IGGY POP · AEROSMITH/JOE PERRY

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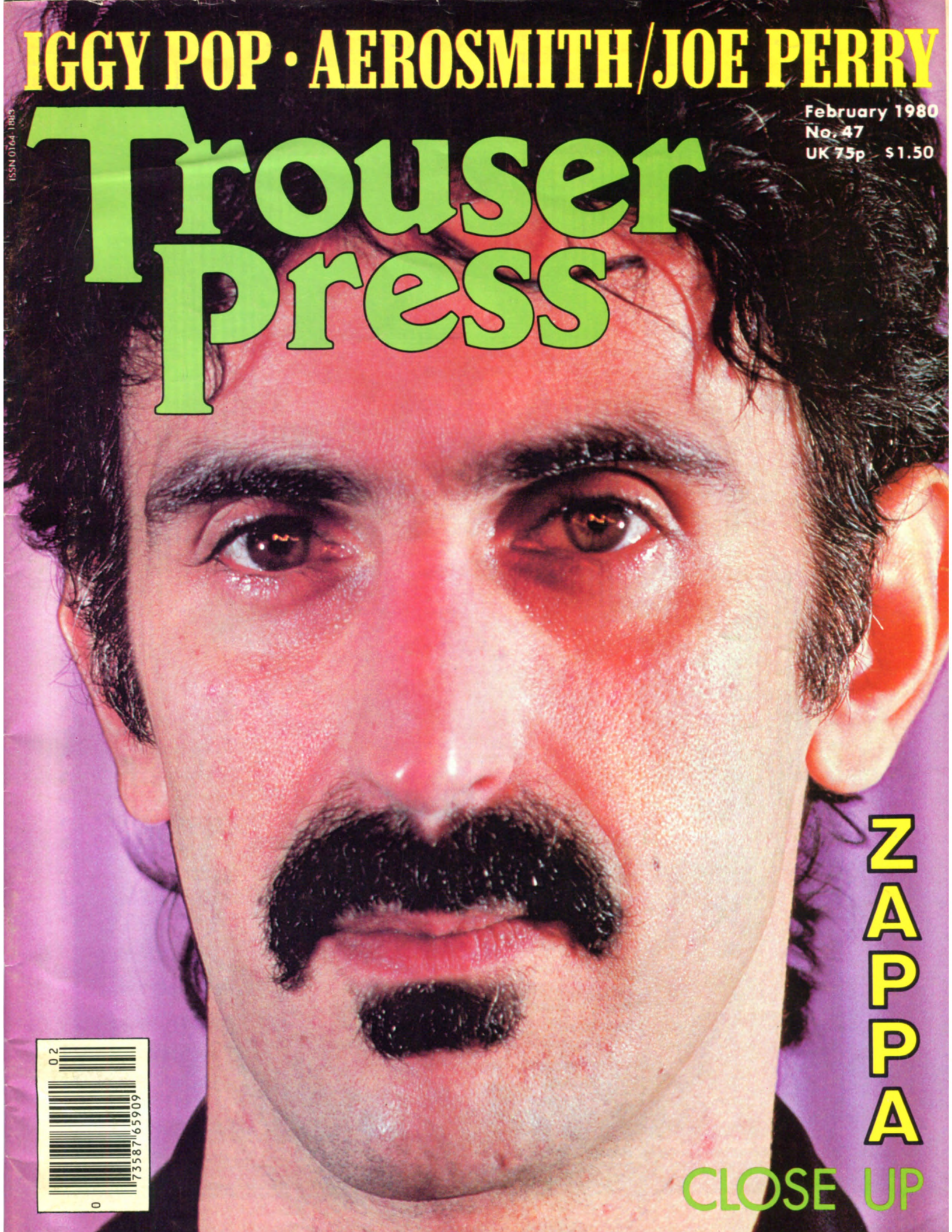

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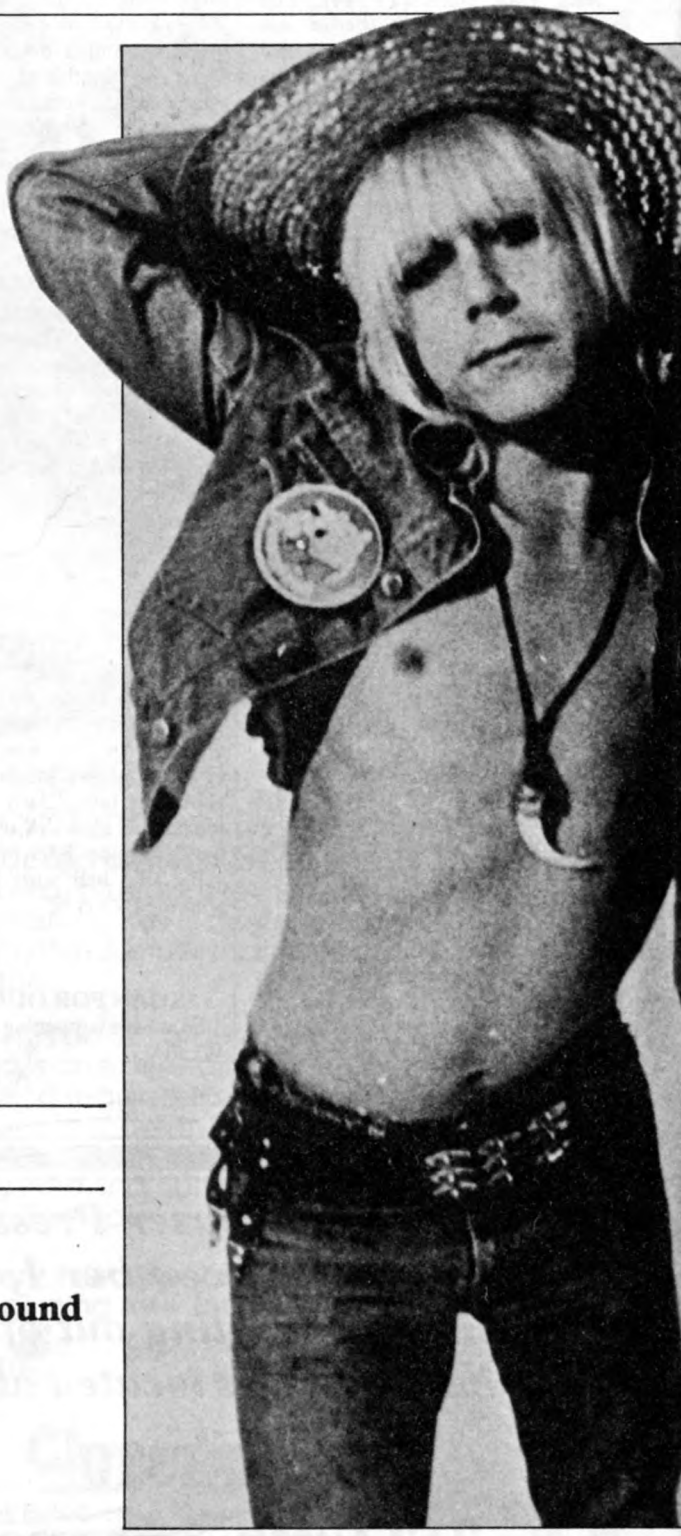
Trouser Press 47

Volume Seven, Number One **February 1980**

features



departments

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HELLO IT'S ME

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LIVING DOLLS

Thanks for the article on the New York Dolls (TP 44). The Dolls deserve credit (better late than never) for being the first new wave rock group and one of the greatest groups, period. If it weren't for "Personality Crisis," "Looking for a Kiss" and their generally cynical disposition, we never would have heard the Sex Pistols' "Problems," "I Wanna Be Me" and "New York."

Jack J. Keaton III
Carmichael, CA

The Dolls were everything rock had to come to at that time. They combined outrage in both appearance and music unmatched by glitter bands and today's punks. The world was not ready for them at the time and probably never will be. Living in Sausalito, I need to listen to them once in a while to remind me that life did exist somewhere at some time.

Michael Reed
Sausalito, CA

BOLAN CHAIN

I know there has always been a very strong anti-T. Rex feeling in this country. Marc Bolan was really hated over here—constantly ridiculed in the press as a person and musician. Some of his records were a bit silly but the vast majority of his recorded work (John's Children, Tyrannosaurus Rex, T. Rex) is absolutely incredible. His pop songs weren't just rock 'n' roll; they were meticulously crafted works of art. Bolan was always popular with artists who appreciated his ideas and concepts. Bowie loved him, as did Steve Harley. Punks knew how cool he was, too, toting around a black wife, half-black kid, thumbing his nose at the establishment and finally dying in a car crash. So why no retrospective, TP? C'mon! I expected more from you people.

Rotwang Ramone
Bridgeport, CT

ABBACADABRA

What was the story on godawful ABBA doing in Trouser Press (TP 45)? Has someone with warped MOR mental deficiencies captured the editorial office? I hope these porridge-brained renegades can be banished and defeated before the next issue. Remember, this is Trouser Press and not just any shit rag!

Bruce Simpson
Ottawa, CANADA

L*T*R*CY

How come you c***s can't do a reasonable article on the Jam? I don't count the f*ckin' useless review of "When You're Young" (TP f*ckin' 44). Instead of writing about the Jam, Clash and Undertones, you f*ck ups write on sh*t like Magazine. F*ck off!

P.S. To hell with Roy Loney; who the f*ck is he?

Angery [sic]
LTA, USA

KOAN FOR OUR TIME

So what's happening with Robert Wyatt?

A. Horvath
Cleveland, OH

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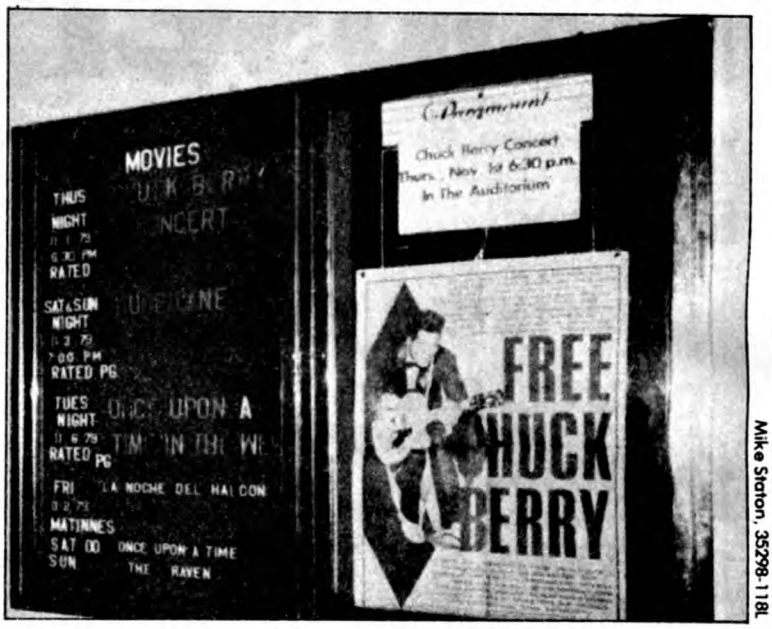

Mike Staton, 35298-118L

Chuck Berry was released from Lompoc Prison Farm on November 19, 1979, after serving two-thirds of his four-month jail sentence for income tax evasion. Even this reduced term cannot atone for one of the more disgusting applications of American justice within recent memory. While down on the farm, Berry gave a concert you're not likely to hear a bootleg of. TP's man behind bars, Shane Williams, filed this report.—Ed.

Lompoc, California is probably best remembered, if at all, as the location of W.C. Fields's *The Bank Dick*. But it is also the home of Lompoc Federal Penitentiary, a maximum security prison with seven layers of razor wire on a double fence, and five gun towers; an inmate was shot and killed in an escape attempt several months ago. Chuck Berry was not assigned here but to Lompoc Prison Farm, a separate and (as the name indicates) much less severe institution. At the Farm (or camp, as opposed to a correctional institute) it is possible to walk away if one desires.

As soon as Berry's sentence became known—even before he arrived in Lompoc Penitentiary—some prisoners, including myself, began asking the recreation department about the possibility of his putting on a show. Berry himself later gave his consent to inmates he met during his physical exam in the pen. Authorities, though, created something of a Catch-22 situation due to Berry's sentence calling for community service concerts; they probably didn't think it right for him to work off one of his 1,000 hours (!) playing for fellow prisoners. Berry probably didn't view it like that. He just wanted to play because he knew people were looking forward to it.

After Berry started borrowing the pen's musical equipment to play shows at the Farm, rec department officials themselves put pressure on higher-ups. A date was set: November 1, 6:30 p.m. Berry forbade cameras. A poster calling for his liberation did double duty as advertising for the "free" concert.

Five hundred convicts jammed the auditorium as concert hour rolled around. The lights were turned down very low (to make sure no photos would be taken?) and Berry, accompanied by his band of felons from camp, came on stage. He started off with a rousing "Roll Over, Beethoven" and kept the pace up during a 75-minute set. The band was at varying levels of proficiency, so it was almost like watching Berry play solo. As might be expected, oldies dominated; when I called out something off his latest LP, **Rockit**, Berry expressed surprise that anyone had heard it, as the album came out a month before he entered prison.

Apart from songs, Berry told a few jokes in the form of a letter he had received from a woman friend. She wrote that she would have enclosed some money for him but didn't think about it until after she had sealed the envelope. The auditorium cracked up; we've all had equally lame excuses foisted on us at one time or another.

Shane Williams, 00214-122L
Lompoc Federal Penitentiary
Lompoc, CA

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RAVING FAVES

RF #23: Worst Rock Rip-Offs

Are you receiving us? "This should be easy," we confidently predicted. The majority of readers obviously disagreed; this question received the slimmest response of any Raving Fave within memory.

Maybe semantics were a problem. Some answers confused "rip-off"—exploitation—with mere bummers (e.g., Raspberries and Badfinger never making it.) Nor were critical evaluations of bands what we had in mind; one Faver nominated Blondie for getting too much publicity. A glance at the list below—virtually everything we received—should clarify matters. Only the first item got more than one vote.

(As always, we welcome suggestions for Raving Fave questions. After two years, exotic topics like this one suddenly look appealing.)

Robert Stigwood's *Sergeant Pepper* movie and soundtrack
Concert ticket prices
Kiss ("biggest insult"—Bob Abbate)
Rock flea markets
FM radio
Beatlemania and/or the Knack ("almost the same"—Judy Stripes)
Any Lou Reed album

Question #26

What are your favorite rock movies? Up to three choices allowed, and they don't necessarily have to be about music. No Beatle films permitted (not that any of you would dare...). Deadline is February 29, 1980. Roll 'em!

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Roman Don't Realize a Word!!

DAVID BOWIE WILL NOT FLY!!

DEVO'S NAME ORIGINATED WHEN BOB MOTHERSBAUGH RECEIVED A POOR GRADE ON A TERM PAPER!!!

DAVE DAVIES PLAYS ALL THE GUITAR PARTS ON THE FIRST TWO LED ZEPPELIN LPS

"THE ULTIMATE TRIP"

ROCK ENTREPRENEUR JERRY BRANDT, IN CONJUNCTION WITH CASABLANCA, FILMED, RECORDED AND PHOTOGRAPHED THE VIBES AT MAX YASGUR'S FARM ON THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOODSTOCK.

"DOUBLE PLATINUM IN REVERSE"

2,000,000 copies of the Sergeant Pepper Soundtrack Album were returned to RSO!!!!

Roman Szolkowski

FAX 'N' RUMOURS

Teenage Wasteland

You don't have to be a rock fan to know that 11 people were asphyxiated (and eight others seriously injured) in the stampede for general admission seats outside the Who's Riverfront Coliseum, Cincinnati concert on December 3; for one day, at least, Pete Townshend pushed the Ayatollah Khoemini off newspapers' front pages. The disaster has been variously attributed to an unruly mob, a delayed show opening and non-reserved seating.

The Who wasn't told what happened until after the concert (making for sleazy headlines like the *New York Post*'s "Eleven Dead—And the Band Played On"). Their tour continued with only one forced cancellation; Townshend vowed, after learning of the deaths, "if we don't play tomorrow, we'll never play again." He also told the *New York Times*, "We care more about these kids than some of their parents do."

The concert was produced by Electric Factory, whose manager, Cal Levy, denied responsibility for security arrangements. There have been previous problems handling crowds at Coliseum rock concerts (Elton John in 1976, Led Zeppelin in 1977). The Coliseum management had made no statement as of our deadline.

A task force, including Cincinnati public officials, is formulating safety policies for the building; there is also a city panel investigating the incident. It may spell the end of non-reserved ("Festival") seating at indoor rock concerts, a Darwinian system rewarding the strongest and pushiest.

Lowe Wins, Radar Loses

Radar Records, the good folks who brought you English releases by Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe (as well as Red Crayola, the Yachts, Inmates and others) has been folded by its parent company, record giant WEA. Managing director Andrew Lauder was dismissed; groups that were signed to the label are being released or transferred to WEA. As one of the really exciting "establishment" labels of the recent few years, Radar will be missed. Any future project that involves Lauder will bear watching.

Speaking of **Nick Lowe**, the newlywed Rockpiler is the prize in an extraordinary contest being conducted by *New Musical Express* in England. Entrants are asked to send Basher a demo tape, along with three coupons to prove they've shelled out the exorbitant $1.25 for three consecutive issues of the paper. The lucky (and talented) winner gets a weekend in a professional recording studio with Nick Lowe producing! For free! The tape will be the property of the musician to do with as he/she wishes. Not a bad deal for some young genius looking to make it in the real world.

True Blondies Have No Fun

The group's name, New York Blondes, is suspicious enough. There's no doubt, though, about the female voice singing "Little GTO"—which is why Chrysalis Records is considering suing British Decca for damages.

This sordid story begins when Rodney Bingenheimer, well known DJ-about-LA and friend of Blondie, received permission from Chrysalis to use members of the band on a 45 he was cutting for Deep Sleep Productions. Debbie Harry, who had a cold at the time, taped a hasty reference vocal for Bingenheimer to follow on the A-side. Harry's vocal obviously wasn't designed for public consumption, yet when Decca issued the 45 in England (on the revived London label) her rough track had become the song's lead vocal. To frost the cake, Chris Stein received no credit for allegedly writing the single's flip side.

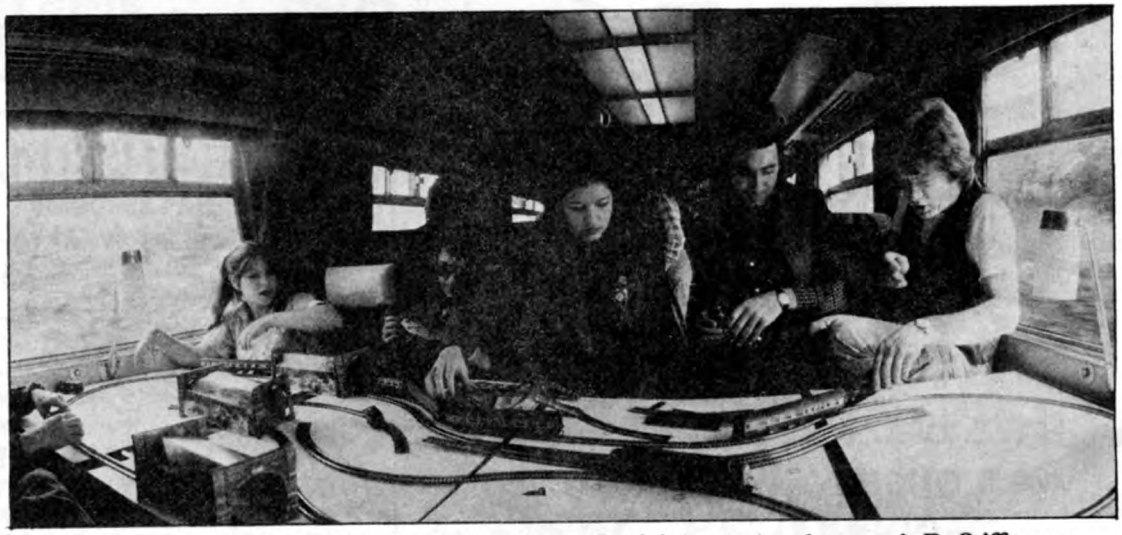
Decca's advertising reportedly aped Blondie's own style, and even used a sketch of a blonde woman (which, at last sighting, Rodney Bingenheimer does not resemble). As the result of a solicitor's letter, Deccas has asked retailers to destroy these posters (go get 'em, collectors!). Back in the States, legal action is being taken against Dan and David Kessel of Deep Sleep. Nice try, fellas.

Broken Records

The Records have parted company with lead guitarist Huw Gower on the eve of recording their second album. Reasons cited were the invariable "personal and musical differences." The group is currently auditioning replacements, may add a third guitarist, and should be recording in London with producer Craig Leon by January.

Cheap Flick

By the time you read this, **Cheap Trick** will be in George Martin's studio in Montserrat, British West Indies, recording the follow-up to **Dream Police**. Their 1980 agenda reportedly includes a film project—just like **Blondie**, who have completed shooting their first film in Texas, of all places.



Strangers on a train: Rachel Sweet (l.) and Lene Lovich (center) on last year's Be Stiff tour.

Fire!

Ringo Starr and **John Mayall** were both the unfortunate victims of burning residences in California recently. Mayall lost much of his legendary pornography collection, and Starr some souvenirs of his golden age. Sympathies to both.

Stiff Records is planning a worldwide package tour for their artists, starting on April Fool's Day. Paul Conroy, number two man in the organization, was on New York radio recently, looking for sponsors to help the proposed traveling circus hit the road. Names being bandied about for possible inclusion in the extravaganza are Ian Dury, Rachel Sweet, Wreckless Eric, Graham Parker, Lene Lovich and anyone else that can afford the air fare. Meanwhile, US Stiff has been on the lookout, and already aided in the signing of Vancouver's **Pointed Sticks**, and Staten Island's trio **Dirty Looks**. On a final note, Wreckless Eric's American LP, **The Whole Wide World** (a collection of tracks previously released in the UK), is being imported into England and is selling well.

FAX 'N' RUMOURS

News of the World

Sheila Rock

Ebet Roberts

Sham 69, after a week or so of non-existence and a few days' affiliation with the Cook-and-Jones Pistols, have returned to plague the rock world once again. Despite their third album, which bears the legend "The End" on the back, the Pursey crew were in New York in December (see Hot Spots, page 56), and show no further signs of decay.

A group of former Marc Bolan sidemen is reportedly flogging demo tapes around under the unfortunate name of **T. Rex**.

Nick Garvey and Andy McMasters spent their Decembers in New York recording the third **Motors** album.

Penetration, whose second LP has only recently been issued in the US, has broken up due to frustrations with the world of professional rock music. **The Adverts** have also disbanded.

Lee Kerslake has been booted out of **Uriah Heep** after umpteen years. (Anyone who still remembers Uriah Heep deserves to know their latest gossip.) His replacement is Chris Slade, ex-Manfred Mann's Earth Band.

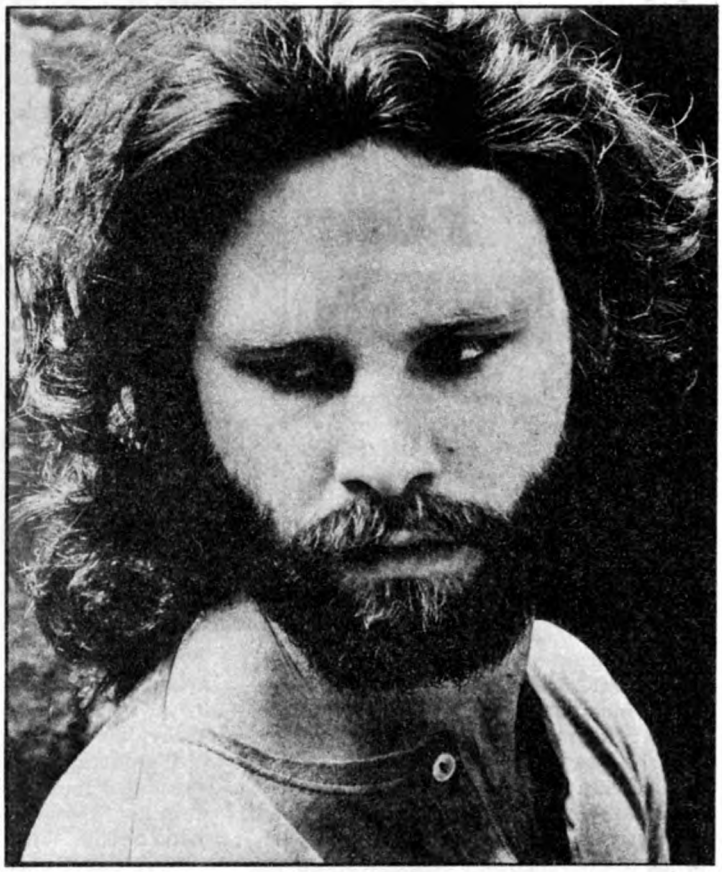
The **Patti Smith Group**, on a temporary holiday, is mixing a live album (from their recent European tour) for spring release, according to Lenny Kaye.

Shape of Vinyl to Come

Some of the new discs you'll be reading about in coming months: Motorhead, **On Parole**; Pete Townshend's long-awaited and as yet untitled solo project produced by Chris Thomas; another piece of excretia called **Sid Sings** by the late Mr. V.; **The Glory Boys** from Secret Affair; the new Ramones, **End of the Century**, produced by Phil Spector; Ian North's much-delayed Neo/solo LP finally seeing the light of day on Aura Records; a highly-touted Bruce Wooley disc; Iggy Pop's **Soldiers**, recorded with his current touring band; Elvis Costello's fourth, reportedly cramming twenty tunes onto one piece of plastic; another Eddie and the Hot Rods adventure; the Rolling Stones' next; the Pretenders' Chris Thomas-produced debut; double live sets from the Kinks and Ian Hunter; newies from Robert Fripp, Bram Tchaikovsky, the Dickies, Mickey Jupp and Jeff Beck (who?); Alex Harvey's **The Mafia Stole My Guitar**; the second Lene Lovich; the second Simple Minds; the Damned's **Machine Gun Etiquette**; and maybe even a few that will be released in the United States!

In a very significant step forward for amazing music, the **Residents** are now affiliated with Virgin Records in England for release/distribution of their unique platters.

This Is (Not) the End



Edmund Teske

Eight and a half years after he drowned in a bathtub, Jim Morrison is still making waves. The revolving Door, shaman and wet dream inspiration is the subject of a biography, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, due for publication in April by Warner Books. Morrison's estate, however, is reportedly seeking to halt the project.

Executor Columbus Courson (Jimbo's father-in-law; wife Pam OD'd her way to Morrison a few years after he died) has denied co-author's Daniel Sugerman and Jerry Hopkins the use of Morrison's poetry—a blessing in disguise—and, in a letter to Sugerman, termed the project a "ghoulish, despicable rip-off."

For his part, Sugerman claims that "There is nothing whatsoever exploitative about this book. Apparently certain people would rather we had glossed over certain aspects of [Jim and Pamela's] lives which were somewhat unpleasant." Sounds good, doesn't it?

According to a Warner Books spokesobject, Morrison's estate has not been in contact with the publisher, and Warner lawyers have determined there is no way Courson can block publication.

Lightning Strikes Twice

Now that disco is passé, Robert Stigwood, who brought you *Saturday Night Fever*, has new worlds to conquer. *Times Square* (working title), shooting in New York for a projected summer opening, hopes to cash in on new wave's current fashionability. The film deals with two teenage runaway girls befriended by an all-night DJ who turns them into media stars. Producers Jimmy Iovine and Mike Chapman are already signed to work on the soundtrack; no artists have been announced as yet. "I believe *Times Square* will do for new wave rock what *Saturday Night Fever* did for disco," says Stigwood. You've been warned.

Easily Swede

All you readers who puked over our ABBA story (TP 45) may be interested to know it has been translated and reprinted in the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet*. We must know something they don't. (Is this carrying cold to Norrbotten?)

GOMM BUT NOT FOR-GOTTEN

Greg Helgeson

By Dave Schulps

If as much had been written about Brinsley Schwarz (the group) while it existed as has been since its demise, there probably wouldn't have been any break-up. Nevertheless, things have worked out pretty well for nearly all concerned (don't ask what happened to drummer Billy Rankin). In the last year four of the late quintet's members have jumped from cult and critical acclaim to commercial success. Bob Andrews and Brinsley Schwarz had a Top 20 album in Graham Parker and the Rumour's **Squeezing Out Sparks**. Nick Lowe hit with "Cruel to Be Kind," an old Brinsleys tune he'd co-written with Ian Gomm. Gomm himself is the most recent ex-Brinsley to re-emerge; his Top 20 single entitled him to overnight success after nearly four years out of the spotlight.

Gomm doesn't look like he would ever be comfortable in a spotlight. Red-headed, soft spoken and a bit pudgy, he seems most at home in the family vacation snapshots on the back cover of his British LP, **Summer Holiday** (issued here with a different cover as **Gomm with the Wind**). His music goes well with this image: simple, melodic rock with no claims to be anything but pleasant and entertaining.

"The Brinsleys were such an intimate thing," Gomm reminisced a few hours before his New York debut. "After coming out of that situation, I suppose the only groups that work are brothers and guys you pay to do it." (Gomm's current band consists of hired session musicians.)

The Brinsleys were intimate, alright; they not only worked together but lived communally in the same house, families and all. "Ugh, it was awful—three wives in one kitchen. It had nothing to do with music, nothing to do with the group. Everybody's personal life just became jumbled together. Maybe if we'd split into separate flats we might still be together today. That, plus our never being able to break through commercially, finished the group."

It's obvious from Gomm's speech that a great deal of emotional investment went into Brinsley Schwarz. With all that talent in the band besides, why didn't they succeed?

"We didn't make very good records; we were much better live. We were also anti-established music business. We wouldn't go on *Top of the Pops*, which would have virtually guaranteed a certain number of record sales. We turned it down twice because we wanted to play live on it. We managed ourselves at one point. We wouldn't dress up on stage. We wouldn't do anything the way it was supposed to be done; wanting to do everything your own way doesn't go down well with the music business establishment."

In return, the business did its best to trip up the group. Gomm says their label, British UA, spent no money on the Brinsleys but refused to give up their contract option. The band died of frustration.

After the break-up, Gomm decided to leave London entirely. "When your group splits up the only thing you can do is hang out at clubs and meet other guys. The trouble is the guys you meet have just split from their bands too; the whole thing is just so depressing. I decided to get away from it all."

It's ironic that the former Brinsleys, who could never find the proper recorded sound together, all wound up in record production. Like Nick Lowe, Gomm's first impulse after leaving the group was to learn how to make a record. He relocated to Wales, where he got involved in a 16-track recording facility being built in a converted cowshed. Foel (pronounced voal) Studios opened in mid-1976. The first group in was the then-unrecorded Stranglers; Gomm produced their demos, which landed the Stranglers a recording contract with none other than UA. Then the new wave came, suddenly no one was using the studio.

"Elvis Costello cut **My Aim is True** at Pathway, an 8-track demo studio. The music business was beginning to wonder why they were spending so much money on groups in big, expensive country studios when they could get good records from small studios on small budgets. When people stopped coming to Foel I used to sit in the control room with my guitar and make demos."

After finishing his demos Gomm decided it was time to get back in the swing of things. It wasn't that simple. "I took them around and got rejected by everyone. It's the old story, but even worse. I'd go into offices and they'd say 'Face it, Ian, not only are the tunes awful, but you can't even sing. Why bother? Get a day job.' I began to think they might be right. Only my wife kept me going. Fially Dai Davies, who used to manage the Brinsleys, called and said to send him a cassette. I did, and he signed me up—first to a publishing deal [a good thing, since "Cruel to Be Kind" was included], then a record deal."

Despite his own production experience, Gomm hooked up with producer Martin Rushent to record **Summer Holiday/Gomm with the Wind**. The two have developed a superb rapport. "It's the old close artist-producer relationship," Gomm explained. "I supply the songs and he molds the product. I'm very cheap to record; we just pay session men for about five days and then I work on vocals, guitars and harmonies for about two weeks. We've completed most of the tracks for a new album already and we're only halfway through the budget. We'll just keep on recording 'til we've run out of money, then take the best tracks."

Considering the new wave's group orientation and antipathy to session musicians, Gomm stands out in his open preference for session players on his records and in his touring band. "I just wanted a bit of—dare I say it—professional experience. My songs are very much down to simple melody. You need good playing behind it to give it that edge. New wave is about raw energy and not what I do."

Indeed, that evening's show bore Gomm out. The set was well-played but scored pretty low on rock's Richter scale. Having seen Gomm play a lot more excitingly in a sweaty London club, I felt his low-keyed approach might possibly be better suited to an intimate club atmosphere. (His London backing—the Joe Jackson band including Jackson on keyboards—might also have made a difference.)

At any rate, Ian Gomm's future is wide open. "Hold On" proves he can write lightweight pop hits; the rest of his album shows he can rock out convincingly and still write quality tunes. He doesn't plan to get back into production, however.

"I know what I'm good at and I'd rather stick to that. I'd really love just to keep writing songs; I can even see myself writing a musical. This year's been particularly good to me. 'Cruel to Be Kind''s success vindicates what I was doing five years ago. It's not only valid, it's a hit!"

For Ian Gomm, the wait has been worth it. ■

IAN LLOYD IS DOWN TO EARTH

By Jon Young

"Do you know what kind of beer causes cancer, by any chance?" Come again?

"I woke up this morning to the Phil Donahue show and they said in certain beers the carcinogen in one can is equal to eating two pieces of bacon."

No, you're not reading Consumer Reports. The man with health on his mind is raspy-voiced Ian Lloyd, singer of Stories' 1973 smash "Brother Louie" and most recently known for his rendition of Car Ric Ocasek's "Slip Away." Ordering lunch (at Atlantic Records' New York offices) can be a risky business. He finally settles on a brand of beer and orders a tuna sandwich, blithely brushing aside suggestions of mercury poisoning ("That was five years ago; now it's just got dolphins in it").

After a sideswipe at that holiest of institutions, the burger, Lloyd states his credo of moderation in everything. Indeed, he is hardly a woozy victim of bad habits, as his six-year absence from the scene might suggest.

"My day is pretty much getting my head to work, practicing no matter what until I get some inspiration. I believe in the Bee Gee philosophy of music: songs are out there and you've got to get them. Unfortunately," he laughs, "I have a lot of trouble receiving them. I've gone through so much drudgery..."

Lloyd's career has been bedeviled with mistakes and roadblocks; it's difficult to see why he didn't long ago take up some other line of work, not to mention lose his good cheer. As he explains it, "I just believe in myself. It's not just since Stories; I've always been into music and believed I had talent, at least for singing."

Having professional musicians for parents must have helped. His dad, a violinist, and his mom, a soprano, toured with Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians playing nice music. Mom did radio broadcasts with Toscanini and recitals at Carnegie Hall. ("Playing Carnegie Hall with Stories was super, because I remember holding my mom's flowers after a performance.") Dad teaches at Columbia and still plays on Frank Sinatra's East Coast dates. "I'd go to my father's sessions; that's how I met Michael Brown. His dad and mine played around town on commercials and recordings."

In 1970 Michael Brown, prodigy behind the Left Banke ("Walk Away Renée), and Ian Lloyd, recent college graduate and veteran of upstate New York bar bands, got together and came up with Stories. Their two albums together were an unlikely but perfect balance of Brown's baroque feel for melody and Lloyd's gritty but perceptive singing. There might have been more but Brown is widely regarded as an unstable genius not unlike Brian Wilson; he went on to another band, the Beckies, a few years ago, and hasn't been heard from since.

Lloyd is less than revealing about Brown. "I don't have too much to say. Michael's talented, crazy and tough to work with. Stories was just a business thing for him."

Stories continued after Brown's departure. Lloyd's first move as sole power in the band was to record "Brother Louie," a Hot Chocolate song he'd heard on a demo. Streamlining the musical soap opera of interracial romance by taking out a spoken word section in the original, Stories scored a hit in the range of two million sales. Yet after only one more LP the group expired in early 1975. Why?

Again Lloyd is vague. "It had to do with the record company, the management. It was all wrong for us. The hit was different from the music the group felt." (Kama Sutra, the band's label, has been dormant for a number of years now.)

Then freedom, or so it seemed: "In 1976 I put out a solo album on Polydor which did nothing for me personally. It had some good stuff. Mick Jones and Ian McDonald played on it; that was the good part." The LP was produced by Gregg Diamond, who had done Andrea True's disco hit, "More More More." "That should have been a clue to me, but I really needed to do something after a year and a half not working. I was hoping I'd be the rock part of the record, but it didn't work out that way. The drums were mixed up high."

With another fizzle to his credit, Lloyd helped friends Jones and McDonald with the early stages of Foreigner while negotiating to get out of his contract. "Before they found Lou Gramm I was singing 'Cold as Ice' in rehearsals." Was there any question of his joining the band? "Not really. I was definitely tied up in that Polydor contract." No doubt "what if?" has crossed Lloyd's mind many times, though he's too proper to admit it.

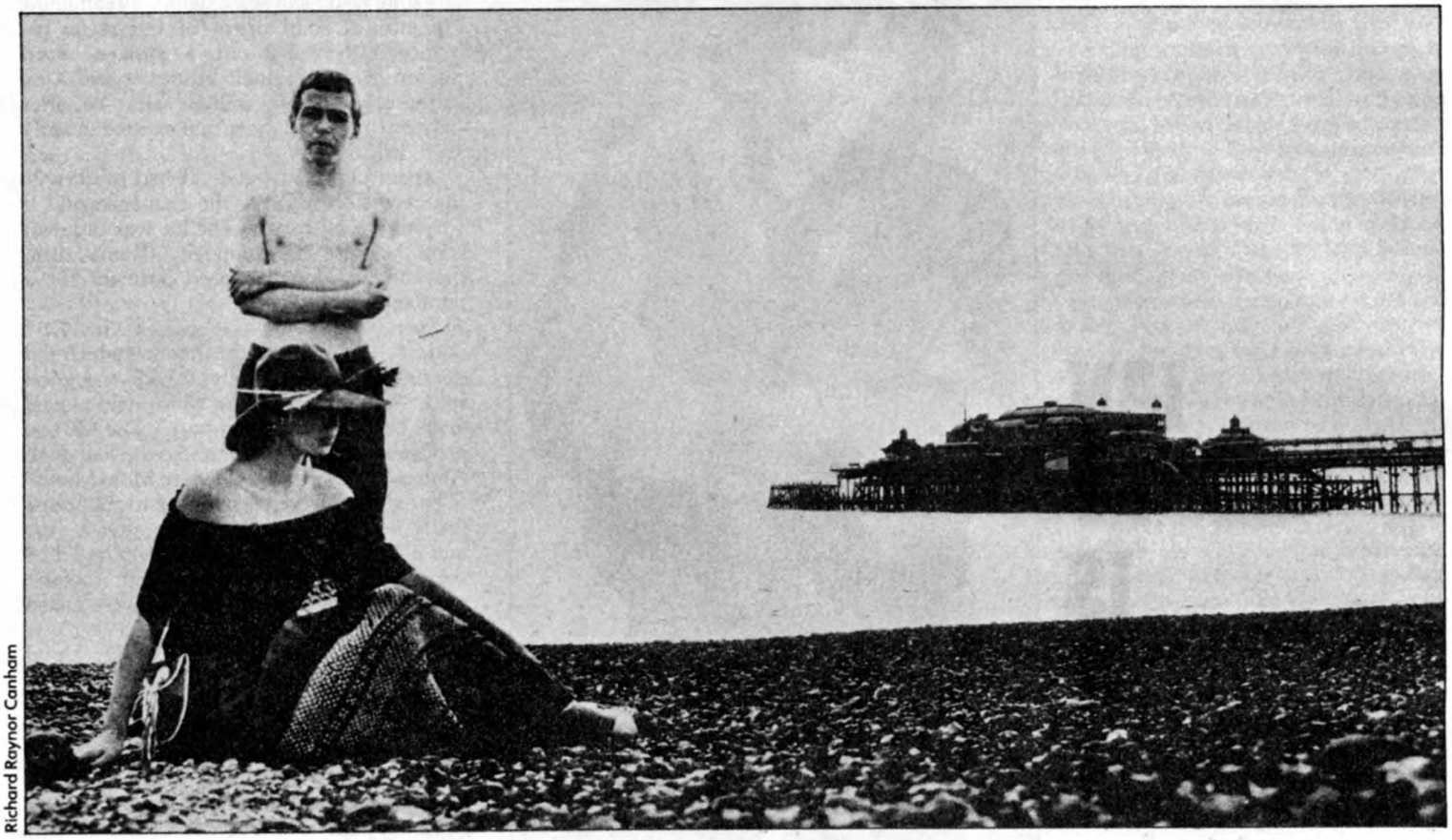
He did free himself eventually and get to make an album he's proud of. Produced by Canadian Bruce Fairbairn (who did the same for Prism), **Goose Bumps** features performances by three Foreigners, two Cars and Larry Fast. It's a strong, accessible record, whose range—from mainstream hard-rockers to soft ballads—may puzzle those looking for a sequel to Stories.

"I tried to get great songs that were right for my voice. I only wrote one song on the album because I wanted to establish myself as a good singer with a good voice that's not just a style. I wanted to prove I could take a Ric Ocasek song, even have them [Ocasek and Ben Orr] play on it, and not sound like the Cars but sound like Ian Lloyd.

"Although the new record hasn't gone crazy sales-wise I think I've gained a lot of respect. If people see what I can do it'll make it that much easier for the next album. There *will* be a next album and I don't think it'll be three years from now. If the record company is happy with sales then I can continue." If the next one sells better, "They" might even let him tour.

Ian Lloyd can now aford to laugh. But, he notes, "It's strange; I've spent as much time recording and working as I have not recording and working. I've just been persevering. I don't believe my ego is particularly large, which is probably one of the things that holds me back. I like to keep it that way, 'cause I've met enough people who are off the wall or think they're important. I try to keep down to earth." ■

What Do the Flying Lizards Want?



Richard Raynor Canham

By Ruth Polsky

The Flying Lizards' interpretation of "Money" is definitely one of the more eccentric 45s to make the charts recently. Call it a novelty record, but the American public finds something attractive about rhythmic pots and pans accompanying an icy female voice declaiming the classic lyrics in a clipped British accent. No comment so far from Berry Gordy.

The Flying Lizards boil down to 25-year-old David Cunningham. Born in Northern Ireland, Cunningham went the usual route of creative young Britons and attended art college. He studied film and sound, and worked on experimental music: "I was writing organizational scores for tape loops and electronic things," he relates, seated at the outdoor cafe of London's Holland Park. He speaks with a soft Irish accent. "I wrote very simplistic, cyclic pieces. I'm totally unskilled at playing instruments, so I was interested in finding tools for writing music. This is where rock music is valuable; it's played by people who can't play, yet they organize it very coherently. It's quite an efficient way of making music. If you mix people who can't play with people who can, you get something like the Velvet Underground, which I reckon is a very potent force."

While still at college, Cunningham recorded "Summertime Blues" one evening in his improvised studio, and added the voices of friends Deborah and Mike. "That was just messing about," he says with a smile. "I went to 20 record companies and they said, 'Go away.'"

Another early recording was done in Malta, where he'd gone "to celebrate having finished my formal education. I recorded a single for Tony Sinden called 'Magnificent Cactus Trees.' He was playing guitar in his garden, and a cicada in the tree above him joined in. By chance, I happened to be recording it."

Cunningham has definite ideas about music and the recording process. "Electronic music is my instrument," he explains. "If I'm producing an album [he's worked with Wayne County, the Pop Group and This Heat, among others] I play the recording console as musicians play instruments. I like reggae because of that; the whole process is part of the music. The Western industrial way of making a record is like a factory: musicians go in, do their bit, there's a discussion process which is the mixing, and it's all done democratically. The producer is management, the artist is work force; they have to negotiate to get the mix. It's an expensive process.

"But if you play the mixing board intuitively, react in a very specific way to the musical shape and try different mixes, you end up with something with which to work. The important thing is, rather than standing around talking about a mix, to do it very quickly—so if you hate it you've got time to do another one, totally different."

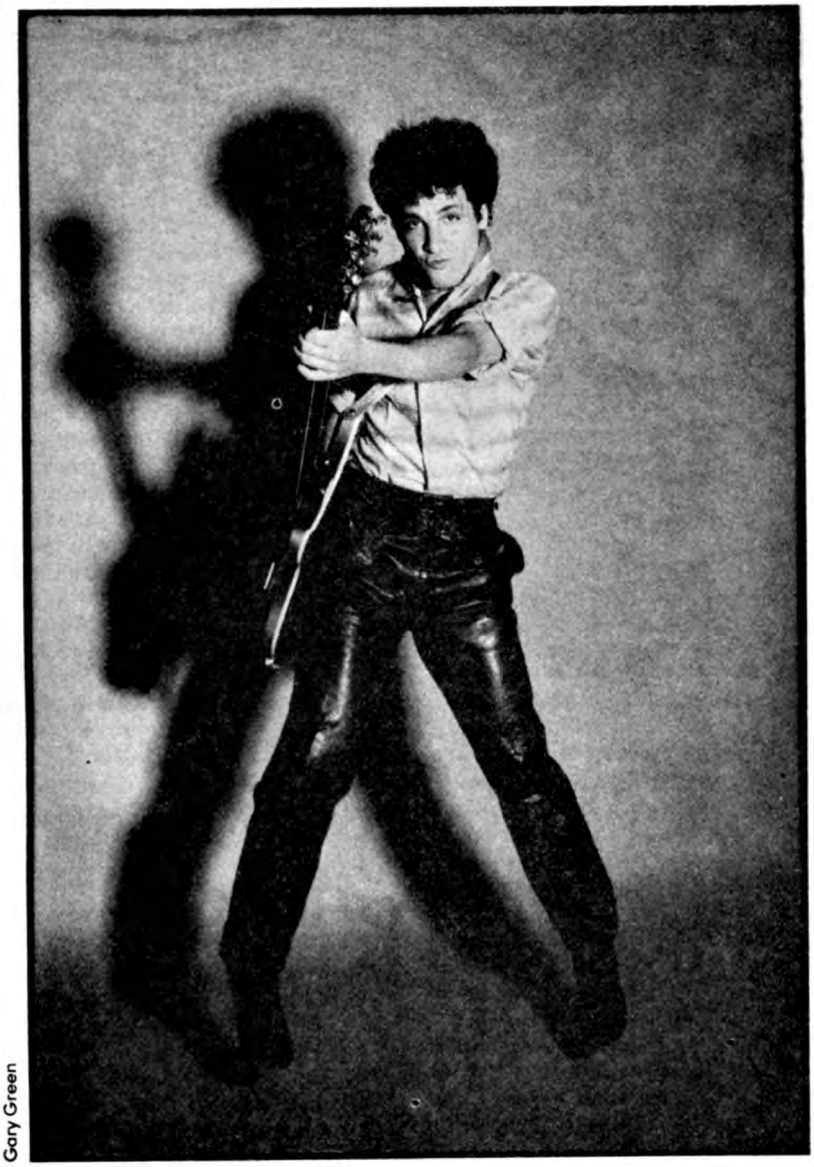
Isn't that approach somewhat artificial?

"It's no more synthetic than Elvis Costello's or Graham Parker's way of making records," Cunningham counters, "Except they don't take the same risks. You're always going through machinery, so why not play with it? Don't disguise the machinery's presence. A lot of what I'm talking about and doing is related to the economic process of making a record. You can go into a studio and quite blindly spend 20 or 50 grand; that really doesn't interest me at all. I'd rather go into a cheap studio and spend ages doing music which has no commercial appeal."

"Money"'s transatlantic success, however, proves David Cunningham can create music with a great deal of commercial appeal. His label may have been less confident at first: "Virgin Records issued 'Summertime Blues' two years after I brought it in. It was supposed to be a one-off deal, but I figured I'd never have a chance to make another record—I was working in an art gallery at the time—so I asked for a two-record deal. That's how 'Money' came about."

The Flying Lizards consist of David, his college friend Deborah, and Julian Marshall, formerly part of Marshall Hain. But the inspiration and motivation that guides the Lizards is clearly David's. A Flying Lizards album will be released early next year under the Virgin/Atlantic alliance. Don't expect more cover versions; the album will be all Cunningham originals, except for a Brecht/Weill song.

Cunningham laughs impishly at the mention of possible tours. "I might just zoom around and go to all the best restaurants. I'll do a tour of good restaurants, I think! A tour would cost Virgin too much; they'd have to get a tutor to teach me guitar lessons every time I did a gig. Touring is silly, why go around trying to sound like the records when you could be making new records?" ■



Gary Green

Sylvain Sylvain: Henry Mancini for Our Times

By Stuart Cohn

Sylvain Sylvain's the kind of guy you want to sit in a bar and watch a ballgame with. After all, the man dedicated a song to Thurman Munson at a concert a few days after the Yankee captain's tragic death. Sylvain and I were supposed to get together at Yankee Stadium (Jim Beatty vs. Rick Wise of the Indians—big deal, I know), but Sylvain had to rehearse with his new band Teenage News. So our lounge is the RCA conference room (sorry, no color TV) and mixed drinks will have to make up for ballpark beer.

The man who co-wrote "Trash," "Frankenstein," "Cool Metro" and "Frenchette" is the friendly neighborhood nice guy he always seemed to be. Sylvain says he was born in Cairo in 1953, the son of a Jewish banker. When Nasser took over Egypt, the family moved to France and later New York City. The accent is more Brooklyn than Left Bank or Nile Delta when he tells me, "I've lived all around the world: Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island." He discovered rock'n'roll by watching Elvis Presley movies in Paris.

As for his days with the New York Dolls: "People used to come just to see what our shoes looked like or if we were wearin' underwear. It got really boring after a while. I couldn't give a fuck what I was wearing. [This from a sometime clothing designer.] What I really wanted was to be the Henry Mancini of the times."

He lived out that dream with the Criminals, formed with Tony Machine after the Dolls split up. The flip side of their "Kids are Back" 45 is "The Cops Are Coming," Mancini's *Peter Gunn* theme. But the Criminals, one of New York's most endearing club bands a few years ago, could never interest a major record company. Sylvain formed his own Sing Sing label to get their single out, and sold 6000 copies by personally calling record stores and distributors.

After the Criminals came a recording and touring stint with fellow ex-Doll David Johansen's band. While with David he met guitarist Johnny Rao and bass player Buz Verno, who along with Bobby Blain (ex-Criminal, piano), Lee Crystal (ex-Boyfriend, drums) and John Gerber (sax) make up Sylvain's new group. Syl, of course, is still playing guitar, singing and talking.

"The band happened very naturally. It's terrible when people come up to me and say, 'Why did you leave David?' I never left David. We're both individuals, both artists. But it's a tough world out there. You can't make a living off two per cent. You write a song or make a couple of albums with a big group and unless those things get really big...well, the landlord comes up first of the month and he still wants the rent. The guys had their own choices to make just as David did. Hopefully, things worked out to each individual's best."

Acceptance as an artist in his own right was a long time coming considering Sylvain's career with the Dolls, Criminals and almost ceaseless pavement-pounding between gigs. "I was takin' around my tape [when the Johansen group got off the road last January] and I got a lotta 'Hey, write disco songs and things like that if you wanna have a career 'cos no one wants rock'n'roll anymore.'"

Sylvain did write a slow, Italian movie theme-type tune which he called "Goodbye Rock'n'Roll." Ironically, it ended up on Johansen's **In Style** as the disco "Swaheto Woman." But he also wrote "What's That Got to Do with Rock'n'Roll," which he considers the most important song on his own new LP. "It kind of brings up the question, 'What the fuck is going on out there?' with a sense of humor." The LP also includes two songs Sylvain sang with the Dolls: "Teenage News," from the red patent-leather Malcolm McLaren days, and Clarence "Frogman" Henry's "Ain't Got No Home."

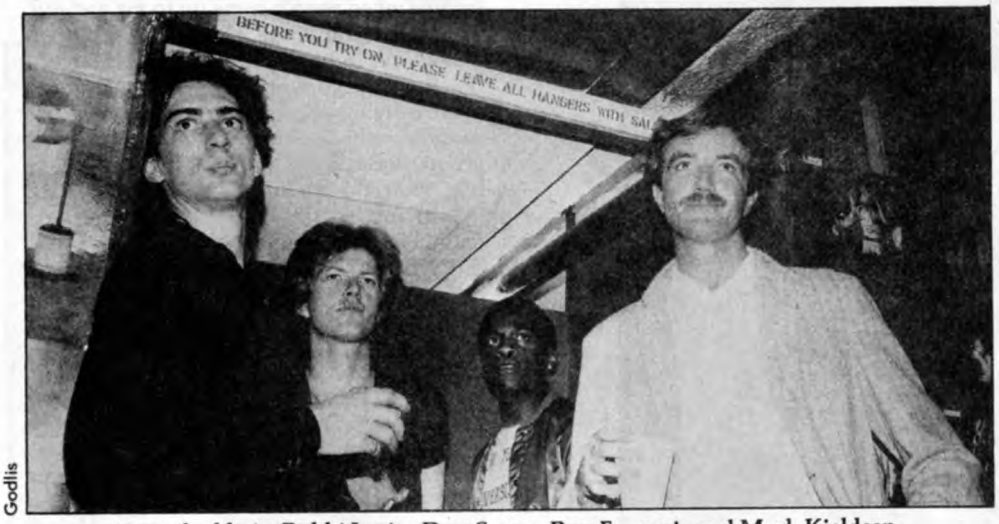
"In the old days a record was really a slice of life. You held onto it to make you comfortable when things were rough. You'd put on the Rolling Stones or Eddie Cochran and that record was your friend. Today Teddy Pendergrass makes me feel like that," he remarks with a cock-eyed grin. "He's very warm; I guess it's all the coke he does.

"Back in the '60s kids had something to fight for. They didn't go out and say, 'Dad, get me a stereo.' It was more like, 'Gotta get me those black jeans, man, those pointed shoes.' Kids just don't have much to revolt against now. Now they are perfectly satisfied that there's plenty of disco going on. The rock that most kids listen to is just not very moving."

To illustrate, Sylvain recalls that in the summer of 1975, just after the New York Dolls broke up, Johansen, Tony Machine, Peter Jordan, Chris Robitussen and himself formed a group called the Dolls to play a touring rock festival in Japan. "Jeff Beck was topping the bill; after the first couple of gigs the promoter asked him to play more rock'n'roll 'cos the Dolls were drivin' 'em crazy. He was playing his jazzy stuff—and it was boring. It wasn't as moving as what people think music should do for them."

Sylvain Sylvain is optimistic; after all, it took a recession in the record business to get him signed. Between his record, band and continued writing partnership with Johansen, Sylvain is covering all the bases. Like Babe Ruth, he has dedicated his life's work to the kids of America. Someone buy that man a drink! ■

The Sound of the SINCEROS



Godlis

No spiked hair: Bobbi Irwin, Don Snow, Ron Francois and Mark Kjeldsen.

By Tim Sommer

"Everyone here is really surprised we're not 17 and don't have spiked hair."

Mark Kjeldsen, 26, the Sinceros' guitarist and lead vocalist, has neatly groomed hair and is wearing a "Shake Some Action" T-shirt. He sits alongside drummer Bobbi Irwin in a Columbia Records conference room, mulling over the future of British pop bands in America.

The Sinceros are far from just another British pop band. Rather than bombard you with Beatles/Blondie three-piece matching suit mania, the Sinceros display (on the debut LP, **The Sound of Sunbathing**, and in the eight new songs they perform live) a talent for inventive arrangements, intriguing lyrics and thoroughly danceable music. They've distinctively melded pop and soul into a good-timey keyboard oriented sound.

"Melodic but danceable," Kjeldsen says. "We wanted people to dance, go home from the gigs humming the songs—and then realize that they're quite wry. We want to appeal to the head, the feet and the heart—to cover all the areas of the body we can."

The Sinceros' influences include the standard '60s pop bands (Who, Move, Kinks, Byrds, etc.) plus early bluebeat and Tamla-Motown; as Kjeldsen says, "The main criteria is dance music." They also love Chic—"one of the best bands to come out of America for ages"—and admire the style and modus operandi of Talking Heads. "They're naked," Kjeldsen states. "They don't try to cover it up. We've got the same vulnerability. We don't come on stage and pretend we're this immortal rock 'n' roll band full of sexist crap, and you're gonna partaaay, and do you feel like I do and everyone's gonna light candles and stick 'em up their arses."

Kjeldsen, Irwin and Ron Francois (bass) had been playing in a London R&B band, the Strutters. Robin Scott (pre-"Pop Muzik") produced a demo (eventually released in France), which convinced a management company to put up money. Don Snow was added on keyboards, and a second demo was recorded.

"Muff Winwood saw us and became a fan," Mark explains. "He produced Sparks, he was in the Spencer Davis group. I thought if he digs us, then we must be good." Through Winwood the group signed with CBS (Columbia in the US). "I think they expected us to be their Knack. It didn't happen, but we've got good radio play and it's our first album."

Before signing with CBS, Ron and Bob had comprised the rhythm section for the first Lene Lovich album, **Stateless**. Irwin describes: "It was completely off the top of our heads. We went into the studio, Les [Chappell, Lene's balder half] would show us the tune and a few chords." The next logical step was to accompany Lene on the Be Stiff tour.

"We said we'd do it only if Mark could come with us. We were thinking, 'Wow, we can sneak on stage and get in a few numbers, like the Records are doing.'" They didn't, but feel it was invaluable experience nonetheless.

After the tour it was time to record an album. Producer Joe Wissert was picked for his work with Boz Scaggs and the Turtles. The Sinceros are less than happy with his lack of input and **Sunbathing**'s lack of attack. They are looking forward to their next LP, which will include "Television Vision," the reggae-toned "Are You Ready (to Go Steady)" and "Count the Beating Heart." Each remains consistent to the Sinceros' maximum melody and beat philosophy.

The Sinceros have considerably more depth and creativity than most of their Xerox-pop counterparts. Live, however, frontmen Mark and Ron smile on cue, deliver meticulously rehearsed songs, intros and one-liners, and generally all but grovel for audience appreciation. They might as well be the Now, Beat, Knack, Yipes, Pop, Gums, Smegmas or Savage Young Thugs Who Prey on the Elderly. But this is all a game, right?

Kjeldsen: "This is supposed to be a business where there are no rules. But there *are* rules, there's a hierarchy and all this shit, because it's a big, multi-million dollar business. We might as well be selling pants. We pretend to be pop because we sound like we have a hit on our hands when we don't." ■

serious MADNESS

By Jim Green

It started when I killed my tape recorder. Attempting to rewind and eject a cassette just before my Madness interview, I discovered the blasted machine would do neither! Time was of the essence, so I deftly wielded a large hammer to the mock-stately toot'n'tinkle of the group's interpretation of "Swan Lake"; within seconds I had the tape in my hand and the recorder in smithereens on the floor.

Boogalooing up Broadway towards the upper west side offices of Sire Records, Madness' US label (they're on Stiff in Great Britain), I realized I'd probably be confronting the entire group—all six of 'em (not to mention mascot/compére/onstage toe-tapper Chas Smash)—without benefit of a tape recorder. But heck, how could I have transcribed that tangle of voices anyway? Couldn't go far wrong trusting my memory.

My great opening line—"Hi, sorry I'm late but I just had to kill my tape recorder"—met with blank expressions from the few who heard me. I soon found that for all the band's nuttiness in the grooves and on the boards, they are serious about what they do. The discussion, with two to five bandmembers at any given time (climbing in and out of the cubbyhole-size office used for the interview), kicked off with what Madness were *not*.

Referring to the neo-Mods article (TP 45) which mentioned Madness, guitarist Chrissy Foreman said, "We are not Mods. We get a lot of Mods coming down to gigs, but they're only a part of the audience; we're not part of any movement." Chris and Woody (drummer Dan Woodgate) had strongly denied in a *Sounds* interview that Madness was a "rude boy ska band." So what are they?

"It's the nutty sound," grinned bassist Mark Bedford. "It's all the different things we mix up in our songs—Tamla/Motown, bluebeat—done our own way." As Chas put it, "the only label we want applied to us is 'that nutty sound,' 'cause there's no one label that describes us as well as the one we thought up!"

A couple of years ago the North London Invaders (at first including only keyboardist Mike Barson, saxmaniac Lee Thompson and Chrissy from the present band) started gigging on their Camden Town home turf. Drawing on their favorite kinds of music—the loping R&B of Motown, Stax/Volt '60s soul, Kilburn & the High Roads' melange of music hall, cocktail jazz and rock'n'roll—the band evolved (musically and personnel-wise) into the present line-up. Current lead singer Graham McPherson ("Suggs" to anyone who asks) is a large, genial chap whose performing style is obviously influenced by Kilburns' leader Ian Dury (and who bears a striking resemblance to Ronnie Howard!).

Chas Smash's story reflects much of what

Madness is about. At first he was just a fan who went into paroxysms of wild and woolly skanking at the sides of stages; he's since been adopted by the band as an embodiment of the nuttiness and good times inherent in their performances. Clad in sharkskin suit, shades and pork pie hat, he does intros, backing vocals and dances up a storm—including cracking heads with Chalkie the roadie in time to "Swan Lake"! Chas was officially inducted into the group just before Madness arrived in New York for a short introductory tour of the States.

Madness is serious about having fun and spreading their nuttiness around. In England they've risen rapidly from local faves to national celebrities. As Woody mentioned, however, they want to do things their own way. Madness' successful debut 45 was "The Prince," a tribute to ska musician Prince Buster (whose own hit inspired the band's name); it was released on the Specials' 2-Tone label, but Madness feared being typecast as a Specials clone. Stiff Records became interested after Madness played at Stiff honcho Dave Robinson's wedding; even antisocial Elvis Costello was seen dancing. Not wanting to get lost in the ranks of Stiff's US affiliations (CBS), the band went with Sire in the States for a personal touch.

Mark Bedford, Chas Smash and Lee Thompson on display.

The conversation degenerated into small talk as the interview lost focus and band members shuffled in and out of the room. I realized the truth in their statement that the only way to get to the bottom of the "heavy, heavy monster sound" of Madness was to see them live. On record, you can make out the tongue in cheek lyrics about the newsdealer who steals underwear off clotheslines at night, or that unique freeloader, the "Bed and Breakfast" man. It's all great party music, but where's the party?

At the club where Madness is playing, of course! May I have this skank with you, m'dear? ■

MIKE BERRY: ODYSSEY OF A ROCKER

By Scott Isler

If there is still a forgotten era in rock history, it's got to be the early '60s—that period bordered by the death of '50s rock'n'roll and the rise of the Beatles. To this era belong the stable of British male singers with manufactured names like Billy Fury, Rory Storm, Johnnie Eager—and Mike Berry.

"The names they had were always sort of duff," Berry (real name: Mike Bourne) can now confess. Unlike his contemporaries, the 35-year-old singer has weathered the '60s and '70s well; for proof, Epic has released **I'm a Rocker**, his first LP in three years.

Berry's is the generation that got hooked on rock'n'roll first-hand, and English rockers have kept the faith with a passion that must shame their American counterparts. Berry himself scored a European hit in 1977 with his anthem "I am a Rocker" (included on the album). Speaking via telephone from his London home, Berry ticks off as influences Jerry Lee Lewis, Eddie Cochran, Fats Domino and Buddy Holly. Especially Buddy Holly.

"When I was around 14 or 15 I used to sit on a park bench with my first, horrible guitar and sing Holly songs for my pals. It sounds ridiculous but that's the way things were then. You couldn't do that now; can you imagine punk rock on an acoustic guitar? But you can sing almost any Holly song with an acoustic guitar and people will enjoy it. That's one reason he's stood up so well over the years."

Berry got serious about performing, playing solo in pubs. The next step was recording, so with three or four friends he cut a demo of "Be-Bop-a-Lula" and shopped it around. At that time the big name in British pop was Jack Good, producer of seminal pop TV: *Six Five Special, Oh Boy* and later, in America, *Shindig*. Good expressed interest in the young rock'n'roller, but Berry thought he would have more artistic freedom with Joe Meek, an up-and-coming independent producer (soon to be famous for the Tornados' "Telstar"). Meek picked up on Berry's infatuation—"I got a record deal on the strength of sounding like Buddy Holly"—and renamed him appropriately, although it didn't hurt that "Berry" was already a well-known name in rock'n'roll.

Berry's second single, "Tribute to Buddy Holly," established both his credentials and his popularity in late 1961. Just over a year later, "Don't You Think It's Time" (not a similarly titled Presley tune) went into the British Top 10. By now Berry was a full-time pro; he had toured England with Holly's own Crickets and shared bills with upstart bands like the Beatles and Rolling Stones. His own back-up band, the Outlaws, included Chas Hodges on bass (now one-half of England's popular Chas and Dave) and, at one point, Richie Blackmore on guitar.

The hits stopped coming for Berry in the second half of the '60s—he blames dictatorial producers—but gigs remained steady. His "Tribute" proved a good calling card; it was released in the US in 1965, and the Germans loved it in 1967. In 1971, though, Berry ditched music for building and racing sports cars—not so very far from rock'n'roll when you think about it.

He stayed out of music for three years. After reacquainting himself via songwriting and session vocals, Berry was picked by producer Miki Dallon (in 1976) to cut a 45 of "Don't Be Cruel." The outcome was an LP, **Rock's in My Head**, reuniting Berry with some original Outlaws for an easygoing oldies session including five Holly tunes and a recut "Tribute" (a European hit all over again).

Any doubts that Berry is out of touch with the current rock scene will be cheerfully dispelled by **I'm a Rocker**. Dallon has provided a higher gloss than last time around, and there's something for everyone: "Don't Be Cruel," Wilson Pickett's "Don't Fight It" *á la* Jerry Lee Lewis, a Status Quo cover (!)—even a couple of schmaltzy things for mums and dads. The album is weighted towards stompers Dave Edmunds would be proud to call his own. (Berry's lead guitarist is Geoff Whitehorn from Crawler.)

Berry has not only caught up with the times, but vice versa as well. "The punk revival was based on rock'n'roll, getting down to roots. The music had grown overproduced and too contrived. There are people bringing things out now and I think, Christ, I was doing that 20 years ago."

The most attention-getting cut on **I'm a Rocker** is bound to be the autobiographical "Boogaloo Dues." In it Berry compares the rock scene past and present and concludes: "Now the name of the game has changed to money."

"It's very true. I'd virtually given up doing gigs because of the hype that goes with it. Having to do gigs to support managers and the rest of it—I don't need all that. I'm in a lucky position; I only accept gigs when I want to do them."

Berry's non-musical occupations—besides sports cars, he's done voice-overs on TV commercials—have kept his rock tastes relatively free from commercial worries. As a result, his music is beyond trendiness and more sincere for it. **I'm a Rocker** doesn't blaze trails for rock in the '80s but it sounds like it was fun to record. How many albums can make that claim? ■

Don't Tie the Sports Down

Ebet Roberts

Pendlebury, Cummings, Jitchens (obscured), Glover and Armiger.

By Jim Green

It's tempting to launch a piece on the Sports with a bunch of athletic puns, but there's a whole other angle to their moniker. Check *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, definition number 12: a sport is a plant or animal "that shows an unusual or singular deviation from the normal or parent type; mutation." Aha!

What's so weird about the Sports? For starters, these guys come from Australia. Down Under. What the Limeys call Oz. It's smack in the middle of nowhere—a country/continent with two-thirds the population of greater New York.

Everybody knows everybody else in Aussie musical circles, Sportscaster (lead singer, geddit?) Stephen Cummings modestly offers as a reason for his band's native popularity (especially on their Melbourne stomping grounds). Superstar status, though, is reserved mainly for big guns from Europe and the US. Cummings observes, "There are a lot of really unusual and interesting groups in Australia, but they generally have a limited life-span; there's not much support and they break up." Most successful local acts soon focus their energies on assaulting more substantial resources in the US and England.

The Sports themselves began as casually as they might have ended. Ex-art schooler (and wide-spectrum rock fan) Cummings, his chum Robert Glover (bass) and Robert's rockabilly-collecting pal Ed Bates (guitar) started the band in 1977. They latched onto Jim Niven (piano) and Paul Jitchins (drums) as they waded into the Melbourne hotel circuit, "playing to 10 people or so." Among those precious few at the early gigs were a rock writer and cohort who were impressed enough to finance a record. The band had been together about a month.

The resulting EP, **Fair Game**, was a solid quartet of tunes (including an old favorite, "Red Cadillac and a Black Moustache") done in Stones/Little Feat style. A week after the EP was made, Andrew Pendlebury (alumnus of one of the same bands as Glover) joined on guitar. Soon the Sports came to the attention of Ross Wilson, from the legendary (in Australia, anyhow) Daddy Cool. Wilson helped get them a deal with manager and Mushroom Records mogul Michael Gudinski; by early '78 they had cut an LP, **Reckless** ("It took a week to make").

Stiff Records' Dave Robinson was intrigued via Sports fan Nick Lowe. Robinson asked the band to support Graham Parker (whom he manages) on an Aussie tour; it was the Sports' first extended concert-hall venture, and led to a British Parker tour and offer to record for Stiff. Meanwhile, "We released a few singles which did pretty well"—including a cover of the Searchers' "When You Walk in the Room" that squeezed into the Australian Top twenty, "and we opened for visiting bands like Thin Lizzy at enormous gigs."

This wasn't quite Ed Bates's speed. "He's older and more set in his ways," Cummings says, "and left the band to start his own record shop." Another pal, Martin Armiger, filled the gap. "Martin was into a lot of different things. When I first met him, a play he'd written was being put on by quite a respectable theatrical group. He had played with Bleeding Hearts, who had a wide underground following in Australia."

Robinson sent Pete Solley (producer of Wreckless Eric's second album) Down Under to look after the Sports' second LP, **Don't Throw Stones**. British and American versions of the album substituted four different tracks on the second side. This seemed surprising, since to these ears two of the excised numbers sounded better than their replacements.

"We're sort of satisfied; it could have been better. It was done rather quickly and mixed back in England. We'd recorded a whole lot of songs, and Dave later decided to use some different ones."

Whatever anyone's opinion, "Who Listens to the Radio" became an out-of-the-blue US Top 30 hit; after a few months it's still an FM favorite. The Sports haven't quite adjusted to success yet, but the possibilities are starting to sink in. Not so long ago, Cummings recalls, "We were just playing around as usual. Our manager was starting to say, 'Things are really going well in America,' and we'd say, 'Yeah, right.' You know, it's better than doing odd jobs in Australia." ■

By Ruth Polsky

When most British rock stars come to New York, they stay in middle-rate, utilitarian hotels. Robin Scott, better known to millions of "Pop Muzik" fans as "M," is staying at the Waldorf-Astoria. Now *that's* record company support!

In other respects, though, Scott is determined to keep a low profile. This "interview" was held in the back seat of a rented car en route to a Talking Heads gig in New Jersey. No tape recorder was permitted, and Scott seemed indifferent to the whole idea: "I'd actually prefer to be featured in a totally unlikely magazine like *National Geographic*." Later I found that he'd turned down every other American publication.

An opening question regarding Scott's pre-"M" band Comic Romance, who released one (dreadful) single, only generates more frost. He virtually disavows any association, although their 45's B-side, "Cowboys and Indians," appears on the M LP.

The conversation continues picking its way warily through Scott's past. He was involved with Roogalator, a British pub-rock outfit that included Sincero Bobbi Irwin and session keyboardist Nick Plytas: "That was a period when I was more unhappy than happy. It was a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time." He produced an early unreleased Sinceros track, "Are You Ready (to Go Steady)." He's been a friend of Malcolm McLaren since the NY Dolls days.

It was at McLaren's request that Scott brought the Slits to Paris in 1978 for a filmed concert. Interestingly, he dismisses the Slits' current work as "an attempt to emulate form, to adopt the clothing of someone else's style—in this case, reggae—without making it work." In Paris, Scott intimates, the seeds of "Pop Muzik" were sown.

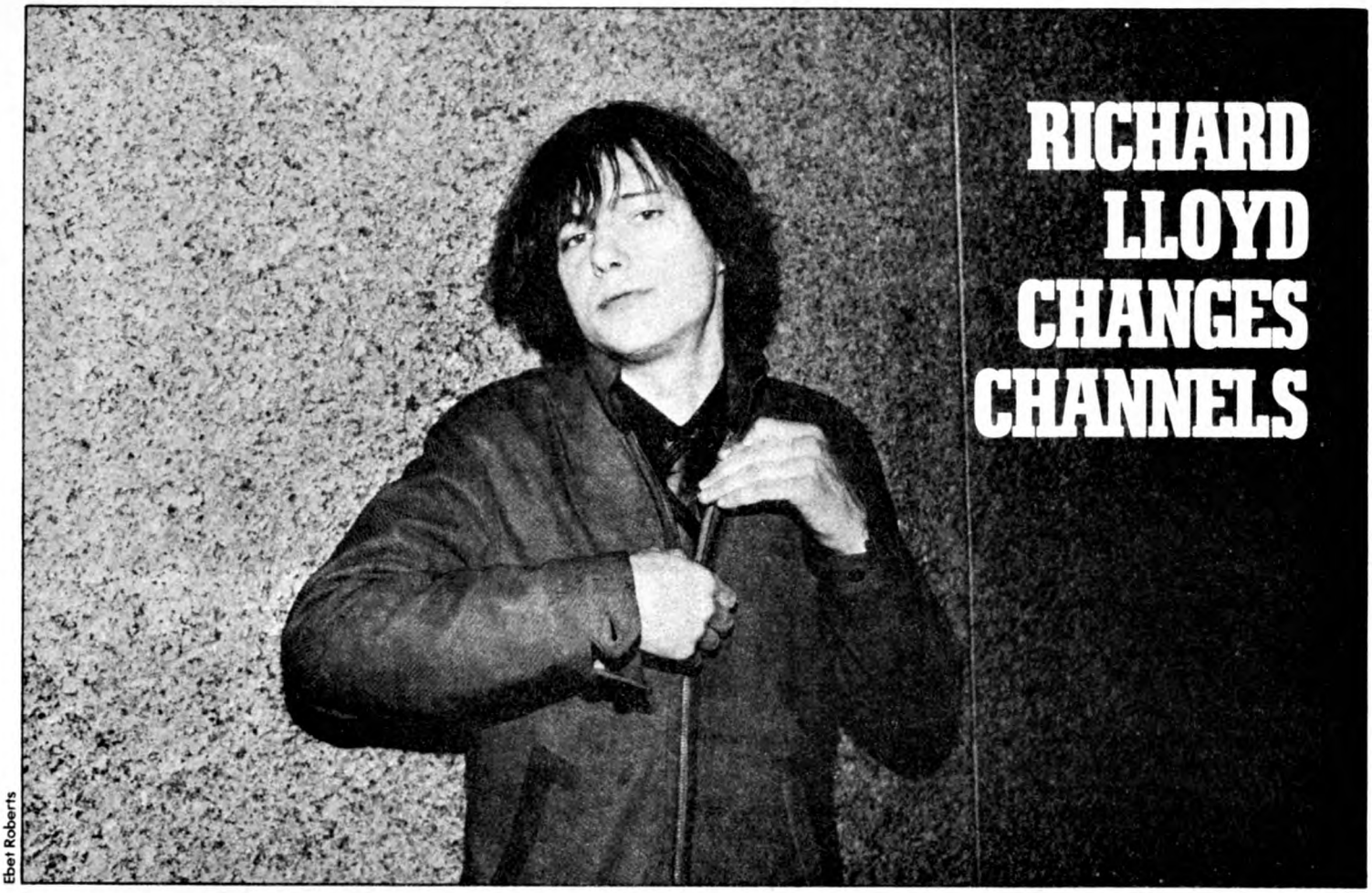
We reach our destination before I can learn more. Following Scott's tall, unobtrusively-dressed frame, it becomes obvious that he is too formal, too restrained, for rock. With his quiet, refined manner, Scott has the air of a 19th-century gentleman, a *Masterpiece Theater* character suddenly thrust into the limelight by a hit single. No wonder he hides behind an initial!

The atmosphere is warmer during the return trip. Robin laughs and corroborates my impression of him, adding that he sees himself as "more a shoe-salesman than an expressionist."

"Everybody made 'Pop Muzik.' I just saw it coming and pushed it along. It's nothing new. The album was made in a code consistent with 'Pop Muzik'—a collection of singles, but with interplay between them. Nothing was planned, but in retrospect I can see the formulas involved."

As New York's skyline appears, Robin Scott states one goal is "to develop the mask through film and music." Then he gazes out at the glittering buildings. "America," he muses, "what an incredible myth."

Not unlike "M." ■



Ebet Roberts

RICHARD LLOYD CHANGES CHANNELS

By Jon Young

Richard Lloyd is late. The guitar virtuoso and former member of Television has just called Elektra Records' offices to say he doesn't have any money to get there on the subway. He can't get off that easy, though; a muttering employee, who sounds like she's been through this before, is dispatched with a five-dollar bill to meet Lloyd' cab.

This is not promising. I envision a mumbling, incoherent mess who can't remember his own name, much less offer pithy observations on Life and Art. Nor am I reassured by veiled hints in the local press that Lloyd is indeed "not together." The publicist says Richard likes to talk. But will he?

Finally(!) Lloyd does arrive, walking fully upright and, except for hints that he hasn't been awake long (rumpled shirt and hair), in perfect working order. In the flesh, Lloyd looks a good two years older than the 16-year-old that comes across in pictures. As it turns out, he's fun to talk to; he often speaks...like...this, measuring out words in a voice that could accomadate a drawl but doesn't. It's the way cool guys at school used to talk, deliberately but not slowly, self-confident without trying too hard. He smirks a lot between words; not obnoxious, just, well, cool.

Lloyd surprised a lot of people with his solo album, **Alchemy**. He never looked like a front man in Television, constantly being pushed to the back of the band by leader Tom Verlaine. His music is worlds removed from Verlaine's elliptical conceits; Lloyd sticks to obvious, even corny, love songs, sung in a sweet unsteady voice. Perhaps most surprisingly, there is little display of the guitar brilliance for which Lloyd is justly known. *Alchemy* is straightforward and "normal" sounding pop music. How odd.

Asked his opinion of the LP, Lloyd lights a cigarette and responds: "I like it. A lot of people make records; by the time they write them, record them, listen to test pressings, listen to acetates, get it out, hear it on radio and play it for all their friends, they can't stand it anymore. But I still like it. I'm dying now to do a second one, and when that's out I'm sure I'll be ready to do a third one. After I do five or six I'll start breathing a little."

Lloyd says that songs pop into his head a lot. "It happens too much for one album a year. I've consciously not written stuff because I knew if I wrote 20 songs in the time an album is recorded eight of them would disappear. That's a shame."

Most of **Alchemy**'s tunes were written right after Television's breakup in 1978. Did he have a solo career in mind at the time?

"Yes. I wasn't gonna be in another band."

Why?

"I don't know." A likely story.

"If somebody had offered me a lot of money to go on tour I would have done that. If I wasn't stepping on anybody's toes and there were no ego fights, I would consider a band. But I wasn't gonna join a group and sit around trying to think up a name. I'm a little older than most people think." Oh? "I'm 28."

Lloyd laughs, as he often seems to do, at an unexpected moment. "I always knew I was going to be in just one band anyway. I just didn't think it was going to end so soon."

Lloyd already had one potential member for his new band in Fred Smith, Television's bass player. Smith was not surprised that Lloyd wanted to start his own group. "When we broke up he asked me if I'd play with him. I *was* surprised he had that much material. He made the transition pretty well."

Lloyd next enlisted the services of ex-Feelies drummer Vinny DeNunzio, though he had reservations about the Feelies' neo-Velvet Underground style. "I didn't think his Feelies drumming was suitable for what I wanted to do. Just the two of us rehearsed in the basement of the Mudd Club and it turned out he liked what I liked."

Which is?

"I don't know—great rock drumming. It's not a Ramones rush, it's not jazz and it's not sloppy. Ginger Baker plays drums on Donovan's 'Hurdy Gurdy Man'—not too many people know that—*that's* great drumming. Ringo played great drums. Charlie Watts plays great drums."

From Paper Moon (another New Jersey band!) he recruited rhythm guitarist Jim Mastro. One big stumbling block loomed: Elektra, Television's label, held Lloyd's option. Maxanne Sartori, former manager of Boston's Reddy Teddy and now on the A&R staff at Elektra, explains what happened. "Nobody knew what Richard could do; he wasn't allowed to do much in Television. Joe Smith, chairman of the board here, had always liked the way he played guitar, so when Richard asked for money to make a demo, Joe gave it to him."

The demo ("Women's Ways," "Should Have Known Better" and "Alchemy") was not a knockout. Lloyd nevertheless won Sartori's support and got an OK from Smith for another demo, this one recorded live at CBGB's. The band, now with third guitarist Matthew Mackenzie (ex-Reddy Teddy), came off much better.

Next, Sartori recalls, "We had a bunch of meetings on the West Coast to decide the fate of a number of people. When Lloyd's name came up I said, 'He has X number of dollars and I think a good record can be made.' One person, who's no longer with the company, said, 'You can't make a record for that kind of money.' This was before the Knack." She got her way.

But why would someone in A&R take a chance on what was still just a long shot? "He had the nerve to call me up and say, 'I want you to listen to my demo.' He literally dragged me up to where they practiced to listen to him play. I could tell he was grabbing at straws. He was desperate for something; he really wanted a chance. That influenced me into thinking he deserved better than to be a former recording artist for Elektra. Something said you should believe in this kid for a while, at least until he shows he shouldn't be believed in."

For that Sartori got "special thanks" on **Alchemy**'s back cover. The LP was recorded in five weeks at Bearsville Studios with Michael Young producing.

Was it strange being frontman? "I don't know if it's something I always wanted to do," Lloyd muses. "Up until I saw that Television wasn't gonna last forever, I was happy to be a guitar player, period. I also realized that when I would write a song Tom Verlaine wasn't gonna sing it. When I ended up with a portfolio of 15 or 20 songs, there were two possibilities: either become a songwriter on retainer, like a hamburger man, or do it myself. People can complain all they want about my voice. I'm doing it for my pleasure and anyone else who wants to listen."

Acknowledging complaints, Lloyd assumes an air of mock (I think) belligerence. "I've read things like, 'The weakest thing is his singing.' Fuck! How am I gonna be a good singer if I don't open my mouth? So that doesn't affect me very much."

Asked why he didn't indulge in more guitar solos, Richard explains, somewhat impatiently, "I could do that 24 hours a day but I'm writing songs. Songs don't always have room for extended solos."

Why didn't Television do any of his songs?

"Because Tom had plenty. I brought it up in the first year but when I realized he was so headstrong, I figured, 'Why should I beat my head against a brick?'"

But he stayed in the band regardless.

"Yeah, sure. That was a great band. I had a barrel of fun."

Born in Homestead, Pennsylvania, Richard Lloyd moved to the New York area as a kid and began listening to AM radio in 1962. "'Be My Baby,' that Spector stuff, that big sound can still really get to me. In those days 45s were worth their weight in platinum," he recalls fondly. "You

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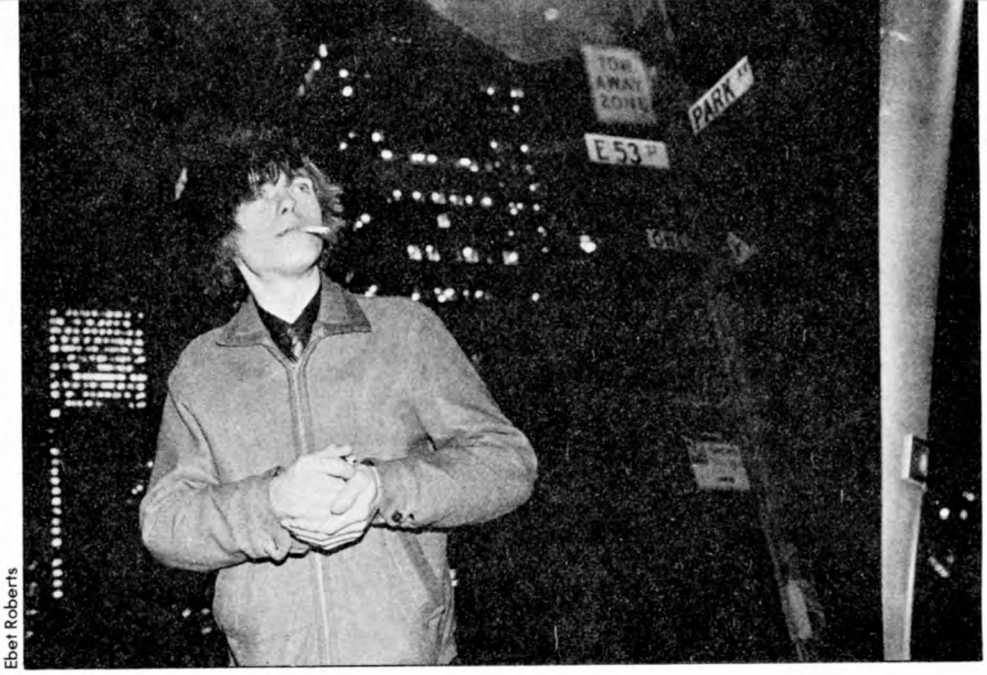
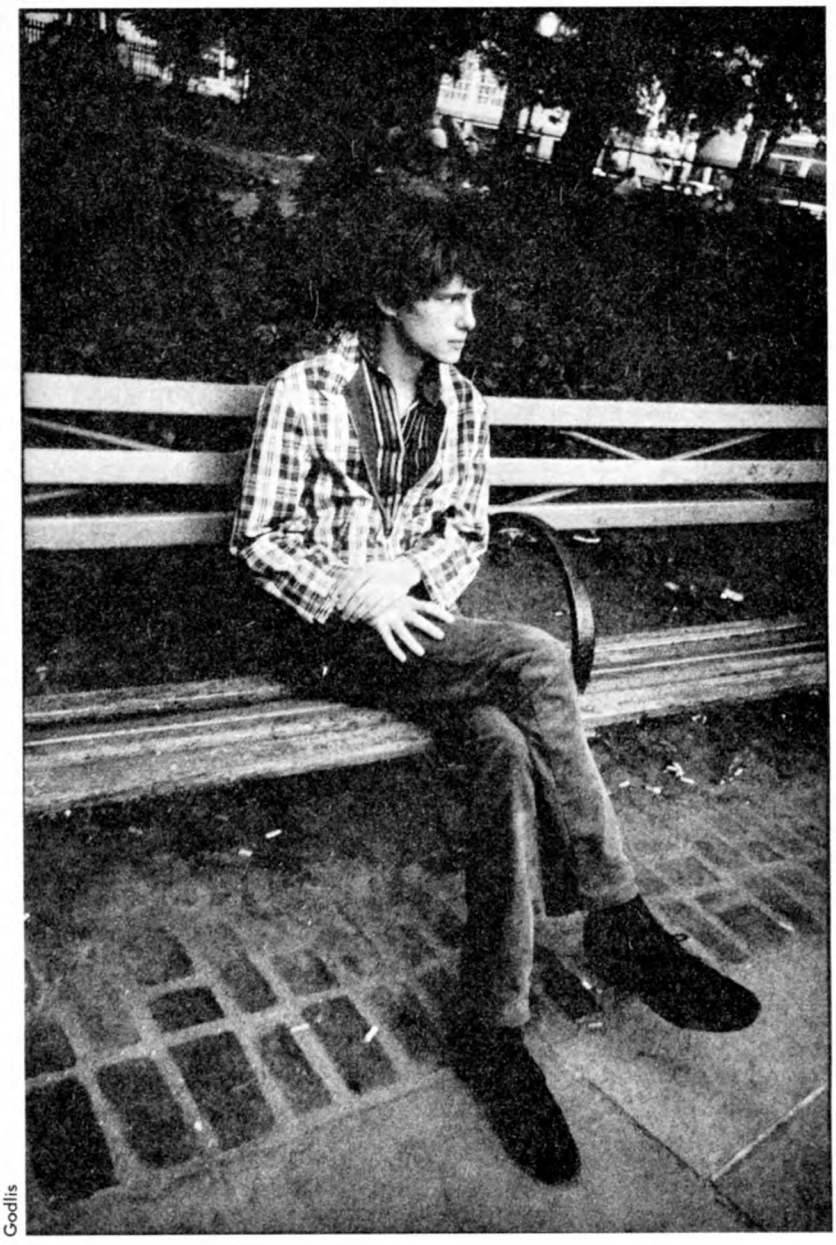


Ebet Roberts



Godlis

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WINNERS'

Thanks for all the interesting and amusing (weird is more like it) entries in our Blockhead/Ian Dury competition. All mug shots were delivered to the good folks at Stiff Records as soon as the deadline had passed. After mulling them over for a suitable period, they sent back these lucky blockheads with the accompanying comments. Stand proud, blockheads! This is your moment of glory; enjoy it while it lasts!

•Grand Prize•

Steve Smith

This guy didn't have to try; he *is* a blockhead! With luck, he'll outgrow it.

1st Runner Up

Robert P. Dingman

This dapper fellow won because no one could figure out what was on his mind. Obviously a basket case with stars in his eyes.

2nd Runner Up

Wayne Panath

A drop-out from the college of rock 'n' roll knowledge now taking a veteran approved home study course. We admire his perseverance!

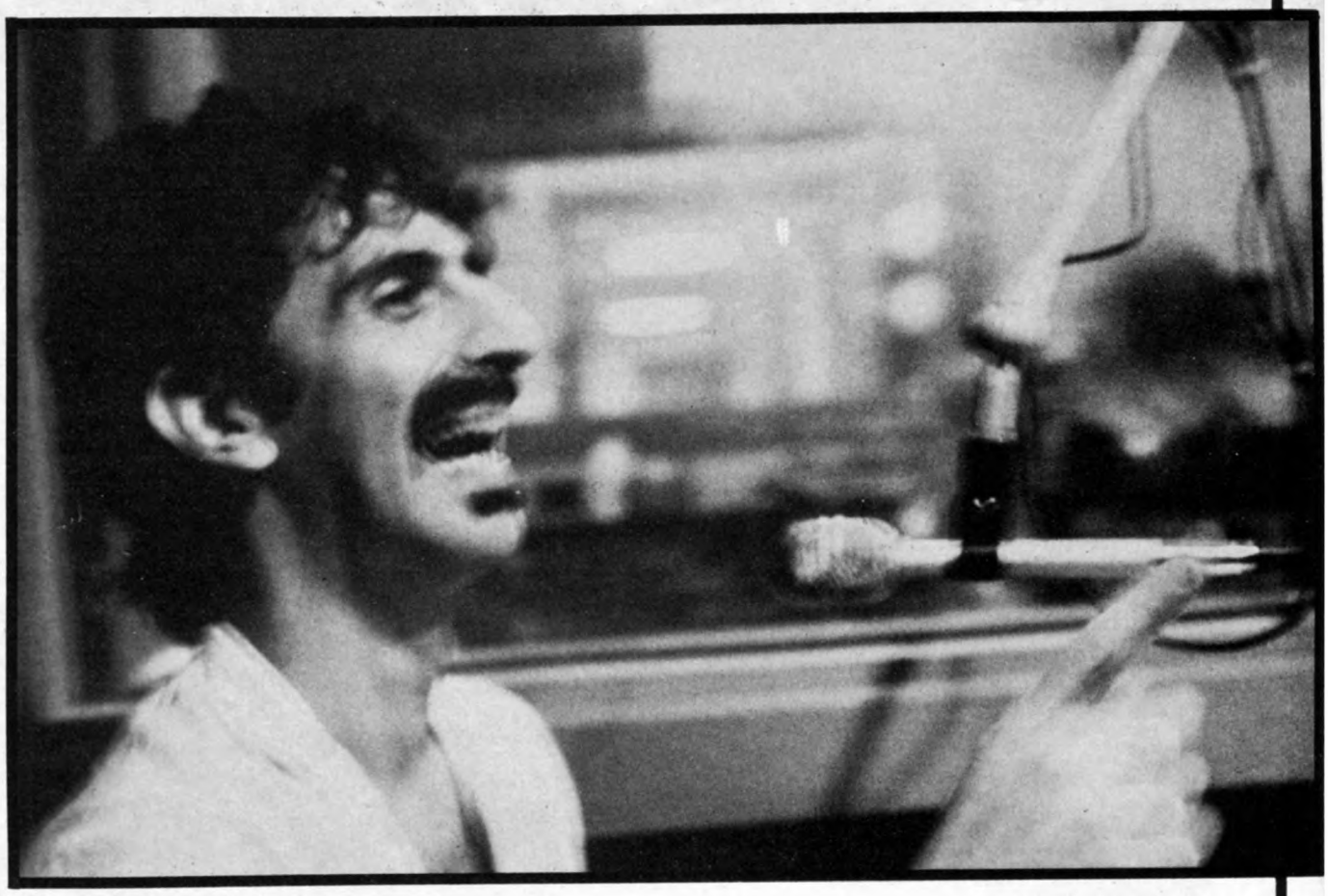


Photo sequence by
Mitch Kearney

Interview with the Composer

By Michael Bloom

Frank Zappa, approaching 40 years of age and 30 albums, is one of rock's most valuable institutions, a treasure trove of musical lore and sociological oddities. He's also one of the most terrifying figures in the industry. He's the ultimate mad scientist, the skeleton at the cultural feast, the vulture poised to pounce on the slightest pretension. He wields sarcasm like a straight razor in a gang fight, and his rhetorical weaponry is almost as sharp.

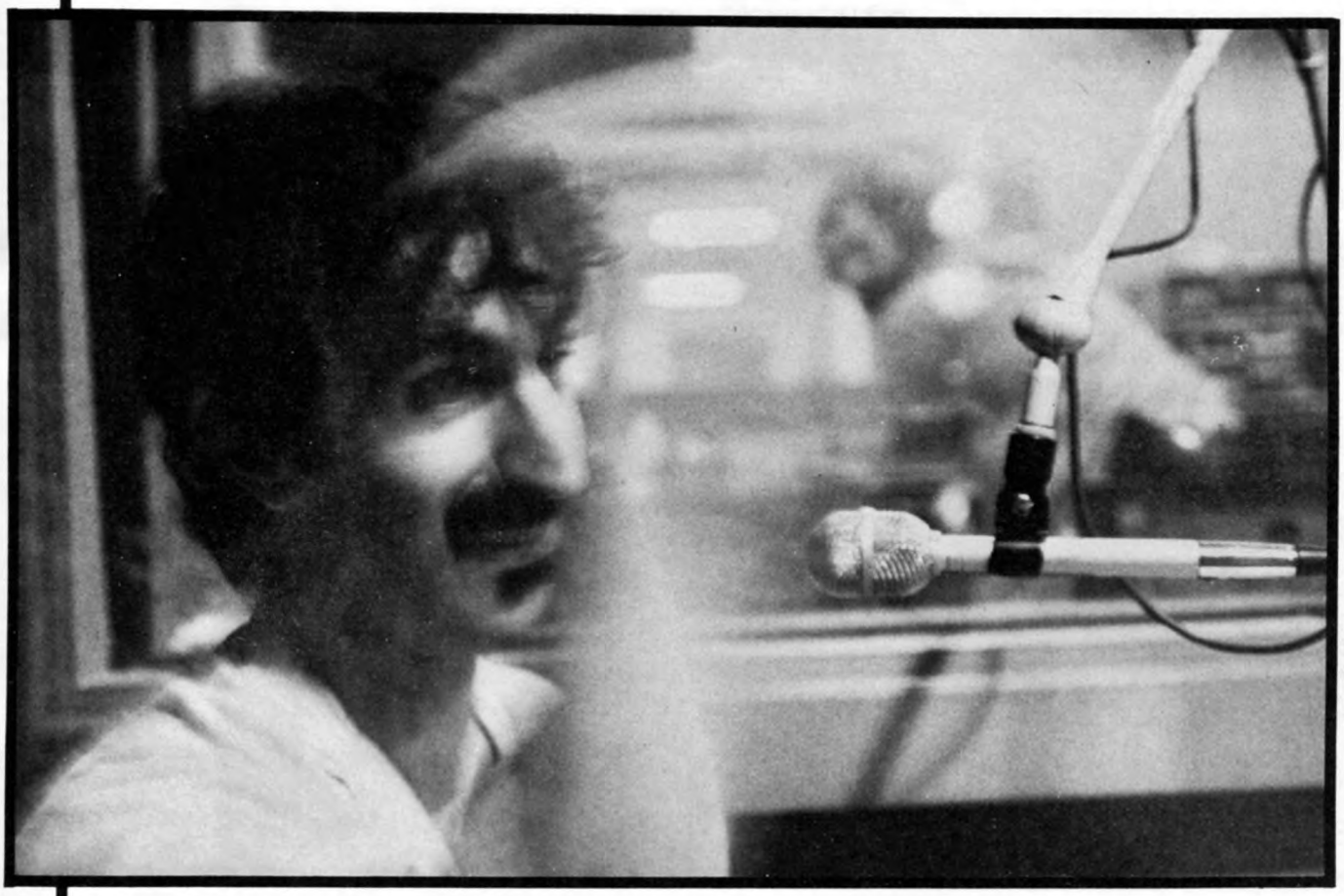
Moreover, he's never made any secret of his distaste for the critical profession. **Joe's Garage Acts II and III** includes the following categorical denunciation: "All them rock 'n' roll writers is the worst kind of sleaze/Selling punk like some new kind of English disease/Is that the wave of the future? Aw, spare me please!" He's sure got Trouser Press's number, as well as several other factions. Even when he's trying to make himself more accessible to the press—this **Joe's Garage** is his third release for his Zappa label and he wants to give it every chance of succeeding—he promises to be a formidable interview.

But I suspected that if I ignored the adversary relationship and treated him like a human being, Zappa might respond as one. And it worked! Zappa metamorphosed into a bona fide nice guy. He talked at length about issues he feels are important, from spicy food ("When it starts sweating right through under your eyes then you know they did it right") to contemporary serious music ("I think 'November Steps' kicks the shit out of 'Turangalila'"). And I think he had a good time. I certainly did.

Of course, Zappa has a reputation for parboiling journalists. But then they have a propensity for pigeonholing: either making him out to be a spokesman for some vaguely defined weirdo caste, or (worse) digging for hippie dirt in the name of good copy. Consequently, Zappa keeps his guard up, and his guard varies from jargon to abrasion.

When I arrived, for example, a pair of reporters (from pop magazines in Italy and Japan, no less) were trying to guess Zappa's sexual preferences from his song lyrics. Apparently it's too naive to assume he has a happy, normal marriage, even if he and wife Gail have four children, from age 12 down to newborn. But here's this geezer Carlo asking, "What do you think is a sexy woman? Since your songs are filled with—"

"References to women?" interrupts an already testy Zappa. "Or women-type objects? The songs that I write have to do with the behavior patterns of different types of people, male and female specimens, OK? A lot of the examples I choose are unusual types of behavior, the pic-



tures of the various specimens are not too cute. Everybody else writes songs about beautiful girls who make you fall in love, and groovy guys that are so wonderful, and heartbreak and all that shit—that's everybody else's department. I'm alternative information on specimen behavior." Not simply put, but an elegant, withering putdown. Carlo dropped the subject and will probably tell all his colleagues for the rest of his life what a bastard Zappa is to interview.

Zappa deals more kindly but just as firmly with the other popular misconception: that he speaks for a subculture. Carlo asked if he'd ever felt an affinity with popular culture. Zappa quickly quashed the idea: "Meaning will I endorse the behavior of hippies and so forth? No. I don't think there is any one mass behavior spectrum I could put my stamp of approval on." So much for a so-called founding father of psychedelia. But the typewriter cadre won't take no for an answer, so they come back with a query about punk—much of which, to be sure, claims his aesthetic influence. Growing pedantic, he amplified:

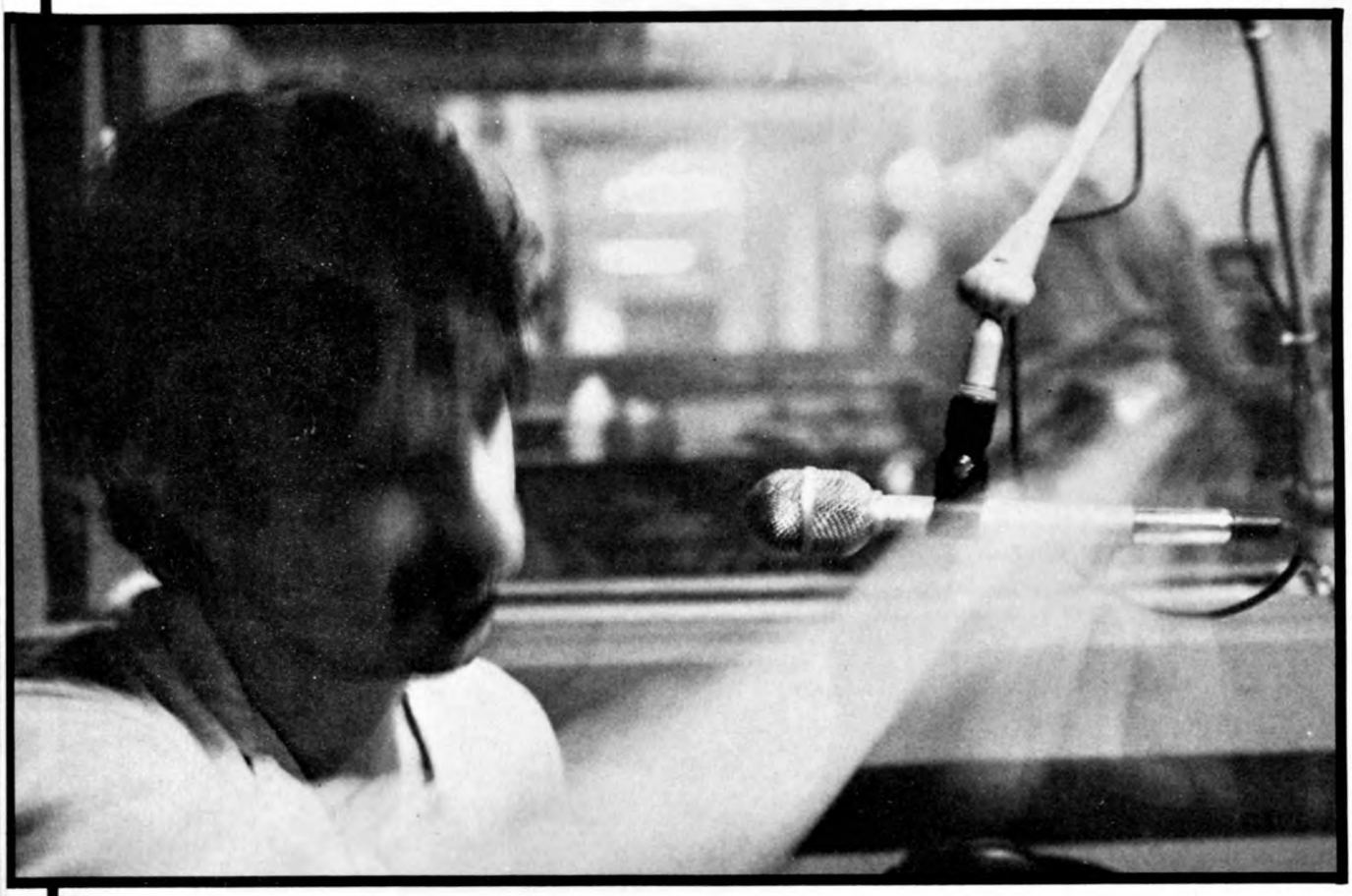
"There's always unknown bands, there's always garage bands, and there's always upsurges. Some of it is wonderful and some of it is not. It's only because everybody is looking at it. Somebody writes in the newspaper, 'Punk is really happening,' bingo bango bongo, a thousand punk groups. The same guy who was singing like the Eagles the other day has just slashed his face with razor blades, stuck pins all over his nose, dyed his hair blue, got a mohawk haircut, ripped all his clothes, forgotten everything he ever learned on his instrument, bangs the fuck out of it and gets a contract for a hundred thousand dollars—because that's the way record companies think."

However much Zappa's been touted as an acute sociological observer—and he willingly cops to the title—most of his schtick consists of sensitivity to, and abhorrence of, trends. The same methodology that trashed the figureheads of peace and love in **We're Only in It for the Money** back in 1968 is still functioning. In **Joe's Garage**, besides the lyric already quoted (from "Packard Goose"), there's the title track, as heavy-handed a piss-take of the three-chord cult as you'll find anywhere. It's not that he hates the genre, he just hates the conformity. "Usually, when a trend starts, once you've assessed from photographs what the clothing style is supposed to be, you're in. That's what constitutes the bulk of the participants in any movement: this army of people wearing the uniform." By contrast, he paid his audience a great compliment: "The profile of a Zappa record buyer is not very uniform."

The culprit? Restrictive mass media, especially radio. "Such a narrow spectrum is broadcast that a person doesn't have much to choose from. Your options are being narrowed down. Your taste is being manufactured for you by a program director.

"Radio as a medium can be very exciting, you know. I just spent four days being a disc jockey on WPIX, and I had a wonderful time. They picked the hits, and I played everything else. I think that out of a two hour show we played maybe five songs from their playlist, and all the rest of the stuff I picked. I put some records on the air that you never would have heard: 'Gidget Goes to Hell' by the Suburban Lawns, Jerry and the Holograms, 'Irene Does It Matter' by the Moth Men, **One Ruined Life of a Bronze Tourist** by Hampton B. Coles under the news. I also played some things from my old albums that never got played, like 'Debra Cadabra'; when was the last time you

"Stupidity is the norm of the universe."



heard that on radio? I got away with a total of eight glorious hours during Thanksgiving week, and I think that what I did was good. I'm getting tapes of all the shows so I can play them in Los Angeles when I get back. Radio's a business, like everything else. It does stupid things that it has to do in order to support itself."

If you have to hang a tag on Zappa, call him an individualist. "I think that's the way you were born. If you want to dump it along the way, submerge yourself to become part of some larger stupidity, that's your business. But I think you'd probably have more fun if you stay true to yourself."

At heart, though, Zappa just grits his teeth and expects the worst. "When things are really stupid, when they're *really* stupid, I'm not surprised. What surprises me is if things turn out good—anything that rises above the general level of mediocrity. Wonderful is something else, you know. I just think the norm of the universe is stupidity. Stupidity is like hydrogen; it's everywhere, it's the basic building block of the universe."

Jeepers, that's pessimistic. It's even depressing. By now I'm beginning to feel genuinely sorry for perhaps the most vitriolic artist of our generation. So, since it's now my turn to conduct the interview, I change the subject: Let's talk about composition.

"That"s a novel question," he offers. But he's getting interested. The label he most readily applies to himself is composer. Whenever he's branded weird, Zappa admits that, yeah, a guy who likes to sit around at a piano all day scrawling little notes on paper is certainly out of step with the times. If you can get across to him that you find composing not weird, but admirable, he'll open right up. When and how did he decide to be a composer?

"I just said I was gonna do it, when I was 14. See, I was always interested in art. I used to practice, when I was a kid, drawing dollar bills. A lot of kids do that, I'm sure. Cal Schenkel, who used to do the covers of our early albums, was so good at it, he drew a five dollar bill one time and passed it; he bought his high school lunch with it.

"I'd never seen music on paper. What I had seen had been orchestra parts they give you in high school, beginner stuff. Then I saw a score. It just looked so wonderful—the very idea that this graphic representation, when translated into sound waves through the efforts of skilled craftsmen, would result in music. I said hey, I've gotta do this! So I got a ruler, I went out and bought some music paper, and I just started drawing. I didn't know what the fuck I was doing, but I could look at it. Then I went around looking for people who could play it, to find out what it would sound like. That's how I started out."

You'll note his style of expression has turned right around: no pseudoscience, a lot less distance, a lot more animation. Plainly, this is how Zappa gets off. He works out harmony and counterpoint problems like other people do crossword puzzles, and he always carries manuscript paper with him. I even spotted, in his hotel room, some of the manuscript pages for *200 Motels*—huge pages that, just as he said, looked wonderful. I was awed to see how tightly written it was: even recitatives, like "Man, this stuff is great!" were exactly notated in rhythm.

"What I'd like to do most right now is get my orchestral music performed. That's number one on my list of priorities. It also happens to be the singularly hardest thing to do; it's guaranteed deficit. It's easier for me to invest a lot of

"I could make more money lecturing."

money in a film, because I know I'm gonna get some money back so I can do another. The minute I spend whatever it'll cost to perform that orchestral music, it's gone."

Couldn't you record it?

"Who cares about those kind of records?"

You don't think if it had your name on it, people would buy it?

"This is a popular fantasy. Most of the people who listen to my music don't give a fuck about orchestral music, by me or anybody else. If it's to survive at all, there has to be a concerted effort to save it, the same way they spend bucks to save the snail dart or any of those other little woodside knickknacks. It always looks good in a news story that we're saving some poor fish, but the cause of contemporary music is a little different; there's such a stigma on it. Contemporary music is probably the most useless thing in America today. The frisbee is more vital and useful to America's lifestyle than contemporary music."

Hmm, maybe we shouldn't pursue this line of discussion. What else does Zappa do? He makes movies—and recently an opportunity dropped into his lap. "A German television crew was here two days ago—they came to do an interview—and they asked me what I was doing on Thanksgiving. I told them I was going out to Canarsie to have dinner with the parents of my guitarist, Warren Cucurullo. Since I was there once before and it turned into this neighborhood extravaganza you wouldn't believe, I said chances are it's going to be another one of those, and you should film it. They did, and boy, it was incredible. You've never seen a Thanksgiving like this; the behavior was so new wave."

Zappa then describes an all-American scene staged for the benefit of German TV: the single-earringed prodigal son—gagged with panties and beaten with a whisk broom wielded by his girlfriend—plunking two-string acoustic guitar on a bed in front of his family (father from the old country) ignoring the whole thing. Zappa's audiences may not realize how few of his lyric grotesqueries derive from imagination.

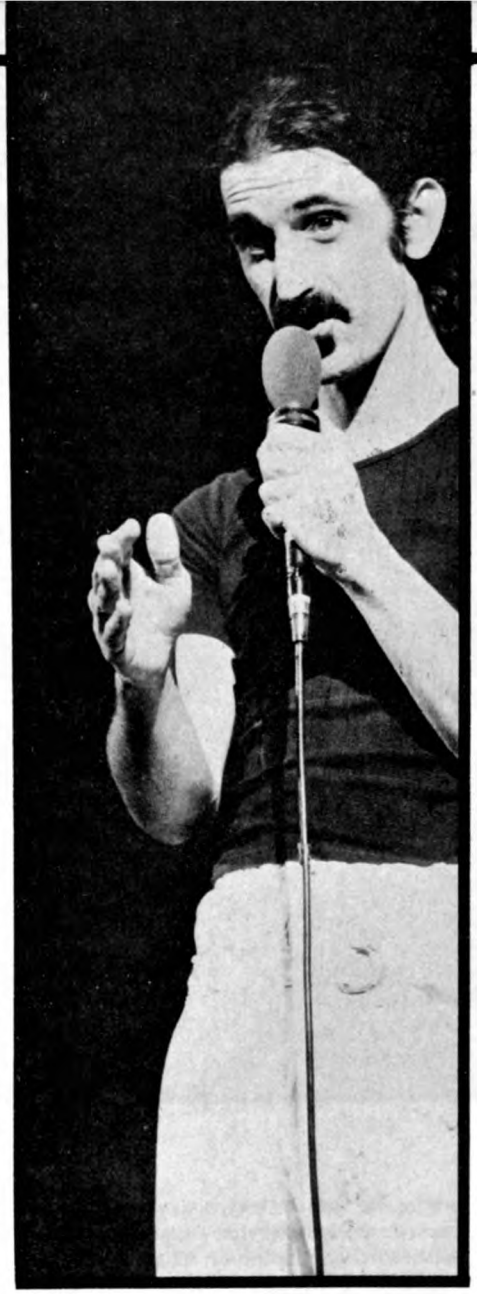
Then there's *Baby Snakes*, which opened in New York on December 21st. It's billed as "A movie about people who do stuff that is not normal"; that sounds like Zappa's field of expertise, all right. He showed me some photos of the animation, the work of maniacally precise artist Bruce Bickford; to produce a sequence of someone shrinking Bickford constructed well over 50 clay figures in finely graduated sizes. "So far it's just playing New York, because I'm paying for everything and don't have a distribution deal yet. If the lines form around the block I'll have a deal, and then go out to the world at large."

There's also a program or promotional pamphlet being planned. Among other things, it explains the spurious looking albums Warner Bros. have issued in the last few years. Has Zappa ever considered writing a book?

"I've thought about it, but that's real time consuming and not as much fun as writing a movie. Of course, it would probably make a hundred times as much money." Zappa fans are relatively literate.

"There's probably other people who would pick it up if the cover was cute. But I did a couple of quick research studies. I could make more money if I didn't have a band and just went out lecturing. I get lecturing offers all the time. Considering touring costs versus my net from performing, I could retire from music completely just by talking. But what a horrible way to live."

Still, you wonder why he doesn't; it's



little different from conducting interviews, which he submits to as part of his job. There's an undercurrent of rare professional ethics, a stubbornness in the face of a universal cheesiness that's as germane to his work as the derision.

"No matter what you do, when you work in a medium where other people have to assist in the production of the artifact itself, there's always the chance of problems. Any hope of unalloyed pleasure is out the window, right away. There are so many people involved that there's no way to control it. But if you don't try, it could be a lot worse.

"If something goes wrong, I get the blame for it, which I'm willing to take. I refer to my band as employees. There's a good reason for that: they refer to me as the boss. As long as you keep it on that level you get the job done. You know who the boss really is? The audience. I work for them."

What's in it for him? This is getting too tragic. Let's talk about composition.

"Composition is a process whereby elements are organized into structure determined by the composer. This is the broadest, most general outline I can give you. If I make a film, that is a composition; it's a matter of organizing visual elements, behavioral elements, textural elements and space and time elements, the same way as I would organize notes on a piece of paper. I think of overall structure the same way. If I'm giving a performance with a band, the show itself is a composition involving sections which are smaller compositions. An interview is also a composition."

Now this is great—I'm getting an unparalleled music lesson here. What sort of structure do you look for when you compose?

"You don't look for 'em, but I think every composer's got some idea of ideal proportions that suits personal taste. You take your raw material, your notes, your visual elements or whatever it's gonna be, and you strike up balances between loud and soft, fast and slow, many and few, thick and thin. It's like cooking, or building a mobile. The contrasts help define the structure, and at the same time they're part of the elements that are being structured. Know what I mean?"

I guess I've got that much. After all, here I'm turning a bunch of quotes—dialogue elements, you might say—into a composition called an article. Tell me more!

"Well, then, try to imagine it happening in a macrostructural sense between fifteen years of albums."

Ulp. Suddenly he's the mad scientist again. A vision that unites his whole body of work, and projects it into the future, is truly scary.

Now that I'm considering it, **Joe's Garage** bothers me. I'm convinced anew that Frank Zappa is a genius, one of the most intelligent people in rock, but his records can be appallingly stupid—especially these last few. The theme of the **Joe's Garage** set (two albums, containing three one-act discs between them) fits in with his abhorrence of senseless conformity. However, the scenario, which he admits right off is dumb, is that the government uses music as a scapegoat for social ills. The plot is even drearier, a concatenation of progressively less savory sexual encounters that ultimately render Joe a mental vegetable, suited only for work as a muffin man. (Get the reference?)

Zappa exercises his unique compositional chops, but you have to look pretty hard. Bizarre synthetic rumbles, tape effects, uneven rhythms, etc., tend to be buried deep in dense mixes: under a fog of disco, reggae, ersatz '50s, ersatz heavy metal and genuine skating rink music. There are half a dozen commendable guitar solos and one characteristically enjoyable blues jam, entitled "Crew Slut" (which is what happens to Joe's girlfriend to send him on the path to destruction). For any long-term fans still listening, there are liberal cross-references to earlier albums (is that how he defines the big structure?), as well as allusions to cultural phenomenon like the Who, Al DiMeola and the Seeds.

I get this picture of Zappa as an immense oyster. He has the capacity to take a social irritant and spew all over it until it becomes a pearl. But the gems are increasingly rare, and most of the time he simply huddles inside his shell. But then, he makes his home in LA—perhaps the trendiest locale in the country, and hence a horrible environment for him.

"For my job I'd have to live there or in New York, and Hollywood's better for the kids. I brought the family east once, last Christmas. We were living in this tiny little apartment, staring out the window at all the big tall buildings, and all Dweezil [aged 9] could think of was when was Spiderman gonna come crawling up the walls?"

Do the kids get shot from their peers for those names?

"No—another myth exploded. They're pretty much accepted for who they are, rather than who I am. Moon Unit's getting into disco music now."

One last question. That beard, the little button with framing walrus moustache that's become a Zappa symbol: has its story ever been told?

"Nobody's ever asked me. I thought it looked good on bluesman Johnny Otis, so I grew it." ■

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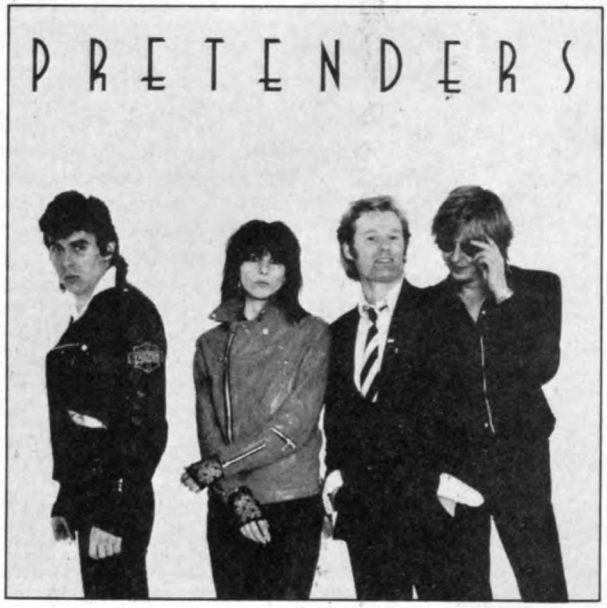

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IGGY POP

It's a long way back to Germany

By Scott Isler

Of course you like rock. But chances are you haven't bled for it, starved for it, suffered literal slings and arrows (or at least beer bottles) defending your musical taste against an outraged populace. Jim Osterberg has.

Perhaps his professional alias Iggy Pop is more familiar. Ten years ago both names were equally obscure addenda to the rock register; today, at 32, Jim/Iggy's place in history is assured. He has reaped the fame of those so out of tune with the cultural mainstream that they anticipate future trends—the prophets without honor. Osterberg will never be a superstar, selling out arenas or releasing triple-platinum albums. He merely has the satisfaction of knowing that the music and attitudes with which he provoked early-'70s audiences became the blueprint for rock's new wave several years later. And one more achievement: he has survived.

The Passion of Iggy is one of the great rock legends. Our hero grew up in Ypsilanti, Michigan, a suburb of Ann Arbor; his parents lived in a trailer park. The teen-aged Osterberg took up drums, performing with local mid-'60s bands like the Iguanas (hence his sobriquet) and the Prime Movers. The former cut an amateur single, recently bootlegged (to Osterberg's wonder but not acute embarrassment). The drummer wasn't singing yet, though. In late 1966 Osterberg went to Chicago; he stayed through spring of 1967, playing with bluesmen like J.B. Hutto and Shakey Walter Horton. When he returned to Detroit he formed the Stooges.

The Stooges (sometimes the Psychedelic Stooges—everything was psychedelic in those days) comprised Osterberg—now Iggy Stooge—on vocals, and school chums Ron Asheton (guitar), Dave Alexander (bass) and Scott Asheton (drums); Iggy later claimed he practically taught them how to play their instruments. At a time when bands were trying to prove how "serious" and respectable rock could be, the Stooges blasted out of a middle-American void like Tasadays dropped into a Rand think tank. Their musical philosophy consisted of getting ripped on every ingestible substance at hand, then going on stage and churning out a couple of riffs for 30 minutes while Iggy did his inimitable thing—of which singing was only incidental.

Whatever it was Elvis Presley started, Iggy Pop finished. His cardinal sin was to violate the dividing line between artist and audience. Iggy clambered into his crowds, demanding involvement; confrontation replaced stimulation. Perhaps the original Stooges' finest hour came during a 1970 broadcast of a Cincinnati rock festival. In between Traffic, Grand Funk Railroad and pre-Vegas Alice Cooper, Iggy walked on outstretched palms, smeared his chest with peanut butter (shirts are too confining; he often dispenses with pants) and flung himself into spectators. Announcer Jack Linkletter provided running sports commentary.

Bernard Gilson

The Stooges were great theater but obviously too raw for mass consumption. They released two LPs on Elektra to general indifference; by 1971 Iggy was into heroin and the group disbanded.

It pays to have friends, and Iggy had an influential fan in David Bowie. Fresh from salvaging Mott the Hoople's career, Bowie may have hoped to do likewise for the Stooges. Iggy had cleaned himself up by 1972; a year later he was a Main Man artiste (just like Ziggy Stardust), had reformed the Stooges and released a new album for Columbia.

In its combination of amphetamine-driven music and existential lyrics, **Raw Power** predicted the new wave yet to come. New Stooge James Williamson's crackling lead guitar runs complemented Iggy's manic intensity; songs like "Search and Destroy" and the title cut spoke for a generation who didn't know what they wanted but knew how to get it. Despite Bowie's imprimatur on the back cover, the album barely crept into the Top 200. (Even the first Stooges LP almost broke number 100.) Iggy later excoriated Bowie for his part in mixing down the tapes, but it's doubtful that sound alone kept **Raw Power** from topping the charts. "Death Trip" and "Your Pretty Face is Going to Hell" were just not what most people would admit identification with.

The Stooges were back on the road, and Iggy was back on a crash course with disaster. Having split from Main Man, he was trying to manage the band himself; downs provided escape. At a New Year's Eve concert in New York, Iggy left the stage only when he stumbled off it. He also sang lying down on his stomach, and announced songs as upcoming after he'd finished singing them.

In 1975, after a period of bumming around Los Angeles, he committed himself to a hospital to shake his barbiturate addiction. Bowie made a visitation; after his release, a newly-renovated Iggy accompanied the Thin White Duke on 1976's **Station to Station** tour

Bernard Gilson

Flanked by Brian James and Glen Matlock, Iggy thanks his audience for their support.

and then (with a little help from his friend) wangled an RCA record contract.

This third coming of Iggy Pop was undoubtedly the most triumphant. The new wave was now in full flower, and Iggy was hailed as its spiritual forefather. Three RCA albums (**The Idiot**, **Lust for Life** and **TV Eye Live**) didn't sell appreciably better than earlier recordings, but Iggy Pop concerts (there were no Stooges now, only backing bands) drew rapturous young audiences paying tribute—a far cry from the abusive crowds of yore. Now with Arista, Iggy's music has matured from moronic, one-chord Stooges days without losing its roots in jackhammer rock. The freakshow attraction has become an artist.

So much for the legend. What about the individual?

The first thing that usually strikes people who meet Osterberg is how small he is (5'7"); it's testimony to his aggressive onstage dynamism. The next surprise is his articulateness. As opposed to the monosyllabic Iggy of stage and disc, Jim Osterberg is a quite fluent and funny conversationalist. (His father teaches high school English.)

The disparity between Jim Osterberg and Iggy Pop has been commented on by more than one rock scribe. The temptation is to construct a Jekyll-Hyde theory around nice Jim (who even wears glasses) and monstrous Iggy. Osterberg's occasional moodiness no doubt encourages such ideas, but truth is never that simple. Iggy is very much a conscious creation, the "world's forgotten boy" (of "Search and Destroy") who slashes himself with broken glass and throws up on stage—the self-described "king of failures." Osterberg strives to give the impression of always being in control, knowing exactly what's going down. He is brash and contradicts himself fearlessly.

I encounter Osterberg horsing around with manager Peter Davies on a landing at New York's Iroquois Hotel. He is wearing black cords, sneakers and argyle socks; a white T-shirt with rolled-up sleeves exposes brawny arms. (Iggy's physique has varied widely in the past from scrawny punk to

Primal Ig, circa "Raw Power."

muscular Adonis.) Seated inside his hotel room, Osterberg plays monologist with a midwest twang, entertaining and expansive. He seems more interested in hearing himself talk than getting feedback from his interviewer, possibly the result of lunchtime sake at a Japanese restaurant. The rubbery, animated face often breaks into the smile on the cover of **Lust for Life**. Osterberg is nothing if not at ease, occasionally smoking, at one point continuing a stream of conversation while he gets up and strolls out of sight into the bathroom. A real pro.

As is to be expected, Osterberg is excited about the band he is currently touring with. Allowing for hype, though, this *is* a new wave All-Star team: Brian James (ex-Damned, now with the Brains) and Ivan Kral (Patti Smith Group) on guitars, Glen Matlock (ex-Sex Pistols and Rich Kids) on bass, and Klaus Kruger on drums. Osterberg runs them down: He picked James by "looking for a guitar player so good you couldn't hear him." Kral, "from Czechoslovakia, plays 'boy by the lake' music, the balalaika parts." Kruger, who had drummed previously with Tangerine Dream, "taught me about American music. He's also the first German that would speak to me" after Osterberg relocated to Berlin three years ago.

This voluntary exile is at the core of Osterberg's self-image. Analysts must have a field day speculating why Jim/Iggy lives in a divided city. Asking why Osterberg prefers Berlin to the US brings an abrupt halt to his volubility.

"It's not what I prefer," he resumes, speaking more slowly. It makes sense for me. I've got nothing against the US outside of California, which I wish somebody would obliterate quickly. But here there's no place for me—a person who's been tromped on by the fucking cretins of this country for so long—except professionally. There's a place for me there. On the block where I live I go downstairs, I have little cakes and coffee in the morning, I like black bread—I don't like white bread, I've always liked black bread." His voice rises ominously. "You can check

B.C. Kagan

back 10 years, I was talking about black bread. I like strong bread, I don't like weak bread. I like strong people, people who come straight to the point, not this wishy-washy shit I encounter here. I could get very vehement but I'm not gonna put down this country because I believe in it. But there they love me; here they're just out to grab, see what they can suck off rock'n'roll artist number 999."

The Nietzschean outburst having passed, Osterberg recounts the facts behind his final RCA album—the amazingly shoddy **TV Eye Live**—and his lacuna before turning up a year later on Arista.

"I made **TV Eye Live** because I was short a few bob and wanted to make as much money in as short a time as possible—bleed the record company like they bled me. My contract called for an enormous budget for each album. I made **TV Eye Live** for about $2500; it was not very much money. I said, here, give me the rest before I hand you the tape; then I said, here's your tape, fuck off! If you want to blame anybody for that album, blame me. I think it's justified; the cover's lovely. It was an honest portrayal of myself on stage at that time. That's exactly what I sounded like. I should know because I recorded it on a machine just like this"—he points to a nearby portable radio/cassette recorder with a broken glass dial covering—"and those were the good tracks. Four other tracks were recorded professionally; I didn't like those.

"I was at the end of my rope with RCA. I bought my way out with the money I got from the live album. I also brought Fred Sonic Smith's Rendezvous Band to Europe. At that time my credibility had sunk to an all-time low there. People had gotten sick of me flouting my music with these fucking rhinestone cowboys from the West Coast [apparently a reference to Osterberg's band with Tony and Hunt Sales]. I wanted to show people what real Detroit rock was about. I lost a ton of money on their tour and it was glorious; I regained my credibility and it turned out to be a very smart business move.

"The next thing I did was sit home in Berlin, eat beans, hock my rugs [recovered later] and play guitar 18 hours a day—till my fingers bled. I learned to write songs so I'd never have to depend on some shitty guitar player whom I thought wasn't as talented as me anyway. I don't play on stage 'cause I'm too good a lead singer, but I'm excellent when I play by myself. I'd get up in the morning, buy German diet pills and chug 'em, and play all morning pretending I was Keith Richards. Then I'd go to a local winemaker, get drunk, come back home and practice all over again. Over and over and over for six months. It made me feel really good."

These new songs became last year's **New Values**. Manager Davies (lured away from RCA: "he was the only one there who didn't have his head up his asshole") scouted around London for an attractive record deal. Arista filled the bill; its American division picked up the album a few months after English release.

As is evident from his live LP anecdote, ethics is a subject close to Osterberg's heart. On his new album, there's even "a lovely song ["Play It Safe," written with Bowie] about my desires for criminality, to deal with the world in an organized criminal manner. That's as good as anybody deserves"—he chuckles—"that I've ever met. My motto is cheat others before they cheat you. I try very hard to overcome certain ideals I was taught in my youth. I don't see any percentage in playing straight with people 'cause they'll just walk all over you anyway. Crime implies victims, and I'd much rather be on the top than the bottom." Much as he hates the subject, Osterberg says he talks about it because a couple of his songs refer to it. "That's only fair!"

His bitterness doesn't seem directed at the world in general so much as the music industry in particular. "I'm not very thrilled about this side of the business." He adopts a macho basso: "'Hi, I'm Iron Man. I'm gonna lay some really green shit on ya, put it in a heavy metal package and sell it up your asshole.'" Besides amateur bootleggers, Osterberg has to live with legitimate but unauthorized LPs like **Metallic KO** (a late Stooges concert) and **Kill City** (a scrapped project from his down-and-out days). The latter in particular is "just an outrage; I'm ashamed it's out with my name on it."

Osterberg on Osterberg in probably most revealing—in both direct admissions and mutually exclusive statements. He admits his highly theatrical style is derived from Jim Morrison, but also names as formative influences the Rolling Stones, John Coltrane, Howlin' Wolf, Sun

B.C. Kagan

The boys in the band: Klaus Kruger, Brian James, Ivan Kral.

Ra and "all the rockabillies from whom I borrowed song structure: Carl Perkins, Dale Hawkins, Jerry Lee Lewis. After that I don't think I had another influence until Bryan Ferry, from whom I borrowed my **Idiot** haircut. It's nice to have a contemporary influence, especially one so tacky.

"The beauty of my songs, of course, is that they're so simple. You can play my songs on a Jew's harp, an autoharp, a synthesizer, a sitar—or you could play them on a symphony orchestra because they're such good music.

"I don't have an idea in hell who might enjoy what I do. I just make my music; my fun is to see who might like it. I'm not so interested in acceptance. All I want out of music is: can I eat, can I have constant activity, can I learn, can I have a challenge. I guess my popularity is due to my energy—certainly not the content of what I do. It's the heat, the warmth. As opposed to light without heat, this is probably heat without light.

"I think I can be really good someday and I'm nowhere near it. I'm just getting decent. I want to play guitar better, to write nice songs everybody can sing and understand. I want to live up to the responsibility of my songs. The best way you can prove responsibility for what you do is to go out and live it and not get killed doing it. Then people will know it's an honest expression. [Compare the statements on crime.] You get jerks like the New York Dolls; they try to live what they do and they last about 12 minutes. I've managed to last 12 years already and I don't look so bad for my age, as I well know. I make sure I can back anything up with action. I try to give people a little excitement, some sex in their lives, and someone to question—someone to say no when they're sure yes. In the past my music has put forth propositions which were totally indefensible. When I tried to live them I would utterly fail. That meant my music was wrong. My lyrics are now more responsible."

Faced with this intense self-scrutiny, one hardly knows whether Osterberg is letting it all hang out—from all viewpoints—or is perpetrating another hustle. Nerviness alternates with self-deflating humility; referring to the abrasive crowd-baiter on **Metallic KO**, he comments, "I listen to that guy and it's like, 'Do I know him?' You've gotta laugh at anybody who'd say, 'I am the greatest.'"

Between talk of smart business moves and percentages, chinks in the fortification let light through.

"One of the thrilling things about being a solo performer—not tied to a group—is that you can exchange roles between management, people, record companies, bands, girlfriends, fire escapes, catastrophes and triumphs. Turn into anything—like alchemy—at will. You're still in the same test tube but you're like a little piece of horseradish in mercury. You're a floating unit. My thrill in life is to get a chance to work with that guy you always used to meet but his band wouldn't talk to your band." His voice takes on a wistful breathlessness. "You *always* wanted to talk to him but little details like who's screwing who used to get in the way."

What is this man—who once claimed as a major achievement that he helped destroy the '60s— proudest of? Osterberg thinks for a bit and replies, "My mother and father."

"We're very proud of Jim," Louella Osterberg replies in kind. "We get along very well. We're just a small, very close-knit family." The Osterbergs have indeed always stood behind their only child, including those periods when he was battling drugs (which he now claims he's "not too thrilled with anymore"). We golf together whenever we can; we go to his shows when he's in the area. We call him Iggy only jokingly."

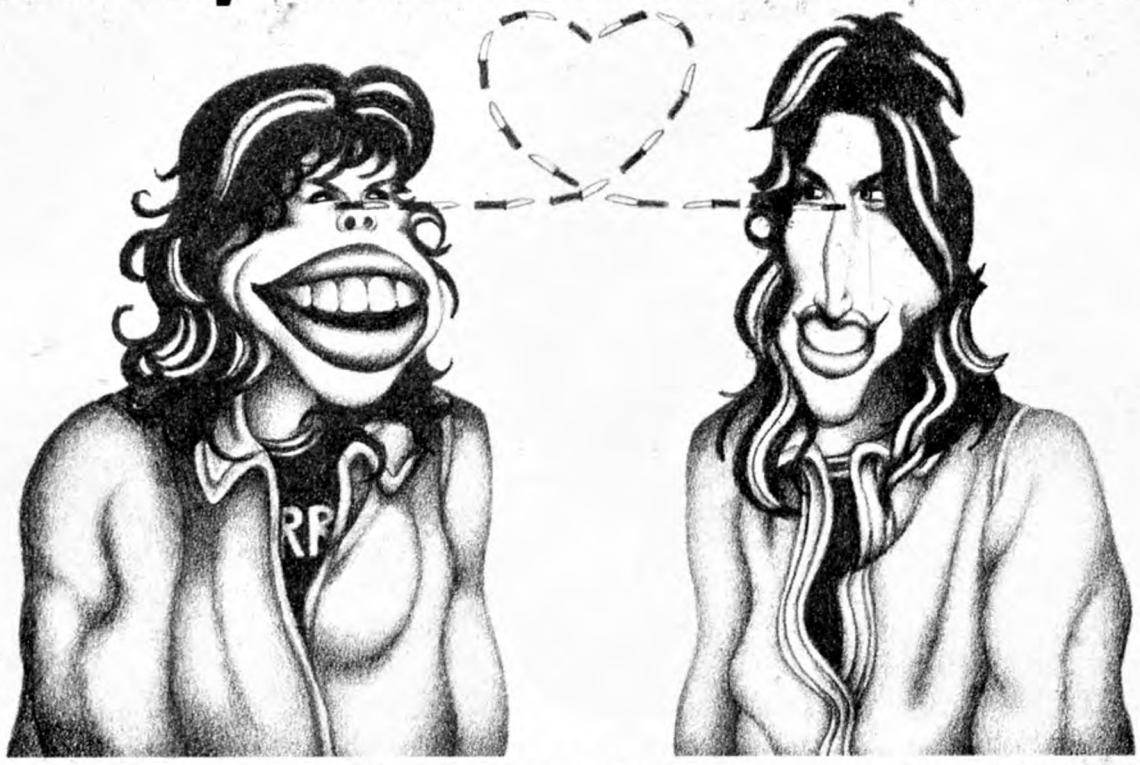
Osterberg also dotes on his 10-year-old son, Eric, in the mother's custody. His own mother isn't disturbed by the variance between Osterberg's image and personal statements: "That's show biz, I guess."

New Values indicated a shift in personae; the album is emblazoned "A James Osterberg Production." Will there ever be an Osterberg LP—his name on the front cover?

"No, no," he protests. "I think Iggy is fucking important—so important that if you call Iggy's name across a room people still wince. Girls go, 'Ooh, what kind of name is *that*?' Anything as good as that deserves a place and I'll stick to it. I really like Iggy and I'm gonna keep him right where he belongs. Jim Osterberg can make albums—I make 'em but I wouldn't want to" —an internal struggle is taking place—"no, I'm Iggy Pop, man, I'm not Jim Osterberg, I'm Iggy Pop and I'm proud of it." The voice has become sullen, slurring over words. It's true! Jim Osterberg *is* Iggy Pop! "I don't want to be like everybody else." ■

THE BEST OF FRIENDS

Joe Perry and Aerosmith's love-hate affair



Amy Horowitz

By Bill Flanagan

Boston College is a Jesuit university. Sometimes bands play there on Friday nights in a dining hall called the Rathskellar. A few posters around campus announced that this Friday's band would be the Joe Perry Project. A few hundred kids showed up, drank, got rowdy and pinched each other. Upstairs, in a classroom, Joe Perry and his guests waited. Song titles were scribbled on the chalkboard; Perry, who as Aerosmith's lead guitarist has played to sold out arenas all over the world, was nervous. This was his first gig since quitting Aerosmith the month before.

Downstairs the kids waited and drank and waited. Steven Tyler, Aerosmith's lead singer, showed up and quickly left. Brad Whitford, Aerosmith's other guitarist, hung around. An opening act came and went. People got edgy.

Finally, the p.a. blasted out the *William Tell* overture and the Joe Perry Project came out to meet the world. Kids stood on cafeteria tables and cheered. The band ran through a ragged but enthusiastic set of Aerosmith songs ("Bone to Bone," "Walk This Way"), a couple of covers ("Talk, Talk," "Heartbreak Hotel") and some new Perry compositions.

Besides Perry on guitar, the band comprised Ronnie Stewart on drums, former Dirty Angel David Hull on bass, and singer Ralph Morman. Perry, however, sang enough leads to qualify as a front man—and his heavy, explosive guitar generated the set's excitement. Even those who avoid this sort of music in an arena would concede that to have heard all this guitar power, all these *sounds*, wailing out of one guitar in a cramped school cafeteria was a gas.

Summoned back for an encore by chants of "We want Joe!" and "Two more!", Perry smiled. "Two more? We'll see. I don't know if we know any more than that. We've only been together for a month, y'know." Finally Perry did a song ("Life at a Glance") he had written the night before. Like most of his new songs, it was shorter and funkier than those associated with Aerosmith.

"Funk-rock instead of punk-rock," Perry laughed later. "I really dig R&B; all the guys in the band are firmly entrenched in R&B. That kind of music has always gotten me off so it's natural I would want to write stuff in that vein. I mean, Sly and the Family Stone is one of my all time favorite bands. And I've always liked James Brown."

Perry and his band have rented a rehearsal hall in a Boston suburb. They are patiently going over rough spots in the new songs when I arrive to interview Joe a week later. Some of the songs are almost new wave. The sound is clean and the vocals, especially Joe's, are improving quickly.

"I've been wanting to do a solo album for a few years," Perry explains. "I was talking about it even before **Draw the Line**. I just never had the time 'cause I'd be too involved with Aerosmith. This summer I had a lot of time off so I started putting this together. I just got more and more involved. I would have had to put it all aside for two or three months to go on the road with Aerosmith. I was looking at the same gigs in the same halls; it was, like, enough for me. The past three or four years with Aerosmith have been pretty much the same. We've been doing all the same size halls, nothing different. It was time for a change—all around."

Was it a hard decision to make?

"Yeah, it was," Perry nods. "Aerosmith has been more than just a band for me for a lot of years. It was the only band I ever went into the studio with. We lived together in the same apartment; it was a way of life. But, for me, it had reached its peak. There wasn't much else we could do. I could see by the way tours were being set up, the way the album was set up and the way the music was going that it was going to be the same for at least a few more years to come. I wouldn't have been able to initiate changes fast enough to satisfy me.

"I couldn't really put a solo act together because I wouldn't have time. Aerosmith plans a lot of things at the last minute, so it's impossible to think about something on the side.

"It's basically my search for excitement. Aerosmith stopped being exciting for me. The other guys obviously have different goals, different reasons for staying; they want to stay together. That's their business. But I reached a point where I didn't want to do it anymore.

"The others sort of knew there was a chance I wouldn't go on the road with them—and essentially that's me leaving the band. The first thing I said was, 'I don't think I'm going to be able to go on the road with you this time out.' That's how it started.

"They didn't know what I was doing. They were really pissed off for a while, I think—all but Brad. Brad understood from the start. He felt a lot of the same frustra-

Joe Perry: "I was wasting my time with Aerosmith."

tions but I guess he's better able to handle it. I'm sure it's just a matter of time until the other guys come around and realize I just had to do what I had to do. I was wasting my time with Aerosmith, getting frustrated and miserable."

Perry regrets that he and Whitford will no longer be a team. "Probably the worst part about leaving Aerosmith was breaking up a guitar duo that was, I think, one of the best. We used to complement each other pretty well."

Perry wasted no time in getting to work on his solo project. He quit Aerosmith on October 10th; the Boston College debut was November 16th.

He had known Hull, an old friend of Steven Tyler, from when the Dirty Angels opened for Aerosmith on tour last year. Morman, Perry's friend, had moved to Florida and was working in construction when he saw Perry at an Aerosmith gig in that state. Stewart was known to several people around Aerosmith as a hot drummer; Perry took their advice and checked him out. Stewart is, in Morman's words, "the anchor of the band. He only has an occasional beer." The muscular drummer is, amazingly, still working a day job in the drum department of a Boston music store. "You've got to make sure everything's gonna work out first and that Joe's pleased," he explains. "I'm used to the routine."

As of early December, the group plans to move into the Wherehouse, Aerosmith's rehearsal studios, when Aerosmith heads out on the road. Once there Perry will bring in a 24-track truck to record the basic tracks for the first solo album. Band members anticipate a more or less live-in-the-studio sound for the album, which they hope will be out in January. The group will then go on a national tour and Ronnie will probably have to quit his job in the music store.

For now, Perry says he is having a great time writing, rehearsing and putting everything he's learned into the business end of his new band. While the band rehearsed, roadies were stenciling "Joe Perry Project" on equipment. The boss himself enthused that he's been setting up club dates and choosing the right p.a.

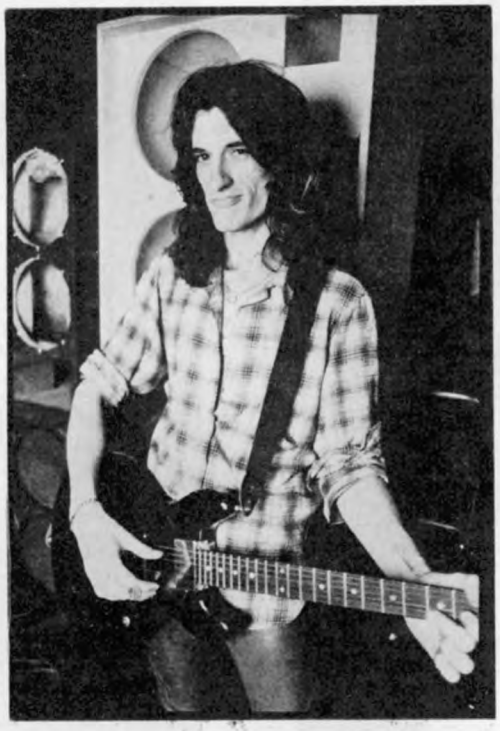
Aerosmith's new album, **Night in the Ruts**, has just come out. It was started last spring and was still unfinished when Perry quit the band in October.

"You can sort of see where Aerosmith is at," Perry says. "I think they're gonna do good now that this album is out. It's getting played a lot. I hope it does good for their sake *and* for my sake. It can help me, too; those are my songs they're playing on the radio.

"If nothing else," he shrugs, "my name is on everyone's mind 'cause they know I'm not with the band anymore. They're listening to the last Aerosmith album that's a real Aerosmith album."

Perry does express one serious reservation: "I'm not happy with the way the album sounds, 'cause I wasn't there for the mix. I don't claim any responsibility for the sound. But I know the basic tracks; I know the potential was there. My guitar work is not quite as good as some of the stuff I'm doing now. When my album comes out I think there's gonna be a big difference in the technique, 'cause I was just starting some new things on the Aerosmith album and for some reason it's not mixed up quite as loud. At least they didn't take 'em off! They were mixing after I quit the band, so I expected them to erase all my playing." Perry decides his low profile on **Night in the Ruts** will make his own album sound even fresher when it appears.

All photos by B.C. Kagan



Does Perry think Aerosmith's next album will be very different as a result of his absence?

"It's got to be," he declares. "They won't have 10 of my songs to choose from as they did on this and every other album. That's when their moment of truth is going to come. Mine is already here 'cause I'm getting to try out my ideas. But they're now forced to take a new direction.

"I'm not afraid to try new things. I'm not afraid to go out and play new material in front of an audience that's never heard it. Most managers will tell you that's certain death, but fuck 'em; I want to do it this way. Nobody else wants to try that—at least not the people I know in Aerosmith. Not to put them down or anything, because everybody's got to do what makes them happy. But Aerosmith doesn't take any chances; they've paid their dues for five or six years, so they just sit back.

"I guess there are different kinds of people. What drove me to do what I did with Aerosmith is the same thing driving me to do this. It's a search for excitement. I'm not trying to fulfill someone else's dream of being a rock 'n' roller; I just know what needs I have inside, and that's to play in front of crowds where you can feel it coming back. A lot of people—namely the other guys in Aerosmith—don't really want to do that.

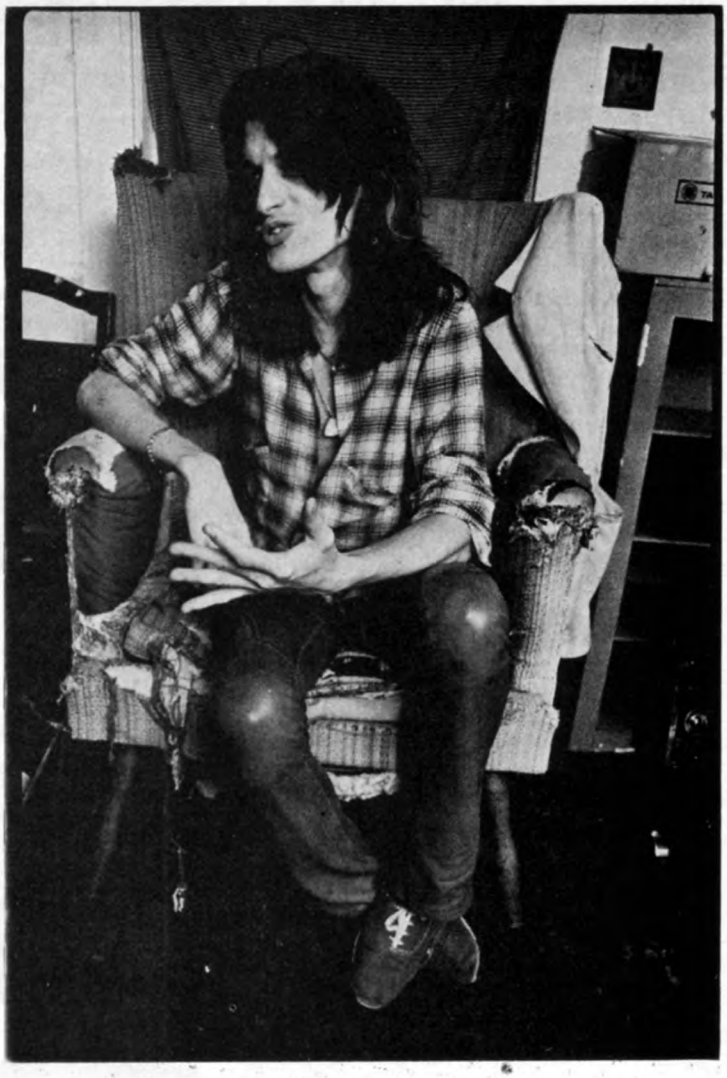
"It's not a step down for me to play in a small club, to be seen by fewer people. You're not sacred, just because you can fill Boston Garden doesn't mean you can't play anywhere else."

Perry pauses as if surprised at his own intensity. Then he says quietly, "It was getting boring, that's why."

The Wherehouse is a long white building in an industrial complex in Waltham, Massachusetts. Neighborhood kids have spraypainted messages on the outside walls imploring Joe Perry to come back. Inside, Brad Whitford and Joey Kramer are jamming in a rehearsal studio. Tom Hamilton is giving a phone interview in an upstairs room. I'm in the office waiting for Steve Tyler. There are photos of rock stars on the walls: Rod Stewart, Chuck Berry, and a disproportionate number of Mick Jaggers. One wall is draped with a sort of photo-tapestry of Mick and Keith's faces.

There are five trays for fan mail, each with the name of a member of Aerosmith. Four trays contain two or three letters. The tray labeled "Steven Tyler" is overflowing with

Steve Tyler: "Joe Perry is a very bitter man."



letters and packages.

Tyler arrives, and we begin talking about Aerosmith's upcoming three-month tour. Tyler insists that new guitarist Jimmy Crespo has "filled Joe's shoes and then some!" and that Aerosmith is better than ever. It becomes increasingly obvious that Steve Tyler is not on good terms with Joe Perry.

"There are a lot of things he's been saying in the press lately that just aren't true," Tyler maintains. "If he keeps it up I'm gonna have to wind up telling the truth about the whole thing and it's not gonna be healthy! So we just say it's a mutual breakup. He's a very bitter man."

Tyler mentions an interview Perry gave *Hit Parader* last summer in which the guitarist stated he was not quitting Aerosmith and would do his solo project on the side. Tyler insists that the interview reveals all Perry's contradictions by itself.

Tyler also expresses displeasure at an interview in which Perry supposedly claimed to have written all the music on the Tyler/Perry collaborations. Tyler says he and Perry co-wrote the music, Tyler wrote all the lyrics, and that the next Aerosmith album will prove that they don't need Perry's writing.

I ask about his brief appearance in Perry's Boston College audience. "There was a band that was supposed to go on before him and play for an hour. I didn't really feel like hanging around. There was no place to hide backstage and the vibes back there weren't particularly happening anyway. Some people just don't grow up and I don't mean particularly Joe."

Why bother going at all?

"I wanted to see what was happening with my brother. I don't care what he or someone else thinks. I still love the guy."

Tyler goes on about the unfair things he feels Perry has been saying in interviews, and I begin to get uncomfortable. I know what Joe told me, but I don't know if I should keep it to myself or give Tyler a chance to respond. Conscience wins out: I'll let Tyler comment on a few points I suspect he'd disagree with. Maybe it's correct to do journalistically. For all I know it's even why I was invited to the Wherehouse. It sure makes me feel like Rona Barrett, though. Here we go, gang.

Point 1: Perry referred to **Night in the Ruts** as the last real Aerosmith album.

"No!" Tyler explodes, "That's not it at all. Oh, *he* said that! Uh huh."

Point 2: Perry's faced his moment of truth, but Aerosmith will face theirs when they make their next album.

Tyler rocks back and forth in his chair. "If he thinks he's gonna find his moment of truth by leaving the band and looking somewhere else, he's measuring his capabilities alone. I can swim upstream. I don't have to quit the band to find out if I can or not."

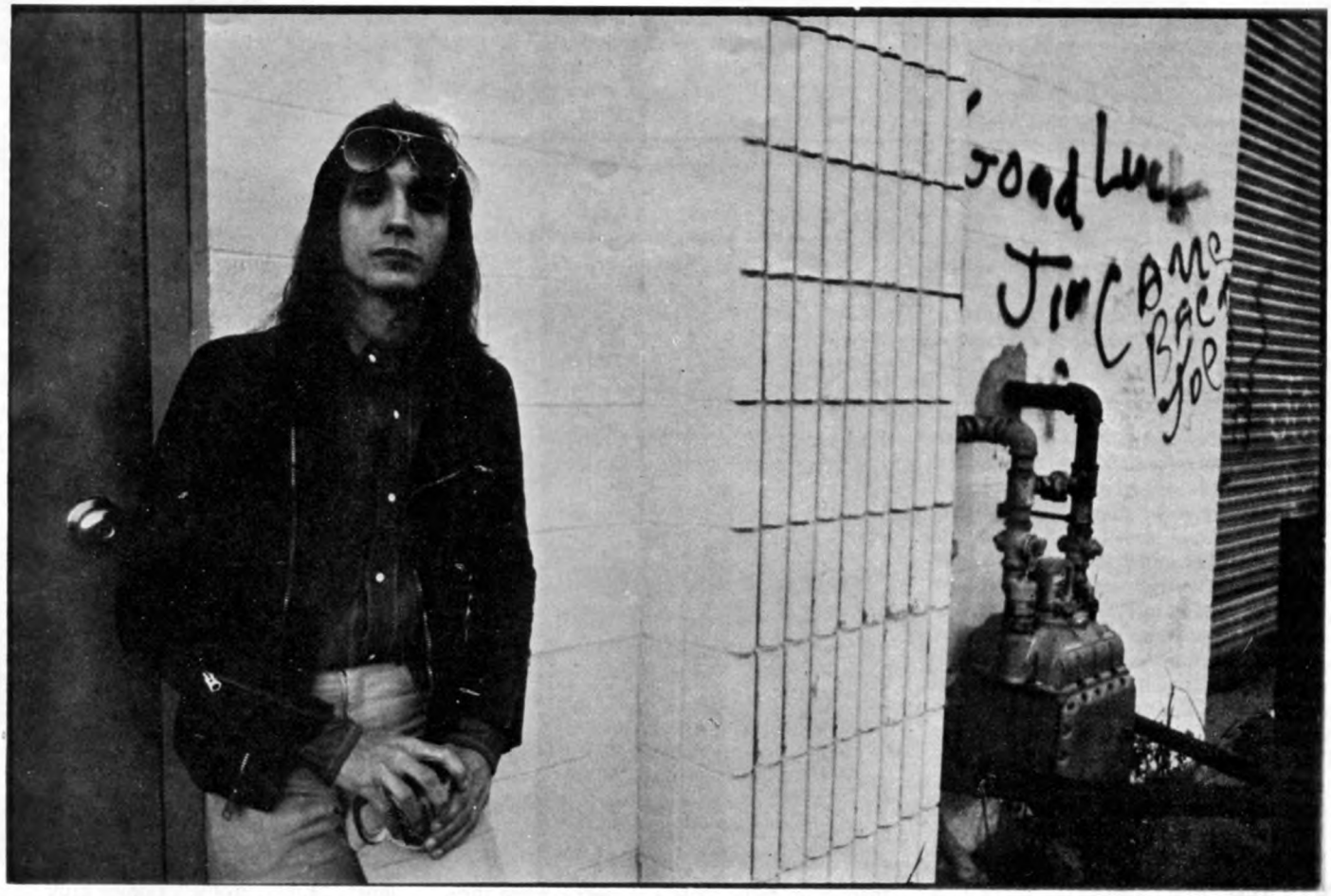
Point 3: Perry said some bands get complacent and don't want to take chances.

"Take chances with what?" Tyler demands.

Going into clubs, I suggest, or playing different kinds of music.

"Well, let me tell you one thing first of all," Tyler exclaims. "Playing clubs again was my idea. It was not Joe Perry's idea! I wanted to go back to clubs 'cause we were recording **Bootleg** [Aerosmith's live album]. I figured, what the fuck, let's go back to the kids again.

"Nobody in their right mind wants to go back and play clubs the rest of their lives after becoming a big band! What the hell do you want to do that for? You can do that



Aerosmith's new guitarist Jimmy Crespo outside the grafitti-splotched Wherehouse.

every once in a while to get your nut off, but you can play a big place and kick ass so well that people in the back get off.

"Yeah, it's fun to play clubs. I love to play clubs. It's a lot easier to play clubs than it is in big halls.

"I also have an obligation to kids. Sometimes I want to quit the goddamned business but then I think about all the kids that want to hear Aerosmith. You've got to play to them all. You'd never play to them all if you played in clubs.

"As for takin' fuckin' chances, that's what Aerosmith is all about. I don't think there's a better fuckin' album on the market right now than **Night in the Ruts** to show where rock 'n' roll's going—or should go. Shit!"

Point 4: Perry said he thought he might be mixed down on the new album.

Tyler's mad now. "I'll tell you what you can print in there! If he'd stuck around the studio long enough instead of being home with his other band he might've had more to say about the album and got himself on there! As it was, I had to bust my hump to get him down there to fuckin' do overdubs and put leads on.

"He was just pissed off. He was upset about something. He wouldn't come down. I tried my damnedest. That's when our friendship broke up. I kept calling him up and calling and calling. He just didn't want to come down. That's when I got upset. I said, he wants to do Joe Perry Project? Then let him go ahead and do it! If he thinks he's mixed down it's his own damn fault for not being there! I spent every fuckin' minute of my time down there. I didn't get home until four weeks ago! I didn't want to miss a fuckin' thing.

"Now Perry's a guy who's been there all the time. But for this album he just didn't come down—only once in a while. When he did, he left at night. 'Cause he had rehearsals with his new band. That kind of upset me! I don't know where he's coming from!"

Tyler is quiet for a moment, then adds, "I don't think he's particularly mixed down, either. If he had something to say, it's there."

After going on like this a bit longer, Tyler declares he doesn't want to talk about Perry anymore. I suggest we talk about Aerosmith's upcoming tour—and we do, for about 30 seconds. Then Tyler interrupts himself and says, "Listen, don't get me wrong. I'm gonna miss Joe. I'm sure a lot of people are gonna miss him. It's just that his attitude towards the end was not what I'd call on the up and up. I mean, the very fact that he said those things to you..."

Maybe in five or 10 years Tyler and Perry will be able to sit down over a beer and laugh about the old days.

"I don't think so," Tyler answers. "I think our relationship is totally dead. He's said too many demeaning things. His wife hates my guts—all kinds of dumb shit. That's just the way it is: rumors, who said this and who said that. I've had my fill of that bullshit. That's what breaks bands up. If I ever see it, my fuckin' knuckles'll be all over it. I don't mean Joe Perry, I mean that kind of situation.

"You should talk to the rest of the guys. Everybody loves Joe Perry's ass, man. We started off in the beginning like that. For him to spread these fuckin' stories because of a split like this—it's just not right."

Tyler calms down and suddenly turns charming. "Isn't it horrible?" he asks. "It can't be just, 'He went his way and we went ours.' He's gotta make up for something. I guess that's the only way he knows how to do it. I still wish him the world. I hope to god he makes it with this band."

We talk about other things. Although the subject always drifts back to Joe Perry, Tyler says he hopes I'll downplay the split in the final story.

Hit Parader is nice enough to send me their Joe Perry interview. The only controversial thing I can find in it is Perry's repeated assertion that he won't be quitting Aerosmith. Reached by telephone, Perry says of the contradiction, "I was still feeling things out—seeing if I could have an extracurricular career. At that time I had no intention of leaving the band. Later on I had to make a decision. It was one or the other."

Steve Tyler is fond of the lyrics to "No Surprise," a song on the new album that chronicles Aerosmith's history from their discovery in 1971 to the present. "Play the singles, it ain't me/It's program insanity," he recites. "That zaps it all up for me."

"All my dreams still haven't come true," Joe Perry admits. "It depends on what your dreams are, I suppose, and where your values lie. If you sit around and wait for your dreams to come true, you wait the rest of your life. 'Cause it's never like that." ■

Clash Calling

Bob Gruen

THE CLASH
London Calling
Epic E2-36328

By Ira Robbins

In the annals of rock recording, there have been only a few double LPs of real merit: **Tommy** and **Quadrophenia**, the **White Album**, **Blonde on Blonde**, **Exile on Main Street**, **Something/Anything**, **Goodbye Yellow Brick Road**. In general the format has been plagued by barbarously awful live expeditions and other contract-breakers. That a new wave band should attempt—and succeed with—a project of this magnitude only reaffirms the Clash's credibility as a top-flight rock organization. **London Calling** has the variety, strength and depth to stand among the aforementioned library of four-sided albums.

The Clash has chosen the least likely path at each and every turn in their chaotic career. Constantly wary of becoming predictable, they've shifted musical direction drastically on several occasions, experimenting with styles that held no guaranteed attraction for their followers. From gangbusting punk aggro to reggae (long before the Police), then on to sophisticated rock at the fringe of heavy metal, the Clash last delivered the tri-directional **Cost of Living** EP, breeding expectations of either Dylanesque folk-rock, commercial rock 'n' roll or semi-wild nonsense.

London Calling shatters any and all preconceptions fostered by **Cost of Living**. The 19 tracks, produced by Mott the Hoople mentor Guy Stevens, are simultaneously mainstream rock and uniquely Clash. The first LP was all ambience and attack, the second all production, and the singles only songs; **London Calling** is a little of each. Stevens records the Clash cleanly and evenly, but doesn't stop them from being loose and sloppy when they care to be. For their part, the group plays their asses off, not hiding behind studio touch-up work. The album was recorded quickly and lacks the fussy precision of **Give 'Em Enough Rope**, but has a spontaneity and natural feel missing from that LP.

The Clash has grown and diversified—both musically and lyrically—way beyond the narrow confines of their urban guerilla days. Without losing their unalterable sense of political ethics and commitment, they've learned not to take themselves totally seriously. Most of **London Calling** deals with serious social comment—nuclear holocaust, the dangers of cocaine, police repressions—but there are lighter moments: a cover of Vince Taylor's "Brand New Cadillac," homage to Montgomery Clift ("Right Profile"), a Motownish dance cut not listed on the sleeve and a few good-time numbers that are hard to figure.

One of **Give 'Em Enough Rope**'s surprises was an unidentified guest pianist on "Julie's in the Drug Squad." This album is teeming with outside contributions; four non-Strummer/Jones compositions and occasional keyboards and horns add decidedly to the variety. Mick Jones sings several tunes; Paul Simonon sings one he wrote ("Guns of Brixton"), sounding like Cheap Trick's Tom Petersson delivering "I Know What I Want" (which suggests something about good-looking bassists who don't really sing); Stevens uses a multi-track production that sounds quite alien to the Clash despite its effectiveness.

There are no out-and-out disasters among these 19 tracks. Almost half are less than extraordinary, but the second side is flawless. "Spanish Bombs" is an overt political appraisal of Spain's civil history featuring seriocomic Spanish lyrics sung by Strummer and Jones. "Right Profile" ambles gaily through Clift's movie titles and a description of his scarring car crash.

"Lost in the Supermarket," the companion piece to **Rope**'s "Stay Free," consitutes the second chapter in Mick Jones's autobiography—this one a soul-searing search along the lines of John Lennon's "Mother." With its suburban imagery, "Supermarket" is a rare blend of sadness and power only the Who have ever been able to tap at will. To place the Clash in the Who's circle not for aggression and energy but passion and sensitivity only makes me cherish their music more than ever before. This band just keeps getting better.

The rest of the side consists of a hot number called "Clampdown" and the reggaeish, moody "Guns of Brixton." The latter may seem trite at first but sounds authentic in a way black music played by whites rarely does. If not for a Jew's harp towards the end, the song would be perfect.

Side three also checks in as a definite winner with three tunes of real substance and magic. "Koka Kola," an indictment of both the advertising world and the ritzy acceptance of nose candy, is built around the "Coke adds life" jingle; it's both effective and hysterically funny. "Card Cheat" has all the earmarks of a Phil Spector classic and stands without doubt as the best production ever to carry the Clash's name. The rousing "Death or Glory" contains the memorable lyric: "He who fucks nuns will later join the church." I don't understand what it means, but it certainly has a ring to it.

London Calling is unlike any other Clash record, yet it remains true to the band's spirit and standards. They play slower songs now and words are much clearer than ever before; but they've given nothing up to take a step forward. Clashtime is now!

TOM PETTY AND THE HEART-BREAKERS
Damn the Torpedoes
MCA 5105

Well, hooray. At last someone's had enough sense and good taste to put the rock back in folk-rock. It wasn't always slick steel guitar licks and sensitive pretty-boy singers whining about how depressed they were. At one time it was Dylan yowling "Subterranean Homesick Blues," the Byrds tripping out on "Eight Miles High" and even dumb old Sonny Bono spitting out "Laugh at Me."

Tom Petty's come up with an album full of chiming, ringing 12-string guitars and spacey, almost subliminally ethereal organs, and put it all to a heavy backbeat. On top of that is his voice. So what if at times it sounds enough like Roger McGuinn's to warrant legal action; Roger's not been using it lately, anyway. Petty adds a punky attitude that pushes it into places McGuinn never ventured.

The single, "Don't Do Me Like That," is Petty's best shot at a hit since "Breakdown." Insistent piano and engaging organ swirls are backed by a modified dance beat, making this one teen fare with bite. There are rave-up rockers too ("Century City," "What Are You Doing in My Life"), but Petty seems more confident in a toned-down vein. "Louisiana Rain" is saved from the Jackson Browne graveyard by Petty's vocals. "Refugee" (sounding like "Lover of the Bayou") is the kind of pep talk Browne wouldn't have the strength for.

Petty accomplishes the impossible, though, on "Here Comes My Girl." He takes what should be a corny conceit (boredom and hopelessness made tolerable by the Girl) and makes it real. While the Heartbreakers (who keep a low profile throughout the album) chug along just below the boiling point, Petty spews out a restless street-corner rap. The self-consciousness of Petty's earlier rock'n'roll postures is gone; the chorus release is a triumphant whirlpool of guitar arpeggios and Byrdsy harmonies. The song becomes what it's about.

Tom Petty may be a sensitive pretty-boy singer, but he sure isn't whining.

—Jerry Milbauer

THE BOOMTOWN RATS
The Fine Art of Surfacing
Columbia JC36248

The first Boomtown Rats album, nearly three years ago, was an angry cry: "Move over," it said, "We want in!" They are currently the most popular rock band in Britain and Ireland. Such determination deserved to be rewarded. Talent is an asset, but hardly a necessity if you've got the drive. The Rats had plenty of both, but at that time the drive, the hunger to break through, was more important.

The Rats show off their talents on **The Fine Art of Surfacing**, their third LP. Clever arrangements, smart lyrics, great playing, lush production; they're professionals now for sure. But where oh where has the drive gone? The immediacy, the sense of grabbing you by the collar and shaking you until you react? Not punk affectations, just, as Ray Davies says, "a little bit of real emotion."

"I Don't Like Mondays" may have it. Certainly it comes closest, with a sparse arrangement (despite the strings) creating a tension that neatly underscores its subject matter. I don't hear much drive anywhere else. Most of the material seems to lack edge; guitars are polite, not cutting, and nearly every song breaks into a cutesy bridge which dissipates whatever energy has been built up.

BOOMTOWN RATS
Where's the fire?

One final crab: the Rats' repetition of tried and true formats. "Wind Chill Factor (Minus Zero)" is "Like Clockwork" over again. "When the Night Comes" hopefully completes the street-wise trilogy, along with "Joey's on the Street" and "Rat Trap." Stealing from others is a rock tradition (see **Tonic for the Troops**); repeating yourself is just boring.

The Boomtown Rats are still one of the best live bands around. **Surfacing** is certainly not bad enough that it can't be written off as a momentary lapse. But come on, guys; where's the fire?

—Dave Schulps

M
New York • London • Paris • Munich
Sire SRK6084

It's too early to determine Robin Scott's place in rock history, but one thing is certain: "Pop Muzik" made friends disco never knew it had. What a difference a title makes.

"Pop Muzik" epitomized the AM radio tradition of gimmicky hits by artists who provide entertainment, not personality. LPs operate under a different code, which is why this album provoked speculation. Had Scott/M shot his creative wad on the single? Or was "Pop Muzik"—with its knowing winks and sly sarcasm—only a teaser for glory yet to come?

The answer, as provided by **New York • London • Paris • Munich**, lies somewhere between the two extremes. Scott descends from a tradition of European pop stars (Plastic Bertrand comes to mind) whose singles success makes them loath to change a winning formula. Scott, though, is breaking musical ground while getting rich, so he has leeway to experiment.

Which is why this album is so puzzling. After opening up a new genre (disco-pop?), Scott seems hidebound by self-imposed conventions. Virtually all his vocal phrases are two or four-bar snippets (often with silly Cold War imagery) coordinating with the music's simple structure. Except for "Woman Make Man," the album's eight cuts adhere to approximately the same disco-regulated tempo. Scott's vocals are highly Bowie-inflected, with a mannered enunciation that quickly palls.

Now the reasons to be cheerful. Despite obvious songwriting limitations, Scott's album continues in the intriguing direction (bleached disco) charted by his single. Apart from M's trademarks—keyboard washes, vocal choruses resembling a calliope with a larynx—the upbeat music on this LP is an in-progress case of pop's cross-breeding. Discophobes may find the less accented beat of "Moonlight and Muzak" more appealing, or perhaps the attractive pushed rhythm of "That's the Way the Money Goes." The generally inane lyrics refuse analysis. ("Cowboys and Indians" is out of Village People country.) Robin Scott's music theories make M worthwhile; those who follow in his breach can polish up the execution.

—Scott Isler

PINK FLOYD
The Wall
Columbia PE2-36183

Never known for a modest reach, this time Pink Floyd has concocted a project so extreme even they may have trouble topping it. **The Wall** takes the worst of two worlds—the concept album and the two-record set—to present an excruciating study in alienation, specifically that which comes from being an artist (as the members of Floyd apparently fancy themselves). By the end of this dreary exercise all but the most devoted will likely wonder what the point is.

With the exciting thunder-and-lightning strains of "In the Flesh?" **The Wall** gets off to a fiery start worthy of Led Zeppelin. Most of what follows, however, is a long, uninteresting cosmic sigh. Roger Waters can still write melodies of skin-crawling beauty ("Comfortably Numb") that are the musical evocation of airless death in deep space. But since bleak is the rule he is unwilling to break the spell by injecting color or tension; most of the songs are static fragments, cleanly though drily executed by the band. When the tempo exceeds a crawl ("Run Like Hell") the result is stiff theatrics as opposed to genuine drama. David Gilmour's infrequent guitar solos give off the only heat, then it's back to desolation. Underscoring **The Wall**'s general aridity is an incessant reliance on sound effects—crying babies, telephones, breaking glass, helicopters, etc.—that are more interesting than the tunes themselves.

Pink Floyd assume by this ghastly display of excess that their audience will accept quite a bit; compounding the offense is their writing about the lot of the big rock star. Ultimately **The Wall** seems neither a daring success nor an ambitious failure. By wallowing in impotent desperation and comfortable numbness, Pink Floyd exposes itself as a group of passionless, facile cynics, despite their pretentions to something far greater.

—Jon Young

MARIANNE FAITHFULL
Broken English
Island ILPS9570

Haunting? Gripping? Brutal, disturbing, depressing? Take your pick, because all of the above describe **Broken English**, Marianne Faithfull's powerful new LP.

Perhaps best known as Mick Jagger's blonde Carnaby Street dolly and the breathless chanteuse of 1964's "As Tears Go By," Faithfull has traveled a rocky road. Sensational sex and drug scandals, a couple of other hits, some stage and screen roles—then miscarriage, a bust-up with Mick, attempted suicide, a junk habit and finally (relative) obscurity.

Faithfull's back now, and with a vengeance. **Broken English** is not a pretty album. The songs are tense, painful and bitter, the music terse and gloomy with dark overtones. There's a strong sense of catharsis; the wounds might have healed but the scars remain. Shel Silverstein's "Ballad of Lucy Jordan" concerns an empty, desperate life at the breaking point. Faithfull encourages parallels with John Lennon through a harrowing cover of "Working Class Hero." Guitarist Barry Reynolds's "Guilt" explores similar primal territory.

Faithfull maintains a consistent tone throughout, but "Why D'Ya Do It" is the album's *coup de grace*. For all the furor its X-rated lyrics have caused in England, it is truly a blockbuster. Faithfull sneers and spits out the scathing sexual imagery (by playwright Heathcote Williams) with viciousness and venom, against solid and slightly psychotic musical backing.

Much credit is due her band. Reynolds's and Joe Maverty's guitars are both subtle and striking; Steve Winwood's synthesizer and organ work provides her with the stark and moody framework in which she works so well. **Broken English** is strong stuff, and it goes straight for the guts. —Bruce Paley

FABULOUS POODLES
Think Pink
Epic JE36256

A lot of people think the Poodles are hardcore nerds. Anglophiles especially tend to dismiss them as mere music-hall run amuck, a big deal for bubbleheads only. Yet as doltish as they seem to be onstage, the Poodles are no sloppier musically than, say, the Kinks have often been. Besides, it's the songs guitarist Tony de Meur writes with non-Poo John Parsons that are the main point—and like Ray Davies's each one's a perfect little story about actual people and real things. If hooks, harmonies and bright, witty arrangements are uncool, we've all been under a profound aesthetic misapprehension for lo, these many years.

While it would be an exaggeration to call this second LP a triumph, **Think Pink** is a quantum leap—in terms of material, production (Muff Winwood again) and general verve—beyond their US debut, **Mirror Stars**. The album kicks off with an exhilarating whoosh of harmony in the form of an obscure Everly Brothers tune called "Man with Money." It sets an imposing standard for the 10 songs that follow; several are almost up to it. With the addition of Chris Skornia on keyboards, the band sounds complete and more confident. Bobby Valentino now seems concerned more with creating textures within tunes than churning out cornball violin leads.

Anastasia Pantsios/Kaleyediscope

The Poodles' Tony de Meur (and friend).

"Bionic Man," with neo-twangy guitar and use of instrumental dynamics, is very much in the mode of latter-day Kinks. Like the Kinks, though, the Poodles roots go considerably deeper. "Any Port in a Storm" could have been written under the influence of cheap vino and Crystals records. "Anna Rexia," ode to the fashionably underfed, is a potpourri of vintage Chuck-Berryisms. "Suicide Bridge" rewrites "Secret Agent Man" (with a guitar solo copped whole hog from Ritchie Blackmore's "Still I'm Sad").

So the Fabulous Poodles are thieves, right? In a way. They rejoice in rifling rock's rich past. More importantly, de Meur's songs and the band's lack of pretention bode well for a bright future. —Kurt Loder

IAN McLAGAN
Troublemaker
Mercury SRM-1-3786

Since the New Barbarians' tour turned out to be one of rock's biggest non-events ever, it's perfectly reasonable to approach an album by one of the participants—ex-Faces keyboardist Ian McLagan—with plenty of cynicism. If fellow Barbarian (and Rolling Stone) Ron Wood turned in an LP below even his limited capabilities with **Gimme Some Neck**, why should we expect any better from a mere piano player?

Not to worry. **Troublemaker** is an unexpected good time, a jolly interlude crackling with the brashness of someone delighted to have center stage. McLagan's band sets a sharp pace, especially Johnny Lee Schell, who's adept at spinning out Richards/Wood guitar lines without slipping into excess.

The real treat, however, is McLagan himself; if he'd written and sung with plainspoken audacity in the Faces we could have had a British Jerry Lee Lewis instead of the Rod Stewart Experience. On "Somebody" he pleads for help in getting rid of a girlfriend ("She's like superglue"). "Hold On" finds him begging her to stay one more day because "Tomorrow you'll be sober." McLagan does blow lines—his range isn't so good—but that doesn't matter; his vocals infer that if he gets into a brawl, it'll be a pie fight rather than a fist fight.

Only on "Truly," a sluggish New Barbarians reggae exercise, and the awkward "Mystifies Me" does Ian forsake his loose approach and fail to connect. Otherwise he plays the charming and slightly hostile rascal to the hilt. Most artists want to score big, but **Troublemaker**'s triumph is minor in the very best sense of the word. —Jon Young

PEARL HARBOR & THE EXPLOSIONS
Warner Bros. BSK3404

THE ROMANTICS
Nemperor JZ36273

Is the guitar solo coming back? That's the question raised by these two debut LPs—and about the only musical device they have in common.

Pearl Harbor & the Explosions, despite their name (and the accompanying buzz when they signed to Warner Bros.), are not new wave. Pearl herself has a closed-glottis, tuneless alto that barely sounds feminine; when she hoarsely iterates "baby baby baby" (on "Don't Come Back"), though, she does bring Janis Joplin to mind. Maybe Harbor is named after this Pearl. When was the last time you thought about Janis Joplin?

The Explosions play tight, funky riffs with a penchant for augmented chords and trebly guitar fills. Their originals don't progress much beyond riffs, both musically and lyrically. "Shut Up and Dance" is cute, with its change-of-pace boogie rhythm behind advice on how to avoid getting picked up. "Up and Over" sports an engaging ascending phrase before shifting into an aimless, extended two-chord vamp. More indicative is "So Much for Love" 's references to well-known song lyrics ("I don't care if your aim is true," etc.)—*that* hasn't been done in a few years—and "Get a Grip on Yourself," a rather cruel ode to male masturbation (Fleetwood Mac's "Rattlesnake Shake" was more sympathetic). This is true pop, and, as such, not very distinguished. The B-52's they ain't. Keep looking, Warners.

Despite *their* name, Detroit's Romantics are as new wave as 1966's headlines (i.e. yes). Coming on like the Flamin' Groovies with a bad case of enthusiasm, this no-keyboards quartet knows all the right Mersey chord progressions, Hollies-like vocal swoops, swaggering tempi and soppy lyrics. US influence is evident in the use of harmonica and variations on "Sometimes Good Guys Don't Wear White." Some songs are more tuneful than others (a straight-ahead cover of the Kinks' "She's Got Everything" is included), but all are dug into with a vengeance. This music may not be coming back but it was fun while it lasted—and still is. —Scott Isler

THE INMATES
First Offence
Polydor PD-1-6241

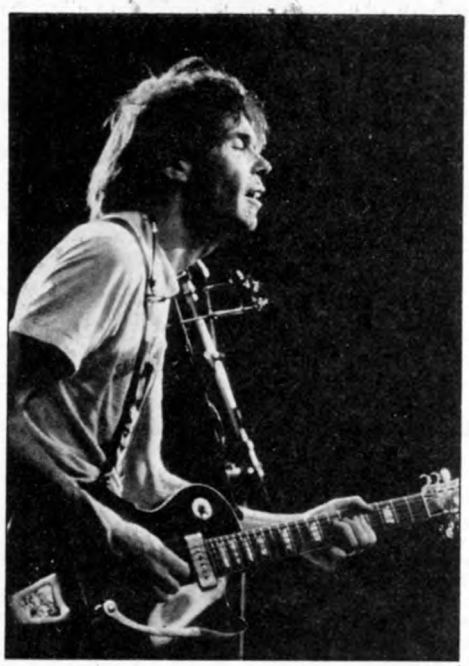
In style and spirit—even in cover art—the Inmates' **First Offence** puts them smack in Stones, Yardbirds and Pretty Things territory *circa* 1965. American soul and R&B tunes mix with originals straining to break from those traditions; there are even covers of groups who were doing the same thing 15 years ago.

The premise is unpromising and derivative, but through spunk, funk and conviction, an old corpse shakes its bones. Credit Bill Hurley's British blues snarling and Peter Gunn's professionally amateurish Keith Richards guitar work. (It's a familiar combination, all right.) A mysterious drummer named Eddie, not pictured with the group, pounds and bashes with finesse.

The Inmates walk a thin line between tribute and imitation with perfect balance; it's as if they came across a trunkful of old records

and wanted to turn friends on to their discovery. Gunn's feedback on the Pretty Things' "Midnight to Six Man" seems to creep in through genuine overenthusiasm rather than careful plotting.

Don Covay's "Three Time Loser" and Arthur Conley's "Love Got Me" use the Rumour brass section; these could have been as overblown as the Blues Brothers mauling Stax-Volt, but restraint thankfully won out. An original ballad, "If Time Could Turn Backwards," is pure Otis Redding with its sliding country-blues guitar beneath drawn-out horn lines. Homage to the American garage band is paid through the Standells' "Dirty Water." The album's most heartening song, though, is the original "I Can't Sleep." This bit of pre-psychedelia shows, just as "The Last Time" did for the Stones, that these boys can do more than dig up their heroes; they can play gritty rock'n'roll that's all their own. —Jerry Milbauer



NEIL YOUNG
Live Rust
Reprise 2AX-2296

After over a decade of unpredictable music, the most surprising thing Neil Young could do is release a conventional record. **Live Rust** is as close as he'll ever get: a two-record live set that recycles old material without radical revisions. Anyone who previously hated Young's extremes—the yowling vocals or raggedly aggressive guitar playing—will stay unconverted. Partisans will find many delights in Neil's fidgety performances but wait in vain for some new twist.

One caveat to casual observers: Young almost always records live in the studio, so these new versions sound pretty familiar. Only "The Loner," given a heavy clinical overdub on his very first solo LP, changes appreciably. "Cinnamon Girl" shows his consistent commitment to whiplash rock. "Sugar Mountain" re-exposes the callow, simplistic roots of Young's art; it would be dishonest to say the hippie sensibilities don't seem dumb at this point, but there's real charm as well. Four songs from the last LP, **Rust Never Sleeps**, are included—redundantly, since that was basically a live record too. In the electric num-

bers Young rakes the guitar strings in a manic fever that almost always sounds stunning through the distortion. "Tonight's the Night" showcases one of the most dazzling, frighteningly passionate solos to come out of a career littered with examples of genius.

"The Needle and the Damage Done" is cheered like some get-down boogie—a disturbing effect Young no doubt intended. For that matter, the constant rumble of arena-sized crowds during intimate songs has the disorienting effect of making him seem light-years away from the audience. Even at his most accomodating, Neil Young is a perverse, magnificent rock 'n' roller. —Jon Young

TONY BANKS
A Curious Feeling
Charisma/Polydor CA-1-2207

Genesis member Tony Banks reaches predictably for a keyboard-dominated semi-symphonic sound, sprinkling his songs with comfortable Brahmsian cliches and couching it all in shimmering electronic textures. He plays keyboards, bass and a little guitar while sidemen contribute vocals and drums. Always an exemplar of the journeyman working inside his limits, Banks coughs up one unbecomingly Wakemanesque synth solo on "After the Lie" and lets the matter drop. This concept album finds him recovering from some romantic disappointment; decorously depressed, he mulls over the affair and Things in General before resolving to "live in the dark."

The close resemblance between this record and recent Genesis ought to lay to rest the sellout accusations that have dogged that band since Peter Gabriel and Steve Hackett's departure. Left to himself, with little pressure to sell records, the surviving major architect of the old Genesis sound does the same things in the same way. **A Curious Feeling** suggests that the current incarnation of Banks' band is not coldly calculating as charged—merely impotent. —Mark Fleischmann

THE SLITS
Cut
Antilles AN7077

Three women, none of whom can sing; a guitar so inconspicuous it may as well not be there at all; a good rhythm section, half of it imported from the Pop Group (eek!). That's what this long-awaited—or dreaded—album adds up to.

The Slits are quite nearly talentless but they're not stupid. Reggae is the significant artery of ideas in British pop today, and the first three cuts on this record ("Instant Hit," "So Tough" and "Spend, Spend, Spend") tap it intelligently and with a trace of originality. A fluid, sometimes slippery-sliding bass weaves an occasionally anti-harmonic counterpoint to involved vocal arrangements; drummer "Budgie" provides rhythmic detail and drive with a shrewd, light touch. "Ping Pong Affair" applies the same strategy to funk with equal effectiveness.

When not supplementing their marginal material with third-world inspiration, the Slits' sparse sound degenerates into a barren, whining bore—and off-key at that. One album of this stuff is enough for anyone with an intact cerebrum. —Mark Fleischmann

IMPORTS

Sheila Rock

Paul Weller with prop.

THE JAM
Setting Sons
Polydor POLD5028

Setting Sons is angry, passionate and emotional without being maudlin. It is about des-

peration and decay, shattered dreams and relationships, and misdirected militarism. It is also the Jam's most enigmatic and ambitious album to date.

All Mod Cons marked the band's musical maturation; **Setting Sons** is an attempt to develop further within their musical confines. Everything on it is unmistakably the Jam, but it's like nothing they've ever done before. As such, **Setting Sons** is difficult to come to terms with.

The Jam has augmented their three-piece line-up with keyboards, sax, strings and even ocarina, creating a more diverse sound than on any previous record. Paul Weller's guitar, always featured in the past, is less prominent now than the rhythm section, especially Bruce Foxton's bass.

The album hints at a unifying theme. Song titles—"Little Boy Soldiers," "The Eton Rifles," "Private Hell," "Burning Sky," "Wasteland"—conjure up military images without ever quite supplying a plot or story line. This could be Ray Davies's **Arthur** ten years on, England having grown bleaker in the interim (the album's title pun), perhaps even on the verge of civil war. Frankly, it doesn't matter.

What does matter is passion. Songs eschew hooks for less effective structures, but the whole winds up quite a bit better than the sum of its parts. That nothing sounds vaguely like a single (although "The Eton Rifles" and "Smithers-Jones" have already appeared as respective A and B-sides) doesn't detract from the album's strong overall feel. The only light touch is the concluding "Heat Wave" (Martha and the Vandellas via the Who).

The Jam's bleak subject matter is not going to help increase their slim following in this country. But Paul Weller and Co. just don't seem to care—about their popularity, that is.

—Dave Schulps

David Arnoff

THE STRANGLERS
The Raven
United Artists UAG30262

The Raven immediately confronts us with the phallus. The front cover displays a large photo of a raven's head; the back shows the band at the prow of a Viking ship, its slender masthead arrogantly protruding upward. These images reinforce preconceived notions—until the first touch of stylus to vinyl. Sure, Burnel's "Ice" urges a "hagakure with perfume" to kill herself and Cornwell's "Baroque Bordello" warns of feminine perils, but the typically morbid references to women have been greatly attenuated. "Duchess" (the single) is an almost endearing pop tribute to a flame of Cornwell's. Almost all the basic Strangler principles have been toned down

Meanwhile, Back in the '50s...

CINCINNATI ROCK & ROLL
Lee JRC869

RARE ROCKABILLY VOLUME IV
MCA MCF3035

ELVIS, SCOTTY & BILL
The First Year
Golden Editions KING1

While not a brand-new reissue, **Cincinnati R&R** deserves mention; it is ironically one of the few US reissues of this most American form of pop. More than that, the LP has a decided "roots" feel. Assembled by Peggy Ligon from master tapes of long-defunct local labels, the almost ethnological approach makes a good case for Cincinnati as a northern outpost of rockabilly. Despite the title, the music wavers between rock 'n' roll's slick urbanity and its southern forebear. There are undistinguished covers ("Splish Splash," "Big Hunk o' Love"), but also aggressive singing from Ray Pennington and Orange Hubbard, not to mention a truly irritating one-note guitar riff on Pete Nantz's "Flip, Flop and Fly." Sound quality varies from OK to considerably less. ($8 from 2291 Wolff St., Cincinnati, OH 45211.)

Rare Rockabilly Volume IV is the last in British MCA's copious series drawn from US Decca, Brunswick and Coral catalogues. As with other compilation series, selections get progressively obscurer (if not desperate) with each volume; the last two MCA sets are decidedly more rock than billy. **Vol. IV** has a good deal of vocal choruses, saxes and other commercial trappings; for compensation there are early-'50s country-blues by Webb Pierce and Hardock Gunter. Moon Mullican takes Jan and Arnie's "Jenny Lee" into the hills; Patsy Cline's sparky vocal salvages a rather Tin Pan Alley number; Veline Hackett steals the show with an effective, light-textured rocker. These tracks would probably be more enjoyable as junk store finds, but their availability on LP is a boon to researchers.

The First Year is something of a milestone for the bootleg industry; formerly available *sub rosa*, this LP is now distributed by UK Virgin in an impressive package. The meat of it is a live five-song Presley performance given very early (March 1955) in his career. Sound approximates a good AM radio broadcast. Presley's voice dominates the "band" (two guys!) as well as the screamers, and the 20-year-old's enthusiasm is irresistible. His between-song comic delivery—too often ignored by Presleyologists—is also in evidence. To fill out the album, there's one of those hopelessly trivial early interviews, and an entire side of Scotty Moore reminiscing about touring way back when.

—Scott Isler

and polished. One is acutely aware of how much this band has improved.

As the first Stranglers LP not produced by Martin Rushent, **The Raven** follows **Black and White**'s path but is subtler and more coherently paced. Gone are the jagged, disorienting shifts in mood and texture. Now you can even hum to several tracks, like "Duchess," "Baroque Bordello," "Genetix," and the slow (!) "Don't Bring Harry." The usual fare of death images, political opinions and black parodies are still crudely phrased but not always crudely sung (or snarled). Cornwell's voice on "Duchess" is peaches and cream, with smooth vocal backups from the boys. Burnel's bass, one of the most prominent in rock, will always prevent this band from sounding "light"—even on a pop tune.

The Raven is the Stranglers' best and most commercial LP since **Rattus**—but not necessarily their most exciting. The songs are mainly low key or mid-tempo. None capture the frenetic urgency of "Curfew," "Rise of the Robots" or "Tank," nor the spontaneity of "Grip" or "London Lady." The Stranglers have outgrown and discarded their punky beginnings; there are no degenerate lyrics, no rancid images. There are also no abrasive rhythms or crashing melodic changes to offend the ears. If your stomach was too weak for the Stranglers before, you'll find them quite listenable now.

Like J.J. Burnel's earlier solo deviation, Hugh Cornwell's solo/collaboration with Beefheart drummer Robert Williams is not even vaguely reminiscent of Stranglers music. **Nosferatu** at least has one thing going for it that **Euroman** didn't: a band that includes Devo's Mothersbaugh brothers, "Duncan Poundcake" (a.k.a. Ian Dury) and Zappa sideman Ian Underwood. Still, the album is almost tryingly experimental at times.

Cornwell told *New Musical Express* that the album is a soundtrack for a film that would never be released. At its worst, **Nosferatu** is dull and meandering, completely lacking the terror and sorrow so integral to the concept (based loosely on the Murnau film).

The material is very electronic, heavy on bass and abrasive in the Cornwell manner. Williams's complex drumming provides a vastly different foundation for Cornwell than Jet Black's regimented throbbings; the former underscores Cornwell's limitations. Cornwell and Williams have compiled a set of electronic melodies that beg for something beyond the all-too-commonplace synthesizer treatments afforded them. An adequate though unexpected cover of Cream's "White Room" is inserted, supposedly to represent the vampire's daytime hideout.

Nosferatu's unconventional hooks grow on you with time. The LP's most striking feature is its absence of beauty: Cornwell's ability to create beautiful riffs in unexpected places is nowhere to be found. This is not orthodox Stranglers fare, but Beefheart, Zappa or even Devo fans may feel at home. —Ann Ferrar

PHILIP RAMBOW
Shooting Gallery
EMI EMC3304

Out of many a failed pop group come singer/songwriters of reknown. Now, from the remains of British group the Winkies, comes Philip Rambow, raising the question: What makes all those groups fail, anyhow?

If Rambow's solo album is any indication, it's the inability to reconcile pop impulses with the ambitions of a lyric-oriented songwriter. Not that Rambow can't write good melodies—he does—but too often he saddles them with obtuse lyrics, then compounds the difficulty by garbling them.

Some songs work. "Victim," the story of Sid Vicious, is slow enough for Rambow to phrase properly without resorting to imitation Dylan or Joe Jackson inflections that are so annoying elsewhere. Instead of generalizing, as elsewhere, Rambow describes a real situation with concrete images. "Young Lust" crosses confidently into the pop arena, its classic teen orientation working as irony.

There are other goodies on the album, and the level of musicianship is consistently high, but the confusion of purpose weighs things down. What's the point of calling a song "The Rebel Kind," then setting it to a quasi-disco beat? Rambow may know, but he's not making it easy for us to figure out. —Jerry Milbauer

THE HUMAN LEAGUE
Reproduction
Virgin V2133

CABARET VOLTAIRE
"Mix-up"
Rough Trade ROUGH4

PERE UBU
New Picnic Time
Chrysalis CHR1248

The Human League does little to encourage belief that the quickly dropping price of synthesizers will usher in a new age of popular music. True, their first single ("Circus of Death") and EP (**The Dignity of Labour**) demonstrated an interest in uncommon uses of

Anastasia Pantsios/Kaleyediscope

Pere Ubu's David Thomas

electronics for pop music; David Bowie has even taken up their cause.

All for naught. **Reproduction** has the punch and vigor of a Kraftwerk album filtered through J. Arthur Rank: very pretty sanitized sound. Only in odd moments ("Empire State Human," "Morale...") are there unexpected moments or original ideas; these are mostly ruined by lyrics with the poetic and philosophical complexity of "Dehumanization is such a big word/It's been around since Richard the Third." **Reproduction** wallows in the post-Devo technological psyche, and unfortunately seems aimed at the electro-disco market opened up by such characters as Gary Numan and the Flying Lizards. Perhaps on their next album the Human League will put aside their infatuation with popularity and fulfill a little of their original promise.

At the other end of the spectrum, Cabaret Voltaire makes little concession to popular taste. Here persistent bass and percussion lines are swathed in ever-permutating electronic sounds, and sometimes swallowed up altogether. **"Mix-up"** has an obsessive strength—like Eno in his stranger moments but without his repetitiveness. The effects, mostly tape manipulations and synthesizer, often give the impression of being used for their own sake. The music, though fascinating, is rarely coherent. This results in an unsettling diffusiveness, making Cabaret Voltaire hard to take seriously.

Pere Ubu bridges the gap between these two groups. **New Picnic Time** shows them at the top of their form: They have solidified their worldview, and draw an ugly picture of a society careening toward catastrophe. The music varies from tough, basic rock'n'roll ("Small Was Fast") to thickly layered cacophonies and shrill juxtapositions of warbling voice and screeching guitars. Pere Ubu picks among the rotting corpse of culture; intimations of the past, warped beyond recognition, run throughout their songs, as on "You've Got to Have Heart"'s mutation into "All the Dogs Are Barking." By recycling material and relentlessly pushing beyond the edges of popular music, Pere Ubu has created the perfect form for their ideas. Unlike other disaster-oriented groups, Pere Ubu not only promises redemption, they point beyond it.

—Steven Grant

GARY NUMAN
The Pleasure Principle
Beggars Banquet BEGA10

It just goes to show you. Despite all odds, with several extremely clever and inventive groups plowing the field of weird rock electronics, the guy that makes it big is a pathetically pretentious bozo so far behind the times that people mistake him for an original. Gary Numan, formerly the Steve Harley of a loose outfit called Tubeway Army, is now a solo genius, with three albums and a monster career in England. Considering the quantity of really good music there, that nation should have flushed Numan down the toidy with all the other inconsequential junk that has blighted the rock world.

Just to make Numan's stardom more preposterous, his records are on a (formerly) small independent label. Beggars Banquet arose from a London record store 'way back in 1977; their stellar artistes included the Lurkers, the Louts and the Doll. Take that, CBS and WEA!

Gary Numan's formula (which hardly varies) consists of a plodding beat, a two-note bass guitar pattern, bored poetrash vocals and vehement synthesizer wails. It's an interesting noise in small doses (say, two songs), but on an LP the overwhelming tedium is unavoidable. That this jerk is fixated on Bowie for apparently all the wrong reasons (witness the black nail polish on his **Replicas** LP cover) sours the impression totally; even the more interesting tracks make you feel sorry that Numan hasn't yet evolved out of glitter and space junk.

The one or two songs on this album (and its predecessor) that I really like—"Cars" and

"Tracks"—only appealed to me after hearing them isolated on the radio. Without the image or pain of repetition, there's no reason not to enjoy Numan's unintentional high camp. Close your eyes, set your timer for five minute shutdown, and enjoy an out-of-date vision of the future. Then put on something au courant; the Knack, perhaps? —Ira Robbins

STATUS QUO
Whatever You Want
Vertigo 9102037

On their last album, Status Quo was overwhelmed by Pip Williams's production. This time Williams has cleaned up Quo's sound—too much so. There are no oddball tracks (odd for Quo, anyway) as have enlivened the last few albums, just your basic, pleasant whacka-whacka boogie. It sounds boring and pat as hell.

And the words—well, Quo has never been much more than sub-literate, and who cares? It's boogie anyway, but for some reason this album strikes me as having the dumbest lyrics I can remember hearing (even from them). There are the usual stoopit love songs plus more than the usual Quo-ta of "life as a rock 'n' roller" paeans, Frank Rossi's attempts to declare his pride at lasting 17 years in a band; Jack Lancaster goes him one better with "Who Asked You," a thinly veiled upbraiding of everyone who ever put Quo down. The album's closing track, though, raises doubts about the band's longevity; is "Old men in boy's clothes" self-descriptive? Unless they can once again inject raunchy, spirited fun into their music, Status Quo will turn into what they've hoped to avoid all along: boring old farts. —Jim Green

PUNISHMENT OF LUXURY
Laughing Academy
United Artists UAG30258

Punilux's (their abbreviation) half-hearted attempt to align itself with new-arty-wave doesn't go much further than a little rapid riffing every few cuts. The basic inspiration for these folks appears instead to be Roxy Music. Lacking Roxy's perverse grandeur and Bryan Ferry's ironic sincerity, though, Punishment of Luxury comes off as a crass, comic-book impersonation—Roxy via the Tubes.

This album's one minor coup—in questionable taste as it is—is "Obsession," an ambitiously Hitchcockian tune whose child-molesting narrator attempts a Ferryesque moan in a late chorus. The band asserts itself elsewhere with belligerent and derivative playing: a bit of clumsy pseudo-Manzanera soloing here, some pointless fifth-rate psychedelia there.

Punilux does have one substantive strength: their tunes have a good deal of staying power. No matter how much you dislike the band, it's hard to get their songs out of one's head. Maybe I should try Roxy Music.

—Mark Fleischmann

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RICHARD LLOYD/Continued from page 16

Godlis

had this little thing with the entire universe on it."

Not until the emergence of Hendrix, Pink Floyd, and the Grateful Dead did he get into guitar. Strangely enough, he never played in a band before Television. Lloyd says he practiced "by playing 20 hours a day to records, to the radio and to myself. I demanded it. I insisted. You can do anything you want if you insist. I wasn't a born guitar player. After six months some people go 'zip zip.'" Some Alvin Lee noises here. "They're the ones whose guitars end up in the closet 'cause it came too easily. I had to sweat to play guitar. I had to blister my fingers."

Terry Ork and Richard Hell worked at Cinemabilia, a New York bookstore. Hell, Verlaine, and Billy Ficca had a band called the Neon Boys. In 1973, Ork took his friend, Lloyd, who was trying to assemble a group, to Reno Sweeney's to see Verlaine solo on audition night. Lloyd "liked Tom's persona" and thus Television was born.

"During that first year Hell and Tom pretty much sang evenly," Lloyd recalls. "Then Tom started to take over." Unfortunately, Lloyd is momentarily stricken with amnesia when asked about Hell's departure from the band. "Uhhh...I don't really, uh, that really is"—short laugh—"dead sea scrolls. You'd have to talk to them because I really didn't have much to do with it. I was sad to see it happen because I was just watching these two guys chewing themselves up, getting to the point where they wanted to kill each other." Lloyd emits a weird chuckle. "I thought it was hilarious, but it was a real drag when Hell left the band. When Fred came in I couldn't deny that the music got twenty times better."

Why did Television finally break up in 1978?

"Why not?"

Great. Was he surprised?

"No. I was thinking of leaving for quite a while. I'm sure Tom was too. Nobody wanted to rock the boat, throw the meal ticket in the gutter. You've got to follow your guts, though. That's why when Tom said, 'I want to leave,' I said, 'You don't have to leave, let's just break it up.' I wanted to do my own stuff."

So it wasn't that Verlaine and Lloyd couldn't work together? "That's true too." As bad as with Hell and Verlaine? Lloyd sounds less certain. "Not as bad, but I don't think we could work together again. I am not going to let anybody be in control of my life the way he wanted to be in control of my life. At one point he was going to get a big cash advance from a European publisher; to do it he had to sign over all the members' publishing rights. Tom said, 'You gotta sign this paper or I'm never gonna write another song with you.' I said, 'Damn right you're never gonna write another song with me. I ain't gonna sign it, so you go to hell!" Lloyd acts out this tense situation very convincingly.

"Now he can do whatever he wants," Lloyd says, calming down. "I can do whatever I want. I enjoy life a lot more." He laughs again.

Fred Smith diplomatically downplays the subject of ill-feelings. "I don't think that was why the band broke up. It was a frustrating time for the group. We were having problems with acceptance. We were having problems with management. It wasn't an overnight thing. It was a blessing; everybody's doing much better now."

As for the current state of affairs between Lloyd and Verlaine, Smith says, "They don't speak to each other, but they didn't talk a lot before either. If we weren't working they didn't hang out together. We've all been in the same room together since the breakup. There's nothing heavy about it."

In retrospect, Lloyd sees two reasons for Television's "failure." First, no commercial new wave bands had come along to open the door for less accessible outfits. Second, Lloyd says, "Not to put Tom down, but he refuses to say anything outright. There's nothing for anybody's heart to hold." He places a fist over his heart as his voice becomes almost inaudible. "Tom's too elusive; he did himself in. Also, he wouldn't folow through with anything. He didn't want to tour, do TV or interviews. He's undaunted by the world, I suppose. Good luck to him. I hope Television's albums continue to sell; I'm proud to have been on them. But I've got my own work cut out for me."

Right now it's not clear exactly what Richard Lloyd's priorities are. His career could benefit from attention in any number of areas. He still doesn't have a manager.

"I figured I'd wait until the album came out and see what the response was, rather than sign with somebody and be sorry later. Even if my album goes into the grave, I'm still gonna be able to make a second one. I'm still looking at a career. Why should I sign away 25 percent just for somebody to give me what both Springsteen and Petty have gone through—heartache?

"I'm not gonna disappear. I'm gonna be around for a while. I don't want somebody who's gonna let me go down the drain. I can do that myself if I so desire."

Richard Lloyd is caught in a vicious circle, as are many other new artists in this era of tight record company money. Although Lloyd emphasizes he's "bored stiff" and wants to hit the road, proven stars have a much easier time getting on tour these days—however, it's easy to become a proven star if you go on tour.

A more immediate concern is the next LP, which he would probably start tomorrow if given a studio. It'll be in the same vein, he says, although with "more straight, hard, cruncho rock. I hate to compare it to anything. It'll be closer to the Knack album. [Where, in alphabetical record store browsers?—Ed.] The moment you put it on it'll go 'zoom.'

"You know what I've been doing lately?" he enthuses. "I bought a harmonica holder and I've been playing harmonica all day and night. And slide guitar—I used to play slide guitar before Television. All this stuff will turn up eventually. I couldn't have put it all on my first album: a goddam country blues with harmonica, a song with a string section, one that sounds like Barry Manilow, one that sounds like Ornette Coleman. People wouldn't know what to think. You gotta open up slowly. It's all there."

Richard Lloyd has already surpassed many people's expectations; as far as he's concerned he's only getting started. With good old-fashioned determination on his side, Richard may pull off even his most outlandish plans. It'll certainly be fun cheering him on. ■

HIT AND RUN

By Jon Young

TANYA TUCKER/Tear Me Apart
(MCA 5106)

Under the supervision of Mike "Midas" Chapman, Tucker once again juggles pop and country sensibilities, coming off like Brenda Lee on speed. Chapman's bristling production (notice the great drum sound) keeps the young chanteuse jumping, though the truth is she's still pretty countrified (as is her material). There's more kick here than you'd get from most bands with hipper credentials. Turn up and git down.

HONKERS & SCREAMERS
(Savoy 2234)
SAM PRICE & THE ROCK BAND/Rib Joint
(Savoy 2240)
THE VOCAL GROUP ALBUM
(Savoy 2241)

A good-guy award goes to Arista for continuing to make available wonderful R&B, largely recorded in the early to mid-'50s. **Honkers** is an orgy of baritone and tenor sax, truly deserving of the overused term "raunchy." Sam Price boogie-woogies those ivories real fine, while allowing King Curtis (tenor sax) and Mickey Baker (guitar) plenty of impressive solos. **The Vocal Group Album** traces the genre's evolution from swing era spin-off to the edge of rock'n'roll. There's too much on these two-record sets to describe fairly; just throw 'em on and dig the real thing.

CINDY BULLENS/Steal the Night
(Casablanca NBLP7185)

After a peachy debut, Bullens scores again with a hyperactive but thoroughly satisfying second effort. What impresses most is her versatility: old-fashioned torchers, Fleetwood Mac-type hummables (with extra adrenalin), and real live rockers all succeed effortlessly. For instant pop fun—and no tedious pretense—you can't do much better than this.

THE ONLY ONES/Special View
(Epic JE36199)

Drawn from their UK release, this hybrid works well enough to make you want to hear what was left out. Will quavering Peter Perrett croon himself into a prune? Wait and see.

FLEETWOOD MAC/Tusk
(Warner Bros. 2HS3350)

Christine McVie and Stevie Nicks stick to their familiar styles, which is fine if you're a fan already. Lindsey Buckingham surprises, audaciously tackling everything from Beach Boy dreaminess to modulated AM pop to genuine bashing. Don't overlook one of the best rhythm sections in rock.

FOGHAT/Boogie Motel
(Bearsville BHS6990)

Huh! Uh need some Boogie, got to hear Foghat. Love those whirly slide guitars, groove on hearin' Lonesome Dave belt out the blues (must be a cool dude, that guy). One beef: why'd they do a cornball romance song like "Third Time Lucky"? They shouldn't worry about airplay. Just spread the word: They're tough.

THE UNDERTONES
(Sire SRK6081)

The American version of the 'Tones winsome debut is identical to the jazzed-up UK re-release, which is to say it has two tracks ("Get Over You," "Teenage Kicks") more than the LP reviewed in TP 42.

GEORGE JONES/My Very Special Guests
(Epic JE35544)

Now we find out who the *real* Elvis Costello fans are. Those who buy this to hear El and George duet on "Stranger in the House" will probably feel that the novelty value compensates for the grating "harmonies."

Roman Szolkowski

THE BYRDS/The Byrds Play Dylan
(Columbia PC36293)

This compilation of old tracks might be a great idea if it didn't revive the misguided notion that the Byrds had no artistic life of their own apart from Dylan. For the collector there's the ghastly "Lay Lady Lay," complete with shrieking chorus; quite possibly the worst thing they ever did.

FINGERPRINTZ/The Very Dab
(Virgin International VI2119)

Fingerprintz are highly likable in the most personal way. They enjoy romping through Jimme (sic) O'Neill's tunes and would like to share their good vibes. If only they were more distinctive and had memorable melodies to bolster the new wave quirks of "Wet Job" and "Hey Mr. Smith." Good blokes, anyway.

DUNCAN BROWNE/Streets of Fire
(Sire SRK6080)

Though he's often more precious than impassioned, much of Browne's high romance works on its rarefied terms. Wistfully passive vocals make perfect sense on the ultra-produced "American Heartbeat" and "Things to Come"; "Nina Morena" is just goo. Without the trappings you might have just another touchy-feelie folkie. Thank goodness for trappings.

WRECKLESS ERIC/The Whole Wide World
(Stiff USE1)

A selection of Eric's high points, from his first and best ("Whole Wide World," "Semaphore Signals") to the present. Observe how gutter-rat vigor and plain ol' cuteness make up for inspiration.

ZZ TOP/Deguello
(Warner Bros. HS3361)

Wonder why it takes them years to make an album? ZZ Top's Texas version of good-time groovin' is slinkier and less overtly swingy than Lynyrd Skynyrd's Southernisms. They strut their stuff quite adequately, if quaintly ("Dust My Broom"?). Maybe they're just lazy.

KENNY AND THE KASUALS/Garage Kings
(Mark LP7000)

Kenny Daniel and his krew (sorry!) play what once would have made a nice American counterpart to pub rock: rowdy, sleazy blowout stuff designed solely for shaking floors. Amid this wealth of unrefined energy, the inclusion of the sensitive "Makes No Difference" is puzzling, but never mind. (Mark Records, Box 57093, Dallas, TX 75207.)

RICK DERRINGER/Guitars and Women
(Blue Sky JZ36092)

Surprisingly, producer Todd Rundgren doesn't overwhelm Derringer, though there's enough of his soothing sound to please those who want it. Todd's style meshes perfectly with Rick's "mature" taste for tuneful popsongs with vaguely philosophical overtones ("Hopeless Romantic," etc.). The obsessively rockin' punk of old remains a stronger presence, however. Two new and raucous Rick Nielsen songs are high points.

LITTLE FEAT/Down on the Farm
(Warner Bros. HS3345)

Even if Lowell George were still around, it seems unlikely that Feat could have continued much longer. George participates more than he has in many an album, yet there's little communal sense that made the band's best work truly hot. He sings well (though with less warmth than on his solo disc), and Payne and Barrere fly off in their own unrelated directions. All in all, a halfhearted farewell from a group that could once move mountains. A shame.

AEROSMITH/Night in the Ruts
(Columbia FC36050)

Co-producing with Gary Lyons (whose

credits include Foreigner), Aerosmith goes for a swampy, molten effect that no doubt is inspired by the Stones' murkier moments (e.g., **Exile**). Singer Steve Tyler isn't always equal to the task and often comes close to disappearing in the din. Not that the boys do badly overall—"Cheese Cake" is torrid—but **Night** seems like a sloppy mix more often than a coherent punch.

IAN HUNTER/Shades of Ian Hunter
(Columbia C236251)

Artist's former record label cashes in dept.: On two records, you get: familiar Mott tunes (some with pseudo-impressive tags like "US Single Version"), dull Mott B-sides and debatable choices from Hunter's solo career—including four from his not very good third LP. **Shades** has its moments ("England Rocks" is one); it ought to have more.

PERMANENT WAVE
(Epic NJE36136)

Except for two Only Ones cuts, this is not an attempt to hustle product in the style of A&M's **Propaganda**. Instead it's a morgue of circa-1977, mostly new wave, bands: the Cortinas, the Spikes, New Hearts and so on. The Diodes' "Red Rubber Ball" charms briefly. Mostly these tracks just sound dated.

BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS/Survival
(Island ILPS9542)

Considering the anger in Marley's lyrics, it's strange how resolutely low-key—bland, even—his performances and the tunes themselves are. Marley is so hypnotic that it's easy to be charmed even by **Survival**'s most mediocre moments. The subtle blast of "One Drop" indicates what's lacking elsewhere. Lively up yourself, Bob.

RONNIE HAWKINS/The Hawk
(United Artists UA-LA968-H)

Hawkins was a rock'n'roll wildman in the '50s and gave the Band their start. Time may not have worn the old boy down entirely but he certainly has mellowed. This mostly-oldies program is executed in an easygoing, downhome manner that would fit on modern country music stations. OK if you're not looking for serious r'n'r.

EMERSON, LAKE & PALMER/In Concert
(Atlantic SD19255)

Three cheers for unabashed garbage: ELP is now promising to disappear forever; what better sendoff than a memento from their silly and financially disastrous 1977 tour, complete with orchestra? "Peter Gunn" is especially amusing, if characteristically overdone. Emerson's "Piano Concerto No. 1" is exceptionally pretentious, even for ELP. Good riddance.

ALDA RESERVE/Love Goes On
(Sire SRK 6079)

This New York City quartet strikes a consistently artsy pose. They probably don't understand the Roxy Music idea that passion can be silly or tacky as well as grand. Brad Ellis's somber vocals more than do his dry songs justice. If that's what you want, help yourself.

CAMEL/I Can See Your House from Here
(Arista AB4254)

Camel doesn't flaunt instrumental prowess in a vulgar way, though their proficiency is obvious on calm Genesis-influenced instrumentals. Their vocalists could easily engage in classy anguish *a la* Pink Floyd, but here too restraint is the rule. So you get a "progressive" band that's settled into a very safe rut. They might as well be playing 21st-century cocktail lounge music for all the chances they're taking.

HORSLIPS/Short Stories/Tall Tales
(Mercury SRM 1-3809)

The lead guitars often verge on Thin Lizzy fever. The tunes come from grass-roots American and stereotyped Brit-pop sources. The boys sing colorlessly. **Short Stories**, though diverting, is so nondescript it's creepy. Help.

ELTON JOHN/Victim of Love
(MCA 5104)

No two ways about it, this is awful. Elton has put himself entirely in the hands of producer Pete Bellotte, who furnishes incredibly dull songs and maddeningly monotonous disco rhythms. Occasionally Elt sings like something's happening, with little effect. And that version of "Johnny B. Goode" is the pits. What's the point?

KIM FOWLEY/Snake Document Masquerade (1980 to 1989)
(Antilles AN7075)

Fowley certainly tries hard, however much of a poseur he may be. This time he offers a futuristic counterpart to **Cabaret**, with a song for each year of the '80s. His concerns—nuclear disaster, space creatures and (of course) sex—are definitely not brought to life by pretentious nonsinging, thin music and lots of horrible, contrived poetry. This isn't even eccentric, it's just insulting. Gong! ■

GREEN CIRCLES

By Jim Green

Cool, Daddy-O!

The Distractions: "Time Goes By So Slow" b/w "Pillow Fight"—Factory (UK) FAC12. This is one of my very favorites, received too late for consideration in the '79 singles overview last ish. The Distractions' melancholy doesn't bog down under its own weight. Result? Danceable heartaches. The lead singer sounds like a more somber and introspective version of Billy Idol (minus the arrogance). Grows on ya but good! The Distractions have just signed to Island UK; see this space next issue.

The Jags: "Back of My Hand" b/w "Double Vision"—Island (UK) WIP6501. A grabber of a single, from the opening octave-hopping synth/bass and drum smacks straight through the instant classic chorus. Problem: It sounds amazingly like Elvis Costello. (Imagine a teen love ditty on **Armed Forces**.) Production is by John Astley and Phil Chapman, plus "additional production" by the Buggles. The Jags are said to hate the way this came out, but the flip (which doesn't sound like Costello) is just plain faceless.

The Wham-Bam Brigade

The Damned: "Smash It Up" b/w "Burglar"—Chiswick (UK) CHIS116. Bravo, lads! Lots of characteristic Damned aggro, but outfitted with a kicker of a hook, splendid Sensible guitar and suitably cheesy organ such as I've never heard from this lot before—and let's not forget Vanian's better-than-ever singing (hitting the notes, y'know, and sounding real cool!). Rat Chris Scabies Miller tries singing "Burglar," the story of a truly narsty bloke narrated in a snide Cockney accent. Ain't it grand to be able to get excited about a Damned single again?

Stiff Little Fingers: "Straw Dogs" b/w "You Can't Say Crap on the Radio"—Chrysalis (UK) CHS2368. The A is a tuff-stuff rocker, as usual, but the lyrics (about mercenary soldiers) are too thin to support the melodrama they try to create. The flip works better; not an original inspiration, but well done (and they break into "Crap-ital Radio" at the end). But lissen, Jake, stop gargling with hydrochloric acid.

The Mekons: "Work All Week" b/w "Unknown Wrecks"—Virgin (UK) VS300. Quite disappointing. Their last single ("Where Were You?") was a gripping two-sider; but here they're shallow and dull (where they used to be stark and moody), singing/playing slightly off key to boot. They may have more "significant" themes to deal with (the B-side?) but words are hard to make out. Everybody has a bad outing once in a while, right?

AD 1984: "The Russians Are Coming!" b/w "New Moon Falling"—Voyage (UK) VOY005. A Strangleresque A-side about what might happen if we don't stop the arms race. Good vocals and a wonderful ensemble sound, but the lyrics gotta get better—and what is this about having not only a regular bassist but a lead bassist too? Wah-wah bass solos are *not* hip, guys. But I'm intrigued enough to want to hear more from AD 1984.

Mod Growing Pains

Secret Affair: "Let Your Heart Dance" b/w "Sorry, Wrong Number"—I-Spy (UK) SEE3; Squire: "Walking Down the King's Road" b/w "It's a Mod, Mod World"—I-Spy (UK) SEE2; Squire: "The Face of Youth Today" b/w "I Know a Girl"—I-Spy (Uk) SEE4; The Purple Hearts: "Frustration" b/w "Extraordinary Sensations"—Fiction (UK) FICS007. This batch of neo-Mod singles reveals heartening maturation. These songs were probably penned months ago—"Heart" and "King's Road" both appeared on the **Mods Mayday** sampler LP—but the arrangements show better suss as to how to put songs across; also, but for the latter two tunes, the material simply sounds more solid than these three bands' previously released stuff. Chris Parry (Jam, Cure, etc.) does a fairly straightforward production job on the Hearts, but the Affair's Ian Page (vocals) and Dave Cairns (guitar) try too hard in spots—although their adventurous spirit (e.g. sax and trumpet work) should be encouraged. All too often the bands wear their Mod-ness on their sleeves, making for silly and/or overly self-conscious lyrics and derivative music. The Hearts weigh down a good song ("Sensations") with gratuitous Who-isms; Squire squanders their material on superannuated styles—they even try Merseybeat, puzzlingly enough. There is a fine A-side out of all this: "King's Road" overcomes forced lyrical nostalgia via apt production (Page and Cairns, who did both Squire 45s too) which does ample justice to this high tone fingersnap shuffle. There's hope yet for the neo-Mods; now if only they'd drop the pose!

AU Grads

Pointed Sticks: "Out of Luck" b/w "What Do You Want Me to Do" & "Somebody's Mom"—Stiff (UK) BUY59. Melodies that (pardon) stick to your ribs, driven by speed-strum guitar and bass (let's not forget the keyboards) and sung by a wunnaful set of pipes—what more could you ask for? These sides were originally pressed by the Vancouver quintet itself (see *America Underground*, TP 43 and this issue too), but Brinsley Schwarz went to their home turf and oversaw their re-recording, enhancing them in the process. "What Do You Want Me to Do?," in particular, profits from added sonic depth and presence. Hot stuff! The best Canadian new wave band yet?

Disco for People Who Hate Disco

The Men: "I Don't Depend on You" b/w "Cruel"—Virgin (UK) VS269; Lori & the Chameleons: "Touch" b/w "Love Me on the Ganges"—Zoo! (UK) CAGE006; Mi-Sex: "Computer Games" b/w "Wot Do You Want"—CBS (Australia) BA222463; New Musik: "Straight Lines" b/w "On Islands"—GTO (UK) GT255. Yup, folks, I ain't kiddin'. Raymond Chandler

once said, "Everything written with vitality expresses that vitality." That very little disco has any sort of vitality (at least vitality that I and probably most of you can relate to) doesn't mean there's none at all. Four usually non-disco artists use disco elements, namely four-to-the-bar beat and electronic keyboard and bass instrumentation. All avoid the miasma of vocal, orchestral or other instrumental overkill that most non-disco-ites find distasteful, opting for generally sparse and spacy sounds. The Men's single is the most conventionally disco of the four, yet even it has odd synthesizer statements to offset the vocal melody, stark drumbeat and muscular bass line. (It's also the only one with a "disco" flip, its B-side being a dub version of the A.) "Touch" is a romantic mood piece with Oriental overtones, narrated (not sung) by the veddy English "Lori" (a secretary at Zoo, the Liverpool new wave label that gave us Teardrop Explodes and Echo & the Bunnymen); I find its tinkly keyboard and delicate vocal utterly charming. Mi-Sex, from Australia, has grafted an energetic electronic disco-beat onto a song that could have been by Ultravox! (The group's name is inspired by Ultravox's first single.) "Computer Games" features a languorous synth theme stated at half speed; whether you like it or not may depend on your fondness for the vocalist's sneering mannerisms rather than the beat. New Musik, allegedly a studio brainchild of producer/composer Tony Mansfield, is the most successful of this quartet, less for its relative downplaying of the disco pulse than for its fine, Peter Gabrielesque singer and hook-filled music. "Touch" was picked up by Sire in the UK, and they'll soon put it out here; "Computer Games" and "Straight Lines" were picked up by CBS for imminent US release.

Public Image Ltd.: "Memories" b/w "Another"—Virgin (UK) VS299. I tried real hard to "get into the vibe, man" but this still sounds like disco for people who hate everything and everybody. More of John Lydon's doomy whine over the strains (and I mean *strains*) of weirdo guitar and a loping disco beat. I guess if you have something to say but can't write a melody for it, you just cry your words over an "impressionistic" musical backdrop. Close-minded? Me? Nope, but I have a headache—from this. NEXT.

Thank God It's Only Once a Year

Paul McCartney: "Wonderful Christmastime" b/w "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reggae"—Columbia 1-11162. Weird but soppy. Macca croons a fluffy toon to the accompaniment of gobs o' gurgling synthesizers for 3:48. Ding dong is right, Paul. To call the flip a reggaefication of the old holiday chestnut is less accurate than saying it's a lurching little adventure in electronic goop that insults a kiddie classic.

Kenny Laguna: "Home for Christmas" b/w "Carianne and Meryl's Song"—Sire SRE49142. Bland sentiments couched in sheet metal guitar and bass somehow don't seem quite at home, yet I detect no irony in Laguna's voice or lyrics. *Ergo* he's serious, QED he's a turkey. Heck, and I didn't even think his production work (Bethnal, Advertising) was all that bad. To answer the question Laguna poses at the end of the Muzak instrumental on the back, yep, it sure *is* a B-side. ■

"All Previous Ads Void."

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AMERICA UNDERGROUND

Some Punks

By Jim Green

Pointed Sticks: "The Real Thing" b/w "Out of Luck"—Quintessence QS103. "Out of Luck" is in the snappy, high-speed mold of the Sticks' last 45 (see *Green Circles* this issue for a review of those three tracks re-cut for Stiff). "The Real Thing" is a mid-tempo burner—romantic angst covered with sheets of clanging guitar chords and laced with Manzarek-type organ. So when do we get an album of this stuff? (Pant, pant.) (Quintessence Records, 1869 W. 4th Ave., Vancouver, BC, CANADA.)

The Ohms: "Chain Letter" b/w "Teenage Alcoholic"—Northside NS703. The recording lacks sonic depth, but that's about all that separates this disc from the higher-priced spread. There's no anal obsession with squeaky-clean sound, but enough rawness to give the tracks some bite. If you have fond memories of Pezband live, or pre-record deal tapes of 20/20 or Shoes, this is for you (and me!). ($2 from Ramjet Enterprises, 45 Stephenson Terrace, Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510.)

Billy Hancock: "I Can't Be Satisfied" b/w "Rootie Tootie"—Ripsaw 211; Tex Rubinowitz: "Bad Boy" b/w "Feelin' Right Tonight"—Ripsaw 212. If you haven't heard about these by now, get on the stick—and I mean pronto, Tonto, especially if you like rockabilly. All too often contemporary practitioners of the art are more caught up in exaggerated mannerisms than the material they use them on. Not so here, although Hancock comes perilously close to being an (early) Elvis imitator. Muddy Waters's "I Can't Be Satisfied" is an especially inspired choice of material. Rubinowitz waltzes through Marty Wilde's number on the front, then shows how bad (and I mean bitchin'!) he can be with his own tune on the back. Is this all just a pose? Maybe, but when Rubinowitz sings, "I'm feelin' right tonight, so get outta my way," you bet yer buns I'm ready to give 'im elbow room. Hot dog! ($2 for Billy, $2.50 for Tex, both from Ripsaw Records, 121 N. 4th, Easton, PA 18042.)

The Mumbles: "Poly Vinyl" b/w "Collision"—Plurex 006. This single is a vast improvement over the EP these guys released as Permanent Wave (TP 34); it's tight, crisp and coherent both in sound and performance. "Poly" is a tongue-in-cheek tribute to a record-lover's fantasy girl ("My needle skips when she gets close to me"), given backbone by majestic guitars and a confident, striding rhythm section. The chorus, for all of its silliness (chimes, yet!), has one of the memorable hooks in this column's batch. "Collision" isn't bad either, an artier track about a tragic romance. ($2.25 from the Mumbles, 1547 32nd Street, Sacramento, CA 95816.)

Bob Riley & the All-Pro Shakers: "Cabin Fever" b/w "I'm a Snow Plow, Baby"—Rebob R4645. Released a while ago, but as appropriate as ever, this is a first-rate novelty record (no snow job) about what happens when the blizzards come. Reverb guitar and soap opera organ set the mood for virile-voiced Riley (he's not only worked with a comedy troupe, but done beer commercials too!). Could the vocal reinforcement be the Sons of the Pioneers? (Well, almost.) On the back is one man's solution to ennui during the White Xmas that won't go away. ($2 from Rebob Records, Box 140, 2520 N. Lincoln, Chicago, IL 60614.)

The Humans: "I Live in the City" & "Earthlings" b/w "Electric Bodies" & "Play"—Beat HIT1234. Intriguing but not quite satisfying, this is a mixture of early-'70s hard rock and post-**Diamond Dogs** weirdness. None of the songs really cut it, save possibly the lead-off track (the most direct of the four). Still, the Humans show signs of possibly worthy future development. (Beat Records, PO Box 336, Ben Lomond, CA 95005.)

Post-Punk Fallout

All the records below exist because punk rock, in its several manifestations, blossomed anew in 1976-1977. It took awhile to penetrate the more stolid sections of America (e.g. Houston, Syracuse, Oshkosh!), and even now is struggling to maintain its existence—while the scope of most of its original purveyors has widened and matured. That punk is "old" doesn't mean it's no longer valid, but most of the discs at hand are unshaped by distinct musical personalities. These are tentative first steps, maybe even put-ons, some band's five minutes of fame. But they all have bits and pieces worth commending (neat guitar solos, for example).

The **Pagans** make punk rock with the frenzy of true believers. It's their saving grace; "Not Now, No Way" b/w "I Juvenile" (Drome DR5, produced by Pere Ubu's David Thomas) and "Dead End America" b/w "Little Black Egg" (Drome DR7) are memorable only for their well-honed buzzsaw attack. (Drome Records, 11800 Detroit, Cleveland, OH 44107; the Pagans' first single, "Street Where Nobody Lives," is better and probably still available.) The same could be said for the **Plastic Idols** ("IUD" b/w "Sophistication," TW-23); they couldn't survive in reactionary Houston without a pretty tough, committed stance. At least they throw in a staggered rhythm to emphasize their "different" choice of subject matter. (Vision Records, 1613 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77006.) **Rise** adds synthesizer doodlings to the formula and veers a tad closer to hard-rock; if you can still appreciate punky lewdness, maybe "Twitch City" (b/w "Visions," Mystic DR-45-79) is up your alley. ($2.25 from Azra Management, PO Box 411, Maywood, CA 90270.) The **Skunks'** "Can't Get Loose" b/w "Earthquake Shake" (Skunks SR-1) is even more hard-rock oriented —unimaginative but (by virtue of wild guitar) fairly dynamic, especially the B-side. (George Hammerlein, 1201 S. Congress, No. 420, Austin, TX 78704.) The **Tyros'** "Parasites" b/w "Cold Shot" (Widget WGT-001) is lyrically more cogent (viz. the topside's putdown of mindless rock star idolizers), rocks almost as hard as the Skunks and features some hot licks. (Widget Records, PO Box 395, Pacific Grove, CA 93950.)

Punk can be hard to take when there's not enough firepower to back up the sneer. The honcho-macho imagery conjured up by a name like **Lust** ("MIA" b/w "Blitzkrieg," Criminal NR-10071) isn't upheld by the A-side's trite "back to rock'n'roll" lyrics. The band, which sounds lost somewhere between recent Ted Nugent and not-so-recent Stooges, almost musters the sheer force to make the lyrics irrelevant on the flip. (Steve Dedow, 7411 Oregon St., Oshkosh, WI 54901.) The **Brain Police's** "Kind of a Drag" is self-descriptive; "I Let Jenny (Ride)" is not only more concise but almost skirts punk's "me Tarzan" male chauvinism. Worth another hearing

(with better material, I hope.) (Legal Records, 197 Buffalo St., Battle Creek, MI 49017.)

New York based **LOK** may have gotten their record pressed in England (whence hails lead singer A.A. Pritchard), but despite fair-to-middling vocals and ex-Electric Chair Eliot Michaels on guitar, two pointless cover versions (the Stooges' "No Fun" and a rough-treatment of the Stones' "Tell Me") are grounds for dismissal. One original, "Starlet Love," shows a modicum of songwriting suss (Fetish FET 1). The **Brains**, allegedly one of Atlanta's best, don't cut it on "Quick with Your Lip." All the more reason to give an extra listen to their A-side, "Money Changes Everything," a nice change of pace (literally slower than almost everything else in this section) and approach: lots of organ graces a half-decent melody.

At least two upstate New York bands have a sense of humor. The **Vores** record slightly whacked-out variations on classic (mid-'60s) American punk; they nearly make up in spirit what the song lacks in catchiness (and the sound in clarity). ("Love Canal" & "Get Outta My Way" b/w "Amateur Surgeon" & "So Petite," BOP3C, Family Only Records, PO Box 32, Buffalo, NY 14222.) Talking about garage bands, the **Penetrators** sound prototypical but for their name, with perhaps a touch of Dictators silliness (though not wit) on the side. Only two guys did "Gotta Have Her" b/w "Baby, Dontcha Tell Me" (Fred FCX 10), and they gotta win a prize for the least likely looking punks of the bunch: a beard, a beer-belly, bellbottoms. Just goes to show, you can't judge a punk rock 45 by its sleeve. (Write the Penetrators at PO Box 94, Dewitt, NY 13214.) ■

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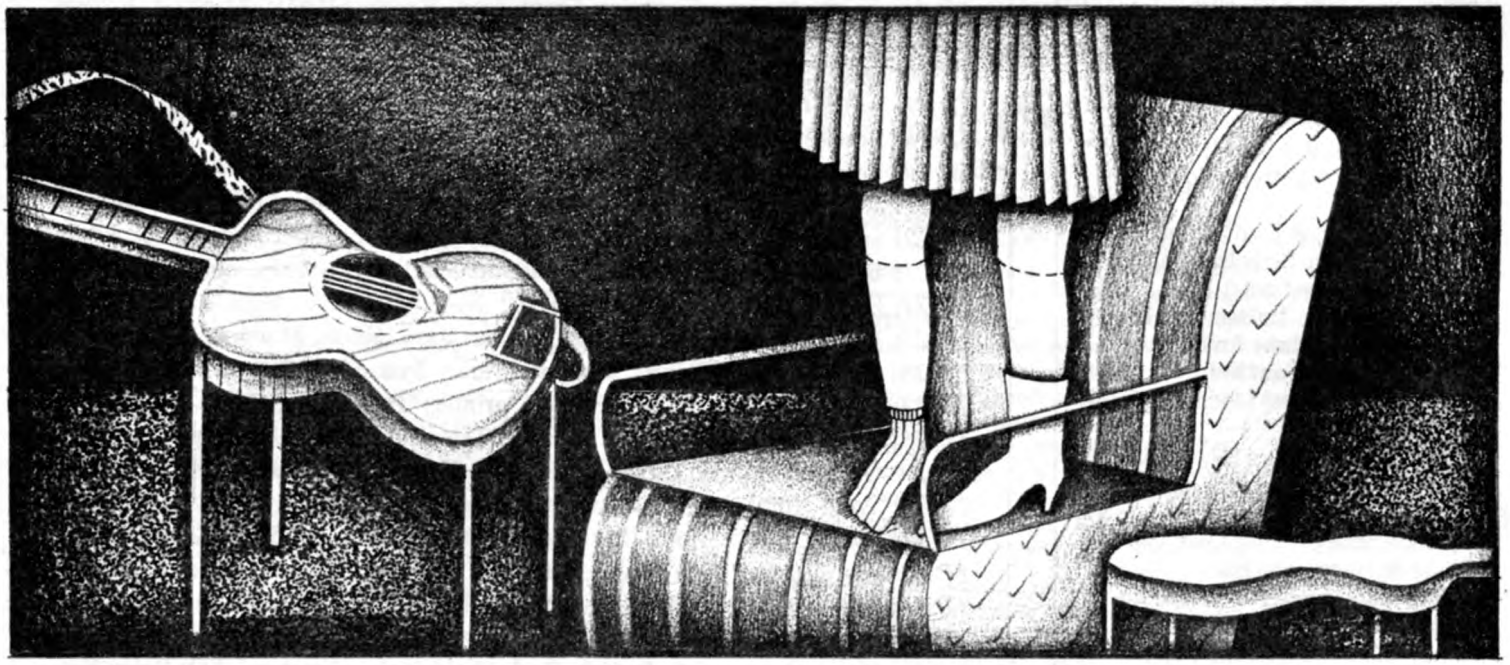

Seth Joben

By Robert Payes

If you can't make noise, make music. Call it avant-garde, free improvisation, outside music, whatever—when a musician throws the rules out the window and plays for pure sound, things start flying (usually beer bottles from the audience). Once the domain of outward-bound jazz players (Coltrane, Cecil Taylor *et al.*) or experimental composers (LaMonte Young), free music has made inroads into pop music in the last decade. James Chance can generate as much saxophone noise as Sam Rivers on a good night. Unquestionably, much patience and a thoroughly rewired pair of ears are required for maximum enjoyment.

Firth of Frith

Back in the progressive rock days of Virgin Records (post-**Tubular Bells**, pre-Sex Pistols), Henry Cow made as much noise as Sun Ra's Arkestra with only a fraction of the players. One of Cow's main movers was guitarist Fred Frith, whose axework combined the aleatory of fellow Englishman Derek Bailey with John Cage's mechanical strategies (attaching alligator clips to strings, using extra pickups and other hardware). Frith stood out, however, due to an unerring melodic sense, showcased on his **Guitar Solos** LP. With no accompaniment or overdubs—just tape looping—Frith recorded spontaneous tunes that went from fractured meter to utter chaos and back, right on the beat. Even on the dissonant, feedback-riddled "No Birds" (a 12-minute composition in which he played two guitars simultaneously), Frith never lost sight of where the music was going.

Thecond and Third of Frith

Guitar Solos was followed by **Guitar Solos 2.** This time, Frith shared the spotlight with three other avant-garde guitarists: Bailey, Hans Reichal and G. F. Fitzgerald. Frith stood out with his unmistakable sound and technique. (Some Frith out-takes from this session wound up on a sampler album from Random Radar Records; this reviewer considers those out-takes more memorable than what was included on **Solos 2.**) But there were more than a few experimental guitarists out there, so Frith took it upon himself to organize and present these fellow radicals. The result, **Guitar Solos 3** (Red 008), exhibits Frith and seven other players from North America, Europe and Japan in contexts light-years removed from standard guitar sounds.

Unfortunately, none of the music is very good. Frith's three pieces are disjointed, without the melodic skill or sense of adventurous fun of his earlier work. The other contributions (by Eugene Chadbourne, Henry Kaiser and Chip Handy, to name a few) sound like what Frith did better on the first **Solos**. I can't honestly recommend this record—like some avant-garde productions, it apparently wasn't made with an audience in mind—but rather advise you to search out the first two **Solos** albums and the Random Radar anthology for a better idea of outside guitar music's potential.

LAFM (sic)

A decidedly less academic approach is displayed on two records from a loose collection of West Coast sonic experimenters known as the Los Angeles Free Music Society. Fans of the Residents (whose own noise is far too structured to be authentic free music) may be aware of that band's contribution ("Whoopy Snorp") to a LAFMS collection, **Blorp-Essette**. More representative of the LAFMS are le Forte Four (L-44 for short), a quartet who'll use *any* noise source in their music, and the Doo-Dooettes, who take more of an art-house stance. Both bands are on **LA Free Music Society Live at the Brand** (LAFMS 003/4). Le Forte Four is additionally showcased on **Le Forte Force** (LAFMS 001-B1), which purports to be a bootleg edition of their **Bikini Tennis Shoes** album. Whatever the LAFMS is, financially well-off it ain't. Cover artwork on both records consists of mimeos physically pasted on blank white jackets; record labels are thoroughly devoid of track information.

L-44's tracks aren't so much music or even compositional noise as much as aural documents of collegiate hijinks. They're not above using such diverse elements as shorted-out guitar cord static, toy instruments, real pots and pans (and you thought the Flying Lizards had a monopoly), soundtracks from HEW information films and even "The Ballad of John and Yoko" (the actual record) rhythmically intercut with synthesizer drones. A separate track sheet provides copious information on sound ingredients, place of recording, etc. If you have as much fun listening to L-44 as they had laying down this stuff, you can't help but come out ahead.

The less said about the Doo-Dooettes, the better; their half of **Live at the Brand** is just as amateurish as L-44 but only a quarter as much fun.

(Pertinent Addresses Dept.: If you want to get in touch with Fred Frith for any information—including how to release your own music outside normal channels—you can contact him at 51 Rossiter Road, London SW12. Inquiries to the LAFMS can be directed to 35 South Raymond #423, Pasadena, CA 91105.) ■

MEDIA EYE

Books, Some Even with Words

By Scott Isler

Granted that rock music has always opted for the visceral over the verbal, there still seem to be more non-literary books on the subject out now than ever before. Publishers apparently worked exhaustive rock histories out of their systems around 1970, although the music has hardly been standing still since then. This current batch of soft-covers for the most part concentrates on rock's visuals—a symptom of declining reading skills?

Right Here on Our Stage

The most noticeable exponent of this genre—because the flashiest—is Laurie Lewis's **The Concerts** (Paper Tiger/A&W Visual Library, New York). This ungainly (12" square) work is simply a collection of color on-stage photos taken in Britain between 1974 and '78 (there's no information on exact dates and locations). The cover montage of Mick Jagger fronting Pink Floyd doesn't promise much, but inside is a healthy selection from the Golden Age of New Wave—Generation X, Slits, Television, the Stiff crowd—as well as the usual big names and a few oddities (Hawkwind, Hatfield and the North). Once past Robert Christgau's acerbic benediction, there's no bothersome text to interrupt the parade of images. Apart from an occasional multiple-exposure sequence, these are documentary shots whose impact depends more on the observer's knowledge and sympathy than any inherent drama. For all the care lavished on this book's production—slick paper and glossy inks make the wearing of gloves almost mandatory—it's too bad many of these pictures suffer from graininess and/or muddy color imbalance (unavoidable at rock concerts?). Lewis's British base at least yields a more heterogenous view than a similarly-budgeted American venture might have attempted.

$8.95 Memories of a Free Festival

Woodstock Festival Remembered (Ballantine Books, New York) virtually drips nostalgia from every page. Most of its 127 9x12" pages are covered with on-site color photos taken before, during and after the event that ended the '60s in more ways than one. Besides the pictures, there's a chronological essay by Michael Lang, one of the festival's organizers. He was the hippie (remember?) and, judging by his lingo, still is: "It wasn't that I didn't want everyone to make money; I just wanted to get it on." A plethora of names sometimes makes the history read like a legal brief; the haggling over permits, money and deals with contractors is interesting, though, as are the pecuniary star wars with those sons o' fun, the Grateful Dead and the Who. This book is obviously being pushed for its photographs, but Lang's recollections may be more important for future historians than the superficial images. (Can we assume factual accuracy? The Jefferson Airplane went on close to six a.m., not nine or ten as Lang states.) Jean Young's more detached afterword explains the euphoria and canonizes Lang. For objectivity's sake it might be helpful to contact the other principals involved. But enough with the naked hippies, please.

Hard-Core Stuff

Jim "Warren" Peace's **Peace Record Guide Volume Three** (Peace Press, Kalamazoo, MI) is another attempt at "a comprehensive reference book documenting collectible discs." While his goal is beyond human endeavor, Peace has gone further than most (within self-imposed limitations). The guide focuses on '60s and '70s rock LPs, EPs and bootlegs, although there's a smattering of show, soundtrack, jazz and spoken word LPs. The Beatles, Yardbirds and Jimi Hendrix are heavy favorites; abundant photos—EP/LP covers and obscure publicity shots swiped from other publications—accompanying all listings. Those listings, in reduced typewriter type, are mostly alphabetical by artist, then vaguely alphabetical by title. The abbreviations and shorthand used should be easy to figure out, as no explanation is given. The book's inclusiveness is bounded by what Peace considers collectible. Thus there are pages of pirate Beatles recordings, most of them bootlegs of other bootlegs; Peace patiently rates qualitative sound differences and other distinguishing traits. All records have market values (source not indicated). In addition to record listings there's a directory of collectors and dealers, sketches on Jimmy Page and Gibson guitars, and assorted ephemera (such as an Angela Davis wanted poster). This is, as they say, raw information and useful as such.

Covering Covers, Pt. 16

Of course, this wouldn't be a rock book review column without an album cover tome. This time it's **The Illustrated History of Rock Album Art** (Octopus, London; distributed by Mayflower, New York). The nominal authors are Angie Errigo and Steve Leaning, but the lengthy captions (about half the book's text) are parceled out to a host of British writers, among them Roy Carr, Mick Farren and Charles Shaar Murray.

The good news is that we finally have a work on this popular subject that analyzes the why of record cover design. Despite the title, this is not so much a history—although there is an intelligent run-down of trends through the early '60s—as an examination of styles and components that make LP covers salable. The book's clear-cut thesis is that album art evolved from straight IDs and image-mongering (still the cornerstone of the genre) to more oblique strategies. For once the copious cover reproductions—normally the *raison d'etre* in works of this sort—illustrate the text instead of challenging it to make sense. Errigo brings a refreshing feminist perspective to bear on sexist covers, and the book contains some thought-provoking parallels (e.g. **Generation X** and **With the Beatles**, or the Sex Pistols **Bollocks** and '50s jazz album design).

Occasionally designers or photographers go uncredited even when their names appear on the album art. Nor is the book free from error: The Small Faces' **Ogden's Nut Gone Flake** was released in the US; more embarrassingly, the rear fin of a '59 Cadillac protruding from the sand on Neil Young's **On the Beach** is hardly a "crashed fairground rocket." It's also lamentable that the book's scope doesn't take in the mini-renaissance of 45 picture sleeves (especially the Stiff/Radar work of Barney Bubbles). Hipgnosis' *Walk Away Renee* may include more behind-the-scenes information, but *The Illustrated History of Rock Album Art* is the best explanation so far of why covers look the way they do.

Present at Creation

We need another book of Elvis Presley photos as much as we need another album cover collection. But Alfred Wertheimer's **Elvis '56: In the Beginning** (Collier Books, New York) is an exception. Wertheimer was a free-lance photographer occasionally working for RCA when he was tapped to cover Presley for the label. The book recreates the entire assignment, from first meeting (in New York, for a Dorsey Brothers TV show) to last (a Memphis concert four months later). In between are episodes like Presley's humiliating appearance on Steve Allen's TV show, and the recording session that produced "Hound Dog."

Wertheimer may not have realized at the time that his subject was changing the course of pop history, but he knew something was up. His matter-of-fact narrative (written with Gregory Martinello) is crammed with detail, as if no facet of Presley's life were irrelevant to his musical fireworks—and during this crucial period none were. The text emphasizes cultural clashes (north vs. south) and Presley's behavior in both milieus. Col. Tom Parker, Presley's manager, is unflatteringly portrayed as a worldly-wise hustler who maintains the singer in a state of divine innocence.

Innocence (though not the sexual kind) is what comes through most in Wertheimer's remarkably candid photographs. His Elvis Presley died long before the bloated self-parody was murdered by its own mythology. *Elvis '56* does more than illustrate the turning point in the career of one individual, important as he is; its intimate glimpses (soon banished forever by Parker) echo our own maturation, the abandonment of youth for the questionable gains of experience. ■

HOT SPOTS

Wreckless Eric

"Wreckless Eric is dead!" came a shout from the crowd.

Wreckless was far from dead, just sober. The first thing one noticed about his performances at Hurrah November 29/30 was that he didn't seem drunk at all. The stumbling, touching Eric of last year's Be Stiff tour had become a coherent and well rehearsed singer. His band (Dave Gosling and Walter Hacon, guitars; John Brown, bass; Dave Otway, drums) was good without drawing attention to themselves.

Not that the excitement was gone. Eric threw himself around the stage with total abandon, tossed the mike stand about, fell into monitors and bounced off the floor with seemingly no concern for life and limb. The only problem was that his songs and vinyl persona were mauled in the process. The audience could care less about subtlety, though, and Eric brought down the house both nights. A good punch 'em up show, even if it lacked the spark and unpredictability of last time around.

Tim Sommer

Sham 69

"I'm workin' my bollocks off," Jimmy Pursey shouted to the crowd packing New York's Hurrah. He was telling us the truth.

Whatever Sham 69's flaws—and on records they're a dime a dozen—it's easy to see why this band inspires undying adulation from the working class kids who constitute its huge English following. The Sex Pistols have lost their rottenness and viciousness, and linger on more as an idea than an actual working band; the Clash evolve away from the punk roots of their amazing debut LP; but Sham 69 carries on the legacy of '77. Their songs amount to little more than slogans—football cheers, if you like—delivered with energetic conviction. They combine straight ahead three-chord music with incredibly naive lyrics and still provide a hell of a good time.

What it comes down to, really, is Pursey. He was against coming over to the States for this short tour (two dates apiece in NY and LA), but still gave his all. He bounced constantly like a boxing kangaroo, established a rapport with the crowd, and proved himself a masterful frontman and better shouter than we had any reason to expect.

By show's end we'd seen pretty much the best of Sham, with an emphasis on their latest LP, **Hersham Boys**. Pursey was so into the proceedings, though, that he said he would keep coming back for encores as long as people kept clapping. So we got "White Riot" and reprises of "If the Kids Are United" (with Stiv Bators joining on guitar) and "Borstal Breakout." Pursey dove into the crowd and ended up dancing with about a dozen kids who'd joined the band on stage.

Rumors are that the band will break up soon; I'm glad they made it to the US. The show was a pleasant surprise.

Dave Schulps

Horslips

Barry Devlin's smiling Irish eyes.

Horslips emphasize the Irish musical tradition, but their basic rock instincts are never far behind. These elements joyously combined in a 90-minute set at New York's Bottom Line.

The group's music is highly structured, at times painstakingly arranged, and still energetic. Horslips count on familiar jigs and reels to get an audience to its feet, yet they don't always take the easy route; an impressive display of instrumental virtuousity also works. "The Man Who Built America" and "Sure the Boy was Green" featured concise but effective flute and tin whistle from Jim Lockhart. Elsewhere Johnny Fean's vocals, fiery guitar and mandolin sparked proceedings.

The band's fresh and vital performance belies their many years together with no personnel changes. Perhaps it's time they paved the way for another successful musical "trend" from the past to make its comeback.

Eric Chappe

Hi there Collectors!

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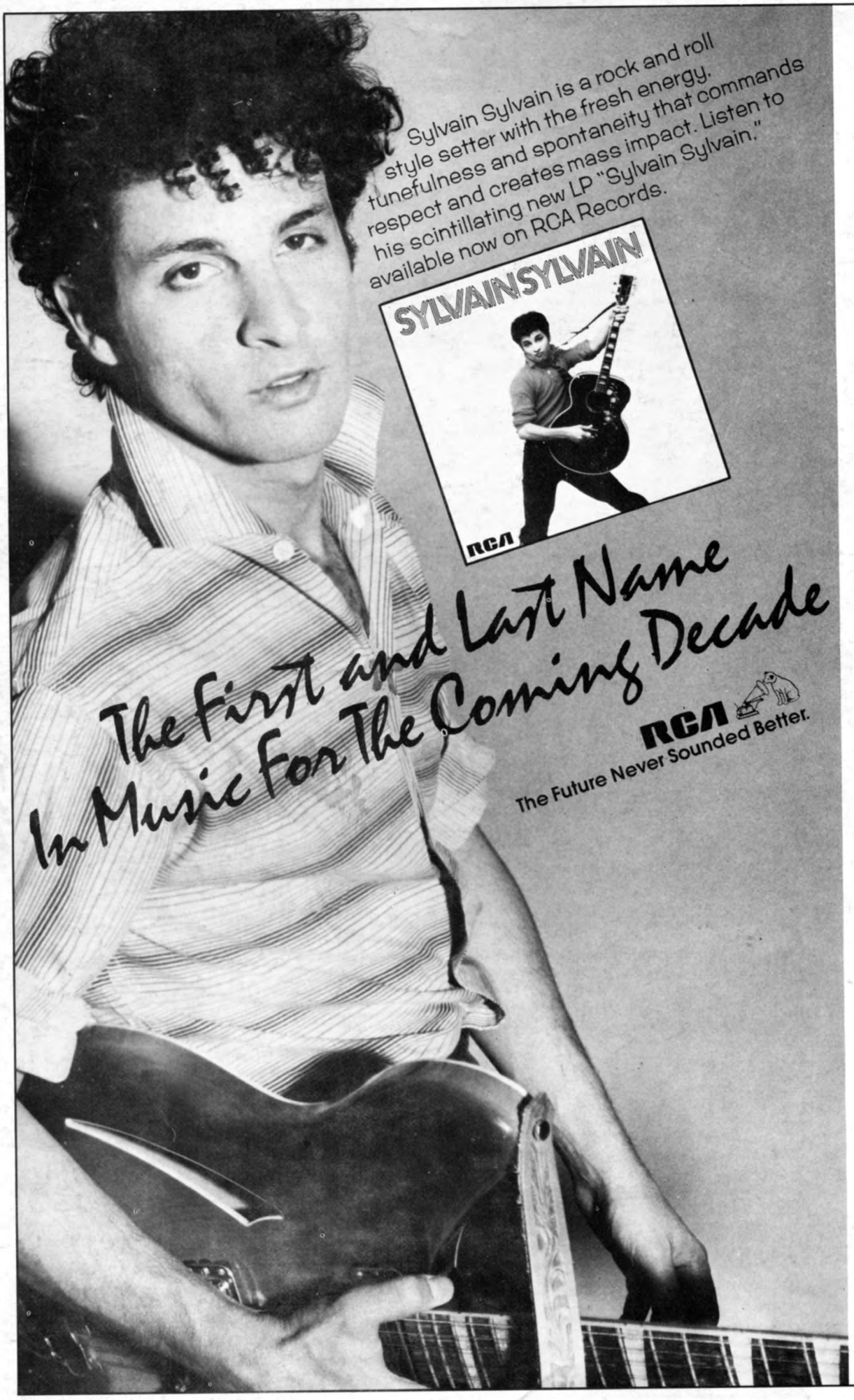
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