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Review the latest US and UK singles

STEVE MARRIOTT
Finishes the Pie story

Trouser Press

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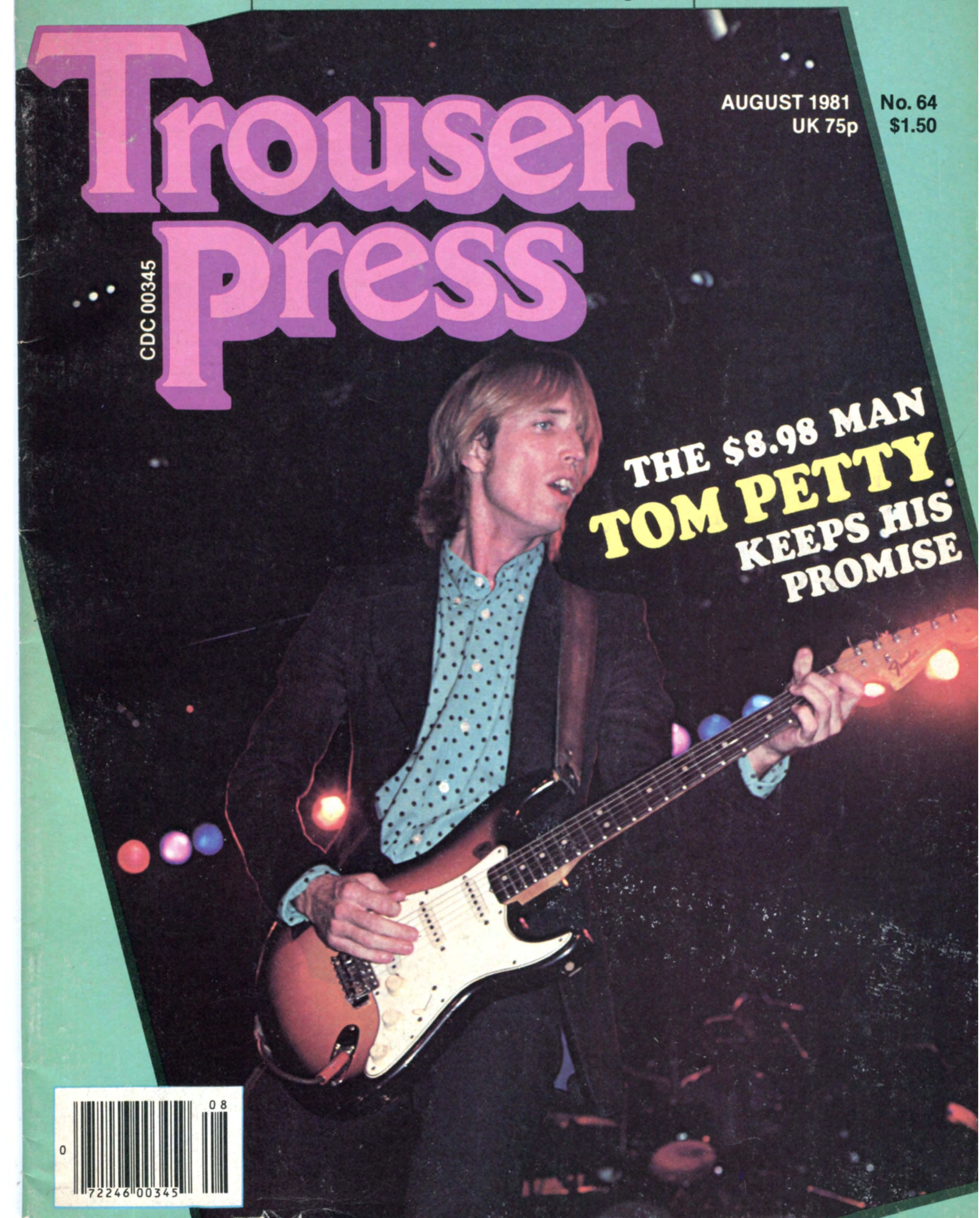

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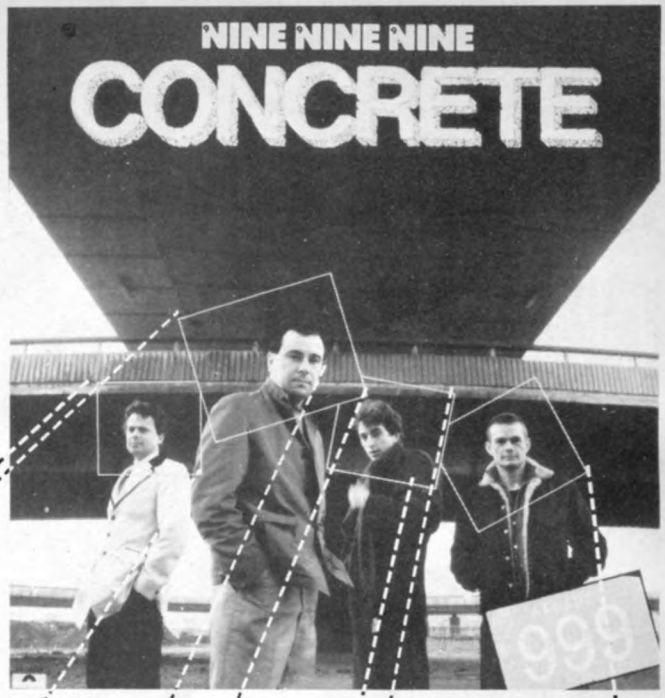

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Trouser Press 64

Volume Eight, Number Six August 1981

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FAX 'N' RUMOURS

Public Image in NY: A Lot of Bottle

It was a weekend the staff of New York's Ritz club would probably like to forget. The trouble started May 13, when **Bow Wow Wow**—the British group masterminded by former Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren and fronted by 15-year-old Annabella Lu Win—abruptly cancelled a five-city US tour. The band was to have made its American debut at the Ritz two days later.

Bow Wow Wow's blow-wo-wo-out didn't surprise cynical McLaren-watchers who doubt the band ever intended to come over in the first place. While handling the Pistols, McLaren used to set up European tours, then cancel them and notify the press that his group had been banned. More recently, Bow Wow Wow has acquired a spotty track record in regard to English appearances (due to a dispute with English label EMI over who would pay for Lu Win's on-the-road tutor).

Ian Copeland, who set up the US tour through his Frontier Booking International agency, had to laugh. "I fell on the floor. I thought, 'That sucker, he's done it again!' It's like a one-trick special."

This time, though, there was a valid reason. Bow Wow Wow had been in the recording studio prior to the scheduled US tour—and joining them was Lu Win's domineering mother, a feisty dame by all accounts. As a result of a shouting match, the younger Lu Win lost her voice; McLaren's press release cited "nervous and physical exhaustion." (Maybe Malc should replace Annabella with her mother, who sounds like she has better pipes.)

The Ritz was thus left staring at a looming weekend with no group to pack 'em in. Then someone at the club remembered that **Public Image Ltd.** was in town. Guitarist/synthesizer player **Keith Levene** had been holding interviews all week, and, with recently arrived singer **John Lydon**—in ancient times Johnny Rotten of the Sex Pistols—and aide-de-camp **Jeanette Lee,** planned to settle in the Big Apple.

Evidently impressed with the club's huge video screen and facilities, the "band" agreed to present a video-oriented show as a last-minute replacement for McLaren's latest protégés. (Perhaps Lydon, never an admirer of his former manager, derived some satisfaction from the turn of events.) It was too late for print advertising, but word spread fast and came Friday night the Ritz was jammed.

Even with hindsight, it's hard to figure out exactly what the crowd was expecting. A reprise of Public Image Ltd.'s New York shows from a year earlier? A trace of Sex Pistols glory? What they got, in any case (after a tediously grating Levene "interview" on videotape, brimming with high-school wit), were Lydon, Levene and pick-up drummer **Sam Ulano** playing behind the Ritz's screen. Bright lights backstage rear-projected Lydon's capering shadow, while video cameras relayed PIL's image in front.



John Pokrassa

Unfortunately, the concept was flawed in execution: The backstage lights made the video projection near-invisible. As the boisterous crowd made its displeasure known, Lydon switched his abusiveness into overdrive. "So glad you're enjoying the show," he egged on an increasingly ugly (and now bottle-hurling) throng. "I'm safe. . . 'Boo, hiss, they're cheatin' us, we want rock 'n' roll,'" etc. etc. Lydon also threw in a chorus of "New York, New York"—and knew the words!

The group did essay a couple of numbers from their new **Flowers of Romance** LP, in between extended synthesizer noises. Levene added a couple of stanzas of the well-known chant, "silly fucking audience," before deciding he'd had enough of the preliminaries and emerged in front of the screen to cool down the crowd.

He didn't have a chance to try his crowd control technique. A Ritz security guard quickly removed him from harm's way, whereupon the show was declared over after 20 minutes. The crowd, yanking on the plastic tarp under the band's set-up, damaged Levene's synthesizer and ripped the Ritz's $10,000 screen. Public Image Ltd. did not perform the following night.

On Tuesday, May 19, Warner Bros. Records, PIL's American label, hosted a hastily arranged press conference at which the band—or company, as they like to think of themselves—could explain themselves. Arriving an hour late, thin-skinned genius Levene (whose idea the conference was in the first place) declared, "I've got nothing to say. I think I'll just. . . film it." (The guitarist seems to like bearing decorative video equipment.)

"This looks like fun," observed Lydon—divine in a pseudo-leopardskin baseball cap, matching doublet over a billowing, untucked New York Yankees pinstripe shirt that could have doubled for a maternity dress, and baggy pinstripe pants. He immediately disappeared into an adjoining room.

The assembled journalists were shown a videotape of the Ritz gig—the same that viewing conditions at the club made impossible to see—after which Levene showed his mettle and provided generally hostile responses to questions. Although he stated the decision to cancel the second night's show was mutual between PIL and the Ritz, Levene rationalized that "We did two shows in one; it was that intense. Didn't need to do another show."

Levene claimed "We didn't plan anything," but then admitted they intended to raise the divisive screen; "We never got to the end of it." He snappishly maintained PIL's innocence of crowd-baiting. "We were not provoking a negative response. . . . We're too loving, that's what it is. The whole thing was positive until the audience moved in." No one suggested PIL play dates without an audience in the future.

"Listen, they're gonna get more out of that [show] than they got out of the last fucking 15 years of what they've been watching," Levene summed up modestly. Making a virtue of necessity, he noted the group had bought the damaged screen from the Ritz for their own use. Actually the club withheld the screen's cost from PIL's fee, which Levene refused to divulge.

"Nobody left disappointed," said Lydon, coaxed out of hiding by Levene's pleas. "They participate one way or another."

Sam Ulano could not be reached for comment.

FAX 'N'

Bob Marley



Greg Helgeson

Bob Marley, who died of cancer May 11 at age 35, never received too much attention in *Trouser Press*; reggae music is not our main concern. The late singer's importance, though, transcends any question of style. Marley demonstrated the power of music to elevate a performer to near-political status (underscored by an assassination attempt in 1976). His nonviolent revolution relied not on guns but song, and was all the more secure for it.

Our own culture, which regards music as a leisure activity, has trouble comprehending its importance in a society where, by providing relief from an intolerable existence, music is more a psychological necessity than idle pastime. Bob Marley did a lot more than write a song for Eric Clapton to cover rather meaninglessly. He also wrote "One good thing about music/When it hits you feel no pain." Marley's healing balm eased the pain for many; he was also a charismatic performer on any level. The records still exist.

Actions Speak Louder...

Rock fans may have turned a deaf ear to warnings that loud sound levels can be injurious, but here's a twist: The government might step in to turn down the volume if no one else does.

So alleges Dr. **Martin Polon,** who has long studied the physiological effects of high intensity sound. Speaking at an Audio Engineering Society convention workshop in Los Angeles in mid-May, Polon warned that health codes currently regulating loudness levels at factories could be directed toward discos and concert halls.

Advances in technology have brought music amplification to "an apocalyptic point," Polon said. About 95 per cent of over 35 recent Los Angeles area concerts met or exceeded levels of 125 dB (deciBels). Polon noted that at over 90 dB the listener (assaultee?) enters the land of "negative stress"; at 150-160 dB fatal seizures are possible.

Deafness, you say? That's the least of it. According to Polon, prolonged exposure to sound levels of over 90 dB can also result in lowered resistance to infection, accelerated rate of arterial sclerosis, high blood pressure and other cardiovascular disorders.

In England, London and Leeds have already ordained maximum sound levels at clubs and halls. Will a *laissez-faire* Reagan government fail to care for its young?

Or why not just ban rock music altogether?

Adam Smokes Peace Pipe!

TP 62's *Fax 'n' Rumours* left **Adam and the Ants** in the middle of the American Indian Community House's warpath: The New York-based organization felt the Ants might be ripping off or making fun of their culture.

Anyone fearing for Adam (**Stuart Goddard**'s) braided scalp can hereby rest assured. After speaking to the lead Ant via telephone, AICH's **Rudy Martin** was satisfied Adam was a straight-shooter.

"His lyrics are certainly pro-American Indian," Martin wrote Lois Marino, associate director of publicity at Epic Records, the Ants' US label. As to the band's live show, "I found nothing offensive as far as my culture is concerned. (Some of the people in my party even liked his music!)"

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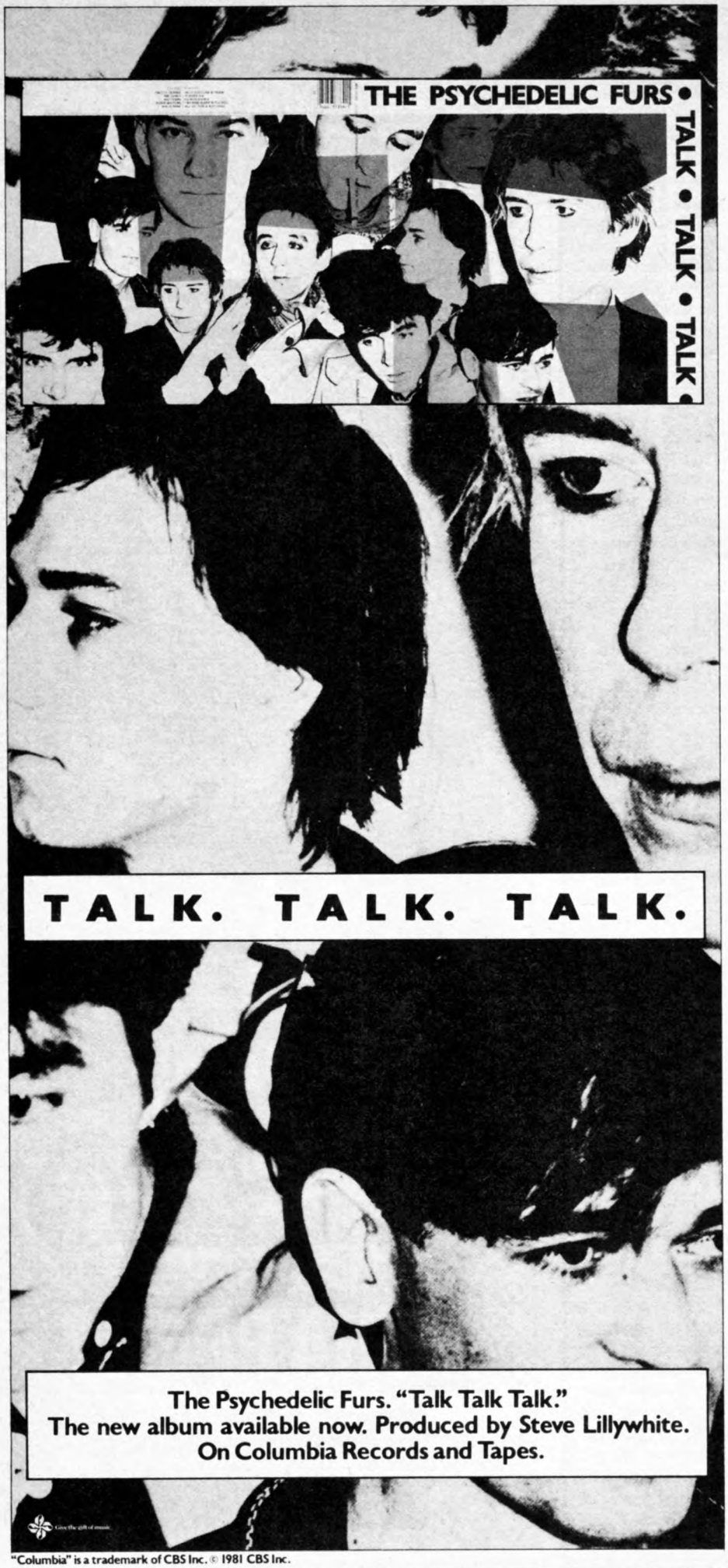

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RAVING FAVES

RF #40: Favorite Record Company

Raving Faver David Sheridan wrote that the reasons people give for best record company should be more interesting than who wins. He was right, although one of his own two criteria—a label's roster of artists—proved to be the most popular factor. The other, promotional ability, also had its adherents.

The company it keeps propelled Virgin to the top rank, even if the label's always had a rough time in the US. (Mark McLaughlin noted also that the company's name "is the subject of almost every Van Halen and Ted Nugent song"—subliminal advertising?) Motown has never had a low profile, although its high standing here seems due more to nostalgia. Epic Records' flair with merchandising its clients (notably the Clash) was appreciated; J. Grimm approved of all CBS labels because their album spines "always use the same typeface and have those little slanted lines."

We didn't ask for negative votes, but several Favers mentioned Bearsville's lack of drumbeating for its artists. More than one entry commented in passing about high prices disqualifying everyone. Some unique choices, along with their reasons, follow the winners' list.

1. VIRGIN
2. Motown
   Stiff
4. Beserkley
   Epic
   Sire

Dark Horses

Alligator—"For trying to make American music as popular in America as it is in Europe." (Anonymous)

Apple—"It's defunct. It *was* a good idea. Different A-side and B-side labels. Pissed off James Taylor. Nice door." (Eric Collins)

Swan Song—"Because they're not in it for the money." (Tina Klaric)

Warner Bros.—"They own half the record world. They dominate our culture. They were started by seven dedicated moguls out for ten thousand million bucks. Their president eats bread." (K. Teel)

Question #43

In these fashion-conscious times, how about: Best dressed rock musician—male, female, onstage, offstage, whatever. The deadline is August 14, 1981.



PSSST!

Q. What 3 things arrive in plain brown wrappers?

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T364

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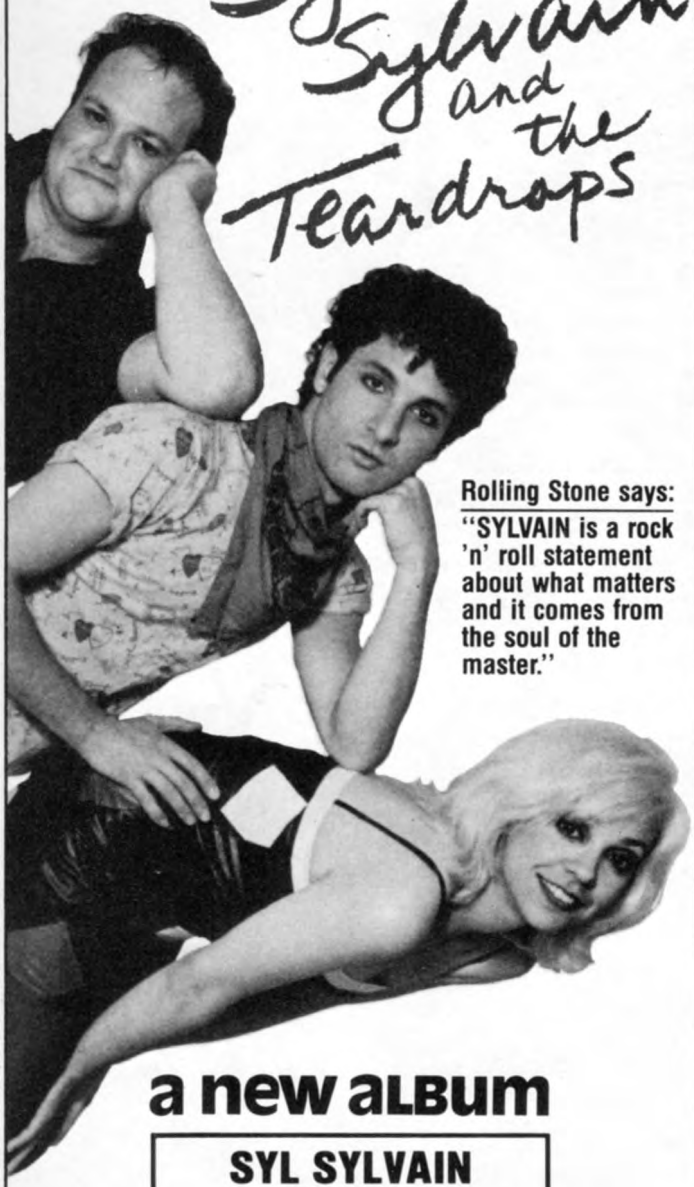
Syl Sylvain and the Teardrops



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Hello It's Me

Write to Trouser Press, 212 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010

PEP TALK

Except for an excellent article on XTC about six issues ago and an interview with John Lydon, your magazine is a sick fucking joke, man. Punk ain't slick, and your trendy little product makes me want to stick my finger down my throat. Get this and get it good: It's magazines like yours that are beating the new wave into the dust. Long live *New York Rocker* and *NME*! I bet you poseurs ain't got the guts to print this.

Marc Nirenberg
Philadelphia, PA

Right again.—Ed.

ENOTISM

Dear Brian Eno:

I have a piece of news for you. The "Jewish movement" ("Going, Going, Ghana!," TP 61) is not based on self-pity. It is based on the desire of the American Jew to rediscover and rejoice in her/his heritage. It means we define ourselves instead of accepting definitions imposed upon us by others. I believe the same can be said of the black and gay movements. Your problem is, the only movement you are involved in is the Eno movement; you are completely self-absorbed.

Are you going to live your entire life with one eye on your escutcheon to see that it hasn't been besmirched? Are you bucking for sainthood or what? Sounds pretty neurotic to me.

You once said that you decided, at the age of 9 (after seeing your dad too tired after work to eat his dinner) that you would never hold down an ordinary job. I really do admire you for following through, and I think it's wonderful after so many years spent under taxi wheels. But you're so smug about it. Yes, we all "do humiliating things here to get on"—but we get on, don't we?

Brian, if you "don't like this country very much," why not go home?

(I would sign my name but I don't want the Nazis to get me.)

Anonymous
New York, NY

MISSING WINWOOD

Jim Green omitted (inexcusably) Steve Winwood's greatest session, circa 1968, from his autodiscography (TP 61). Winwood played keyboards with Jack Casady on bass for Jimi Hendrix's crowning "Voodoo Chile" on **Electric Ladyland**. Better luck next time!

PS. Thanks for the Who scrapbook!

Ken Kaffke
San Francisco, CA

THIS IS THE END

Every time someone dies you treat it as a joke. (Except for Lennon—you wouldn't have the balls to caption his obituary "One '60s Star to Go"). You've lost your soul, your heart and your brains. All that's left is a sneer, and you can't make it on that alone. Just ask the Knack.

PS. Your Who scrapbook looked like a photo of someone's desk drawer. What's so great about ticket stubs?

Dorothy Cavallaro
Brooklyn, NY

Unlike the majority of rock music related deaths, John Lennon's murder had nothing to do with self-destructive urges. In general, however, our policy is that if you can't laugh at death what can you laugh at?—Obits Ed.

MUSIC FOR MONEY

Fax 'n' Rumours in TP 61 mentioned that copies of **Meet the Beatles** were going for $750 and $1000. I have one, so I got real excited. An "official" price guide for LPs says it is worth only $10, and that's in mint condition. At a local used record store (which also had it) they told me the same thing: only $10 in mint condition. Who's right—you or they?



The choice is yours: $10 or $1000.

Mark Sagarin
Woodbridge, CT

That someone with no knowledge of the collectors' market (and probably little more knowledge of the Beatles) is willing to pay $1,000 for a record worth one-hundredth the price doesn't indicate informed market values. As P.T. Barnum once said, "There's a sucker born every minute."

RIPPING YARNS

I consider your magazine the only music publication worth reading but cannot find it in area stores. After receiving three copies through a subscription, I have a complaint: All three were torn to shreds. I realize this was not your fault, but could you please devise a system of keeping the mag readable? Maybe a paper wrapper or envelope would help.

Jim White
University, MS

Glad you brought that up! Starting last month, subscribers' issues are being sent in what we hope is a post office-proof wrapper. And we still haven't raised subscription prices (yet)!—Ed.

MARS SOMEWHERE

Thank you for mentioning Mars Everywhere's **Industrial Sabotage** in *Hit and Run* (TP 61). We must inform you, however, that Random Radar Records is no longer recording Mars Everywhere, and the album is no longer available from us.

Steven Feigenbaum
Random Radar Records, Inc.
Silver Springs, MD

ERIN GO HOME

I don't know where you people learned geography, but someone at TP should know the difference between England and Ireland. The cover of issue 63, referring to the Irish U2 as an English band, shows an amazing lack of political comprehension. You probably also believe that Krakatoa is East of Java. What a bunch of nimrods!

Roberto Geldof
Port of Spain, Trinadad

T-SHIRT WINNERS

The following ten people have won Trouser Press T-shirts by entering the contest in the May issue. Look sharp!

James Bailey (*Ontario, Canada*)
Julie Bickelhaupt (*LA, CA*)
Michelle Canion (*Flushing, NY*)
Susan Hiliger (*Blue Island, IL*)
Albert Hinden (*Whitestone, NY*)
John Morere (*Jackman, ME*)
Kathy Shannon (*Bayside, NY*)
Rod Thibodeau (*Lawrence, MA*)
Steven Turcus (*Spotswood, NJ*)
Bobbie Van Sleet (*Scotia, NY*)

SURFACE NOISE

By Mick Farren

Hope You Die Before You Get Old?

Bob Dylan turned 40 on May 24th. I suppose it should have meant something but somehow it didn't. A year or so earlier he had appeared on the Grammy show in an antiquated tuxedo and stiff wing collar, doing an extended version of "Gotta Serve Somebody." That was pretty much the end of Bob Dylan for me.

I could never quite bring myself to acquire or listen to the **Saved** album. That Dylan, who had done so much to liberate rock music from many of its initial, self-imposed limitations, had adopted the narrow, mean and judgmental position of the born-again Christian was a little more than I cared to handle.

Bob Dylan had often articulated ideas that were only half formed in the minds of the rest of us. He had the knack of always getting there first. He turned rock around from tribal dance music to a medium for artistic self-expression. He hit politics first, he hit surrealism first, psychedelics, amphetamine psychosis, even the '70s revival of country music.

Dylan was always in front. According to legend, he gave the Beatles their first reefer. For a long time, wherever Bob Dylan went the rest of rock seemed obliged to follow. Then, just as new wave was breaking, Dylan plunged into darkest Jesusism and, for all creative purposes, his light went out.

The problem bugging me this month isn't simply the decline of Bob Dylan's career. At root, it's the one of aging as opposed to growing old in the world of rock. There seems to be no way to get away from this. New blood is constantly pumped into the beast, but the old-timers still hang on. Protests to the contrary, old rock 'n' rollers don't appear to retire voluntarily. Some drop dead, like Elvis Presley or Keith Moon. Others are incapacitated, like Jan Berry or Vince Taylor. Some deteriorate or fall from favor, like Johnny Thunders or Eric Burdon. Only a very, very few take the money and quit while they're ahead.

I figure there must have been some point during the decline of the Roman empire when youth worship reached even more ludicrous proportions than it has during the second half of the twentieth century—only I have never actually heard about it. Since the '50s we have witnessed simmering teenage rebellion, a generation gap, all-out youth revolt and punk nihilism. We have been told to trust nobody over 30, that they've got the guns but we've got the numbers, that the kids are alright and we fervently desire to die before we get old. Only a lucky few managed the last one. For the rest of us—despite drugs, jogging, yoga or Oil of Olay—each twelve months take us farther away from sweet 16.

There is, of course, no reason why rock should be locked into youth. Jerry Lee Lewis stumbles into his late 40s a trifle incoherent at times but still rocking on. James Brown is in his 50s by most reckonings, but he is almost certainly in far better physical condition than Stiv Bators. Most of rock's conscious agism is due to a certain kind of critic looking to whip up fringe partisanship. For a while some writers, leeching off the energy of early punk, adopted the stance that no one should be allowed to play rock unless they were 17, working class and pig ignorant.

The position wasn't without its contradictions and ironies. Many of its adherents unwittingly adopted an inverted racism. The same people who attacked Keith Richards as a drug-soaked millionaire with mush for a mind, eulogized Chuck Berry—although the latter has become, without doubt, one of the most boring old farts in the business. Some found they had to take more and more extreme positions to maintain their fashionable iconoclasm. More than one new wave rock writer has been discovered in a closet, unable to do anything but swallow Contac 500 and listen to Lydia Lunch and selections from the soundtrack of *The King and I*.

Probably the greatest irony is that with the passage of time these young people suffer from a desperate nostalgia for the presumed purity of the first flowerings of punk. We may eventually discover a definable subculture that can't get itself out of the '70s, as dislocated as any Deadhead hippie who can't see beyond 1968.

These prejudices about age hang thicker over the British Isles than the US. Maybe America is so big that people are less inclined to mess around with the musical tastes of others, or maybe it's the constant wash of paternalism that saturates England, the one that closes bars at 11:00 p.m., turns off the TV about an hour later, shuts stores on Sunday and eventually forces any sensible human to live somewhere else.

Nobody in the US screamed exploitation when they discovered Deborah Harry was in her 30s and had served time in a 1969 flower-power band. Marianne Faithfull's "Broken English" was a substrata hit over here; in the UK, it was dismissed as the tiresome maunderings of a tedious old drug addict. Possibly the most despicable example of this English vice is the way a number of British critics have taken to savaging the Clash (apparently on account of their US success) as all that is reactionary and unfashionable in rock.

Fortunately, the end result of these tunnel-vision prejudices is usually to alienate the writer's audience. Even blind bigotry can be entertaining as long as it's presented with some degree of humor. Overuse of a few clichés and constant attacks on the same targets, however, can only lead to boredom and discrediting of opinion.

Starting a stylistic war on the basis of age is, in the end, a no-win proposition. Anyone who seriously believes rock music can't be played by those over 30 has effectively eliminated Fats Domino, David Bowie, Dave Edmunds, Ray Davies, Desmond Dekker, Lemmy and about a half-million other fine artists from his or her frame of reference. As the years flash by, the rock agist must continually adjust his or her thinking. The time comes when he/she finds that growing up on Marc Bolan can look just as dated and contemptible to the next wave of youth as growing up on Dylan and the Stones looked to *them*. Few go so far as to sacrifice their lives because they are no longer young and fashionable. Most tackle the problem of age when the times comes.

A great deal of the musical tedium that is the major complaint against bands like the Rolling Stones is not so much a by-product of age but working on a treadmill operated by the record corporations. All too often bands and artists feel required to turn out product on much the same lines as they have been doing for years, and plough their way into a rut. It's hard to get as excited about an act's twenty-fifth album as it was their third or even their tenth; yet, year after year, the records keep coming, each with its attendant trumpeting, ads, obligatory interviews and equally obligatory tour.

It's a rare musician who can pump out the same formula without sounding tired and lame. Unfortunately, it's also a rare musician who has the courage of John Lennon or Jaime Robertson—the courage to step out of the spotlight and take an extended break to recoup and recharge. This may be what Bob Dylan is doing, although I wonder how much creative energy one can find in the bosom of Jesus.

One thing is for certain: As the artist gets older, energy no longer flows as fast or easily. Each has to find an individual solution to the problem, since rock will neither survive without energy nor maintain a jaded and non-productive establishment. ■

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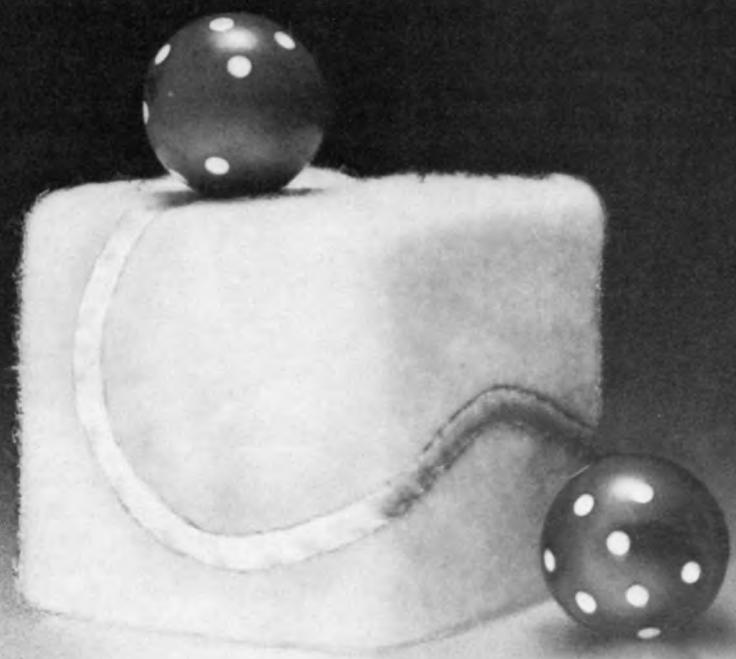

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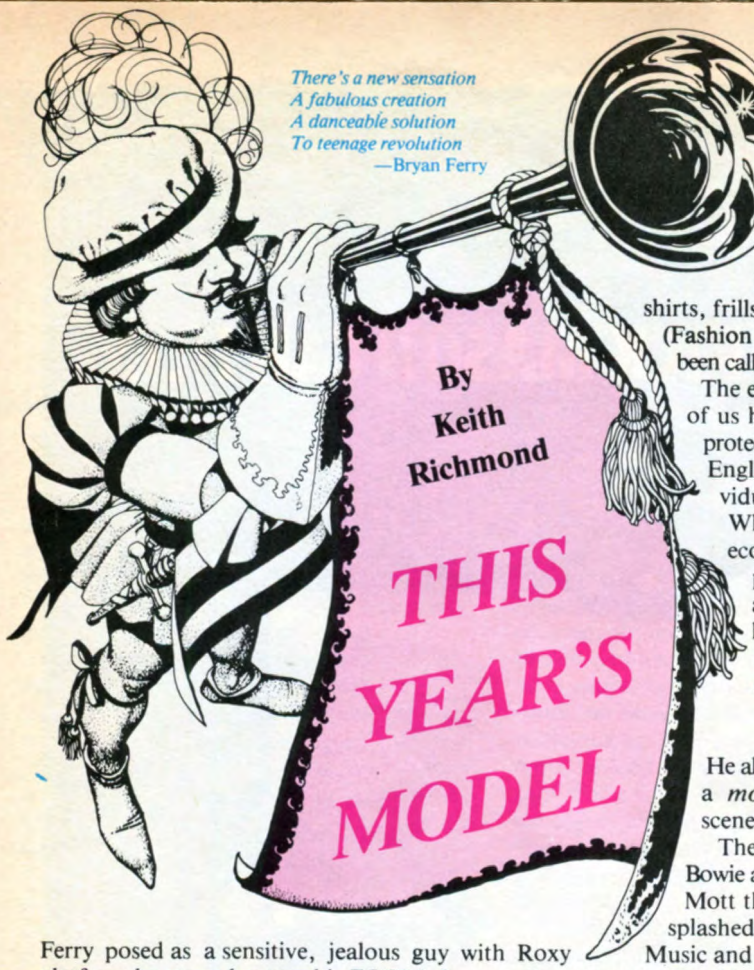

There's a new sensation
A fabulous creation
A danceable solution
To teenage revolution
—Bryan Ferry

By Keith Richmond

THIS YEAR'S MODEL

It was a swinging party. Geronimo, Blackbeard and Louis XIV were there, as were Marlene Dietrich, Errol Flynn, Sally Bowles and Robin Hood!

Okay, you guessed; they were lookalikes. The location was one of the new clubs that now straddle England with the New Style. A music/fashion movement with one carefully made-up eye on glam-rock and the other thrown back to Beau Brummel is sweeping British youth. Devotees flock to clubs in baggy trousers, huge billowy shirts, frills, rakish hats, brocade waistcoats and giant sashes around their waists. (Fashion note: Favored fabrics are madras cotton and exotic prints.) They've been called new dandies, Blitz kids and new romantics. Their bands are video heroes.

The evidence is on the street: people are dressing up instead of down. Most of us have little choice what we wear by day; jobs dictate a suitable suit or protective overalls. But step out at night and you can start to dress—and live. English kids dressed down for punk and it became a uniform. Now individual flair is back.

Why? Narcissism is one answer to depression, both psychological and economic. Christopher Isherwood captured the Weimar Republic on paper with "Goodbye to Berlin." Now Spandau Ballet puts it on tape and sells it as vinyl, with a nod in the direction of Scott Fitzgerald and his Jazz Age tales. It's all escape into fantasy—from the dreams of hippies through glam-rock to punk and on to the (so-called) new romanticism.

Between the haze of dope and glory and the blitzkrieg bop, glam was the name of the teenage game. In 1971 a former mod about town changed his name from Feld to Bolan and made his Marc. He also changed the name of his band—from the prehistoric Tyrannosaurus to a *moderne* T. Rex—and bopped and boogied the stale British music scene into the 1970s.

The Electric Warrior was soon joined by the lad insane himself: David Bowie as Ziggy, and the Spiders. All the young pseuds? Even mainstream rockers Mott the Hoople (all the way from Hereford) pulled on their satin trousers, splashed on the makeup, and carefully placed stars beneath their eyes. Bryan Ferry posed as a sensitive, jealous guy with Roxy Music and gave Art School Rock a bad name. Then Elton John stepped into his platform boots and put on his ZOOM glasses to become a hero amid all the (Gary) Glitter and Glamour of the New Generation.

It was a Ballroom Blitz. In between the hippies and the punks, Bolan, Bowie, Roxy Music, Alice Cooper (the Token American), Mott

All color photos by JEFFREY STILLMAN







and the Sweet turned teenagers on with a different style of boogie. Clothes (and makeup!) became as important as the music. Gary Glitter finally took it all beyond rock into the music hall of caricature.

Came the Bleak Days. Bolan went into tax exile, Roxy split, and Bowie became the Thin White Duke. Teenies squeezed into disco pants to dance the nights away to the soporific sounds of Donna Summer and Boney M. Bloated musical beasts stuck in the middle of the road (Fleetwood Mac, ELO, Abba, Frampton etc.) took over the airwaves and pounded a bland beat for all it was worth—and it was worth a lot. Not only did parents not object to their children listening to this music, they were down at the corner record shop buying the discs themselves!

The kids were bored. Manager Malcolm McLaren took on the New York Dolls, who were somewhere between Bolan and the Stones with a touch of Iggy Pop's panache. He failed, but returned to London to create the Sex Pistols and a rock myth: revolution, pills, lager and the dole. We were all Clash City Rockers as punk triumphantly rescued its audience from disco-dazed nights of mindless mediocrity.

Eighteen months ago it all ran out of steam. The new wave became a blow wave. Bands took to making concept albums and the kids felt sold out. They took shelter behind comforting images of Debbie and Sting, as Blondie and the Police tackled the teenage market. Those two groups had the image of the moment.

And rock is nothing if not image. A folk singer alone on stage with only an acoustic guitar for company is working damn hard to put across the image of lonely goatherd. Rock has always been about theater and masks as much as the music exploding from the speakers.

A young man called Steve Strange decided a leather fetish was one thing, but style was quite another. Punk. he said, was not only dead—it was dead boring. It lacked Style. With his flatmate, drummer-turned-disc-jockey Rusty Egan, the ace face staged a series of electro-diskow nights at Billy's in Soho. Kids turned up dressed as pirates, Regency fops, lounge lizards, Beverly Hills starlets, space cadets—matinee idols all. From Billy's the scene moved to Tuesday nights at Blitz, and then to Hell in Covent Garden. At Blitz the entrance fee was a sense of style. With a nod in the direction of Studio 54, Strange stood at the door and vetted all potential trendies. If your face and clothes didn't fit, you didn't get in.

Back in the summer of discontent, 1976, Malcolm McLaren urged people to be individual, reject old values, smash it up—anarchy in the UK. But soon all the punks and punkettes looked alike. Individuality went out the window as the kids bought the gear mass-produced. Zandra Rhodes even ponced it into high-fashion punk chic (and *she* came close to designing Lady Diana Spencer's wedding dress).

Clearly, following fashion is no longer enough; the idea now is to create a style. At first the Blitz Kids' clothes came from jumble sales and theatrical costumiers, but a clique of specialist shops has sprung up to supply the market. It's a growing market; a Valentine's Day Ball at London's Rainbow attracted 3,000 punters at over $7 a head.

The bands provide the soundtrack for the lifestyle. Spandau Ballet cracked the British Top 5 with their debut single "To Cut a Long Story Short" after playing fewer than a dozen gigs, and

Now the audience is the star.

without the usual record company hype. Steve Strange has his own band, Visage. There's Classix Nouveaux, Modern Eon, Ultravox, and even Adam and the Ants got wise at the right time. In the wings is the actor on whose attitudes so many of the new romantics are shamelessly modelled: Bowie.

The Ballet leads the way. They're the band who credit their hairdresser (Lee Andrews) on the sleeve of their first album, **Journeys to Glory**. The other credits read: Tony Hadley (vocals/synth), Gary Kemp (guitar/synth), Steve Norman (guitar), Martin Kemp (bass) and John Keeble (drums).

Front man Hadley sums up all the new romantics stand for: "The show starts the minute the first fan walks through the door." Gary Kemp, who writes all the material, puts it this way: "If you're out of work or having a tough time, you certainly don't need someone up there on stage telling you how boring you are. The idea is to have a little fun and enjoy yourself.

"It became imperative to find something different from punk. The clothes had become nothing more than a uniform, the kids too secure because they knew how they should look and feel. They became complacent. Clothes came long before the music for us. When you're just one door of a small house in a very big council estate, then looking different from everyone else becomes a crucial aspect of your life."

Pillaging the evil side of history (SS armbands) as well as the Hollywood dream machine, the costumed hordes prove that even aggression can be tamed by a sense of style. Whatever happened to teenage revolt? The kids pose inside their clubs where their symbols are divorced from all reality. Blitz is a game that delights in its own decadence without realizing that there's not much space between the beautiful and the damned.

Marc Bolan said, "Politics? Nah, I'm just a funster!" Beyond glam-rock and Blitz lies the decadence of futurism. This movement may have left punk nihilism behind, but is there a consciousness behind the high camp? Aristotle was right: As the music changes, the politics change.

I, I will be King
And you, you will be Queen
—David Bowie, "Heroes"

We seem to need heroes. A rock star's influence is enormous. She/he is interviewed and expected to have definitive views on art, politics and everything in between. The Blitz Kids and their Spandau Ballet soundtracks have shifted the emphasis; now the audience—you, me—is the star.



David Johnson



David Johnson

Hear...the sublime glow of music for heroes
Driving straight to the heart of the dance
—Robert Elms, "Journeys to Glory"

Visage—a vehicle for Steve Strange—is a studio band, composed of Midge Ure and Billy Currie (both from Ultravox), Rusty Egan (ex-Rich Kids) and Magazine men Dave Formula and John McGeoch. Strange may be a scene stealer and high priest of the new faith, but his music is not as innovative as Spandau Ballet's. (Visage's debut album was recorded over a year ago.)

Elsewhere, the Skids' Richard Jobson (who has played guitar with Egan) stars as a poet/entertainer at Soho's Cabaret Futura. Geoffrey Deane, lyricist/vocalist of Modern Romance, uses the language of neo-Fascism: "A new renaissance has begun... where reading Kafka, speaking patois and dressing down are banned. Old riffs, old myths—stand up and salute the demi-gods."

Gina X Performance is another Futurist group, and don't forget the new Joy Division, called—ominously—New Order. The Human League, the pioneer post-glam pre-futurist band, has split, with Phil Oakley and Adrian Wright retaining the name. Martyn Ware and Ian Craig Marsh have set up a production company called the British Electric Foundation.

Yes, this is the New Age. The rose has a barbed wire stem, but the Blitz Kids have put the rhythm and romance back into rock 'n' roll. You can dance to it and pose to it—and was rock 'n' roll ever about anything else? Just watch out for the petals. ■

PLIMSOULS



Teri Bloom

Eddie Munoz

Lou Ramirez

Peter Case

Dave Pahoa

By Jim Green

Ah yes. The ringing guitars, simple rocking beat—definitely American but with a twist of Limey-philia. The Plimsouls are from Los Angeles, and you know what that means: Johnny-come-lately post-Knack power pop hype. Here's one more among the squirming mass of drossy bands vying for your attention (i.e. dollars), right?

Peter Case, the Plimsouls' lead singer/songwriter/second guitarist, has to contend with such frustrating biases. "We ain't just another Knack," he maintains."We're real different —in motivation, content, approach...Sure, you can make superficial comparisons, and people do it before they hear us, see us live. Talk about anti-Knack backlash—people are always coming up to me, saying, 'You people are getting all this hype.' Not *us*!"

One big difference is that the Plimsouls achieved naturally what the Knack choreographed: a substantial local following.

"The Knack played maybe 10, 11 times around town; we've played 250 gigs," Case asserts. "By the time I was in the Plimsouls I was sick and tired of trying to get record companies to listen; I didn't even want to go through the hassles of booking gigs. We never pursued anything—that was the fashion of the Plimsouls. If it didn't come to us it didn't happen."

Case had his share of success-seeking in the mid-'70s with the Nerves, a San Francisco trio with a Ramones-like attack. ("When we saw the Ramones on their first national tour, we thought, 'Shit, they're doing what *we* do,' only we didn't say '1-2-3-4' out loud.") The cheapo Chinese recording studio at which the Nerves (all of whom wrote and sang) recorded an EP forced them to curtail the high energy, resulting in a rather staid performance. Nonetheless, guitarist Jack Lee's "Hanging on the Telephone" came to the attention of Blondie, who parlayed it into a Top 5 UK hit and a substantial pre-"Heart of Glass" stateside stepping-stone.

But the Nerves were going nowhere. They adopted Los Angeles as a base of operations, promoted some early punk shows, toured the country for four months and broke up in early 1978. "I did get my songwriting together," Case reflects from the vantage point of the conference room at Elektra/Asylum's New York offices, "and I got to live out my Route 66 fantasies on the road."

Case and fellow Nerve Paul Collins formed the Breakaways and then pulled together what became the Beat. Case quit before the band got a record deal, and scuffled about for almost a year, writing songs and advertising for musicians with no results.

The Plimsouls coalesced in the unlikely milieu of a restaurant/bar in El Monte, a few miles east of Los Angeles. Drummer Lou Ramirez and bassist Dave Pahoa, recent acquaintances, invited Case to join them backing a blind guitarist named Doc. The material included "Paloma Blanca" and "Luckenbach, Texas," but the gig provided free beer and a chance to work on originals. (The group alternated songs with Doc.) One night, answering a request for "Polk Salad Annie," the band delivered a rave-up version—"hell-bent, lying on stage. For once the owner wasn't juiced out of his brain. He saw all these kids there [the band's friends had taken to dropping by] and us going nuts, and that was it." Fired.

With the addition of guitarist Eddie Munoz, previously repairing guitars on the road for Elvis Costello and Rockpile, the Plimsouls (they had already used the name for some solo shows) spent 1979 and 1980 accumulating an audience in Los Angeles. The release of a 12-inch EP, **Zero Hour**, on the indie Beat label helped considerably.

"It was ridiculous," Case says offhandedly. "We went from drawing like 200 to almost 1000." They played for bikers, who wanted them to stay on as their club's house band, and heavy metal fans, among others. "We get everybody at our gigs now —punks, skinny-tie college types, bi's, tri's. You never have to worry what to wear to a Plimsouls show." Last summer they signed with Planet Records, distributed by Elektra.

The Plimsouls are displeased with their self-titled debut LP inasmuch as it was cut in the conventional, fragmented manner of laying down backing tracks and then overdubs, making for less spontaneity than they would prefer. Still, some of the album retains their live R&B grit, and onstage the Plimsouls are hotter than ever.

"We wanna put garage music on the radio in America," Case says. Who needs to acquire the Knack if you got the feelin' in your (Plim)soul, baby? ■

LOUNGE LIZARDS



Laura Levine

Dana Vlcek (new guy), John Lurie, Steve Piccolo, Anton Fier and Evan Lurie.

By Wayne King

"What could be more old-fashioned than the avant-garde?" someone once wrote. Over the past few years New York has played host to some very curious couplings of pop stylings with trendier, dissonant electronics. One of the more intriguing of these cross-cultural mutations is the Lounge Lizards, a group that says it's alright for a band to sport '50s hipster outfits onstage and, by a studied "no wave" lack of technical brilliance on their instruments, bring cool jazz up to date by both revering and satirizing it.

What rock, you might punningly inquire, did these Lizards crawl out from under? Sax blower John Lurie, 28, and ivories-tickler Evan Lurie, 26, have played together for over 20 years—first in their sandbox in Worcester, Massachusetts (brothers, you know) and then in various high school bands, often with Lizards bassist Steve Piccolo, 26. Guitarist Arto Lindsay (another 26) and skin-beater Anton Fier, 25, met on the New York club circuit while in groups they're still associated with, DNA and the Feelies respectively.

The Lizards' first public appearance, at New York's Hurrah club two years ago, met an encouraging response. They subsequently recorded some demos (with Blondie's Chris Stein behind the board), which—although not sátisfying to the group—were apparently good enough to impress their idol, producer Teo Macero. The Lizards asked him to work with them even before they signed to Editions EG, the recently formed label offshoot of the old Roxy Music/King Crimson management company.

Macero, a saxophonist and arranger who has worked with Charles Mingus, Thelonius Monk and Miles Davis, took the group into CBS Studio B (where, according to Lindsay, "a lot of our favorite records had been made"). The album was recorded quickly, and just the way the quintet wanted it: live in the studio with no separation between the players. The only problem was a rushed mixing job, due mainly to the band's outside commitments. After a brief skirmish with EG over the cover ("too intellectual," Evan Lurie says), the platter plopped into stores in February of this year. Lizardmania hardly ensued, but the record did call attention to the "fake jazz" ethic that was attached to the music.

The Lounge Lizards raises some thorny questions. The group is pleased with it, but the album seems to be nothing more than a basic re-hashing of all their influences. Both band and critics often remark on the humor behind the Lizards' concept; perhaps it's more perceptible onstage; even Evan Lurie admits the record is "just vinyl" and that a lack of visuals makes it hard to appreciate the satire. There seems to be no real distinction in this claustrophobic music between tribute and spoof. Would there be much point to the whole affair anyway at this date?

Robert Palmer of *The New York Times* thought so. Centering a piece concerning some previously undetected "aesthetic of the fake" around the group, Palmer seemed overjoyed at the possibilities of playing fake renditions of various styles of pop music. Possibly realizing to what extent the whole trip was being bent out of shape, the Lounge Lizards have been cooling their "fake jazz" rep.

"On the way to the first gig we were thinking, 'Well, people are going to be writing about this, what are they going to call it? Let's call it fake jazz, just as a joke.' Since then, we've been trying to abandon it," Evan Lurie explains. "Nice guy, but dumb article," concedes Lindsay.

All this leaves the band a bit out in the cold. Whom do they see as their potential audience? "Anyone; we don't want there to be any restrictions, any barriers," Evan Lurie states. The natural place for the band to head after Manhattan is other urban centers, places that might support scenes where hepcats rule. They've already been to Toronto and Boston (a scheduled trip to San Francisco blew out when one of them took sick), and Europe is a good target for Lounging in the near future.

That is, if all the outside projects don't interfere. Lindsay splits his time evenly between the Lounge Lizards and DNA, and even sat out a recent Lizards tour to be with his other band. Fier continues to keep time with the Feelies, and Piccolo has a solo studio project called Domestic Exile. The Luries have been busy soundtracking film and videos. John has the most experience with visuals; he was involved with Eric Mitchell's *Underground USA* film and can be seen honking away on one of Debbie Harry's TV jeans commercials. He's even made his own films, once concocting a talkshow parody with punk-funk loudmouth James Chance. (It ended with Lurie imitating Humphrey Bogart in *The African Queen* and Chance attacking him by imitating a leech, appropriately enough.)

Doesn't this extracurricular activity hurt the group? "We're all musicians first, and Lounge Lizards second," Evan Lurie opines. "Pushing the record is important, but basically we're pursuing a musical direction and it will lead where it leads. Having people like us is certainly not something I want to avoid, but my ultimate concern is not whether we could have recorded [Herb Alpert's] 'Rise.'"

Continued on page 56

PEARL HARBOUR



B.C. Kagan

Hey, sailor...

By Jon Young

The rockabilly revival currently sweeping England ought to be a bonanza for rock 'n' roll fans, but mostly it's been a dud. While the original rockers certainly had their calculated side—Elvis Presley manipulated crowds and songs adroitly—the goal was hysterical abandon. This new breed, on the other hand, seems more concerned with proper hairstyles than gettin' loose; what ought to be a catharsis usually stops at an expression of cautious reverence. (Ironists will note that these self-styled rebels are just as self-conscious as arty fringe bands.)

Sometimes you have to look to unlikely sources for the real goods. Consider singer Pearl Harbour, late of San Francisco's Pearl Harbour and the Explosions, a quartet that surfaced briefly in 1980 with one LP and then sank out of sight for good. Nobody who heard the Explosions' tepid jazz- and funk-influenced pop could have anticipated the rowdy shouter who bursts forth on **Don't Follow Me, I'm Lost Too**.

"The hardest part right now is showing people I am completely different," Harbour, 24, concedes from a cramped Warner Bros. office in Manhattan. She doesn't exactly look or act the part of a flaming rocker: the offspring of a Philippine mother and American father projects a slightly exotic aura reminiscent of Ronnie Spector, and speaks with languid casualness. Only an excess tonnage of jewelry, most of it flashy bracelets, suggests she's a live wire.

Pearl Harbour calls **Don't Follow Me** "the kind of album I've dreamed about making," but she's taken a roundabout path getting to it. Growing up in Germany, where her father worked, the former Pearl Gates experienced a revelation at a **Sweetheart of the Rodeo**-era Byrds concert, complete with Gram Parsons. "It was the best thing I'd ever seen in my whole life and the Germans booed them off stage," she remembers. "I said to myself, 'I'm gonna be a country singer. If the Germans don't like it, it's gotta be good!' "

So in 1974 Gates dropped out of high school and migrated to San Francisco. After the usual succession of drudge jobs, she had a brief stint in Woodnymph, a women's "spiritual" cabaret band that discouraged members from drinking and smoking. No way! In 1976 her tap dancing won a Tubes talent contest and led to two years singing with Leila and the Snakes, a Tubes spinoff specializing in musical comedy. Eventually Gates and the band's rhythm section of Hilary and John Stench split off and enlisted guitarist Peter Bilt. Pearl Gates added a middle initial "E" and the band became Pearl Harbour and the Explosions, reflecting her parent's December 7th anniversary.

Although scoring quickly with an independent single ("Drivin' ") and Warner Bros. contract, the band was doomed almost from the start by conflicting tastes. Gates preferred simple rock 'n' roll and country; as for the others, she says, "the only music they liked was funk, R&B and jazz. That's not what I put on in the morning." She was essentially powerless during the making of the LP: "I had nothing to do with the arrangements, the production, or the choice of material. We each had an equal vote. The three guys always agreed on something and I was the outsider.

"They wanted me to tone down, and I wanted them to tone *up*," she concludes. Pearl Harbour and the Explosions disbanded in April 1980.

Escaping to London, Gates quickly fell in with more compatible company. Rockabilly guitarist Nigel Dixon, formerly of Whirlwind, and Otis Watkins, Shakin' Stevens' piano man, helped Gates shape up her new, livelier material. Mickey Gallagher, keyboard player for Ian Dury and the Clash, produced her demo, and Gates, rechristened Pearl Harbour, was on the way to a hot LP.

"I just lucked out," she laughs. "All the musicians I knew were out of work." **Don't Follow Me, I'm Lost Too** sounds like a whale of a party. Producer Gallagher gives Harbour's strong vocals what she calls an "Elvis Presley echo" and the band stomps along in noisy support, drawing extra punch from two drummers. (The in thing, obviously.) Among the crew are Watkins, Dixon, Nick Simenon (Paul's brother) on drums, Barry Payne (Blockhead Davey's brother) on bass, and former Rich Kid Steve New on lead guitar. Putting in cameo appearances are drummer Steve Goulding (the Rumour), steel guitarist B.J. Cole, etc., etc.

Harbour's euphoria over the LP has been compounded by a recent jaunt through England with her steady band of Dixon, Payne, Simenon and New. It's a big change from the Explosions.

"I call the shots and I choose the material. The musicians who play with me like my songs; we all like the same kind of music. They're very wild and I don't have to say a thing about the way they look, 'cause they all look terrific. We had bad luck [on tour] but we made it through laughing. With the Explosions on the road it was real straight, sometimes depressing.

"That's the thing about English musicians: they're out for a laugh. Have a few beers at lunchtime, have a few beers in the evening. Everything's a good time. I'm sure there's a lot of cool musicians in America and I just haven't met 'em," she adds quickly.

Harbour's adamant that **Don't Follow Me** transcends nostalgia. "I think the record sounds *really* modern. Steve New plays such unique guitar on 'Filipino Baby' and 'Fujiyama Mama'; you're not gonna hear that sound on anybody else's record. Some of the stuff is rockabilly influenced, but the traditional rockabilly sound is real thin. I've got two drummers. Our show is real loud.

"I'm not interested in doing any '50s revival thing. I listen to that kind of music at home, but I'm trying to do something new here."

But **Don't Follow Me** does sound more like 1956 than 1981. Is it commercial? Harbour smiles weakly (because radio hasn't responded). "I have no idea. I think it could be a hit record but that's my opinion. It probably won't. A lot of people tell me it's too weird for radio. I don't think it's weird at all. It's all good fun; there's nothing heavy or depressing about it."

Pearl Harbour names Tina Turner and Dolly Parton as her idols, and aims to follow in their tradition. "I enjoy entertaining people a whole lot. There's so many creepy things going on in the world that I always want to do things for my own pleasure and for the pleasure of the audience. I want people to know that I'm not real serious."

What else is there to say but . . . Rock On! ■

LIP SERVICE

By Ira Robbins

The New Musical Regime Moves In



At the risk of sounding like some flower-power holdover from the Woodstock generation, I've been noticing signs all around lately that the new music movement in America is starting to become a major force—and not only through the popularity of bands. An entire structure has developed that makes new music an almost self-contained entity, no longer reliant on the benevolence of the rock establishment.

Lest I paint too rosy a scene, there is at the same time more discord and disagreement among musical factions than ever before, and there may be less commitment from the audience than formerly assumed. Yet we seem to be in a period not unlike the late '60s, when the record industry finally admitted rock's rebels into the fold.

The new music proliferation has gone way beyond the early stages of incipient rebellion. The first signs of a movement—pockets of resistance, mimeographed (well, Xeroxed) broadsides, international solidarity efforts, curious but unconvinced media coverage, polarization of theories—have given way to a much greater apparatus. These days there are not only new music magazines, but a network of clubs devoted to new bands, committed record companies on all but the largest scale, booking agencies, publicity firms, managers, specialized photographers and designers, record retailers and trade magazines (even specialized record charts), fashion retailers, fan clubs, record distributors, etc., etc. The ways to make a buck (and aid the movement, such as it is) appear to be endless, and the resourcefulness with which young people all over America (and in numerous other countries as well) have gotten involved is staggering. There have even been early rumblings of a trade association for new music; a seminar held in New York last year was successful enough to be repeated this year.

There are two ways to view this development. The first, more optimistic approach, is to be pleased that a groundswell movement has accomplished so much against enormous initial resistance from the established music industry. As in the '50s and '60s, kids who liked a type of music stuck it out long enough to effect some real changes in the business.

The other, more cynical viewpoint considers the dilution and co-option of the movement, and wonders if popular success for mellower new music is a desirable compromise of revolutionary intent. The artists who have made it to the top of the charts (and of course that means appealing to a broad part of the population) are hardly the most novel the new wave has to offer. On the other hand, some of the groups who have done well in the more rarified atmosphere of new music fans (e.g. the alternative charts) are very off the wall indeed.

The only major frustration yet to be overcome by new music activists is broadcasting. Despite a brief dalliance with new music, America's radio programmers quickly retreated from the genre, waving tattered audience rating reports. Radio seems to be the final frontier, even more so than the usually impenetrable world of television. With advances in video technology, one gets the feeling rock has a better chance of making headway in television (basically by going around entrenched organizations) than on radio, where power is more nebulous and scattered. To make radio change would require buttonholing 500 program directors, their bosses and their subordinates; altering television requires only a few strategically chosen targets. How that battle will develop is anybody's guess. Maybe it's just a matter of waiting for an advancing new music army to direct the record industry towards higher profiles in other media.

Attempts to compare the English and American rock scene in 1981 only lead to miscomprehension. Changes occur faster in Blighty; chart toppers and "revolutionary" trends switch in a matter of weeks. Bands surge forward seemingly unencumbered by the mundane aspects of getting to the top—all the hard work and frustration—yet their fall from grace can be equally swift. The overnight success in England of the Stray Cats stands in stark contrast to the 10 years that it took an equally routine outfit, REO Speedwagon, to reach their peak popularity in the US. (Of course, the magnitude of hit bands here is vastly greater than the smaller pond in which British bands compete.)

An alternative record industry developed sooner and more viably in England, yet the new music establishment faces the same problems of keeping up with fads that hurt the previous order when new wave exploded. What will a progressive label like Rough Trade do about the rockabilly explosion, for example? What music does Stiff stand for in 1981? Even if the new labels choose not to participate in the fad fad, is there much sense in expecting a crop of record companies with each new musical wrinkle?

The new music establishment, then, has a choice: stick to their guns and run the risk of becoming passé; try to catch up and risk wearing egg on their faces trying to jump on each successive bandwagon; or fold up and go home when their limited run has concluded. No one can remain very long in the vanguard of an audience that is continually changing direction.

Perhaps the new music establishment will take on the character of the not-yet-extinct record company dinosaurs, losing self-consciousness while selecting new bands and sounds that might find an audience. The early indies that have survived have certainly become less distinguishable from the majors. Fortunately, a new generation of labels displaying greater artistic integrity has cut a swath for contemporary rock music. And regardless of style, the hits just keep on coming! ■

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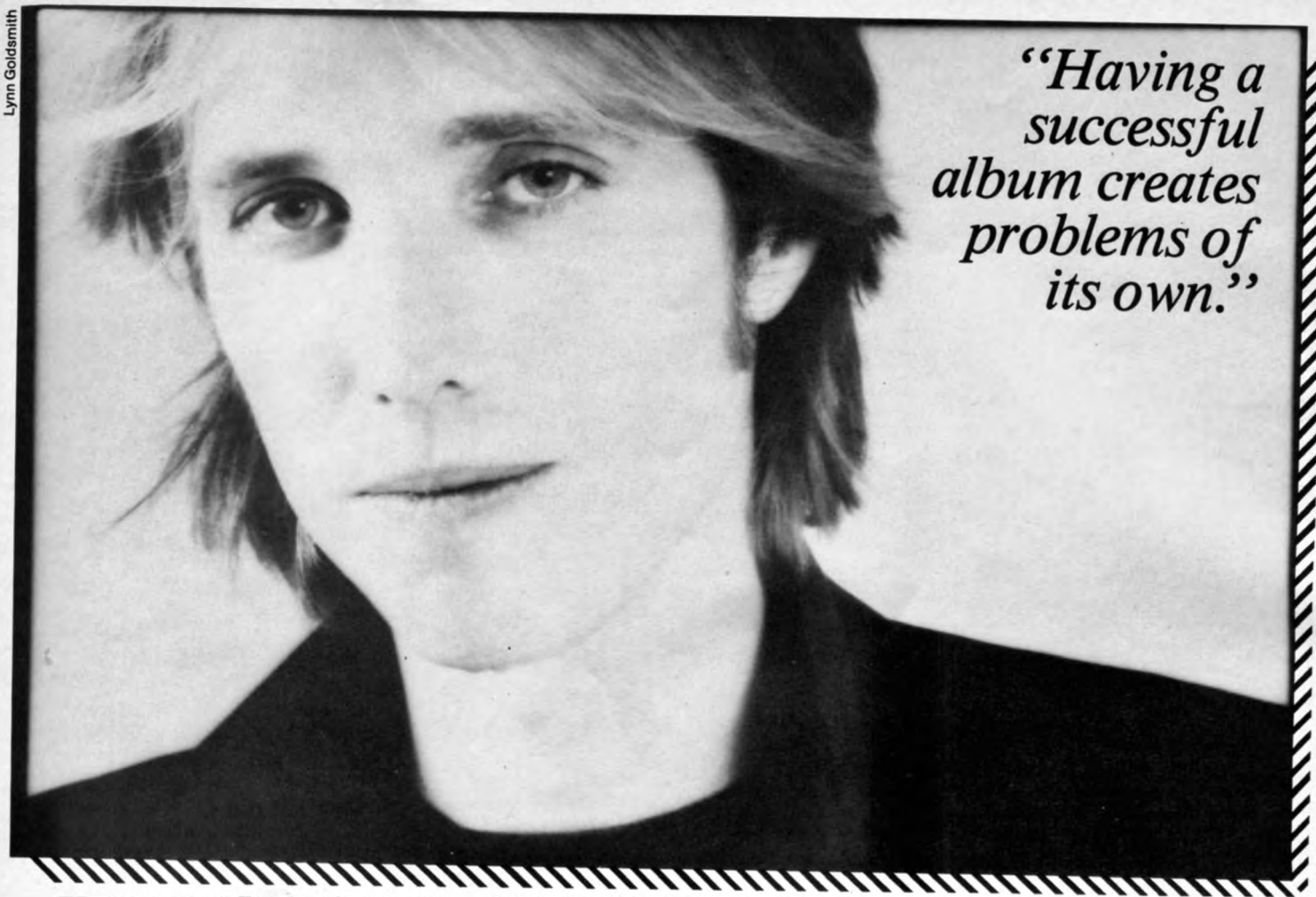
Dennis Callahan

Mike Campbell, Tom Petty, Ron Blair, Stan Lynch, Benmont Tench

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers fight the good fight—for decent rock on AM radio, $8.98 albums and the American way of life

By Blair Jackson


Lynn Goldsmith

"Having a successful album creates problems of its own."

Two years ago Tom Petty's career was in a strange limbo. His record label, ABC, had been sold lock, stock and barrel to entertainment giant MCA, and his contract was part of the deal—unbeknownst to Petty. He had two successful albums under his belt, yet he was virtually broke.

Petty fought MCA for his freedom in hopes of signing with another label. The protracted legal battle delayed his third album by several months, costing Petty and his Heartbreakers precious momentum built up through month after exhausting month of touring. With the legally-enforced idleness came a restlessness within the band, a gnawing feeling among some members that the group had reached the end of the line. There were rumors of a break-up; when Petty filed a chapter 13 bankruptcy petition in court, many believed the singer had been brought to his knees.

But, of course, this story has a happy ending. In the fall of 1979 Petty signed a lucrative deal with Backstreet Records—distributed by MCA, but definitely autonomous—and the first album under the new arrangement, **Damn the Torpedoes**, became one of 1980's best-selling LPs. Petty landed three singles near the top of the charts ("Don't Do Me Like That," "Refugee," "Here Comes My Girl") and tickets to his shows sold out faster than you could say "superstar."

Now, a year and a half later, Petty has emerged with **Hard Promises**, a potent follow-up to **Torpedoes**, and nothing short of an unforeseen disaster seems likely to keep him from bounding over every other American band on the charts. On the first single from the album Petty sings that "the waiting is the hardest part." For Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, the wait for success is over.

Which is not to say that all Petty's problems will now disappear miraculously. Yes, the band is the most solid it's been in three years. Yes, there is financial security where once there was dangerous insolvency. Yes, there is the adulation of millions of fans worldwide, something every artist dreams of. But there are trade-offs, too. Fame is not all roses and champagne, as the somewhat subdued tone of much of **Hard Promises** will tell you.

"Having a successful album doesn't solve all your personal problems," Petty acknowledges while reclining on a comfortable sofa in his manager's Hollywood office. "It creates problems of its own. It can confuse you. The rough idea of this album is to touch on all that: the confusion, the loneliness, the happiness. I wanted to get all that in there and a little more. I never really thought success would solve all my problems, so I'm lucky in that respect. You want to think that when you become successful you'll wake up one day and all your problems will have been cleaned up. But *you've* got to clean them up.

"There have been a lot of changes in our lives over the past year and a half, a lot of them good changes, but I don't think we're a lot different than we were," he continues. "We mainly feel less oppressed. You know, when we were doing the **Torpedoes** album we were being hassled by so many people over all the legal stuff that we retreated and just said, 'Get away from us. Leave us alone.'

"My main concern with **Hard Promises** was to move someplace we hadn't been before. I think we've made a sound that is 'The Heartbreakers' but we've also been able to change. This isn't 'Anything That's Rock 'n' Roll.' The side of the band this album shows has always been there, but I don't think people are that aware of it. There are more ballads, and I think it's a little more lyrical than the other albums we've done. I wanted to try and open the door for experimentation in more than just one musical style."

Indeed, **Hard Promises** does cover a broader range of styles than any of Petty's previous three albums. Some songs certainly hark back to earlier work—"The Criminal Kind" is an obvious cousin of **You're Gonna Get It**'s "Restless," for example—but the Heartbreakers have never attempted as affecting a ballad as "You Can Still Change Your Mind," or the contemporary R&B flavorings of "Nightwatchman," or "Insider"'s lyrical duet singing (with Stevie Nicks). The last-named marks a particularly interesting partnership—one that was seemingly unthinkable a couple of years

ago when the Heartbreakers were at their most insular.

"In the early days we thought everyone else was full of shit," Petty remarks. "We've always kept our group enclosed unto itself and never let anybody else in. I think we even put poor Stevie through some weird stuff because it's so hard to get inside our closed circle."

Petty had known the Fleetwood Mac siren for about two and a half years, and originally penned "Insider" (written in one day near the end of the **Hard Promises** sessions) for her upcoming solo LP.

"She came into the studio to sing it, and she left my lead vocal on in one earphone so she could learn the melody. But she kept singing harmony instead of the melody, and finally decided that that's the way she wanted to do the song—as a duet. It sounded great.

"I got really excited about it, because I'd always wanted to record a song like that. I'd always loved duets like Gram Parsons and Emmylou Harris on **Grievous Angel**, or George Jones and Tammy Wynette. Those things kill me. Finally, Stevie just said, '*You* take the song,' and it ended up fitting the album perfectly."

In exchange for "Insider," Petty surrendered a song that had been slated for **Hard Promises**: "Stop Draggin' My Heart Around," written with Heartbreaker guitarist Mike Campbell. "When Stevie heard it," Petty recalls, "she lit up like a Christmas tree and said, 'That's what I wanted all along!' She could have written a million songs like 'Insider,' but she wanted a rocker and that's what we ended up giving her."

As a lyricist, Petty blossoms on **Hard Promises**. He has come a long way from the fairly mundane romantic themes of his first two records; now many of his songs can be appreciated on several levels, and some are downright obtuse. The two songs that close side one of **Hard Promises**—"Something Big" and "King's Road"—contain some of Petty's most intriguing verse yet. The former has the sinister feel of a detective story:

It didn't feel like Sunday
Didn't feel like June
When he met his silent partner in that lonely corner room
That overlooked the marquee
Of the Plaza all-adult
And he was not lookin' for romance—just someone he could trust. *

"It's just a weird story," Petty chuckles. "It's a Raymond Chandler type of thing. I was interested in that song because I had to sing three or four different characters and that was basically the first time I'd tried that approach. At the same time, it's a little autobiographical, too. Michael [Campbell] was saying that he thought it was a great road song, with the maids and the bed and all that. I can see the whole gangster/road trip/dope deal thing in there."

"King's Road," on the other hand, deals with Petty's own sense of alienation when the Heartbreakers toured England last year. According to the song's author, King's Road is "a street in London where the kids come out in this week's fashion and sort of pose for each other. You see teds, and punks, people into the whole pirate thing. At the same time, you also see a lot of Arabs and Pakistanis selling things out of little booths."

Hard Promises has its share of love songs too (notably "Insider" and "You Can Still Change Your Mind"), but even these have more depth than most of Petty's past writing.

"As the last year went by," Petty comments, "I decided I wanted to say more on this album than I had said in the past, and I realized I could if I tried. Really, these records are all I'll leave behind, and for some reason I wanted to put as much as I could about what I felt on the record. The dilemma was that I didn't want to stand up and preach it; I also didn't want it to be so obscure that only people in the music business could understand it.

"You can look at a lot of these songs on a couple of levels," he clarifies. "I used the boy/girl thing to get across some other points. I think a lot of people cruisin' and listenin' to the radio are in different stages of love affairs, and they can grab onto that initially in my songs. Then, as they listen they can hear other things coming through. That's what I wanted to do with this record."

It is typical of Petty that he cares so much whether or not he is singing *to* his fans. From the beginning, he has been nearly obsessed with the idea of getting

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Romeo Void is a new American band.

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Critics grope for comparisons:

Greil Marcus – *X, The Ventures*
Sue Klein – *U2, Psychedelic Furs*
Mark Leviton – *Patti Smith, Blondie*
Phil Elwood – *Pharoah Saunders, Albert Ayler*
Billboard – *The Pretenders*
Liz Lufkin – *Jefferson Airplane*
Ron Young – *Supertramp, Blondie*
Ken Tucker – *Clarence Clemons*
Eric Feber – *The Motels*
Adam Block – *Booker T & the MG's, Marianne Faithfull*
David Fricke – *John Cale, Joy Division*

But there are no simple comparisons because, ultimately, what romeo void sounds most like is romeo void. And the only place you can hear them is on their debut album: itsacondition.

decent rock music on AM radio—believing that if kids can only hear it they'll buy the real thing instead of the MOR schlock that has dominated the airwaves for so many years.

"Some people were very alarmed that we put out a rock 'n' roll song like 'The Waiting' as our first single," Petty says. "There's a tendency right now to put out your mellowest song as a single, your catchiest singsong thing. It all comes from this misconception that people are stupid and the singsong, la-de-da songs are the only ones they can appreciate. I wanted to put 'The Waiting' out as a single to prove a point: that people will buy rock 'n' roll singles."

At the same time, though, Petty says that "the important thing with this band has always been the albums, not the singles. It's nice to have hit singles, but I worry about them only because they prolong the life of the album and open up the audience a lot."

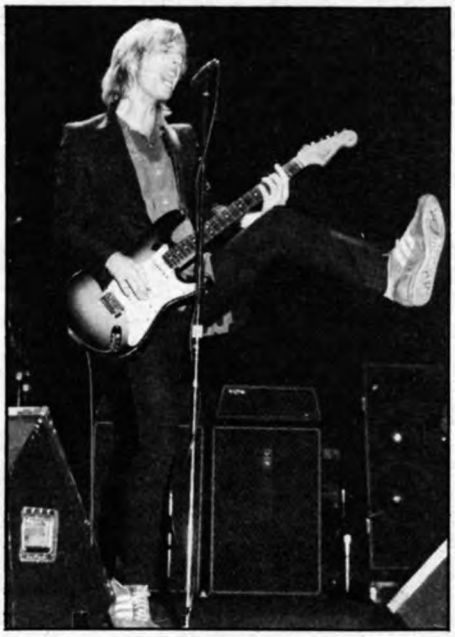
Singles have definitely opened Petty's audience a lot. Two years ago he and the Heartbreakers played mainly 3,000-seat halls, and even then most Midwestern cities failed to sell out. Now Petty headlines huge arenas and his shows sell out in a matter of hours.

Petty understands that hockey rinks make less than perfect rock venues, but, he adds, "from our standpoint, the jump to larger halls happened at a critical time because we desperately needed the money. I know it's not the ideal way to go, but at the same time I think we're one of the few acts that is real good in a coliseum. We work very hard at seeing that people can go to the shows and get a decent seat, see good lighting, hear good sound. We have to work a lot harder to make the show good. In a club, you can raise an eyebrow and say something with that gesture, but in a coliseum you have to wave your arms and carry on to reach the people in the back. I've never heard a lot of kids complaining about where we play, so I think we must be doing alright."

Petty's caring attitude towards his fans also carries over into areas not related to performing. Just before **Hard Promises** was released he became embroiled in a dispute with MCA over the list price of his album. The label wanted to charge $9.98, rather than the current industry standard of $8.98. Petty refused to hand over the album masters until the label capitulated. He won the fight, despite MCA's having no legal obligation to change its decision.

"I think the press had a lot to do with winning that particular battle," Petty says. "Not because they intimidated MCA, but because they made the kids aware of what was going on. My hat's off to the press because there wasn't much *I* could do except speak out about it. I wasn't going to let it go for two reasons: one, $9.98 is just too much to pay for a record, and two, I didn't want MCA hanging a record price rise on *me*.

"The response from the kids was amazing! We got a lot of letters pledging support, people saying 'We'll wait a year for the new record if we have to. Don't give up your fight!' It's important to have that kind of support on the street. Kids can control entertainment prices: Just don't pay it! I think that fear hit MCA and that's why they changed. I had no legal power. They can charge $100 for a record if they want.



Bob Leafe

"I never wanted to be a big show-biz personality."



Bob Leafe

"I sympathize a little with MCA," he continues. "They're in an awkward position because they don't want it to look like I can push them around and get away with all the things I get away with; then every artist on the label will start doing the same kinds of things. That's fine with me," he laughs. "If the artists don't take some responsibility for the prices of records and shows the company *will*, because money is their objective."

At the rate **Hard Promises** is selling, MCA can only be pleased with its decision not to tempt fate by tacking a dollar increase onto the record. Petty is one of the hottest selling artists in pop music right now and his stock is still going up. What was once a band that appealed largely to the hip fringe is now an undeniable part of the rock mainstream, albeit to the left of giants like REO Speedwagon, Styx and Journey. Nevertheless, Petty thinks that "we're not that big in my opinion. Elvis was a *big star*. The Beatles were *big stars*. We're just a popular rock 'n' roll band."

Such modesty is unbecoming. The Heartbreakers—Mike Campbell (guitar), Ben Tench (keyboards), Ron Blair (bass) and Stan Lynch (drums)—are perhaps the most exciting American rock band to appear since the prime of the grossly underrated Little Feat. Petty has emerged as one of the most striking personalities in music—a figure with the charisma of Mick Jagger, some of Bob Dylan's dark mystique, and lyrical insights that rival Bruce Springsteen's.

Yet he seems remarkably unaffected by his enormous popularity. If anything, he is more open and friendly now than he was when the Heartbreakers were just one more struggling rock band. Success has brought inner peace to Tom Petty, even as it forces him to sacrifice some privacy.

"I never wanted to be a big show-biz personality," Petty comments. "I think it's fine for people who like it, but it would terrify me to make my life so public. You get nervous because you go places and you start to draw a crowd. People never *do* anything to you. It's more like, 'Hi, Tom. Love your album. Will you sign this?' and that's fine. But it's still a little embarrassing to be standing in line for a movie and everyone starts to shout.

"I'll do it—go to the movie and risk that—because I think it's important that I do it. Otherwise you isolate yourself too much and you stop realizing what real life is like. And if that happens, how are you going to write about it and sing about it if your whole existence is your big pad and pool?"

Petty's pad isn't *that* big, he insists, and he still owns the Camaro he's driven for the last few years. He now has a guard (immortalized in **Hard Promises**' "Nightwatchman") to keep the curious away from his front door, but that is about the only overt sign of his enormous popularity. **Hard Promises** gives no indication that Petty is going to rest on his laurels.

"I feel satisfied," he says, "but not so much so that we can hang it on the wall and forget about it. Mostly, I'm happy to see that we've done more than just be a rock band. We came along at a time when change was in the air. Things had gotten pretty dull. We haven't changed the world or anything, but the kids like what we're doing and that's always been the key thing. That's always been what we wanted most." ■

ROCK DISCOS

WHY ARE THEY HERE? WHAT DO THEY WANT?!

By Vincent Nicolosi

The lights flash and twirl with the intensity of lasers, and yet it is dark here. The music, pulsing and unrelenting, drives upwards of a thousand people onto the dance floor, engulfing them with the fury of a hurricane. And what a potpourri of styles they wear: blue jeans and Adidas, military motorcycle leather, the trim and gothic European black tie and tails of pre-Nazi Berlin.

Is this 1928 or 1978? A Weimar-era cabaret or *Saturday Night Fever* revisited? Neither. It's a rock disco and the time is *now*.

If it weren't for the big mirrored discos of yesteryear—Studio 54 and its galaxy of clones—the rock discos of today and tomorrow might never have happened. The whole concept evolved as a competitive maneuver, a survival tactic, between Studio 54 and another flashy disco in New York City.

By 1978 disco had already left the black, hispanic and gay ghettos where the music had its birth, and had gone high fashion. New York's first ultra-chic disco was Hurrah, where beautiful people came to see, be seen and dance to non-stop music until dawn. Hurrah's financial success, however, carried within it the seeds of the club's downfall: it encouraged competition. Studio 54's initial momentum was due reportedly to Hurrah's firing a certain employee—who then took vengeance by selling Hurrah's mailing list to the newly opened Studio 54. Whatever the reason, the *Saturday Night Fever* set, attired by Halston, Gucci and Fiorucci, fluttered to more stylish nests. Hurrah stood empty.

The club had to innovate or fold. Hurrah tried wooing the old crowd back with "Neon Woman," a cabaret show starring Divine, the colossal blond transvestite from the movie *Pink Flamingos*. The old crowd came back, caught the show, and left for Studio 54 when it was over.

At that time new wave was a largely ignored culture confined to New York's grungy Lower East Side. The underground rock scene centered around a few bars, mainly CBGB's and Max's Kansas City, but these were places for listening, not dancing. Hurrah's manager Henry Schissler devised the concept (after Divine's show failed) of playing rock in a disco setting. Perhaps more importantly, he provided a forum for new bands to showcase original work. The idea worked, giving Hurrah the distinction of being the nation's first rock disco.

Since then other rock discos have mushroomed across the country, serving as a coast-to-coast, off-the-air forum for new bands showcasing their work on record, video or through live performance. The recording industry views rock discos as a barometer to assess their own product and the potential of unsigned acts. For their patrons—the wrap-around shades after dark crowd, the night people of the chic proletariat—rock discos are the focal point of an emerging national lifestyle, albeit underground and mostly still urban.

Three years after Hurrah's sink-or-swim foray, more than 200 rock discos have opened in the US, nearly every one in a major metropolitan area. New York is the most influential market, monitored by record companies, radio and other rock discos throughout the nation. The city is host to over 20 rock clubs, including the Mudd Club, Club 57 and the Ritz. San Francisco has the I-Beam and the Stud; Los Angeles, the Odyssey and the Cathay de Grande, patterned after the Blitz Club in London, which plays intentionally non-commercial music.

There's a wide scattering of rock discos from sea to shining sea—for example, the 688 in Atlanta, or Neo in Chicago, which changed from disco to rock when the old crowd thinned out and wandered away. A few clubs have even opened in predominantly rural areas, such as Vermont, and in smaller towns like Moscow, Idaho. All tend to favor rock songs with a strong rhythm track that are not usually heard on radio, and play them blended—back to back, disco-style—for a rock audience which is definitely into dancing.

Rock discos have been, and continue to be, immensely important to innovative but unestablished bands. Ever heard Pylon, Human Sexual Response or the Dead Kennedys on a commercial radio station? Yet these groups, along with others, have a large cult following from Nantucket Sound to San Francisco Bay. When people want to hear music that radio refuses to play, they'll gather where they can hear it—and that makes the rock disco an increasingly important communications center.

Most of the new wave bands who graduated to "star" status in 1979 and 1980 were broken in the discos first, and then on radio. The pattern is likely to continue for the next wave bands as well.

"That's where we had to break Devo, in the discos," says Stephen Patrie, a promo man at Warner Bros. Records. " 'Whip It' and 'Gates of Steel' were both born in the rock clubs where people could dance. 'Whip It' was selling well on club play alone; then radio finally picked up and we could hardly ship out enough records to meet the demand.

"It was similar with the B-52's. They traveled to New York from Georgia and played around at places like Club 57. Warners signed them in '79 with 'Rock Lobster,' which the band had produced themselves [as an independent 45], already playing in all the clubs. The radio stations finally picked up on them, and a year and a half after its release their first album went gold.

"Look back at the beginnings of nearly every band to come out of the new wave movement and you'll see that it's a similar story: New rock bands with a dance beat just have to get broken in the dance clubs."

The Pretenders, Talking Heads, Gang of Four, the Clash, Blondie and more recently Spandau Ballet and Adam and the Ants are among the better-known bands to break first on the rock disco circuit, to be picked up later by radio. Their accessibility makes the clubs more important initially than radio to the new rock artist. Also, the rock disco's patrons and all-important d.j.s tend to think of themselves as trendsetters, if for no other reason than that they are

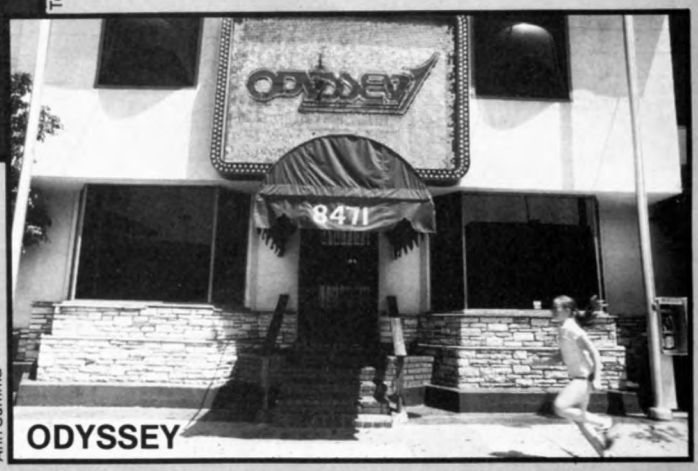


SPIT



Teri Bloom

B.C. Kagan



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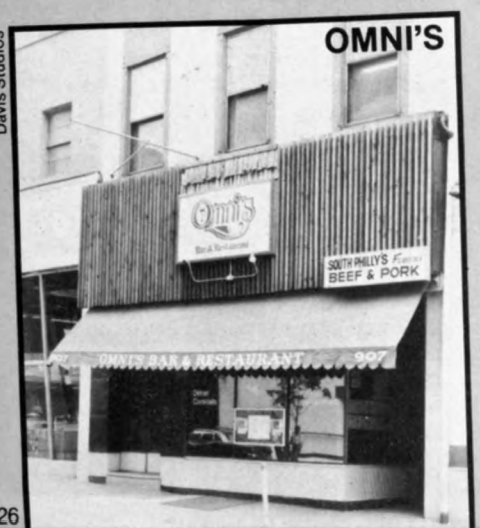

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"All it takes is a good record. It doesn't matter who you are."

—Danny Heaps, d.j., Mudd Club

open to and in touch with the latest, the avant-garde and the unestablished.

Lee Salmon is a d.j. and booker at Omni in Philadelphia. "Not only do we play good records by unknown bands, we also try to book the bands themselves, to give them a chance to perform."

Omni isn't a liberal exception among rock discos. "All it takes in this scene is for a record to be good," says Danny Heaps, d.j. and the man who books live acts at New York's Mudd Club, one of the most famous rock discos in America. "It doesn't matter who you are. You just have to be good and have a very current sound, whatever the sound is 'now.' The sound keeps changing and moving; bands have to be aware of that. What's happening now is a Euro-sound, Visage and Spandau Ballet. There's also the black sound, tribal, like Talking Heads and Eno and Byrne's **My Life in the Bush of Ghosts**, or like Medium Medium. We'll play anybody if the sound is good and current. But what was new and interesting a year ago is boring to our crowd today."

Danny Heaps and his associate Mark Josephson had an idea in 1979 that affected not just rock discos but the whole new rock scene in general. They are co-founders and co-presidents of Rockpool Promotions, a communications link of input and feedback between the country's scattered and farflung rock discos. The New York-based Rockpool is also the first national rock record pool, servicing records to progressive radio stations—mainly those on college campuses—as well as clubs.

The basis of Rockpool's operation is simple. Record companies submit sufficient quantities of newly released records to Rockpool, which in turn dispenses them to member rock discos and radio stations. All recipients (selected for their high standing in the "new music" community) must keep a record of which cuts were played most frequently, and submit this list to Rockpool. The compiled results are sent to record companies and each member of the pool in a bi-weekly newsletter which is perhaps the most comprehensive chart of its kind, covering not only disco and radio play of dance-oriented rock, but national retail activity of albums as well. Thus members of the pool, or individuals who want simply to subscribe to the *Rockpool Newsletter*, have current information on what records are being played and sold nationwide.

At Rockpool the major record companies do not have a monopoly over small independent labels, or even records released by bands at their own expense. "We give everyone a chance," Josephson says. "If a band cuts a record and sends us copies, as long as the record is of quality and not something that would reflect poorly on us, we'll distribute it. Of course it's up to the d.j.s after that."

One self-produced band that received national recognition through Rockpool Promotions is Our Daughter's Wedding. They submitted their own record to Rockpool, and Heaps liked the band enough to act as their manager. "Lawnchairs," distributed to rock discos and progressive radio stations throughout the country, rose to number one on Rockpool's national playlist. Heaps is currently considering ("with extreme caution") several offers from major labels.

(Large record companies have done equally well by Rockpool, which estimates Epic sold 100,000 copies of Adam and the Ants' **Kings of the Wild Frontier** and the B-52's reaped over a half-million album sales largely from club exposure.)

Our Daughter's Wedding is currently touring the rock disco circuit, preceded by their cult fame. This is another way rock discos have been important: by helping to revive and expand the popularity of live music.

Bands have always toured, but it's usually meant nationally known and commercially successful acts hitting a big stage in front of thousands. Before rock discos and organizations like Rockpool, few if any bands without record company support, significant airplay or a reputation mellowed by nostalgia could pack a house two thousand miles from their hometown. The nation's recessionary economy and escalating gasoline prices have handed the touring advantage over to superstars; bands of the concert-hall variety—too big for clubs but too small for arenas—have been hard hit. New acts, however, unknown except throughout the rock disco underground, can travel cheaply and lightly with minimal equipment, usually without special lighting or sets, and with few (if any) roadies or employees.

Jim Fouratt is a promoter and manager. He helps smaller groups until they can afford full-time management, and he steers new bands, as he says, "through the shark-filled waters of record company contracts." He guided Polyrock from the band's beginnings until they were contracted by RCA Records.

"The rock disco is still needed to showcase up-and-coming bands which deserve exposure but aren't highly polished. Without backing from a record company, the discos are about the only way to get or strengthen a large regional or national following—one that a band has already begun to develop by record or in some cases video play."

Continued on page 57

A NATIONWIDE SAMPLE

THE AGORA/Cleveland, Ohio
Ohio is a rock stronghold, and so is the Agora, still going strong after a decade. The club is evolving into the '80s with a nod towards danceable rock. It has video upstairs and live acts onstage. The Agora blends traditional rock with new.

I-BEAM/San Francisco, Ca.
There is good rock in San Francisco but the city is still a disco holdout, due no doubt to a large gay population. Just as San Francisco offers everything for everyone, I-Beam plays some of the best rock to be heard in the area—in between disco cuts.

NEO/Chicago, Ill.
Neo has recently switched from traditional disco to rock music. This is one of the most popular rock discos in the Midwest and is a principal forum for local as well as national acts. Equipped with video.

ODYSSEY/West Hollywood, Ca.
Like the I-Beam in San Francisco, the Odyssey isn't 100 per cent anything, musically or otherwise. The club programs new rock exclusively on Fridays and Mondays, with scattered play throughout the rest of the week as well. Odyssey has three floors, three bars, a patio and a large dance floor. It's without video at the moment and doesn't present many live acts, though the management hopes to expand in both these areas in the future.

OMNI/Philadelphia, Pa.
Omni, once a topless bar frequented by businessmen, is now Philadelphia's number one rock disco. This major east coast venue favors non-established bands; it also presents video.

THE PLAYPEN/Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.
A huge disco that plays between 60 to 70 per cent rock. Rock discos on the Florida coast are of vital importance in reaching the students who flock south (and head for nightspots like the Playpen) throughout the winter and early spring. The Playpen packs in more than 3,000 people during spring and winter breaks.

THE RITZ/New York, NY
A rococo rock disco with cathedral-like capacity, the Ritz is doing a lot to commercialize the new rock simply by making it chic. The club will present anything, however, if the music is danceable and the d.j.s like it. Its importance is nearly equal to its size.

688/Atlanta, Ga.
Like many rock discos, 688 rose from cult status to become a major club in its region (in this case the Southeast). 688 attracts rockers not only from Georgia but from both Carolinas and Tennessee. It's a major Southern venue for live acts; also shows video.

SPIT/Boston, Mass.
Spit, a large rock disco, not only accepts but openly encourages new groups to submit recordings and videos. The club presents live bands, and (like most rock discos) is open to "underground" acts.

TUGS/Seattle, Wash.
Tugs is a rock oasis in the Northwest. About 60 per cent of its recorded music could be classified as dance rock; early in the week the club plays jazz and R&B. Tugs also presents new work by new acts. —VN

THE STEVE MARRIOTT

AUTODISCOGRAPHY

PART TWO



Ebet Roberts

As told to Jim Green

Last issue we left Steve Marriott, his Small Faces seemingly poised at the edge of superstardom, beating a hasty retreat. Fear of success? Or fear of failure to live up to rising expectations? "Whatever you read in print, it was a case of 'Marriott was scared,'" said the teen idol in question.

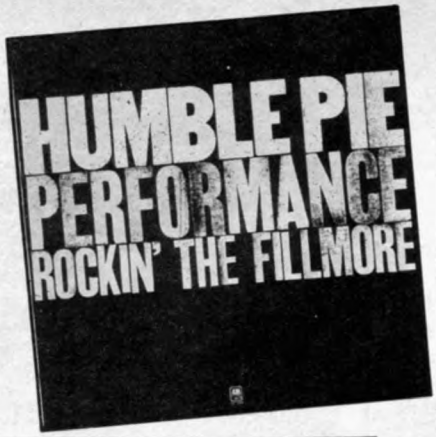
For certainly he'd become that, and his apprehensions were spiced with distaste for gigs where indiscriminate screaming drowned out the music (which had become a shaky affair onstage at best). The only solution was a new band—playing new music. —*JG*

Peter Frampton was very upset with the state of affairs with the Herd; they'd killed themselves with bum records [*somewhat successful commercially, but artistically barren*]. He wanted to leave but didn't know how to, and could he join the Faces? I thought, "Yeah, it'd be great. He's a very talented guitar player, so I could drop the guitar, vocalize a bit more, and that'll rejuvenate us as a live band."

But I asked the band and they didn't want him in. I think that's when I thought, "Sod it! What am I doing? I've got to do something else myself." Frampton's unhappiness made me feel I had to get out of the depressive rut *I* was getting into.

What I did then was find drummer Jerry Shirley and bassist Greg Ridley for Peter. Shirley was once in Apostolic Intervention; I produced their version of "(Tell Me) Have You Ever Seen Me" on Immediate. I wanted to call 'em the Nice, but Andrew Oldham said, "You can't use *that* name!" Then later on he used it for Keith Emerson's band, who'd been backing P.P. Arnold. Andrew always steals with decorum—very Nice-ly! [*Ridley had been in Spooky Tooth.*]

I thought it was gonna be a great band, so about two weeks later I rang Pete up and asked if *I* could join! I thought, "I'm fed up with being a front man; I'll just stand back, play some guitar and do some vocal backings, and let Peter be the front man."





1969

As Safe as Yesterday Is Town and Country

We were in the studio for about six months. We did **As Safe as Yesterday Is** *and* **Town and Country** before the first was released. Delays, delays—I don't know why. Andrew had all these concepts for the album cover of **Yesterday**, and I said, "Fuck it, put it out in a brown paper bag and write 'Humble Pie' on it in pen." So they did that and photographed it and that was the cover!

Meanwhile, there was all this press about us. You're supposed to be amazing the day you come out, but you need time. There was so much pressure I was nearly at the point of mental breakdown. It drives you into being a recluse, instead of the extrovert you're known as. We wanted to come in the back door but the media wouldn't let us.

On the first two LPs we were confused as to what to do. I can write lots of different types of songs—so can Pete, though they were mainly my songs at the time. I had all this country stuff and all this rock stuff; we wound up doing more quiet stuff than people expected.

After those two albums had been out, Andrew gave us the nod on Immediate. He said, "You've gotta leave now 'cause we're going under," and suggested ways of getting a record deal, which was really nice 'cause I'd had no idea. We could have gone with the company and wound up as assets to the liquidator. So we went to A&M, told 'em what we wanted and they gave it to us.

A&M picked up both albums—only the first had come out here, on Immediate, with and without CBS distribution—and packaged them as the **Lost and Found** *double set in 1972. Oddly enough, the Pie's one British hit, "Natural Born Bugie," is miscredited as a song called "Growing Closer"—written by Ian McLagan!*







1970-1971

Humble Pie Rock on

By our third album we were starting to mix everything in, including some of the heavy stuff we later moved into. Our new manager, Dee Anthony, had a very strong influence in that. Danny Farnham, a roadie who'd been working with Spooky Tooth, said, "There's this great rock 'n' roll manager in America; want us to put in the good word for you?" Dee came to England and talked to us. We thought he was just the type of strong guy we wanted.

Now, onstage we used to come out and sit down and play acoustic. He told us to kick that out for a start, 'cause until you're in a position to do that—until they *want* you to do that—they're going to boo you at the Fillmore and throw their popcorn. He wasn't wrong; it just hadn't dawned on me, 'cause I was still too busy smoking hash and being introverted.

Rock On was the first 16- (or was it 24-track?) album we'd done; it had extra backing vocals and sax and all that shit. [*Glyn Johns co-produced.*] It was a further combination of elements, but mostly harder rock with a bit of soul in there. The first Small Faces albums consisted of our going in and doing our stage act, but in the Pie we started going in and *creating* the stage act—getting the songs down that we wanted in the set, instead of coming out scared: "Oh shit, how we gonna play *that* motherfucker?"



1972

Performance: Rockin' the Fillmore

There were lots of blues, R&B tunes and cover versions in **Performance**. By the time we did that album the audience was familiar with us and we knew what they wanted, which was hard-hitting rock—so OK, let's give it to 'em.

It's not as if I'd stopped writing other stuff; it's just that there's a time and a place for it. It's also that I started coming out more. I was still introverted to a point. Dee would take me into a corner and give me a big lecture: "You've got to come out, they *want* you to. You're a front man, now *be* a front man."

As soon as I started showing my balls a bit Peter realized that I was gonna take over. It scared him a bit, and he split. I don't blame him. I would have done the same thing. When you see someone coming on stronger than you can, the jealousies start creeping in and there's no more feeling of being a unit.

Smokin'

That's the album where we really got into hard rock, and the soul influence started coming out. I was leaning that way; hell, I started out that way in the Moments! Dave "Clem" Clempson [*ex-Bakerloo and Colosseum guitarist*] had joined after we'd done most of it. He wasn't on a lot of the backing tracks and wasn't in on the working-up of any of them. I don't think I would've liked being in a three-piece; I'm not a good enough guitar player. I like to be able to stop playing at any point and concentrate on singing, and that was hard enough in the Faces where at least we had a keyboard. We got Clem in the band, put him straight into the studio and said, "Here, overdub on this and this."

1973

Eat It

I thought, "Heck, maybe *now's* the time to blend in the quieter country stuff and the soulful stuff with the rock 'n' roll"; I had all these songs hanging out. So one side was rock tunes and one side country-type, plus a side of old soul numbers and a live side. Maybe it wasn't the right time. But fuck it, I'll own up to that; it was my fault —if you can call it "fault"—and I really enjoyed doing it. It was considered a failure 'cause it only got up to number 12 in the US. What a pity!

We used the Blackberries [Venetta Fields, Billie Barnum and Clydie King] on backing vocals. They were a great influence on me; great singers, all of 'em. I thought the black backing vocals would be good for the vocal side of the band. The instrumental side was virtually tied up at that point, but I thought we needed something else. As soon as I find a formula, I want to break it! What I was originally going for, which the rest of the band objected to (although I don't blame 'em), was a "revue" format, like the old Ike and Tina Turner shows, which rock audiences hadn't really seen. I wanted to get Junior Walker to tour with us. He'd step out—we'd back him up—and do, say, "Shotgun," and we could do a couple of our numbers, and the Blackberries could step out and do a couple of the old Ikettes things—that's who the Blackberries were, the Ikettes, "Peaches and Cream" and stuff like that. It would've been a different turn, if nothing else.

Maybe the others had dried up as far as songwriting; they weren't forthcoming, so all I had was my own stuff. A lot of the songs had been by Marriott and the Pie: my words, but half the writing, even half the production, came down to arranging. They deserved credit if they worked on the arrangement, so they got it.

Thunderbox

With this album we were getting towards the end of our tether. We'd been on the road for about four years and were very tired. I was in a quandary at the time; I thought we were going in one direction, but the rest of the band turned around and said they didn't *like* that direction. I remember Clem saying, "Look, we've gotta make a rock 'n' roll album." I didn't understand that kind of logic. What the hell is rock and roll? Is it Black Sabbath? Chuck Berry? Yes? Or just what people say you are when you do it? So we had a mixture of things on **Thunderbox**. It was the last album I had any responsibility for.

1975

Street Rats

Street Rats was disastrous. I had nothing to do with the fucking thing. I'd backed out by then and would just show my face every now and then to do a vocal and split, 'cause I was fed up with the whole situation. I wrote a couple of things on it; the rest was bits and pieces. "Funky to the Bone" had nothing to do with Humble Pie; it was just musicians up in my studio. "Street Rats" was just me and a drummer friend, Ian Wallace—nobody else on it—messing around in my studio.

The rest of the guys had said, "Let's bring in a producer," so I said, "If we must, let's bring in Andrew Oldham; he formed the band, blah blah blah." Andrew put homemade things in some cuts and took them to America to make them metally, which I think was a silly move. I guess he had to do it—he was under pressure from A&M—but the whole thing was disgusting.

I've gotta be honest, I was very aloof from the rest of the guys then. I had my own studio and was playing with other musicians again. Ian Wallace was in King Crimson with Boz Burrell [*Ian McLagan's pre-Faces bandleader*], Mel Collins [*who'd played sax on* ***Thunderbox***] and what's 'is name—Fripp. I convinced "Wally," as I called him, to leave King Crimson and work with Alexis Korner and Peter Thorup, who'd been touring with us. [*Korner, British blues legend and ex-kingpin of the London club circuit, had sung back-up on some Pie cuts.*] They formed Snape, who did one album I thought was remarkably good. Wally was one of the musicians who'd come up to my studio and fuck around. At that point I didn't have much to do with the rest of the band. We'd grown apart.

Nobody really left, exactly; a roadie came 'round to tell me my band was breaking up. "Why are you telling *me* this?" It made me a bit sick. I'd said I hadn't wanted to tour, but we were contracted to do one more. We actually enjoyed it, 'cause we knew it was a farewell tour and no more bullshit. We probably became closer on that tour than we'd been for the past 18 months; we'd been splitting up personally and professionally, my wife had left me—it was a nasty period. We talked about it, why we were splitting up, and it was a big own-up all around.



1976

STEVE MARRIOTT: Marriott

There was a hiatus for some months, after which Marriott toured with the Steve Marriott All-Stars—"a funny band; it was terrible!" The line-up oddly enough included Ridley and even Clempson. "He wasn't supposed to be there, but he came in one day when we were rehearsing and said, 'I'm bored, can I play?' 'Sure.'"]

My solo album, as it came out, wasn't my concept. [*A "British" side with Wallace, Ridley and Mickey Finn (ex-T.Rex), an "American" side with Marriott—singing, not playing guitar—surrounded by LA session musicians.*]

It was a pressure situation A&M had put me in. I'd given them songs done by me at my studio, but they said, "No, it's not good enough quality, we use dolbys these days," and all that crap. It cost me $300,000 to have the same songs sound like an LA clinic, but I didn't really have a choice.

They brought in Kenny Kerner and Richie Wise to produce it; they're nice people but let's face it: the album's no great shakes. They didn't know how to produce English rock musicians, guys used to thrashing it out. It sounds like they put a limiter on everything and squashed it into a can. The other side is too clinical—they said my version sounded too black, but the LA side came out sounding blacker—or rather more contrived "black." They're mostly my songs, but they didn't come out as I'd visualized 'em—or as I'd already *done* 'em.

I'd been touring as **Marriott** came out, but stopped shortly after. I was disillusioned by the whole thing.

1977-1978

SMALL FACES: Playmates 78 in the Shade

After that tour I started talking to the rest of the Small Faces about a reunion. It wasn't my idea. I'd had no plans. Kenny Jones, I think, rang me up; he and Ian McLagan knew Rod Stewart was splitting from the Faces, and they'd been talking about getting back together for a couple of gigs and a live album from them. "Itchycoo Park" had been reissued in England and was very successful [*a Top 10 hit for the second time*].

It took a long time to talk over, 'cause it was so sensitive. Ronnie Lane was in on it in the beginning, but we had another row and a falling-out. It's a shame two good friends of old can't get on, but that's the way it is. [*Rick Wills took his place.*]

We fell in love with **Playmates** while recording in the studio. It was very light and laid back, just right for that time; you didn't have to push for anything. **Seventy-Eight in the Shade** was a bit heavier [*with Jimmy McCullough added on guitar*]; like Humble Pie, I think it would've gotten heavier and heavier had it gone further on.

The reunion wasn't financially viable. Too many of us had too many tax and other financial pressures to do what we'd've had to do—take it street level and play all the clubs and support gigs. We all had to run away; it was a case of "scramble!" [*McLagan hooked up with the Rolling Stones, and later the spin-off New Barbarians for tours. Jones, of course, has since joined that West London band of mods the Small Faces were originally compared with.*]

1980

HUMBLE PIE: On to Victory

I went to California and was hanging out. For a while I was playing with Leslie West; we recorded some stuff with Jim Leverton [*ex-Fat Mattress and Savoy Brown*] on bass and Dave Hines, the original Spencer Davis drummer. We carved out nigh 12 tunes, which will eventually see the light of day —if not the actual cuts, then at least the tunes.

After that I was just pissing around, and I got fed up with it. I hate to see a good name get passed over, so I thought about getting Humble Pie back together. First I contacted Jerry; he was all for it. Then I rang Greg. He's selling antiques in Gloucester—retired, officially. He said, "My old lady don't want me to do that stuff no more. I'm quite happy in the antiques business."

[*After the Pie, Shirley founded Natural Gas with ex-Badfinger Joey Molland, ex-Heep bassist Mark Clarke and ex-Sutherland Bros. & Quiver Pete Woods. Natural Gas evolved into Magnet, which included bassist Anthony Jones from New York band the Planets.*] Jerry grabbed Anthony—"Sooty" we call 'im, a good bloke—and we went into the studio [*in New York*], just the three of us, and cut "Fool for a Pretty Face." I went back to California and thought no more of it than, "Maybe, who knows?" But we got such a violent reactino on it—airplay in New York, stuff like that—that we said "OK, let's make a go of it," and cut **On to Victory** as a three-piece.

Clem and Bobby Tench came out to California. Clem was artin' and fartin'; he didn't know what he wanted to do, the Jack Bruce thing or whatever. We told him, "Go home and think about it. Do whatever you want but be positive about it!"

I've known Bobby for years. He was knocking around in bands like the Gass in the mid-'60s.

[*Tench later followed Rod Stewart in the Jeff Beck Group and played with that group's offshoot, Hummingbird, and in Streetwalkers.*] Bobby and I aren't great guitarists, but we're good ones, and with the vocals we've got we don't want no flash guitar; Van Halen can cover that sphere.

I can play keyboards too; I did most of 'em in Humble Pie before. At first Peter and I swapped piano and organ, but after that I did 'em except for spots by Jerry and Clem. We might bring keyboards back onstage but it's such a hassle, especially piano.

Continued on page 56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THE WHO - My Generation. Reissue of First LP on Virgin. (UK) $9.15
THE WHO - The Who: Perfect Collections. 24 cut, 2 LP set. (J) $22.40
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THE BEATLES - Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band/Within You, Without You (F) $3.00
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PETE TOWNSHEND - Keep On Working/Jools and Jim (UK) $3.00
PETE TOWNSHEND - Rough Boys/And I Moved. (UK) $3.00
XTC - Towers Of London/Battery Brides (live) (H) $3.00

7" E.P.'s

THE BEATLES - Here Comes The Sun/For You Blue/While My Guitar Gently Weeps/Piggies (M) $4.70
THE BEATLES - Get Back/I Me Mine/Two Of Us/One After 909 (M) $4.70
THE BEATLES - Rock And Roll Music/Eight Days A Week/Mr. Moonlight/Kansas City. W/lyric sheet. (J) $4.15
THE BEATLES - Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band E.P. (J) $3.95
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BEATLES - Paperback Writer/Norwegian Wood/We Can Work It Out/Drive My Car. W/lyric sheet. (J) $4.15
BEATLES - Yellow Submarine/Taxman/Here, There And Everywhere/An Your Bird Can Sing. W/lyric sheet. (J) $4.15
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BEATLES - Bad Boy/Strawberry Fields Forever/Penny Lane/Good Day Sunshine. W/lyric sheet. (J) $4.15
THE BEATLES - Long Tall Sally/Matchbox/I Feel Fine/Slow Down. W/lyric sheet. (J) $4.15
THE BEATLES - Magical Mystery Tour. 2 E.P. set with 24 page booklet. (UK) $6.65
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KATE BUSH - Army Dreamers/Delius/Passing Through Air (non-LP) (UK) $3.00
THE DOORS - "The Door's Hits" E.P. (A) $4.30
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STIFF LITTLE FINGERS - Just Fade Away/Go For It/Doesn't Make It All Right (live) (F) $3.00
***THE WHO** - Substitute/I'm A Boy/Pictures Of Lily (UK) $3.00
XTC - Respectable Street/Strange Tales, Strange Tails (non-L.P.)/Officer Blue (non-L.P.) (UK) $3.00

12" E.P.'s

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DAVID BOWIE - "Fashion" 12" (UK) $4.55
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CREAM - Extra Cream 12". 4 Tracks. (A) $5.75
THE CURE - Primary/Descent (non-L.P.) (UK) $5.10
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GENESIS - "Spot The Pigeon" 12" (C) $5.60
IAN GILLAN - "Reading Live and More" Photo label 12". (J) $8.90
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JAPAN - "Special Edition 12"." 5 tracks (C) $5.50
JUDAS PRIEST - Hot Rockin'/Breaking The Law (live)/Living After Midnight (live). Has photo label. (UK) $4.55
JOHN LENNON W/ELTON JOHN BAND - I Saw Her Standing There (live)/Whatever Gets You Through The Night (live)/Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds (live) (G) $6.55
JOHN LENNON - Imagine/Working Class Hero (G) $6.55
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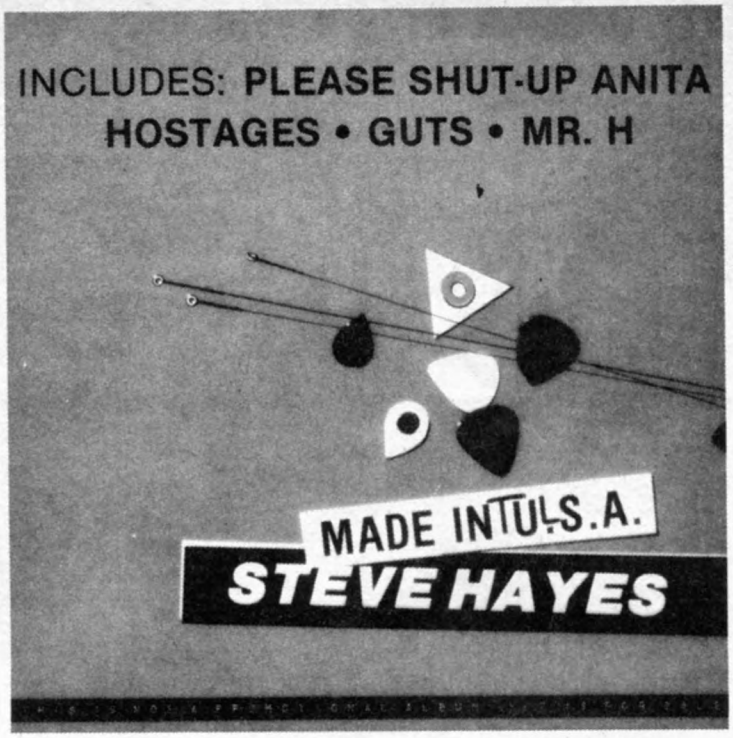

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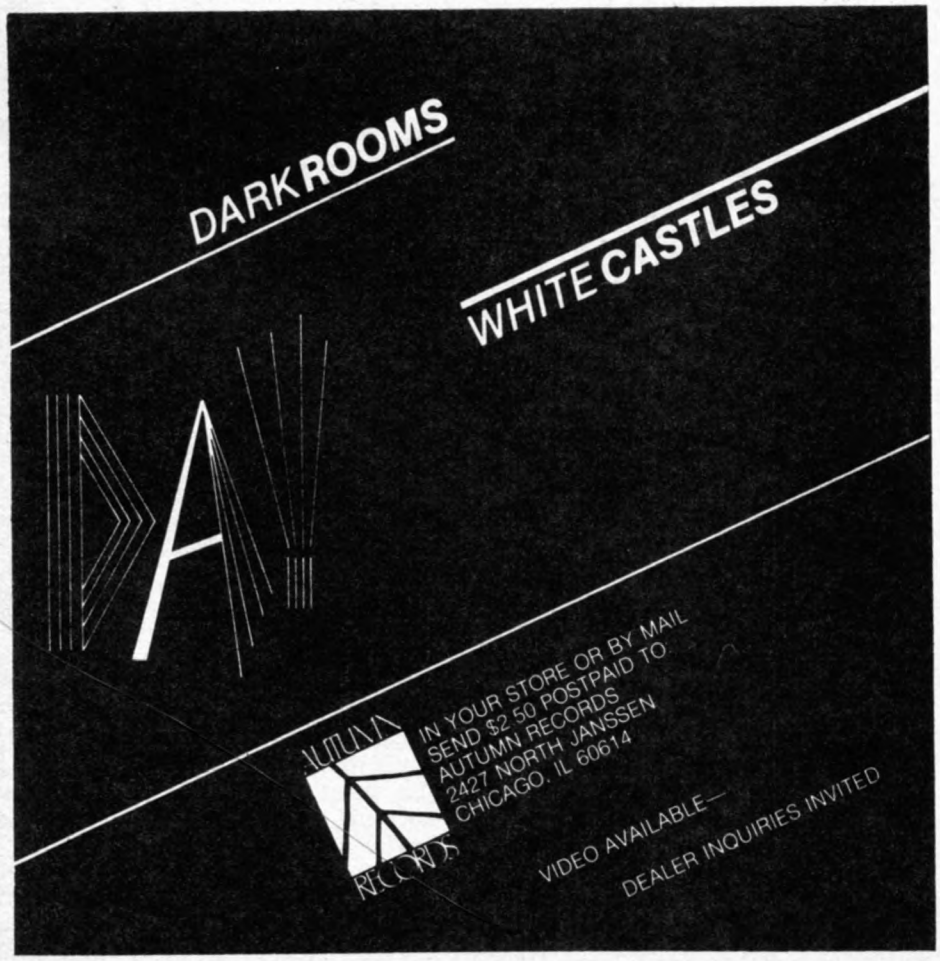

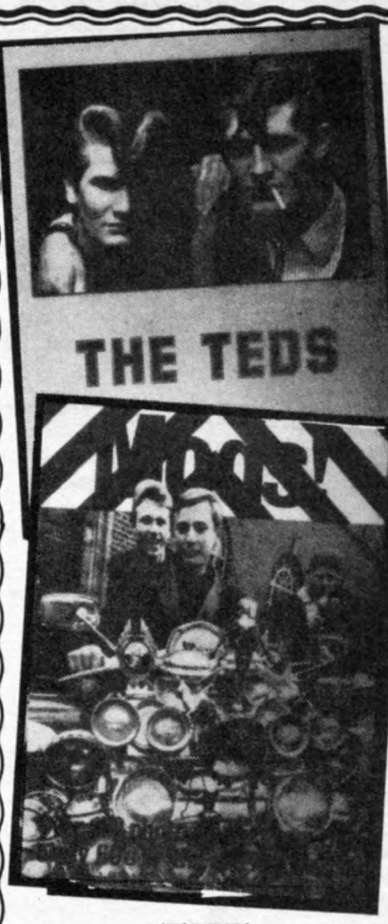

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Rock's Friend IRMA

A new organization (sometimes for profit) grows in Nashville

Last year the name began appearing in such publications as *Trouser Press*, *Billboard* and *Playboy*: The International Rock and Roll Music Association, Inc. It was an unlikely name in an unlikely city, Nashville. A scam? Another bumper-sticker ad in the classifieds? Initial publicity was generally ignored, but a year later the association continues, and for sheer diligence alone it merits attention.

The International Rock and Roll Music Association (IRMA, for short) is the brainchild of Bernard Walters, a 34-year-old former tennis pro who moved to Nashville from his native Philadelphia several years ago. Walters has been a self-confessed English rock fanatic since 1964, when he saw the Rolling Stones on their first American tour. He has since taken and collected over 5000 photographs of his favorite groups, concentrating upon the Stones, Who and Kinks. Finding himself relocated in Nashville, home of the internationally recognized Country Music Foundation, Walters visualized a similar organization devoted to rock music. Considering the impact Nashville and the South in general had on the formation of rock music, the locale becomes less unlikely.

Walters, his wife Katherine and a volunteer staff of eight run the association with their own funds and those solicited through memberships—which range from $5 for an "enthusiast" student membership to $100 for a corporate membership. IRMA's lack of substantial financial support from the music industry doesn't bother Walters; he would like to keep the association as independent as possible and wants support to come from fans.

He does, however, cultivate the backing of individuals within the industry to serve on IRMA's honorary board of directors. This list currently includes Rick Nielsen of Cheap Trick, Bonnie Bramlett and members of the Rossington-Collins Band and Humble Pie, as well as attorneys, promotion people and producers. Besides their verbal support, Walters plans eventually to organize annual meetings of these honorary directors and the rest of the association to discuss current ideas and future goals.

IRMA's specific plans are a bit ambiguous, evidenced by the credo "to keep rock rolling." Walters's thesis is that although rock music is the most influential part of the music industry, it is not accorded adequate recognition. He cites *Billboard*, which prints separate country, soul and Latin record charts but lumps rock music in with broader-based pop. Walters feels the charts should be either completely segregated or completely integrated to emphasize rock's dominance.

On a more immediate level, Walters has enumerated several specific goals toward which his organization is working. The first, and most important, is concert safety. In the wake of the Who's Cincinnati tragedy, Walters undertook a study of current mass gathering practices around the country. IRMA would like to organize grassroots support to make concertgoers aware of safety measures, heading off government intervention or banning of rock events.

Walters is also concerned with piracy within the industry—not so much the relatively harmless bootleggers, but industry-connected pirates and counterfeiters. Walters reasons that since the lost profits and costs the industry must bear are passed along to the consumer, the consumer should be educated to avoid pirated product.

IRMA differs radically from other organizations in its profit-making status. Walters sees IRMA as both a profit-seeking service and a non-profit historical foundation. There are several negative connotations to the "uncharitable" nature of this organization, but Walters considers it a way to expand, gain legitimacy within the industry, and branch into such fields as video, rock flea markets and conventions, and syndicated radio specials. (One such special, already in the works, is a study of early English rock.)

The non-profit side of the association will be structured along the lines of the Country Music Hall of Fame, which houses a museum of memorabilia and artifacts besides one of the most comprehensive resource centers in the world. Although IRMA is far from having the funds for a like enterprise, Walters plans to locate the museum along Nashville's Music Row to attract the huge tourist trade. He has already begun assembling files on artists and organizing his collection of memorabilia and photographs for the eventual museum. Rick Nielsen has reportedly pledged a guitar [*Only one?—Ed.*] to the collection.

Walters's goals may seem the products of naiveté or entrepreneurship to some, but IRMA illustrates a growing need within rock fandom for a center of information, research materials and, of course, music for current and future generations of fans. Many dedicated people have worked for years on discographies and biographies, with admirable results. Yet there is no data bank for all this information. To create one would require not only major funding but also expertise. Whether the International Rock and Roll Music Association is the organization for the job is still to be determined. In the past year IRMA has proven itself worthy of future consideration. ■

(For more information, contact Bernard Walters, PO Box 50111, Nashville, TN 37205.)

BOOKS
FILM









This Is Elvis

(Malcolm Leo and Andrew Solt, directors; Warner Bros.)

Four years after his death Elvis Presley has gone beyond legend to almost a secular canonization. You don't have to be a fan to know the bare outline of his story—the poor, rural boy who grew up to be the prototypical rock 'n' roll idol, gave two years of his life to Uncle Sam in the Army, churned out the films in the '60s, staged a triumphant musical comeback and died, young but not prematurely, a victim of overwork and overindulgence.

That's *This Is Elvis* in a nutshell. The film's significance lies not in its revelations—there aren't any—but in its near-total reliance on Presley footage to tell his own story. Writers/producers/directors Malcolm Leo and Andrew Solt proved their mettle at rock film assemblage a few years ago with ABC-TV's *Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll*; their new work displays the same painstaking research and solid craftsmanship.

Like *Citizen Kane, This Is Elvis* begins with the (tastefully indirect) death of its subject before shifting back to childhood. Both these sequences are recreated for the camera, as are Presley's adolescent years. Once fame hits—around the time of his first television appearance—the film leaps into the electrifying if circumscribed primary source material, and the few remaining dramatized shots, cleverly tricked up to look authentic, are barely noticeable. A beyond-the-grave narration ("If only I coulda seen what was happening to me...") by long-time Presley soundalike Ral Donner ties everything together, joined occasionally by the voices (recreated and otherwise) of his parents and friends.

The blend of documentary and staged shots isn't pronounced enough to raise questions about cinematic truth; it poses an aesthetic issue, rather, of fiction's unlimited potential versus fact's narrow path. Where is the truth, for example, in actual film clips of Presley's wedding? Gawking at home movies blown up to 35mm prolongs the circus of publicity that hounds Presley even beyond death.

On a less philosophical level, *This Is Elvis* errs on the side of triteness in its staging of Presley's first Sun Records recording session (with producer Sam Phillips portrayed by his son Knox); the film also propagates the myth that Ed Sullivan only telecast Presley from the waist up. The early performance footage is priceless, however, as are the vintage anti-rock 'n' roll interviews and announcements (some of which will be familiar to viewers of *Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll*).

If anything, the film is almost too even-handed in its treatment of Presley's career—as you'd expect from a project with the singer's manager Col. Tom Parker as technical adviser. A couple of vignettes do stand out in their unexpected glimpses of deeper feelings: an emotional press conference held by the authors of *Elvis—What Happened?*, the infamous "bodyguard book"; and Presley himself, overweight and clearly zonked out of his mind, in one of his last concerts—funny as always but now pathetic in his helplessness. "I've lived a life that's full," he sings in "My Way." We're supposed to empathize, but *This Is Elvis* shows that that life, brief and constricted, was not full at all. It is the film's most telling lesson.

Scott Isler

Shout!

(Philip Norman; Fireside/Simon and Schuster, New York)

In this incredibly detailed biography, British journalist Philip Norman renders the Beatles suitable for study in high school, replete with rote memorization of names, dates and places. While replacing Hunter Davies's *The Beatles: The Authorized Biography* as the preeminent work on the subject, Norman's story differs in minor details, and leaves the reader with no clear indication of where the truth actually resides.

Shout! (subtitled *The Beatles in Their Generation*) is exactly what a biography should be. It begins at the beginning, with the lives of the Beatles' and Brian Epstein's parents, and ends with the band's breakup, leaving only the subsequent solo careers (probably not as interesting to most) unmentioned. Along the way, Norman offers a series of nicely arranged and interwoven stories, bringing in new characters as required. George Martin, Allen Klein and Dick James are presented more vividly than in any other Beatles bio I've read, making the story more comprehensible. Thorough coverage of the band's early struggles should lay to rest any myths about the Beatles' charmed lives.

The book suffers, however, from myopia due to the people Norman was able (and unable) to interview in preparing it. None of the ex-Beatles participated, nor did Allen Klein. It's unclear whether quotes are new or from prior sources; in any case, Brian Epstein's mother, Stu Sutcliffe's mother, Derek Taylor and John Lennon's aunt Mimi Stanley's views may be less than totally objective, and Norman rarely speculates who's right or wrong. So many people involved in the Beatles saga have written memoirs of their own (Epstein, Cynthia Lennon, Martin, Taylor) that any attempt at consensus would have to be a statistical average.

One of the saddest things *Shout!* points up is the counterpoint of unhappiness and death behind the Beatles' success. John Lennon may have died most recently and left the greatest legacy, but Brian Epstein, Stu Sutcliffe, Mal Evans and Julia Lennon are all tragic figures with only the unprecedented phenomenon of the Beatles as common denominator.

There's no doubt that *Shout!* will stand as the definitive Beatles bio. The book is realistic, gritty and believable. If there has to be another work on this subject, this may as well be the one.

Ira Robbins

HIT and RUN

By Jon Young



FLYING SAUCERS/Some Like It Hot
(UK EMI EMC3366)

While a swarm of British kids strains to create believable rockabilly, this grizzled quartet gracefully delivers the real thing *sans* hype. Sandy Ford's crooning incorporates Gene Vincent's sigh, Jerry Lee's sneer, Roy Orbison's purr, and 'bout every other cool cat you could name, while Niggsy Owen spins out fluid guitar lines. The Saucers stay close to the country roots that preceded the stylized aggression of slicker rockabilly, but make no mistake—they're plenty fine.

CHARLES DE GOAL/Algorhythmes
(French New Rose 2)

Bravo, *mes amis*. Charles De Goal's taut, bristling performances impart a spooky glow to stark material. Cross-references should include Devo, Talking Heads and especially the repressed hysterics of the Cure. An occasional fixation on effect for its own sake can be excused, considering the overall vitality. *Mon dieu*!

SPIRIT/Potatoland
(Rhino RNSP303)

Although the semi-legendary **Potatoland** (recorded in 1973) isn't the masterwork die-hard Spirit fans would like, it's still a delightful addition to the band's oeuvre. Randy California shows off his knack for psychedelic funk and breathtaking ballads; the hearty, upbeat harmonies never fail to uplift. Yes, the acid-casualty sound effects that ruin his most extreme work are here too, but stunning tunes like "Turn to the Right" make up for the gibberish. Genius will out, y'know.

ALEX CHILTON/Bach's Bottom
(German Line 5081)

In the early '70s Chilton's Big Star played spirited power pop before the term became meaningless from overuse. This chaotic 1975 session emphasizes his oft-alleged instability: with vocals mixed way up front (and tapes underedited), every gasp, flat note and mumble fairly leaps out. Yet even this extremely flawed addition to the small Chilton discography testifies to his charisma. With proper treatment (or discipline) he could have been amazing.

MICKEY JUPP/Oxford
(German Line 5083)

Jupp is such a down-to-earth bloke that, playing his records, you may forget he's on the turntable. In a sense he's the ultimate pub performer, with a repertoire of blues, New Orleans and novelty ("Oxford Dick and the Words") tunes that combine pleasant eccentricity and predictability in a most reassuring way. If his wry, often hapless, persona doesn't bring a smile, you're probably a grouch.

STIFF LITTLE FINGERS/Go For It
(Chrysalis CHR1339)

Has the angriest band in the world cooled down? **Go For It** may not be the SLF's **Sandinista!**, but it finds them abandoning the narrow confines of their familiar roaring style. "Gate 49" could be early, countryish Beatles. "Just Fade Away" verges on pretty. Sometimes Jake Burns doesn't even seem to have tonsilitis! In short, a surprising and refreshing effort.

LEE CLAYTON/The Dream Goes On
(Capitol ST-12139)

The man who penned "Ladies Love Outlaws" has hardened his outlook and now resembles one of John Cale's embittered cynics. Clayton's muttering, menacing performance lends credibility to grim chronicles like "Industry" ("He got the job done though it cost him his legs—Thanks Union Carbide...") and "Where Is the Justice," though he's too depressing for extended listening. "Oh How Lucky I Am," witn a children's chorus, seems more like a sick joke than authentic rejoicing. This boy needs cheering up *bad*.

LIVE WIRE/Changes Made
(A&M SP 4856)

The title of Live Wire's third refers to the band dropping the Dire Straits approach that hurt credibility. Now Live Wire is livelier and less mannered, like an educated bar band—still short on fresh ideas but fine for boozin', when spirit matters more than creativity.

THE SILENCERS/Romanic
(Precision JZ37085)

For a gang of street-corner romantics, the Silencers are a pretty detached bunch. Singer Frank Czuri pays homage to Graham Parker (on "Heart Attack"), among others, without working up a sweat. If there's nothing wrong with this standard stew of R&B, reggae, etc., there's also not enough spice to make it memorable. Some J. Geils Band humor would help.

ZED
(Atlantic SD19299)

Brit Nigel Jenkins bears a passing resemblance to Bob Seger in the scratchy voice, and to Al Stewart in the tendency to stuffiness. Despite stinging (though routine) guitar and the best intentions, Zed's earnest tales of passion seem more recited than inspired. More boogie needed.

WAZMO NARIZ/Tell Me How to Live
(Big FD1004)

Poor Waz: kinda cute but not too amusing. He's still wearing two ties, which was a low-yield joke in the first place. Mock-pompous warbling, satirizing the likes of Bryan Ferry, has limited value when the originals court self-parody themselves. However, Nariz devises some truly gorgeous melodies ("What Lays, Lays," "The Refrigerator Saga"); maybe someday he'll sing them straight. (Big, 6420 Drexel Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90048.)

ROGER CHAPMAN/Mailorder Magic
(German Line 5080)

Well over a decade after the emergence of Family, Chapman's lost little of the obsessiveness that makes him a genuinely frightening presence. Aiming his voice like an unsteady marksman, he shakes and groans as only a hopeless loony can. (Call the guards!) Little else here measures up, though; flabby material, sloppy playing and unbelievably murky production serve as a reminder that craziness isn't communicable.

DAVID LINDLEY/El Rayo-X
(Elektra 5E-524)

You'd expect Jackson Browne's brilliant accompanist to be more up-front about his virtuosity. Lindley's subdued eclecticism—blues, country, cajun, reggae, etc.—mashes into a pleasant whole. Still, the crew (including Browne, Garth Hudson and Bill Payne) obvsiously had fun, making for a move than decent groove.

STRAIGHT EIGHT/Shuffle 'n' Cut
(RCA AFL1-3979)

Straight Eight clearly has the will to be a great pop quartet. The band's playing is forceful but not overbearing, and their best piercing harmonies recall early Who. What they lack is substance. Frontman Rick Cassman's songs never ignite, despite extroverted singing and Mike Howlett's overly vivid production. Nice try, though.

THE SPIZZLES/Spikey Dream Flowers
(A&M SP 4861)

Heavy echo and filtering on the vocals set the course; singer Spizz can only be cool and distant with that treatment. Rather than act superior to his tunelessly jerky compositions, he should give his hard-hitting band songs that allow them room to stretch. Enough of this junk about robots, soldiers and *Star Trek*—please.

KAREN LAWRENCE & THE PINZ/Girl's Night Out
(RCA AFL1-4006)

Lawrence used to sing heavy metal with 1994: (*sic*); now she sports a politely spikey haircut and borrows from Lene Lovich and the Cars. Crassness that works shouldn't be condemned, but this crassness, which doesn't, should simply be forgotten. Next formula, please.

RUPERT HINE/Immunity
(A&M SP 4858)

Hine's arid futurism, with plenty of electronics and passive, mechanical vocals,

lacks the desired mystery (or danger) because he won't take any chances. Instead of the daring of Bowie or Peter Gabriel, he offers only the glib gimmickry that makes Gary Numan such an attractive and worthless commodity. To quote the title track: "No sensation/No elation/Processed all my thought communication/I've tamed imagination." Exactly.

JIM STEINMAN/Bad for Good
(Cleveland International FE36531)

The *Ben Hur* of rock albums! Jim Steinman, the man behind Meat Loaf (lotsa room back there, eh?), shows he doesn't need the big fella at all. **Bad for Good** contains a surfeit (57 minutes) of the same sort of grotesque pseudo-opera that made **Bat Out of Hell** such unbearable torment. It's enough to make you believe in censorship.

The Huddled Masses

OLD TIMERS: Soft Machine's **Land of Cockayne** (UK EMI), with the ubiquitous Jack Bruce on bass; Wishbone Ash's **Number the Brave** (MCA), featuring John Wetton on bass and Claire Hammill on backing vocals; Dan Hartman's **It Hurts to Be in Love** (Blue Sky), more pop than disco; Billy Squier's **Don't Say No** (Capitol), boisterousness in debt to Led Zep; Muddy Waters, as fine as ever on **King Bee** (Blue Sky); **Come an' Get It** (Mirage), Whitesnake's usual he-man theatrics; Lake's **Ouch** (Caribou), lowbrow "progressive" rock; **Pronounced Normal** (Rhino), Wild Man Fischer's rantings and ravings, produced by Barnes & Barnes.

NEWER TIMERS: **Don't Point Your Finger** (A&M), respectable British bar blues from 9 Below Zero; **BGM** (A&M), Yellow Magic Orchestra's cerebral synthesizer doodles; **Doyawanna** (Radio), heavy metal bubblegum from LA; **Get Wet** (Boardwalk), camp 'n' cabaret rock; **Splodgenessabounds** (UK Deram), strained punkish humor, featuring "Wiffy Smells."

UPSTARTS: The Senders' **Seven Long Super Single** (Max's Kansas City), exciting slam-bang boogie 'n' swing; Beowolf's **Slice of Life** (Morrhythm Records, Box 2111, Huntington Beach, CA 92647), flashy heavy metal; The Look's **We're Gonna Rock** (Plastic Records, 24548 Pierce, Southfield, MI 48075); Thrills' **First** (G&P Records, 539 W. 25 St., New York, NY 10001), subbing for Journey and Styx.

NOT NEW: **Killing Joke** (Editions EG), with one track more than the previously-reviewed import; Magazine's live **Play** (IRS), previously reviewed on import; **The Best of Delbert McClinton** (MCA), drawn from his three ABC LPs, 1975-77; formative Country Joe McDonald recordings on **The First Three EPs** (German Line), including a 1965 "Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die."

SOUNDTRACKS: **American Pop** (MCA), including Hendrix, the Doors and other reliables; **Hard Country** (Epic), with one apiece from Joe Ely and Jerry Lee Lewis. ■

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The Beat Goes On



The English Beat
Wha'ppen?
Sire SRK3567

By Scott Isler

The English Beat (*must* we call them that in this country?) blew in with the Two-Tone revolution of 1979/80, but always seemed to stand slightly apart from the movement's other bands. It's not just that they have their own English record company; their music, while paying obeisance to ska and related styles, has never been afraid to push beyond the barriers that defined Two-Tone in the first place. For their debut single, the band chose not a Jamaican classic but Smokey Robinson's "Tears of a Clown," revved up almost beyond recognition. Their first album (last year's **I Just Can't Stop It**) veered from Andy Williams to near-rock without losing control. If Two-Tone was about overcoming divisions, the (English) Beat, with its rhythmic flexibility, was the best advertisement. The band's name should have been in the plural.

As Two-Tone (the fad) has been towed out to the dumping ground for Last Year's Things, the groups associated with it have had to be judged on their own merits. The Specials and the Selecter have already issued second albums, with mixed results; it's not a style that counts, after all, it's what you do with it. **Wha'ppen** presents a band that, far from suffocating in a dated trend, has shed its Two-Tone chrysalis for full-fledged individuality. It's a breathtakingly vital record.

A warning, however: Musicians (or artists of any stripe) who haven't exhausted their creative resources can't be expected to rehash the past. **Wha'ppen** will disappoint (Eng.) Beat followers expecting more of **I Just Can't Stop It**'s effervescence. The new album is in a decidedly mellower groove—more a lazy swagger than the impatient push of old. "Fans" who can't follow a band through tempo changes should question their loyalty.

There are certainly Beat trademarks aplenty on **Wha'ppen**. "Doors of Your Heart" eases us into the album with that pizzicato guitar, periscope bass, Saxa's gliding alto and the inimitable Ranking Roger toasting away over an easy tonic-subdominant change. The words, though, are jagged with hurt and uncomprehension about increasingly volatile racial tensions: "So what's the use in fighting?"

The dichotomy between upbeat music and downbeat lyrics may be the Beat's most characteristic trait. The group consistently sneaks in depressing statements (of varying socio-political balance) with deliriously carefree playing. The strategy is a painless way to put across a message; the Beat's single-mindedness about it borders on monomania.

After "Doors of Your Heart," for example, comes "All Out to Get You," whose conga-line rhythm masks lines like "You're so scared of death/You don't know what life is" and "It takes more than tears/To get rid of the stains." The following "Monkey Murders" is equally glum in its depiction of personal relationships; then there's "Drowning," "Cheated"—well, you get the point. About the only song that escapes such pigeonholing is "French Toast (Soleil Trop Chaud)" which has the double advantage of being non-original (the only one on the LP) and sung in French patois.

Although their songs are credited to the group en masse, singer/guitarist Dave Wakeling is assuredly responsible for the gloomy sentiments. He views all romances as soured (add "Walk Away" to the above list) and life in general as dehumanized agony ("Over and Over," "Cheated"). "Get a Job" ("in a factory/Where they're making ammunition") is a little more specific, and "I'm Your Flag" downright anti-chauvinist.

But this is the Beat, not early Bob Dylan (or Barry McGuire), and not even flip mouthfuls of lyrics can dull a sparkling musical finish. A session trumpeter adds gloss to "I'm Your Flag"'s jazzy riff, and is joined by steel drum on the vivacious "Over and Over" (another one-and-two-and-three-kick). Spanish guitar launches "Monkey Murders," a "La Bamba" soundalike. The slower "Dream Home in N.Z." is quite evocative, with eerie whistling courtesy of a Whirligig. "Cheated"'s dub feel (isolated bass, other tracks faded in and out) also crops up in "Doors of Your Heart," and the former's seductive chorus is near-irresistible. Wordiness actually imparts a syncopated swing to these tunes.

Wha'ppen—the title conveys the unsettledness the songs allude to—concludes with "The Limits We Set," a pleasant-sounding ditty (vocalized "ooh"s, tinkling marimba, dreamy sax) condoning shoplifting. It is an extreme test of both the band's words-versus-music dialectic and the listener's tolerance. Are you prepared to follow the Beat (sorry, English Beat) across the barricades? "The only limits we set/What can we get away with?" Wakeling sings in this endorsement of the "looking after number one" philosophy. Maybe it's facetious, or tongue in cheek, but remember that life is tougher in Birmingham, England (the Beat's hometown) than suburban America.

That geographical difference also determines how well **Wha'ppen** will sell over here. If the US shrugged off **I Just Can't Stop It**'s non-stop dance party, how will it take this comparatively laid-back offering? There's almost no way masscult America can deal with this album. Radio will ignore it, record stores will bury it. That leaves a pitiably small coterie to spread the word.

What isn't in doubt is the Beat's musical confidence and self-possession. The most frightening thing about the group is that, for all **Wha'ppen**'s impressive playing and arranging, they haven't even peaked yet. Whether the band is allowed to get that far depends on the vicissitudes of the record business, luck and maybe your purchase of this album. □

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Public Image Ltd.
The Flowers of Romance
Warner Bros. BSK3536

It's a safe bet that no matter how seriously we take Public Image Ltd., no one will ever take them as seriously as the band members themselves. Their grim artistic self-consciousness may turn off the masses, but by experimenting through pop music channels PIL provides rare aural exercise for anyone willing to check their aesthetic preconceptions at the turntable. Last year's **Metal Box/Second Edition** is already looking like a classic.

The group's identity in the past depended as much on Jah Wobble's overwhelming bass as on John Lydon's vocals or Keith Levene's scratchy guitar—and Wobble's departure set off speculation on PIL's future. Typically, the band, already hobbling along without a permanent drummer, decided they didn't need a bassist either. **The Flowers of Romance** presents the current, highly exclusive organization: Lydon, Levene and non-performing Imagist Jeanette Lee (on the cover), with vital drumming assistance from crony Martin Atkins.

The new album's most obvious difference from preceding PIL recordings is its near-total absence of bass. Rather than replace Wobble's reggae-like throb, the band has veered off in another direction, even starker than before. Atkins now provides the low frequencies and visceral punch, with rhythmic drum patterns replacing bass lines as structure. Levene evidently favors synthesizer over guitar these days; only "Go Back" features his distinctively reedy six-string work. Fear of typecasting?

The opening "Four Enclosed Walls" is a dramatic introduction to Public Image's current approach. Against a sonic backdrop of what sounds like squirrels munching, Lydon lets rip with piercing muezzin chants on vaguely appropriate themes ("Destroy the infidel," "A new crusade"); his only steady accompaniment is a kicky drumbeat. Except for quavery voice, no musical pitches are employed. Anything more minimal and the grooves would be blank.

Following cuts are more melodious—Levene at least makes his presence known—but just barely. **The Flowers of Romance** is pretty much Lydon's show, from the lack of recorded competition against his mincing vocals to the importance given his lyrics. The latter are lumped together on the inner sleeve and faithful down to such ad-libbed pearls as "Alright stop Nick," addressed to engineer Nick Launay (whose credit was left off the American album cover). The band, such as it is, doesn't quite break loose on its one instrumental: "Hymie's Him" is a lumbering beat with occasional synthesizer chords, gurgles and clangs—music for things that go bump in the night.

Maybe it's coincidence, but the album's most arresting tracks are those (such as "Four Enclosed Walls") on which Atkins shares writing credit with Lydon and Levene. "Under the House"'s sinister lyrics ("Scream in the trees... It came out of the wall, a single cadaver") combine with a double-bass drum rumble, synthesized "strings" and distorted background vocals for a disturbing, impressionist tableau. "Banging the Door," with an electronic drone and a slow drumbeat that wouldn't sound out of place in Led Zeppelin, is the closest thing to a tune here. Lydon's cruelly funny singsong takes both sides of an invasion of privacy probably drawn from real life: "If he knew we were here I'm sure he'd let us in. I won't let you in."

PIL's dehumanized music, while capable of sporadically interesting effects (the dulcimer—santir?—at the beginning of "Phenagen," for instance), remains subservient to Lydon's words—not always a good thing. A tentative guitar solo can't redeem "Track 8"'s misogyny, and the singer's technique for repeating stream-of-consciousness phrases derives more from poetry readings than the Hit Parade.

The Flowers of Romance's songs are more comprehensible than their predecessor's, but the topicality jars against the music's near-academic sterility. "Francis Massacre" refers to an Irish political prisoner. "Go Back," addressing a reactionary Britain (with black humor: "Have a cup of tea good days ahead"), lacks the intriguing haze of "Careering" or "Albatross." Lydon has a flair for words and private images, but until Public Image learns to play in more than one emotional key he'd better refine his talent. It's hard for one person to carry a band; just ask Johnny Rotten. —Scott Isler

Dave Edmunds
Twangin...
Swan Song SS16034

Rockpile's sudden, lurid break-up necessitates changes in the way we view Dave Edmunds's **Twangin**.... What was to be the guitarist's last solo LP before entering musical matrimony with his then-bandmates now stands as a fresh start at picking up the pieces—or as one more record (the sixth) in a steady if low-key career.

Twangin... was wrapped up late last year, which accounts for no little irony in its credits. Edmunds modestly claims to play "everything" except the other instruments; enter Rockpile, with an affectionately termed "Nicky" Lowe. Former bosom buddy Lowe further helped out with two songs: "I'm Only Human," credited to Lowe/Rockpile, and "(I'm Gonna Start) Living Again If It Kills Me," written with Edmunds and Ms. Nick, Carlene Carter.

Current bitterness aside, the record has to rise or fall on its own merits, and with Edmunds—a dependably squeaky-good vocalist and better guitarist—that inevitably means the choice of material. In that respect, **Twangin**... is a distinct let-down from his preceding **Repeat When Necessary**. "Cheap Talk, Patter and Jive," from the writing crew that blessed Edmunds with "Queen of Hearts" and "Sweet Little Lisa" last time around, is undistinguished save for some evil amplified harmonica. Don Covay's "Three Time Loser," which follows, also lacks development and doesn't take well to the stompy beat Edmunds must like, since he uses it again on Guy Mitchell's "Singing the Blues."

Unlike Nick Lowe's ultra-commercial facade, Edmunds seems to let his personal tastes get the better of him. The (royalty) tributes to John Fogerty ("Almost Saturday Night") and Mickey Jupp ("You'll Never Get Me Up") are nice gestures, but hardly improvements on the original recordings. The Jupp tune, coming after "Three Time Loser," makes for three medium-tempo songs in a row, indicative of **Twangin**...'s lack of pacing. Edmunds's mock-country tendencies provide some relief on the cleverly pretty "Living Again if It Kills Me" (with overdubbed harmonies on loan from the Everly Brothers) and good-timey lope "I'm Only Human." The latter's jazzy guitar licks are the only ones on the album. Now that *is* modesty—the unwarranted kind.

Twangin...'s two upbeat songs are the LP's brightest spots. "It's Been So Long," an Ian Gomm number, is a likable bubble that should be released on 45 (unlike the plodding "Almost Saturday Night") to reacquaint Edmunds with everyone who bought "Queen of Hearts." George Jones's "The Race Is On" benefits from the lighter touch of backing band the Stray Cats, replacing journeymen Rockpile—and raising hopes for future collaborations.

Rock 'n' roll enthusiasts are always under fire for living in the past. Edmunds, at his best, combines reverence with vitality, but **Twangin**... has the odor of mothballs

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about it. (His claustrophobic production doesn't help either.) The attitude here is typified by the album's finishing with a pale clone of Elvis Presley's "Baby Let's Play House" dredged up from 1968. For an LP that clocks under 30 minutes, it hardly befits Edmunds to wallow in his own nostalgia as well as the music's. Anyone who thinks a 13-year-old recreation of a 26-year-old recording has something to say should check out the original—and hope Dave Edmunds regains his footing on his next album. —Scott Isler

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers
Hard Promises
Backstreet BSR-5160

Tom Petty's story parallels Bruce Springsteen's—to a point. Both are rock 'n' roll traditionalists who add distinctive touches to the music of the '50s and pre-**Sgt. Pepper** '60s. Both jumped from intense cult adulation to mass popularity on their third LP. For the fourth—a stern test—Springsteen came up with **The River**, two ambitious discs of spectacle. Petty has issued **Hard Promises**, a different story entirely.

If commercial success has turned TP's head, he's keeping it well-hidden. **Hard Promises** might be his most modest effort yet. He continues to weed out the Byrds influences, and the Heartbreakers underplay to the point of minimalism; lead guitarist Mike Campbell rarely takes the spotlight. Petty and Jimmy Iovine's co-production, polished and unobtrusive, dampens the few rockers but enhances the other tunes.

Dominated as it is by love songs, **Hard Promises** is so low-key that it could have been recorded effectively by Petty solo with acoustic guitar. His gift for simple, heartfelt lyrics is in full flower on "A Woman in Love (It's Not Me)" and "You Can Still Change Your Mind." (Sorry, no quotes; this isn't fake poetry.) Wry observations turn potential filler like "Nightwatchman" and "The Criminal Kind" into minor treats. Petty's singing still reeks of Roger McGuinn, but his tortured delivery seems less shy and affected than before. Only the tedious "Something Big" and "Insider," a hair-raising duet with obnoxious Stevie Nicks, suffer from self-importance.

Frail, blond Tom Petty may enjoy being a star, but his music and "ain't this swell?" grin on the inner sleeve show he's retained a sense of proportion. **Hard Promise**'s cover sums it up nicely: cool Petty stands in a store surrounded by other people's records. Though clearly proud of himself, Petty's secure enough to acknowledge he's one of a multitude, not a messiah. We need more like him. —Jon Young

Squeeze
East Side Story
A&M SP4854

Submitted for your consideration: The curious case of Squeeze, a tuneful British quintet with both the good and bad fortune to be far more ingenious than the average pop band. On one hand, Squeeze boasts

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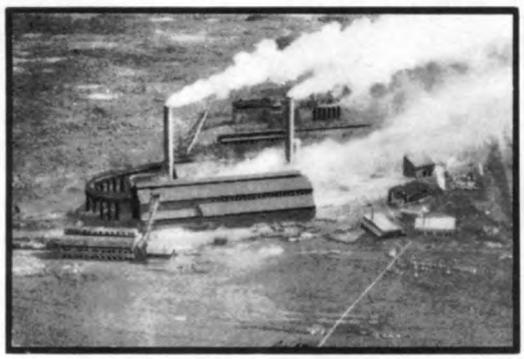

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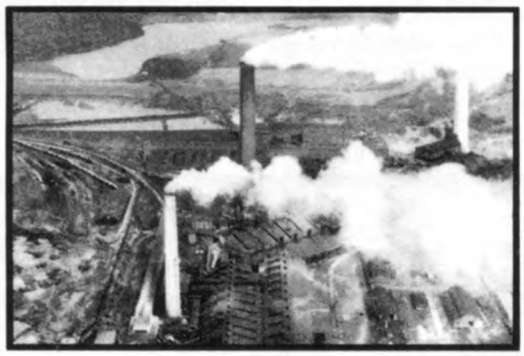

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one of the sharpest songwriting teams anywhere in Glenn Tilbrook (music) and Chris Difford (lyrics). On the other, this creativity doesn't always translate into a fully satisfying record. If Squeeze didn't set such high standards for itself, the band could get away with mediocrity; instead, they too often settle for cleverness.

East Side Story covers an exhausting amount of stylistic ground in its 14 tracks. (Aside to Elvis Costello fans: Your hero, who co-produced and adds backing vocals on two songs, is strictly serving a client here. Ditto for Dave Edmunds's work on one track.) Apart from a few snappy, slightly goofy tunes—"typical" Squeeze songs—little here could have been anticipated on the strength of the band's previous three LPs. The ornate "Someone Else's Heart" finds Difford forsaking his usual grubby voice for a breathy style suggestive of the Zombies. Tilbrook's McCartney impression on "There's No Tomorrow," a dreamy reverie, would fool Linda and the kids. "F-Hole" employs thick, melodramatic strings and Indian overtones; it segues into "Labelled with Love," delightful fake country music. New keyboardist Paul Carrack, who replaces Jools Holland just fine, sings funky on "Temptation" (just as he did on "How Long" with Ace). This cataloguing of musical versatility could go on and on.

Indeed, there probably hasn't been such voracious eclecticism since the Beatles went crazy in the later '60s—and therein lies a danger. Though we were usually too taken to notice, the Beatles slowly but surely began to unravel with **Rubber Soul**, growing progressively more "impressive" at the expense of feeling. Then as now, glibness can be fatal.

East Side Story's last track, "Messed Around," may be the album's best because Squeeze seems less intent than usual on scoring points. Tilbrook sings this housebroken rockabilly, reminiscent of early Cliff Richard, in his sweetest voice and adds a spiffy guitar solo. After spending most of the LP earning our respect, Squeeze finally makes a play for our affections. It's so much nicer that way, isn't it?

—Jon Young

MX-80 Sound
Crowd Control
Ralph MX8102

Tuxedomoon
Desire
Ralph TX8104

Renaldo & the Loaf
Songs for Swinging Larvae
Ralph RL8108

Fred Frith
Speechless
Ralph FF8106

If Residentologists are correct in assuming that Ralph Records got its name from the phrase "call Ralph" (i.e. to barf), then Ralph has been Ralphing up an unheard-of quantity (and sometimes quality) of deviant music as of late.

After three albums, MX-80 Sound is starting to grate. The garage-band rawness of **Out of the Tunnel** has been replaced by murky studio sound not helped by equally murky playing. **Crowd Control** seems to be trying its damnedest to do away with melody completely: songs become clumps of guitar noise and frazzled beat behind Rich Stim's emotionless recitations. About the only bright spot is "City of Fools" (Stim as movie producer raving about his latest property), but then the band follows with an atonal carving-up of the theme from the movie *Sisters*. Come out of the tunnel, guys, dinner's getting cold.

About the only bad thing about the new Tuxedomoon album is the rather unoriginal title. This is a fine album, slightly denser and more rhythmic than the preceding **Half-Mute** but just as eerie. Dead-twangy bass lines propel the songs in tandem with keyboard melodies, while sax and violin add hazy film-noir textures. Singing and lyrics remain a bit much, but **Desire** does exhibit a new, errant sense of humor. A jacket blurb proclaims "A Melody You Can't Hum" (when the only unhummable tunes are on the MX-80 album), and side two ends with a sneaky pisstake of "Holiday for Strings" entitled "Holiday for Plywood." Tuxedomoon remains a good medium between yesterday and tomorrow.

Renaldo and the Loaf want to be the Residents so bad it hurts. They don't use synthesizers, but otherwise it's all there: splintered vocals, mad percussion, tape manipulation—the whole shebang. All it amounts to juvenile highjinks on vinyl; lacking the surreal lyrics and internal logic of their idols, RATL end up just wagging their tongues. This group may come up with something worthwhile down the pike, but **Songs for Swinging Larvae** was probably more fun to make than listen to.

Fred Frith's second Ralphing is as engaging a mixed bag as the first, **Gravity**. The guitarist mixes acoustic and electronic sounds with tapes of street noise, swinging from melody to atonality and sometimes expertly mixing the two. On side one Frith plays with French band Etron Fou LeLoublan, easily some of the best musicians he's worked with since Henry Cow; side two puts him alongside Massacre (his band featuring the rhythm section from Material) in several "live from CBGB" tracks, running the gamut from "guitar-as-pure-noise" improvisations to Zappaesque raveups. This is furious creativity with a clear eye for the end result. It's not the dance music of **Gravity**, but I'll sit still for Frith anytime.

—Robert Payes

John Cale
Honi Soit
A&M SP-4849

For a fellow who made his name as an innovator, John Cale is keeping his sound remarkably uniform. Cale emerged from a three-year hiatus in late 1979 with **Sabotage/Live**, a group of new songs recorded onstage at CBGB's with a band composed of New York-area unknowns. Now he has moved from his own IRS-distributed Spy label to bigger A&M (who in turn distribute IRS), recruited Wire mentor Mike Thorne as producer, formed a new band of unknowns that sounds exactly like the old one, returned to the studio for the first time in four years and produced what amounts to a spinoff of his last record's themes and musical attack.

Honi Soit picks up where **Sabotage**'s military madness left off, exploring in more detail the psychological byways of a war-torn psyche while tempering its predecessor's musical extremes with more homogenous

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songs couched in more fashionable production values. Cale continues to spit out near-impenetrable but evocative lines from pretty much the same musical and thematic bunker, while Thorne scurries to smooth out the jagged, primitivist edges. **Honi Soit** is John Cale's **154**.

And Cale knows it; this is the closest he's crept to a commercially viable album since the mid-'70s. The free-associating lyrics of "Strange Times in Casablanca" are set against guitar/organ riffing reminiscent of the Patti Smith Group; the title cut is an attempt at Bowiesque Eurofunk. Such tips of the hat to successful avant-gardists suggest Cale would like to get his bills paid up before multi-megaton devices rain from the red sky, but this relentlessly dramatic record accumulates power on successive spins. "Streets of Laredo" (the obligatory non-original) and "Magic & Lies"—each placed strategically at the end of a side—are compelling as well as clever, and prove Cale can perpetuate his trademarked sound with intelligence and vigor.

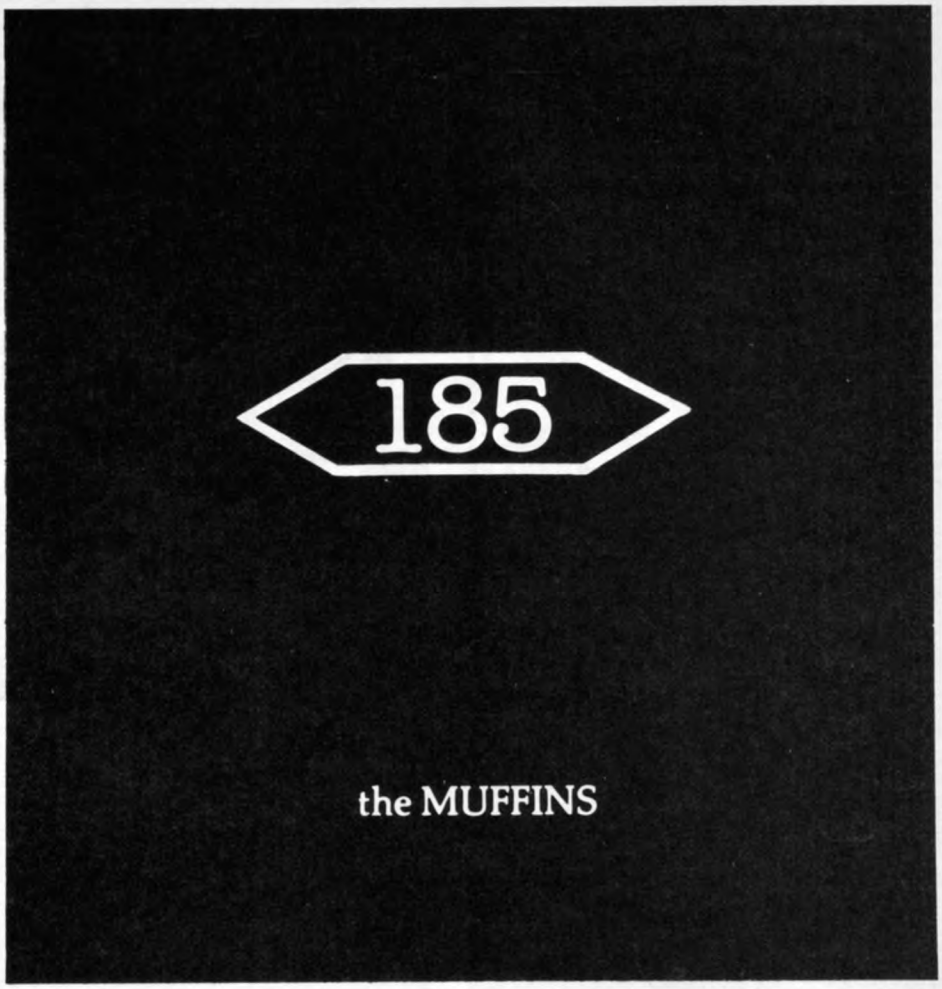
Why is John Cale's mind so full of bombs and barbed wire? Maybe he's been wondering that himself. "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*," the motto of the British Knighthood's Order of the Garter, means "Evil to him who evil thinks." Cale may be warning himself as well as the powers that be. One hopes he takes his own advice before he blows up. —Mark Fleischmann

The Vapors
Magnets
Liberty LT-1090

In the years following the initial beat-group boom, the best British pop-rock often displayed deft touches of caricature. More recently, the same quality made a success of the Vapors' "Turning Japanese"; how else could a song about going mad (or masturbation, or both) capture the popular ear on two continents? Yet the Vapors were unable to endow the rest of **New Clear Days**, their debut LP, with it, and sounded thin and stiff as a result.

Magnets shows the band has matured as a recording unit, with guitarist Ed Bazalgette broadening his sonic palette and Steve Smith coming into his own as a bassist. (Split Enz producer David Tickle has replaced Vic Coppersmith-Heaven.) The album also heightens the contradictions in singer/guitarist/songwriter David Fenton's depressive character.

Fenton's acute melancholia colors his reflections on John Kennedy's assassination ("Magnets"), gratuitous police harassment under Britain's controversial SUS law ("Civic Hall"), and Life Itself (almost every other song). The results are intriguing, especially since the band provides such flair. "Jimmie Jones," although released as a 45, demonstrates why there are no hit-single candidates on this LP: its sprightly bounce supports lyrics about Reverend Jim Jones and the Guyana mass suicides. "Spiders" might have been a UK hit if its synthesizers had dominated instead of subtly enhancing



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the macabre instrumental mood of this song about a woman with an arachnoid obsession.

Get the picture? Attractive music offsets grim lyrics. "Live at the Marquee" has a pulse-racing chorus with what sounds like xylophone punctuation; "Daylight Titans" could pass for the Attractions playing the Jam, or vice versa. The more you listen, the more you want to hear. You could get addicted to this perverse little record.

Now excuse me, I gotta go see a man about a gun... —Jim Green

Plastics
Island ILPS9627

Tick, tock, tick, tock, this is the way the Plastics rock.

If you caught the B-52's on tour last fall, you probably saw Japan's Plastics as the opening act. Judging from their US debut album, the Plastics wanna be Oriental lobster rockers. There are a couple of things standing in their way.

Instrumentation, for instance. Imagine a band featuring the guitars of B-52 Ricky Wilson (snick-twang) and Talking Head David Byrne (chop-strum), Gary Numan's synthesizer, and electronic drums from Tuxedomoon. The drums in particular are fairly well executed, yet there's something missing—a "human factor," if you will. So far, syn-drums just can't replicate a backbeat.

Then there are the songs themselves. Except for a few Japanese phrases on "Copy," all lyrics are in an awkwardly constructed English idiom not aided by the vocalists' deliveries (especially Chica Sato's doll-like whoops and squeals). Nor are the songs' subjects—multinational corporations, society trendies, Xerox machines, teenage romance—particularly original.

Granted, the Plastics *are* kinda fun to listen to, and certainly light-years superior to the pseudo-disco of Yellow Magic Orchestra. Funnier (as in sillier) lyrics and further development of the drum sound are in order. (Some English lessons wouldn't hurt, either.) Meanwhile, back to the beach until I start feeling a bit plastic. —Robert Payes

Stars on Long Play
Radio RR16004

This album couldn't have been released on a more appropriately named label than Ft. Lauderdale, Florida's Radio Records; any station that fails to pick up on the first side's gimmick (excerpted as "Stars on 45") "Stars on 45") deserves to have its FCC license voked. The idea of cross-breeding disco fever with Beatlemania must have occurred to many by now—the former isn't quite the sensation it was a few years ago—but it was left to Dutch producer Jaap Eggermont to assemble the thing. The result is a 15-minute medley of 29 Beatles songs set to a metronomic tempo of bass drum and handclaps, with all other elements calculated to resemble the real McCoy. A foolproof hit?

Pretty much, unless you're the sort of person who can resist too much of a good thing. The Beatles' melodies lend themselves well to this treatment, but there's no structural rationale beyond the concept itself; the 45 version says it all in four minutes, and the album track could have gone on twice as long to no greater or lesser effect. Most of the songs are from 1965/66—perhaps a value judgment (the Beatles' golden age?), but more likely due to those tunes lending themselves to the no-frills treatment. The John Lennon impersonation is uncanny, Paul McCartney and George Harrison less convincing. (Ringo Starr was inimitable, apparently.) All voices sound like the work of one person, including an artificially induced "female" on the "Stars on 45" theme that acts as station break at beginning, middle and end of the side.

That leaves side two as an afterthought, and it's treated as one. The disco-pulse-as-unifier technique is sorely strained to link "Only the Lonely," "Sugar, Sugar" and "Funky Town" on the first of three cuts. The other two are organized more rigorously along "oldies" lines (and credited to "Long Tall Ernie and the Shakers," who sound exactly like the preceding "Stars On"), but discofied Little Richard tunes are no improvement on either disco or Little Richard. Some things man was not meant to meddle with.

Still, the "Beatles" side is cute, and bound to make **Stars on Long Play** the party record of the season—and a popular item at tag sales the season after.

—Scott Isler

Robin Lane and the Chartbusters
Imitation Life
Warner Bros. BSK3537

Style comes naturally to Robin Lane and the Chartbusters. Other bands struggle for years to devise an identifiable signature, but this Boston-based quintet already had the moves down pat on their 1980 debut album. Lane, touting a modern version of folk-rock, pitted her deep, mournful vocals against textured electric guitars for a spine-tingling experience that made Fleetwood Mac sound like bubblegum. Anyone who still digs the Byrds and Beau Brummels probably thought it was hot stuff; everyone else probably complained of saminess. And in today's cash-and-carry economy, cult status won't suffice (say the record companies). What to do?

On **Imitation Life**, Lane grapples with the problem of making her music more broadly acceptable in a number of ways. Since she and the Chartbusters tend to overwhelm her surprisingly varied material, producer Gary Lyons of Foreigner fame (!) has been brought in to diversify the packaging. On "Solid Rock," Lyons tries to bury Lane's severe singing under the instruments, but to little avail; she dominates the song anyway. "For You," a droopy love ballad, sinks under strings that turn the tune into self-parody and the LP's only failure. Lighter guitars and big-beat drums decorate the sexy "No Control," and Lane obligingly tosses in a more upbeat vocal. But the male chorus on "Send Me an Angel" won't get you dancing, unless Gregorian chant

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In the long run, these efforts at levity are misguided as well as futile. Lane's strongest performances are her gloomiest, e.g. the gracefully modulated tear-jerker "Say When," and "Rather Be Blind," which looks on helplessly at the world's misery. Despite a few inappropriate touches, **Imitation Life** is a powerful second showing from a band of weighty integrity. Anyway, nobody needs to be cheerful *all* the time. —Jon Young



Tenpole Tudor
Eddie Old Bob Dick and Gary
Stiff SEEZ31

The minute Eddie Tudor (nee Tenpole) lurched on screen in *The Great Rock'n' Roll Swindle* crooning "Who Killed Bambi" into the handle of a vacuum cleaner, I knew he was a genius. His involvement with the post-breakup Sex Pistols (singing "Bambi" and "Rock Around the Clock" on the soundtrack LP) only started his career, though a tantalized public then had to wait until his band, which had been gigging around the London circuit, signed to Stiff and toured with the "Son of Stiff" package last year.

Tudor's debut album exhibits his manic side as well as an accomplished band capable of strong songwriting and effective playing. Therein lies the dichotomy: As a straight rock outfit, Tenpole Tudor is above average, but not ready for mass adulation; yet there isn't enough drunken lunacy here to catch anyone's attention.

What **Eddie Old Bob Dick and Gary** presents (besides a terrible cover by Eddie and as unwieldy a title as any in recent memory) are 13 songs; about half are quite good in an ordinary way. "Wunderbar," "3 Bells in a Row," "Anticipation," "Go Wilder" and "There Are Boys" are catchy rockers with clever words. Other tunes fail to impress, stuck with routine arrangements and playing.

Eddie Tudor's rubber face and singing voice capable of more warbly inconsistency than a duck call are natural wonders live. This album could use such raucousness; it sounds more adult and responsible than it should. Whether Tenpole Tudor will turn into a debonair combo or join labelmate Wreckless Eric in limbo remains a mystery. So far so good; now go wilder!

—Ira Robbins

Modern English
Mesh and Lace
4AD CAD105

Let's face facts! We hear a lot about a "psychedelic revival" these days—but what do we get? Echo and the Funnymen and the Kneejerk Explodes may be okay in their way, but they're about as psychedelic as a tube of toothpaste. (Replace comparison as applicable.) It makes you wonder about those entrusted with dictating musical fashions; have they even heard first-generation psychedelic rock?

Now Modern English may not be as chic as some other groups, but when it comes to gloomy musical psychosis this quintet knows their LSD backward and forward. If the title of this debut LP doesn't tip you off, check out the cover photo: drummer Richard Brown, clad only in a breech cloth, waving his arms around with a handkerchief on his face—while a fish, suspended by its tail on a string, dangles in the background. Pretty goddam far out, eh?

But wait! There's a record inside, and that's when the fun really begins. Modern English obviously has the psychedelic routine down pat, since the band uses it (unaltered) every chance they get. Songs start out without a fixed beat; then the tom-toms come in and the tempo accelerates as droning singer Robbie Grey tells us what's bothering him—most of which is indecipherable, meaningless or both. ("Exuberance leads to exhaustion"; "Fill him up he will respond"; "Why do ya do this to me?")

The churning, wailing music is effective because Modern English has discovered the secret behind good psychedelic rock music: songs with not one chord (that's Grateful Dead turf) or three (too dynamic, although the band indulges occasionally), but *two*—preferably a second apart. At least five of the album's eight drawn-out cuts use this technique and come off as demented as anything the Chocolate Watchband ever hallucinated. "Grief" even helps itself liberally to Country Joe and the Fish's "Grace" in feeling and texture. Ping-pong stereo sound effects, meandering background organ—Modern English doesn't miss a trick!

This is a heavy freak-out, alright, from the phased intro and radio voices on the opening "Sixteen Days" to the scrambled vocal accompanied by crunching glass on the concluding "Dance of Devotion (A Love Song)." Ten years from now some rock archivist will dig this up and decide it's a kitsch masterpiece. Why wait?

—Scott Isler

Fischer-Z
Red Skies Over Paradise
Liberty LBG30326

In TP 60, Fischer-Z leader John Watts predicted that the group's third album would be "desperately different" from the first two. I don't know if I would go quite that far in appraising it, but praising it is easy. Fischer-Z is a fascinating one-man show masquerading as a trio; the clever songwriting, reedy singing, thoughtful coproduction, adequate guitar and keyboard playing, and who knows what else is all the work of John Watts.

Red Skies Over Paradise, like the previous **Going Deaf for a Living** (which was released in the US), has the earmarks of a successful band: self-confidence, a measure of individual character and vision, and cohesion indicative of a strong leader, which Watts evidently is. However, his two cohorts—bassist David Graham and drummer Steve Liddle—are no slouches, providing punch to support Watts's awkward singing. Despite the imbalance of power, Fischer-Z sounds like a group, not a vehicle.

Watts's songs of detailed observation are the greatest asset here. Three of them—"Cruise Missiles," "Battalions of Strangers" and "Red Skies Over Paradise (A Brighton Dream)"—venture opinions about warfare and nuclear holocaust. Two others, "Berlin" and "Luton to Lisbon," deal with travel, while "You'll Never Find Brian Here" follows in the steps of **Going Deaf**'s standout track, "So Long."

The music is well-crafted, loud but intricate, with guitar and keyboards equally prominent. Why Fischer-Z is having such a rough time with radio and on the concert trail is perplexing; this is one of those rare instances where a band is both worthwhile *and* commercial. Maybe it's just a matter of time. —Ira Robbins

The Boys
Boys Only
Safari BOYS4

Albania
Are You All Mine
Chiswick CWK3016

The Boys' album (their fourth, hard to believe) displays pop-artsy shots of adolescent antics. This collection of three-minute ditties not only reveals a stark Records/Ramones/Shoes affinity but also points out an agonizing fact: too many clones.

There's nothing inherently wrong with good old pop-rock, but the Boys' version fails to offer anything vaguely refreshing. The layered harmonies and tried-and-true hooks have been done to death by groups of greater insight and ability, from the Searchers on down. Song themes (mostly problems with females) seem puerile and simplistic; these are indeed boys only. Any idiosyncratic appeal the band might possess is dispersed in Nick Tauber's homogenized production. In light of current trends, **Boys Only** is a hopeless anachronism.

Scotland's Albania opts for equally identifiable packaging, but with a twist. The cover painting—a nattily attired European gentleman posed alongside a half-naked African woman—suggests a juxtaposition of modesty and sensuality. **Are You All Mine** is indeed a strange hybrid of styles, linking pop, R&B and art-rock to achieve a heavy, danceable sound tinged with Euro-funk.

Vocalist/guitarist K-Y McKay's songs build on a pop foundation, yet are inescapably rhythmic; offset by Dusty's disco-inspired bass, these quirky tunes are innovative pop. There is more than a hint of Roxy Music influence, particularly when Andy Hamilton's soulful sax blends with McKay's impassioned vocals ("Take It Away," "French Farewell"). The group itself probably can't figure out their highly esoteric lyrics, but no matter—bands employing cornet, flugelhorn and accordian can't be too concerned with accessibility. Unlike the Boys, whose teen audience is cut out for them, Albania has yet to find its market. —Jane Lupo

Kryzys
Blitzkrieg/Barclay 200.173

Deadlock
Ambicja
Blitzkrieg/Barclay 200.174

It's no Polish joke. You can now get authentic Polish rock music direct from Warsaw and Gdansk via the French Barclay label. Deadlock and Kryzys have a couple of things in common: what the promo sheet proudly calls "an unshakable Faith in God" (*sic*) and albums recorded in glorious mono. Several of Kryzys' tracks sound like they were recorded live in a small club. They have a sax player named "Men" (who also guests on Deadlock's disc), and their music ranges from Contortions-like jazz/funk/noise to toy reggae and a few other stopovers in between. All in all, it's pretty amateurish.

"Amateurish" isn't the word for Deadlock, who sound like they were recorded in a freight elevator. To put it bluntly, these guys bite the big one. (Is that what "Faith in God" can do to you?) To call their attempts at reggae and punk rock one-dimensional would be a compliment. Compared to the music here, the Slits are virtuosos, and the Ramones are positively erudite. A Russian tank rolling over this record would vastly improve the sound.

In short, you'd be better off looking for good Polish rock music in Hamtramck, Michigan. Mother Poland sure doesn't have anything to offer at the moment.

—Robert Payes

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Frank was asked to select songs for an LP from all the material in the vault. Frank thought for about four seconds and selected the cuts you find on this record.
Frank also selected two additional tracks which are not on this album. There is no record of the songs ever having existed.
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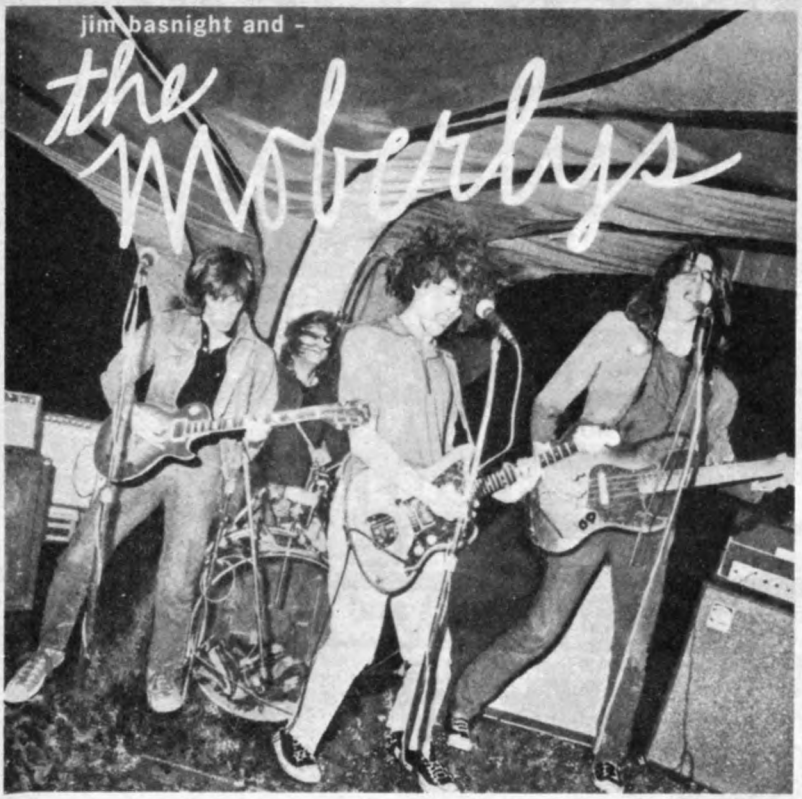

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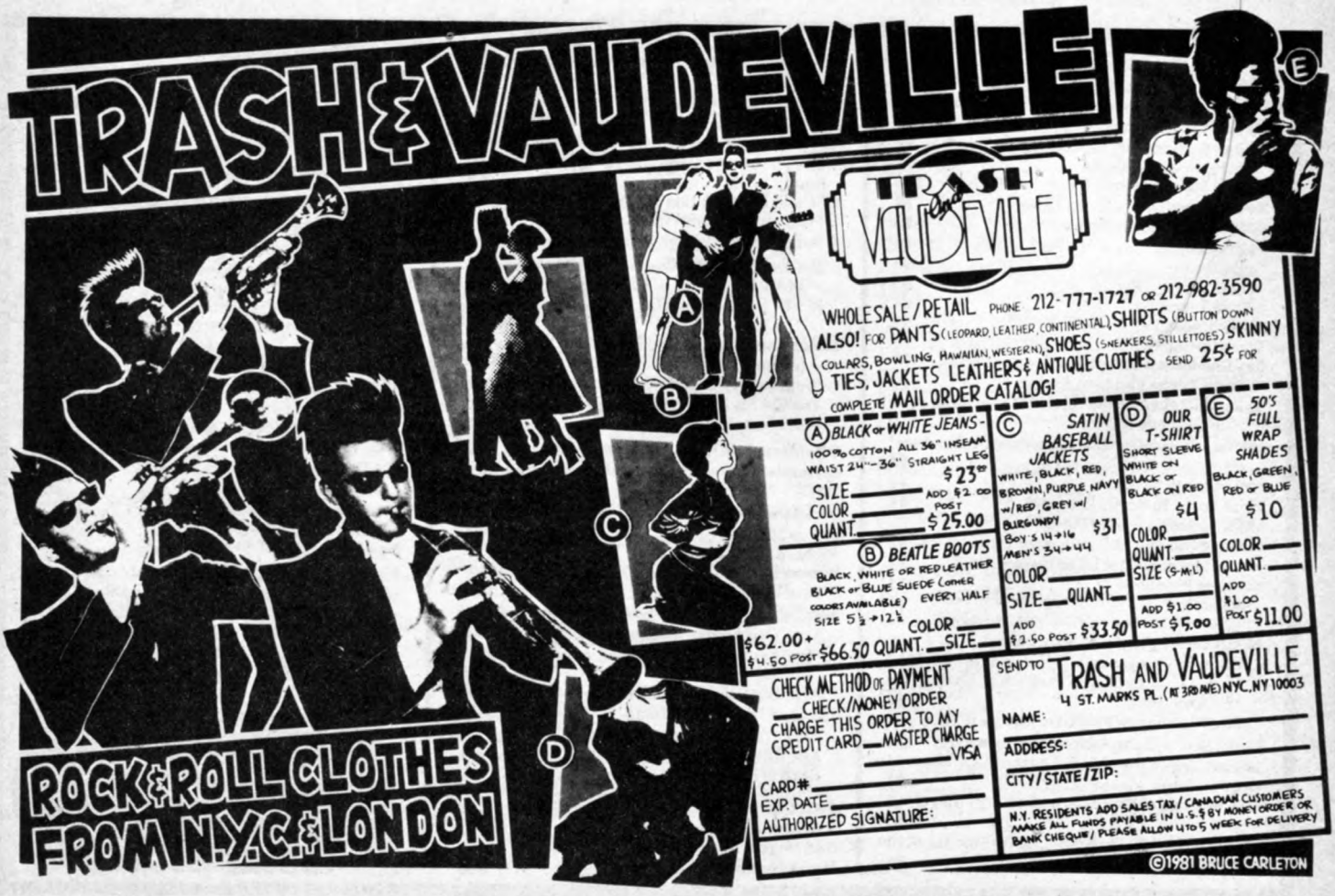



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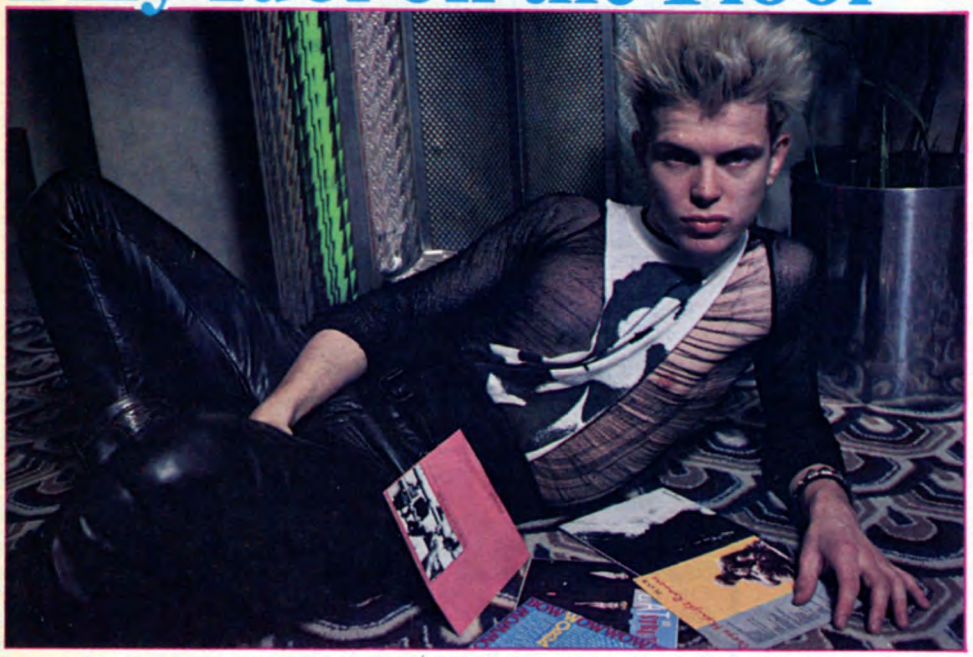
Reviewer of the Month:

Billy Idol on the Floor



Laura Levine

Ain't no percentage in trying to second-guess a guest reviewer. This time around we've got Billy Idol, newly parted from Gen X and residing in New York. The former teenypunk wet dream looks wildly incongruous in the conference room of Aucoin Management: a sprinkling of men and women go about their business; an electronic Kiss pinball machine bink-bonks in the distance; a set of Kiss marionettes stand next to a video playback unit and in walks the spike-haired Idol, a mass of stylishly punky shreds and vents in T-shirt, leather trousers and vest/jacket.

Aucoin is betting that Idol will be the right mix of teen appeal and rock credibility for '80s America. Idol mentions, however, that his taste in music is not necessarily that displayed on his former group's three LPs—and his reactions to the records I bring along bear that out.

He also protests that "this is an unnatural way to listen to records. Music is a personal, private thing; a lot of times a record that sounds unremarkable the first time will gradually pull your ears in—but not in the middle of a whole lot of others."

As it happens, we hit a responsive chord straight away, in the form of "W.O.R.K. (N.O. Nah No No My Daddy Don't)" by **Bow Wow Wow** (UK EMI 5153), the latest protégés of Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindler Malcolm McLaren.

"It's great! It's not like a conventional song, although it's easy to jump to. Sure, it has that sort of 'rap record' feel and the disco bits, but in the end it's not a conventional record."

Bizarre as it may seem, "W.O.R.K." was produced cleanly by Alan Tarney, a songwriter/producer associated with Cliff Richard.

"While it's not as rough as their first record, 'C-30, C-60, C-90 Go,' they'll have that rough guitar sound with any producer, and the song does come through. One of their best." Idol also applauds the Spanish version of "C-30" on the flip.

He is less enthusiastic about a tune I quite like, the **Plimsouls'** "Now" (Planet P-47923, with an instrumental version of the old Nerves number, "When You Find Out," on the back). "Was it a tribute to John Lennon?" I have to admit it's flawed by a clinical sound, which even the Plimsouls had remarked on.

"I don't really like this kind of American-sounding record anyway. It's very professional—or *sounds* it. Even though Bow Wow Wow were produced by Cliff Richard's producer, and may be professionals, in a way, even more than the Plimsouls, they sounded less professional, and had a feeling that this doesn't."

After scrutinizing the printed lyrics on the sleeve of "Plan B" by **Dexy's Midnight Runners** (Parlophone R6046), Idol still can't figure them out. (An obscure declaration of friendship?) He doesn't relate particularly well to the "young soul rebels" stance.

"Quite nice, I suppose, if you like tight little band sounds—a bit like Elvis Costello on the chorus—but to me it's like great old soul music done by lesser people. It's so painful to talk about these kind of groups; I mean, I suppose it's not a total drag backward in time, done as it is today by white people in England in totally different circumstances, but I don't care for it." He declined to listen to Dexy's remake of the Bar-Kays' "Soul Finger" on the flip side. (Dexy mainman Kevin Rowland claims the record was put out by EMI over his objections, for whatever that's worth.)

The **Bureau** consists largely of most of the original Dexy's personnel. Since the latter's Kevin Rowland refuses to speak to the press, the Bureau has dominated UK accounts of the two groups' post-split activities. "Only for Sheep" b/w "The First One" (UK WEA K18478), less faithful to '60s soul sources than Dexy's, is so irritating (vocally and instrumentally) we can't last through either side. Asked what he didn't like about the record, Idol replies, "*It.*"

"I thought the **Stray Cats** wouldn't have as good a record as 'Runaway Boys.' Everybody kept telling me I was wrong, and when it came out I said, 'Mmm, well done, lads.' But 'Stray Cat Strut' [UK Stray Cat/Arista SCAT3] is pretty average, as was 'Rock This Town.' Good drum sound and so on; I like the bluesy feel as a change of pace, and it must be nice when they play it live.

"They're an exciting live band, a 10-star presentation, but I'm not really moved by this new rockabilly thing—although I love the old Sun records. The Polecats doing 'John, I'm Only Dancing' was all right 'cause it wasn't playing into the rockabilly thing directly; it was sort of breaking the rules. But as far as 'Stray Cat Strut'—fuck's sake, Billy, give 'em a break. I do like that it's not overproduced, and that they tried to keep it at least a little rough. And they sound like they do mean it, which is more than I can say for most of this sort of thing."

The flip is a live take of "Drink That Bottle Down," but we agree the only single worth pulling from their album was the first.

Bauhaus' "Kick in the Eye" (b/w "Satori"; UK Beggars Banquet BEG54) didn't reverse the negative trend. "I do like that *kind* of thing, that smacking drum sound, but every day someone'll put on a record and I'll sit there grumbling that it sounds like somebody else. 'Fuck me, that's the **Low** drum sound, the David Bowie bit, the harmonizer on the vocals.' And I don't even *know* nothing—I've only been in the studio about three times and I didn't know what they were on about then—but I can tell that it's a fucking copy. 'Yes, add the little disco bit to pull them in.' Maybe that's unfair, but at least Bow Wow Wow is different. 'W.O.R.K.' is noise, but a great noise. This is shit noise.

"At the same time I'd rather play this crap than Led Zeppelin or REO Speedwagon. I wanna see the floor wiped with groups like that. The frightening thing about making records today is that you've

Continued on page 56

Here's...Jello!



Jeffrey Stillmar

By Tim Sommer and Jello Biafra

The Dead Kennedys are the first band in a long time to arise from the American underground and impress the "real" world (particularly in Britain). We thought it might be interesting to have the Dead Kennedys' lead singer and focal point, punk lunatic/legend Jello Biafra, revisit his vinyl alma mater and sit in as guest reviewer for this month's America Underground.

He turned out to be an excellent choice for the job. Biafra knows a lot about the underground band scene, and not just from personal experience. He's truly a fan, a record and fact hoarder with a passionate interest in alternate rock. The number of underground bands Biafra can talk about knowledgably is amazing.

My own comments are in italics. All the rest is Biafra. One last note: With my usual foresight, I gave some of these 45s to Biafra right after reviewing but before noting song titles or label info—thus a few incomplete listings. —*TS*

The Teen Idles: Minor Disturbance EP—Dischord No. 1. *[Fast, no-nonsense hardcore punk—eight songs' worth—from Washington, DC.]* A very important band. The Teen Idles played in Los Angeles and San Francisco last summer, and they took the west coast mentality back to DC with them. Then they split up into three other bands: Minor Threat, Youth Brigade and SOA. There are about six or seven real young punk bands in DC now. They're real wild but they don't go out to hurt people; if they're dancing all over the stage and knock over a drum mike they'll bend down to pick it up, *then* they'll dive headfirst into the audience. The singer in this band works in an ice cream parlor where the Kennedy children hang out.

The Washington, DC scene is my favorite on the east coast. The bands aren't under the constant glare of the media so they just develop on their own and play for fun—which is pretty damn important, especially after you've seen people who put too much planning into things. People can cry "dated" all they want about records like this, but the energy speaks for itself. Punk will never die until something more dangerous replaces it. The closest anything has come to that has been Flipper. (Dischord Records, c/o Yesterday and Today Records, 1327-J Rockville Pike, Rockville, MD 20852.)

Flipper: "Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ho Ho Ho Ho Ho Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee Hee" b/w "Love Canal"—Subterranean LTI. *[Like the Crass with a sense of humor. Wall of noise, absurd lyrics—one of TS's faves of the year so far.]* This is the Flipper mentality in a nutshell. They've done away with such rigid musical bullshit as tuning their instruments properly, or playing with proper techniques. Try learning the chords to either of these songs and you'll have lots of problems. Wait till "Boom Boom Boom" comes out; you need a Bacardi bottle to play that one right. What they do to annoy the punks is play excruciatingly slow. I figure this is closer to new psychedelia than Echo and the Bunnymen could ever hope to be, 'cause there's danger involved here. Flipper, like some other people (including us), does not play to entertain, but to attack. And Flipper does this better than anyone I know. (Subterranean Records, 912 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94710.)

SF Underground 2 (Lewd, Undead, Society Dog, Spikes)—Subterranean SUB10B; No Alternative: Backtracks EP—Subterranean SUB9. *[SF Underground 2 spotty but worthwhile; No Alternative roarin', rockin' stuff.]* Subterranean is probably the west coast label with its ear closer to the ground than anyone else. **SF Underground 2** is better recorded than the first one, but only time will tell whether these bands will have the impact of the bands on **SF Underground 1** (Flipper, No Alternative, VKTMS, Tools).

The best cut on here, I think, is Society Dog's "Title Role." Their singer, Jonathan Christ, is a real intelligent guy and the rest of the band is slowly but surely catching up to him. "Hitler's Brain" got the (San Francisco) Undead in a bit of hot water; the song was meant to be sarcastic, but came off to some people as being pro-Klan, pro-Nazi.

The Lewd put out an EP in Seattle a while back, before moving to San Francisco. Their "Mobile Home" is real good. It's the sort of subject matter everyone kicks themselves for not thinking of first; nobody's really gone after trailer-court life in America before.

No Alternative has a lot of good songs and should have recorded more by now. This EP is different from their live stuff; there are a lot of overdubs. The band is basically the creation of Johnny Genocide, who will go far one day. I think he's only 18 or 19, though he's been around; he was in the Offs for quite a while.

Half Japanese: "Spy"—(UK) Armageddon A5009. *[A plodding riff with all manner of things going on over it.]* We played with Half Japanese in Washington, DC. They were amazing; I was afraid they might be a total art-student disaster, but only Flipper can top them in the "wall of abrasive noise onstage" department. I think this is their first record as a six-piece. David and Jad Fair play untuned guitar—David's is fretless, as well—and they have another guy playing tuned guitar with regular chords, a horn section and a very abstract drummer. One saxophone plays Psychedelic Furs-like runs, while the other one does Beefheart-type cacophony. They didn't do anything as slow as "Spy" live. Armageddon is a great label. I'd dearly like to meet [label head] Richard Bishop; he's obviously interested in American stuff.

Kevin Dunn and the Regiment of Women. *[Synthesizer pop.]* He's in the Fans. Kevin Dunn on his own is *really* bizarre. The Fans are real pop, which isn't quite my cup of tea; I like Dunn's solo stuff better. This may be a different recording, but this is the B-side of "Nadine," his first single, and disappointing in comparison. "Nadine" is *so* weird.

The Feederz: "Jesus" + "Stop You're Killing Me" b/w "Avon Lady" + "Terrorist"—Anxiety 666A. A cross between Wire and Teenage Jesus. "Jesus" is one of the most direct anti-church tunes I've ever heard; I think [lead singer] Frank Discussion got sent to church a little too often

Continued on page 56

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AMERICA UNDERGROUND/From page 53

when he was little. At their first gig in Phoenix, Frank came out with a live rat in his mouth. He threw it into the crowd, it landed on a girl and bit her. They weren't allowed to play Phoenix for six months after that. So the second time around he came out with live crickets glued to his shaved head and shampooed people with them—and didn't play Phoenix again for quite a while.

This recording isn't quite what it could be; the Feederz are a lot more powerful live. They consider themselves musical terrorists, and Frank is one of the most twisted people I've ever known. Needless to say, the members of his band are not very well liked by the police in their hometown. ($2.50 to David Albert, Anxiety Records, 6737 E. Culver, Scottsdale, AZ 85257.)

Teddy and the Frat Girls—Hospital. Ah! Shades of Flipper, always a healthy sign. Pretty good lyrics, too—very anti-male. "If I was a man, I could fuck anytime, and be as hard as a rock, spend my life worrying about the size of my cock." Eat your heart out, Raincoats. I like this group because they are so absolutely *cruel* to people. (Hospital Records, 216 E. 9th Street, Cincinatti, OH 45202.)

Art: Only Record in the World EP—Venus. An absolute classic—the most accurate record about New York in who-knows-how-many years. Instead of love songs or blues about living in the city or how wonderful it is to slowly amputate your career due to smack, this is an insight into people who consider themselves insightful and work so hard to make other people think they are as well. I'm so glad New York has a band like this that's willing to put them in their place. I just *love* bands that go out of their way to annoy people. (Venus Records, PO Box 166, Cooper Station, NYC 10276.)

Glorious Strangers—Theoretical. I thought Theoretical Records was defunct, but I guess not. It's the first time they've printed an address. This sounds a little like Y-Pants; I wonder if there's any relation? Another musical milestone: drum, bugle and kazoos. "What's your name/Who's your tailor/She wants to marry Norman Mailer"—this sounds like something Glenn Branca would put out, though he's not on it. These are the rest of the Theoretical Girls, I guess. I still like Static [*Branca's own band, who released a neat 45 a couple of years ago*] better. (Theoretical Records, 340 E. 22nd, basement, New York, NY 10010.)

The Wipers: "Alien Boy". They're real inventive. They have good punk songs, but they can mix them with ballads and make that work, which I've never heard anyone else do. This is their morbid psychedelic side; it's an extended version of a track on their album. The other side's three songs are non-LP. Greg Sage, their guitar player, produces and records a lot of Portland bands himself, putting them out on his own Trap Records label. He and the bass player once backed a professional wrestler on an album called **Beauregard**. ■

LOUNGE LIZARDS/From page 16

At least the Lounge Lizards are conscious of the New York scene's built-in transience. "It's the nature of fashion that things continually change," Lindsay says. "It also leads to a lot of falsification because when there is no 'movement' there's always someone hanging around trying to invent one. But that's New York; this is where the bright young kids move in from the midwest because this is where it's happening, and they practice for six months and they're set." (Sounds a lot like the story of the Lizards themselves; Lindsay allegedly played his first date with DNA one month after picking up guitar.)

So there is a crazy momentum to the entire thing, and since no style has lasted for more than a year or two in New York in the last decade, trendy types will soon be exchanging their baggy pants and skinny ties for something else. That's alright by the Lizards; John Lurie once said he felt the group wasn't liked for the reasons they're good, anyway. Asked where the Lizards would like to be five years from now, Evan Lurie replies, "Still out there with musical exploration—to boldly go where no man has gone before." (Lindsay chimes in with the theme from *Star Trek*.)

"All of us have been buying blue jeans, and washing them a lot but not wearing them so we'll be ready for country jazz," Lindsay points out. "Yeah, that's the new trend," Evan Lurie decides. Now that's good, that's the kind of copy we need here. Anything better? Lindsay exclaims that if things don't work out and the Lounge Lizards are left behind the times, "We'll kill ourselves!"

That's it! That's what's needed to put this piece to bed. You heard it, folks: BUY THIS CONCEPT OR WE'LL KILL THESE LIZARDS! ■

GREEN CIRCLES/From page 52

really got to make sure what you're doing is for *real*; it isn't just copying all the little bits and hoping they're gonna sound different. 'Kick in the Eye' sounds like four or five different things glued together."

Fortunately, **Robert Fripp** came to the rescue. "Dislocated," from the **League of Gentlemen** LP, backed with "1984 (January 13th-May 16th)," from the Frippertronics LP **Let the Power Fall** (UK Editions EG EGEDS2) presents two contrasting views of the master at work. Idol gives the danceable first side points just for being a non-nostalgic instrumental, even though it's too long, and remarks on the other side's striking guitar work.

"He's got a great sound, doesn't he? Of course it's always better when a great guitarist is inserted into an outside context, contained by something. With Bowie or Blondie, Fripp comes in and goes crazy, like he's just come from outer space, and gives a whole new idea of what the track's about. These two sides are kind of like dub reggae, the good bits being worth sticking it out. It's a different way of playing guitar, and that's the important thing. Fripp's always looking for something new."

It's back to the world of lesser mortals, however, when confronted with the **Beat**'s disappointing new single, "All Out to Get You" b/w "Drowning" (UK Go-Feet FEET6). The topside doesn't happen; Idol is impressed by the flip's sliding, dipping bass line, and is disappointed that's all he can enthuse about, as the Beat is a personal fave.

"They sing about things most people can relate to, have clever riffs, catchy tunes—like the Police, they succeed on good dynamics. But there's nothing much here; it's really poor in terms of their previous records. They've been working really hard, haven't they? Could be they're stretching themselves too far."

"I don't like **Echo & the Bunnymen**," Idol says apropos of their live 12-inch EP, **Shine So Hard** ("Crocodiles," "Zimbo," "All That Jazz" and "Over the Wall"; UK Korova ECHO1). "They might be great blokes, but this '60s sound doesn't move me at all. It doesn't sound like they're enjoying themselves playing it." For the record, it leaves me flat too. The recording is from the Bunnies' disastrous "surprise" gig in Buxton—about which they'd said the same thing as Idol! (See TP 62.)

To close the proceedings we checked out the 12-inch EP (99 Records 99-04) by New York's own **ESG**, a band Idol rated as the Apple's best after seeing them live. "You're No Good" (not the oldie), "Moody" and "UFO" are studio tracks produced by Martin Hannett; "Earn It," "ESG" and "Hey" were recorded live at Hurrah.

Idol bubbles with excitement. "It's absolutely fantastic! They're up there with Public Image, the Cramps and Suicide. Just some percussion, bass, one-string guitar and vocals. It's like Motown dub!"

He just *has* to tape it so he can take it home, and I leave him still raving about it. Gadzooks, what will Idol's next band sound like? He promised to keep in touch. ■

MARRIOTT/From page 31

1981

HUMBLE PIE: Go for the Throat

I'm very proud of the new album. Gary Lyons is a great producer; I want to use him forever. He says it's the best album he's worked on, and he's worked on a few [*most notably Foreigner*]. The drive on it is insane, and there's not one cut I can point to as weak—which I *can* do on nigh on all the other albums I've done. **On to Victory** was groping for ideas, like **As Safe as Yesterday Is**, but Gary sifted through all our songs and chose some things that maybe I wouldn't have picked—and they all turned out to be spot on. It took us almost a year to get this one out, but no complaints at all. It's nice when you get one like that 'cause you can [*emits a Bronx cheer*]. Just wait till you hear it. ■

DISCOS/From page 27

"Video's becoming very important in clubs. It's already important to both unknown and known bands in the same way records are important. David Bowie's 'Ashes to Ashes' video is popular in the discos and must have sold a lot of albums for him. New bands are also making videos of themselves in performance and distributing those along with records. Indoor Life, a San Francisco band, made a video, sent it out, and it was just like a record; they had exposure in the East before they even left the West Coast."

It was an attempt to survive competition that brought about rock discos three years ago. The scene has since catapulted into a multi-million-dollar industry, with accompanying pressures. Cities that successfully supported one or more rock discos are witnessing entrepreneurs and promoters—hurt by the decline in tours—using their resources to turn old buildings, theatres and even parking garages into rock dance halls.

An understood principle of competition in this market is for each new disco to go one step beyond its predecessors. Instead of holding several hundred, new clubs feature capacities of a few thousand. White-ghetto nihilistic minimalism has been supplanted by Las Vegas glamour and ostentation. Bidding for bands has also become fiercer, with corresponding rises in admission prices.

"We're going to see big clubs putting the smaller clubs out of business," Rockpool's Heaps says. "It's happening in New York City already; Tier 3 has closed. Hurrah has gone. The big clubs are outbidding the smaller ones for acts, and it's going to become harder and harder for small bands to get a booking. Is it in a band's interest to demand five or 10 thousand dollars because that's what they can get at the Ritz [in New York] and thereby drive the smaller clubs out of business? If the little clubs go, then so will many of the opportunities that small bands have been enjoying."

Jim Fouratt agrees. "Soon it will depend on how many people [a band] can draw. I see the same thing happening now that ruined the discotheques in the late '60s. Bands priced themselves right out of the club market, and people got in the habit of wanting to see only the bands they knew. What was left was a small circle of bands at the top and lots of discotheques, large and small, closing their doors."

Will history then repeat itself? And if trends recur in cycles, can the rock disco scene—which still seems so new, and helped establish a new generation of rockers—be circling back to constrict itself so quickly?

These are open, tentative questions. What matters most in the rock disco scene is the *now*—and right now, if the music is new and innovative with that just-right sound, there are more and bigger places to play it, and an increasing number of people who'll want to dance to it. ■

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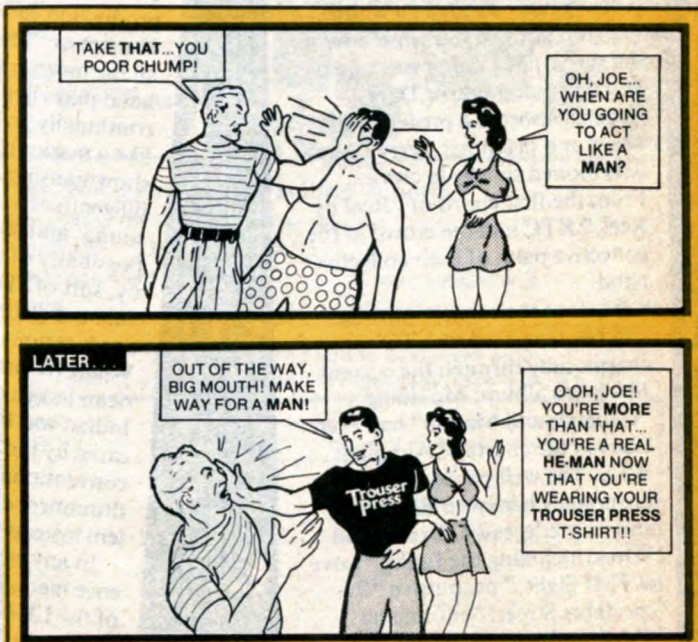

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HOT SPOTS

XTC

One of these days, XTC might give Chicago a less than stellar performance. The band has appeared in the windy city five times in just over a year, with each show as good if not better than the last. The law of averages just *has* to be against them by now.

XTC knows how to keep things interesting, however, even if the material's familiar. Their idiosyncratic, smartly jagged pop is consistently enhanced by the goofball antics of guitarist Andy Partridge (who seldom repeats the same shtick twice) and mop-top-tossing bassist Colin Moulding. Impromptu song introductions, varied running orders, creatively off-the-wall slide projections—these little things distinguish one performance from the next.

It's been intriguing, too, to watch XTC's stage presence develop. At first four rather enigmatic characters—impressive as all hell but more mysterious than fun—XTC's onstage humor and exuberance have positively blossomed as their playing prowess has become even more formidable.

At the Park West, Partridge was a regular dandy in a white silk shirt with an immense bow at the throat; Moulding was suited and scarved; guitarist Dave Gregory sported a professorial beard and drummer Terry Chambers looked sinewy in civvies. From the first chord of "Real by Reel," XTC had the crowd in the collective palm of their collective hand.

Most of the capacity throng had been exposed to XTC's charms only through the current **Black Sea** album; Moulding's "Generals and Majors" had even cracked the charts of AM giant WLS. The well-paced set was appropriately heavy on **Black Sea** and its predecessor, **Drums and Wires**, including the funky "Love at First Sight," propulsive "Respectable Street," entrancing "Making Plans for Nigel," hysterical "Scissors Man," eloquent "No Language in Our Lungs," giddy "Helicopter" and appealing new "Ball and Chain"—all proof positive of a delightful versatility.

One complaint: They completely ignored **Go2**, the album that had provided some of XTC's most unforgettable concert material. The lads could easily have taken a pass on "Roads Girdle the Globe"—not exactly a bang-up live number—in favor of "Crowded Room" or "Battery Brides." The latter is certainly as much a favorite as "This Is Pop."

Beef aside, XTC delivered in top form as they always do. It's a safe bet their burgeoning Chicago following swelled ranks considerably as a result.

Moira McCormick

Adam and the Ants

Listen, snobs: Adam and the Ants headlined New York's Palladium Theater (3300 seats) for a legitimate reason, not just that tired old scapegoat hype. Love it or hate it, **Kings of the Wild Frontier** is a masterpiece of modern-day bubblegum, full of agreeably silly vocals, engagingly simplistic melodies and, of course, rhythms designed to make your leg twitch. Anyone offended by Adam's kitchen-sink wardrobe or idiotic sloganeering just doesn't understand pop.

What really cements **Kings** into a wonderful whole is its glossy production (by drummer Chris Hughes as "Merrick")—which is all the more apparent when the band plays live. Onstage Adam continually jerked and swayed like a marionette; so much for showmanship. Everyone strove diligently to recreate the LP's sound, and considering the impossibility of the task, they got by, sort of. The Ants' much-vaunted drum style, however, needs serious rethinking live. Whatever that is on record—African jungle drums or American Indian war beats—can't be duplicated by the sluggish sound of a conventional rock drum kit. Two drummers exacerbated the problem instead of helping.

In any case, much of the audience mentally added the charisma of the LP to the show and had a good time. More power to them. And don't be too hard on Adam and the Ants. Nobody ever said the Ronettes had to be great live, either.

Jon Young

Stranglers

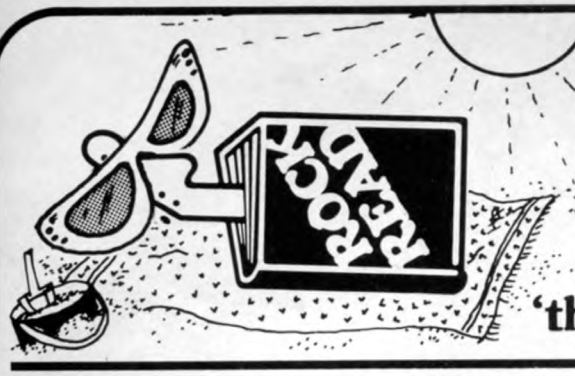
The Stranglers have toured more in the US without a steady American label than with one. In keeping with their new album (and the like-named song from the previous **The Raven**), at Toad's Place in New Haven, Connecticut, they literally became the "men in black": black clothes, black instruments and black stage, altered only by strategically placed white spotlights. Such a thorough sense of anti-visuals gave the audience no choice but to concentrate on the music—just as well, too, because all four Stranglers, none of whom have ever been slouches instrumentally, were coming up with some astounding sounds.

The only concession to "playing the hits" was a grudging encore of "Duchess" and "Hanging Around"; most of the set was drawn from **Raven**, the new **Meninblack**, and, oddly enough, **Black and White**. (Maybe they know something we don't...?)

Entrapment behind their drum and keyboard setups didn't prevent Jet Black and Dave Greenfield from shining forth. Black was a sullen drum machine, definitely a candidate to replace John Bonham as number one slammer, while Greenfield calmly added his trademark keyboard squiggles and the odd vocal. That left the "front man" roles to Hugh Cornwell and Jean-Jacques Burnel, neither of whom stood up straight all night except to sing. Bassist Burnel hopped about doing a modified Hubboon Stomp; guitarist Cornwell, looking blanker than ever, swung in time to the beat and baited the crowd mercilessly during breaks. ("Does anybody here suffer from...premature ejaculation? Yeah? Tell me, what's it like?")

It could be said that the Stranglers don't write songs so much as take familiar riffs and modes, and subject them to those familiar Strangler dissonances. The method works; coupled with a stage presentation that would have been gripping in a large arena, never mind a medium-sized drinkery like Toad's, the Stranglers may finally be ready for world domination. From now on, the correct response to "Are we not men?" should be "We are...the men in black."

Robert Payes



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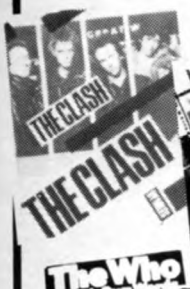



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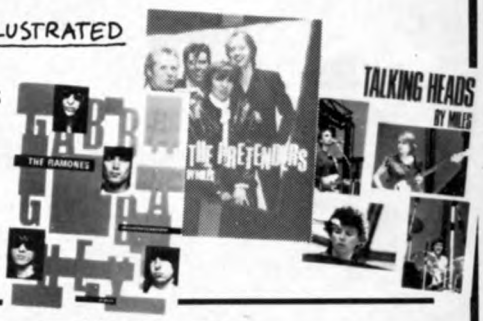



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