. And Blondie just packed 52,000 fans into Belmont Raceway. Somebody out there must like them...

Perhaps, one way or another, Blondie *will* be superstars. Was their recently-found US stardom merely the result of crass marketing of a disco crossover single hit, or is America finally ready to embrace a great '70s pop band? Only the resounding success of the new album will silence their critics and any remaining self-doubts the group may harbor. Alright everybody—Eat to the Beat! ■

The early lineup with Gary Valentine on the right.



Bob Gruen



B.C. Kagan

Ex-Face Kenney Jones on Mods and Sods

By Dave Schulps

"According to Pete, as soon as I went on stage the blood left my face and it didn't come back until I'd left the stage and was back in the dressing room." Kenney Jones, ex-Small Faces and Faces drummer, and, of course, as everyone knows by now, the new Who, reminisces over lunch about his first Who show, at London's Rainbow Theatre, a mere handful of months ago. His enthusiasm about his new job bubbles over into the conversation often, and if there's any extra pressure on him due to having to fill the shoes vacated by the irreplaceable and much loved Keith Moon, he doesn't show it. Maybe because the choice of Jones seemed like such a natural one the attendant comparisons have been avoided for the most part. That Jones has long been acknowledged as a great drummer and that as a former Small Face he shares the same Mod roots as the Who have obviously eased the transition a great deal in the eyes of both the public and critics, who have lauded Jones's work in all three performances with the Who thus far.

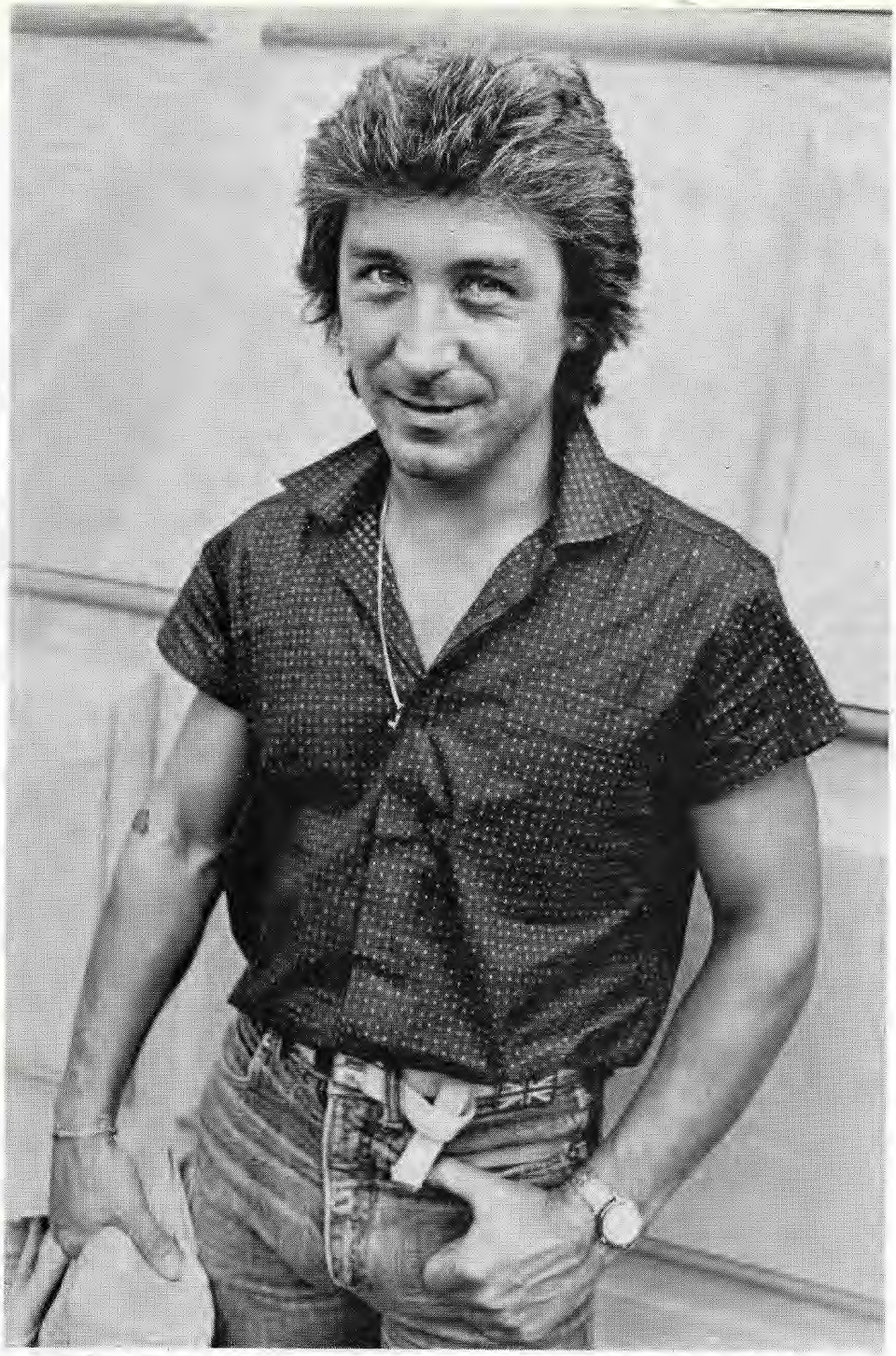
In fact, apart from the aforementioned opening show jitters, Jones claims that playing onstage with the Who represented not so much a stylistic transition as a return to a type of playing he still remembers well from the old Small Faces days. "The arrangements are similar," he explains. "You have to be precise, put an accent in a certain place every time or you'll blow the song. With the Faces [i.e., the Rod Stewart version] there wasn't that type of precision. It was looser than that." With the complexity of the arrangements you'd expect Jones to have rehearsed extensively with the Who in order to learn all the material, but that notion is dismissed: "We really didn't rehearse much at all. We booked Shepperton for two weeks, but the Easter holiday was in the middle, so that cut off four days. When we did rehearse we only worked from two 'til six in the afternoon. Really, it boiled down to about a week's rehearsal to learn everything."

One might also assume that Jones would have been fairly familiar with both the Who's stage act and some of their material—after all, the Small Faces toured with the Who a number of times—but Jones nixes that idea as well: "No, I've never seen that many Who concerts, actually. In the early days when we used to tour together we always used to leave after our set, or get there and go right on. I wasn't that familiar with them at all. The last Who concert I saw was at Charlton in about '73 or '74—the first show they did there, whenever it was. It was quite a while ago, and most of that time I was backstage hitting the bottle—I do like a drink," he chuckles.

As far as Who material goes, Jones also confesses to a certain degree of ignorance: "It's funny, I never really had a chance to listen to the Who because I was always so busy working with the Small Faces and the Faces. It's only now that I'm really able to educate myself in the Who songs as I go along." As to favorite Who songs and albums he names "My Generation," "Substitute" and "Won't Get Fooled Again," with "I Can't Explain" as his all-time favorite, but confesses to not having a chance to listen to any LP all the way through.

"I don't want to be influenced, so I purposely didn't listen to anything. Just before the first rehearsals started I put on a compilation album and the last album and listened to them once, but not even all the way through because my kids kept coming in and interrupting me. It's impossible to listen to anything all the way through in my house. So what I really did was just familiarize myself with the sound, which was there anyway, and went down to Shepperton and played everything exactly right without even learning anything. The first day was so good; it was a little insight into what it would be like by the time we finished rehearsing. The next day it was down to using my brains—remembering the numbers and stuff like that.

I am working in the city



B.C. Kagan

"I mean, I've worked with the Who before. I did the soundtrack LP for **Tommy**. Well, most of it, anyway. I didn't realize it at first, but I was actually in the Who then, in a way. In the studio the second day I was just sitting and playing and all of a sudden I realized that there was Pete on one side and John on the other side. 'Hold on,' I thought, 'this is the Who.' Of course, I dismissed it immediately, because I was in the Faces and I knew that after working on **Tommy** for a week I'd be back on the road with the Faces."

Kenney and John Entwistle also made up the rhythm section on about half the tracks of **Flash Fearless**, a sort of super session-cum-concept album recorded in the latter part of 1974. During those sessions, Jones explains, he played a lot with Entwistle between takes and established the kind of eye contact that's made his transition into the Who a smooth one. "For me, he's not that difficult to play with because of those previews I had. I'll never change my style, anyway—you either like it or you don't—and he's not about to change his either. We accepted each other on that level, so we'd already cracked the ice somewhat."

There's been much talk from time to time, especially by Pete Townshend, of a desire to change the Who's stage act, possibly radically, as they've been doing pretty much the same set, save for a couple of numbers from whatever happens to be the newest album at a given time, for almost a decade. It was thought by many, and hinted at by Townshend, that Keith Moon's death would free the band to alter their show in a way that might not have been previously possible. The first three shows with Jones—the Rainbow gig and two shows outside Cannes, in France—were pretty much in the classic Who mold, with the addition of Rabbit Bundrick on keyboards on a number of tunes being the only major difference in the stage approach. Jones, however, promises that changes are coming, but that those gigs weren't really the right place to introduce them, since he was still learning the ropes.

As to what those changes might be, Kenney says: "I think we can use brass on a few numbers—tracks that contain brass already and maybe on new stuff, as well. That's why I'm so anxious to do a new album. The extras we use on that we'll probably use on stage. Like Wings is only a certain amount of people, but they bring brass on stage when they need them and they get off when they're done playing, so the band is always prominent throughout. The Who always wanted to do that and now they can."

The Who's next shows in America will be the long-sold-out five-night stint at Madison Square Garden in September, and Jones warns that there *may* be a few surprises in store: "We're hoping to do that if we can, but there's no promises. The way the Who's organization works, time is so valuable—one minute we might plan to put aside a week for rehearsal, and somebody from films may come in and take it up if it's really important. If nothing changes, though, and we're able to rehearse as much as we're planning to, there'll be some changes."

How different is the "organization" that surrounds the Who from that of the Faces, when they were together? "There's no difference, really," Jones replies, grinning slyly, "except that I wouldn't call the Faces an organization, I'd call it a *dis*organization. The Who's organization is very professional on every aspect of everything they do: films, light shows, records and interviews."

As for the Who's current plans—which will change from week to week if the last 14 years serve as any kind of precedent—everyone seems to be working on something all the time. According to Kenney, John will be starting on a solo album in Los Angeles shortly, and Pete has already begun recording the first LP of his new solo deal with Atco. Kenney says he'll be making appearances on both records. John and Kenney will also be in charge of the soundtrack for the *McVicar* film, which Roger is currently busy acting in. Then, hopefully, they'll all come together to do a new Who single and start working on an LP in September.

"September's a bit long to wait," Kenney enthuses, "so we want to put out a single before we start recording the album. That way, too, we'll be guaranteed at least one new number in the old stage act. Everybody's so impatient, they can't wait to go into the studio and do a new album with the new band."

As for Pete Townshend's well-known aversion to future touring, Jones claims that Pete's been slightly misunderstood on the subject: "He wants to go out on the road, right, but what he doesn't want to do is anything longer than a three-week or a month tour—which is long enough. Those long, grueling tours, in my opinion, were fatal to a lot of bands and musicians; they really

fucked a lot of people up. That's what he doesn't want to do and that's what I don't want to do. We've all got families and other commitments. What he wants to do is like a week at the Garden, then a month off doing something else, then a week somewhere else or a week of one-nighters. It'll be much better because it'll be more frequent. I'd much rather do that than, say, one long tour and then not come back for two years or so."

Kenney was actually in the process of joining another band when the call came from the Who asking him to join. That band, an Anglo-American six-piece called Lazy Racer, continued on without him and has since released their first album on A&M. "Glyn Johns wanted me to get that band together with a guy called Bill Lamb. I flew over to Portland, Oregon, to meet him. It was going to be a bit like the Eagles, with Dave Markee on bass and Tim Renwick on guitar. My heart wasn't totally in it, but it was something to do, and what else did I have? Then I got the phone call. They knew I was about to sign the deal so they had to snap me up quickly, I suppose. The Who's manager, Bill Curbishley, called and said that the band have had a meeting and they're going to be staying together permanently and wanted me as an equal member. I said, 'Oh, we must have lunch.' I'd become so accustomed to business dealings that it just seemed like the natural way to react. I met with Pete and Bill the next day and didn't say yes or no at first, but after talking with Pete for two hours I agreed. After all, it's where I come from anyway, as opposed to playing in a band with three Americans and two other English people. If you can stick to your roots whenever you can, you're better off."

The question of roots brings us to the Small Faces, which seem to have its share of both pleasant and unpleasant memories for Kenney, a good share of the unpleasant ones being associated with the more recent, reformed version of the group, which put out two albums that were remarkable only for their being so incredibly *un*remarkable.

"That thing finally got out of hand," he explains. "Whilst in the Faces I always had this idea of reforming the Small Faces for a reunion concert. I thought we should do two shows at the Hammersmith Odeon in London, record it, film it, and sell the whole works. We'd been ripped off all down the line and it would be like thumbing our noses at the business if we could do it and get some money back off it. Another thing was that the Small Faces split up too soon. I'd never got a chance to play **Ogden's Nut Gone Flake** on stage. That was my ambition. I only wanted to do that, I didn't want to reform the Small Faces permanently. We got together and instead of playing old stuff, everybody was writing brand new songs and some of them were good. And then they got fucked up and things got out of hand when a lot of people began to say we should stay together permanently. That frightened me, but I thought, 'Well, I'm not doing anything else.' And it frightened Ronnie Lane. He didn't want to do it, though he loved the idea of the reunion gig. Anyway, it was a mistake."

The question of Steve Marriott's current whereabouts seems to rub a sore spot: "He's fucked up. He was then and he totally blew it for everybody—gambling with everybody's life."



Kenney as a Small Face around 1970.

Pressed to explain, Kenney continues: "Well, he's a bit untogether here and there. He had an opportunity to pull himself together and make a new start, but he blew it. That's one of the reasons it didn't work. He's living on the West Coast now, somewhere. I hear he's playing with Leslie West—they kind of suit each other, don't they? Steve's rude—he was very rude to the four of us. In the end I decided I just wouldn't work with him anymore."

The reformed Small Faces—with Rick Wills, now in Foreigner, substituting for Lane on bass—actually stuck together long enough to record two LPs, though. "Two albums that could've been fantastic," Jones says, shrugging. "The ideas on some of the songs were great. If we would have used a producer and acted professionally it might have been really good. I'd do the tracks and go home, because I refuse to work through the night and always have. If they want to stay up all night and blow their brains out they can. So, I'd go home and when I came back they'd finished it and it wasn't very good." He adds nicely, "I can't wait 'til I get to the point where no one asks me about the Small Faces and the Faces, just the Who..."

Did he ever get to play **Ogden's** on stage? "No." He laughs. "That was the thing that pissed me off most. It would've been great to play **Ogden's** and a few old hits like 'Itchykoo Park' and call it a day." And one last Small Faces question. Why did the original band call it quits in the first place? "Because after **Ogden's Nut Gone Flake** everyone felt that we'd made such a great album there was no way we could follow it. We felt drained, and at the time that seemed serious. What we should've done was take some time off to give everybody's brain a rest, but we didn't. That's what happened, really. Also, Steve Marriott had the idea that he wanted to play with better musicians—that really does make me laugh to this day."

Returning to the more timely subject of the Who, a discussion of the so-called "Mod revival" that, if we believe the British music papers, is currently taking place in London leads us back to the Rainbow gig: "I couldn't believe it," Kenney says about that audience. "I walked on stage and I didn't realize it at first, but there were all these young 'faces' in the audience and I looked back and there were older ones and I felt like I was 10 years back in time. I guess there will always be that Who audience. They're all going out and buying scooters. I'm going to buy one myself. I used to have one. You should see the *Quadrophenia* film, it's exactly what we used to all do. Fantastic!"

Has he seen any new bands that really excite him? "Well, I've never really been a concert-goer because I could never sit in an audience without beginning to want to get up on stage and play. I prefer at least standing on the side of the stage, in the wings. I like Blondie and the Boomtown Rats. There's so many good new bands, though I'm glad the punk thing is done with—sticking pins through your cheek, horrible! I just taught my cousin how to play drums and he's got a mod band. I think you're going to see a recurrence of something like the way things were happening when the Small Faces and the early Who were around, except more to do with today."

I wonder if the addition of Rabbit to the Who has eliminated the need for backing tapes on songs like "Won't Get Fooled Again" and "Baba O'Reilly" on stage; tracks which used to require Keith Moon to play with a set of headphones on. Jones shakes his head sadly. "No, we've still got the tapes. Bloody hard to play to. The track comes through the cans and I have to keep in perfect time with the tape. If I go out the whole band will go totally out of time, because they have to follow me. It's really hard to do. There's tremendous pressure to play it right."

Does he, then, have to stop drinking on the day of a show?

"No," he replies adamantly. "Start. I start in the bloody morning, I always have a couple of brandies before I go on, then drink through the show and go off stage pissed out of my brain..." ■



OBLIQUE STRATEGIES

By Jon Young

Devo has just returned from Japan and Jerry Casale says it was "fantastic, possibly our most pleasant experience to date."

The band's bassman, sometime singer and often spokesperson is happy to elaborate. "Have you ever been to Japan? It's somewhat hard to describe but Japan is the most incredible place we've visited, maybe just because it's so foreign to anything Western. Everything I saw there made sense. They are very Devo, to resort to that term. Sorry, but it's true."

Which is to say, Jerry admires the "incredible self-control and cooperative spirit they exhibit, especially in Tokyo, where the population is very dense, more so than New York. Yet there's none of the horrible behavior of the West. Virtually no crime. I saw no violence, no obnoxious freaks, maybe one drunk the whole time. At four in the morning it's as busy as New York at nine in the evening and you feel totally relaxed walking about the streets.

"They're together, what can I say?"

Now this is a bit of a new wrinkle. Anyone who's even a casual student of Devo can hardly have failed to pick up on the collective aghastness that Jerry and the others feel at the state of (ahem) Modern Society. From the comments in interviews on fat housewives in curlers to the "Big Mac attacks" in their songs, these Akron, Ohio, emigrés have tended to preach, group protestations notwithstanding, a gloomy outlook. Even if you managed to tune in primarily to the hysterical high spirits of last year's **Q. Are We Not Men? A. We Are Devo!**, they made sure you didn't go away too excited by closing the record with "Shrivel Up," as in we've all gotta someday. Clearly some sort of relief was needed to keep the Devo aura from souring.

The positive nature of Jerry's observations on Japan is the necessary flip side of Devo's customary depression, a new angle that can also be seen in the title of their second LP. "**Duty Now For the Future** works on a number of different levels," he explains. "It's partly a sarcastic or wry statement on one hand and just a fact on the other. It was an appropriate phrase we had been wanting to use anyway.

Devo: Are we not businessmen?

"It's like what we saw in Japan. There's so many people there that if they were like here in the West, especially in America, every man for himself, the civilization would fall apart. You see lines of people four or five lines wide filing off of tube trains up into the street level; they actually move like traffic patterns, no pushing, no shoving, very aware of each other, incredibly organized. And yet not in any kind of depressing or oppressive way. It's just that they balance their freedoms out with what they understand they must do to have what they want."

Returning to the LP, sort of, Casale continues. "**Duty Now For the Future** is merely the fact of the circumstances we're faced with at the end of the millenium. There are things that are obviously necessary to be done that hopefully will be done in time to keep it all going. If not, people are asking for some kind of crisis or demise."

Consider the lyrics to "Mr. DNA": "He's a man with a plan/ His finger is pointed at Devo/Now we must sacrifice ourselves/That others may live/OK we've got a lot to give." As Jerry cryptically explains it, "In there we're putting ourselves in the position of the altruistic genes."

Duty is produced by Ken Scott, who's worked with Supertramp and the band's old patron saint, David Bowie. When asked why they didn't use Eno again, Jerry is considerably less expansive. "We didn't feel like it was anything to repeat. I just feel like that's what happened in three weeks." (And one day, to be precise; the second one took twice as long.)

Mark Mothersbaugh sheds a little more light. An occasional synthesizer doodler and the lead singer of the majority of Devo's songs, onstage he appears to be a worried guy who's desperately struggling to contain himself, doing his best to stay sane. In conversation, in contrast to Casale's self-assured smoothness, he retains a touch of the emotional edge although he's extremely soft-spoken.

"The recording was all great on the first album. The problem, if there was one, was in the final mix. So it fit less into a pop music format than the new record."

The more convoluted sound of the first LP, recorded in Germany, might also be partially attributable to the fact that "we were celibate the entire time, because none of us could speak German. All these girls that Brian Eno promised to introduce us to, none of 'em lived in Cologne. It was like a lab experiment that went on too long."

Well. Anyway, Mark notes that "Ken Scott is an extremely competent technician. I'd respected the things he'd done with Bowie; I'd liked his drum sounds." Jerry adds, "We wanted to go for a sound that was very similar to our original self-recordings. We made the decision for Ken Scott on the basis that he was primarily an engineer and we felt that he could technically help us attain that. And to some degree we did."

Mark feels that Scott's methods were "quite interesting and quite alien. We did things where everyone played but we only recorded the drum tracks. It was a strange additive process that worked quite well, actually. It was fun. You had to know your parts."



Ebet Roberts

"We've learned a lot," Jerry says. "What we'd like to do is produce ourselves because Devo doesn't really need production. We have our arrangements, we have the running orders, but what we need is an incredibly sophisticated engineer."

But he's emphatic that they wouldn't have produced themselves this time. "We wanna do it in a significant way. The point is, everybody feels like they're more capable than they are. It's the dilettante level we're trying to avoid. We need the proof we can produce ourselves, and we need the confidence of the management and record company so that it's meaningful. Otherwise it would look like a band that's floundering."

So in the future they'll be looking for an engineer "with all the modern technological tricks." That could well mean "someone that's done the most electronic type of disco recording, Giorgio [Moroder], or someone like that. We'd like to take the electronic sounds of disco and use them to make typically Devo songs. We'd be using the same palette as all the catatonic disco music, but it would be to a different end."

Mark echoes this interest. "As far as sequencers go, I think a lot of disco things that are happening now are more right on in terms of sounds—just the fact that disco was responsible for boom boxes and those great sound systems."

Neither one feels that **Duty** is a major step into the future, however. "We don't think this is the time to make our radical move," Jerry expostulates. Then when? "I see a radical change coming about on our next album. It'll be time; it'll be the '80s."

And what's to come? "As far as sound goes, it'll be more patently electronic and more classical. It'll continue to have a hypnotic pulse but all the references to rock'n'roll will be even more removed. We feel this is a good thing because it'll finally break through and take everything that's going on and synthesize it into a form that's truly Devo, rather than implicit or talked about."

"Very danceable," he adds reassuringly.

Meanwhile, guitar player Bob 1—well, that's what he calls himself—says he's slowly working a guitar synthesizer into songs and that "We're looking for synthesizers that will make the sounds we want and be easy to use, so that we're not totally at the mercy of technology."

Also looming in the future, maybe, is a more extensive participation from Booji (pronounced "boogie") Boy. He's the slightly cute, slightly scary little fellow (actually, it's Mark in a mask) who sang a few numbers on the encore of the last tour and who sticks a fork into a toaster in the *Satisfaction* film. Who is this creature anyway?

Jerry laughs. "The Booji Boy character is a regular guy. It's just like Devo represents every man; he represents every boy." Booji Boy's music—slow, tortured, and high-pitched stuff that makes the skin crawl—has never been heard on record but may be soon, perhaps as early as the next LP. "It may be a thing that's included on an EP that's more than the album." Asked whether this is part of the more "radical" approach he was referring to, Jerry says, "Oh yeah, that's the sum of it," and adds: "Including actual vinyl from Booji Boy would have to be done in such a way that it's not passed over."

Mark reviews Booji Boy's past. "There was a time when we did a lot of things privately. Booji Boy used to be on the stage all

Amy Horowitz

I really don't know if I'm feeling dead or alive



Ebet Roberts

the time back in '75-'76; I was never on stage. I don't think he ever sang, maybe one or two songs; he did do part of a song called 'All of Us.' Jerry did most of the vocals back then.

"Then there was a shift in '76-'77 when we went through a lot of material no one's ever heard. Because of changing over to a stage show—we decided to start playing in clubs—and not just doing it in the basement for ourselves, Booji Boy ended up being relegated to an encore position. Maybe someday when the opportunity presents itself Booji Boy will do a **Songs of Inspiration** solo album. He's got about nine songs.

"There's a lot of concept periods we went through. At one time we did a basement demo tape that was 10 versions of the same song done in all sorts of different styles. Maybe we'll bring that out someday; one pimple on the giant acne-covered face of Devo."

But enough nostalgia. More immediately, even as you read this, there's a tour of the US and Canada. Besides tunes from the two LPs, they'll be doing such provocative-sounding numbers as "Soft-Core Mutation," "Soo-Bawlz," "The Girl That Gets Away," "Penetration in the Centerfold" (the B-side of their UK single), and "In Heaven," a Booji Boy song originally from David Lynch's film *Eraserhead* (now in re-release and from which, Mark asserts, "*Alien* ripped off about half of its better techniques").

Most of the films Devo has used to open its stage show previously will be, as Jerry puts it, "relegated to history," but available on a videocassette to be marketed by Time-Life this fall. In their place will be two new ones also filmed with Chuck Statler: *The Day My Baby Gave Me a Surprize*, based on a song from the new LP, and *Roll Out the Barrel*, which Jerry explains is about "Devo and the record business. Rod Ruder is the character, the president of the only record company left in the world."

Implicit in this tour and LP, of course, is building on the large cult inroads made by the first record. Mark feels **Duty** "might be a little more accessible to the radio. It's got a better rhythm section. We're trying to hit on a number of different levels, trying to put our music in a form that will allow it to fit on the radio without losing content." He expresses concern that it be possible for "friends of my little sister in Ohio not to be afraid of it. There's not even a hideous golfer on the cover" as there was on the first LP. (Inspired by Chi-Chi Rodriguez, by the way.)

Jerry agrees on the need for radio play. **Are We Not Men?** sold "just under 200,000 in the US, just under 120,000 in Europe, and 50,000 in Canada. And the only reason that's good is because there was very little to zero airplay.

"Now we're getting more airplay and that's the important thing. The audience is there. When people are allowed to see it and hear it and they like it. The only problem has occurred when radio's stepped in and attempted to choke that relationship."

Ah, yes, where would Devo be without a little paranoia? Referring to their "unpleasant baptism" into the record biz, Jerry rather unenthusiastically goes on to say that Devo's current relationship with Warner Bros. is "all we can expect. Within what a record company does—without getting into that—they've done a very, uh, proficient job."

In a similar vein, Mark, when asked about the prospect of alienating their older, artsier, following responded, "We're worried more about something happening to cut us off." Meaning the Powers That Be.

In fact, nobody expresses any qualms at all about the possibility of having the "wrong" kind of audience (such as one that views them as a variation on Kiss). "Without the support of people, *nothing* can happen," Jerry declares.

There's no way to be misinterpreted to the point of being counterproductive?

"To be counterproductive is to be ignored," Jerry responds.

This raises the possibly outmoded question of a sellout, "which I wish was true," sighs Mark. "Any money we make is being plowed back into concepts, back into ideas. If success happens it just means we can do bigger and better shows. We can do the things we talk about privately, that we fantasize about.

"We're interested in feature-length films; we've got scripts. We're just waiting for our chance at the big leagues.

"There's a lot of room for progress. We're certainly not at the end of our ideas."

Bob 1: "What it comes down to is that we have a lot to say before we shut up."

And finally, if you prefer the humanist image to that of the determined and hungry band, take Mark's parting words: "The war's over, so quit fighting."

And that's where we came in. ■

FRIPP



Mitch Kearney

By David Fricke

"I'm sure that my ball could roll faster if it wasn't going uphill." —Robert Fripp in a phone interview with a Montreal journalist.

A self-congratulatory smile creases Robert Fripp's face as he picks up a copy of the day's *New York Post*. "CRISIS CITY" screams the headline with subheads decrying the gasoline shortage in New York City, a possible meat shortage caused by the independent truckers' strike, and the politicians' inability to do much of anything about either.

"If I'd said five years ago," announces Fripp in his soft but steady tone of voice, "that this would be the front page headline today, they would have laughed. Five years ago I *did* say that and people *did* laugh."

The 33-year-old Fripp isn't exactly laughing now, but he feels some justification in pointing out that during the course of his current one-man Frippertronics tour of England, Europe, and America he has seen concrete evidence of the "dinosaurs"—as he has been calling the social and industrial macrostructures governing our lives for at least those five years—sliding into the tarpits while he and other, yes, "small, intelligent, mobile units" rise to the fore to carry on the business at hand. The idea of the dinosaurs vs. the units (or "gazelles" as he also calls them) has been a prominent metaphor in Fripp's conversation since he first started doing interviews last year and while many Fripp followers have had "dinosaurs" and "gazelles" up to here, there is no denying that with the release of Fripp's **Exposure** and the Frippertronics tour that followed, Robert Fripp has made his point and made it well.

"The Frippertronics tour is part of the drive to 1981"—an individual offensive detailed in Fripp's liner notes on **Exposure**—"which operates on two levels. First, on the marketing level, the campaign in the marketplace but not bound by the values of the marketplace; and secondly, as a way of promoting ideas near to my heart, not by talking about them, but by trying to live them."

Example: the Frippertronics trek, in which he is accompanied only by his guitar, a combination road manager/technician, and two Revox tape recorders often provided for him at the gig, is a tour like any other rock tour in that it helps to promote sales of **Exposure** and in every city Fripp does the required interviews and radio promo visits. Unlike most tours, Fripp has mapped out an unusual itinerary of small, out-of-the-way clubs (in New York he returned to the Soho arts venue, the Kitchen, where he played a one-off in February '78), restaurants (the Pizza Express in London, for one), and record shops (e.g. Plastic Fantastic in Philadelphia). The idea was to deflate the usual rock concert context into one allowing for human interaction.

Such interaction, or the attempt to initiate same, must be very tiring. On the day of this interview, Fripp looked tired and drawn, his eyes still waiting for that second cup of coffee, although he spoke at his usually garrulous clip. "You've seen me at the beginning of my day," he allowed. "As the day progresses, I shall be humming a bit more," a reference to that night's Kitchen show, the fourth of his eight-night stint there.

"I think probably it's only yesterday I started to wilt," he grins. "Because I don't treat interviews, for example, as automatic things any more than I do playing. It's a question of how to be human and put real life into it. And that requires energy, an effort. There is a lot of energy about in the ideas and the music and from one point of view, it's the music that keeps me going. It's almost as if there's an energy in the music that I draw from."

He expects his audience to liberally draw from the music as well and when they don't, he becomes a bit perturbed. He goes on to describe "two or three situations that were difficult. The first was for a radio concert, in a studio. The audience came along and simply were passive, they expected to be entertained. There was little I could do with the audience, who went away feeling intrigued.

"The second was in a rock club, which was a lot larger than I expected. They also came along anticipating entertainment and went away intrigued. It's also funny that one stands up and says, 'I don't want to be part of this vampiric relationship'"—another generic Fripp term for the rock star fixation—"to which they cry, 'Hurray, a man of the people' and then come up to me saying,



Mitch Kearney

'Can we have your autograph, a photograph, a pic...?' Very peculiar."

It may seem rather cold for Fripp to even conceptually deny a fan's right to desire an autograph or a quick pic. It is also ironic since Robert Fripp is a central figure in the British art-rock trilogy of Fripp/Eno/Gabriel as a result of his time with King Crimson and brotherly alliance with both Eno and Peter Gabriel (the unavoidable Genesis connection). Many of the Crimsoids who came to see Fripp at the Kitchen were visibly unimpressed by the Frippertronics, the atmospheric mood created by the eerie drone flowing from the tape loop, or even Fripp's own spirited soloing. They came to *see* Fripp, not to hear him, and he feels the dinosaurs tend to feed that public fetish.

"Apparently, some adverts—spots on the radio, I think you call them—said, 'Robert Fripp is coming to such-and-such a place,' and then played Crimson music, implying that I would be playing Crimson music—which is very dumb."

So Fripp then goes out of his way to further confound audience expectations and from that confusion construct a new audience/performer relationship, as he did in that third situation. This one took place in what Fripp calls "a very nice arts center," just the kind of concert context he'd gone out of his way to avoid on the Frippertronics tour. "One of the main subtexts of Frippertronics is the idea that art is not something to be locked up in a museum and only available during business hours. I prefer those situations that are more normal or accessible..."

Fripp responded to his surroundings by, on the second night of his two-show stay, starting the show before anybody even came in. "I thwarted their expectations by setting up a little coffee table and easy chair and as people walked in I had the tape of the previous night playing while I had a glass of wine or a cup of coffee. And after a half-hour or 45 minutes of this, I got up and played, then sat down, listened to the tape and had more wine or coffee."

That his audience doesn't always take the cue doesn't bother him any more than the gas crisis does. "Not all the ideas go in immediately. But the ideas have a validity, they are appropriate. The time for these ideas is not far off."

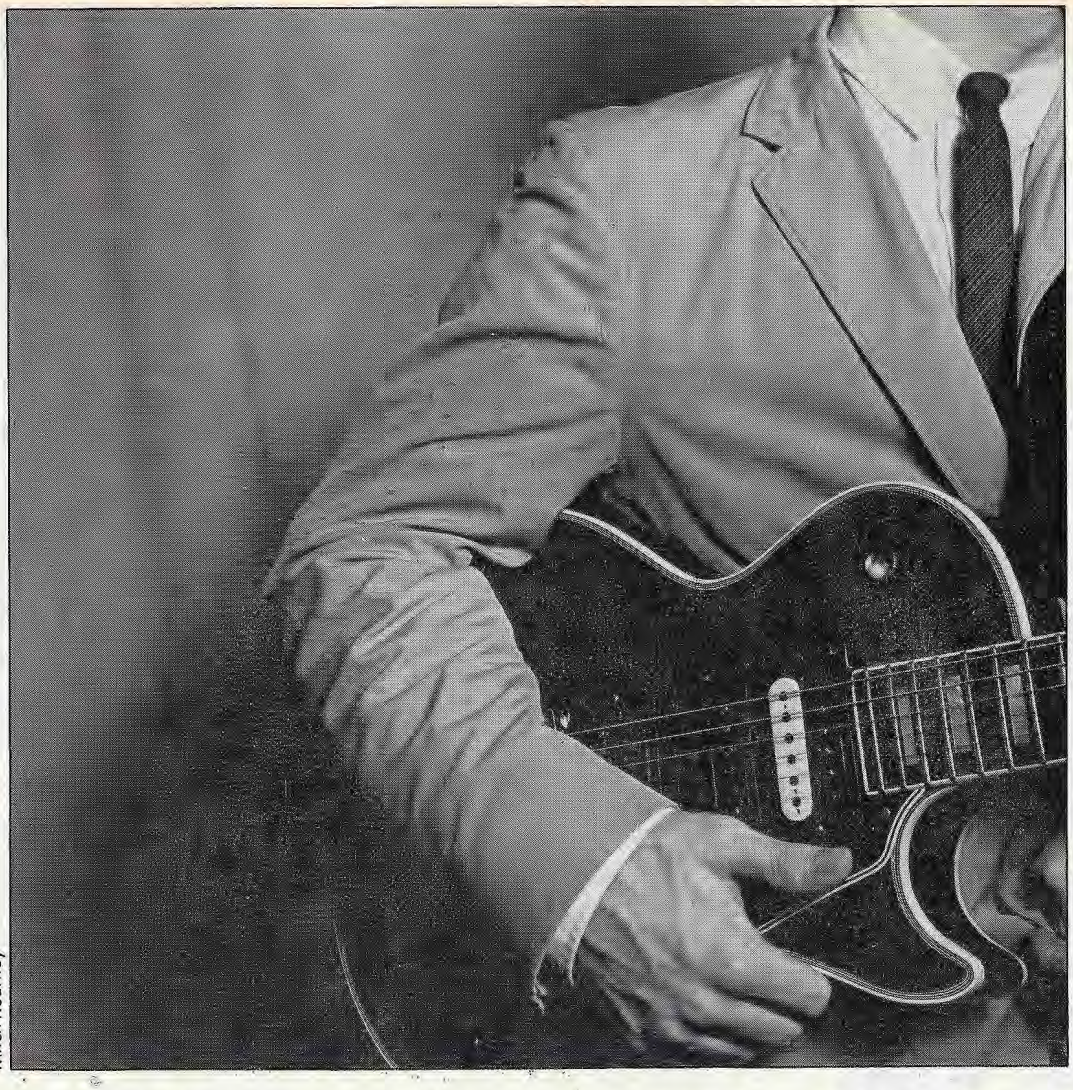
The unflagging spirit with which Fripp promotes his ideas and those of the English theorist J.G. Bennett, whose teachings he studied at Sherborne after his '74 retirement from King Crimson, may be uncomfortably close to proselytizing for some. At the Kitchen shows, the price of a ticket included a cassette of a J.G. Bennett talk on the subject of "God and the Creation Four." And Fripp's insistence on swimming upstream against the pop music current can also be misinterpreted as obstinence. There is a story, for instance, that Fripp went to do a radio concert in Philadelphia under the assumption that the concert would be aired live. When informed that it was being taped for later broadcast, he played the Frippertronic show anyway and, at concert's end, asked for a copy of the tape before leaving. Told that copies had to be made and that this would take time, Fripp took matters into his own hand and calmly sliced the tape in two with a razorblade. No tape, no radio concert. At least, so goes the story.

How then does he explain releasing **Exposure** through the corporate dinosaur Polydor? After railing against the industrial elements because they didn't understand Crimson, wouldn't release without considerable prodding the Fripp/Eno albums, wouldn't release the Fripp-produced **Sacred Songs** by Daryl Hall at all, and shelved a Peter Gabriel single because Fripp's guitar solo was an "irritant"—after all this, he releases **Exposure** on Polydor? Not to worry, he grins.

"It's a question of being mobile within a framework," he says, noting that this is a period of "transition" in which smarter gazelles can temporarily utilize dinosaur resources. "It's very easy, also, for us to forget that when we talk about dinosaurs, we're talking about size, a unit of organization. It's very easy to forget that people are involved. And a lot of people I've met are very nice straightforward people stuck in a situation..."

One of those people could be Daryl Hall,

So I got this bedsit on Earl's Court



Mitch Kearney

the tall, blond, rakish half of Hall and Oates, who once—in Fripp's words—"effectively denied" even making **Sacred Songs** with Fripp due to RCA heat regarding the commercial damage such a liason could do to the Hall and Oates career. Hall and Fripp are now planning a quick fall guerrilla tour together with a band, although no decisions on song material or venues have yet been made. But when Daryl first suggested the tour to Fripp, the latter calmly laid down his conditions—three weeks' rehearsal, everyone in the band getting equal shares as opposed to being paid sidemen, and only playing small "situations."

"'Fine,' said Daryl. Daryl doesn't have to be convinced about dinosaurs. It's good that our personal relationship has survived through all the difficulties. And, as Daryl said to me, 'They can't stop us from working together.'"

And how does Fripp explain the quiet acquiescence of RCA in this matter? "Instead of discovering that Fripp is an obscure artist who can in turn obscure Daryl Hall's career, with the response to **Exposure**, someone has woken up and discovered that this might not be such a bad idea after all."

That gets Fripp started on the subject of **Exposure** itself, an admittedly amazing document that's already been dissected and praised in these pages. In discussing **Exposure**, he throws modesty to the winds, as he does in all subjects. But far from being a raving egotist, Fripp is merely indulging in honesty. If he thinks **Exposure** is a "hummer," which he does, he won't hesitate to say it, although when he does it is with a most disarming smile.

"I think **Exposure** is going to do a lot better than people think. I think there is a turning of opinion within some parts of the industry, that it surprised a lot of people. [Note: As of this writing, **Exposure** is in the upper 100 reaches of the pop album charts; not bad for an artist widely dismissed as eccentric.]

"You see, I see it as a 1980s' version of 'A Day in the Life.' One's day begins with the dreams and then the telephone interrupts and the first program of the day is problems with the bird, then the rush to work, then your mother calls you up and bends your ear. And so on through the day. **Exposure** is an autobiography of Robert on a day-to-day level with family, lovers, the people next door. It's also a psychological autobiography as well as spiritual. But Robert is only the excuse, the symbol. If you took Robert's name off and put your name in, it would be just as applicable...that's why I think it's going to be very successful. Because it's so good, so general, yet so specific at the same time."

Exposure is only the first installment of Robert Fripp's widely publicized Drive to 1981. Future installments will include two Frippertronics albums already titled **Music for Sports** and **Music for Palaces** after the fashion of Brian Eno (**Music for Films** and **Music for Airports**), whom Fripp credits with introducing him to the skysaw guitar technique he calls Frippertronics. There will also be a Discotronics LP come the fall of '80 entitled **Music for Kitchens**.

Beyond that, Fripp will only reveal that come 1984, when "there will be panic," he will be settled back in the rural burgh of Wimbourne, his English home and birthplace, watching the decline of the cities. "Wimbourne, in the next 10 years, will have to find its own solutions to garbage disposal, health, education, etc. What I shall do, I think, is participate in the cultural life of Wimbourne, which would seem obvious since that is my background. And my plan is to form a guitar school and I am currently looking for premises. I can have my guitar school where, in a period of decreasing geographical mobility, I will be in a fixed place. And I will also publish my book on guitar mechanics."

But in the meantime, he will tour with Frippertronics and endure endless questions from fans, freaks, and interviewers about fave Crimson cuts, the fate of the Giles brothers, and other—to him—useless trivia. For example, in a phone interview he conducted with a Montreal writer just before settling into this conversation, Fripp covered his whole life's story, from the time he sold

Continued on page 44

And like not many people come to visit me

MADE IN JAPAN

AN EYE-WITNESS REPORTS ON THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES OF THE ROCK SCENE IN THE LAND OF THE RISING SUN



By Barry Jacobs

They clutch the concert programs like straws. The Japanese girls in neat chiffon dresses and tap shoes sit stiffly on the subway home from Budokan. An hour ago the lights were up, the music was on. They flung streamers at the stage, cried, and spilled soda all over their socks. Now their faces are damp with perspiration and they are quiet. These are the women who've sold their souls for rock'n'roll. Tonight it was Rod Stewart. Last night it was Queen. And tomorrow it's back to the prissy blue sailor outfits that are the national uniform for all Japanese high school girls. They've only got until morning to dream. On the train home, their fingers smudge the color prints of the program. Their tap shoes kick back and forth idly.

Robin Zander of Cheap Trick has dozens of horror stories of being hunted down by these fans in the streets of Japan for a few strands of blond hair. It is said that he could run for Japanese prime minister on the strength of puppy love. And win. Graham Parker includes two songs about Japan on his new album and accounts of groupies who wanted more than sex—they wanted escape. And Elvis Costello, after his tour there in late 1978, swore he'd never go back.

The face of Japanese rock is reminiscent of that of your average Japanese girl. It wears too much red lipstick and giggles a lot. It likes to scream and shout, but brushes its teeth three times a day. It is colored by all sorts of strange juxtapositions between the traditional propriety and the ultra-modern cosmetic features of Japanese culture. In the land of raw fish and convention are the world's staunchest heavy metal freaks. In a society of fabled sobriety, the fans worship rock'n'roll in a frenzied manner not seen since the early Beatle days. Japanese rock is a hysterical and profitable business, run on social norms that are foreign to our understanding, but rooted, even more so than in the West, on that most universal of conceptions—good marketing.



Hordes of Japanese fans click their Rick.

It would take a Robert Altman movie to capture the interminable activity and constant hype of Japanese culture—a whole society plugged into a million media sources and periodically swept by short-lived, devastating commercial trends. Borrowed from the Americans, rock has caught on and been molded into part of the disposable media industry. Heroes are manufactured like so many Leif Garretts, remaining the same youthful age year after year, then dropping out of sight. For the domestic music scene, the palpability of a slick exterior takes higher precedence than musical innovation. Most Japanese bands more closely resemble Las Vegas lounge acts than leaders of rebellious youth. For the American and English bands that storm through the Japanese charts it is largely the group's image that determines the amount of media hoopla that's going to lift them to the top of the market. If they play their psychological cards right, they can make their entire living—even if they bomb the rest of the world over—on yearly tours of Japan. And many do just that.

The Japanese like Donny Osmond and Judas Priest but don't have much use for Barry Manilow and the Grateful Dead. Cheap Trick are mammoth superstars but no one's ever heard of the Cars. Why they like who they like seems to us contradictory. But it follows certain patterns.

Lead singer Robin Zander of Cheap Trick is cute. Tom Petersson of Cheap Trick is cute, too. But the way the Japanese girls throw themselves specifically at Robin one would think Tom had bad breath or something. The secret lies in the kind of beauty. Robin's got soft, shaky eyes and slight shoulder blades. He looks like if he stooped he'd snap like a chicken wing. Tom wears boots, is darker in complexion, and generally looks healthier. The Japanese girls look at him and say, "Yes, he's handsome." They look at Robin and say, "Kawaee so"—an all-encompassing Japanese expression meaning, "Oh he looks so poor and adorable I'd just love to take him home and mother him." It's Robin's sense of "kawaee so" that brings out the maternal instincts in teenage Japanese girls. Right now, his face is everywhere in Japan from magazine covers to full-sized posters. And every time a Japanese girl sees the face she wrings her hands and gives a little gasp.

Barry Manilow is thought by some American women to have a certain amount of loveableness, jumping around on stage in his leisure suits. But the Japanese simply can't stomach him. There's none of the pitiableness about him to attract them.

Tom Petersson's more macho image, likewise, does nothing for them. There's too much egoism involved in the trumped-up character. **Saturday Night Fever** may be hot stuff in the Japanese record stores but no one pays much heed to John Travolta, either. They want the soft and cuddly kind of lonely guy. They want, and riot to get, Robin Zander.

On the other side of the adorable is the lurid. And, as contradictory as it may sound to the "kawaee so" phenomena, the dirtier and more evil-looking a band may seem the more records they're likely to sell. There is no parallel for a scummy appearance in Japanese society. Everyone's so obsessively clean and neat that even the poorer populations dress immaculately. When Japanese teenagers wear black leather jackets they all look like they've just had them dry-cleaned and pressed. When they slick back their hair it smells like they've used French salon hair oil. Yet the Japanese are attracted to the lurid exactly because it doesn't visibly exist in their own society. It's just like the Japanese love of monster movies. When society is so safe and regimented as to pose no dangers, one can afford to envision over-sized reptiles. Especially when they're only on film. Or, better yet, when they're only to be observed—and from a safe distance—on the rock'n'roll stage.

Subsequently, Japan has been and still is the haven for heavy metal noise mongers. Deep Purple's "My Woman From Tokyo" was only the tip of the iceberg. Japanese teenagers gobble down everything from Uriah Heep to Nazareth to Judas Priest—bands who haven't sold a dozen copies of their albums in the United States in half a decade. And these bands practically depend on the Japanese market for their livelihood. Their yearly tours in huge halls on the Japanese mainland bring in the bucks to go back to England or California to tinker in relative obscurity. A couple of Deep Purple ex-members do yearly solo tours of Japan and cut live albums exclusively for the Japanese market. And they do quite nicely.

Of all the so-called English punk bands, the one to make the most impression in Japan has been the Stranglers. And it's no wonder. Never has the ugliness and nihilism of a group been so evident and simple-minded. And the Japanese, most of whom haven't the vaguest emotional understanding of the political circumstances in which the Stranglers' music developed, just eat up the dark overtones.

The third clue to success in rock and rather good for the rest of Japanese society as well, is summed up in the old adage: "When America sneezes, Japan catches a cold." Americans know nothing about Japan except that people get packed into the subways like anchovies. The Japanese, on the other hand, are obsessed with American trends, fashions, tastes. More Japanese music magazines cover American music than cover Japanese bands. Japanese reporters are constantly scouring American cities for the latest cultural low-down. The record charts from New York and London are printed weekly in many of the Japanese dailies. Recently, one Japanese music magazine went so far as to re-print an interview of James Chance (formerly) of the Contortions that originally appeared in the *New York Rocker*. Now no one in Japan will ever hear a James Chance record, *see* James Chance, or understand why James Chance loves to maul his audience. But Japan is an information culture. And America is the land of the free and materialistically-endowed. So, for the Japanese, all information about America, with or without the artistic product in hand, is the kind of essential stuff of which religious pamphlets are made.

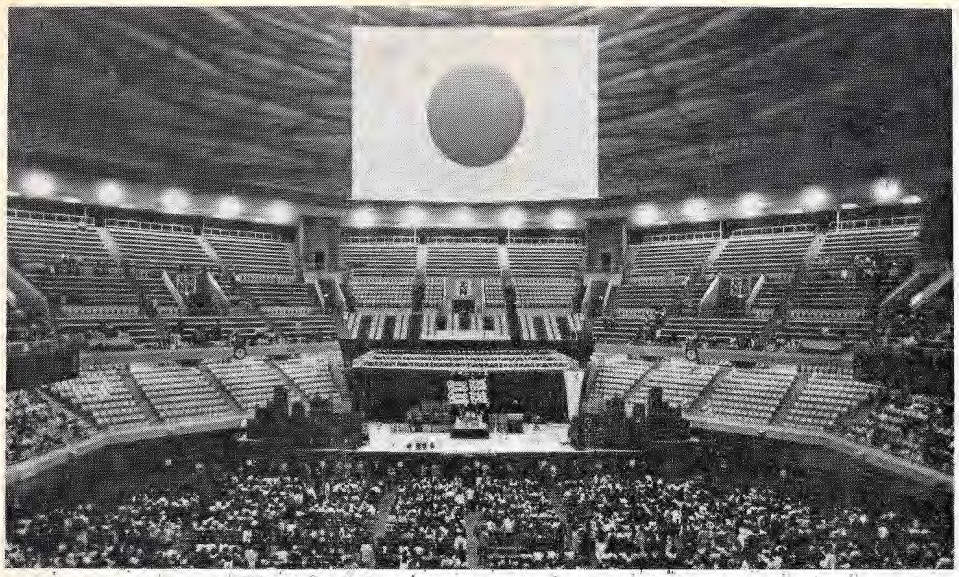
Give the latest American hit two months and chances are good it'll be riding the Japanese charts. In the case of British music, it's got to first be approved by the American consumers before the Japanese will accept it. This spring saw major tours by Rod Stewart, Linda Ronstadt, Boston, Queen, and other industry heavies. Their success in America is widely known to the Japanese. Their success in Japan has as much to do with identification with the American public as with the music itself.

The Elvis Costello tour of Japan of 1978 was not a particularly successful one. Playing before mostly half-filled houses, the

PINK LADY (Ladies?)



But there's this bird across the way



This is Budokan...in case you were wondering.

band did very little to enhance mediocre album sales. According to the three rules of etiquette we've established, Elvis fared badly. He may be lonely but, outside of a couple of masochists, he's not about to inspire a mother's sympathy. He may be kind of nasty but he's not quite evil. And his success in the US is still bordering on cult phenomena. Plus Elvis, with his usual confrontation politics, violated the ultimate rule in the book. Japanese love group regulations but feel uncomfortable being pressured by personal dogma which they see as selfish and generally unwise. Elvis and the band rented a flatbed truck and rode through the streets of downtown Tokyo, playing their music while donning the all-black military uniforms worn by Japan's male high school students. While this kind of ploy ranked as a genuine media event when the Rolling Stones pulled it off in New York a few years ago, the mid-afternoon disturbance in Tokyo was regarded coldly by Japan's business masses. Elvis was trying to cut through the work-a-day surface of these people's lives and touch them, even if he had to stand up there in regimented attire mimicking them. But the Japanese who were there couldn't have cared less. Some groups may just not be suited to the nap of the Japanese music market. And Elvis for one, after having claimed he'd not return to Japan, may be quite pleased to put himself in that category.

While the foreign bands grab most of the headlines, the domestic Japanese groups sell most of the records—around 70% of all records sold in Japan. Most of the domestic music is dominated by a pop scene so cakey-sweet that it's enough to make any real rock fan wretch. Groups like Pink Lady, Godiego, and Alice prance nightly on the television "big shows" and their records perennially hover at the top of the Japanese record charts. The "big shows" are reminiscent of the American television variety shows of the '60s and consist of musical acts, dancers, comedians, and the most bland kind of TV personalities. Singers are generally young girls with big sappy smiles and are accompanied by hordes of go-go girls in the background bouncing through some far-fetched choreography. The musical entertainers on these programs are a select club of beautiful people who appear night after night, year after year, until someone gets too old and must be replaced. There are many of these "big shows" in Japan and they're quite popular with the viewing public. A song performed on one of these programs has a good chance of hitting it big.

Pink Lady, who are soon to be releasing an album in this country, are two cute Japanese women who wear matching sexy outfits and sing pre-programmed pop melodies while dancing. With each new song they release, there are new outfits and new dance steps. Within a week, every Japanese child between the ages of four and 40 has actually practiced and memorized every nuance of the routine they've seen on TV. The popularity of Pink Lady is so pervasive that their faces seem to follow you around all day—on magazines, subway ads, kids' sneakers, paper cups, etc.

Godiego are less pretty but more talented. They play cheery pop music in the great tradition of Three Dog Night with nice soft hooks and powerful harmonies. One of their most recent hits was the theme song from a popular Japanese television program. They're a bunch of softies but at least they're spirited softies.

Alice is one of the most popular folk-rock bands in Japan, drawing on both Japanese traditional forms and California mellowness. Acoustic guitar frills and sweet melodic changes are chucked in overabundant quantities to produce an over-charmingly pleasant sound.

The influence of American music on the Japanese pop scene sometimes takes some strange turns. A Japanese male pop star recorded his own version of the Village People's "Y.M.C.A.," changing the words and turning it into an ode for little kids based on the general theme of "young man, earnest soul." As the hit rode the charts, the young pretty boy singing the song appeared frequently on the "big shows." The dance he had made up to go along with the song became all the rage with young Japanese school kids and at the discos. What was so ironic was not a single Japanese had even the foggiest notion of the humorous homosexual connotations that the American version's success was built on. They had no idea of what Y.M.C.A. was supposed to mean except for the place where kids play checkers on rainy Sundays. When the Village People's version of "Y.M.C.A." came out in Japan they bought that too, and danced to it in perfect innocence. They couldn't figure out why the members of the Village People dressed so funny on the record sleeves. But some figured it just might be the coming fashion fad.

The less commercial Japanese bands play everything from jazz-tinged flowing melodies to rhythm and blues. On the whole they're generally inferior to the American bands working in the same genres. Part of the problem is drumming. American rock inherited its backbeat from the blacks. The Japanese inherited theirs from the Americans who inherited from the blacks and something's got lost in the process. Japanese walk in stiff, crisp steps. The backbeat swagger of rock is not a natural rhythm for them.

Another part of the problem is a reliance on technical virtuosity. Japanese love flashy guitar work and there are some really superb Japanese guitarists. But this is often undertaken at the expense of a complete coherent, driving sound. It is too often riffing for riffing's sake.

All these things are part of the greater malaise which, at least to these American ears, plagues Japanese rock. The basic tenets of rock'n'roll—the rebelliousness, the middle class kind of desperation—are emotions almost completely absent from Japanese society. The rugged individualists get cut down early in Japan. For them, the rock form isn't an outlet for a certain kind of adolescent energy because that kind of energy either is completely sublimated by society's demands on the individual or largely doesn't exist in the first place. For most of the Japanese, rock is a set of chord structures they've borrowed from the Americans without the juice that makes it all happen. It is hollow. Similarly, Japanese R&B bands are notoriously bad. They have no feeling for the subtleties that make Sam and Dave or Muddy Waters so expressive. They play the songs without having lived them.

Two Japanese bands that have largely avoided these kinds of pitfalls are the Plastics and Shokichi Kina. In both cases, the bands have bones to pick with the world they see around them and their music benefits from a certain emotional intensity that's rare for the Japanese.

As art designers, Toshi Nakanishi and Chica Sato of the Plastics are afforded a first-hand view of one of the slickest, most perverse aspects of modern Japanese culture—the Tokyo fashion industry. The songs they write deal with the deterioration of Japan in the wake of too many pleated suits and too much television. Their music and stage presence works off the supposition that Japan's gone mechanical. Short repeating bass patterns are overlaid with electronic keyboard and distorted guitar work. They have replaced the drummer with a rhythm machine, giving their music a constant tick-tock feel. On stage, they swivel like robots, wear hand-tailored galactic uniforms, but sing with incredible rage. The Plastics are not very dissimilar in approach from Devo but

Japanese New Wave on Vinyl; Three From the Techno-Culture

YELLOW MAGIC ORCHESTRA
Horizon/A&M HZ 736

TOKYO ROCKERS
CBS/Sony AH09

TOKYO NEW WAVE '79
Victor SJX 20122

Tokyo is a city of eleven million scurrying inhabitants whipping their ways through lifetime employment in the latest fashions of American business magnates living the good electronic life. The pervading sense of security here is staggering. What isn't chained-weighted by traditional values has been gilded by a modernity made slick by the whine of household appliances. Nearly everyone wants to drive an American car.

These three albums reflect something of Tokyo's techno-culture. The first two are from "new wave" groups who generally are rebelling against the surface mechanisms of Japanese society. The third is from a band that revels in them, distorting and mixing them in their own image.

The Tokyo punk scene started a few months after the British scene began to rise. But while the British faded, the Tokyo punks have plodded on anonymously with the same noisy chords intact. The **Tokyo Rockers** and **Tokyo New Wave '79** collections feature live recordings of bands ranging from the reggae-influenced S-Ken to the atonal Bolshie. But their influences have not yet strayed so far from the original pared-down conceptions; the music is harsh, often excessive, and still lacking in the all-out pop feel that's fueled bands in England and America.

The two albums differ slightly in character. **Tokyo Rockers** features Lizard! and S-Ken, two of the most eclectic bands on the scene and among the most popular. Lizard! plays some well-designed funky rockers with synthesizer frills used as a melodic counterpoint for some dirty guitar playing. S-Ken also like to use electronics, and employ lots of distorted guitar and the slow backbeat of reggae. Among the Tokyo bands they're probably the most proficient, but they also could rock out a bit more than they do. Word has it that they are presently negotiating with Stiff Records.

Tokyo New Wave '79 presents some of the more radical bands, some of whom sound not too dissimilar to the "No Wave" groups of New York. The most powerful band here is Bolshie, who create an eerie, heavily distorted sound with strange English lyrics. (Japanese is hard to pronounce in rock's 4/4 time structure, so many bands borrow English when it's convenient.) "(I Want To Be) A Robot in Hospital" may sound like artistic gump to us, but to the Japanese, these strange words, invoked in a language they may barely understand, take on nothing short of cosmically ineffable proportions. The band switches rhythms frequently, raising and easing the tension of the music by effectively varying the volume, and ultimately sounds more convincingly alienated than the rest of the Tokyo scene put together.

The **Yellow Magic Orchestra** album is the first Japanese record in several years to be marketed by an American company for release in this country. Frankly, it's a brilliant distillation of the Western influences that pulse through Japanese life. The diversity is here: synthesizer work styled after the German bands, taut, near-disco rhythms, and the crisp, static quality of Devo, all laid over a zippy 1940s kind of romantic decadence. Yet it remains truly Japanese. The Y.M.O. draws on the music that accompanies the video toys that are so overwhelmingly popular in current Japan, as well as the mad hum of the Tokyo subways. So much of it appears recognizable, but twisted—a wholly modern kind of appeal that bridges and transcends all categorical boundaries. Y.M.O. captures the perversely structured anarchy of Tokyo, whacking out its essence in sharp little bleeps and burps. How it will lodge in this country—either with the disco or Eno/Fripp camps—will be interesting to observe.

These three records (and a recent short documentary film) bring some of the radical aspects of Tokyo music to a level of visibility not previously known. Chances are, however, they will remain cult items in their own country—the rest of Japan is more interested in the shiny and the palatable [just like home—Ed.] than the vulgar or quirky. As a result, there may be a brighter future for these bands abroad. The vitality on their records is odd, enriched by too many Western postures, but raw with the pressures of a context we can vaguely imagine. These are the kids who won't kowtow to Cheap Trick, although they may latch onto other Americanisms. These are the kids who have something more to say about Japan—even if nobody's listening—than the Budokan's identically dressed, shrieking, yet tame masses.

—BJ



Ian Buruma

THE PLASTICS

come across with anger instead of collegiate humor. Columbia, Victor, and Stiff record companies have all expressed an interest in the band.

Shokichi Kina is from Okinawa, which is one of the most unfortunate things that can happen to a person in Japan. The Okinawans are widely discriminated against on almost all levels of society. Shokichi Kina plays the rock outlaw, speaking out for Okinawans, challenging the rest of society. His music is not so much rock as insistent chanting based on Japanese rock and folk patterns. It is powerful in the same way that Bob Marley's music is—lacing politics with religious fervor that gets the most mileage out of simple forms and strong desires.

After Dylan's and Cheap Trick's Budokan successes, we're bound to hear more music by way of Japan. As some bands have already discovered, it is a ripe market with enormous enthusiasm for American product. There's the off-chance that Japanese music may one day ride the coattails back over here, with releases and tours in this country. As Japan itself becomes increasingly important in the world economic picture, the chance of such an exchange of rock culture seems more and more likely.

But the two forms entail different currencies. The rock cultures are not the same. When the girls in the chiffon dresses lie in bed at night and think of "America," it is not a place that we Americans would recognize. If and when we hear Japanese rock in this country, we will praise it and put it down with considerations that the Japanese probably couldn't understand.

Robin Zander may wonder why he's chased. If he really wants to know he should let himself get caught. There, gaggling around him, will be girls desperate for something different, but rigidly enmeshed in the styles of the times. They all want to be married by the time they're 23. Their nature is quiet. The only chords they've ever really heard are dinner bells. One kiss from Robin's lips would put an end to them all. ■

GREEN CIRCLES

By Jim Green

Since the inception of Trouser Press, the choice of what is covered has largely been a matter of personal preference of the powers that be. Value judgments aside, black music has never been included in Trouser Press's scope. Until now. (For that matter, neither has folk, classical, any type of jazz, or ethnic music.)

Way back in TP 13 (April-May 1976), I reviewed a couple of reggae singles because I'd been intrigued by the musical form since Island first tried the Wailers' **Catch a Fire** LP on the American record-buying public. My feelings at the time were that TP ought to pay attention to a field so highly regarded by our journalistic idols, the British music papers. But in light of space limitations and other considerations (lack of sympathy by other TP-ers), reggae 45s didn't last long in this column.

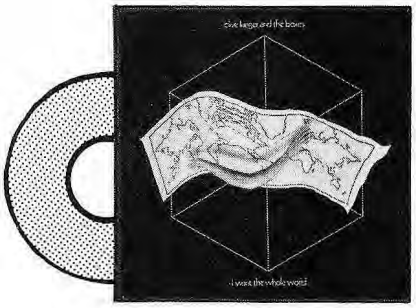
But things have changed in the past three years, and several reasons make us now feel that reggae is a significant and notable influence, both in substance and spirit, on the music (and musicians) we regularly cover in TP, and that the time has come for us to include reggae in these pages. The Police, Joe Jackson, the Clash, Elvis Costello and others have made it clear that reggae is "cool," and unlike the blues and soul music that helped mold any '60s rocker of note, it is a viable and thriving genre, not dissipated, co-opted, or dated.

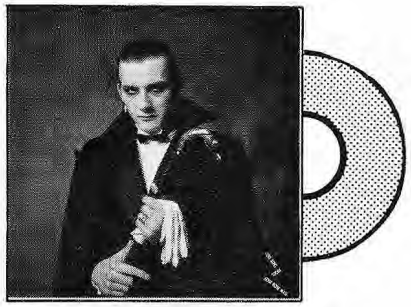
We don't plan on jumping into reggae coverage whole hog—it's not a main focus of the magazine, nor are we equipped or informed enough to pretend authority in the field. However, an intelligent, exploring dose of our admittedly diletantish view should provide a useful tonic for the Trouser troops, as well as serve as an introduction for those of our readers who see the development of reggae as a significant musical trend.

Since singles have long been the prime medium for reggae recordings, what better place to start than in a singles column? Here are four very different samples of the current reggae crop that you might want to feast your ears on:

The Regulars: "Fool's Game" b/w "Victim"—CBS (UK) 7271. Both sides are numbers in a fairly standard "commercial" reggae style, '60s soft-soul vocals intoning a lilting hook, with mainly the rhythm and a faint Jamaican accent making it reggae. A lesson in how to be "mellow" without being embarrassingly laid-back. (CBS UK issued some black vinyl copies coupled with pic-disc versions.)

Nigger Kojak/Joe Gibbs & the Professionals: "Massacre" b/w "S.I.R."—Laser (UK) LAS 3. This black 'Jak's a terrific "toaster," laying down some genial jive







about cops 'n' robbers hijinks down JA way in his thick, patois-laden voice, while the Professionals set up a moderately upbeat groove. Joe Gibbs, label honcho and producer, pulls the levers for the dub version flipside.

Eddy Grant: "Living on the Frontline" b/w "Frontline Symphony"—Ensign (UK) ENY 26. Despite making a good bit of chart impact in '67-'68, the Equals' driving black pop-rock has been undeservedly forgotten ever since. But Eddy Grant, the band's creative core, has prospered and matured in the intervening years and resurfaces with this little gem, which he wrote, sang and apparently played most of. His terse but expressive vocals carry a gospel roots melody, sparsely embellished by some keyboards and a smart little guitar solo and riding atop an insistent synth-bass lick that'll have you on your feet and skanking before you know it. ("Symphony" is a "classical" treatment of the tune, making tastefully low-key use of a synth-orchestra.) If I can pull it off the turntable, I just might finish this column...

The Special, AKA/The Selecter: "Gangsters" b/w "The Selecter"—2 Tone (UK) TT2. This is sorta cheating—"Gangsters" is actually bluebeat, a fast-paced forerunner of reggae, and the Specials (one of the things they're Also Known As), are mostly white Brits. But it's close enough, and it's records like this that make me glad I could tear myself away from Eddy Grant's disc. Get this: a high, wimpy white voice sings the spiv paranoia blues (sorta like Joe Strummer if he could carry a tune) to a brisk, syncopated, infectious pulse. Play this too often and you'll wear your crepe soles thin. (The Selecter is some Specials backing a mate in a pleasant but disposable reggae-oid guitar instrumental.)

Now Pop for Pure People

Patti Smith Group: "Frederick" b/w "Frederick" (live)—Arista SP-62. Longtime Patti pal, Todd "Have Console, Will Produce" Rundgren does a fine job of making this a bright and sparkling pop tune, despite its being a rewrite of "Because the Night"—or is it the other way around? No matter; though its lyrics are at times even more inane than its predecessor's, lines like "Hi hi/Hey hey" can't help but be more apt for this kind of chorus (I'm serious, sorta). Minor offense: synthi-twitter in the midsection. The live side is an adequate stage reconstruction, marred by 2:40 extra of the usual audience cheerleading, more synthesizer nonsense, and so on.

The Knack: "My Sharona" b/w "Let Me Out"—Capitol 4371. This bunch are being heralded (read: hyped) as the next princes of teenypop, but their debut single, produced by mighty Mike Chapman, is curiously un-single-like. At 3:58, it's way too long, and has a pointless, unnecessary bridge; feasible as an album track, it should have been edited for 45 release. Still, it's a diabolical grabber, and why shouldn't it be, since it's really an inversion of the signature riff of "Gimme Some Lovin'"? (Same speed, same key, even.)

Bram Tchaikovsky: "I'm the One That's Leaving" b/w "Amelia"—Radar (UK) ADA 37. Speaking of potential hitmakers, Bram and band may not be such dark horses themselves, even Stateside, where radio reaction to "Girl of My Dreams" has been quite positive. This number may be a touch too rough-hewn for AM-ers, yet the signal "Eight Days a Week" guitar jangle and neo-Motown chorus vocals also might put this energetic rocker into chart contention. What all this biz fizz means is that it's one record that'd sound mighty fine blasting forth from car radios—and it's all the better heard isolated from the rest of Bram's LP, the production of which can be cumulatively suffocating to the material. (The folky B-side is non-LP, but non-essential, too.)

Tin Huey: "I'm a Believer" b/w "New York's Finest Dining Experience"—Warner Bros. WBS 49001. Yes, this track is on the Huey's LP, and yes, the remix and re-cut overdubs make little difference in the takes. And, true enough, the approach is based on Robert Wyatt's version of a few years ago, as any Huey will be the first to tell you. In

She's got a forty-inch bust

fact, that's why this is a labor of love, and it shows. Wyatt's offbeat charm can't be duplicated, but instead the Hueys imbue the song with concision, power and sheer exuberance that make it take off: powerful, soaring guitar contrasted with delicate piano and understated synthesizer, all riding on a sleek but high-powered rhythm. A Neil Diamond tune, made famous by the Monkees, based on an arrangement by an ex-Soft Machine eccentric, made "commercial" again by some Akron crazies—wildy improbable? Yeah, but also true, and if you never thought you'd want to listen to a band called Tin Huey, think again; this is without a doubt one of the five best singles thus far this year.

...And the Rest

The Damned: "Love Song" b/w "Noise Noise Noise" & "Suicide"—Chiswick (UK) CHIS 112. The Damned are back and proud of it. Should they be? This single doesn't answer conclusively, as there are points pro and con. Captain Sensible, now on guitar, sounds more impressive than you'd ever have expected; Al Ward (ex-Saints) plays bass with an authoritative punch that Sensible couldn't muster in his former role; "Love Song" has a good chune purveyed by Dave Vanian's best vocal technique yet. Meanwhile, Rat Scabies's drumming is as sloppily over-the-top as ever, and do we really need another boring suicide rehash or to be told "leave the music for zeroes/noise is for heroes" in 1979? I'll take a wait-see position on the issue.

Essential Logic: "Wake Up" & "Eagle Bird" b/w "Quality Crayon Wax OK" & "Bod's Message"—Virgin (UK) VS 26112. Even on the bizarrely appealing lead-off cut, with its Roxy Music overtones, Lora Logic (on saxes and, ahem, "warbling") and pals display a penchant for willful hyper-whimsy that obliterates the distinction between healthy idiosyncracy and overbearing self-indulgence (all but obscuring the talent lurking behind it all).

After the Fire: "One Rule for You" b/w "Joy"—Epic 8-50712. Sounds like a bunch of quasi-progressos aiming for the pop market, but these Anglos avoid the obnoxious bombast of a Styx or a Kansas. In fact, with the guitar shoved back in the mix, this fine number goes to the other extreme, the production just a weensy bit *under*whelming.

Clive Langer & the Boxes: I Want the Whole World (EP)—Radar (UK) RDR 2. This 12" EP does seem like half an LP, as it lacks anything sounding like a "single." Langer has his eccentricities; unlike the E. Logic EP, these mainly mean the songs taking a while to kick in. His singing, which is as off-key as Tom Robinson's and blurred by a Cockney accent, doesn't help either. All but the title tune lacks some immediacy, but in time most of it grows on ya.

Jane Aire & the Belvederes: "Call Me Every Night" b/w "Lazy Boy"—Virgin (UK) VS 273. Surprisingly good picture disc pressing. Well-played, luxurious production, smooth singing. But not much of a song. Glossy as the package is, this could be an Olivia Newton-John outtake, but for the flipside, which is more in line with what we'd expect from the pen of Akron's crafty oddball auteur, Liam Sternberg: more quirkily tuneful, though just as slick as the A. Akron-MOR? ■

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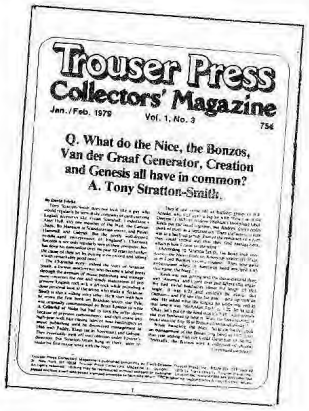

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RECORDS



THE CARS
Candy-O
Elektra 5E-507

On **Candy-O**, the Cars have built an '80s concept album around Cars and Girls, the pet icons of American rock'n'roll since Jan and Dean and the Beach Boys first rolled their tops down. Ocasek's songs depict a world-weary cynic who ultimately succumbs to an obsession which retired Playboy artist Alberto Vargas (in something of a record jacket "coup") masterfully depicts—the icy statuette, the ultimate hood-ornament.

Ocasek constructs songs that churn like pistons. His lyric specialties are the well-articulated half-thoughts ("she's a frozen fire, she's my one desire") that flash on and off like strobes with more sobering observations ("she's driving away with the dim lights on"). Behind them, drummer David Robinson sprinkles syncopations that surprise like Buddy Holly hiccups, over Greg Hawkes's ironic "She Lives on Love Street" keyboard fills. As on the debut album, producer Roy Thomas Baker's handiwork is ubiquitous: an envelope filter here, an echo-segue there, a synthesizer that sounds like it's being squeezed through a crack in a car door. Baker wisely never overpowers the basic five-instrument mix, although Eliot Easton's versatile Harrisonesque lead guitar has been underplayed in deference to the rhythm guitar on this album. The urgent energy of a record produced in 16 days (the debut album took five days longer), is preserved with a vengeance.

Both bassist Ben Orr's easy pop tenor and Ocasek's own harsher, on-the-edge delivery successfully capture the distant mordancy of Ocasek's vision. Both singers communicate the distasteful ache of being kept at a distance by women who are simple yet elusive. On **Candy-O**, girls are portrayed as "dangerous," sometimes vanishing into the night like rainbows ("you'd like to come in colors/you don't know which ones"). Over and over again the singer is told where to get off, and still the chase continues.

The album's first (and best) track, "Let's Go," is a simonized synthesis of all the band's ideas, musically and lyrically. From there, the momentum builds, through "Double Life" ("it takes a fast car lady to lead a double life"), the nightmare-treadmill "Shoo-Be-Doo," until on the title track, music pulsates and undulates like a crazed chrome mandala.

The album's weakness, though, lies in its very unity of structure. While Ocasek has even sustained his color imagery in the lyrics (girls in "flamingo pink" with "ruby rings" on their fingers drive "cadmium cars" in "red conditions"), he has forsaken the musical variety, the mood modulations that kept the first album breeding hit singles. While on **Candy-O**, the Car's thematic identity ("alienation is the craze/and it's all gonna happen to you/when you drive in a haze") is indelibly stamped in black/white/red, the overall effect is too numbing. It's like being locked in one of those fake car booths in a penny arcade, with the same painted scenery rolling endlessly by. On **Candy-O** the Cars may have started dozing off at the wheel.

—Susan Klein

THE RECORDS
Virgin VA 13130

Ever since the initial punk veneer was stripped off the English new wave, the direction taken by many of the bands has been towards high energy pop. There's just something unavoidable about the beauty of a clever melody sung well over a carefully arranged background of electric instruments. Certainly nothing novel about that—it's only the ratio of pretty-to-powerful that seems to present problems to groups of the genre—the tendency to go all soppy, forgetting the energy of rock'n'roll, or to start cutting delicate corners off in order to make the impact of the songs more direct. It's a fine line to walk, and few have succeeded at it for very long—in many cases, pop/rock (the dreaded "power pop" by any other name...) is merely a transitional stage between rough and polished.

The newest entrant in the tightrope division is the Records, a carefully conceived and staged four-piece from London way. Early in 1978, as the much-lamented Kursaal Flyers were folding up, drummer Will Birch gathered up all the painful lessons he'd learned from four years of hard breaks and tough times on the road, and decided to try

THE RECORDS



Living in a bedsit

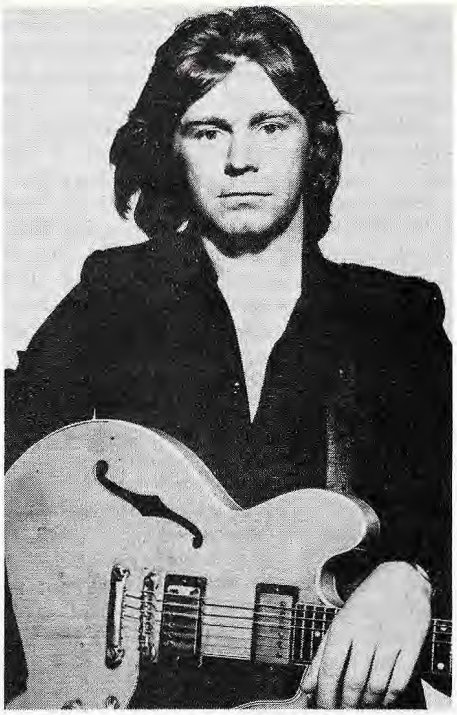
again, with a clean slate. Within several months, after many auditions, the Records came into being, and by the end of last year were signed and in the studio.

The Records presents a fine distillate of rock'n'roll energy in the well-constructed format of pop music. With four vocalists in the group, harmonies are employed at all the opportune junctures, but without the irritating regularity of less subtle outfits. The guitars are just as ordered—clear and pretty on one cut, raw and dirty on the next. The drumming, certainly the mainspring of the band, is simple, steady, and lighthanded.

The Records' songs score high on the success ratio toteboard. Of the 10 presented, there are five potential hit singles, a couple of strong LP tracks, and one or two throwaways. Birch's lyrics are often quite clever, and some of the melodies are instant stick-in-the-minds. And it all sounds good on the radio, which is precisely where it is supposed to (and will undoubtedly) be, played regularly.

The first 25,000 copies of the album contain a bonus 7" disc, which amounts to the Records' version of David Bowie's **Pinups** LP. The four cover versions make a nice little treat—the Stones' "Have You Seen Your Mother Baby"; the Kinks' "See My Friends"; Spirit's "1984"; and an obscure song ("Abracadabra") by an obscure American band (Blue Ash). Nothing too amazing about these, but it's always fun to hear the sound of one band imprinted on the songs of others.

The Records, honestly, are not staggeringly original. Nor are they the next wave of rock'n'roll's avant garde. However, to anyone that loves rock'n'roll music just for the enjoyment it can deliver, the Records are here for your listening pleasure. And with other like-minded outfits, they appear to be bringing pop music back to rock'n'roll in a big way. Finally! —Ira Robbins



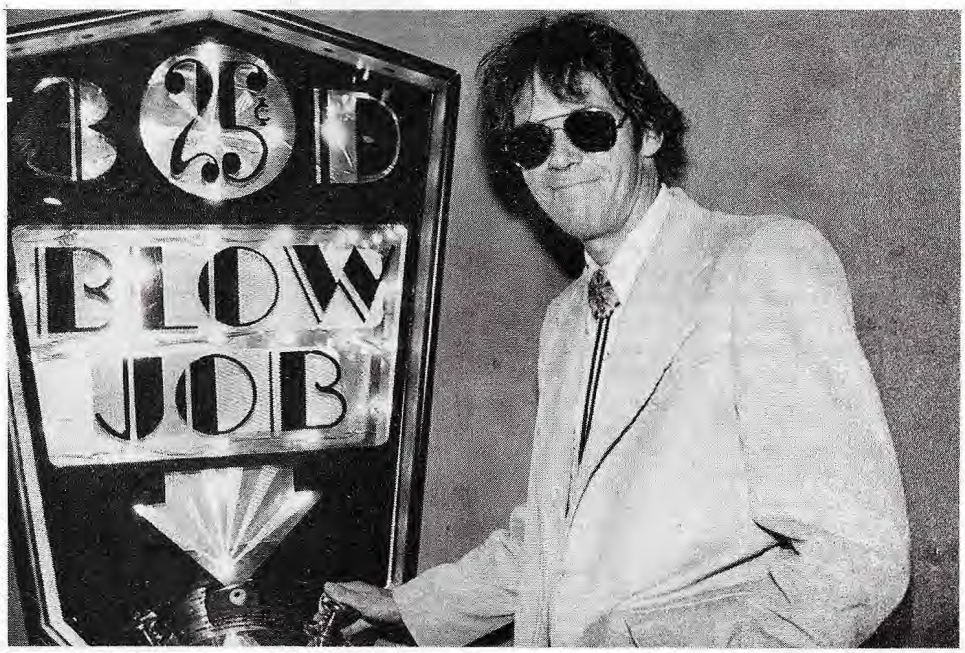
DAVE EDMUNDS
Hardest rocker yet

DAVE EDMUNDS
Repeat When Necessary
Swan Song SS 8507
FLAMIN' GROOVIES
Jumpin' In the Night
Sire SRK 6067

Between Nick Lowe's mastery of pop forms and Dave Edmunds's suss on the rock'n'roll and rockabilly end of things, Rockpile's version of the Nurk (Glimmer?) Twins have to be the most potent one-two punch (tag team?) in music today. And while most of Edmunds's contemporaries (Christ, he's over 35!) seem to suffer at least periodic lapses of musical or emotional senility, Edmunds just seems to rock harder each time out. That said, **Repeat When Necessary** is indeed Edmunds's hardest rocker yet, the first side especially burning with a white hot intensity that manages to recall at times the great Eddie Cochran himself. (The highest compliment one can bestow...)

Edmunds has gone to outside sources for material on this one—there's nothing at all written by him *or* Lowe—and come up with some gems, among them new Elvis Costello ("Girls Talk") and Graham Parker ("Crawling from the Wreckage"), a funny J. Geils-ish R&B tune penned by Clover's Huey Lewis ("Bad Is Bad"), an old Patti LaBelle number once covered by Vanilla Fudge at quarter-speed ("Take Me for a Little While"), an already-done-to-death rockabilly by Ronnie Self ("Home in My Hand," previously recorded twice apiece—studio and live—by Commander Cody and Brinsley Schwarz) and six other songs of unknown origin (which Edmunds will hopefully shed some light on next issue). What Edmunds has been able to do so well on his past three albums is take essentially dated rock'n'roll styles and make them sound rich and contemporary. Although his production sometimes overwhelms with echo and effects ("...Little While" and "Black Lagoon"), it also brings out the thickness and richness of Edmunds's and Billy Bremner's guitar playing (with a super cameo by Albert Lee to boot). The vocals are suitably adenoidal, as well, in the traditional rock'n'roll manner. All and all, another winner from the Rockpile camp.

Not so the Flamin' Groovies, former Edmunds protegés who continue to be mired knee-deep in mid-'60s nostalgia. Over their last three LPs the Groovies have wallowed in Merseybeat (though **Shake Some Action**'s title track is a certified classic), skirted the R&B boom, and now flap their wings and magically become...the Byrds. No less than three Byrds covers are included, and Cyril and company have not even had the decency to bother rearranging them. And what isn't written by the Byrds, sounds like the Byrds anyway (except, that is, for "Please, Please Me," the Beatles song, which sounds like an outtake from the **Shake Some Action** sessions, and their cover of Edmunds's cover of James Burton's "Down Down Down"). A couple of cuts are really good despite themselves—the title track, "First Plane Home" (not the Kinks song), and the hilarious Byrds-eye view of "Werewolves of London" no less. After listening to **Jumpin' in the Night**, I went right to my collection and pulled out the Byrds' **Fifth Dimension** album. Yes, Cyril, it is fuckin' great, but who needs the Groovies to retread it without adding anything new? Maybe by 1984 the Groovies will be into the '70s. —Dave Schulps



Chester Simpson

NEIL YOUNG AND CRAZY HORSE
Rust Never Sleeps
Reprise HS 2295

"Gotta get away/Gotta get away/Gotta get away," and so on, is a refrain heard on **Rust Never Sleeps** and one can't help but wonder what's bugging Neil. Young's music has always been a reflection of his feelings, more so than with most other artists, where a certain distancing goes on. So perhaps his most memorable—and ugliest—work came in response to the drug'n'death scene that claimed friend Danny Whitten. **Time Fades Away** and **Tonight's the Night** were not "entertaining," they were cries for help and angry, frustrated expressions of such intensity that even the awareness of Neil Young as their performer was consumed by the heat. At the other extreme is the mellowed-out hippie who can either still strike home or assume the guise of an unambitious light folkie, depending.

Rust Never Sleeps follows the pattern of the 1978 tour from which most of these

Traveling on the tube train

songs were taken, half of it acoustic (Neil and his lonesome guitar) and half of it electric (Neil and Crazy Horse), souped up by bits of overdubbing here and there to add fullness. Like Robbie Robertson, Young constructs his own American mythology, and there are new pieces of that puzzle here in the form of "Powderfinger," "Pocahontas," and "Thrasher." Throwaways are rare on Neil's albums, yet **Rust** has three that come close to being little more than time-passers: "Ride My Llama," "Sail Away," and "Welfare Mothers," a sour piece of opportunism ("Welfare mothers make better lovers") that's strangely out of character.

Now Young's always been a questing soul, and he's never made any bones about setting himself apart from the world at large, no doubt because he likes the romantic image. Here he seems for the first time to be reveling in lonerdom for its own sake rather than as a means to an end. In "Thrasher" he leaves his burned-out friends behind because "they were just dead weight." Elsewhere he fantasizes sitting around the campfire with Pocahontas and Marlon Brando, smugly looking askance at Hollywood.

All of which would mean zilch if Neil turned in his usual hot-blooded performance; however, he's often detached and cool. Despite some robust chords, the acoustic songs are lazy, and the electric portion tends to be unfocused, in contrast to raw cutting edge found on, say, **Zuma**.

"Sedan Delivery," the record's penultimate number, comes from another world, one that's hallucinatory and frightening. Young alternates monolithic punk rhythms with piercing dreamy pauses and comes up with powerful theater. Since he sounds involved, the buzz of the song is compelling like nothing that's come before it.

The LP opens gently with "My My, Hey Hey (Out of the Blue)": "The king is gone but he's not forgotten/This is the story of Johnny Rotten/It's better to burn out than it is to rust." And at the end of the record, the song's been reworked into a chaotic sledgehammer rocker, only Neil comes across just a little too pleased with himself. This too-clever framing device was used with greater success on **Tonight's the Night**; Young's best gimmicks aren't detectable as such until after they've done what they do. In effect, Young is saying that he can rock with only an acoustic guitar and he's declaring that he's chosen not to rust. But previous albums didn't need such assertions; their vitality was self-explanatory. Maybe it's time for Neil Young to come back from whatever world he's in and renew his sense of commitment.

—Jon Young

THE GREG KIHN BAND
With The Naked Eye
Beserkley BZ-10063

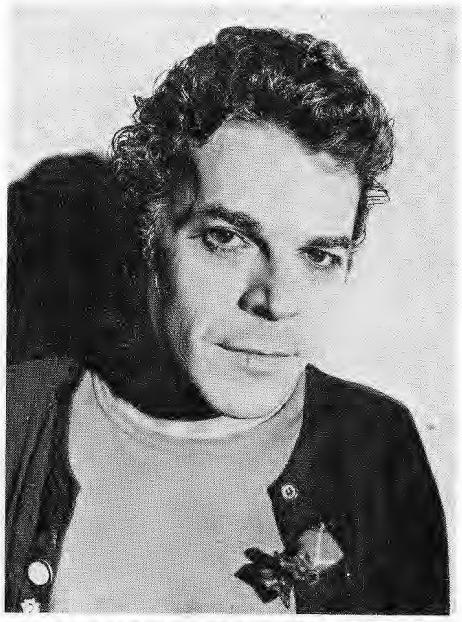
When Kihn covered Springsteen's "For You," singing "but you did not heed my urgency" in the sincerely ingenuous tenor of an adolescent who had just been denied the privilege of carrying his current crush's books home from school, he successfully forged a likeable power pop persona for himself. On **With the Naked Eye** he attempts to grow up a bit by doing another Springsteen tune, "Rendevous," in a rougher vein, charging headstrong into Jonathan Richman's "Roadrunner" and sneering pretentiously on a heavy-metallish original, "Fallen Idol." The result is that his image has become too diffuse—his reach, this time, exceeds his grasp.

Side one is a nicely realized amalgam of gentle mid-tempo tunes, arranged in the band's crisp homage-to-the-Byrds, guitar-oriented style. But unlike Tom Petty or Nick Lowe, his cousins in the Pure Pop for Now People family, Kihn has a bad habit of fishing with a line, sinker and no hook. The title cut opens promisingly with a delightful lead guitar and bass conversation but blands out for lack of a catchy melody.

Sometimes the lyrics are at odds with the music. The energetic "Beside Myself" is betrayed by wimpy lyrics ("I'm beside myself but I wanna be next to you"), whereas "Getting Away With Murder" ("you're in danger of killing a true love") becomes sticky with a wad-of-bubblegum tune.

The most successful is "Moulin Rouge," a collaboration with excellent bassist Steve Wright. It's a warm, minor key mood piece, the music complementing a well-told story: "She was just a showgirl, she had sparkle in her eyes/I was just a carriage driver whose soul she hypnotized." With more well-constructed pieces like this one, Kihn may rescue himself from spreading himself too thin.

—Susan Klein



IAN DURY & THE BLOCKHEADS
Do It Yourself
Stiff/Epic JE 36104

Memories of Ian Dury's wonderfully frantic and hyperactive stage presence flashed through my mind halfway through the first side of **Do It Yourself**, as I wondered why it had left me so unmoved, and why it sounded so goddam relaxed. I really didn't expect to be bothered by the disco feel; it was expected, and anyway I'd loved "Wake Up (And Make Love With Me)" and "Rhythm Stick." But who would have thought Dury could be so uninvolving, so laid back, the production so uninteresting? That's not to say that each song didn't have a worthwhile moment or two—the odd tweeting Davey Payne sax break here and there, some off-the-wall guitar work like the "Charleston" duet on "Don't Ask Me," the synthesizer on "Mischief," an occasional flash of life from Dury. But, oh, for the passion of a "Sweet Gene Vincent," the pathos of "My Old Man," or the pure crazed nonsense of "Rhythm Stick." When you get right down to it, **DIY** just sounds safe and the relentless plodding of the disco beat eventually *does* grow so numbing that you realize that form itself can eventually destroy whatever content is placed around it. By the time "Lullaby for Franci(e)s," the innocuous reggae number that ends side two, rolls around, the relief of the different beat is so great that one tends to feel the song is a lot better than it actually is.

Ian Dury has made an inoffensive, laid back disco album, most likely created, as Tommy the Tool Box puts it on the album cover, "for all the family to enjoy." I can see English mums and dads trucking down to Woolworth's in droves to pick it up and, yeah, they'll probably love it. Big accomplishment, Ian. Now hit me! —Marc Mayco

DIRE STRAITS
Communique
Warner Brothers HS 3330

Mark Knopfler's problem is that he is so unreproachably good at what he does. He writes bluesy odes woven out of the fabric of American myth, sings in a deep Dylanized growl that occasionally betters the original, and does things with a Telecaster that would make hallowed guitar technicians like James Burton and Albert Lee bolt up from their studio chairs and sweat E-strings. Now having done all that on the first Dire Straits album, what's left for Knopfler to do on **Communique**?

He simply does what he does best and therein lies the bum rub. Knopfler, brother Dave, John Illsley, and Pick Withers have so crystallized their style that to a substantial percentage of the million-plus consumers who bought **Dire Straits** earlier in the year, **Communique** may as well be the same album with a higher list price. As a songwriter, Knopfler's subtlety lies in his simplicity so that a cursory listen to "Lady Writer" may bring instant recognition as "Ah, another 'Sultans of Swing'." Had **Communique** been the first album, "Lady Writer" may have in turn been the hit "Sultans" was.

But **Communique**—recorded last December before the band's platinum panic began—is an album of consolidation; reconsideration in a few months could possibly prove it the better of the two. Muff Winwood's straitjacketing production on **Dire Straits** is replaced here by a relaxed, more sympathetic sound achieved by Jerry Wexler and Barry Beckett, who project a more authoritative but not overbearing air of R&B about the record. This is best heard in the rhythm section, where Illsley's bass and Withers' drums kick with a quiet intensity underscoring Dave Knopfler's steady strumming. Mark Knopfler's leads are as sharp and incisive as one might expect, but the producers have so opened the sound—even adding bluesy Rhodes piano on the title track—that the Dire Straits showcased here sounds more like *a* band and not *Mark Knopfler's* band.

Knopfler, however, writes all the songs

Working all day long

and as he rises and falls on their merit, so does the band. "Angel of Mercy" blends singalong C&W with the kind of boppy Tex-Mex drunkenness that Ry Cooder specializes in, but the rest of the songs expand only within the limits set by "Down by the Waterline" and "Wild West End" on the first LP. And it is those songs—specifically "Once Upon a Time in the West," the almost poppy "Lady Writer," and "Follow Me Home" (a beachfront blues that ends the album on a starkly reflective note)—that best project the improvements, however invisible, on **Communique**. And if **Communique** does sound a lot like **Dire Straits**, it's because they know their limitations and can work their magic within them.

—David Fricke

WINGS
Back To the Egg
Columbia FC 36057

I slapped the record on the turntable. "Wow!" I thought, what a great song! Really catchy, nice '60s-pop feel. But that voice doesn't sound like Paul's, does it? And why does this song sound familiar...? It was then that I realized it was the new Nick Lowe LP, not Wings. They'd come in the same CBS package (along with Laughing Dogs) and I must have switched 'em.

But then, after a couple of frustrating spins of the McCartney disc, it dawned on me—Nick Lowe is better than Paul McCartney. Hell—even the Laughing Dogs are more exciting! Is nothing sacred?

Apparently not, because, truth is, I could have (should have?) written this review before I even heard the Wings LP. It's not that it's a lousy album per se—it's actually rather likeable in an innocuous sort of way—it's just that it's so damn thin and predictable, full of fast food rock'n'roll that won't even last until the next (no doubt similar) Wings album. There are, of course, a couple of fine ballads—"After the Ball" and "My Baby's Request"—and the usual pockets of exciting rock'n'roll, most notably in "Getting Closer," "Rockestra Theme," "So Glad to See You Tonight" and "Old Siam Sir." The last is the most interesting tune on the album, but the two preceding it are pumped up by the likes of Pete Townshend and Kenney Jones, Zeppelin's John Bonham and John Paul Jones, and Pink Floyd's Dave Gilmour, among others, and had these guys hung around a little longer, the result might have been the knockout album that some people still hope McCartney will some day deliver. There is also the expected abundance of cute, insubstantial schmaltz (that act's getting old, Paul), as well as a severe lack of guts—in every sense of the word. At this point, McCartney's like the veteran baseball pitcher whose stinging fastball is behind him, but still gets by with a combination of control and experience, and a bit of the tricky stuff.

Obviously I can't relate to what McCartney's doing anymore—although 5 million pimply teenage girls surely will, and I would no doubt be vulnerable to their charges of old age/senility/lameness were it not for the fact that the Nick Lowe LP delivers everything that the McCartney album *should* have—an especially valid point since they both cover similar pop territory. Lowe is fresh, just about as melodic as McCartney, with stronger songs, better lyrics, and real rock'n'roll enthusiasm.

Sorry Paul, but you've been one-upped this time.

—Bruce Paley

QUEEN
Live Killers
Elektra BB-702

The name of this album should be **Dead Ducks**. From the first moment that the incredibly foolish (yet genuinely talented) form of Freddie Mercury hit a concert stage, the fortunes of Queen have been disconcertingly divided. While on one hand capable of incredibly sophisticated power rock in the studio, the failings of Queen concerts are legend. Unable to hit notes outside his limited range without studio assistance (at least the chance to try 10 or 20 times), Mercury's prancings and mincings became his only weapons on stage, and in fact only the strained screamings of drummer Roger Taylor saved the band from having no vocal presence at all. Brian May, for all his technical ability as a guitar fiend, cannot reproduce much of their recorded flash on stage, and has always relied on echo chambers to build something for audiences to be impressed by.

The first couple of Queen tours here were painfully embarrassing for those of us who had become devotees strictly through records. The foolishly overdone theatrics—lighting, props, smoke, and all the other predictable accoutrements—only served to make the group's untuned and poorly performed shows that much more pathetic. They certainly lost more fans through those first two tours than they gained.

As megastardom finally caught up with Queen, their touring problems both improved and deteriorated. Tunes like "Bohemian Rhapsody," so studio-based and unrock'n'rolly that exact recreation live was out of the question, became tape exercises, with the band trying not to look useless while their records blared over sound systems to the hardy legions. But at the same time, the sheer size and spectacle of their presentation made the proceedings a lot more fun, and Freddie's prat behavior gained some sort of harlequin charm.

But a live album? Not too swift an idea, although one gets the impression that all recording contracts this decade require a proviso allowing (or forcing) the band to do at least one double-live-set per five years. Queen's time is up, so here are the goods. And bads. There are a few worthwhile cuts included in this stack-o-tracks, but not enough to justify the chintzy packaging, ludicrously self-congratulatory liner notes (the first self-reviewed LP in history), or indulgent mediocrity of performance. Many of the songs shouldn't be done live at all—"We Will Rock You," done football cheer-style, a medley of "Death on Two Legs"/"Killer Queen"/"Bicycle Race"/"I'm in Love With My Car," and "Bohemian Rhapsody." On the plus side, the more straightforward rockers—"Keep Yourself Alive," "Brighton Rock," "Tie Your Mother Down"—are fine workouts, and show the group to be what they ultimately are: a clever Led Zeppelin. Stick to the studio, lads. On second thought, with their last few outings being such lifeless death masks, perhaps not.

—Ira Robbins

THE KNACK
Get the Knack
Capitol SO-11948

If Gidget were still on, the Knack would be likely candidates for her "fave" group of the week, playing continuously till some cuter band came along to replace them, leaving the Knack to join the ranks of once faves such as Bubble Puppy, the Cherry People and the Mosquitoes.

In other words **Get the Knack** for all its catchy riffs, carefully chosen hooks, and well-intentioned rock'n'roll clichés falls flat. Don't get me wrong, after hearing it often enough anyone would find themselves humming these tunes unintentionally. The songs are nothing if not catchy—but they are also terribly predictable.

As an inoffensive pop band, the Knack succeed—they will woo teens with their crooning—but as a rock'n'roll band they offer us nothing new and at best sound like a good Pezband. "Let Me Out" a rocker very reminiscent of Cheap Trick's "Hello There," but not enough to make you really rock, leads off the LP. "Your Number or Your Name," complete with Chipmunk harmonies, is cute enough for what it is. "Maybe Tonite" and "Lucinda" are clean ballads, which "She's So Selfish" and "Siamese Twins" are poorly executed rockers. "That's What the Little Girls Do" is pleasantly Beatlesque, but "Heartbeat" is a mediocre version of the Buddy Holly favorite. The most likeable cuts on the album are "Oh Tara," "Lucinda," "Frustrated" (Ah, teenage lust!), and "My Sharona," despite its tedious guitar solo.

Having seen the Knack live, I can't say this LP is an accurate representation of their sound and feel. The fault lies not so much with Mike Chapman's production as with the fact that a way of representing a personality on vinyl still hasn't been found. Lead singer, rhythm guitarist and songwriter Doug Feiger is the personality of the Knack, or at least everything that's good about it. On stage, Feiger seems only to be flanked by fellow members of the Knack for reasons of symmetry. Hopefully his talents will be further exploited on future releases.

As an album, **Get the Knack** is neither here nor there—it's really a matter of taste. Personally, I'll pass, but if you liked the Mosquitoes...

—Elin Wilder

BIG HITS OF MID-AMERICA VOL. 3
Twin/Tone 7907/8

The most impressive thing about this two-record anthology of current midwestern local bands is its amazingly consistent standard of high quality—not just on the material represented, but in the excellence of the production (all but two tracks were recorded at Blackberry Way studios in Minneapolis) and the packaging of the discs in general. Twin/Tone is a small label based in Minneapolis—from where most of these bands originate—that has already distinguished itself through its series of beautifully packaged EP and single releases. The four previously released groups—the Suburbs, Fingerprints, the Jets and the Spooks (who've broken up and are represented here by spinoffs the Pistons and Curtis A. and the Originals)—plus the remains of the now departed Suicide Commandos (appearing in various guises, with three cuts as the

Commandos) account for 16 of the 22 cuts here. The remaining six come from the Hypsters, NNB, Chicago's the Swingers, and Milwaukee's Yipes (since signed up by Millenium/RCA).

Without getting too specific, what becomes apparent after a few cuts is that these bands are the true descendents of the "original" mid-'60s punk bands. By that I mean that they rock raucously and unselfconsciously in a way that bands on either coast rarely manage to do, and are in turn both less sophisticated and less pretentious than their coastal cousins tend to be. It also means that there's more playing and less posturing, and that's refreshing. While I've stressed the remarkable consistency of the discs, that's not to say that all the bands sound alike. The material ranges from the Beatlesque harmonies of the Jets (both cuts personal faves); to the feminine folk-rock of the Wad; to updated punk (as in Shadows of Knight, Standells, Troggs and MC5) of the Pistons, the Swingers, Fingerprints, and the Commandos and their offshoots; to the more revolutionary rumblings of the Suburbs and NNB; to Yipes's mainstream with a sense of humor. All is competent at worst, and more often than not inspired (most of the guitar work, especially, is very well executed).

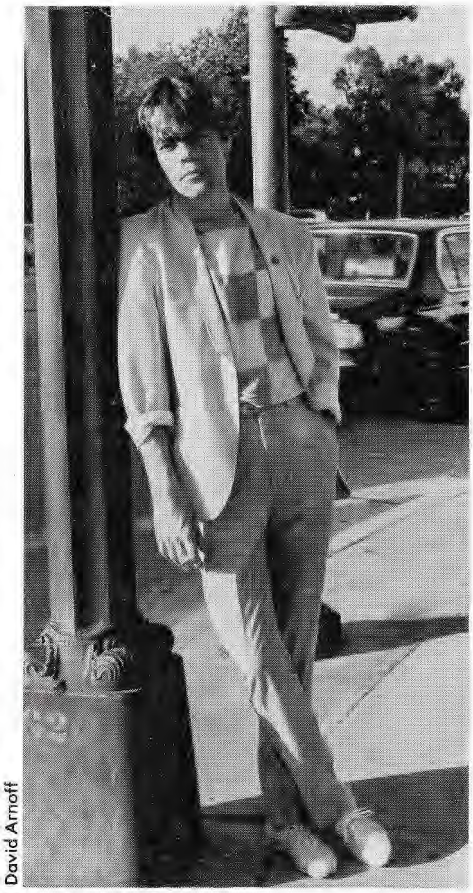
If this sampler of talent culled almost solely from a single midwestern city is anything to go by, there's a lot more hope for American rock'n'roll in the '80s than I'd previously imagined. Encore! (For info, write Twin/Tone Records, 445 Oliver Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55405.) —Dave Schulps

DAVID WERNER
Epic JE 36126

David Werner was the 19-year old American "whiz kid" whose Bowie-inspired rockers got tagged for being overly derivative and was out of a recording contract after two albums by the time he was 22. A four-year lay-away has sharpened his songwriting abilities, darkened his vocals, but dates him badly. Even while he escapes the Bowie stigma on his new release, **David Werner**, he remains a barbiturate romantic with a guitar-dominated sound slippery as a codeine high. Mark Doyle's guitar crunches, coughs, spits, and squeals out the melodic backbone and Werner coughs, spits, squeal, and generally squeezes the vocals up in high C over surly brat range. Only with this, his second time around, Werner makes emphatically sure his driving early '70s sound is carefully pasted into place—lavish with overdubs, tricky bass breaks, and old, slick T. Rex hooks.

When trying this hard, each song is strictly hit or miss. What works plows straight ahead. What doesn't topples flat. "Can't Imagine" and "Every New Romance" (featuring vocals by Ian Hunter) are powerful numbers that could crack the 15-year old Aerosmith market wide open. "High Class Blues" and "What's Right" are not so good, and all the flaming guitars in the world are not going to improve their dud status.

What becomes most evident throughout is a certain amount of structural strain. Werner's brand of excitement has got so many extra limbs grafted on that it seems to trip over itself in the end. The songs he builds from simple riffs into flashy, turreted hulks show craft and even a certain amount of passion but, in the midst of today's sleeker competitors, appear rigid in the kind of stilted poses Bowie and others have fortunately left behind. —Barry Jacobs


David Arnoff

DAVID JOHANSEN
In Style
Blue Sky JZ 36082

Within his element as a raucous, cocky rock'n'roll singer, David Johansen has few peers. Apparently bored by doing the same old thing, and encouraged by co-producer Mick Ronson, Johansen strays pretty far from that element—with surprising results. The smooth, easy-going tunes, the ballads, and the presence of strings, xylophone, clavinet and the like takes some getting used to, but like fellow ex-Doll Johnny Thunders, Johansen has demonstrated that he has a lot more depth and sensitivity than his past work has generally indicated.

Johansen tries a little bit of everything here. Dolls fans will love "Wreckless Crazy," a tune co-written with Syl Sylvain that could easily have been a Dolls outtake, while the rousing title cut and the hot and punchy "She" will more than satisfy hard-core rock'n'rollers. "Melody" is a rocker with strings that works well, while "Swaheto Woman" has—perish the thought—a disco feel to it (though it's a rather ordinary, slick and weak song). "Big City" is a lazy piece featuring some fine, moody sax by Stan Bronstein, and "She Knew She Was Falling in Love" is reggae, buoyed by some bouncy organ work. The real surprise, however, is the final cut, "Flamingo Road," a bitter, powerful, painful song, also co-written with Sylvain. Beginning with an Ian Hunter piano line, it builds into an epic, Johansen's own "Like a Rolling Stone."

So while Johansen might not be as blatantly electrifying or exciting, or as immediately accessible here as in the past, and most of these songs aren't as much fun as the older things (I'll never tire of the first Dolls album), **In Style** is nonetheless rewarding, given half a chance. —Bruce Paley

SCORPIONS
Lovedrive
Mercury SRM-1-3895
PAT TRAVERS BAND
Go For What You Know
Polydor PD-1-6202

As the next decade approaches you're going to hear over and over that a new era of music is on the way. Could be. It's entirely possible that all the standard boogie, metal, and even plain 'ol rock bands will eventually end up as irrelevant and useless as they're often accused of being. Just don't tell the Scorpions or Pat Travers; they couldn't stand the shock.

Probably the most impressive thing about Germany's Scorpions is that they've managed to land another contract after years of no sales on another label. Otherwise, they're just a textbook example of a mediocre heavy metal band, suitable for a museum exhibit. Naturally, most of the songs thunder along vigorously, smothered in ugly guitar chords that render a vivid image of electric nausea. Manly vocalist Klaus Meine shrieks like it's all real exciting, and the rhythm section is utterly nondescript. Even the exceptions to the formula are routine; notice the feigned sensitivity of "Always Somewhere" and consider "Holiday," which starts quietly and explodes just when you knew it would. (Well, who hasn't heard "Stairway to Heaven"?)

Heavy metal doesn't have to be so dire. When guitarist Rudolf Schenker gets his brother Michael to guest on a few songs, the qualitative difference is evident. UFO's former lead axeman may not be the classiest musician around, but he performs with real fire and sense of purpose that's simply beyond the grasp of the others.

The true barometer of a heavy metal band's worth is its ability to offend. Both Led Zeppelin and Ritchie Blackmore's Rainbow, two quite obvious influences on the group, are capable of conjuring up wholly alien and often unpleasant worlds in an authoritative way. The Scorpions have a tame bag of tricks and they're so obvious that you can spot their moves well in advance. Dull, dull, dull.

On paper, the Pat Travers Band looks only marginally more promising. In recent releases, Travers has shifted the emphasis from creaky boogie'n'blues to a more upbeat and straightforward style of rock'n'roll. The guitar remains the ultimate form of expression, of course; both the singing and the songwriting, with the exception of the heartfelt "Stevie," are appropriately indifferent. What makes **Go For What You Know** more than just another junk live album is some impressive playing. Travers and co-lead guitarist Pat Thrall have soaked up a sizeable amount of Hendrix, not so much the early Jimi, but the later **Cry of Love** musician who was more concerned with textures and shading. When the combination of the two

Pats' wah-wah flurries and hyper riffing clicks, which is more often than not, it doesn't matter how old-hat the style is. And while the band's old-fashioned approach may indeed be a dead end, Travers and company do manage to communicate the pleasure they get from what they're doing and that is what rock'n'roll is—or should be—about. —Jon Young

BLUE OYSTER CULT
Mirrors
Columbia JC 36009

This LP should have been called "Blue Oyster Cult Listens to the Radio and the Radio Wins Hands Down." In a desperate effort to attract AOR credibility, the Cult have buried nearly all the remnants of the totally ridiculous yet thoroughly amusing (and thus endearing) heavy metal band they once were under pale mimicry of what anyone could hear by flipping the radio dial around for a while. The only thing on **Mirrors** the band has in common with Blue Oyster Cult is the personnel, and the ill-suitedness of Eric Bloom as a lead vocalist.

There's a lot of pseudo-funk on **Mirrors**; none of it works well. It's just not the genre for the Cult. Also unsuitable are the female back-ups utilized on some of the more foolish cuts, even if those femmes are Geriya Ravan and Ellen Foley. The thing kicks off with the worst of the lot, the appalling "Dr. Music," real dumbo stuff that doesn't seem to relate in any way to the Cult or the song's co-writer, R. Meltzer.

And **Mirrors** doesn't really pick up from there. Rather than expand on their old-style laughing-behind-their-hands heavy metal, the Cult have turned to a Boston/Foreigner/cretin commercial sensibility, even though the time for the old-style Cult may finally have arrived. But everything on **Mirrors** could've been done by countless bands; in fact, it *has* been done, as evidenced by stuff like "You're Not the One," a total and complete "Best Friend's Girl" rip-off. Handclaps, anyone?

This is the first Cult LP without mentor Sandy Pearlman; for **Mirrors**, the Cult have turned to rising star Tom Werman, and though the failure of **Mirrors** might be blamed on Pearlman's departure, I don't think it has to do with Werman's entrance. Werman has done a fine job; the production is full, chunky and very alive, jumping right out at you in the manner of Werman's masterwork to date, Cheap Trick's **In Color**. However, Werman has gotten stuck with a once-ballsy band who have, seemingly for commercial purposes, gone soft.

This is not a Blue Oyster Cult LP. There are moments when some distant memory of the old band resurfaces above the mess, but these are few and insignificant. No "Godzillas" or "Cities on Flame" here. However, for what it's worth, there is one good song on **Mirrors**, Allan Lanier's "In Thee", very tuneful and enjoyable (with "strings" courtesy of "Heaven Tonight" contributor Jai Winding), but definitely not

It seems that the Cult have come full circle; 11 years ago they started out as a promisingly intriguing Long Island bar band, and that's pretty much what they've become again—only now, they're just silly.

—Tim Sommer

THE SHIRTS
Street Light Shine
Capitol ST-11944

On the Shirts' debut album released last fall Annie Golden and company made a pretty good showing. When they cut out the pretentiousness, they proved capable of writing both neat ballads and rockers with clever lyrics. The band's second effort, **Street Light Shine**, just doesn't measure up. Of the LP's 11 tracks, only four are really satisfying, four are decidedly mediocre, and three are plain awful.

To put it bluntly, it seems as if their recording studio's drinking system was spiked with Valium. Gone is the sense of force and urgency that marked the first album, especially such tunes as "Teenage Crutch" and "Poe." The tone of the new album is very low-key; many of the songs just plod along.

Britisher Mike Thorne is the producer again, and there are no glaring production changes, notwithstanding a bit of extra gloss. But Annie Golden's vocals have lost the grit and stridency of the past LP. Here she sticks to a high soprano range. "Triangulum," an incredibly pretentious, Pink Floydish mess, might have been a wee more tolerable if Golden's vocals had been transposed an octave lower.

The songs on the first album were highlighted by lyrics that creatively and intelligently conveyed a sense of alienation. On **Street Light Shine** they've become boring and, at times, embarrassing. "Maybe, Maybe Not," a dippy ballad makes you wince with clichés like: "Maybe we'll see tomorrow together/Maybe we'll make it in spite of the weather." C'mon now.

When the band does click, the end product is quality material. "I Feel So Nervous" is an absolutely first-rate pop tune. Simple and affecting, it features some gorgeous Golden harmonies and a wonderfully plaintive guitar line. "Love Is a Fiction," written by Annie and bassist Robert Racioppo, is also perfect pop containing a dose of punchy guitar work, catchy lyrics and the old Golden vocal grit.

Hardcore Shirts fans will probably be satisfied with this album, but I like my Shirts less pressed and starched. —Susan Flinker

SCREAMS
Infinity INF 9009

Forget this band's name if you're looking for significance, or new musical ideas. Screams' debut represents a 35-minute lesson in *déja vu*. It's easy to review this band on their influences alone. Unfortunately it's just as impossible to judge them on their own merits.

The album opens with "Paper Dolls" which sounds strikingly similar to another Illinois foursome of some repute, like Budokan without the screams (pun intended). "Angeline's Toys" carries this musical allegiance to extremes. There's even a "Brontosaurus" bass riff-off like the one in the recent cover version of R. Wood's "California Man." "I Play for You" comes from somewhere between Kansas and Boston. Illinois? Side one closes with what sounds like a Badfinger outtake.

Side two opens with a few pleasant surprises and at least a little credibility by sticking to an unassuming hard rock style through three cuts. And "Financial Disaster (It's Only Money)" is fun, despite its imitative qualities. The interplay between guitars and rhythm section is effective, as are those neat M-O-N-E-Y cheers. Above all it shows some humor, which there's precious little of elsewhere. Finally there's the Bowie impersonation on "Pop Art," with references to A. Warhol and Marc Bolan. The parody is obvious. Too bad the reasons aren't.

Screams is a competently performed debut. Unfortunately the songs are seconds. For what it's worth, these boys have fine tastes. If only they could assimilate their influences and go from there, it would certainly make the reviewer's job easier. After all, having to discuss Screams in the same breath with any other band is a Cheap Trick indeed. —Mark L. Andrews

IMPORTS

THE CONTORTIONS
Buy the Contortions
Ze ZEA-33002
JAMES WHITE AND THE BLACKS
Off White
Ze ZE-3303

The man behind both of these records is saxophonist-composer James Chance, whom I firmly believe to be the most important new musician working in New York today. His innovative blend of James Brown funk, post-Ornette Coleman free jazz and white rock'n'roll is demanding yet danceable, a unique and vital aural experience.

Although his career is less than three years old, Chance has already made more than his share of enemies. Many have pronounced his music "noise" because it is often unmelodic and not as harmonically or rhythmically predictable as that of the average band playing the NYC rock circuit. Chance is hated by people who have never heard his music but have read of his habit of physically roughing up unsuspecting members of his audiences. One night at Max's, after a particularly brilliant Contortions set, Chance was attacked as he walked through the crowd to leave the room. His assailant was a large hippie (Chance himself is a rather small and scrawny cat) who first tried to start something, but then just opted for pushing Chance down onto the floor. As Chance lay there, dazed, the hippie bellowed, with all the logic he could muster, "If you're gonna play outside music, learn to do it right!"

I'll never forget that line. The notion that there is a "right" or a "wrong" way to play free music is, of course, absurd, yet it is illuminating to note that even a genius like Cecil Taylor, the avant garde pianist, felt compelled to answer his similarly numb-skulled critics in 1958 with these words: "Some people say I'm atonal. It depends, for one thing, on your definition of the term. Basically, it's not important whether a certain chord happens to fit some student's definition of atonality. A man like [Thelonius] Monk, for example, is concerned with growing and enriching his musical con-

ception, and what he does comes as a living idea out of his life's experience, not from a theory."

The basic Contortions formula consists of the following: a solid, funky bottom layed down by bassist George Scott and drummer Don Christensen; the divinely dissonant slide guitar of Pat Place pitted against the oddly angular chords of guitarist Jody Harris; and the anguished vocals of Chance, complimented by his highly accomplished alto sax playing. **Buy the Contortions**, recorded earlier this year, preserves the band's live sound with Chance's fine production highlighting the individual players while simultaneously presenting the band as a powerful whole.

Off White, by Chance and the Contortions' alter-ego group, is almost an entirely different matter. Recorded in the fall of '78 with the nucleus of the Contortions being joined by guest artists like Bob Quine, Lydia Lunch and Ary Mantilla, the music here has more free jazz overtones and less funk underpinning. The version of "Contort Yourself" that opens this LP is slower and more spacious than the Contortions' versions, allowing for more sax fills and other embellishments. **Off White** is primarily an instrumental album, and because most of the pieces have fewer chord changes than Contortion material, the emphasis here is on Chance's arrangements. With the exception of "Contort Yourself" and "Heatwave," the compositions are dense, gradually built-up layers of guitars, keyboards and saxophones, often raging to a fevered pitch and intensity. Probably less accessible than the Contortions LP, but no less astounding or rewarding. Both albums are real achievements and they drive me wild. Excuse me while I go and get contorted again. —Cole Springer

THE REZILLOS
Mission Accomplished...But the Beat Goes On
Sire SRK 6069
DR. FEELGOOD
As It Happens
United Artists UAK 30239

Two live albums with not much else in common:

The title of the Rezillos LP (recorded in Glasgow just before Christmas last year) undoubtedly refers to the band's current sad state of disarray. **Mission Accomplished** should have been a blazing send-off, but it suffers from a novel production concept: make the recording sound as bad as the actual concert. This means burying everything—vocals, guitars, drums—in gobs of echo. The result distances the listener behind a smear of sound; OK if you're there watching the band, but a cruel joke on record.

Production incompetence aside, the LP offers 14 non-stop rave-ups, including Rezillo-ized versions of "Land of 1000 Dances," "I Need You," and "Ballroom Blitz." Six cuts are carry-overs from the **Can't Stand the Rezillos** debut album, leaving five new originals. The playing is enthusiastic throughout, with Fay Fife's clipped, strident vocals much in evidence; but whether the limited amount of new material (plus the horrible sound) merits the price of an import LP is for Rezillo fans only to decide. Newcomers should seek out their studio album, which isn't perfect either but has a higher slugging average than **Mission Accomplished**—and isn't sabotaged from inside the control room.

The Feelgoods' second live LP finds them in fine form. Unlike the tricky Rezillos, Dr. Feelgood has always been touted as a live band—which reputation hasn't done much for their studio album sales. On **As It Happens** they're reunited with producer Vic Maile, who gives them a punchy sound fitting their spare instrumentation. Once again originals are surrounded by an impeccable choice of covers ("Ninety-Nine and a Half," "Things Get Better"), adding up to an unrelenting succession of fast-paced stompers. Guitarist John Mayo sounds indebted to Jimmy Page in his phrasing ("Sugar Shaker") and trebly guitar tone; the Feelgoods' hesitant riffs ("Take a Tip," "Every Kind of Vice") are a bit Led Zeppish too. Lee Brilleaux's vocals might lack character, but the rest of the band more than compensates with tight nuts-and-bolts playing. Anyone tired of over-ornamented rock will be rejuvenated by the Feelgoods' brazen functionalism. **As It Happens** is an aural decongestant. —Scott Isler

THE UNDERTONES
Sire SRK 6071

When the Undertones, one of Northern Ireland's few new wave bands, cut a four-song EP for a local label over a year ago, their aspirations weren't especially high. They weren't banking on the EP to become a favorite of England's most influential deejay, John Peel, or that it would go into the charts and bring them a recording contract with an international company like Sire. Now, despite all their lack of ambition and hunger for superstardom, they've got an album out in England, and with an American release scheduled for later in the year.

And it's not a bad showing at that. A bit less stylish, but in the Ramones/punk vein, the 'Tones have a tendency towards good riff hooks and clever vocals which make the album much more than we've come to expect from new English new wave outfits these days. What the Undertones lack in finesse or originality they more than make up for with their listenability. There's enough variety among the 13 tracks (including "True Confessions," re-recorded from its original appearance on the **Good Vibrations** EP) to make the record more than just interesting. In fact, even though they've had a few hit singles in England, there are enough strong tunes here to keep them in the charts for months.

The Undertones' music is universal, on songs like the energized "Family Entertainment," the poppy "Girls Don't Like It," the nostalgic "Jump Boys," and "Here Comes the Summer," which features Farfisa organ in true holiday tradition. And those are all on the first side. On the flip, which is by-and-large better, we find "Jimmy Jimmy," a catchy 45 success; "True Confessions," their best-crafted (and very subtle) chart item which sounds like old Eno mixed with Devo; and "Runaround," which has the light bounce of a Merseybeat memory. Not a bad collection for five kids from Ulster. Give this one a listen, America—you'll be pleasantly surprised. —Marc Mayco

THE LAST POGO **THE RARE STUFF**
Bomb 7029 **Harvest SHSM 2028**

Now that just about everyone has finally admitted the demise of new wave as a movement, these two albums come along to close two particular chapters of the story—one from the perspective of the regular bands of a defunct Toronto punk club, and the other from the company trying to keep some spark alive by collating scraps by various minor bands on (and/or off) their roster.

The Canadian scene has always been a bit of a mystery; here's this country that gets records from England faster than we do in the States, seems to pick up on the right things all the time, yet turns out wretched bands that seem oblivious to the passage (and progress) of time. Toronto's punk explosion made little impression on the world outside. If these bands are representative, then a lot more was going on than reached the American media. Some of the eight groups represented here have a lot on the ball. Whether they have any future outside the comfort of a local following is hard to predict, but judging from my own memories of some of the best early New York club bands, there's nothing really holding them down. Despite the unfortunate sound imperfections inherent in live recordings in a small club, this certainly beats the first CBGBs collection (which was awful) to shreds. (And four alumnae of that double-disc debacle have been signed and have released LPs.)

The standout bands on **The Last Pogo** (good title!) are Drastic Measures, a suave quartet that features uncredited sax work on one of their two impressive contributions; the Evergladed, a decidedly cool foursome who deliver clever lyrics (especially "Rock'n'Roll Cliché") and strong guitar sonics; and the Cardboard Brains, whose music hardly meets the quality of their name. The mandatory (yet welcome) reggae outfit, Ishan Band, adds a nice touch to the collection of tracks. There's even a Jam-clone, named (what else?) the Mods, and they've even got a singer who sounds like a mixture of Springsteen and Weller. No points there. All in all, **The Last Pogo** succeeds in a genre that rarely warrants its existence.

Harvest's odds and sods album contains hard-to-find tracks by half a dozen bands, none of which have made much earth shake on either side of the pond. The Saints, the Rich Kids and Wire all had brief careers as single hitsters in England, but what about the Shirts, Flys, or Banned? Was anybody really looking for these tracks? In point of fact, many of the 16 cuts are surprisingly good, and I suppose it's nice that they've been rescued from the dust bin, but wouldn't it be nice if someone could sort through all the legal red tape and put out a compilation of the really rare and important things from the significant bands. By dint of the do-it-yourself recording roots of many of today's big-name outfits, there are a lot of limited edition singles worth reissuing in album form. But that's just wishful thinking.

In any case, there's quite a lot worth listening to here. Instead of getting hung up worrying about where these tunes originally appeared, it's amazing (and a bit frightening) to hear tracks of this quality on an LP of basically minor items. There's the Saints' panicky rendition of "River Deep Mountain

So you watch television

High," the Banned's poppy reading of the Raiders' "Him or Me," and the Rich Kids' excellent (and self-produced) B-side, "Only Arsenic." A lot of the cuts are vaguely familiar, mostly because a lot of them have crossed my turntable briefly as singles (one side or another—there are As as well as flips), or on one of the punk samplers issued all over Europe.

I can't give **The Rare Stuff** a wholehearted thumbs up, because there's a lot of deservedly obscure material, but if any of these bands sound interesting, there are things here worth a listen. Or 10. —Ira Robbins



PLASTIC BERTRAND
J'te Fais Un Plan
RKM 4B064-61975

When Plastic Bertrand's exhilirating punk-parody "Ca Plane Pour Moi" was followed by an album containing more of the same—some just as much fun and the rest enjoyably disposable—the fashionably spiked "croon-air" was dismissed as a Belgian waffler, whose time had passed before the album even appeared Stateside.

But on his second European issue, Plasteeque proves the pundits putzos. Just because Napoleon XIV and Nervous Norvus had only one substantial hit apiece is no reason to dismiss pop novelties as less-than-noble art. Whether Bertrand is an unwitting producer's puppet is something for he and producer Lou Deprijck to work out, though American geocentrics may never even get past the fact that Bertrand does his emoting in French.

That, however, has nothing to do with the fact that this album has its share of unconventional classics. His French-language take off of the Four Seasons' "Walk Like a Man" is good for at least one smile every time 'round. His Jamaican is none too good, mon, on the title toone and "Hit '78," both of which were recorded—if we are to believe the credits—at Jamaica's Dynamic Sound studio in Kingston, but both songs bounce brightly to the half-beat in their own contrived way. The punkish rockers, like "Super Cool," and the appropriately dubbed "Cliché," have nothing on "Ca Plane Pour Moi," try though they may, but the 10-minute long "Tout Petit La Planete" has everything on the electro-deesco fusion movement. Where Kraftwerk applies melodic hypnosis to a stiff mechanical beat and Giorgio Moroder believes in a higher commercial authority, Bertrand and Co. take a simple tune and get unabashedly spacy, to great if derivative effect.

Plastic Bertrand may indeed be guilty of disrespect in the first degree, but that's no reason to assail him for lack of talent. He may not hit the mark every time, but I—for one—have plenty of fun watching him try.

—David Fricke



Lou Kish

DAEVID ALLEN
N'existe Pas!
Charly UK CRL 5015

Six appearances on disc in three years, a traveling freak show criss-crossing North America to bring the word of Gong to the woolly-hatted faithful—and now Daevid Allen's telling us he doesn't exist. At a time when it seems he's rarely been more visible, it's a happy circumstance that this, the vehicle for his "disappearance," is an album that stands up to scrutiny much more successfully than its recent predecessors.

While **N'existe Pas!** remains very much the sort of album one would expect from Daevid Allen— eccentric and eclectic, with echoes of bygone psychedelia—it's apparent that he's put some distance and growth between this and his previous solo outings. There's not a scrap of rock'n'roll here, for one thing, nor a breath of space whisper. The whole LP exhibits a much jazzier feel than past Allen efforts; this is due largely to the presence of George Bishop of New York's Taki-i-ki, whose saxophone and clarinet contributions provide an abstract underpinning for much of the album. There's also a willingness to stretch out more, both musically and vocally, bringing Allen into areas previously untrodden by him.

"The Freedom of the City in a Suitable Box," the opening track, is a sparse, impressionistic piece whose mild resemblance to Henry Cow might owe something to the presence of Cow/Art Bears drummer Chris Cutler. There's a short, spirited track featuring pipes and banjo that conveys a traditional Celtic feel, and another banjo-powered composition more evocative of a celestial hoe-down. Other odd bedfellows are a drill team of clarinet and drums, and an oriental refrain set to handclaps. On "But It's Really Not Real," a moody glissando guitar and saxophone piece, Allen's voice moves through some definitely Wyattesque shadings.

The album's most instantly likeable piece, "It's a Fine Air for Fliss," mates Bishop's lyrical clarinet lines with a delicate webbing of acoustic guitar from Euterpe's Pepsi Milan. The track spins the sort of soft, ethereal mood that has characterized Allen's most successful post-Gong tunes, such as "Lady Dear Lady" and "Wise Man in Your Heart."

And there's also a lyric sheet, but try not to read it. What scant mention there is of the Gong mythos is disposed of in the album's first few seconds, so there are a lot of first-person meanderings instead of the usual Zero the Hero camouflage. Armed with these lyrics, evidently penned by Gilli Smyth, Allen comes on like a cosmic Marjoe, preaching God and love and salvation with a vengeance. The lyrics are not without humor, some of it even self-directed, but there are nevertheless some real wince-producers in the batch.

Anyway, you can't say the customer hasn't been warned. Near the close of the A-side, Allen cheerfully sings:

When everything is said and done
And the point's completely missed
Who the hell would want an LP
With lyrics like this?

—Lorie Leavy

FISCHER-Z
Word Salad
United Artists UAG 30232

Here's your basic clever pop group with aspirations to something higher. Lots of little details come to the fore on the first spin. Frippophiles will recognize John Watts's chorded guitar solo on "Lies." Watts also evokes Phil Manzanera on "Pretty Paracetamol" and likes to sing in tense upper octaves a la David Byrne. Which is interesting, because Steve Skolnik's synth fills and flourishes sound like vintage **Buildings and Food** and most of the songs here, especially "Billy and the Motorway Police," smack just a little of T. Heads with a good dollop of the Godley-Creme 10cc.

But the feeling of deja vu never becomes overwhelming because this band has more than its share of smarts—arrangements are shrewd and economical and the enviably solid rhythm section of Steve Liddle (drums) and David Graham (bass) is mixed right up front, neatly balancing the overtly arty posture of Watts and Skolnik. There are the usual rapid new wave-inspired pieces (three) and the requisite reconstituted reggae (two), all delivered with admirable taste and control. It would have been nice if the good, bruising rhythm track opening "Nice To Know" hadn't gotten lost in the mix, and "Lemmings" sounds a little too much like the Tubes for comfort. But then there's the wrenching, dissonant one-word chorus of "Lies" ("Lies!"), nearly as menacing as it was intended to be and topped off with the Fripp impersonation. Pretty good, huh?

Keep an eye on these guys.

—Mark Fleischman

The Members are gonna tell you what it's like

CHERRY VANILLA
Venus d'Vinyl
RCA PL 25217
WAYNE COUNTY & ELECTRIC CHAIRS
Things Your Mother Never Told You
Safari GOOD 2

For all their self-perpetuated hoopla, Wayne County and Cherry Vanilla have wound up on opposite sides of the schtick. County, after an exciting debut, has since degenerated into a rather mundane and uninspired little rock'n'roller, (is that what estrogen does to you?), while Cherry V. has followed her enticing and surprisingly good debut with a fair successor. While **Venus d'Vinyl** doesn't substantially advance her cause, it *does* prove that **Bad Girl** was no fluke.

After rocking her way through **Bad Girl** with a collection of clean, catchy tunes, Cherry has settled into a smooth, easier groove. Although nothing on **Venus** is as tough as "Foxy Bitch" or "I Know How to Hook," nothing on **Bad Girl** was as charming as "Amanda (Paradise)" or "Wayne's Sweet," or quite as seductive as "The Young Boys." In other places, though, the sentimentality tends towards the lush, and even on the better tunes, Cherry projects an often irritating Patti Smith-like persona that seems to demand adoration. Overall, however, **Venus d'Vinyl** is an intriguing, *delicate* album, worthy of attention.



WAYNE COUNTY
Lacks balls

Wayne County, on the other hand, lacks a distinct notable style of his/her own beyond outrage, and while I'm sure there's a place for a good transsexual rock'n'roller, Ms. County's not gonna make it with fodder like this. In concert, County got by nicely on a combination of fine musicians, sheer rock'n'roll enthusiasm, and, well, balls, which unfortunately doesn't always translate well onto vinyl. Almost without exception, the songs on **Things Your Mother Never Told You** are dull and plodding, and County's vocal shortcomings are especially evident through weak material. The highlight of the LP comes on the opening cut, when County sings "I'm your wonder woman," (she does look pretty good on the cover) but it's all downhill from there, and in an apparent search for inspiration, Wayne leans heavily on a '60s sort of psychedelia, of all things.

This album is so bad that one wonders if County shot his load on his first LP.

—Bruce Paley



ROGER CHAPMAN
Chappo
Acrobat/Arista SPART 1083

Roger Chapman's music conjures images of a rowdy, crowded bar: the sleazy characters in his songs, the honky-tonk piano, that raspy voice. Chapman's raspy voice is probably one of the best England has ever produced. It croons one moment and growls the next. Just when you think that quivering vibrato has lost control, Chapman eases it into a trembling whisper. The inherent harshness of his voice may take some getting used to, but when he sings about a lost love, you feel it.

Chappo is Roger Chapman's solo debut. While breaking no new ground musically, the album does provide an excellent showcase for Chapman's talents. Dave Courtney's crystal clear production tends to let Chapman's voice rise over its mediocre surroundings, drawing our attention to its every nuance. The performances from the other musicians may be a might sterile, but Chapman's impassioned singing is superb.

One glaring problem is the obvious absence of longtime Chapman guitarist and collaborator Charlie Whitney. In his place we have Crawler guitarist Geoff Whitehorn, who proves himself to be a dexterous if emotionally shallow guitarist. The return of Whitney's subtle and melodic guitar would surely add the depth that Chapman's compositions lack.

—David G. Rosenberg

MALE
Zensur und Zensur
Rock-On 1

While Male aren't the first German new wave group to make it onto record, they are the only "true" one to do so. Such bandwagon jumpers as the Strassenjungs, Big Balls and the Great White Idiot are aging heavy metal-ites in not very clever disguises. Nina Hagen is a punk parody that arrived too late, considering so many of the first-line British bands have become little more than shadows of what they once were (Clash, Hot Rods, et al.). Anyway, in Germany real punk never made it; the big record companies ignored the real goods in favor of recycled music with a facelift on the visuals. It seems ironically fitting that Male (arguably the first German punk band) has been recorded by an independent label.

Live, Male were always good fun, sloppy but spirited, reminiscent of the early Damned. They showed a nascent pop consciousness with a great hard version of "Daddy Cool," and they always had decent originals with hummable, singalong choruses. Nothing truly special, but good nonetheless.

The problem with **Zensur und Zensur** is that the fun of their live show only translates onto vinyl about half the time. The other half, Male busy themselves by attempting to be a teutonic Clash. Their songs are idiotic didactic tracts (in German, so you can ignore the words) centering on the horror of the streets and the various social ills of Male's hometown, Dusseldorf. The vocals are tuneless shouting, much like Strummer's; effective only when particularly impassioned.

Musically, side one is pretty dire—average punk thrashings. The title cut typifies the problem: it makes use of too speedy, mundane riffs to push a non-melody nowhere. The exceptions are "Kontrollabschnitt," which couples an old German folk melody with a quirky rhythm, but ultimately fails at producing an interesting synthesis; and "1 Tag in Dusseldorf," which begins with some strange, slow chords, a guitar screeching from speaker to speaker, and solid drumming that builds up the tension and tempo, finally exploding into a charging hard rocker. The other four songs are undistinguished.

Side two is much better. The songs are more memorable and display more variety. The opener, "Polizei," is a Ramones-type chugger with powerful guitar chording, jangling lead guitar that sounds like a police siren, and an excellent chorus. (The lyrics are the best on the LP; naively sarcastic in their description of the police.) "Ampelstadt" is a short rocker that opens with deceptively gentle strumming. "Grosseinsatz" is a good song with an unusual jerky beat. "Zensur Dub" is a great dub arrangement of the title song which improves on it mightily. "KH3" is a sweet and short pop song that features bona fide background singing. "Errinerungen" ("Memories") is an absolutely marvelous surf instrumental. Dick Dale lives! Male end the record with another fine rocker in "Planspiel."

Zensur und Zensur is conclusive proof that it's better to rely on more than one influence, as long as you don't allow yourself to become too diffuse. On side one Male decided to emulate the Clash musically and lyrically with the result homogenous but boring rock. Side two runs the gamut from hard punk to pop punk, from reggae to surf and succeeds because of its focused diversity. One good side doesn't make for a great record, but if you want an example of German punk don't reach for the well-packaged phonies, reach for Male.

—Richard Pollex

THE SONGS LENNON AND McCARTNEY GAVE AWAY
EMI Nut 18

Collecting stray Lennon and McCartney songs is such a good idea that it's surprising

someone didn't do it sooner. A majority of the 20 tracks date from the 1963-1964 era, when the Fabs took over the world and blessed countless fellow musicians along the way. Some of the names herein are familiar. Peter and Gordon benefited the most from John and Paul, and in retrospect did indeed have their own sound, sort of; "World Without Love" in particular still sounds good. The somewhat nerdy Billy J. Kramer tended to get romantic numbers that otherwise would probably have gone to Paul, although the Buddy Holly overtones of "I'll Be on My Way" are a pleasant surprise. That's more than can be said for Cilla Black, whose garishly orchestrated and uncomfortable renditions (what *was* her problem?) trashed otherwise decent tunes like "Love of the Loved" and "It's for You." Both Billy and Cilla were produced by George Martin, by the way.

Of the more obscure inclusions, two bands certainly deserved wider notice. "I'm in Love" is first-rate beat band material performed in a self-assured manner by the Fourmost. Likewise, the Applejacks' "Like Dreamers Do" is plenty rewarding. It would be nice of EMI to dig up the Beatles' versions. Other tunes are just plain dregs and the not-so-hot artists who had to settle for them deserve sympathy: P.J. Proby, choking up on the Gene Pitneyish "That Means a Lot"; the Strangers, grinning through the infantile "One and One is Two"; Tommy Quickly, with the nursery rhyme of "Tip of My Tongue." It should also be noted that the compiler has taken pains to embarrass Paul by dredging up some thoroughly wretched solo compositions, including Peter and Gordon's grossly overdone "Woman," and "Penina," a crooner's exercise by Carlos Mendes that's guaranteed to provoke gales of laughter.

The Songs Lennon and McCartney Gave Away is hardly the great lost Beatles record, but it does perform a valuable service. And if even one lost soul goes back to **Meet the Beatles** for spiritual renewal, the album has justified itself. —Jon Young

THE BEST OF BRITISH ROCKABILLY VOLUME 1
Sonet SNTF 787

These aren't 20-year-old recordings excavated from a moldering vault, but new (mono) tapes from a host of generally unknown artists. Exceptions: Mike Berry, who's been around almost as long as his inspirations, turns in a couple of credible performances, and producer Vic Maile (Tom Robinson, Eddie and the Hot Rods) steps out of the rockabilly closet for a snazzy "Baby, Let's Play House." The rest of the bands don't have Maile's studio expertise, but can recreate the sound of authentic country rock'n'roll—a sound based on recording limitations, anyway. Highlights include Johnny and the Jailbirds' confident, relaxed performances, and Hogshead Rockabillies' defiantly acoustic (dobro, fiddle, harmonica) swinging. These artists, along with Crepes 'n' Drapes, Mr. C and the Hep Cats, Sav and the Rhythm Cats, etc., prove that rockabilly is this English generation's trad jazz. Twenty tracks and this is only volume one. No wonder they elected a conservative government. —Scott Isler



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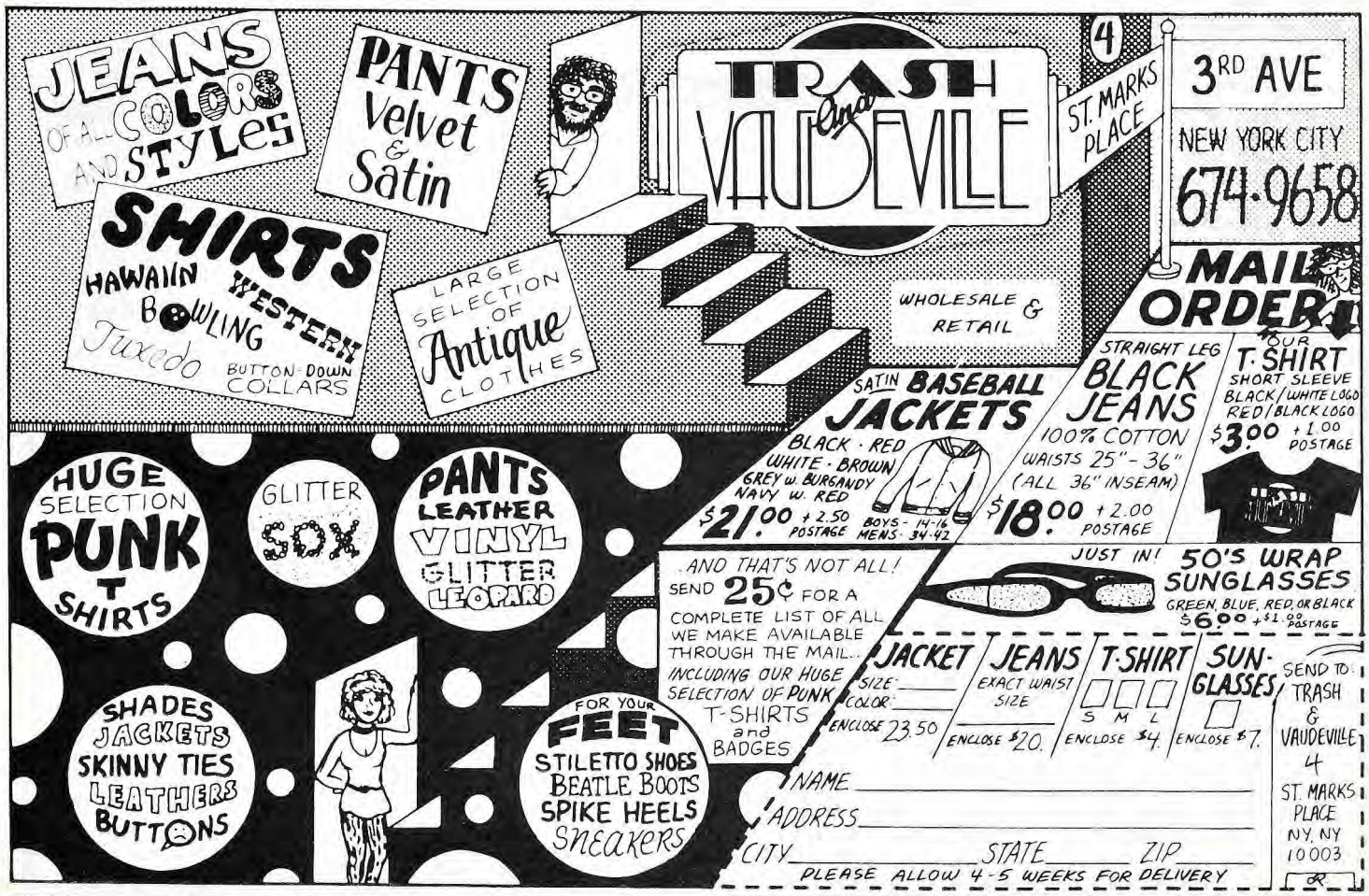

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MOON MARTIN/Continued from page 9

pass." And he played on sessions for Del Shannon, Linda Ronstadt, Jackie DeShannon, and Gram Parsons (which came out on a Jesse Davis album).

Then finally, a breakthrough. "Jack Nitzsche and I were fishing partners and I got around to playing him some songs. When he went to New York to produce Mink he called me at four in the morning and asked if they could do 'Cadillac Walk.'" Moon terms their version, which he likes, as "science fiction John Lee Hooker. Real strange!" Nitzsche went on to use Martin as a guitarist on Michelle Phillips' **Victim of Romance** LP, and Moon contributed three songs: the title track, "Paid the Price," and "The Aching Kind."

With characeristic modesty, he says, "The only reason I did get a deal was because of the Mink DeVille record." Maybe, maybe not, but once heard, it's clear he's the voice of rock'n'roll authority. Martin's first LP featured support from ex-Twilley Phil Seymour, ex-Blondie Gary Valentine, and producer Craig Leon. Leon is back for the new one, but now Moon's got his own band, the Ravens, which features guitarist Jude Cole (from Iowa; they met at a bus stop), and brothers Dennis and Rick Croy on bass and drums.

So now, hopefully, it's Moon Martin's turn. While he acknowledges the overwhelmingly positive response of those who've listened, Martin adds, "I just hope I can tolerate it when people don't like it."

Moon's wasting his time worrying about that. ■

FRIPP/Continued from page 27

houses as a teenager with his real estate auctioneer father, to his short spell studying economics and political history in college, through Giles, Giles and Fripp, into Crimson, and so on—all with a cheery but earnest lilt in his voice and nary a breath of condescension.

He maintained that composure after that night's Frippertronics concert at the Kitchen even as he expressed disappointment over the audience's inability to contribute to the show.

"This was a difficult audience. They didn't really pick up on the clues."

By "clues," he means those catalytic touches he may throw into a solo to heighten audience attention. As he had earlier explained, if he felt an audience was taking the whole thing too seriously, he might toss in a humorous guitar phrase and if they looked uncertain as whether to laugh or maintain serious expressions, he might then stop playing—as the tape rolled—and smile. Well, tonight...

"I threw them one clue and they didn't catch it. I threw them another clue and they still didn't get it. Then I threw them another clue and two people walked out." Ah, reaction.

Then there was the guy, an obvious Crimson/Gabriel nut, who came up to me just after I talked to Fripp at the show with the widest pair of eyes I'd seen and asked, "Do you *know* Fripp?" So as if to cancel the excess of adulation, I asked him how he liked the show and probably got the most honest reaction to Fripp's shows that I'd heard yet. No arty criticism or lofty pretension.

"My ass hurts a bit," the guy said, rubbing his rear which had just been on the Kitchen's hard wood floor for two hours. "But that's cool." ■

WINGS/Continued from page 11

power pop is the shape of Wings to come.

The pair's current round of radio and press interviews serves double duty—it's a convenient way to introduce the two new members to the public, and has the added benefit of saving McCartney the trouble of doing interviews himself. Holly and Juber are philosophical about their role as the boss's flak-catchers, though. "It hasn't been too bad," Holly says wryly.

"When people begin asking too many McCartney questions," Juber adds, "we usually manage to steer the conversation in another direction."

Although both Holly and Juber grew up with the Beatles, they say it doesn't strike them as particularly strange that they're now playing in a former Beatle's band. "Musically, I found it a bit of a challenge," Holly says. "I'm a long-standing admirer of the Beatles in general and Paul's bass work in particular—especially since I'm a drummer. He's a fantastically melodic bassist."

"I was a little bit overawed the first time I played with Paul," Juber says, "but it didn't last long. You're too busy making music to think about it after awhile and you just accept the situation on a professional level."

The new edition of Wings seems to put a premium on spontaneity, what with their plans for surprise shows and off-the-cuff tours—and both say they don't expect to run into difficulties in pulling it off, despite the fact that they're now recording for CBS, the ultimate corporate monolith.

"That sort of thing comes from within," Juber says. "We're not affected by the fact that CBS is enormous. All it means to us is that the corporate machinery is more efficient."

The fact that Wings is now a band of writers as well as players will have a pronounced effect on future Wings albums, according to Holly and Juber. **Back to the Egg** finds them beginning to exploit that situation in tentative ways, and the pair says that the next few LPs should see other members of the band contributing more.

"The situation is excellent," enthuses Holly. "We have a writer of Paul's obvious talent and scope, and also very importantly, we have Denny's writing..."

"Steve and Linda are writing some good stuff as well," Juber adds.

"I'm just happy to nurture all those writing talents and bring those songs out," Holly says. "The one question I put to myself when I was asked to join the band was whether or not I could add my full share to what was going down. As it turns out, I think both Laurence and myself have done that. And as long as that situation prospers, I'll be happy as a pig in shit, as they say." ■

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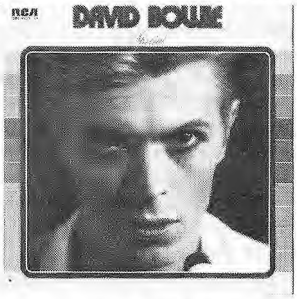





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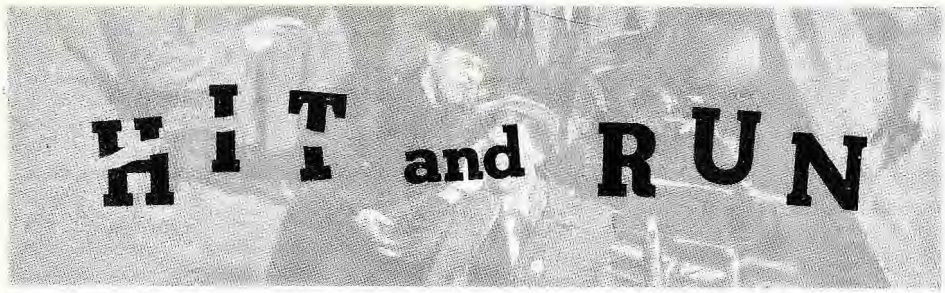
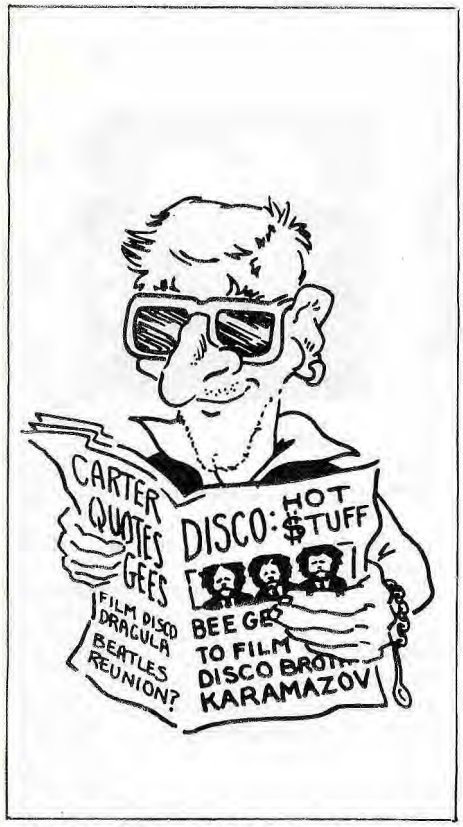


By Jon Young

NICK GILDER/Frequency
(Chrysalis CHR 1219)

With his upwardly-inclined vocal range and bratty tough flair, Nick expertly captures teen passion in a style reminiscent of the glory (i.e., glitter) days of Slade and Sweet, although he exhibits a wider pop vocabulary than those bands did. If Gilder didn't sing with such fire he might be considered wimpy and if the band, led by guitarist James McCulloch, didn't rock so hard he might be considered bubblegum. Not to worry; this disc is hot escapist fun.



THE PLASTIC PEOPLE...PRAGUE/Egon Bondy's Happy Hearts Club Banned
(LTM and BOZI MLYN LIM 1001)

The Plastic People are a group of Czech dissidents who've been encouraged by Zappa, the Fugs, and other adventurers, and gotten in a whole lotta trouble with the authorities in the process. Their startling LP was recorded, says the sleeve, "in 1973 and early 1974 on largely homemade apparatus" and "produced without their knowledge." Without intending to sound patronizing by romanticizing the situation, it is true that the Plastic People's music is a compelling and tortured experience that points out the complacency of much Western pop. Plastic People Defense Fund, B.M. 1415, London WC1V 6XX ENGLAND.

DELBERT McCLINTON/Keeper of the Flame
(Capricorn CPN 0223)

Good God! and have mercy!, white Southern funk style. Del is one cool dude the way he effortlessly gets down on this set, which includes Elvis's "A Mess of Blues" and Don Covay's "Seesaw." Jerry Lee Lewis had better watch out if he wants to remain the number one good old rockin' boy. In fact, McClinton is so inspirational you might even be moved to get drunk and go start a fight in a bar.

FINE ART
(Good 101578)

One nice thing about a homegrown record is that the band can do what it wants instead of bowing to commercial imperatives of the moment. So Fine Art display a heavy debt to early Jefferson Airplane in both heartfelt strident vocals and searing, semi-Eastern lead guitar (counterpointed in turn by incisive rhythm guitar). More contemporary developments are represented by occasional cerebral punkishness and the ceaseless alienation of the lyrics. While there's plenty of room for "improvement" as far as polish goes—should you subscribe to the concept that slicker is better—this LP works just fine on its own terms. Good Records, 3539 White Bear Ave., White Bear Lake, MN 55110.

OVER THE EDGE/Original Sound Track
(Warner Bros. BSK 3335)

Though the soundtrack of this movie—a pretty awful movie, to judge from the troubled youths on the cover—offers nothing new, it does have some nifty selections by Cheap Trick ("Speak Now," "Downed," "Hello There," "Surrender"), the Cars ("Best Friend's Girl," "Just What I Needed"), Ramones ("Teenage Lobotomy"), and Jimi Hendrix ("Come On"). And a few less interesting others.

PETER LANG/Back to the Wall
(Waterhouse 7)

Like John Fahey and Leo Kottke, Lang is an acoustic guitar virtuoso, a bit more of a country boy than either of them, who could no doubt pick agreeable little ditties all day long. To his credit, Peter's not content with that, attempting instead to stretch the medium a bit. The occasional jolly vocals are considerably less mannered than Leon Redbone's and considerably more musical than Kottke's; his tunes utilize not just things like tuba, mandolin and (psycho) violin, but also sax, rockin' drums, and even a touch of guitar synthesizer. More daring would be even better.

• • •

TERRY MACE/Confessions of a Sinner
(Mercury SRM 1-3773)

A cute l'il fellow, this Terry, like some Bay City Roller who's barely outgrown the costume. Likewise for his disc, a modest exploration of froth starring Mace's nervous vocal flamboyance—he's a teenage Bryan Ferry on "Lonely Love," a less shrill Russell Mael on "Super Boy." The big beat is there, just waiting for the melodies to gain a little more of an edge. Then he'll be a perfect master of pop corn, and there aren't too many of those anymore.

ABBA/Voulez-Vous
(Atlantic SD 16000)

It's too bad Abba have to make albums, because what they're best at are those shimmering singles-type tunes that grab your consciousness and don't let go. The examples of that contained herein are as sterling as ever; where they attempt something else, be it grander, funkier or inspirational, the result almost inevitably seems to lack the same pizzazz. Must hears, regardless, are "Angeleyes" and "Does Your Mother Know."

THE RUMOUR/Frogs, Sprouts, Clogs and Krauts (Arista AB 4235)

LENE LOVICH/Stateless
(Stiff/Epic JE 36102)

RACHEL SWEET/Fool Around
(Stiff/Columbia JCT 36101)

IAN GOMM/Gomm With the Wind
(Stiff/Epic JE 36103)

Stiff types finally surface stateside, some months after UK release, with some cosmetic changes intended to enahnce marketability. The Rumour album is unchanged from its English issue and, upon cautious rehearing (after my harsh review a few months back), seems much less like the disaster it used to, although the rationale behind their contrived 10cc-like stylings remains a mystery. Lene's LP has been resequenced and (except for two tunes) remixed, which gives it a brighter, cleaner sound no doubt more acceptable to Amercian radio; her affected and jumpy performances remain an acquired taste. Akron teen Rachel Sweet is really nothing more or less than the reincarnation of Brenda Lee, with all the charms and limitations that implies; Rachel's "B-A-B-Y" can't come close to Carla Thomas's original. The American edition drops two by Liam Sternberg ("Just My Style," "Girl With a Synthesizer"), whose quirky compositions often overshadow their performer, and adds conventional readings of "I Go to Pieces" and "Sad Song." Ian Gomm's retitled LP (formerly **Summer Holiday**) has been subjected to some resequencing and is easily the standout of the bunch. Recommended to partisans of Nick Lowe's perky pop proclivities.

RICK WAKEMAN/Rhapsodies
(A&M SP 6501)

After all the stuffy drivel Wakeman's been involved in, this two-record project is genuinely refreshing. Not that his songs are that great, but most of them are cheerfully dumb filler performed in an engaging throwaway manner, making this some of the most diverting muzak you'll ever hear. Especially fun are the kitschy disco "Rhapsody in Blue" and a reggaefied "Swan Lake" ("Swan Lager"). Bravo!

FRANKIE MILLER/A Perfect Fit
(Chrysalis CHR 1220)

When does an artist go from showing potential to being a disappointment? Scotland's answer to Otis Redding has always been frustrating on record and this one

Buy yourself this record

changes little. Particularly disturbing is that Frankie seems to have settled into a comfortable groove that makes for pleasant listening and challenges him hardly at all. Only "When I'm Away From You" hints at the depth of emotion Miller plumbed most successfully on **The Rock**. Maybe next time?

JOHN COUGAR
(Riva RVL-7401)

Once upon a time Johnny was the next Springsteen; now it looks like he's just about ready to be himself. Cougar has his own ode to roots—the Midwest, in this case, similar macho romantic visions of night fever, and familiar tales of women tender and tough. He generally manages to escape accusations of mimickry (though "I Need a Lover" pushes things) by avoiding Bruce's guitar-based overdrive and by being a less grandiose lyricist. So while Cougar's music contains no great revelations, at least he's claimed himself a small piece of a very crowded turf.

KISS/Dynasty
(Casablanca NBLP-7152)

Once you get past the endless huckstering of product and their now-tame image (tee hee), Kiss are a decent rock'n'roll band, even if they are suspiciously overproduced. Highlights this time include "I Was Made for Lovin' You," a cross between Bad Company and disco, Gene Simmons's mucho macho "Charisma," and the great guitar break in "Hard Times." Still, with all the hoopla, one expects more, whether that only means more ludicrous or not, so they're ultimately just a non-unusual letdown.



PETER FRAMPTON/Where I Should Be
(A&M SP 3710)

It's time to give the poor slob a break; he's not so bad and certainly hasn't had an easy time of it lately. And he's still trying. In this case, for a soulful sound, away from the cotton-candy sweetness that comes so naturally. To that end, Frampton: sings a little grittier, does two Hayes-Porter Memphis classics, and enlists the help of a gospelish back-up trio and Stax greats Steve Cropper and "Duck" Dunn. All to the good. Instead of coming off like an overpaid superstar, Peter sounds like the minor talent that he is.

MYCHAEL/Neon Dreams
(Free Form AHL 1-3400)

You may be excused for dismissing this one because of the cover, which shows a drippy-looking guy with a dumb name holding a guitar that has a neon cord. (Not to mention the sleeve note that "'Cloud High' is dedicated to my friend, Jesus.") Yet side one is an engaging and rocking, if not terribly distinctive, set; Myke sings and plays guitar melodramatically, helped out considerably by busy, echo-heavy production. Side two, though, is just dreck: sugary ballads and an ill-advised "composition for rock guitar orchestra" called "The Life Sonata" that makes Mike Oldfield look pretty good. The kid needs a few more years.

CANNED HEAT
(Takoma TAK 7066)

Good lord! A new Canned Heat album? 'Fraid so, although at this point the only vintage survivors are vocalist Bob "The Bear" Hite and drummer "Fito" De La Parra. (For added nostalgia, Harvey Mandel and the Chambers Brothers guest.) The latest version of Heat boogies quite credibly and predictably; it doesn't take a genius to guess what tunes like "Strut My Stuff" and "She's Looking Good" will sound like. So what's the point? They weren't all that interesting in their prime.

• • •

OXENDALE & SHEPARD/Put Your Money Where Your Mouth is
(Nemporer JZ 36063)

Gerry Shephard is the singer; Peter Oxendale is a jack of all keyboards who briefly flirted with "fame" as a member of Sparks some years back. What they've collaborated on is a pleasantly faceless LP with bits of Queen's pomp, Barry Manilow's sincerity, Boz Scaggs's soul, and...uh...zzzzzzz.

TMG/Disturbing the Peace
(Atco 38-115)

The most this Australian quartet can claim is that they don't embarrass themselves in their respectful emulation of Bad Company. TMG have taken Bad Co.'s spare guitar style one step further, eliminating the element of dynamics that sometimes makes Mick Ralphs an exciting soloist. As a result, the songs march along at a determined mid-tempo that offers no frills and nothing to latch onto. And give Ted Mulry the Paul Rodgers soundalike award of the month. Anyway, the cover, a *Little Rascals* still, is great.

THE JEREMY SPENCER BAND/Flee
(Atlantic SD 19236)

Like poor old wacko Peter Green, Jeremy Spencer was gripped by spiritual turmoil and consequently bailed out of Fleetwood Mac. On this LP his born-again Christianity is, thank goodness, only implicit most of the time. Unfortunately, so are Spencer's once-impressive talents. Except for a very few hot guitar parts, Flee is wholly defined by monotonous rhythms and dazed vocals. Lobotomy, anyone?

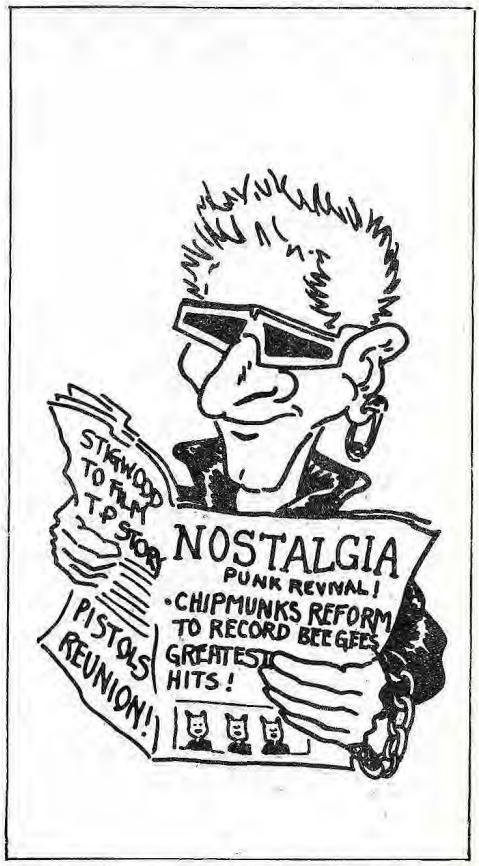
LAZY RACER
(A&M SP 4768)

One supposes the Fleetwood Mac boom explains the existence of Lazy Racer, a soft-rock band containing vets Tim Renwick and Henry Spinetti and featuring genteel male and female vocals. But this crew's efforts are so languid as to be almost totally flat, and thus closer to the Carpenters than the worthy Mac. Thereby reinforcing the prejudice that pretty equals dull.

ST. PARADISE
(Warner Bros. BSK 3281)

SAXON
(Carrere UK CAL 110)

It's no wonder ultra-heavy rock is on the wane with lame outfits like this pair trying to carry on the tradition. St. Paradise, a trio that showcases grads (flunk-outs?) of the Ted Nugent school of crud, engages in the usual gestures of solidarity with the audience, odes to groovy ladies, hyper guitar riffs, etc., only mechanically, with none of Ted's repellent charm. Saxon are equally cretinous though a bit more polished. Taking their cue from fine artists like Black Sabbath and Uriah Heep, they do their earnest best to create an awesome wall of amplified sound, but just can't muster any personality to give it meaning. Next, please.



RENAISSANCE/Azure D'Or
(Sire SRK 6068)

Renaissance continues to epitomize what may someday be viewed as the low point of the '70s: the bland artsy band. Annie Haslam's zomboid ice goddess vocals, the rote execution, and the dry pseudo-classical bent of the music take what Yes and Genesis were trying to do and turn it into pointless pretense. Bah! ■

AMERICA UNDERGROUND

Capitol Radio (& Clubs, Bands, etc.)

D.C. Scene by Steve Lorber; Reviews by Jim Green

Washington D.C. rock scene? Bands? Clubs? Records? It may come as a shock to the rest of the country, who have more likely than not never even seen any coverage of the scene in the Nation's Capital, but believe it or not the D.C. rock'n'roll scene is alive and kicking. The list of better-known D.C. artists who *have* landed major label contracts does not exactly help the city's dismal image: Starland Vocal Band? Roy Buchanan? Artful Dodger? Root Boy Slim? Walter Egan? Facedancer? Nils Lofgren? Not a line-up a rocker can be proud of. In addition, D.C. has suffered from not having the overbloated media eye of New York, Boston or L.A. monitoring every development and blowing insignificant events out of proportion. Despite it all, though, there exists a thriving scene that locals will tell you is the most active and exciting since the heyday of D.C. rock in the late '60s when bands like the British Walkers, Hangmen, Apollos and, of course, Link Wray and the Raymen were having local hits and tearing up the city.

D.C.'s musical renaissance began in 1976, the same year many other American regional rock scenes were beginning to blossom. Two bands, the **Slickee Boys** and **Overkill** appeared virtually out of nowhere, taking the city by surprise if not by storm. Suffering from lack of receptive venues more than scarcity of ideas, if the two bands had had to depend on the few rock bars then in existence for support and gigs, they both would have died quick deaths. Beside the odd gig for a children's hospital or an experimental new wave night at an art gallery which was going out of business there was almost nowhere for these bands to play. Instead, they received strong support from two of the local media: the *Unicorn Times*, a well-established local entertainment monthly, and WGTB-FM, the radio station of Georgetown University. WGTB's free-form format and powerful signal gave the D.C. area the luxury of good alternate radio and helped immensely to get the new wave scene off the ground. WGTB's educational, non-profit status allowed airplay of every type of music, and had actually pioneered new wave ideas and attitudes long before they became fashionable. [*The author's weekly punk-rock show,* Mystic Eyes, *began its run in 1975, long before the first rumblings in New York or London.—Ed.*] If GTB's on-the-air presentation wasn't always slick and professional, you could be sure it was always exciting. In addition, GTB acted as a forum for new rock sounds, a place where any local musician or band could have their tapes aired.

With the help of the *Unicorn Times* and WGTB the looniness and absurdity being perpetrated by the Slickee Boys and Overkill was able to spread throughout the Chocolate City and into the suburbs, bringing to life a scene that had been dormant far too long. The Slickees (who are still active—more later) went into the studio on a shoestring budget and came out with an EP, **Hot and Cool**, which drew on a bizarre mixture of beat and psychedelic influences. Both **Hot and Cool** and Overkill's basement recording of Brute Force's obscure classic "In Jim's Garage" received heavy airplay on WGTB, which in turn created a demand for live performances by both bands.

During this same time (late '76/early '77), three other major local bands emerged: the **Ritz**, the **Look** and **White Boy** (all now defunct). The Ritz had a light sound reminiscent of Cockney Rebel, and a gifted songwriter who has unfortunately since disappeared from the scene. The Look were the first active progressive new wave band in D.C. Their guitarist, Robert Goldstein, went on to the Urban Verbs, the first and only D.C. new wave band to be signed by a major label, with their first Warner Brothers album expected shortly. White Boy, perhaps the most interesting and certainly the most bizarre of the lot, was a weird father/son aggregation which combined a progressive heavy metal sound with a punky, maniacal edge. Sporting a silver wig and a pair of Sunday glasses, lead singer Mr. Ott (dad) had one of the strangest, most demonic stage demeanors imaginable. Imagine *your* father on stage wearing a silver wig! Before breaking up recently, White Boy had released three singles: "I Could Puke," "I'm So Straight," and "I Hate" (in which TP's Jim Green, who had not exactly supported the band in his reviews, was but one of a long list of White Boy dislikes).

1977 saw the scene growing by leaps and bounds, the only missing element being a club that the new wave could call its own. Late in the year the Atlantis club opened and for a short time seemed to fit the bill. Soon, though, relations between local bands and the club's management broke down, and generally stayed that way for the duration of its six-month existence. Still, the Atlantis did help unify the scene and demonstrated to would-be entrepreneurs that the new wave was potentially profitable in D.C.

The most important band on the D.C. scene over the past few years, in terms of longevity, size of following, effect on other bands, and most important, creativity, is the **Razz**. Had they been a part of any of the more publicized regional scenes, the Razz would have undoubtedly been signed to a major label long ago. But like Hank Aaron, who, had he played baseball in New York instead of Milwaukee and Atlanta, would be a national monument instead of a salesman for Magnavox, the Razz have suffered from the isolation of their environment.

The Razz began to take off in 1976, playing to SRO crowds at a small Georgetown club which booked mainly heavy metal cover bands. In a matter of weeks they outclassed the place and moved to a residency at the Psychedelly in nearby Bethesda, Maryland. The club's owner, Lou Sordo, known previously as the man behind Washington's blues boom (another Psychedelly fave, the **Nighthawks**, have a number of hot R&B albums in the Thorogood vein on Adelphi Records) was knocked out by their power. After the Razz played the Psychedelly, Sordo's vision changed and he opened up his club to the better new wave and rock acts.

Stylistically, the Razz has its roots in the

Slickee Boys Kim Kane, Emery O, Mark Noone, Dan Palewski (hidden) and Marshall Keith.



Becky Hammel

And it's lonely for me



Michael E. Tanner

D.C.'s finest? The Razz: Bill Craig, Doug Tull, Mike Reidy, Ted Nicely, Tommy Keene.

early Flamin' Groovies and late '60s British guitar bands, and visually they are quite amazing: four weird looking but extremely adept instrumentalists fronted by depraved 5'2" lead singer Michael Reidy, probably the only front man in recent memory to have invented an original move!! Known as the "crotch dance," locals speak of it in the same breath as Chuck Berry's duck walk, Daltrey's mike swinging and James Brown's never-ending finale. It's usually performed during "Cherry Vanilla," a song about that New York starlet's rise to fame. Reidy affects a look of total helplessness as he demonstrates being pulled by his chain across the stage in a series of short jumps, insinuating that Cherry Vanilla climbed the ladder of success by servicing and humiliating men whenever necessary to reach her goal. Reidy's look of sheer terror is so convincing that one has to wonder whether he isn't doing the *real* "mystery dance."

Able to draw fans from both new wave and boogie audiences, the Razz were undoubtedly D.C.'s biggest draw. Their first single, "C-Redux," was a local favorite, selling out in D.C. within two months even though it was poorly produced and failed to capture on vinyl the magic the band displays live. A live EP, culled from a local radio recording and released in a limited edition, remedied the problem somewhat. Their newest disc ("You Can Run But You Can't Hide"/"Mr. Comedy") is their most commercial yet, sounding like a cross between the Cars and Cheap Trick. It was recently added to the playlist at WWDC-FM, a station best known for playing the likes of Boston and Foreigner. It could be the break they've been waiting for.

The Razz's success inspired new bands and made many new clubs receptive to new rock. Some of the bands following on the heels of Razz were the **Rage**, the **Penetrators**, the **Deceits**, and the **Turds**. Though not necessarily inspired musically by the Razz, their local success gave these bands a better chance to play around town.

The Rage were an excellent power pop band in the Shoes/Dwight Twilley mold, who were quite popular during their short existence. Their main problem was that although they looked good they conveyed no real personality or image on stage. Eventually, guitarist Tommy Keene left to join the Razz. Singer-bassist Richard X. Heyman is now with New York's Sorrows. The Penetrators are Washington's answer to the Sex Pistols. Tight, meticulous, and steamrolling every song at 90 miles per hour, they are quite excellent at what they do—particularly their rendition of Max Frost and the Troopers' classic "Nothing Can Change the Shape of Things to Come." The Deceits are unquestionably one of D.C.'s current pop contenders. They feature ex-Slickee Boys lead singer Martha Hull and ex-Overkill bassist Harrison Sohmer, along with Keith Campbell, a ferocious Mick Green-styled guitarist, and Vic Quick on drums. Early in the group's career they recorded an EP on the Limp label, and are still developing nicely.

Limp Records was started by Skip Groff in order to help many of D.C.'s new wave bands get off the ground. The label has built up an impressive roster of local talent, with releases so far by the Slickee Boys, Deceits, Nightman, Shirkers and Tina Peel, as well as a D.C. new wave sampler LP, **30 Seconds Over D.C.** (For info write Limp c/o Skip Groff, Yesterday and Today Records, 1327-J Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852.)

Perhaps the group that will have the biggest effect on how the new rock from D.C. is viewed in the future is the aforementioned **Urban Verbs**, who are in the studio with Chris Thomas recording their first album as this is written. The Urban Verbs are from the Talking Heads school of new music (drummer Roddy Frantz is the Heads' Chris's brother), and are very fine musicians. The Verbs have always had a strong cult following in D.C. and have been received very well on frequent journeys to New York. They are very close with Brian Eno, who recommended them highly to Warner Brothers. All of Washington's hoping that they'll lead the way for other local successes.

Working against all possible odds and surviving several personnel changes, the Slickee Boys seem just now to be hitting their stride. With two EPs and a limisted edition LP behind them, they are currently in the studio recording their forthcoming EP, **Golden Love**. Live, the Slickee Boys cover just about every period of rock music from 1962 on—which gives them an almost comic-book effect. They are very tight and always a lot of fun.

Lest I receive the wrath of voodoo Rock Therapy, a few words about the current rockabilly movement are in order. Originally contrived by Rock Therapist Dr. Joseph Sasfy, through tireless efforts he brought several geeky rockabilly musicians out of the woodwork and singlehandedly promoted them to legendary status. The scene currently sports three main men who interchange bands and drive crowds to a frenzy wherever they play: Billy Hancock and the Tennessee Rockets, Tex Rubinowitz and the Bad Boys, and—direct from Leo's Diner—Danny Denver.

It's hard to mention every band and to talk about them fairly. Some of the newer bands just now starting to gig with some regularity and/or with records coming out are the Nurses, the Chumps, Nightman (an excellent EP on the way), Nojos (new EP out with live version of "Strychnine"!), Bad Brains, Snitch and the Pinups.

Currently there is rock'n'roll regularly to be found at these area clubs: Psychedelly, Varsity Grill, Childe Harold, Columbia Station, the Bayou and even DC Space, a former avant garde jazz hangout. TP's *Outer Limits* columnist John Paige has been responsible for many of the avant garde rock sounds coming out of the area—his Random Radar label works not only with such local D.C. outfits as the Muffins, but with British artists like Lol Coxhill and some of the old Henry Cow, as well.

Another indication of the healthy D.C. scene is the two excellent fanzines it has spawned. *Descenes* was conceived by Howard Wuelfing, former bassist with both the Slickee Boys and the Look, now fronting the Nurses. Wuelfing, who also does a new wave column in the *Unicorn Times*, is an important figure on the local scene and *Descenes* deals exclusively with D.C. rock. the first issue is invaluable, with a family tree of all D.C. bands and musicians. *The Infiltrator*, which mixes coverage of local music with national, is the brainchild of former WGTB jock Mary Levy. Its layout is exceptional, making it a very enjoyable mag to look at. (*Descenes* 5018 8th Rd., South Arlington, VA 22204. *The Infiltrator*, 11844 Farmland Dr., Rockville, MD 20852.)

To sum up, the scene in the Capitol has taken its time in developing, but right now it seems to be at its height, with an abundance of bands, clubs and local records. Hopefully, major recording companies and rock magazines will take the time to investigate and, perhaps, be pleasantly surprised. —JG

* * *

Short Business

OK, buddies (and buddesses), since I gotta cram the reviews into a little space this issue (no wisecracks!), well, like Levi Stubbs sez, "this-a gon' be sho'tuh": ...Nip-punks on a rampage! In "Eyeball" b/w "I Hate Music" by the **Mad** (Disgusting Records, 334 Bowery, NY, NY 10012, $2), Screaming Mad George leads his joltin' Japanese (and one Cauc femme) thru slashing, foam-at-the-mouth-style "ditties" revealing love-hate relationships with—yep—eyeballs and music. Suitably revolting sleeve. ..."Every dog has it's day," sings **Ether**, so I gotta give them theirs. "Ya Gotta Kill Me" is a pretentious bit of Ziggy-influenced foolishness that builds to a glorious crescendo if you ignore the words, and "In and Out" is about, er, the ol' in-out: "I'll make you coffee and feed you and then/We'll start all over..." Thorry boyth, yer jutht not my typeth. (M-92 ANOA-2, available through stores carrying JEM product.)...The **Sillies** are sleek, rocking, casually *ennuyé*, and I wish I could make out more of the words. "No Big Deal" b/w "Is There Lunch After Death" are tongue-in-cheek teasers, mainly because like so many debut discs, they promise more than they deliver. Hope they stay together long enow to do another 45—I wanna hear whether there's Musical Lunch after this Sillies Snack. (Sheila Edwards gets the Bored Vocal Award for the first half of '79 on "Lunch.") ($2.50 from Nebula Records, 20894 Lancaster, Harper Woods, MI 48225.)...**Lucky Pierre**'s "Fans and Cameras" b/w "Idlewood" ain't yer usual Cleveland power pop rekkid atall. Arty, Angloid progresso-pop? Those labels are fairly meaningless, so let's just say these clever dicks have ambitions informed, seemingly, by very early Sparks, and Jet, but with a dimmer lyrical outlook. Striking arrangements and textures, though the melodies could be more memorable. But keep yer eyeballs pealed for further developments. (NR-9906, Unadulterated Records, PO Box 641, Cleveland, OH 44107.)...**Wazmo Nariz** is either one of your faves or leaves you cold. Although he's got a great band and oft-ingenious turns of lyrics in his plus column, I'm turned off by his twee over-use of falsetto, general too-too cuteness and musical insubstantiality. On his first single it was somewhat balanced by the band's muscular musical overdrive, on his new EP it isn't—except on "I Hate This Life," a gambol through the woods of melancholy (howzat, Waz?) which retains his stylishness. In any case, too talented to ignore. (EWAZ-94, $3 from Fiction Records, PO Box 375, Wilmette, IL 60091.)...Lastly—but far from leastly—is the best yet from **Cinecyde**, their **Positive Action** EP (TR005). Once more, it's either me or them that's changing for the better; they still do their armageddon riff-rock, but "Phosphorus and Napalm" sounds a whole lot catchier for all of that than I'd have expected, and they do a great version of the DC5's "Anyway You Want It," displaying a pop propensity which they should indulge a lot more, especially as a needed respite from their unremitting doomsday lyrics. ($2.25 from Tremor Records, 403 Forest, Royal Oak, MI 48067.) —JG ■



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THE KAZOOS BROTHERS Plateful of Kazoos — **RNEP 504**
The much-anticipated sequel to the Temple City Kazoo Orchestra, the Kazoos Brothers (who will be appearing on Dinah Shore's TV show around September 12th) demonstrate that the kazoo is the funkiest, most soulful instrument around. Cuts: "Soul Man," "Rubber Biscuit," "Can't Turn You Loose," and "Little Darlin'."

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—The Members/Virgin Music Publishers Ltd. 1978

HELLO/Continued from page 4

PRAISE FOR PAIGE

Congratulations on John Paige's column, "Outer Limits." The one predictable thing about it is its name. Paige even writes well. (Most rock critics write well only when they're making mincemeat out of somebody.) Best of all, he fills in the blanks for readers who want to learn more about the kind of music once known exclusively to god and Chris Cutler.

Gail Lande
Pikesville, MD

RAVING FAVEMAIL

Regarding "Raving Faves" #16: I find it hard to believe that **Agents of Fortune** is thought of as a useless album. "Reaper" isn't even the best cut on it! Also, the Music Machine LPs, far from being disappointing, are extremely enjoyable if you appreciate '60s psychedelia.

Brian Davis
Dix Hills, NY

So?—Ed.

WORD FROM THE VOID

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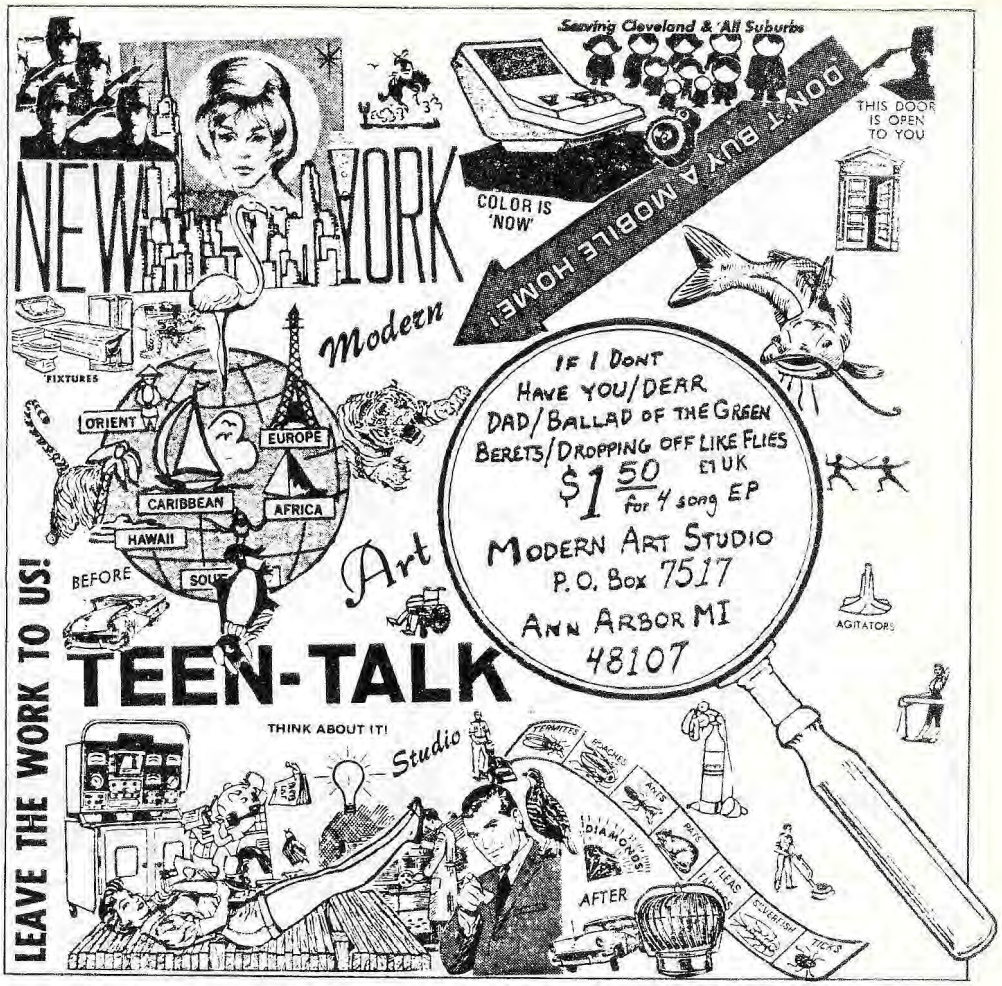
Lansing, MI



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Davey Jones & the King Bees
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Who—Who Are You/Had Enough
Who—The Relay/Wasp Man
Who—Last Time/Under my Thumb/Anyway Anyhow, Anywhere/Daddy Rolling Stone*
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PUBLICATIONS

YARDBIRDS: Back in print! "The Complete Yardbirds" tells everything you wanted to know about the legendary band that spawned Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck and Jimmy Page. Includes extensive discography. Formerly TPP3, this historic essay is now available as a back issue of Trouser Press Collectors' Magazine. Copies are $1.25 each, including postage ($2 overseas, including airmail), from Trouser Press Collectors' Magazine, PO Box 2450, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10017.

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THE IKON-Todd Rundgren Newsletter: Issue #1 w/discography, pictures, lyrics, more! 75¢. The Ikon, c/o Chapter III Records, 229 E. Broad St., Athens, GA 30601.

FAN CLUBS

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A European Smorgasbord of Talent

By Robert Payes

Three gentlemen of varying musical reputes have recently made separate attempts at "progressive music," with greatly varied results.

Now that Stewart Copeland's success with the Police has shown that there is a future for ex-Curved Air members, violinist **Darryl Way** has resurfaced with his very own violin concerto (**Concerto for Electric Violin**, Island UK ILPS 9550). "That's progressive?" you ask. It could be when you have Francis Monkman (also ex-CA, though less visible since **801 Live**) providing the orchestra on a brace of synthesizers. In the liner notes, Way breathlessly explains why an electric violin was best for this project: unlimited volume, the possibility of sound warpage, etc. Which is swell, except that Way is no Isaac Stern at the violin and no Mozart at the pen; the concerto is stultifyingly boring (Monkman, it must be added, is no London Philharmonic himself), and Way's "daring" improvisations, supposedly unheard-of in a classical context, are so pitiful one yearns for some of Jerry Goodman's Mahavishnu raveups instead. In fact, one can list a variety of genuine classical music compositions (Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" comes to mind) that the average progressive-rock fan would find more substantial—not to mention more enjoyable—than this. Maybe some mellotrons would've helped.

As for **Vangelis**, you kinda wonder what keeps him going; he's been steadily releasing albums of carefully overblown electro-art rock for years with little or no recognition. Almost a shame, considering that **Albedo 0.39** and the recent **Beaubourg** were rather entertaining records. **China**, (Polydor PD-1-6199) unfortunately, makes the deadly mistake of hanging an entire album around a Concept, maaan—and if the title doesn't hint at the concept in question, then Vangelis is guilty of wasting more time than allowed by law. Humorlessly pretentious synthesizer work decorated around the edges with I-Ching hexagrams, and featuring a Chinese poem sing-songily recited by the team of Yeung Hak-Fun and Koon Fook Man (I kid you not—but the album credits might). Ultimately, Vangelis accomplishes less with an entire album of Chinese imagery than Siouxsie and the Banshees' "Hong Kong Garden" does in less than three minutes.

Of the trio, the only album that even begins to work is **Neil Ardley**'s **Harmony of the Spheres** (Decca UK TXS-R133), mostly because his conceptual approach (the "harmony of the spheres" refers to the proportionate orbit times of each planet, translated to musical terms) is soft-peddled in favor of the music. More interested in the musical than the technical applications of the synth, Ardley's composing exudes a distinct Canterbury influence (read: Caravan, Soft Machine)—adroit, sedate without lapsing into coma, and infinitely listenable. Ian Carr and John Martyn make forthright contributions on trumpet and guitar respectively (although Martyn's leads tend to come across as somewhat tentative). **Harmony of the Spheres** succeeds because it carefully underwhelms the listener, and these days that's no small achievement.



VANGELIS PAPATHANASSIOU



FRANCOIS BREANT

With its two most recent releases, Egg Records moves two squares closer to its tag line, "The Most Progressive Music Experience." Just the fact that they're actively cultivating the French progressive scene is encouraging—without Egg, a lot of good edge music might not even make it outside the head of its composer, much less outside the French border.

Francois Bréant's **Sons Optiques** ("optical sounds") (Egg 900.553) is thematically akin to American jazz trumpeter Michael Mantler's **Movies**—i.e., instrumental pieces based on imaginary film sequences—but any other similarity ends with the first crescendo. Like many of his fellow Frenchmen (Richard Pinhas and Christian Vander come to mind), Bréant tempers his playing and composing with a certain defiance that forces the listener to adjust himself to the composer's desires and not vice versa. **Sons Optiques** easily moves between a fluid, lyrical jazz-rock along the lines of Hatfield and the North or Bill Bruford's combo and the Gothic-ominous tone explosions of Magma; Bréant's keyboard work, confined to one grand piano and one ARP synthesizer (none of this 25-different-keyboards nonsense), is simultaneously brash and to the point, and the backing musicians (including ex-Magma violinist Didier Lockwood, who's been showing up on a lot of sessions recently), do more than their fair share. Worth bugging your local record importer for.

Stand By (Egg 900.578), the first Heldon album on Egg (not counting the contributions members Richard Pinhas and Francois Auger made on the Ose album **Adonia**), could convert a fair number of people who were turned off by the machine anthems and Fripp-and-Eno devotions that characterized previous Heldon outings. Although still heavily dosed with repetitive synthesizer programs and somewhat uneven snake guitar (uneven, that is, compared to Pinhas' axework on his **Rhizosphere** album), **Stand By** relaxes much of Heldon's old "overhead valves of Hell" image by periodically wandering into (almost) straight progressive rock. Keyboardist Patrick Gauthier (one-time Heldonite who's also worked with Magma and Weidorje) makes a welcome appearance, as does Magma vocalist Klaus Blasquiz, his singing made completely inorganic as processed by Pinhas's circuitry. As the track "Rote Armée Fraction" implies, Heldon remain the electronic guerillas of modern music. ■

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