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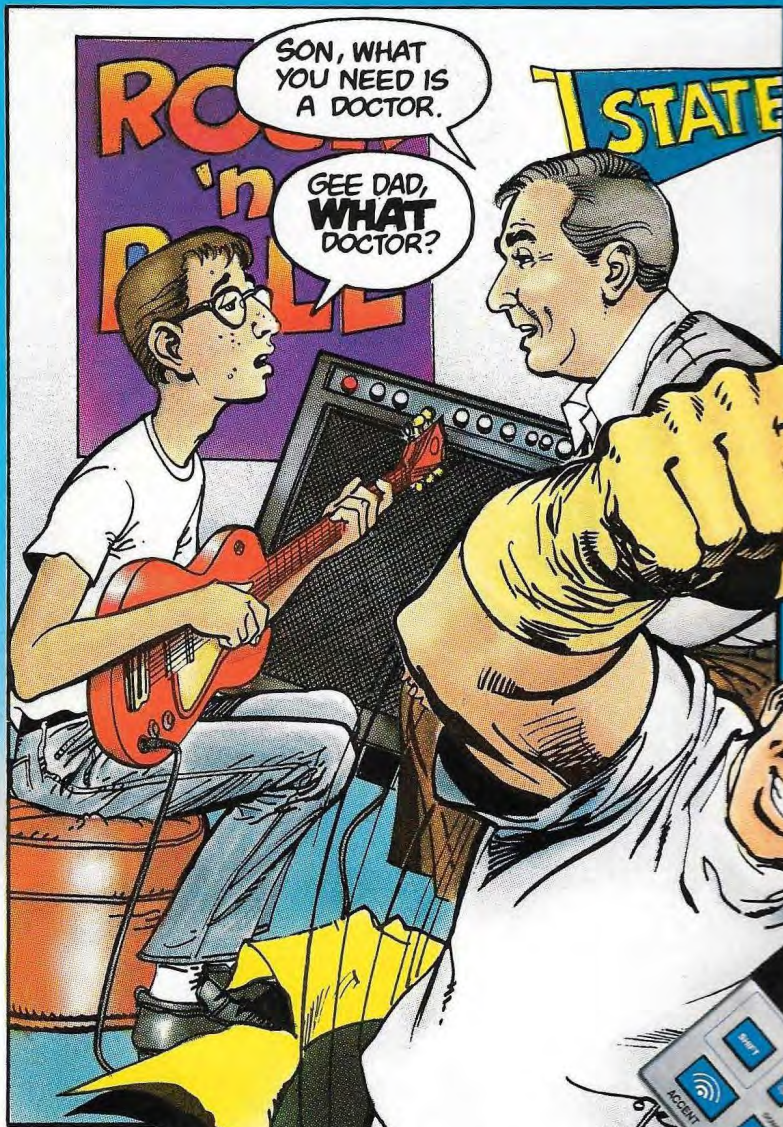
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ROMAN HOLLIDAY
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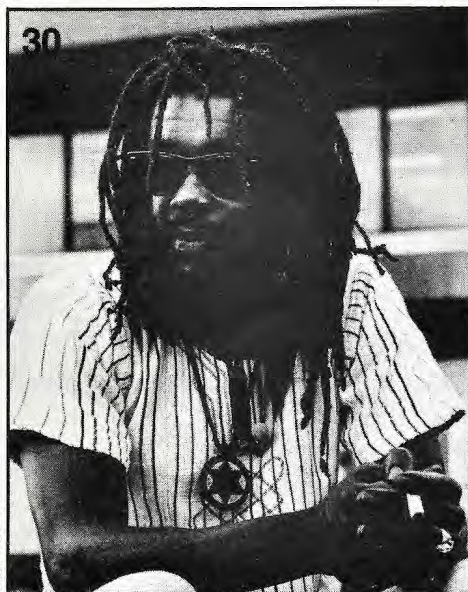
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hello it's me

DURAN ALL THE WAY

As a devoted fan of Duran Duran, I went wild when I saw the cover of your October issue (TP 90). The article on them was the best and most in-depth I've read.

Thank you so much and keep us all up to date on Duran Duran's success! *Trouser Press* is totally fab!

**Margo Patrick
West Hartford, CT**

I just read *Trouser Press* for the first time and was very impressed with the excellent cover story on Duran Duran.

Scott Isler probably won't be the next president of Duran Duran's fan club, but at least he took them seriously enough to write a clear, factual article on a bright new band with lots of potential. The rest of the magazine was pretty impressive too. My subscription form is in the mail!

**Delia Lockwood
Topsfield, MA**

I bet the only reason you covered Duran Duran was to sell more copies. Who cares that they haven't done anything worth writing a huge article about? Tons of mindless teens will buy it and make a lot of money for *Trouser Press*.

Leave Duran Duran and their likes to totally wasteful magazines like *Tiger Beat* and *Rolling Stone*. *Trouser*

Press was great at one time and still can be. Just stop being an MTV fanzine.

**Ronnie Walker
Richmond, VA**

Thanks for putting Duran Duran on the cover of an important music magazine like *Trouser Press*! The article was excellent (though maybe a little too much emphasis on hair color?) and you treated them well.

The band has long deserved a place in *real* rags, not as pin-ups in *16* magazine. (I admit I buy those too.)

**Ceci Panjati
Hamden, CT**

When we took off the wrapper of TP 90, we couldn't believe our eyes. We thought for a moment someone had accidentally sent us a copy of *Tiger Beat* or *16!* Duran Duran—everyone's favorite brainless pretty boys—on the cover of *Trouser Press*. What is the world coming to?

As two former TP fans, we can only express our deepest sorrow over the downfall of a great magazine.

**Yoon Kim
Sarah Gordon
Chapel Hill, NC**

The first four paragraphs of your Duran Duran story refer to a girl named Stephanie. She happens to be one of my friends—my claim to fame,

her name being in *Trouser Press* and all. It's just all over school!

Well, I too want to be in *Trouser Press*! If you don't print this, I will be very upset and cry.

**Jennifer Price
Roslyn Harbor, NY**

I am daring to venture that most readers who enjoy Duran Duran's music take the band a little more seriously than to wonder whether Nick Rhodes had on eyeliner, or what John Taylor wore to the interview. The difference between your article and one in a teenybop magazine is that you forgot to put in a coupon to win an autographed photo or dream date with Simon Le Bon.

Thanks for a cover story on one of the best bands in the post-Squeeze era, but no thanks for the style in which it was penned.

**S. Harber
Ft. Wayne, IN**

Your cover story on Duran Duran was the best article on the group I have ever read. The members were depicted as cool, mature, and serious musicians—nothing like their teenybopper image most people think of when they hear about Duran Duran. Finally they are getting the praise and respect they deserve.

**Erica Brunwasser
San Francisco, CA**

raving faves

RF #69: Rock/Pop Christmas Songs

No, we didn't forget about *Raving Faves* #68. Since we "lost" a month with our double issue, the timeliness of this topic took precedence while the holiday spirit still runneth over. We'll catch up with the past next month.

Voting was fierce this time, but the winner by far was the Kinks. Char Ham probably summed up popular feeling by noting that "Father Christmas" "has a touch of humor to it, but also gives an accurate picture of how some people spend Christmas."

The next most popular songs take a more sentimental view of the season. As consensus wanes, cheer vies with jeer in varying amounts.

Honorable mentions: **The Beatles Christmas Album** is not a song, but a few Raving Favers felt this collection of fan club yuletide messages worthy of mention. (Most of these recordings are now available on **John Paul George and Ringo.**) Another LP, **Phil Spector's Christmas Album**, was also cited.

Jim Creasy's "A Pete Townshend Christmas" is a "minor underground classic," swears Jon Henderson, the only one who voted for it. Synopsis: "Instead of Santa, if kids are nice they are paid a visit by Meher Baba and given a Who album."

Dishonorable mention: Once again New Orleans' Raffey's come through with an admirable job of ballot-stuffing for their version of "Silent Night." This band should get out of rock and into politics.

1. "Father Christmas," Kinks
2. "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)," John & Yoko
3. "I Believe in Father Christmas," Greg Lake
"Santa Claus Is Coming to Town," Bruce Springsteen
5. "Christmas Wrapping," the Waitresses
"Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer," Elmo and Patsy
"Peace on Earth"/"Little Drummer Boy," David Bowie and Bing Crosby
"Run, Rudolph, Run," Keith Richards (also by Chuck Berry and Dave Edmunds)
9. "December Will Be Magic Again," Kate Bush
"No Christmas for John Quays," Fall
"Fuck Christmas," Fear
"Punk Rock Christmas," the Ravers
"Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree," Brenda Lee
"Snoopy's Christmas," Royal Guardsmen

No question this issue. Next time we present the thrilling results of "records you wish you'd bought." Don't miss it! (And happy holidays!)

HEAVY BUSINESS

Thank you for your intelligent, informative article on Duran Duran. Since I'm one of their older fans, it's good to see them on the cover of a thoughtful music magazine.

Faith Ruzio
Columbia, MD

Your story on Duran Duran was excellent.

Just one thing: Roger Taylor's punk band was called the *Scent* Organs. He was also in a band called Crucified Toad.

Merewyn Furiga
Plymouth Meeting, PA

The Duran Duran article stated that Stephen Duffy (former member of Duran Duran) left the band after John Taylor took a swing at Duffy for criticizing Taylor's lyrics. I talked to Duffy recently and asked him about this. He said it was the other way around: One of the reasons Duffy left Duran Duran was that Duffy took a swing at Taylor for criticizing Duffy's lyrics.

Just thought you might like to know.

Rowena Reano
Rosemead, CA

Let's see now: Duran Duran on the front. Robert Plant on the back. Thomas Dolby, Eurythmics and more Duran Duran in the middle. Throw in Ira Robbins's Video column (still more Duran Duran) for good measure. Top everything off with Joan Jett on the flexidisc. You guys have definitely been watching too much MTV.

Better luck next time, and please, no Def Leppard.

Gary McBride
Kettering, OH

SOMETHING THEY SHOULD KNOW

A thousand—(no, a million)—thank yous for your cover story on A Flock of Seagulls (TP 89). I'd never read a full article on them. I am indebted to TP for the straightforward and honest writing.

PS. Didn't anyone let those guys know they *won* the Grammy for Best Rock Instrumental?

Lindy Simmons
Nashville, TN

How could A Flock of Seagulls' Mike Score possibly take credit for "pav[ing] the road for . . . Duran Duran"? Duran Duran have proved themselves many times over without any help from the birds, not only in good looks but also with their extraordinary musical ability (neither of which the Flock seem to have).

Lisa Consiglio
Annmarie Santavicca
Warren, MI

Figures that A Flock of Seagulls would name their band after an equally crummy book, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*. Granted that the book was pretty disgusting, you must blame the true author. The culprit who wrote it was Richard Bach, *not* Erich Segal.

Are you looking for any new blood for your research department?

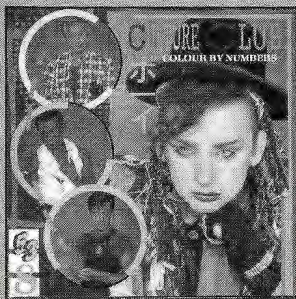
Kay Tell
Iowa City, IA

What research department?—Ed.

ACHE TO SEE XTC

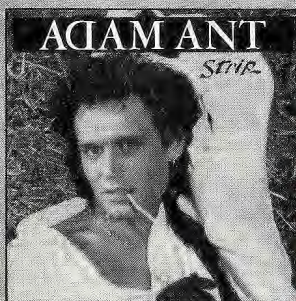
It was depressing to read about XTC's problems

Continued on page 18



CULTURE CLUB—"COLOUR BY NUMBERS"

Available now: 7" picture sleeve of "Church Of The Poison Mind" and limited edition 7" 4-color picture sleeve version of "Karma Chameleon." This is the album that both critics and fans agree is the genuine article.



ADAM ANT—"STRIP"

Self-produced Ant solo LP features two Phil Collins co-produced tracks—"Puss 'N Boots" and "Strip"—with Collins' trademark percussion blending with Adam's international rhythms. First U.S. single is "Strip" in 4-color picture sleeve, with unavailable B-side. Watch for U.S. commercial 12" in January of extended Collins tracks in all original sleeves. Coming January: 60-city U.S. tour.



THE ROMANTICS—"IN HEAT"

Out now: The Jelly Bean Benitez 12" remix of "Talking In Your Sleep," the song everybody is waking up to. The "Detroit Leather Pack" have earned their coils—their live show brings back visions of '60s splendor with standouts like "Rock You Up" and other nuggets.



CYNDI LAUPER—"SHE'S SO UNUSUAL"

Yes, she's the one who covers The Brains' perfect song, "Money Changes Everything." And Prince's "When You Were Mine." And Robert Hazard's (Much Improved!) "Girls Just Want To Have Fun." She's Cyndi Lauper, former lead singer of Blue Angel and the star of her first solo LP. Available now: 7" picture sleeve—"Girls Just Want To Have Fun."



WILD CARD 12" OF THE MONTH: INNOCENCE IN DANGER'S—"VIOLATE THE VIDEO"

For those of you who ever wanted to put in the boot to your television, check out Innocence In Danger's pro-video anti-exploitation tune, "Violate The Video," a nifty new 12" from one of America's young unsung bands featuring guitarist, Carlos Alomar.

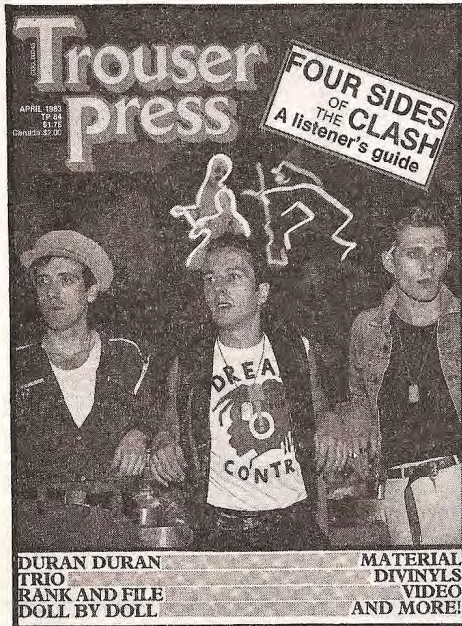
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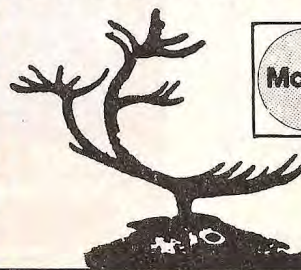
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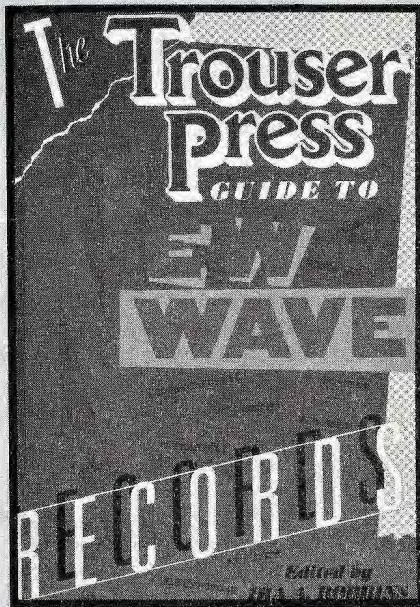
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Dear Santa,
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 plums, Donkey Kong or my two
 front teeth. Here are the two things
 I really want this Christmas:

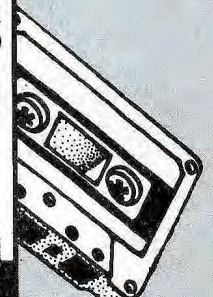
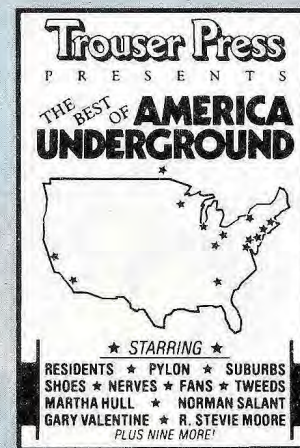


The Trouser Press Guide to New Wave Records

An indispensable reference source, a useful buying guide, and just fun to browse through. In 416 pages, Trouser Press writers offer concise, descriptive reviews of virtually every new wave album—domestic and imported, major label and independent, commercial and fringe. It's the most complete book ever about new wave music—nearly 1,000 groups are covered and over 2,300 records are reviewed! Published in paperback and hardcover by Scribners. The *New York Times* calls it "essential."
\$12.95 paperback; \$24.95 hardcover

Trouser Press Presents the Best of America Underground

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fax 'n' rumours

Beat, Undertones, Go-Go's

Out but not Down

The rest of the **Beat** is coming to grips with life without renegades Dave Wakeling and Ranking Roger. Guitarist Andy Cox has only half-facetiously suggested "Any good vocalists in the US out there, send tapes to the Beat." Cox and his bandmates, fed up with "Boy George imitators," are looking for "soulful, unusual" singers.

Missing vocalist aside, the rest of the slimmed-down Beat (with Cox, bassist David Steele and drummer Everett Morton) is doing fine. The band has an album's worth of new songs ready. If only they could find someone to sing them . . .

□ □ □

Various **Undertones** are digging out of the rubble of that Irish band's collapse (*Fax 'n'*

Rumours, TP 89). Singer Feargal Sharkey has recorded with the **Assembly**, a new "group" consisting of keyboard player Vince Clarke, himself recently employed in Yaz, Yaz co-producer Eric Radcliffe and rotating guest vocalists. Undertones guitarist Damian O'Neill and bassist Mickey Bradley are also busy founding a new band in London.

□ □ □

Remember the **Go-Go's**? (Hint: They recorded the original version of "Our Lips Are Sealed.") The all-female success story of 1982 was fairly quiet in 1983, dropping manager Ginger Canzoneri and battling rumors (false, sez label IRS) of interband strife.

In late October (about six weeks after opening a concert for David Bowie) the Go-Go's set off for

England to record their third album. Producer is Martin "golden hands" Rushent, of Human League, Pete Shelley *et al.* fame. Look for the record around February.

□ □ □

Duncan Browne is also back, from a considerably longer vinyl vacation than the Go-Go's. The perennial cult favorite has a new album, recorded in collaboration with ex-Van der Graaf Generator bassist Nic Potter.

□ □ □

Speaking of comebacks, did anyone catch **Nicksilver** with Nick Gravenites, John Cipollina and Greg Elmore (of Quicksilver Messenger Service), Al Staehely and Merl Saunders? Far out!



VIV STANSHALL/Ebet Roberts

Gonzo for Bonzo

The **Neil Innes Club Extraordinaire** (N.I.C.E., to you) publishes a newsheet/magazine three times a year keeping up with their boy. Write Tania Cheslaw, 44 Donnington Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA3 0NG, England.

Viv Stanshall reportedly suffered a minor heart attack while recording recently. His new album will detail the further adventures of the inimitable Sir Henry.

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fax 'n' rumours

Clash, Bow Wows, Voodoo

Separate Ways

What's the **Clash** without guitarist Mick Jones? You'll find out soon enough. Singer Joe Strummer and bassist Paul Simonon—the steadily shrinking Only Band That Matters—ejected Jones in September. The official explanation was that Jones had “drifted apart from the original idea of the Clash.” The remaining duo, a British press statement continued, will now be able to “get on with the job the Clash set out to do from the beginning.”

Jones, however, disputes he has drifted anywhere. He also stated that Strummer and Simonon did not discuss the matter with him before declaring him non-Clash. Since his abrupt dismissal, Jones has busied himself with studio work for Sigue Sigue Sputnik and General Public—the latter being Dave Wakeling and Ranking Roger's spin-off from the Beat (*Fax 'n' Rumours*, TP 90).

□ □ □

Bow Wow Wow has lost their master's voice: that of singer Annabella Lwin. Guitarist Matthew Ashman, bassist Lee Gorman and drummer Dave Barbarossa asked Lwin to leave in September. The decision reportedly surprised neither Lwin nor RCA, Bow Wow Wow's label. The band had played together (behind Adam Ant, as the original Ants) before then-manager Malcolm McLaren imposed Lwin on them as frontperson; now they've regained their autonomy. Lwin will continue as a solo artist.

□ □ □

Bands haven't been too quiescent in the US, either. **Wall of Voodoo** has suffered the defection of singer/songwriter Stan Ridgway and keyboard player Bill Noland. The two, with ex-Gang of Four drummer Hugo Burnham and synthesizer player Mitchell Froom, have just released a maxi-single under Ridgway's name. Wall of Voodoo carries on—the band's own new album is imminent—and is audi-

tioning for replacements.

□ □ □

The semi-legendary **Cramps**, just overcoming health and record company problems, have now lost Kid Congo Powers. The guitarist has rejoined Gun Club, his alma mater. His successor in the Cramps is Ike, brother to Bryan Gregory, whom Powers originally replaced. Gregory, meanwhile (are you still there?), left *his* band, Beast, just before a British tour got underway. It's all so confusing.

□ □ □

No confusion here: After four and a half years together, **Pylon**—one of the bands that made Athens, Ga. famous—“just decided to break up,” according to bassist Michael Lachowski. “We weren't interested in going more commercial, making videos and being on the road half the year.” He also hints at dissatisfaction with the band's “unprofessional” business set-up.

Pylon's farewell tour ended December 1 back in Athens. The group will now record a final 45, and possibly a quickie LP of older material, before pursuing individual interests.

“We decided that when we weren't having fun we would break up,” Lachowski says. “It was a real positive decision.”

□ □ □

Another positive decision finds Chris Stamey departing the **dB's** for a solo career. Ironically, Stamey left just before the long-underappreciated dB's began recording their first album for a major US label, Bearsville. Stamey recorded on his own while in the dB's, and the split is amicable.

□ □ □

Techno-pop pioneers **Los Microwaves** are no more, but co-founder David Javelosa isn't idle. With guitarist Knox Chandler (a former Swollen Monkey) adding rockabilly riffs to his electronic keyboards, he's recording and touring as Javelosa.

*And You Thought He Just
Drummed with the Police.*

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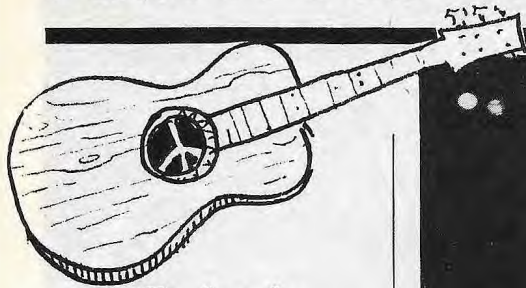
Includes the new single
"DON'T BOX ME IN!"
Vocals by Wall Of Voodoo alumnus
Stanard Ridgway.

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fax 'n' rumours



Quiet in the Museum!

Chicago's Peace Museum is dedicated to providing peace education through the visual, literary and performing arts. That's an intriguing concept by itself, but through January 31 the organization is holding an exhibit of special interest to pop music fans: "Give Peace a Chance" displays original manuscripts and scores, photos, art and other memorabilia from John Lennon (including the guitar he played during the 1969 bed-ins), Yoko Ono, Stevie Wonder, Phil Ochs and U2, among others. The show is at the Peace Museum Annex, 341 W. Superior St.

Ebet Roberts



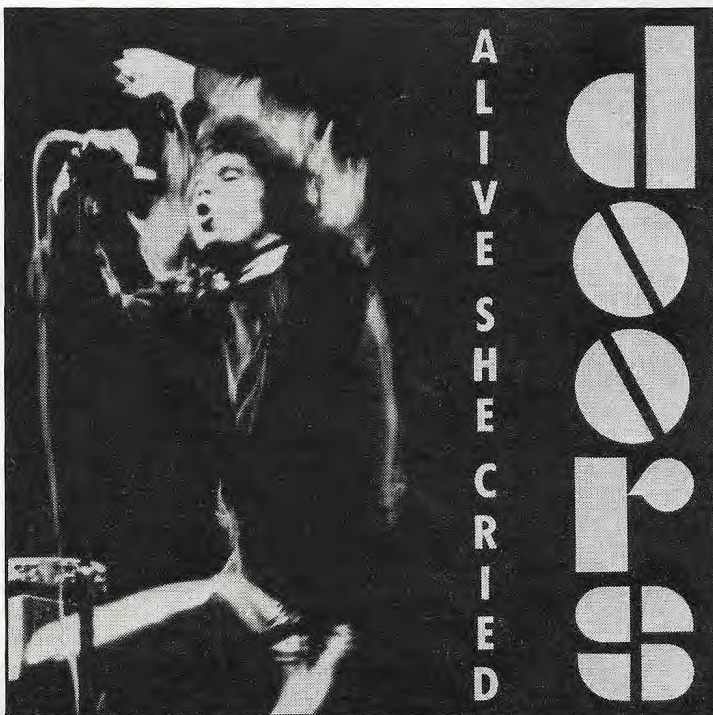
Gods still walked the earth, or at least the stage, as recently as September 20, when audience and stars alike packed London's Royal Albert Hall. The event was a tribute to ex-Small Face Ronnie Lane and a benefit for multiple sclerosis, from which Lane suffers. Helping out, from left to right, are mandolinist Steve Winwood, Andy Fairweather-Low, Eric Clapton, Jeff Beck, Lane himself, Ray Cooper, Bill Wyman and (for those with X-ray vision) Charlie Watts. Jimmy Page, Chris Stainton and Kenney Jones also performed.

THE DOORS. TRACKS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD BEFORE.

"Alive, She Cried" includes previously unreleased live versions of classic Doors songs plus two cuts, "Gloria" and "Little Red Rooster," never heard on any Doors album.

Produced by Paul A. Rothchild

Video Direction of "Love Me Two Times," by John Koslowsky



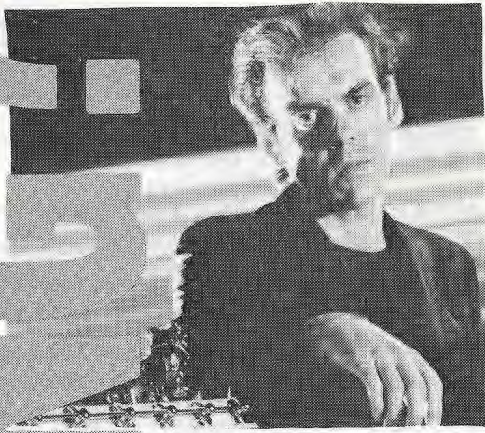
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THE DOORS: The Illustrated History available now from Quill Books (a division of William Morrow & Co.)



Available on Elektra Records and Cassettes

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"GOOD AFTERNOON, MADAM. My name is John Hiatt, and this is my new recording—it's called *Riding With The King*. Much time and care was put into it—the finest quality playing and singing. I believe this is the finest example of rock & rhythm & blues songwriting available, and, just before your husband died, he ordered this copy—embossed with *your* name. Of course, this is the special \$20 version..." That's how John Hiatt would sell his new album door-to-door, according to joking comments in a recent interview. But *Riding With The King* has a pitch all its own—with a list price of \$8.98 and production by Nick Lowe (half) and Ron Nagle/Scott Matthews (the rest). On Geffen...

OH BRITANNIA. ● With two "whaps" and three "thunks," it's *Construction Time Again* for Depeche Mode, England's premier electro-pop band. Mode fans "Just Can't Get Enough," but the group's new Sire LP, an upcoming U.S. tour and the single/video "Everything Counts" should help. ● And, the Gang Of Four finally is. *Hard* is the latest LP from this U.K. threesome, who have added drummer Steve Goulding (ex Lene Lovich) to the line-up for a North American tour. Everyone loved the Gang's "...Man In A Uniform." Now consider the single question: "Is It Love" or is it just *Hard*?

MACHO IS PERVERSE, per August Darnell (a.k.a. Kid Creole), who explains that Kid Creole & The Coconut's latest album is called *Doppelganger*; that a "doppelganger" is the ghostly double of a living person; and that "The Kid is the perverse side, the macho side of August Darnell." Oh. Explanations aside, K.C.&T.C. are known for their rock/R&B/jazz/Latin/so-you-can-dance music. "If You Wanna Be Happy," catch the Kid, Andy Hernandez and the voluptuous Coconuts in concert, and on Sire/ZE records.

"I LOVE THE WAY HE YODELS," says Laurie Anderson of Peter Gabriel, who appears alongside Adrian Belew of King Crimson on Anderson's new 4-song disc, *Mister Heartbreak*. "All the songs on it are about love in some way," she says, citing Thomas Pynchon, William Shakespeare, Betty Boop and Cuban rhythms as current influences. *Mister Heartbreak* (specially priced) is Anderson's first work since the completion of *United States*, the performance piece that gave birth to the album *Big Science* and the hit "O Superman..."

BLACK SABBATH'S BEEN BORN AGAIN, and we're not talking baptisms. Vocalist Ian Gillan, lately of Deep Purple, is the new voice of Black Sabbath, and drummer Bev Bevan (ex ELO) joins the group on tour. Black Sabbath's heavy metal is heavier than ever—on *Born Again*, they're hitting below the Bible Belt.

"ONE AND ONE-HALF WANDERING JEWS/Free to wander wherever they choose/are travelling together/In the Sangre de Cristo/The Blood of Christ Mountains/Of New Mexico" So begins the title cut of Paul Simon's new album, *Hearts And Bones*. From the surrealism of "Rene And Georgette Magritte With Their Dog After The War" to the seeming simplicity of "Cars Are Cars" to the driving force of "Allergies" ("But my heart is allergic/To the women I love-/And it's changing the shape of my face"), Simon has created some of his finest songs to date, songs that glide from simple motifs to genuine insights. Don't miss this record.

IT'S A VINYL JUNGLE OUT THERE... "This Is Advertising?" has been forced to return your checks. We can't sell you records, although all items mentioned here should be available from your local record store or one of several national mail-order clubs. We've even heard about a new phone-order service (1-800-HOT-ROCK) that's open 24 hours a day and guarantees one-week album delivery. What'll they think of next? Of course, you can still drop "TIA?" a note (and small, unmarked bills) at P.O. Box 6868A, Burbank, CA 91510.



T H I S I S A D A D



TRUE WEST

WHO: Gavin Blair (vocals), Russell Tolman (guitar), Richard McGrath (guitar), Kevin Staydohar (bass), Joe Becker (drums).

WHAT: Lucifer Sam/Lucifer Sam backwards (True West)
True West EP (Bring Out Your Dead)

HOW: After a few false starts, Russell Tolman formed the true True West with Gavin Blair in Sacramento around June, 1982. (Both had played in Suspects, a band that included future Dream Syndicate leader Steve Wynn and bassist Kendra Smith.) After extensive gigging in Davis, Sacramento and San Francisco, the band released a version of Pink Floyd's "Lucifer Sam." It won gushing praise in alternative music mags and heavy airplay on progressive and college radio. Last spring's EP, co-produced by Tolman and Wynn, elicited even more enthusiastic press, radio and fan response. Now, with an East Coast tour under their belt, and interest from some major labels, big-time exposure and success for True West seem a foregone conclusion.

WHY: True West is often conveniently—and somewhat erroneously—lumped with neo-psychedelic groups like Green on Red and the Dream Syndicate. There are some surface similarities, but True West cuts a distinctive musical path. On any given number you're as likely to hear punchy, contemporary rhythms and Verlaine-like dynamics as psychedelia beneath Blair's wispy yet forceful vocals. Live, True West's subtle force can seduce any adventurous rock fan who prefers tough and uplifting guitar-oriented music. This is one of the most stirring rock bands to emerge this year.

RUSSELL TOLMAN: "I don't really like labels like 'psychedelic.' Once you start worrying about it, you might end up not writing the song you started out to; you don't think it will fit, that it's not psychedelic enough. We're simply a guitar band... actually what we are is a youth-cult-tidal wave."

By Duncan Struss

ROMAN HOLLIDAY

WHO: Steve Lambert (vocals), Brian Bonhomme (guitar/vocals), Adrian York (keyboards/vocals), Jon Durno (bass/vocals), John Eacott (trumpet), Rod Lambert (saxophone), Simon Cohen (drums).

WHAT: Stand By/Round & Round (Jive/Arista)
Don't Try to Stop It/Beat My Time (UK Jive)
Motor Mania/Cookin' on the Roof (UK Jive)
Roman Holliday EP (Jive/Arista)
Cookin' on the Roof LP (Jive/Arista)

HOW: Roman Holliday germinated in a small town (Harlow, just north of London) via a newspaper advert. The band completed its lineup in London with friends, barmates and street musicians. In short order they obtained a residency in a hip Soho club, wound up on John Peel's BBC radio show, selected a label from several suitors, went in the studio with a hot producer (Peter Collins of Musical Youth fame), and made a string of infectious singles. In a mere two years, Roman Holliday (named after the Audrey Hepburn film, with an "I" added for originality) has gone from idea to popular reality. The band

has an identifiable sound, a silly image (which they intend to lose), and a swell album that indicates real talent.

WHY: Although labeled a "swing" group, Roman Holliday has only borrowed some big-band sounds while forging a musical identity. Their songs are catchy and clever, avoiding nostalgia in favor of a genuine rock style punctuated by precise hornwork and carefully arranged vocals.

JON DURNO: "The old swing bands had the energy of modern rock, only they didn't have the watts. The swing backbeat is so catchy that with modern pop it sounds really good."

By Ira Robbins



THE ALARM

WHO: Mike Peters (vocals/guitar/bass/harmonica), Dave Sharp (guitar/vocals), Eddie MacDonald (bass/vocals), Nigel Twist (drums/vocals).

WHAT: Unsafe Building/Up for Murder (UK White Cross)
Marching On/Across the Border & Lie of the Land (IRS)
The Stand/Third Light (IRS)
The Alarm EP (IRS)

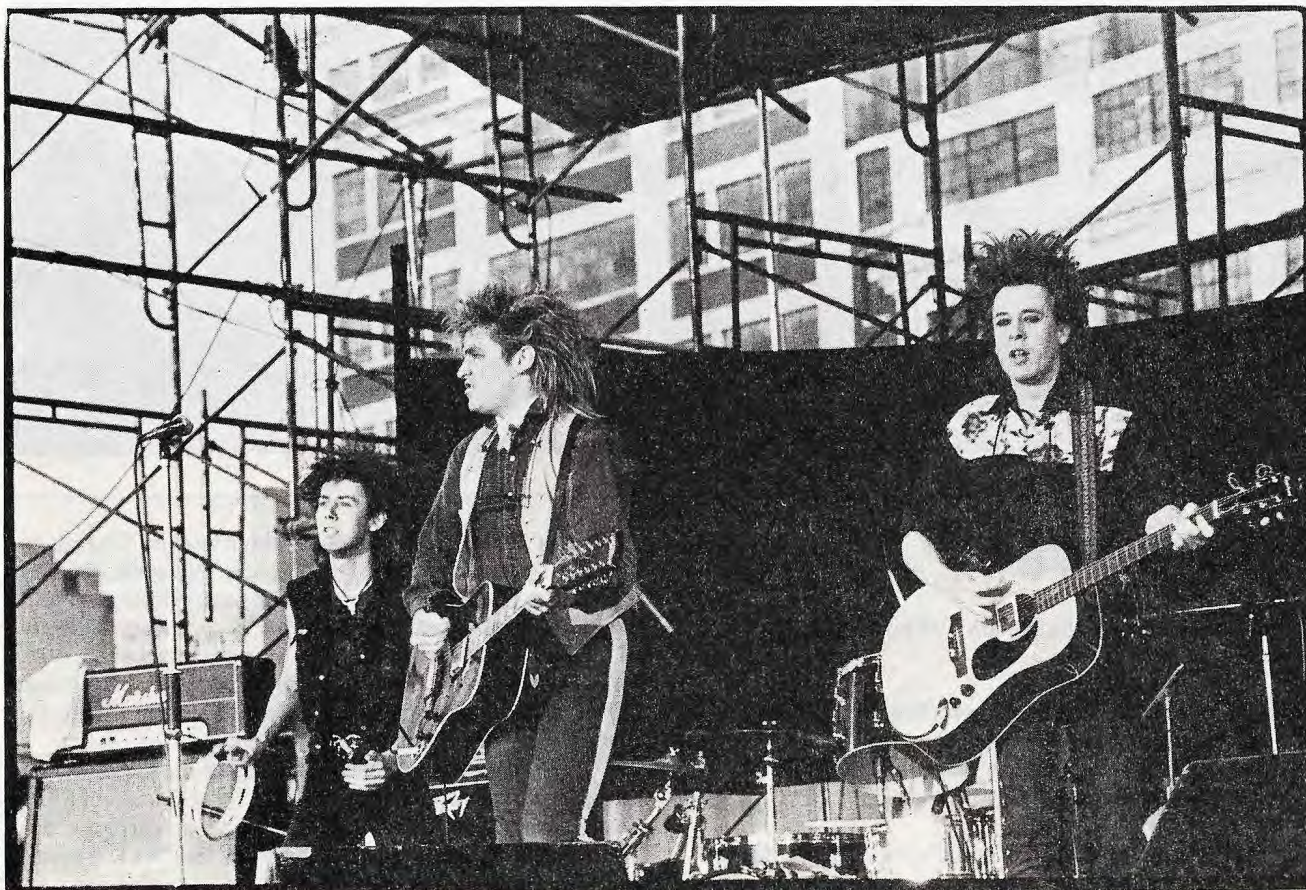
HOW: The Alarm was formed in Spring of 1981 by long-time friends Peters and MacDonald, with Sharp and Twist. The quartet had been in various bands, and had operated a weekend dance club in their hometown of Rhyl, Wales. They made enough money from gigs to cut a debut single, which they sent to record companies in lieu of demo tapes.

The Alarm eventually outgrew Rhyl's music scene and left for London. As an opening act for the Jam, Stiff Little Fingers, the Beat and U2, they won over crowds and attracted the attention of IRS Records, with whom they signed last September. Earlier this year the Alarm journeyed to the US supporting U2's tour, and also headlined dates themselves.

WHY: Although acoustic guitar distinguishes the Alarm's music, the band's live delivery is fierce and positive, surging with the same uplifting juice as Alarm booster U2. Song lyrics exhort people to shake off apathy and "take a stand." It's idealistic, maybe even naive, but these guys *mean* it; they're determined and committed. And they pull it off: Alarm music possesses the stirring energy and therapeutic value associated with the most potent rock.

MIKE PETERS: "We want to encourage people to keep at whatever it is they're doing—to have faith, to maintain hope."

By Duncan Strauss



Ebet Roberts

RUBBER RODEO

WHO: Bob Holmes (vocals/guitar/violin/mandolin), Trish Milliken (vocals/organ), Gary Leib (synth), Mark Tomeo (pedal steel), Doug Allen (bass), Barc Holmes (drums).

WHAT: Rubber Rodeo EP (Eat)
She Had to Go EP (Eat)

HOW: While attending the Rhode Island School of Design, Bob Holmes and Doug Allen played in a bluegrass ensemble called Blind Gary and the Foggy Vision Boys. The world turned a deaf ear to Blind Gary, so Holmes and Allen began dabbling in "found" music and toy instruments with some friends. An attempt to meld the traditional with the experimental gave birth to Rubber Rodeo, and a sound not unlike Devo playing Gene Autry. After rounding up Bob's brother Barc and Nashville session veteran Mark Tomeo, the group re-

leased two EP's of their demented version of Grand Ole Opry. They recently signed to Polygram Records.

WHY: In their formative years, the Holmes brothers perceived America as a land of TV sitcoms, western movies and Hostess snack cakes: all brightly colored and shiny, but caricatured and devoid of substance. From this came the disorientation Rubber Rodeo hopes to evoke in its music—a yearning for something lost in the shuffle. Quirky, electronic versions of "Jolene," "Tumblin' Tumbleweeds" and "Wichita Lineman" alternate with similar originals, bearing witness to country music and Roxy Music simultaneously.

BOB HOLMES: "We have a hard time with 'roots music'—either listening to it or trying to play it. Our roots are stuff like TV and movies and Muzak, all false forms."

By Thomas Anderson



B.C. Kagan

RUBINOOS

WHO: Jon Rubin (vocals, guitar), Tommy Dunbar (guitar, vocals).

WHAT: Beserkley Chartbusters (Beserkley)
The Rubinoos (Beserkley)
Back to the Drawing Board! (Beserkley)
Party of Two EP (Warner Bros.)

HOW: Berkeleyites Jon Rubin and Tommy Dunbar joined

forces in 1970 as two 13-year-olds with a love for '50s rock 'n' roll and a desire to play at school dances. Along the way they picked up drummer Donn Spindt and bassist Royse Ader, and began writing original material with a '60s pop slant. While entertaining at the grand opening of an auto parts store in 1974, the Rubinoos were "discovered" by Matthew "King" Kaufman, aspiring music biz mogul and manager of Earth Quake, which contained Tommy's older brother Robbie.

The ensuing years were frustrating for the Rubinoos; the band's fortunes hinged on the financial ups and downs of Kaufman's Beserkley Records. The label's constant switching of distribution deals didn't allow the Rubinoos' late-'70s LPs to stay

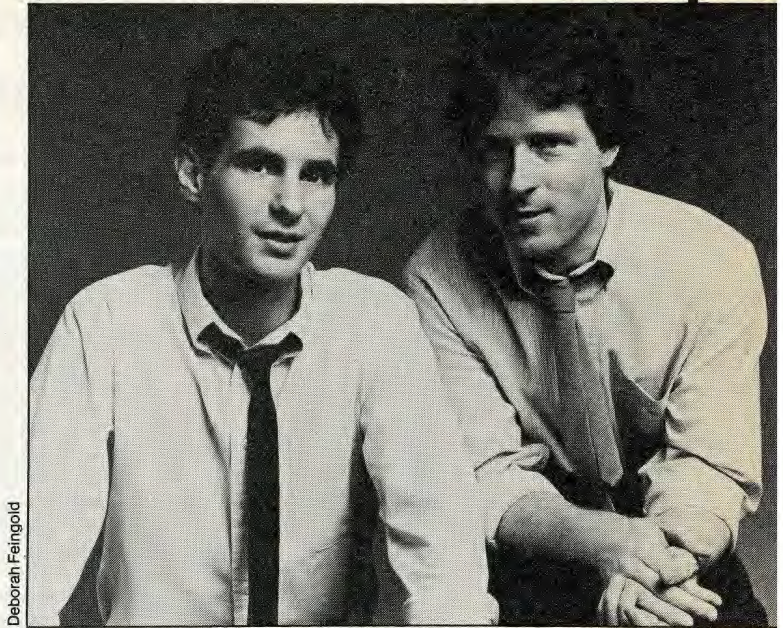
in one spot long enough to find an audience. The turmoil brought band and Kaufman to an unfriendly parting of the ways, and also thinned the Rubinoos' ranks: Ader split in 1980, Spindt in 1982.

Undaunted, Rubin and Dunbar persevered as a duo. They signed with Warner Bros. and recently recorded the five-song **Party of Two**; all four members of Utopia (Roger Powell, Todd Rundgren, Kasim Sulton, Willie Wilcox) produced.

WHY: As a quartet, the Rubinoos' classic light pop was characterized by bright harmonies and breezy guitars. "I Think We're Alone Now," the Tommy James song on their first LP, and "I Wanna Be Your Boyfriend," from their second, are textbook examples of the genre. The 'Noos say they won't be radically different in their current edition, though Dunbar insists the vocals will be more like Sam and Dave. Ha ha.

JON RUBIN: "We're not an AOR group, we're pop. Every song is a potential single to us. If we tried to play like Lover-boy, we wouldn't be able to pull it off."

By Jon Young



Deborah Feingold

NEATS

WHO: Eric Martin (guitar/harmonica/vocals), Phil Caruso (guitar), Jerry Channell (bass/organ/vocals), Terry Hanley (drums).

WHAT: Another Broken Dream, Do the Things (Propeller compilation cassette)

Six (on Propeller compilation EP)

Caribou/Harbor Lights (Ace of Hearts)

The monkey's head in the corner of the room. EP (Ace of Hearts)

The Neats LP (Ace of Hearts)

HOW: Formed in Boston late in 1979, the Neats is the first band for each of its four players. They began recording for the

Propeller musical collective, then moved on to the prestigious indie, Ace of Hearts. The Neats are Boston club faves, make frequent trips to New York, and occasionally venture out into the rest of the country. The **monkey's head** EP hit the top five in the *Village Voice's* critics' poll last year.

WHY: The Neats still play with a punky snarl and drive, but have added shifting, swaying layers of trance-and-dance sound. They couple pop melodicism with peripheral wild noise. Amid the sonic blur you'll notice country undertones, impassioned (if oblique) thoughts and jangling guitar lines.

JERRY CHANNELL: "[We're] like statues with this unbelievable power pouring out—still onstage, but the music and sounds are moving. It's a nice sort of schism."

By Jim Sullivan



B.C. Kagan

HELLO IT'S ME

From page 5

getting their new LP released (TP 90). Virgin Records' reluctance to put out the album is symptomatic of the conservative climate in today's pop industry, and the sad fate often in store for original, inventive music like XTC's.

Personally, I thought **English Settlement** was the most critically underrated album of 1982, and clearly I'm not alone in appreciating the sonic brilliance of the Swindon lads. Shame on you, Virgin, for standing in the way of art.

Don't lose faith, Andy boy; a loyal cult following will always be more gratifying in the end than a trendy mega-audience.

Kevin Renick
St. Louis, MO

DAMNED PRECIOUS

As the biggest Damned fan in this cultural desert called Colorado, I thank you for your Damned auto-discography (TP 89). It's very rare to read much about the band, especially in an American publication. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately) they remain rather obscure in the States, despite their being the only real, original punks left.

The Damned has defied all the media's expectations. They haven't died, vanished, turned to synth-pop or become arena-rock favorites. They're just the Damned, and that's all that matters.

Ann Stretton
Ft. Collins, CO

ONLY JOE "KING"

Your Joe "King" Carrasco article (TP 89) made him sound like a failure. After watching Joe and the Crowns do their thing four nights in a row, I'm more convinced than ever that he's anything but.

Allen Barra can write all he wants about business

and demographics, but with Carrasco the show's the thing. Barra also managed to make the Crowns sound like a mere backing band. Anyone who's seen or heard them knows better.

Thanks anyway for printing something on my favorite band. At least the pictures were a gas.

Dena Ford
Chicago, IL

THE JOYS (?) OF BOOTLEGGING

If record companies issued an amount of live recordings commensurate with demand, bootleggers would be out of business faster than your average record exec can say "Thunder Road." Record companies asked for this to happen by refusing to issue the records in the first place.

As for artists not wanting certain material released—this is bullshit of the most hypocritical sort coming from the record companies. Did the Stones want **Metamorphosis** released, or Debbie Harry **The Wind in the Willows**? Jesus, this is the stupidest stuff on vinyl ever, Sesame Street not excepted. We're talking *major* embarrassment. Beaucoups barf. The real stupidities are never studio out-takes or demos but shit heaped on a gullible public under the aegis of cash-flow generation for a record corporation.

Nor are profits being eaten into much. Damn few artists who are starving for royalties can be found in the bootleg racks. Putting bootleggers out of business is going to be a damn expensive business. Record companies will do it to symbolize their hatred for small labels in particular and anyone in general.

Packard Goose
Somewhere Over the Rainbow

THE CLASH SELL OUT?

Thanks for printing Roman Szolkowski's "Clash sell out" cartoon (TP 90). It really opened my eyes to what *Trouser Press* has become in the past year or so: cheap, shallow, boring garbage. (You can't even call it "trash," like *Creem* is—at least trash *knows* it's tasteless!)

I don't recall the Clash ever saying they weren't

interested in making money. Don't you remember the big hoo-ha when they signed with CBS for 100,000 pounds? Or Joe saying, in 1980, that they played a festival in England because "it was good dough"? So why are you so indignant about their US Festival appearance? You must have been carrying around some ridiculously idealized vision of the Clash as golden-hearted, self-sacrificing rock 'n' roll saviors who are far too noble to have the base desires of lesser men.

If *Trouser Press* wants to start talking about blatantly commercial sell-outs, why doesn't it start at home? You don't have to look any further than your September and October covers. A Flock of Seagulls? *Duran Duran*? When's your *Loverboy* issue coming out? Right after Def Leppard? Then you can print articles on such fascinating subjects as "Adam: What Sends Him Up, Down, and Sky-High!" or "The Night Martin Fry Almost *Died* for Love!" It's the next logical step in your obsessive examination of trite, flavorless pap.

Too bad the days are long gone when you'd put the Clash on your cover even without their having a single in the Top 40. Oh well, I guess you never said *Trouser Press* wouldn't become teenybop mush for the mindless synthpop trendies—or just another MTV puppet.

Malores
Columbia, OH

All this over a cartoon? Surely some Clash fans must see the paradox between the band's message and modus operandi. Interestingly, we didn't hear from one irate Chipmunks fan about the other drawing in the same Don't Believe a Word!—Ed.

MTV EYE

Thanks to Karen Schlosberg (*Media Eye*, TP 89) for reminding MTV that we're sick of the stupid role-playing 90 percent of its videos reflect.

What makes a band substitute expensive models for real people? It's because in real life these big-mouth heavy metallers don't have the equipment to attract real women—women who do more than pose in stupid videos for stupid record executives. Women musicians are the only hope to save rock from bullshit. Women should boycott MTV as minorities do.

Women in Music
Dallas, TX

NOT-SO-GRAND REUNION

As the Marquee is my local club, I was amused to read your write-up on the Manfred Mann reunion (*Fax 'n' Rumours*, TP 87). Where were Jack Bruce and Klaus Voorman when we queued up to get refunds when the gig was cancelled?

Your next month's "reunions" news story fared no better. John Mayall cancelled; Eddie and the Hot Rods were crap. The Yardbirds played without their noted guitarists, and included a cameo appearance by the singer from *Medicine Head*!

Why not mention Caravan reuniting and playing a blinding gig? Ten Years After were brilliant too.

Liam Box
London, England

BELA LIVES!

The Question Column (TP 90) stated erroneously that Bauhaus' "Bela Lugosi's Dead" has "never surfaced on a Bauhaus LP." It's the fifth track on **Press the Eject and Give Me the Tape**, a live album packaged with the British edition of **The Sky's Gone Out**. This version of the song was recorded at the Old Vic, London, February 24, 1982. I know because there's always Bauhaus at our house.

Anita Lobotomy
Tom Turner
Mt. Holly, NJ

The *Question Column* was referring to the original studio version of the song. **Press the Eject** was later uncoupled from **The Sky's Gone Out** and issued separately.—Ed.

TAKING THE MICK

If enough people write in to complain that Mick Farren's column is a piece of crap, will you take it out again?

David Voelker
N. Royalton, OH

The QUESTION COLUMN

Please settle a bet for us. I say that, though not credited, Chrissie Hynde sings the "Gucci, Gucci, Cartier, Cartier" part on the Kinks' "Add It Up" (from "Give the People What They Want"). My brother says Ray Davies sings it. Who's right?

V.S., Marysville, OH

Arista Records, the Kinks' label, never received confirmation of the identity of "Add It Up"'s mystery vocalist. An Arista spokesperson, though, shares your hunch about Chrissie Hynde helping out her husband.

My question concerns the oldie "Hey Joe." I have a version by the British band the Creation very similar to the more familiar one by Jimi Hendrix. Which of the two came first?

F.B., Dearborn Hts., MI

"Hey Joe" was the Jimi Hendrix Experience's debut single, released (in England) in December, 1966. The Creation's recording first appeared on a German album in 1967. Chronology aside, the Creation's "Hey Joe" sure sounds like a cover version.

A Double-Sided Flexi-Disc For Subscribers . . .



The Bongos

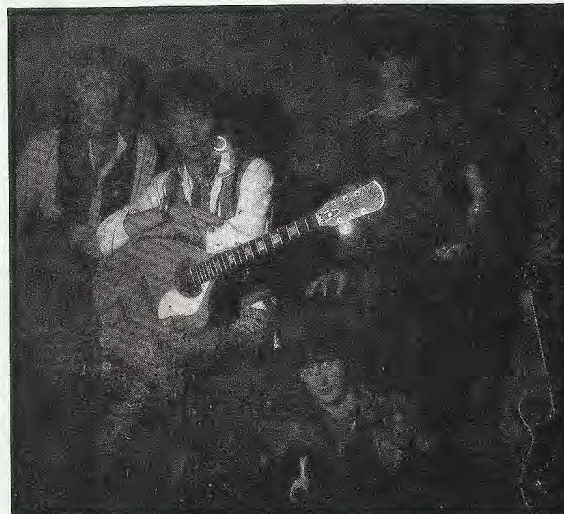
THE SONG

Barbarella (live)

Recorded at Columbia University in New York by DIR Broadcasting for the King Biscuit Flower Hour.

THE BAND

Richard Barone (vocals/guitar), James Mastro (guitar), Rob Norris (bass), Frank Giannini (drums). The Bongos formed in Hoboken, New Jersey in late 1979, and have been singlehandedly responsible for generating national interest in the local scene there. Starting in 1980, they released several 45s on the English Fetish label, all of which were later compiled on an American album, **Drums Along the Hudson** (PVC Records, 1982). Playing pure pop that consistently attracts both crowds and critical praise, the Bongos' latest records is **Numbers With Wings**, a five-song mini-LP produced by Richard Gotterher and released by RCA Records.



One the Juggler

THE SONG

Passion Killer

From a forthcoming RCA album. Produced by Chris Thomas.

THE BAND

Rokko (vocals), Lushi (guitar), Colin Mindon (guitar), Steve Nicol (drums). Except for Nicol, who was in the original Eddie and the Hot Rods, the members of One the Juggler are a mysterious bunch. The group formed in 1981, supported Elvis Costello at a London concert in December 1982, released this song as their first single in January 1983, and have most recently toured with Big Country in the UK. RCA will release their debut album in February.



Blue Zoo

THE SONG

Forgive and Forget

From the RCA album **2 by 2**. Produced by Tim Friese-Green.

THE BAND

Andy O (vocals), Tim Parry (guitar/vocals), Mike Ansell (bass), Mickey Sparrow (drums). In early 1981, a London five-piece band called Modern Jazz released its debut 45 on the Magnet label. Later that year they dropped one member, renamed themselves Blue Zoo, and re-launched their assault on the British pop world. Blue Zoo has since released a batch of singles, appeared repeatedly on *Top of the Pops*, and recorded an album, **2 by 2**.

TP Flexi-File 24/25



MAD



MADNESS

By Jim Green

The transatlantic telephone line is dominated by the muffled distortion and hiss common to calls made across a thousand leagues of water; the voice at the other end also cuts off intermittently for split-second intervals. At one point, though, the speaker obviously pauses, as if to gather his thoughts on a subject he rarely discusses, at least not with the press.

"The image of the band is itself almost as strong as the music, if not *more* memorable, to the average person," says Graham McPherson. He is referring to Madness, the group in which he is lead vocalist (and, true to form, in which role he is far better known as "Suggs").

"I don't know if it's right or not," he continues hesitantly, "but musically we've been looked on as something instant, not really worthy of analysis."

Nobody would argue that, least of all McPherson's bandmates—until the release of the septet's fourth British album, **The Rise and Fall**, Madness has moved into new musical and lyrical ground, with the fullest realization of their capabilities to date. Yet the record incurred critical brickbats from the British music press, which characterized it as depressing, and—unkindest cut of all?—"said you couldn't put most of the songs from it on the jukebox."

What a switch from the days when Madness was branded too frivolous and lacking in the "socially relevant" virtues of the other outfits with which it was lumped: Selecter, the Beat and the Specials. (The last were the so-called vanguard of neo-ska and proprietors of the 2 Tone label on which the others got their starts.) But Madness has rarely received comment from the Britpress, positive or negative, that hasn't been based on one prejudice or another.

That the group suddenly matured isn't, in the members' own eyes, deserving of celebration by the press. Nor do they seek the critical scrutiny and interpretation

Lisa Haun



inflicted on artists like Elvis Costello or even the Jam. They just want a fair shake.

If McPherson, bassist Mark Bedford and guitarist Chris Foreman (the latter two available to chat during this summer's US tour) are representative of their bandmates, one of Madness's most salient characteristics is a distinct lack of self-consciousness. Madness most likely would have entered the 2 Tone graveyard long ago if they'd been more calculating than what they've always been: a bunch of friends who like making music together.

Mark Bedford: "If anything, we're more influenced by outside sources now than when we started. Back then"—when they were mostly in their late teens—"we, like most kids, thought we knew it all; no-one could tell us anything."

When Madness started, as the North London Invaders in 1978, there was no "movement" or trend. The band did what they enjoyed, even if few pubs encouraged them.

Another band called the Invaders (from West Yorkshire) staked a claim on the

name, necessitating a switch. No one was satisfied with Morris & the Minors (a pun on a British automobile). Then Foreman suggested rechristening the group after one of their songs. As a jokey example he mentioned "Madness"; Prince Buster's '60s ska hit was a keynote of their set.

To Foreman's dismay, the others leapt on it at once. "I didn't like it," he says. "I thought it was the kind of thing for an Alice Cooper-type band. But it stuck."

McPherson now is bemused by the group's youthfully naive élan in those days. "Like anybody, you don't really imagine or realize that you'll be a great success. We always knew, when we were young, that anything we did would be brilliant. Every time we played we expected everyone to go mad, but it didn't go beyond an immediate enthusiasm for impressing people, as opposed to becoming nationally successful."

In early 1979 the Specials created 2 Tone and garnered lots of attention. When word got out that they were looking for other groups to put on their label, Madness jumped at the chance. "We sent them a cassette—a rehearsal tape, really," Foreman says, grimacing.

"Jerry Dammers [the head Special] still has it!" Bedford laughs. "He told me he still listens to it once in a while and has a laugh."

Still, Dammers and company heard something of merit in it. By September, Madness was enjoying its first hit with its tribute to Buster, "The Prince." "We weren't mugs," Foreman asserts. "We wanted to get an album out right away."

"We wanted to do it with 2 Tone," Bedford adds, "but [the Specials] only had money enough to do their own album."

Label shopping resulted in their signing to Stiff. An LP, **One Step Beyond**, was quickly recorded and followed its namesake single into the UK Top 10; the album went platinum during its 64-week chart residency.

Other hit singles followed. Madness's albums sold even better than most of their



45s, but English pundits jeered the group for being a “singles band”—as if that somehow cheapened the success.

Image problems persisted. Madness suffered in the aforementioned comparisons with their former 2 Tone mates (or, for that matter, whichever “serious” new world-beaters were current press favorites).

“We never said, ‘We’re a ska band,’” Foreman claims. “We never put those limits on what we were doing.”

“That’s musical suicide, sooner or later,” Bedford says.

“Other people lumped us into that but we didn’t mind; we knew what we could do,” Foreman adds. “Calling our music the ‘Nutty Sound’ was a way to avoid categorizing ourselves. ‘Nutty’ was just a word Lee [saxman Thompson] used a lot, and someone picked up on it.”

The “Nutty Boys” might have smacked all too much of bubblegum-style merchandising, but even skeptics found it hard not to be taken in by Madness’s wacky antics in front of movie or video cameras. The group released a semi-autobiographical feature film, *Take It or Leave It*, in October, 1981, and then *Complete Madness*, a compendium of videos with added linkage and a pair of their Japanese TV commercials thrown in for good measure. And they remained overwhelmingly popular in the UK.

What could be wrong? Gradually, band members got married—notably McPherson to songstress Bette Bright, and drummer Dan “Woody” Woodgate to

ex-Mo-Dettes bassist Jane Crockford—and started families. But something was brewing.

Bedford admits the marriages have crimped Madness’s former camaraderie. And he and Foreman are both less than pleased with the band’s third album, **Seven** (despite its spawning “House of Fun,” Madness’s first Number One single).

McPherson remembers the situation more clearly: “I was satisfied with **Seven**, but the others weren’t. We didn’t have the best feeling when we recorded it, in Nassau in the Bahamas; I think we were pressin’ down there, which was very strange.

“It started feeling very professional. That side of things was becoming more prevalent than with the previous two albums, where it was pure luck we were there at *all*.

“Clive [Langer] and Alan [Winstanley], our producers all along, became scapegoats since they were in control of the proceedings.

“After we got back to London we were thinking of trying other producers. We met Trevor Horn, whom no one got along with. It made us realize how good Clive and Alan are as communicators, apart from everything else. It brought us closer together again.”

Madness then created their best album by far. What made the difference? Just a better atmosphere while it was

being recorded?

Bedford and Foreman mention that the band’s working up different arrangements of the same number had a key effect. McPherson puts that new (for Madness) technique into a larger context.

“I think we realized that maybe we had been restricting ourselves, just like any bunch of kids will do. It’s like we weren’t ‘allowed’ to do certain things; none of us would have grown a beard, for instance, and musically it was probably the same. Certain things were ‘uncool,’ like to do introspective stuff. **The Rise and Fall** was generally more thought out. It’s the first album we’ve made that’s an album, not a collection of songs.”

Indeed. Would you believe a Madness concept album?

“It was gonna be about the rise and fall of a normal person in a particular area that was falling into bad times. ‘Rise and Fall,’ ‘Primrose Hill,’ ‘Sunday Morning’ and ‘Blue Skinned Beast’ were all linked together. But as other songs started to be written, it kind of lost its way. We realized you had to write songs to fill in bits of the story, to keep it moving, but that they might not be very good or able to stand on their own.” McPherson sighs at the thought of “14-minute songs” and such—heaven forbid!

The way the album jelled reveals the vital interaction of Madness’s members. Foreman and keyboardist Mike Barson have long been the songwriting mainstays as well as musical arrangers; Bedford, who’s now writing less, is getting into technical aspects.

“I saw him reading a technical book on

Echoed In The Press

**ECHO
AND
THE
BUNNYMEN**

London Royal Albert Hall

THE ALBERT Hall's ornate dome swells majestically to enclose a vast bubble of overhead space. What setting could be more appropriate for Echo And The Bunnymen, purveyors of the world's most vaulting, stratospheric rock sound? But rather than aim for the heights, which they reached in any case, Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Echo unleashed the most urgent, frontal punk assault I've ever seen them deliver. And I'm still reeling.

In harmony with the uplifting aspect of this opulent, Victorian cathedral of Culture, our expectant chatter hushed to the strains of Gregorian chant and stained-glass windows projected onto the backdrop. Thoughts of choirboys, altars, the sacred and profane sprung to mind. But rather than surrender to flights of religious fancy induced by the basilica-like setting, the fab four — like Dylan, the Stones, The Who, Chuck Berry and Mott The Hoople famously before them — played it as merely a gigantic rock 'n' roll cellar-club.

Strung in a line along the stage's lip like a firing-squad and shrouded in *Apocalypse Now* dry-ice, they lashed into 'Going Up' from the first album, which segued after a chorus or two into 'With A Hip' from their second. Apart from socking it to us from the whistle, this one-two knock-out exemplified how very *similar* one rabbit punch is to the next — and yet they *both* lay you flat. Echo And The Bunnymen can reproduce their style in seemingly endless permutations, yet the elements of their method are unchanging — Les Pattinson's dark, probing bass, Peter De Freitas' tautly controlled drum frenzy, Will Sergeant's orchestra of searing guitar sounds, and Ian McCulloch's rhythmic urgency on guitar and vocal grand opera Hamlet.

... Echo And The Bunnymen know their Rock, and right now they are the Rock against which all others must be measured.

Mat Snow
New Musical Express
7/30/83

THE SOUND OF THE ECHO KEEPS GETTING LOUDER



Echo And The Bunnymen

The new five-song E.P. features "Never Stop" and a live version of "Do It Clean" recorded at the legendary Albert Hall concert. *(reviewed left)*

"Echo And The Bunnymen know their Rock, and right now they are the Rock against which all others must be measured"

— New Musical Express

7/30/83



Watch MTV for the video of "Never Stop" recorded live at The Royal Albert Hall

engineering," McPherson says, "and he's produced singles by two bands, Bonsai Forest and Strawberry Switchblade. Now at least one of us understands what's going on at that end of things."

"Woody does the sleeping for the band," Bedford jokes, while pointing out that Woodgate did write "Sunday Morning." McPherson mentions that everyone has taken a more active interest in writing—collaborating more than ever—and arranging.

"That's part of the reason we've stayed together," he explains. "There's no pressure on any one person to think of a concept or do all the songs."

The piece of the Madness puzzle that's fallen into place is vocalist and trumpet player Carl Smyth—best remembered by early American fans of the group as the zany seventh member, "Chas Smash."

Smyth got involved with Madness as a friend whose dance antics and vocal hijinks (he's the voice on "One Step Beyond") were worked into the group. But he seemed something of a fifth (or in this case seventh) wheel; he doesn't appear on the cover of the first album.

"There was a funny period just after **One Step Beyond** that Carl didn't have much to do with," McPherson says. "He was a member of the band, but he wasn't really involved with anybody else—particularly me, because we're both singers. We talked about it between ourselves, and it must have been strange for him; I think he felt he was sort of outside us, yet felt changing that would be pushing me out. He didn't push his position 'cause he didn't know what it was. But we decided that whoever had the right thing, be it words or music or singing, we'd do whatever seemed right."

Smyth's enthusiasm is evidently catching. "He'll have a million ideas when we start talking about videos," McPherson says, "another million when we're getting things together for it, and when we're actually doing it he'll have a million more. It's like he had something bottled up in him and suddenly the cork sprang out. He's brilliant. We probably wouldn't be here if he wasn't like he was, because out of every million ideas come 10 really good ones."

"And he's always thinking of dance routines we can do, or whatever. If things start flagging a bit, he'll pick us up."

Now known within the group as "Mr. Bosh," Smyth reverted to his given name for songwriting credits. Since co-writing "Cardiac Arrest," a hit single on **Seven**, Smyth has made several important contributions—notably co-writing "Our House" ("Carl lives in one very much like that,"

Foreman says), "Tomorrow's Just Another Day" and the current British single, "Wings of a Dove."

Madness fans got a bonus with the British single version of "Tomorrow's Just Another Day": a guest lead vocal by Elvis Costello.

"I'd heard an old rockabilly song," McPherson says, "which started out with a bluesy version, then faded out and back in to a rocked-up arrangement. I thought it'd be great to have something like that on 'Tomorrow's Just Another Day'—an arrangement that sounded old and bluesy, just 20 seconds at the beginning of the song, and then cross-fading into the newer version, which we'd already done."

"The backing track was cut, slowed down a bit and quite good. But I couldn't come to grips with real singing. So Carl had a go; he did a good version, jazzed up a bit in the phrasing, but it still didn't sound quite right."

"By that time we'd finished the album and still had this backing track. Clive was soon going to be producing the new Elvis Costello album, and I think Chris suggested he ask Elvis to try it. He was really good; came in, did it and left. If he hadn't, we'd *still* have that backing track sitting around! I think it was one of the best vocals he's ever done." Perhaps in deference to Madness, Costello sang with a British accent, which he also tried out on **Punch the Clock**.

In the US, Sire Records had released **One Step Beyond** and its follow-up, **Absolutely**; both albums promptly died the death. Sire didn't bother with **Seven**, but Madness, hugely successful everywhere else, wasn't too concerned. "We didn't turn our back on America, really," Foreman says. "We just kind of forgot about it."

According to Geffen Records A&R man Danny Heaps, however, US labels didn't forget about Madness—especially as the group racked up hit after hit in England and Europe. In early 1983, Heaps says, Madness approached Geffen—a hot new company that had just started the last time the band had an American release.

"They were a logical signing. Remember, at that time Dexy's was number one here. And you know, that stuff about Madness being 'too English' for the US is nonsense."

"We picked Geffen for the same reasons we signed with Stiff," Bedford says, "because of the people we talked to. They accepted us for what we are—not saying, 'You're great but you'll have to do this and you ought to do that.'"

Geffen released **Madness**, a compilation drawn mostly from **The Rise and Fall** but digging as far back as the first album.

"I don't like it," McPherson states. "It's a scrapbook, not an album."

Foreman is more philosophic. "Programming the album that way is, well, the way things are done for the US. I didn't used to feel this way about it, but now I realize it has to be."

Heaps argues that Geffen's track selection, "instead of putting out all of **The Rise and Fall**, was purely commercial logic. The stuff from **Seven**, which includes singles, has never been out here—and 'Night Boat to Cairo' [from **One Step Beyond**] is just a track someone in the company really wanted on there. We wanted to put on 'Madness' or 'The Prince,' but the group would allow only so much of our delving into the past."

The "commercial logic" paid off. **Madness** has sold over 200,000 copies, and spun off two hit singles: the Top 10 "Our House" and a version of Labi Siffre's "It Must Be Love."

Future plans? Typically, McPherson chuckles and quips that he's anxious to "have some of the stew that my beautiful wife's knockin' up on the cooker." More seriously, he's looking ahead to the next Madness album. Recording began last spring, before an American tour, and resumed this autumn.

"Before we recorded **The Rise and Fall**," Bedford says, "the mood of the country was pretty grey." He mentions Britain's economy and the Falklands war, referred to in "Blue Skinned Beast"—dead soldiers were put into blue body bags. In contrast, Madness's spring studio session were much more upbeat.

"We're looking out for our more introspective tendencies," McPherson says, "even though we're not sure we've been going into them that heavily, so we can balance that with our more flamboyant side."

Madness getting self-conscious? Losing artistic innocence? Maybe... and maybe not. McPherson still believes in group dynamics.

"**The Rise and Fall** succeeded because there was so much collaboration. Everyone had to stay interested, or we wouldn't know what was going on the record! People change and grow together when they get so intensely involved. I think we were all in the same groove, the same vein, when we made that record."

That's what he thinks makes Madness yield up its best work: democratic anarchy. ■

HUNTERS & COLLECTORS

HUNTERS & COLLECTORS



They're Coming...

Don't Be Caught Behind...



HUNTERS & COLLECTORS

12"

Edited Version

3:56

"TALKING TO A STRANGER"



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The end of any year is a time for taking stock of the past and looking ahead to the future. As we hover on the edge of 1984, however, the moment seems especially propitious for pop music—least of all for the date's Orwellian significance. Record sales, radio airplay and this summer's New Music Seminar in New York were conclusive: The current descendants of the original new wave explosion have entered the pop mainstream.

So far, so good; where next? Going to the source, TP contacted various musicians for their views on the scene, present and future. Their answers speak for themselves—but it's interesting to note that more than one hints of an imminent synthesizer backlash, and the increasing influence of video. If any consensus emerges from the opinions below, it's that the coming year may prove to be more exciting—musically, anyway—than George Orwell could have envisioned.

1983-1984

A SURVEY



ADAM CLAYTON

U2

1983: People are reevaluating what they're going to be doing, where they're going—trying to get more of a firm direction. It's been very much a year of re-assessment. A lot of bands are coming and going, particularly bands that have done three or four albums and have gone as

far as they can go in that format: Paul Weller and the Jam, the English Beat, the Clash. U2 certainly intends to make a change from what we've done so far.

1984: I think music will become a lot more vital, maybe a bit rougher, not as smooth and produced as it has been. It may go in a more political way overall. The synthesizer bands are already having problems: They can't really tour, and they're very reliant on that floating market that buys hit records. They have no more longevity than their next song. A lot of those bands may well disappear. The vanguard of the new direction is certainly the Alarm and Big Country.



JERRY CASALE

Devo

1983: This was the best year since 1978. With the success of bands like U2, the Eurythmics

and Heaven 17 (in Europe), a degree of style and intelligence has been allowed out once more from the narrowcasting chokehold of the music biz. Good things have been rewarded.

1984: There seems to be a widening chasm between the forces of goon regression and the forces of true mutancy. Nineteen eighty-four promises to be the year they come together in some big crunch. It's a mythical year everybody's been looking forward to, and it's sure to affect everyone on an unconscious level. Devo will be right there with our customary ambivalence and exuberant cynicism. We know, of course, that with every move we make and every step we take, the police are watching us!



ADAM ANT

1983: Music got a little bit safe and precious last year. I think it could become a lot sexier with more humor. Live shows could become far more colorful and theatrical than they have in the past. In fact, due to the video revolution we may see some of the style of the videos reproduced live. Video has fulfilled more than anyone ever dreamed. **1984:** I would like to see more artists getting involved in controlling their own video imagery. It's important to realize that videos are the product of the artist's imagination and should reflect the lyrics the artist has written. Videos have to be worked through in the same manner that one writes a song. It is a craft to be learned by the artist and not just handed over to outside producers. Otherwise it may be turned into cosmetic

with no musical guts.

Lastly, I think that in the coming year audiences should be given a lot more credit. Live performances are very important and kids should demand a higher level of entertainment than ever seen before.

IGGY POP

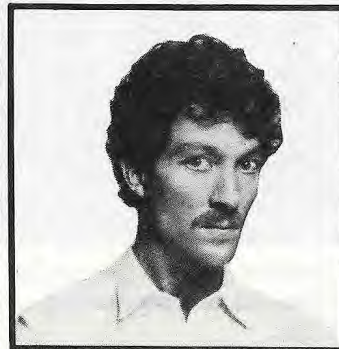
1983: You could call 1983 the Year of the Sobering Experience. A lot of the mystery and maybe mysticism that was once attendant upon music has gone out of it, which is good: As new wave becomes a dominant musical force you can actually hear on radio, musicians are beginning to realize this can be a lifetime role. Bands are getting more serious and a little more normal about their lifestyle. I'm finding the people in the audience at my shows are living a life not terribly different from mine! Before you could have an Elvis living in the Hollywood hills with starlets around the house, and his fans would be hillbillies. Now half the people in the audience have bands of their own! There's an integration between performer and audience—something I tried to push a long time ago.

1984: Because of MTV and a lot of other channels, people are going to start writing music much more with video and a story in mind. A long, arduous tour will no longer be something you have to do to get yourself seen everywhere. That's good for the audience,



Esther Friedman

because a lot of people used to get ruined from touring too much. You can give more thought to what you do in a video than trying to deal with the frustrations of a small club with a bad sound system 10,000 miles from home.



FRED SCHNEIDER
B-52's

1983: More avenues are open for non-MOR groups. New British music, good and bad, and MTV have opened up radio. People are finally getting to see the groups they wanted to see and hear.

1984: I guess it will continue the way it has been for the past year or so: more British music coming in, more American groups getting better exposure. Groups who might not get radio play will take advantage of video, getting the exposure they need and deserve—or don't deserve. My family watches MTV; they let me know what's going on.

MOON ZAPPA

1983: It's been a pretty boring year. I can't stand listening to drum machines. I respect groups like Van Halen that

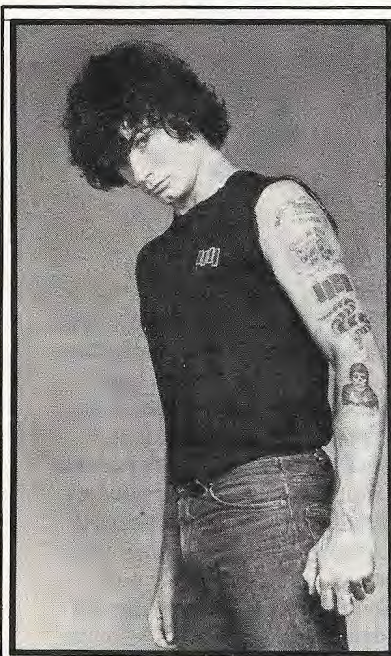
work for a living, that go out and put their all into it. Or groups like the B-52's, where you get totally funky and involved in the lyrics. Synth-pop has been the main development this year, and I think it's pretty bleak.

1984: I would hope bands go back to raw-sounding music, but I see the same thing: techno-pop, boring synthesizer garbage. Everything's getting so commercial. Pushing buttons just gets boring.

RAY MANZAREK

1983: The new music scene is extremely exciting. I'm finding people are committed to the importance of music once again. It reminds me of what was going on in the mid to late '60s, when music was important. Music should be entertaining but it shouldn't be *just* entertainment. Certainly X is in the forefront; that's why I'm working with them. Some people coming out of England and Australia are starting to do very meaningful things. There's a lot of bullshit going on too.

1984: George Orwell said 1984 is the year of Big Brother, but it's not going to go that way. Instead individual human beings are going to find out that music is one of the most important things in their lives. Music matters, and the words singers are singing matter. I see some important things going on in 1984 that will be generated by the young people of America and the whole planet, committed to the intoxicating rhythms of rock 'n' roll. Either that, or the shit hits the fan.



Ann Summa

HENRY ROLLINS
Black Flag

1983: I'm kind of a rare bird in that I don't keep a finger on the pulsebeat of rock movements. Radio is awful. Hardcore is not very hard. I don't see anything that vital except a handful of bands: Minor Threat, Minutemen, Husker Du, Meat Puppets, Big Boys, St. Vitus. Mostly I listen to older records; my favorite band is the Stooges. I start with the Stooges and Velvet Underground, and *then* I look at bands.

1984: Black Flag's going to tour a lot and put out a lot of records. We are a live touring band, and this sitting-at-home shit is not happening.



JOEY RAMONE
Ramones

1983: I'm disgusted with elevator music, all this English synthetic Motown. I'd like to see music get exciting again. Rock 'n' roll is exciting music, but this is schlock: A Flock of Seagulls, the Fixx, all this crap. Everything now is just so artificial and superficial. There's no feeling, no guts or soul. I'm not saying everybody's doing this, but it seems most people are jumping on the bandwagon; it's the easiest thing to do. It infuriates me when bullshit like Wham! is the hottest thing in England.

If you grew up on rock 'n' roll, you know what's good. I like music that's real, with some emotion. I've had enough of all this shit, and I think kids have too.

PETER BUCK & MICHAEL STIPE
R.E.M.

1983: There was a bit more willingness on the part of the

media to spotlight independent labels and uncompromising music.

1984: The record industry is going to die like the dinosaur which it so much resembles.

PAUL WELLER
Style Council

1983: Very cloudy and overcast. Lots of drizzle.

1984: More grey clouds, but outbursts later, followed by extreme sunshine.



STYLE COUNCIL

SUGGS

Madness

1983: I really hate the phrase "new music." That's one of the worst trends in America, segregating music.

It's a funny period. Everything's been done, and anything that anybody's doing has been recycled. Maybe that's how it's always been, but it seems like there's nowhere to go. People are burying themselves in synthesizers, finding nothing at the bottom, and flinging themselves around trying to find new things.

Madness. That was my favorite trend this year.

1984: A good sign is that the young seem a lot more involved in popular music than they were a few years ago. Punk is the best thing that's happened.

STIV BATOR

Lords of the New Church

1984: I see a return to glam-punk coming in, along the tradition of the Alice Cooper "nightmare" look as opposed to the feminine/drag queen look. There'll be a weird undercurrent of punkadelia thrown in too.

GORDON GANO

Violent Femmes

1983: I'm fairly ignorant of the music scene, even though I'm part of it. We don't make it our business to stay up on what's happening. But it's certainly been a good year for the Femmes!

1984: If we were to play it relatively safe our popularity would grow. But what we're planning for the second album will throw some people for a



GORDON GANO

loop. We want to continue to make the best music we can, and we hope people will continue to be openminded and get into it. I think it will be a good year.



Robert Matheau/Atrocities

ANDREW GILL

Gang of Four

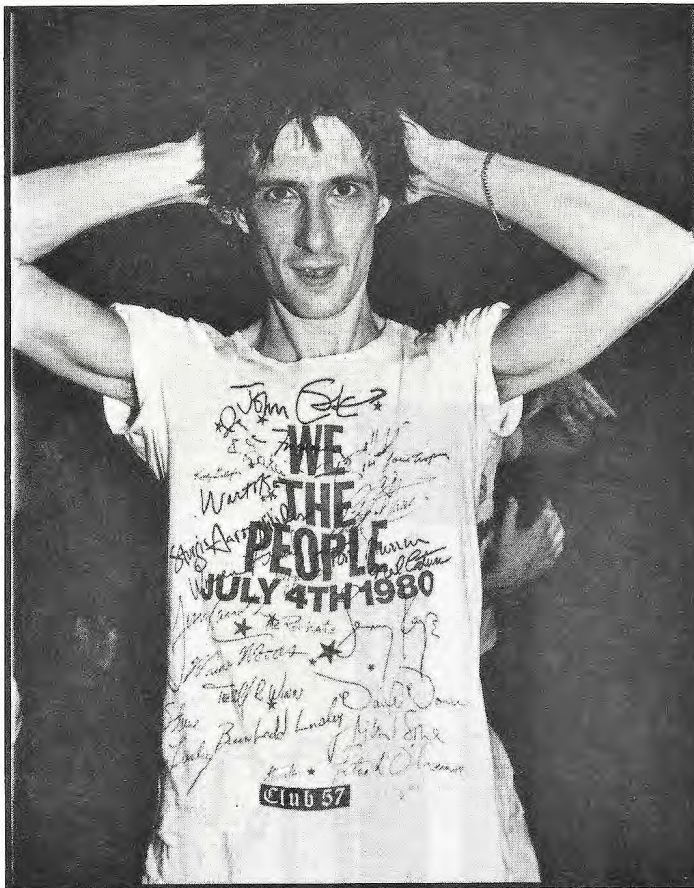
1983: I don't think there's been an enormous change in the last 12 months; the change happened more like two years ago. The synthesizer thing is still sticking around. The American Top 20 has been dominated by English groups the last couple of years, with well-crafted pop songs. As in the classic pop song tradition, those songs are about nothing. I like a little bit of interest.

1984: Changes will be occurring soon. People are going to get tired of being fed this pap all the time, and will look for something with substance to it—which will be good for Gang of Four. What we feel we're doing makes sense when it's nestling shoulder to shoulder with Barry Manilow and REO Speedwagon. That's the context in which Gang of Four should be heard. Perhaps we've not achieved that because we've been so difficult in media terms. We felt we could get away with more radical moves than people are prepared to accept.

LENNY KAYE

*Lenny Kaye Connection,
Jim Carroll Band*

1983: Nineteen eighty-three gave us the technology for the music we're going to be listening to, and the ways we're going to listen to it, over the next 10 years. It completely split apart old musical categories and created new ones. You can hear that in radio, if nowhere else. It was a year, for instance, when



disco music, once the most conservative of forms, became the most radical—and rock 'n' roll, vice versa.

It's form over content at this point. In England form has taken total precedence over everything; whatever content you get out of the music is incidental.

1984: Perhaps people will learn to harness technologies and style. Now that we have a bunch of new styles to work with, I'm curious to see whether we can get into what these styles can teach us about how we live and breathe. African music—a novelty, from a white viewpoint—will have a lot more relevance than just "this week's foreign music." The most relevant album to all this—so relevant it's almost a theoretical work—is Malcolm McLaren's **Duck Rock**.

Obviously, new wave—which began in the mid-'70s—has run its course. You can see it in the music and sense of possibility that looms right over the horizon. I'm kind of anxious for the next year to begin, because I think that's when things are really going to start rolling, and the true personality of the '80s will make itself manifest. ■



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TOUGH TOSH

BY JOHN WALKER

“The heir to Ras Tafari?” Peter Tosh lets the phrase fairly drip off the tip of his tongue. Imagine sarcasm with the consistency of honey. “Madness . . . It’s pure bullshit.”

What has brought forth this burgeoning irritability? The notion, bandied about

in Timothy White’s Bob Marley biography *Catch a Fire*, that the late singer may be the spiritual/cultural successor to Haile Selassie—Jah.

“I’ll tell you, I just *heard* about the biography. But these guys obviously intend to promote Bob Marley. They want to promote Bob Marley even more than Emperor Haile Selassie. And that’s why Bob Marley is where he is today, seen?”

Suddenly Tosh’s emotional temperature bubbles over.

“They don’t realize that Bob Marley *IS ONE OF MY STUDENTS!* I made Bob Marley ‘Bob Marley.’”

Peter Tosh understands the value of drama. Most people do. Sometimes, though, we neglect the drama of values.

It isn’t always an issue. But when a Rasta man meets the press, it ought to be. It’s very easy to be absorbed by the novelty of Peter Tosh’s culture—and forget that he has his own ideas.

For years we’ve been getting the dub version of Peter Tosh: That booming foundation of Rasta, the angry kick-drum, the heavy echo of injustices from long ago. Basic tracks. Undisputed essentials of the Tosh personality. But as you read on, listen for the A-side. Peter Tosh is worth it.

Before our meeting, everyone I’d spoken to shared a vague sense of discomfort about Peter Tosh. He was too full of himself. A tough nut to crack. Even the publicist arranging the interview gave me a mildly distracted pep-talk about how, OK, Peter may come off a little spacey, but he’s really a lovely fellow.

Dub version, dub version. But what if I told you the secret of secrets? For every minute you spend with the Stepping Razor and the Bush Doctor, you get two with Ward Cleaver in dreadlocks!

How else to describe a man with a dry, easy wit—a man who patiently frees your head from the bars of cultural contrariety . . . and follows up the whole thing with a lecture on good eating habits?

Peter Tosh was born to keep the butcher’s thumb off the scales of justice. Well balanced? The man travels by unicycle! But when his sense of justice is ruffled, the floodgates tend to open and give the situation a good washdown.

These outlashes are not the Armageddon of personality some people take them to be. Tosh is just weighing all the factors and distinguishing them with emotion. For purposes of illumination.

Now sit up straight and pay attention.

“**I** taught Bob Marley music, seen? And when my student is promoted and reach a potential of acceptance . . . well, it’s very good, but at the same time, *remember the teacher*. And they *always* tend to forget the teacher. They pretend as if the teacher never existed, seen, and pretend



Anne Fishbein/Photo Reserve

as if the student's potential is bigger than the teacher. And that is *wrong*, totally *wrong*.

"Eighty percent of the songs that Bob Marley wrote was co-written by me and never credited. And not only co-written, but musically architected by me. Because I am the music, and I *was* the music. When I met Bob Marley, Bob Marley wasn't playing no instrument, so he did not know how to design a song. He could only sing out of his mouth. But the world don't want to accept that shit, seen? They want to *keep* me in the back, keep Bunny Wailer in the back like we weren't doing *NOTHING*, like we were just baggages. **THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO WRITE MY BOOK!** And when my book is written, then they will know."

There will be a lot to tell. It has been 20 years since the Wailers—forever, principally, Marley, Bunny (Neville Livingston) and Tosh—came together to become the cardinal reggae aggregation in the music's history. It has been nearly a decade since Tosh "left." Since then, he has survived: survived a devastating automobile accident that killed his girlfriend; survived more than one brutal beating at the hands of the Jamaican police; survived the animosity of politicians and businessmen; survived the death of Bob Marley.

His faith and philosophy have helped him to cope with these most tangible tragedies and disappointments. His solo career has finally established him as perhaps the reigning reggae representative outside of Jamaica. But Tosh still seems

concerned with the nebulous forces that disrupted the Wailers.

Ten years' passing haven't clouded the issue. The '70s were the era of the front man, and Bob Marley was the obvious choice for the Wailers—just as you'll never see the phrase "Keith Richards and the Rolling Stones" anywhere beyond your bootlegs.

Tosh, who to this day sings "I don't want peace, I want equal rights," clearly balked at this development. Although he recorded solo while still a Wailer, he clearly did not regard this as a conflict of interest. To Peter Tosh, "the Wailers" was a rock-solid entity unto itself.

A PERTINENT DIALOGUE

Was there animosity between you and Bob Marley?

"No. No animosity. The shitstem designed the animosity, seen?"

Was Marley affected by the emphasis on him? Did he believe the promotion, or was he just swept along with it?

"Well, it's like he wasn't concerned about that. Maybe that was his *intention*, because nothing was said after he saw what was done, seen? I wouldn't know if he *helped* them to create it, but he *accepted* the fact that they divided us, seen? [*A hint of pain in the voice.*] And he said nothing about it, so . . . silence is consent."

We all know the ego is a strange bird. What if the shoe had been on the kicking foot? Ponder the concept: *Peter Tosh* and the Wailers.

You might as well indulge yourself, because Tosh sure as hell won't. As if he were teaching arithmetic to an extremely dull child, Tosh leadenly reiterates: "It was *the Wailers*, seen, it was a *group*, seen. The *power* of we three come together to make the power of the group *the Wailers*." Seen, seen.

"Me and Bunny used to be the harmony of the group, and we sang harmony like birds. We two sing harmony, sound like *five*. Bob Marley never sing harmony, no time."

Harmony was Bunny's middle name. More mystic than egotistic, he apparently felt the jagged vibes between Tosh and Marley like a blast of Santa Ana wind. When Wailer recording sessions started to resemble episodes of *Divorce Court*, Bunny quietly skanked away.

While no less prolific than his brethren as a recording artist, Bunny has not pursued stardom with commensurate gusto. Reggae connoisseurs consider his to be the sweetest of the Wailers' three voices; the combination of talent and reputation should have guaranteed Bunny stardom equal at least to Tosh. Instead, Bunny has maintained the lowest of profiles.

"He is doing what he is doing," Tosh reports of his former bandmate. He pauses for a split second, as if silently

contrasting Bunny's lifestyle with his own. "And . . . he's cool. He's making music and intending to make move. Which could be Africa, anytime.

"Plus, you know, we are working together to make an album and keep the name of the Wailers alive."

Well, *no*, I didn't know. The notion sounds dazzling, but Tosh's voice dips into the portentous range. He's not known for his sentimentality; nor would Tosh keep the group's name alive only for posterity. This "reunion" shows he has not resolved the issue of the Wailers. There are still factors to be weighed, evidence to be reintroduced.

New testimony: "When we left as 'the Wailers,' Bob Marley took unto himself some other people and called *them* 'the Wailers.' And that is what is now causing the animosities."

Tosh's tone is like fast-hardening cement. For him, the furor over "the Wailers" is not just a matter of clinking egos, but a case of stolen identity.

The real issue is unity. In discussing competition within the reggae community, Tosh displays a healthy perspective.

"Anything that is more than one always becomes competitive. It's not a matter of direct competition, but people are trying to do their best . . . and people who are weak in this world many times are controlled by ego. And they many times get carried away, seen? They begin to put all confidence and trust in themselves, not knowing from whence inspiration cometh. And one or two years later they fade away, they've lost all inspiration. They don't remember how to create."

Between Tosh and Marley, then, was the natural competition of two people trying to do their best. They were stirred up by outsiders who related to competition only as a win/lose situation.

The depth of Tosh's perspective becomes intensely apparent when asked if he felt a sense of loss when Marley died. The question begets a small explosion.

"No, I never lose *NOTHING*. When my woman die, I never lose nothing, so when my brother die, I lose nothing. I don't fret about it."

Perhaps he'll see them again?

"No! If them come back here, I will see them, but if them still out there, I won't."

But when Tosh goes "there" . . .

"I won't go there. I have been there so many times, mon. *You think it is joke-business I am talking—I AM NOT. The gift of Jah is eternal life.* Everyone who goes to Sunday school will read that the wages of sin is death . . . so the preacher say. And he says the gift of god is eternal life. So what does *that* mean? What does 'eternal

life' mean? Go in the coffin and come out back?! I will be *HERE*. Who are going to die will die . . . and they will never see who live. I'm not going anywhere, I promise you that."

Tosh's Rastafarian foundation supports him, though it may confuse others. "I was born Rastafarian," he asserts. "You cannot turn a Rasta man, you have to be born a Rasta.

"What makes you confused is when you try to be influenced by too many things. But if you keep your eyes on one thing and keep moving towards this one thing—you may stop by the way to pick up something and to look at it, but you say, 'No, this is not it,' and you keep going."

Is he open to the possibility that somewhere down the road something he never conceived of will show itself?

"I don't go down the road, I go *up* the road," Tosh laughs. "I don't like 'down the road'; I've been come from 'down the road.'"

"My psychology teaches me to expect the unexpected, seen? So I'm always prepared."

Nine out of ten people would call Peter Tosh arrogant. One former acquaintance of mine says he thinks Tosh obscures his most important accomplishments—influencing a generation of reggae guitarists, for example—with his boasting.

Tosh sure seems to fit the bill. When I fail to grasp a rather esoteric religious point, he gestures toward the lager in my glass and concludes, "You cannot understand that and drink beer . . . Michelob, seen." Soon after, he states (albeit the quote is out of context), "I live higher spiritually than you."

But I wasn't offended. When looking at another's culture, it's easy to misjudge the intensity of a statement—to hear nothing but the dub throb.

So Peter Tosh likes to argue. Coming from a country where a national pastime is debating scripture, he could read aloud from the Brooklyn phone book and sound like he was spoiling for a fight. Don't forget the A-side: the man who will break down the components of an argument like the squares of a Rubik's Cube just to clarify his position.

It's not easy to build a bridge to such a personality. People who try often weave one from the most convenient material: hemp and dreadlocks.

"Yeah, we know *that*. But, then again, it's just as far as we have people whose minds are lower than people, and people who *see* deeper than people, people who *hear* deeper than people, seen? But we know that irrespective of how high or low they see or hear, we still have to teach them, we still have to awaken them. And

musically is the easiest way to get across."

The situation is different, if not much better, in Jamaica. Back home, Tosh is a celebrity on the receiving end of adulation that can cross over to harassment.

"I am a diplomat, so I know how to move amongst the people. You go to the fish shop, you go here, you sit down, then you go *here*, now we don't know where we are going. . . ." He giggles at the effect of his comings and goings.

"Here, *here*, Peter, he *was*.' That's the way I love it. I come and go freely. Me move like the people.

"Most people don't want to deal with me because most people say I'm hostile, some people say I'm arrogant. Them have all different kinds of names to class me and most people who hear these things are in fear to even talk to me. So, with that, I get around."

When people connect to the star and not the person, Tosh says, "I teach them. My duty is to teach them. And I am always successful, because when they see me *that* way, I see the level of thought and mind they function off.

"Psychology teaches you everything. When you know psychology, you can deal with any kind of situation, any kind of people any time, anywhere. I think that my psychology teaches me to do that and I think that I am doing my best, seen? I have learned to live through all situations. I have learned to be *absent in my presence*. So I am able to cope."

How does he compare his experiences inside Jamaica and out?

"I've been respected more outside of Jamaica than in Jamaica. And I have been treated better outside of Jamaica. I don't go to jail out here, first thing. I'm not being brutalized by the police out here, second thing. And I don't see too much bad-minded people who don't want to see our progress but want to see our destruction."

I suggest the latter batch of folk are all over the place, and Tosh only notices them more in Jamaica, where he's in the thick of it.

"Well," he concedes very drily, "I prefer where I'm *not* in the thick of it."

That may explain Tosh's various ploys to break into the rest of the world—like the Rolling Stones fiasco.

To be fair, Tosh got a lot of exposure in their spotlight, dueting with Jagger during a hip, hot tour. But apart from "Walk and Don't Look Back," his three records on their label didn't click. Some of Tosh's most enduring fans now regard those albums as sub-par. Tosh himself sees the failure as symptomatic of his relationship with the Stones.

"I was inhumanely treated. But, as I told you, I am always prepared. Because if

I was not prepared, I'd be exhausted and frustrated."

He feels the records were, willfully or accidentally, under-promoted and incorrectly marketed. Considering the Stones' reputation as a corporate steam-roller, didn't Tosh anticipate the inevitable wane of their attention?

"I do not judge a man by his looks until he do what he does. It is not to say that I would not have *known*, but if I had told the world before it had happened, that would be libel, seen? I know it is a tragedy, but I know I *must* be compensated. My trust is in the almighty and I leave all these cases that are difficult to him." Tosh smiles. (Cut to the Glimmer Twins in purgatory, sweating.)

Then there's Tosh's recording of "Johnny B. Goode," "as seen on MTV." Rumor has it he was less than enthusiastic about *that*.

"Well, it's all in the business. That's the way the whole music business has been designed—not to cater for cultural music, but to depreciate and destroy the presence of the music. I was asked, I wasn't compelled to do Johnny B. Goode.' I wasn't interested much—not to say that I'm not interested in the song, it's just that I'm not interested in doing other people's things. I like to create my own things, seen?"

AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR LIVE AT FIVE

Tosh races from the interview to appear on the local NBC-TV news. Lightweight in tone and heavy on the ratings, *Live at Five* tosses Tosh into the conversation pit with newscaster Sue Simmons. The two of them create an allegorical tableau worthy of off-Broadway. Simmons is black, but isn't about to ditch her plum co-anchor spot for repatriation. This is New York. This is bright-lights show business.

The spot opens with a short clip from the "Johnny B. Goode" video, but something sounds peculiar. Was there flamenco guitar in this production? The mystery is solved when the camera opens up on Tosh. Eyes hidden behind ever-present darkers, he's in possession of an acoustic guitar which he strums and plucks throughout the interview. Musical worry beads.

Simmons is, as a rule, very good at these snack interviews. Her questions are thoughtful, but, by necessity, very *Live at Five* basic. Tosh goes on automatic pilot, punctuating stock recitations with an occasional (and decidedly non-deferential) "yes, my dear." As he works the bugs out of his flamenco run, one wonders whether his distance is motivated purely by boredom. Could it be the habit of a culture where an anchorwoman looks after the anchorman's children? Or is it shyness?



Ebet Roberts

In the last seconds of the interview, Tosh deadpans a line about the destructive qualities of the "shitstem," and Simmons bids a brisk and formal farewell to the Not Ready for Prime Time Punster. She, too, has the deadpan expression of a weary professional.

Showtime! And—uh oh. Talk about being an outsider!

At the very moment Tosh hits the stage at New York's open-air Pier 84, about 20 of his countrymen attempt to crash the gate. It's a drastic move, but what can you do when the show of your dreams is sold out and the ticket you intended to buy was snapped up by a spiff-smoking preppie for a scalper's ransom?

The tiny mob storms past a small guard of freckle-faced ticket-takers, who freak out and slam shut the huge section of cyclone fencing that passes for a gate. This move proves very unpopular with the remainder of the ticket-holders. After a long and cautious appraisal, the powers that be decide to re-open the facility.

I am caught, literally, between the reggae and the hard place. By the time I get through the gate, Tosh is well into his set. At least I *think* it's Tosh. An entire audience standing on their chairs—the give-away of a headliner in progress—makes it a certainty.

The last time I saw Peter Tosh perform was a good seven years ago. Back then, he had the presence of a crocodile, trudging across the stage with a very ominous and deliberate motion, as if the air were water.

But *this* Peter Tosh dances about in the garb of an African emissary. He ends each song with a flourish of synchronized arm waving like Elvis of Vegas, and fronts an extremely cranked-up band. This Peter

Tosh could almost be called an *entertainer*.

A purist next to me complains to his friend. Hundreds of girls in topsiders and alligator shirts, pudgy from non-ital diets of institutional food, shout "Jah!" like their elder siblings shouted "Yeah!" They crane their necks as Peter races through "Walk and Don't Look Back." Maybe Mick is here. . . .

My Peter Tosh interview did not begin on a sensational note, nor even an historical note. As Tosh sat behind somebody's desk, distractedly peeling a lichee, I asked if he was happy. It seemed the obvious thing to ask someone who looked so damned miserable.

Tosh looked slightly taken aback. He gazed out the window. Then he spoke quietly of learning to make the best of a situation. He voiced a sweet, sad hopefulness that conveyed the reality of being Peter Tosh. I would convey it better to you, but I had forgotten to release the pause mechanism on my tape recorder. (It is only thanks to the eagle-eye of Tosh's traveling cook that the rest of the interview made it onto tape.)

I will compensate, though, with a quote that does equal justice to Peter Tosh's wisdom—that indicates the drama of values may serve some purpose after all.

The question was if he'd been approached by any political factions for his endorsement. Tosh allowed that the intent was clearly afoot, but the futility of garnering his support was virtually a given.

"They know I don't support politricks and games. Because I have bigger aims, hopes and aspirations. My duty is not to divide them, my duty is to unify the people, 'cause to divide people is to destroy people. And destroy yourself, too." ■

pure pop

The Blasters celebrate



By Bill Flanagan

“**m**y dad was a union organizer,” Dave Alvin explains. “Steel Workers. When Phil and I were real young he’d take us out on his organizing missions into the southwest. Some of my first memories are of him standing on top of a 1960 Chevy Impala on an Indian reservation or in a coal town or a copper mine town in New Mexico or Colorado, doing the union pitch. Or him getting into fights with guys in diners over union stuff.”

When Dave Alvin, the Blasters’ songwriter and lead guitarist, sat down to write his group’s second album he decided to deal with serious subjects. He wrapped them in the sort of American mythology that John Fogerty and Robbie Robertson first brought to rock in 1968.

The result, **Non-Fiction**, is an album full of hardworking folks without enough to eat, grimy shacks next to new highrises, and the receding memory of New Deal days—when government cared about the little guy.

“**Non-Fiction** was sort of for my father,” Alvin, 27, admits. “LA last year was rockabilly heaven. The trendy element burned out real quick and I was afraid we’d get lost in the shuffle. But people remembered we were around long before.”

“Part of the reason for **Non-Fiction** was that the most important thing for us to do was to make a different sort of sound than just, ‘Let’s have a party and get drunk.’ I didn’t want to have a ‘Marie Marie’ on it, ‘cause I knew that’s what people were expecting. On the first album all the songs were written over a period of

two years. This was the first time I sat down to write a *batch* of songs. So I was real conscious of using recurring imagery and stuff like that. I knew what I wanted.

“The reason I got drunk last night,” the guitarist sighs, “is that this guy kept buying me beers because I wrote ‘Marie Marie.’ His band does it. That happens every other time I walk in a bar. On **Non-Fiction** I didn’t want to write that sort of song anymore. It was more important to me to write a ‘Jubilee Train’ or a ‘Boomtown.’ ‘Long White Cadillac’ is the best song I ever wrote.”

“Long White Cadillac,” with its howling wolves and midnight desert, treats the death of Hank Williams. The song is as rife with symbolism as Van Morrison’s “Slim Slow Slider,” Elvis Presley’s “Mystery Train,” or at least Thomas Mallory’s *Morte d’Arthur*.

“Part of it is Hank’s last minutes through his dying eyes,” Alvin explains. “The other half came about when we were on the road last year. We’d been touring for so long. Finally in Europe I got to the point where I was so far away from home and I was questioning. ‘Why am I doing this? Why don’t I just go back and get a day job? People don’t want to hear this shit anymore.’ I was full of self-doubt. That’s what the other half of the song is about: Looking yourself square in the face and asking why the fuck you’re doing something.”

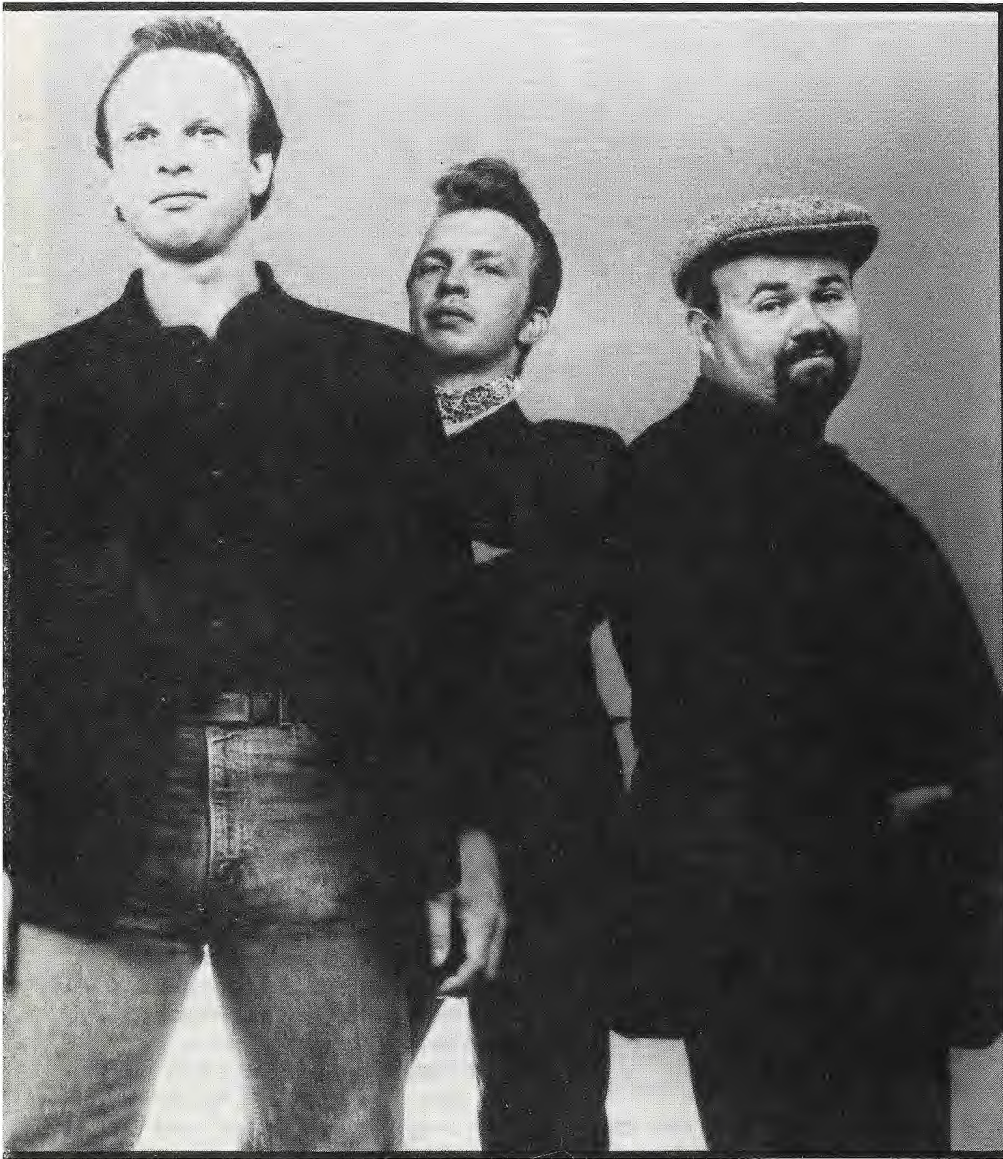
On a warm late summer evening the Blasters roll into Providence, Rhode Island and set up their equipment at the Living Room, the town’s most popular new music club. The room usually re-sounds with punk and new wave, but at



sound-check the Blasters play country blues and big-band swing. Although Dave Alvin writes the songs, his brother Phil, 30, fronts the band, singing, playing rhythm guitar and blowing harmonica. The group has swelled from original members John Bazz (bass), Bill Bateman (drums) and the Alvins to include pianist Gene Taylor and sax players Lee Allen and Steve Berlin.

p u l i s m

the common man



Dave wanders into the empty barroom and talks about his relationship with Phil. His tone suggests that even when younger brothers write songs and play lead, older brothers somehow dominate.

"Phil and I are very different. The only things we agree about are music and politics—and we smoke the same brand of cigarettes. Everything else—religion, what food to eat—we see differently. If we

weren't brothers I would have left the band long ago, or he would have fired me. But we really love each other, so we'll put up with so much shit. That's the glue that binds the band together."

The conflicts? Dave says his subject matter is limited: "There are some things my brother won't sing about."

Such as?

"Oh, having sex with dogs. I have to

stay clear of that."

OK, Dave, be that way. I'll go ask your brother.

"I won't sing a song I don't want to sing," Phil Alvin declares. Then he laughs. "You can bring it to me but you can't make me do that. Dave knows what I won't sing. It defines a path for him of what he can write. It evolved that way. How can you write modern poetry and have Phil sing it?" He laughs at the thought.

So you wouldn't sing what? "Lola"?

"Lola"?

The Kinks song. You know it?

"No."

It's about a transvestite. Is that the sort of song you wouldn't sing?

"I don't know. I'd have to hear it. It's not content. It's not what it says, it's how it says it. I would love to transmit the image of a wild, rocking, sweaty club. But I will *not* tell people to 'Rock, rock, rock.' But if I can transmit the *image* of that to you, I will."

the Living Room is a family operation run by brothers Randy and Brian Hien. When their mother knows that a group playing at the club has come a long way, Mrs. Hien often cooks the travelers a nice hot meal. Mrs. Hien's meals are like Thanksgiving in a Norman Rockwell painting.

The Blasters are crowded around a dressing room table, consuming chicken and lasagna. I park my plate next to Lee Allen, the veteran tenor sax player who made classic records with Fats Domino and Little Richard when the Alvins were still watching their dad battle capitalism.

The Alvins have known Allen since they were 12 or 13. The aspiring young musicians used to journey across LA to the blues clubs and strike up friendships with their heroes. Young Dave (then playing flute and sax) and Phil jammed with Big Joe Turner and T-Bone Walker while learning their licks.

"Lee used to babysit us," Phil laughs across the table. "He still does!" Phil lost touch with the sax player from 1972 till '77. During that time Dave Alvin got dis-

gusted with the business side of music and taught college math, while Allen was back on the road with Fats Domino.

"The Blasters have a more modern, youthful approach," Allen says. "It's got a little more fire to it than Fats's songs. Some of Fats's songs broke loose, but the rhythm thing the Blasters have is different. Some of Little Richard's things had that fire, that push."

Are all the Blasters willing to make the lifetime commitment to music that Lee Allen has made?

"We'd love to be stars," Allen says slowly. "All of us. When some people get stardom they don't want to stay there. They've accomplished their goal. Others say, 'I want to go further.' You never get all the way up there. You just keep plugging along."

John Bazz looks up from his dinner. "I think it's more our goal to have an everlasting mark on the music," he says. "As opposed to being *around* for eternity."

"You set a goal," Allen shrugs. "Without a goal you're just wasting time."

no one wants to come right out and say it, but it's easy to get the impression that the Blasters' record company wishes they would pursue stardom a little more and Big Statements a little less. Toward that end there has been pressure on the band to make a really commercial record next time.

The Blasters go through managers the way other bands go through drugs. Brother Phil—the old math teacher—keeps an eye on the group's business dealings. But, as he points out, "The fact that you run a business doesn't mean you have to maximize profits."

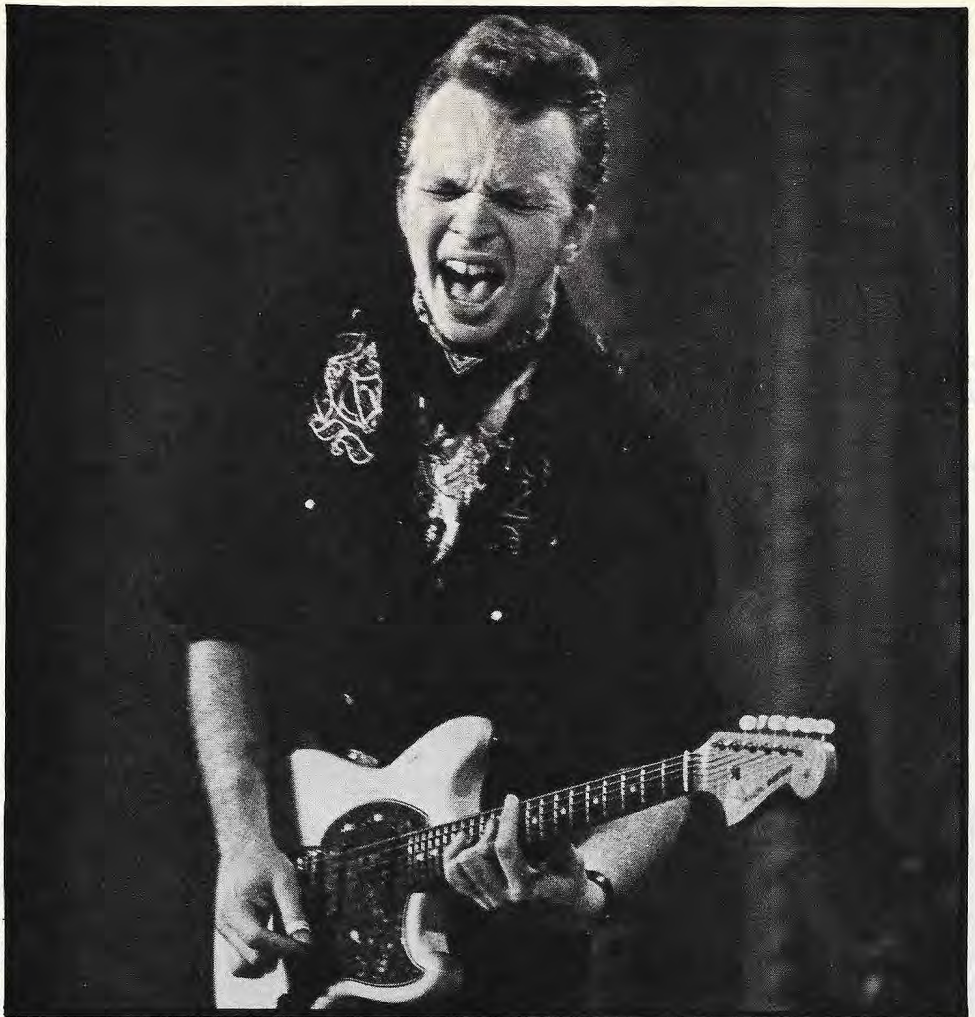
Just what those record conglomerates love to hear.

"It's not that the Blasters don't want success," Phil adds. "But the Blasters want success without certain compromises that shouldn't *have* to be made. A person isn't just someone standin' on a stage makin' music. But that's what they *make* some people. And those people go crazy. If your contracts don't reflect what you are, you have to change."

One change forced on the Blasters is that they will use an outside producer for the first time on their next album. Dave shrugs off the move: "It's good to try new challenges."

But Phil doesn't beat around the bush. "The issue is forced," he smiles bitterly. "You play the game at the next level. And it is a game to me. The types of pressure they have are very subtle. The producer has his own reputation, guarded by his own system and his own connections.

Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve



"The record company would have you pay for the producer, an extra thing that guarantees their product. And if you won't do that then the record company will watch you while you make a record! So it's one or the other. Maybe you get a guy you can beat up and sit in a corner and tie a rag around his mouth, or maybe a cool guy you can get along with. But you *get* one and then they think everything is OK."

Phil pushes his plate away.

"They make you pay each step down the line," he declares. "And they know how many places they have to make you pay at. That's the length of the contract."

"If it's not a hit, 'You don't have the songs.' Then: 'You don't have the production.' Then: 'You don't have the management.' If you get a *hit* it doesn't matter. But if you have all those things and the record still fails, then the record company goes back to the beginning and says, 'Well, the songs were never there.'

"Then you go on and become a hit in history, in some other revival. So the next step for the Blasters? All right! We'll get a producer, you . . . baloney heads."

I'd hate to be the company man sent to whip the Blasters into shape.

a rock band that can really rock *and* write thoughtful lyrics is something special. Add political awareness and mathematical ability, and you've got a group some folks in the biz would consider downright dangerous. A bad precedent.

Dave Alvin, writer, seems more phlegmatic than Phil Alvin, front man. When he's not Blasting, Dave (who majored in literature in college) publishes poetry in small West Coast magazines. Along with X's John Doe and Exene, among others, he's contributed recitations to *Voices of the Angels*, an anthology of spoken verse on Freeway Records.

Although he now devotes little time to his poetry (and turns his short story ideas into songs like "Bus Station" and "Border Radio"), Dave envisions a time when, too old to rock, he'll concentrate on words.

"I'm gonna lose my hair someday," he smiles, "and be fat and old and repugnant. And people won't want to pay a dime to see me. But you can still write poems and send 'em to magazines."

It could happen. But I bet it won't. I bet that when the Alvins are fat, bald and older than Lee Allen is now, they'll still be in a bar like the Living Room, rockin' the rafters. Probably, as Phil says, a hit in history. A part of some other revival. ■



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DIETER MEIER YELLO

BY ROBERT PAYES

SOME YEARS AGO, a curious poster began appearing all around Zurich. It announced that if 10,000 Swiss francs could be raised by public donation, then *the process of collecting the money* would be declared a work of art.

A put-on, right? A vaguely conceptual joke, perhaps?

Yes . . . and no. Dieter Meier, whose poster and theory it was, had recently launched himself as an artist. Annoyed by the closed, incestuous artist/gallery/patron relationship, Meier posted his announcement as a sincere (but not totally serious) attempt to short-circuit the process by which artists get paid for their work.

As it turned out, people *did* make contributions. But not enough; the cash influx stalled just past the halfway mark. Still, almost 5,200 francs is nothing to sneeze at, and Meier was certainly entitled to take the money and run.

He did not such thing. Because the declared amount had not been collected, Meier considered the "work of art" nonexistent—and returned all the contributions. Didn't keep a penny of it.

This is your typical starving artist?

Dieter Meier *is* an artist, although neither starving nor typical. He's something of a master-of-several-trades, not least of them being his participation in that band of eccentric Swiss techno-poppers known as Yello. We'll get to Yello shortly—they're the main justification for this article—but the diverse experiences that constitute "Dieter Meier" fairly cry out for elaboration.

Meier's upbringing was unabashedly bourgeois. His family was involved in various mercantile endeavors, including sock manufacturing. He initially studied to be a lawyer.

But even during his formative years, Meier set out to be a capitalist of a different stripe. He became a professional gambler at an age when most teenagers are laboring through college, and tempered his membership in the Swiss National Golf Team with some casual hustling on the links.

These early experiences left the young Meier with a profound indifference towards money: If he was solvent, fine, but he wouldn't freak out if his funds ran dry. This soon mushroomed into general indifference toward any material possessions, a rule Meier bends only when it comes to neckties.

What provoked this para-capitalist to join the ranks of self-mutilator Chris Burden and video sculptor Nam June Paik? Meier decided one day that he wanted to create something—something that would define himself—and that it had to be done in public to be valid. So, over the course of a week in 1968, he sat in a small wooden enclosure, sorting 10,000

**Dieter Meier,
conceptual
artist turned
pop star,
is no
Swiss cuckoo**

pieces of scrap iron into 1,000 sacks.

His parents, needless to say, were convinced their son had gone mad. His peers were too busy rioting in the streets to notice. Meier himself considered the act "incredibly stupid." Yet the satisfaction he got upon completion—he variously compares it to making a statement or giving birth—convinced him he was on to something.

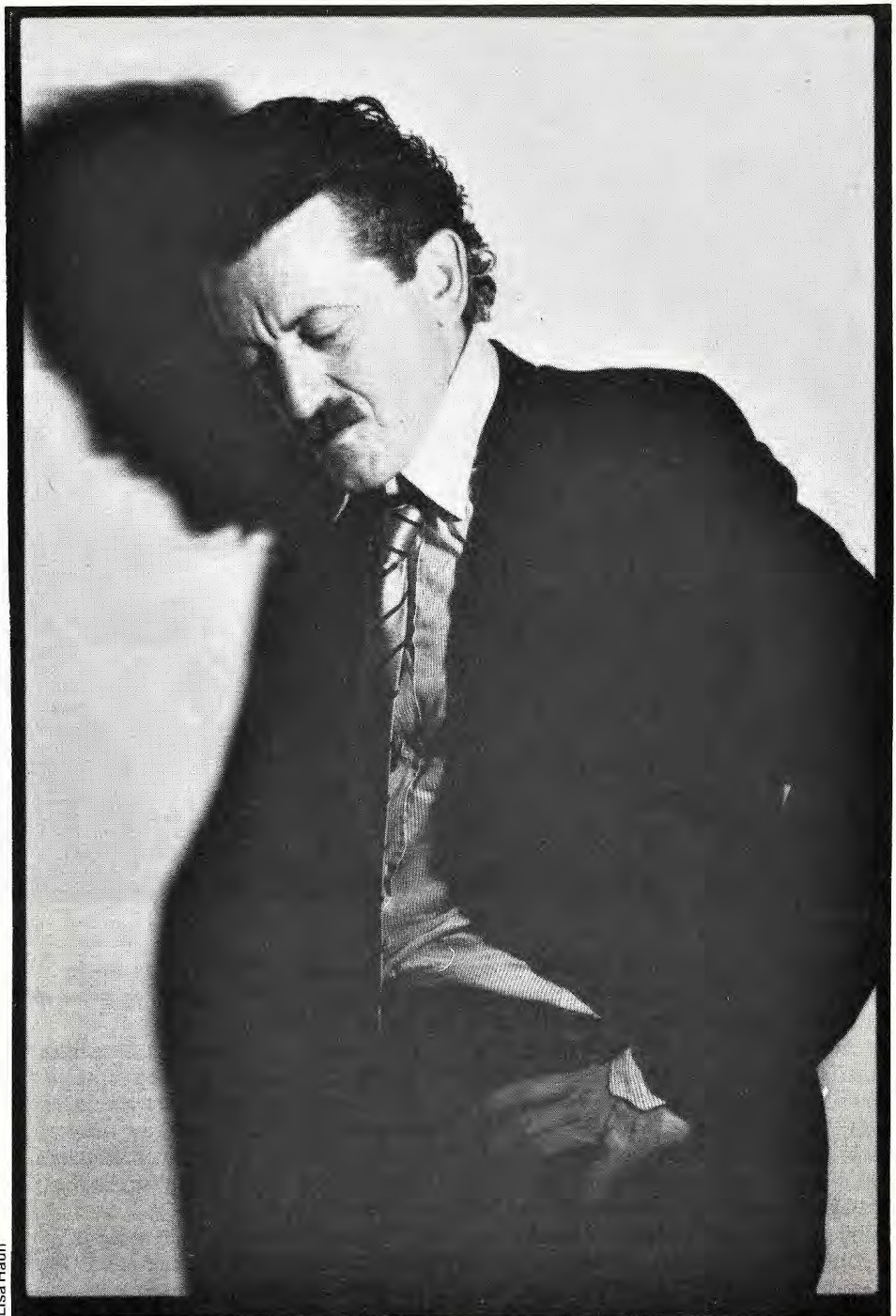
Other conceptual pieces followed, all in similarly wry and faintly absurd fashion. For one piece, he set up a booth on a New York street and asked passers-by to sell him the word "yes" or "no" for a dollar. Each participant who let Meier record their chosen word received a certificate with their photo plus a buck; Meier then took the recordings back to Zurich and replayed them in a darkened gallery room. Another time, he set up a timeclock in an art gallery and forced patrons to clock in and out of the place.

These days, Meier limits the extremes of his sense of absurdity to the context of Yello—which is not to say that Yello is the sole outlet for his energies. He's written a children's book. He's designed silk patterns for the Paris fashion world. He's made films, from avant-garde shorts to *Jetzt und Alles*, a feature-length thriller about a rock star who turns to crime to regain the buzz his music no longer provides. (Meier also directed the controversial stab-the-barmaid video for Trio's "Da Da Da.") He even tried to launch a brand of Swiss beer; his campaign was scuttled at the eleventh hour by the breweries, who decided that if there *was* a market for the stuff, they might as well sell it themselves.

Meier—in his late 30s, with Peter Lorre eyeballs and a toothbrush mustache—impresses as a man who likes to keep busy just short of workaholism. With no fixed abode, he spends a lot of his time flying from country to country as the need arises. This reporter caught up with him at the lower Manhattan branch of his production company, This Heat Pictures (named after Charles Hayward's experimental combo, although Meier chose the name as much for the phrase itself as for the band). Here, balanced on the arm of an easy chair, Meier discussed the whys and wherefores of Yello.

Chances are good you've heard Yello without knowing it—especially if you hang out in hip dance clubs. If you're a Residents fan, shame on you if you *haven't* heard of Yello; Ralph Records, the Residents' label, first brought the band to the attention of us Yankee fringies (though Yello's success came about after leaving the Ralph fold).

Yello's electronic pop music is snappy,



Lisa Haun

pixilated and just weird enough to skirt the AOR-ness of the Soft Cell/Human League camp. Imagine Heaven 17's Linn-drum mated to Residential audio warps, with vocals by Mel Blanc. The beat-oriented music bridges the gap between Studio 54 and the Peruvian rain forests. [*Finally!*—Ed.] In other words, sophisticated primitivism.

Droll sound effects are folded skillfully into the mixture, usually in startling places. ("I Love You," the opening track from the current **You Gotta Say Yes to Another Excess**, pits the title phrase against screeching car brakes.) Vocals combine an elastic goofiness with the odd cadences of someone for whom English is not a native tongue.

The resulting music, while quirky and

slightly alien-sounding, still manages to be warm and unpretentious. Unlike Kraftwerk, who try their damndest to become one with their machines, Yello would rather be futuristic aborigines, pounding gleefully on their technological bongos.

It's not often that a car-crushing plant figures heavily in the birth of a band. Boris Blank was out by one near Zurich in 1978, intent on recording the sounds of automotive mutilation. Quite by accident he encountered Carlos Peron, who was there for the same reason. Shared intent led to friendship, which led to collaborative tape experimenting.

Meanwhile, Meier was indulging his



lifelong pastime of singing, both for himself (accompanied on a one-string guitar!) and with several Zurich bands. But he soon became disenchanted with the unoriginal local scene and musicians who, however talented, had little ambition. In turn, Meier's colleagues were less than enthralled by his reluctance to learn the hits of the day; he preferred to jump onstage and sing whatever popped into his mind (what he terms "action singing").

Meier did manage to record a few obscure records with several bands, some on the independent Periphery Perfume label. One day Peron and Blank brought their tapes to the P.P. office. The two were convinced their music was too weird for mass consumption, and were stunned by the label's relative praise. But, said P.P. execs, you need a vocalist—and we know this crazy singer who would be perfect!

Enter Meier, stage left. Blank's initial reaction was far from enthusiastic; he was leery of this stranger stepping into his sound picture. Blank and Peron acquiesced, though, and invited Meier to their shared flat where all their soundmaking junk was piled in the bathroom!

That first meeting went so well that the trio ended up recording the same day; they liked the results enough to form a permanent partnership. Meier came up with the name Yello, not so much a color as a sort of "yelled hello." Periphery Per-

fume soon issued Yello's debut single ("I.T. Splash"/"Gluehead"), recorded on a 4-track machine.

The musical bathroom has since been abandoned for a self-contained complex with a state-of-the-art 24-track studio, as well as offices for administering other artistic and business aspects of Yellodom. Peron has also set up a mini-studio for various solo projects.

"Division of labor"? Yello could have coined the term. Blank, a suave, swarthy John Oates lookalike, is almost solely responsible for music and rhythm tracks—despite a complete lack of formal musical training. A happy studio recluse who regularly puts in 12-hour workdays, Blank considers any time away from the mixing desk as time lost. Peron, a pale Art Garfunkel doppelganger, has a more nebulous role: he supplies tape effects and generally acts as co-producer and creative sounding board for Blank.

Meier provides lyrics and just about all the vocalizing. Sometimes he'll retrofit words to an existing piece; more often than not, the "action singer" takes over after hearing a rough mix only once.

Meier doesn't consider himself a singer in the traditional sense. He sees his contribution as more like that of an actor, changing roles to fit the part at hand. Thus his voice has produced everything from guttural drawls to manic falsettos.

Some judicious tape tricks and Vocoding aside, most of the vocal bizarrities you hear on Yello records stem from Meier's unaltered voice. ("No," he laughs, "no helium.")

The world may never know what the Residents think of Yello, but the reverse is no mystery. Two months before adding Meier to the fold, Blank and Peron made a 7,000-mile pilgrimage to the San Francisco headquarters of Ralph Records. They went as longtime Residents fans and—they hoped—kindred spirits. To this end, they brought along a sample cassette of their musical wares.

"The Ralph people liked their approach," Meier notes. "They said, 'If you ever have something a bit more improved technically'—because this stuff was *very* rough—then let us know, because we're interested."

The Ralphsters kept their word; when they caught wind of "I.T. Splash," out came the contracts. ("Splash" was recorded as the B-side of "Bimbo," Yello's first Ralph 45.) Two albums, **Solid Pleasure** and **Claro Que Si**, followed; they broke no sales figures but none-

theless were important for the band's image, especially in Europe. With Ralph signing other deviant combos such as Tuxedomoon and MX-80 Sound, the sky seemed the limit. It wasn't.

Meier blames the problem on cash flow and missed opportunities. "The Residents' records could have done much, much better in Europe than they did. They were never really aware just how prominent they were. The best music magazine in Germany had a five-part series on them. They were extremely popular, and they never capitalized on that fact."

Ralph was running into business and distribution problems. When the Residents' music-making started being affected, Ralph cut loose its entire roster. Yello found themselves label-shopping again.

A short liaison with Stiff America yielded two 12-inchers before that outfit closed down. Then Yello noticed something strange: Major American labels were beating a path to their door, egged on by the surprise club success of "Bostich," one of the Stiff sides. What prompted Yello's decision to sign with Elektra/Asylum?

"Bob Krasnow," Meier sums up in two words. The Elektra chairman had known Yello "from at least the second album—perhaps even the first album. He really liked our music very much, and I liked his approach to our music. Even though he's an upper-level record executive, he's still a real fan of music."

Yello has been strictly a studio aggregation. Blank claims stage fright but the group itself is down on "gigging." Meier points out, not for the first time, that someone standing behind a synthesizer for 90 minutes is less than visually arresting.

All this will change in the very near future. The band and stage director Tony Zanetta (responsible for some of David Bowie's past extravaganzas) are putting the finishing touches on *Snowball*, a multi-media stage show/micro-opera scheduled to premiere in New York. Besides supplying a mixture of old and new tunes, the members of Yello will also take part in the stage action.

The star of *Snowball* is none other than stage-shy Boris Blank. He plays a medieval magician/musician whose songs have an almost Rasputin-like influence over his listeners. The powers that be consider him so dangerous that they banish him to a sealed-in mountain cave. So that he doesn't go mad from sensory deprivation, he must resort to the powerful imagery of his music.

The show gets its title from those little water-and-scenery-filled trinkets that



Lisa Haun

"snow" when shaken. The magician uses one of these "snowballs" as a sort of surrogate crystal ball.

Meier bemusedly concurs that *Snowball* sounds like an autobiography of Blank himself—the master musician in exile (in his case, self-imposed).

"That's very true. . . who knows? Maybe he is the reincarnation of some musician who lived. He can't read notes, and he can't really play an instrument, yet he can make music."

Meier mentions the time he exposed Blank to an album of Wagner. Two days later Blank emerged from the studio and played his amazed colleague 30 minutes of his own neo-Wagnerian music, created from nothing more than machines, tapes and innate tunefulness. Meier still sounds stunned recalling the event.

Even if Yello doesn't survive the '80s—and with Elektra's support, there's no reason why they shouldn't—Meier will not be scrounging around for ways to occupy himself. He has already set into motion what can only be described as the world's first time-delay conceptual gag:

An iron plate one meter square is imbedded in the pavement outside the railway station in Kassel, West Germany. It's been there since 1972. Inscribed on it is the following statement: "On the 23rd of May, 1994, between 3 and 4 PM, Dieter Meier will be standing on this plate." Meier fully intends to be there at the designated time, after which the plate will be pulled out and destroyed.

Reality—what a concept. ■

By Karen Schlosberg

It was a dark and stormy night. In his castle high on the hill, evil Dr. Vollen was cackling to himself, and to the stuffed black raven on the bookcase.

"I'm a law unto myself," he gloated, rubbing his hands together. "A god with the taint of human emotions. I'm a man who renders humanity a great service, and for that my brain must be clear, my hands steady, and my nerves even."

Bela Lugosi in horror movies like *The Raven* had a strange and lasting effect on the Fleshtones' lives. Everyone has heroes; theirs just happens to be Bela Lugosi. And Liberace.

The Fleshtones, too, render humanity a great service. They produce wonderful music to which they are passionately committed. Known in some circles as "Kings of Garage Rock," the group has been practicing its Farfisa-laced hoodoo since 1976, when singer/keyboard player Peter Zarella, guitarist Keith Streng and bassist Jan Marek Pakulski got together in Queens. (Saxophonist Gordon Spaeth is another Queens native; drummer Bill Mihizer is from upstate New York.)

New York new music entrepreneur Marty Thau signed the band. The Fleshtones recorded an album, **Blast Off**, for Thau's Red Star label that should have been released in 1979. Unfortunately, Thau lost his financial backing; only a single, "American Beat," came out. (**Blast Off** was issued as a cassette in 1982 by ROIR.) In 1980 they signed with IRS and released an EP, **Up-Front**.

Two albums followed: **Roman Gods** and the current **Hexbreaker!**

The Fleshtones are basically a party band. They have no intense underlying messages except to keep your perspective on life, have a sense of humor, and try to have a good time. Their energetic, earnest method is to meld the best bits of R&B, psychedelia and simple rock 'n' roll into a style all their own.

The result sounds nothing like what is popular today—unfortunately for the band's career. Artistic success aside, the Fleshtones have been struggling for too long, while their companions in the musical class of '76 (Blondie, Talking Heads, Ramones) went on to bigger and better things.

"**Roman Gods** was the first step," Streng says. "The second step was the **Hexbreaker!** 'super rock' concept." Is **Hexbreaker!**, then, a concept album?

"Well, everything we do is kind of conceptual," Streng smiles, "even sitting here talking with you."

"Unfortunately, super rock has not paid off in the dividends we expected monetarily," Zarella says.

"Right," Streng adds. "The music we are making is super-oriented but the money is not."

"But the faithful know," Zarella says proudly.

Granted that the Fleshtones make exciting, vital music and are, as Zarella says, "the most exciting men in rock 'n' roll—I say that in all modesty." Why, then, do only the faithful know?

Zarella agrees that radio's much-touted opening up to "new music" applies only to bands with synthesizers.

"We're having much more difficulty with this album than the last. This album is a lot less compromising than the last one. We wanted it really driving and hard, and as a result the commercial radio stations are really afraid of it. God bless the college stations, 'cause they just play what they like.

"We didn't set out to do something that wouldn't be popular," Zarella continues. "We just thought the time was right for a real tough Fleshtones record. We did it, and we're glad."

FLESH- TONES

Opening the doors of perception



Cathy Underhill



Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

do we meet fads head-on and win, but we set the pace for the pacemakers.”

As with other bands who base a modern sound on an older style of music, the Fleshtones are often written off as part of a “psychedelic revival.” Band members agree they are a psychedelic band only in the word’s literal meaning of expanding one’s mind. Aside from that, Zarembo says, “We take as much inspiration from Sylvester as from the Chocolate Watchband.”

“And Bert Kaempfert,” Milhizer adds.

What about the band’s penchant for vintage equipment? Not many groups today use Ampeg amps. Zarembo plays a 20-year-old Farfisa organ; Milhizer has a 1963 Ludwig drum kit. “We got these instruments,” the singer states, “because we wanted these sounds, not because we wanted to recreate the Whisky A Go Go or the Cheetah Club.

“We started to create our sound a long time ago, before it became popular for Billy Joel to pose with an old-fashioned mike, or Neil Young to pose with an old guitar. A lot of people now do it because it’s just a style. We started in the age of Marshall stacks; to show up with amps like this was like when Martin Luther nailed that manifesto to that church door—not that I’m a big advocate of his, but . . . he would’ve been better off buying some Ampeg amplifiers, probably.

“We’re not into being Fleshtones because we were into being rock stars. It was never a means to an end, like a kid who dresses up and buys a guitar and makes sounds like Jimmy Page.”

“We’ve been good at other things we dabbled in,” Pakulski chimes in.

“I was good at typing,” Streng declaims. “I was in the typewriting class in high school. I was better than all the girls. I was doing about 45 words per minute.”

“Those same skills carry over to the fretboard,” Zarembo adds helpfully.

“Now I do 60 words per minute on the guitar,” Streng laughs.

The Fleshtones hope **Hexbreaker!** will live up to its title and get through to the deaf ears of commercial radio programmers.

“We New Yorkers are fortunate enough to be able to go down to our *botanica* and buy Lucky Dream spray and special anti-hoodoo candles,” Pakulski says. “We figure most of the country can’t get these things, so we’ve packaged the **Hexbreaker!** album for nationwide—in fact, worldwide—distribution, for the unlucky populace.”

“The record itself is a lucky charm,” Zarembo says. “How can you stop someone with a hexbreaker? You don’t.” ■

Image problem, perhaps? No way, Zarembo retorts.

“I think we’ve got more image than A Flock of Seagulls. When they step out of a shower, what’s their image? [Mike Score] probably combs his hair back and looks totally normal in his everyday, ‘real’ life.”

“A Flock of Seagulls have a gimmick

more than a good image,” Milhizer says. “We have an image—I think it’s easily identified—but we don’t have a gimmick. We don’t *want* a gimmick.”

“We’re niche-free,” Streng adds.

“We’ve lasted as long as we have because we’re doing something we think is important,” Zarembo says. “Not only



HAVIN' A PUNKY REGGAE PARTY WITH

BAD BRAINS

By Don Howland ○○○

Darryl Jenifer

minus the ball. Every now and then a chicken fighter springs up, lurches about wildly to maintain balance, and sinks back into the roiling sea of flesh and boneheads.

As usual, the celebrants leap up on stage, accompanying the Bad Brains' fervent, dreadlocked singer Paul "HR" Hudson in familiar choruses and dancing about the rest of the group: drummer Earl Hudson, bassist Darryl Jenifer and guitarist Gary "Dr. Know" Miller.

Of the four, only Dr. Know appears to be having fun, delighting perhaps in the ease with which he tears off knifing blitzes of lead guitar. The fanatical HR and the stoic rhythm section give the impression that the Bad Brains are serious business. They stoke the barbecue alternately with severe blasts of rock and timber-shivering reggae; the accent this evening, as on the album, is on the former. It's a triumphant show for both the band and the scene it arguably spawned; a great time is had by most.

The second night is just 11 days later,

core punk scene rever as local (if not world) champeens of speed mania, is providing the entertainment. The scene inside a packed CBGB is appropriately infernal.

Flailing arms and legs, chiaroscuroed by glaring yellow stage lights, leap out of a vast tangle of bodies on a bare plank floor like tongues of flame off fat-splattered white coals. Circle slammers engage in the local pastime, which resembles rugby

Two steamy nights on the Bowery. The first is a party—not what your local PTA would be likely to call a party, but a party nonetheless. The event celebrates the release of **Rock for Light**, the debut vinyl long-player by the Bad Brains. The band, whom many in New York's hard-

again at CBGB. The crowd is nearly as large. (A CH3 gig down the street no doubt accounts for breathing room this time around.) In the intervening 10 days the Bad Brains have made the sort of US tour only a sadist could engineer: eight dates in such far-flung cities as New Orleans, Los Angeles and Minneapolis. The night before arriving home the band played Seattle.

The Bad Brains take the stage late, accompanied by some dreadlocked friends, and launch into a pulsating reggae number. They follow that with another. And then another. As it becomes obvious that little or none of the harder-than-hardcore upon which the band's fame chiefly rests would be played that night, the crowd—punks and non-punks alike—begins an exodus to the Bowery pavement. (For the record, *one* thrasher did get played.) By set's end the audience has dwindled to a handful, a good chunk of them Rastas, swaying along to the beat.

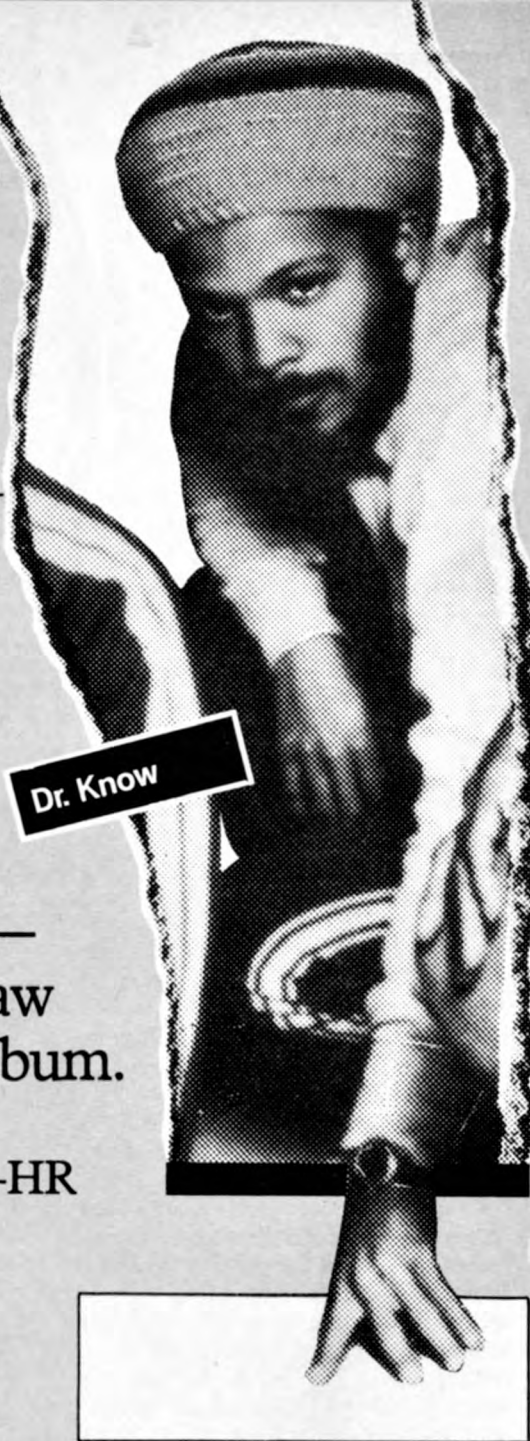
“We was seeking—
and then I-man saw
the Sex Pistols’ album.
I said, this is it!”

—HR

This sort of thing is not unprecedented for the Bad Brains. If the band's following is due to its undeniably awesome rock, its notoriety—even enigma—accrues from such stunts. Indeed, the crowd filing out of CBGB doesn't seem angry (though certainly not *happy*); New York audiences have learned to tolerate the eccentricities of a most eccentric band.

Bad Brains cognoscenti are aware the band has long promised (or threatened, if you're a thrash fan) to switch to an all-reggae approach. Only six months previous they billed a three-night stand at CBGB as the “last call” for hardcore before changing their name to Zion Train and their music to Rasta. So what gives?

A couple of days later, in the Village apartment of the Bad Brains' manager, I get a slightly better reading on the recent and not-so-recent doings of what must be the most unusual combo in “pop music” today. A less than tolerant sector of the punk press has interpreted the band's actions negatively and far too simplistically. The Bad Brains are a genuinely enigmatic lot—“creative renegades,” in



the words of their often confuddled manager—and, predictably, their reputation is a curious mishmash of truths, half-truths and falsehoods.

HR (“Hunting Rod,” a childhood nickname) also goes by the name of Joseph I since becoming involved with the Twelve Tribes of Israel. In contrast to the onstage warrior, in private HR/Joseph is friendly, loose (though not quite relaxed) and not devoid of a sense of humor—which might surprise anyone familiar with his work. In diction dotted with the inflections of a Rastaman, he depicts the Bad Brains as four individuals totally committed to god, a positive mental attitude, and setting an example of righteous living with the ultimate goal of “Unity.”

The Bad Brains recognize their status as

entertainers first, but these four men have a lot on their minds peripheral to what hardcore audiences expect of musicians—and they don't hide it. Their earnestness shows in unpredictable actions like the all-reggae set at CBGB. Mostly it's reflected in ambitious plans for the future.

The most immediate of those plans calls for three tangential bands, primary of which will be Zion Train. Sure enough, the seven-man configuration that virtually cleared CBGB is indeed Zion Train. In the future, HR says, the reggae band will bill itself under that name and thereby cultivate its own audience.

In addition, HR has organized a new, eponymous hardcore band in which he's backed by three members of New York's MOB. A third, more nebulous project called “101” involves HR and Zion Train member Judah Selassie. The two will use local reggae bands as backup, much in the manner of touring Rasta DJs. (A tape of 101, revealing a raw, gritty top and throbbing bass, recalls Wobble-era PIL—an observation with which he wholeheartedly agrees.)

Here's where it starts to get complicated: Money made by 101 will fund the two singers' pilgrimage to Ethiopia where Joseph will take a second wife; Rastafari doctrine permits up to seven. Any additional profits from this venture will go toward establishing a 101 “headquarters” in Nigeria. (101 is also the name of a Rasta-minded organization and group home the band has set up in Brooklyn.)

HR's commitment to this trio of projects doesn't mean Bad Brains will cease to exist. But that unit is on a back burner temporarily. They have shows lined up (as the Bad Brains) later this year, and a tour of Nigeria is in the works.

Ambitious? Why not? The Bad Brains, under whatever name, can probably realize any objective with their positive mental attitudes. From the beginning this band has determinedly defied the norm.

HR, his brother Earl Hudson, Jenifer and Miller became Bad Brains six years ago in Washington, DC. They'd been operating about six months as a jazz/funk outfit called Mind Power, but disco glitz soured them on the ability of their music to turn the heads of increasingly escapist crowds.

“All the while we was jazz, we wanted to innovate,” HR says. “We wanted to get out of there and be part of something new and different and real. We was continually seeking—and then I-man saw the Sex Pistols' album, and I said,

BOOM! This is it!"

Influenced by the Pistols, Eater and the Clash (interestingly, it was the Clash's version of "Police and Thieves" that introduced the band to roots reggae), as well as such decidedly non-punks as Return to Forever (!) and Led Zeppelin, Mind Power changed its name and dove head-first into punk rock. The foursome bought a house in suburban Maryland; they went to jobs and school during the day, and rehearsed furiously at night to build stamina and speed.

After about six months of such exercise the band ditched its daytime commitments—HR forfeited three years of premed—to go professional. They distributed flyers outside DC new wave clubs for a free show in their house basement. The band later charged racism as the reason for difficulties in getting gigs, but their dark skin hardly hampered them at first.

"It was so different because we were all black playing punk rock music that news spread around DC," HR says. "Before we even played people were coming up to me telling me how good the Bad Brains were. I'm not going to complain about that."

After a series of bi-weekly gigs, the hip venues followed. Soon it was common knowledge: The Bad Brains were the fastest, rawest, most outrageous band in the nation's capital. The legions of young fans who followed the band religiously included future members of the Teen Idles (later Minor Threat, more or less), Scream and S.O.A., whose singer Henry Rollins went on to front Black Flag. After a verbal battle with police who tried to pull the plug on an outdoor show, the Bad Brains found themselves effectually blacklisted by clubs, hastening their departure from the city. HR remains fond of DC's punk scene nonetheless.

"They're setting good examples. I-man is well glad to see the youths are at the controls. Even if they make mistakes, it's their mistakes. Like with Dischord [Minor Threat and Scream's label]: They get it together, they listen."

The Bad Brains' decision to relocate in New York was a logistical one, and not a missionary venture to the city that is, in HR's words, "the capital and heart of the beast of Babylon." By the time the band hit the Big Apple in 1979 they had collectively adopted Rastafari.

A Bob Marley show the group had attended earlier that year was, to hear HR describe it, a spiritual experience. The newfound religion gave sharper focus to the notion of survival through righteous action and thought, or "positive mental attitude" (PMA), that had been the band's backbone from the beginning.

(Of several anthemic songs in the Bad

HR



Brains' repertoire, none is as concise and to the point as the minute-long "Attitude," with its chorus "Hey we got the PMA." HR lifted the PMA concept from a self-help book called *How to Think and Grow Rich*. The concept led the Bad Brains to the Bible—HR keeps a dog-eared copy by him during the interview—and then to Rastafari.)

The Bad Brains' New York following grew steadily from day one. The band gigged frequently at CBGB and eventually at larger clubs like Irving Plaza and the Peppermint Lounge. The city's hardcore scene—as Washington's before it—rose in their wake. Support for the Bad Brains was, and continues to be, reciprocated by the band: HR commonly announces dates and locations of upcoming gigs by local bands between songs. The singer feels a special relationship toward the New York scene. "I'm not proud of it," he says. "All I know is that as long as I'm here, it's my reality."

In 1980 the band recorded a debut 45 on their own label. Later included on the widely distributed hardcore sampler *Let Them Eat Jellybeans*, "Pay to Cum" (not about what you think) introduced those outside New York and Washington to a band capable of superhuman tempos. "Pay to Cum" shattered any previous claim to a land speed record (probably held at the time by the first Middle Class 45) and put the Bad Brains on the map.

Hardcore settled in as a grass-roots American youth movement in 1980 and '81, and Bad Brains' fame (if not fortune) increased. They toured the country

repeatedly and released a 12-inch EP on the Dead Kennedys' Alternative Tentacles label. Last year came another 12-inch and an album-length cassette on the ROIR label which drew critical accolades not just for their inventive, technically precise hardcore, but for the three reggae efforts as well. As 1982 drew to a close, so it appeared would the band's stint as hardcore rockers.

Probably due less to outside prodding than to the band's intrinsic unpredictability, the no-more-core pronouncement was revoked. Besides the whirlwind US tour, this year the Bad Brains also played England, Holland and Germany ("beautiful, beautiful and more beautiful," HR says) with sets about equally divided between hardcore and reggae. And the new *Rock for Light* is a predominantly hardcore masterpiece recorded under the auspices of Ric Ocasek in the Cars' state-of-the-art Boston studio.

If the Bad Brains were to ditch hardcore, *Rock for Light* would remain a definitive statement of the band's music over the past six years. The hookup with Ocasek, noted patron of the oddball, proved fruitful; unlike the many companies and producers who had designs on the band in the past, HR says, Ocasek "wasn't really trying to change the band, he just wanted to produce us."

Produce he did. Only Black Flag's masterful *Damaged* has translated the power of searing metal punk to vinyl with equal success. At the same time, *Rock for Light*'s three reggae cuts show a marked increase in sophistication from past efforts; like the band's hardcore, it's catchy enough to surprise neophytes.

Whatever the Bad Brains do in the future, collectively or individually—bassist Jenifer is in increasing demand for studio work from the likes of Bob Dylan—musically or otherwise, you can be assured they'll mean it, man. On the first July night at CBGB they played hardcore with a fury and conviction that buried any notion that they were just going through the motions. Similarly, the next week they brought an obvious honesty to their reggae; like it or not, it was real.

Quirky as the Bad Brains' actions are, this band is real. Because of a complete lack of affectation or pretense—not because they are black; not because they are among the best in the world at two disparate musical forms; not because their voice is the angriest—they can be considered a most unusual group.

And never, never underestimate that PMA. ■

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GUIDE TO

ROCK BOOKS

1983

By Scott Isler

Once upon a time there were no books dealing with rock. As the music amassed a history and certain artists proved worthy, publishers responded with full-scale bios and critical examinations. More recently, the success of *Born to Run* and *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (Bruce Springsteen and Jim Morrison bios respectively) has opened a floodgate of publications covering all aspects of the genre. Here's a rundown of what just the last 12 months have deposited in book stores.

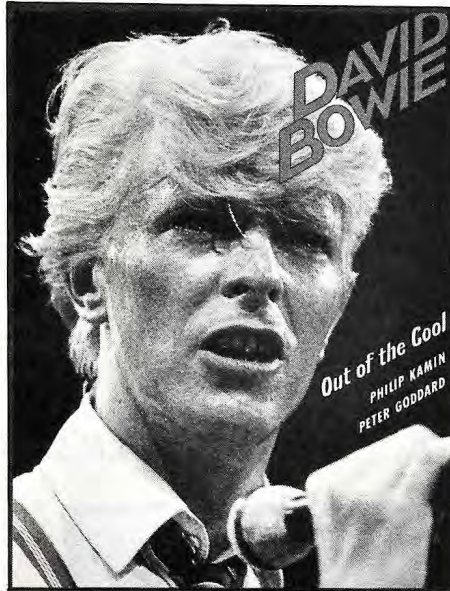
Beatles books have slowed down, replaced by a spate of John Lennon books. *The Last Lennon Tapes* (Dell/Fred Jordan) transcribes a three-hour interview he and Yoko Ono gave to Andy Peebles two days before Lennon's death.

Lifelong friend Pete Shotton tells Nicholas Schaffner of the Lennon he knew in *John Lennon in My Life* (Stein and Day). May Pang, who knew Lennon carnally if not intimately, spills the beans to Henry Edwards in *Loving John* (Warner). John Green, Yoko Ono's tarot card reader, gets into the act with *Dakota Days* (St. Martin's). Lennon's television repairman and grocery delivery boy have yet to be heard from.

Panning away from Lennon, Peter Brown and Steven Gaines promise "An Insider's Story of the Beatles" in *The Love You Make* (McGraw-Hill). Paul McCartney in *His Own Words* (Delilah/Putnam) takes a first-person approach, in conversation with Paul Gambaccini. The latter adds a closing chapter on Wings' "Venus and Mars" album to this work first published in England in

You don't have to be a record fanatic (but it helps) to enjoy *The Complete Beatles US Record Price Guide* (O'Sullivan Woodside). Perry Cox and Joe Lindsay's catalogue lists and illustrates hundreds of releases dealing with Messrs. Lennon, McCartney, Harrison and Starr, individually and collectively.

The Rolling Stones juggernaut continues to inspire publishers. This year's most impres-



sive tribute is *The Rolling Stones* (Rolling Stone/Doubleday), a hard-cover picture book with text by Robert Palmer. *The Rolling Stones in Europe* (Beaufort) is virtually all photos, by Philip Kamin, from the band's 1982 tour.

The customary flood of Elvis Presley books is now down to a mere torrent. Jerry Osborne's *Elvis Presley Record Price Guide* (O'Sullivan Woodside) overhauls a three-year-old work, *Presleyana*. The carefully systematized work covers domestic releases, commercial and promotional. Lots of label and sleeve illustrations, a record release chronology, and even some previously unpublished vintage live shots add to the book's appeal.

Another record guide, the more esoteric *Jailhouse Rock* (Pierian, Ann Arbor) deals exclusively with Presley bootlegs. Compilers Lee Cotten and Howard DeWitt assign no values to over 300 illegal items, but provide

scrupulous descriptions and thorough cross-indexing. The introduction has a worthy account of the bootlegging industry in general, besides the Presley boot field in particular. Of more interest than you might think.

Dave Marsh's thoughtful *Elvis* (Rolling Stone/Warner), a class picture book, is now available in paperback. Finally, duty compels mention of the pin-up *1984 Elvis Calendar* (Scarborough/Stein & Day), with too many ghastly mid-'70s photos.

David Bowie's triumphs this year justified lengthening his bookshelf. *Bowiepix* (Delilah) is just that—a slim 32 pages of mostly familiar images in disappointing duotone. It includes a color poster of the cover, if that helps. *Bowie: Out of the Cool* (Beaufort) documents his recent tour in photos (Philip Kamin) and prose (Peter Goddard).

Undoubtedly the most interesting new Bowie tome remains unpublished in this country. *David Bowie: The Pitt Report* (Design, London) is by Kenneth Pitt, Bowie's manager from 1966 until just before the Ziggy explosion. Maybe next year?

Dave Marsh tests Who fans' satiety with *Before I Get Old: The Story of the Who* (St. Martin's). This 550-page opus should convince the band to break up if only to spare Marsh any updating.

The Who: The Farewell Tour (Beaufort) is much easier to get through. Peter Goddard's intelligent reporting and on-the-road interviews are at least as much of an attraction here as Philip Kamin's photos of the event.

Jerry Hopkins relates the Jimi Hendrix story in *Hit and Run* (Perigee/Putnam).

Like Hendrix, the Doors are also dead, but not to fans—or book publishers. Danny Sugerman's *The Doors: The Illustrated History* (Quill) is a lavish compendium of photographs and contemporary writing on the group. British writers John Tobler and Andrew Doe put in their tuppence with *The Doors* (Proteus).

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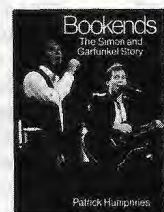
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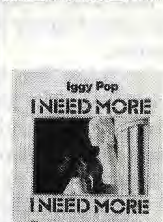
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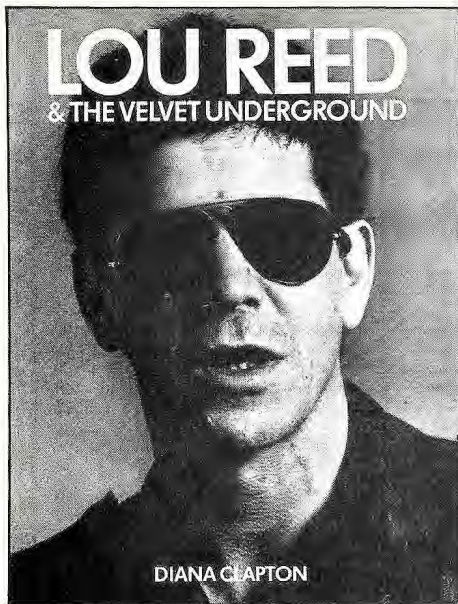
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Speaking of dead, *Grateful Dead: The Official Book of the Deadheads* (Quill) is a *Whole Earth Catalogue* on the subject, with photos, fan art and impressions, a tour list, quizzes and other essential trivia. Blair Jackson provides a more coherent history of the band in *Grateful Dead: The Music Never Stopped* (Delilah).

Diana Clapton recounts the career of a fascinating rock 'n' roll animal in *Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground* (Proteus); the photos are spiffy. Ed Ward's *Michael Bloomfield: The Rise and Fall of an American Guitar Hero* (Cherry Lane) is a

tragic tale of a self-destructive talent.

Plunging further back in time, John Swenson takes a revisionist view of *Bill Haley: The Daddy of Rock and Roll* (Stein and Day). Perhaps the most ignored founding father of rock, Haley is usually dismissed by critics as lucking out with "Rock Around the Clock." Swenson examines the evidence, interviews some principal figures and concludes Haley and his Comets have been short-changed in the history books. He plugs a lot of biographical gaps too, including Haley's bizarre final years.

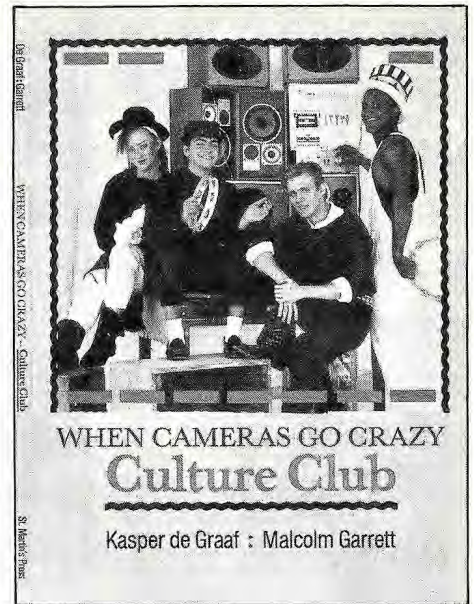
Rock 'n' rollers can also peruse John Tobler's *Buddy Holly Story* (Beaufort), a 1979 British work just published here.

Back among the living, *Culture Club: When Cameras Go Crazy* (St. Martin's) documents one of the more visual phenomena of the year. The 96-pager by Kasper de Graaf and Malcolm Garrett is both snazzy and informative.

Even reclusive Van Morrison scored with two books this year: Johnny Rogan's eponymous bio (Proteus) and *Van Morrison: The Mystic's Music* (Horizon, Fremont, CA), a musicological study by Howard DeWitt.

And would you believe *Dead Kennedys: The Unauthorized Version* (Last Gasp, San Francisco)? This is a scrapbook of photos, artwork, press clips and a little text on a band most people wouldn't expect to find between book covers.

Special mention here for Proteus Publishing's binge of fan bios. Concentrating on current attractions, Proteus' fall book list alone includes volumes on *Duran Duran*, *The Jam*; *Joy Division*, *Shakin' Stevens* and



Toyah, among others.

If the name Deborah Spungen sounds vaguely familiar, you probably remember her notorious daughter Nancy, allegedly murdered by Sex Pistol Sid Vicious in 1979. *And I Don't Want to Live This Life* (Villard), the mother's story of her troubled daughter, fills out the cartoon-punk media image of Nancy, and sheds a little light on Vicious as well.

Reggae music's spreading popularity justifies increased print coverage. *Reggae International* (R&B/Knopf) is an excellent introduction to the form; Stephen Davis and

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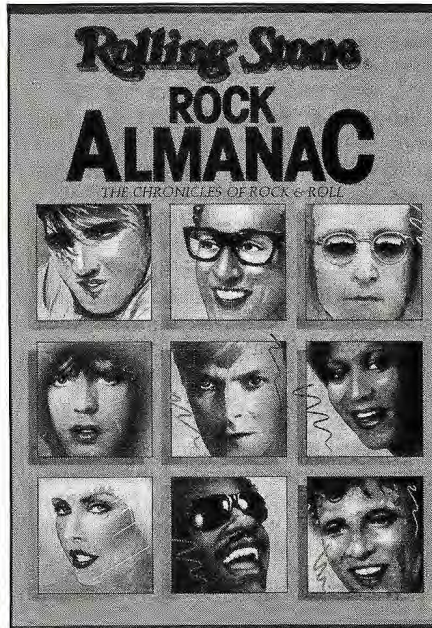
Peter Simon coordinate the musical, sociological and political approaches. Howard Johnson and Jim Pines explore the subject in *Reggae: Deep Roots Music* (Proteus). *Catch a Fire* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston), Timothy White's in-depth bio of Bob Marley, vividly conjures up the culture.

Next to bios, rock reference books are the most popular form of information storage and retrieval. Rolling Stone Press is unloading a long-awaited fusillade: *The Rolling Stone Encyclopedia of Rock and Roll* (Rolling Stone/Summit), *The New Rolling Stone Record Guide* (Rolling Stone/Random House) and *The Rolling Stone Rock Almanac* (Rolling Stone/Macmillan). The last orders information chronologically, from 1954 through 1980 on rock and related musical developments.

Not to toot our own horn, but *The Trouser Press Guide to New Wave Records* (Scribners) does review literally thousands of albums, import and domestic. Well-informed and well-opinionated.

Although off the rock track, *The Listener's Guide to Folk Music* and *The Listener's Guide to Country Music* (Facts on File) are good introductions to other forms of pop. Sarah Lifton in the former and Robert Oermann with Douglas Green in the latter sketch the leading personalities in the genres, and recommend recordings. The folk volume concentrates almost exclusively on the Anglo-Irish tradition and its stateside carry-over.

In the blues bag, Alan Greenberg's *Love in Vain* (Doubleday/Dolphin) is a screenplay freely treating the life and myth of Robert Johnson. Anyone partial to the subject matter



will be taken in by the swirling atmosphere.

The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Black Music (Harmony) packs an enormous amount of data in just over 200 pages, while still leaving room for abundant photographs. *The Harmony Illustrated Encyclopedia of Rock*, in the same format, has just undergone a third revision.

The Rock Yearbook 1984 (St. Martin's), the fourth in a row, again wraps up events of the preceding year. Editor Al Clark maintains a British perspective, but the *Yearbook* touches all bases.

As you might expect, *Stiff: The Story of a Record Label* (Blandford, Poole, England) is pure Anglophilia. Bert Muirhead's illustrated, annotated discography traces the rise of new wave through the company that got it off the ground.

Rockspeak: A Dictionary of Rock Terms (Delilah) is a pocket guide to slang heard in more than just music circles. Entertainingly browse-worthy.

The Illustrated Book of Rock Records Volume 2 (Delilah)—*Volume 1* came out last year—is a reference book for people who don't care what they find.

Making Music (Quill), edited by George Martin, is a handsome "Guide to Writing, Performing and Recording." Among the many distinguished contributors are Paul McCartney on songwriting and playing bass, Jeff Beck on playing guitar, Herbie Hancock on synthesizers, and Adam Ant on making promotional videos.

Also in the self-help category are the acoustic *Guitar Owner's Manual* (John Muir, Santa Fe), with clear, friendly advice

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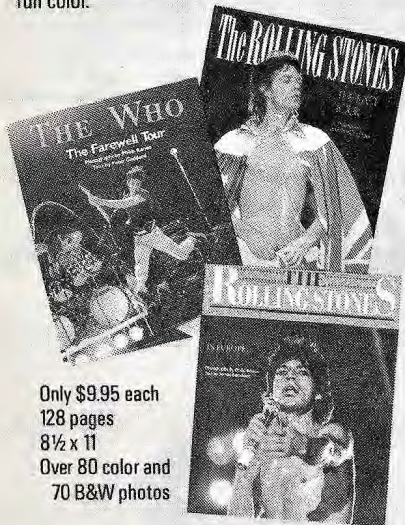
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from Will Martin, and a revised *So You Want to Be a Rock and Roll Star* (McGraw-Hill)—Sharon Lawrence's tone is gee-whiz but sensible.

Other books stick to narrative but are useful reference works. John Broven digs way past rock in his comprehensive *South to Louisiana: The Music of the Cajun Bayous* (Pelican, Gretna, LA). The work covers cajun, country, zydeco and blues, besides the more commercial swamp-pop and rock 'n' roll crossovers.

Ian Whitcomb in *Rock Odyssey* (Double-day) reviews pop history and adds personal touches as an insider. *The Incredible Music Machine* (Quartet/Visual Arts, London) covers not only rock but all music captured since the invention of the phonograph.

Certain volumes fail to slot into tidy categories. *Rock 'n' Roll Asylum* (Delilah) consists of Headley Gritter's "Conversations with the Madmen of Music": Ozzy Osbourne, Tiny Tim, Frank Zappa (?) and 14 others. *All American Music* (Knopf) propounds John Rockwell's embrace of all native styles, from rock to ethnic to "classical." John Tobler and Stuart Grundy's interviews with *The Record Producers* (St. Martin's) contain a little information among the cross.

Future Pop (Delilah) is half Peter Noble's photo portraits, half quotes from over 100 representatives of "new music." *Annie Liebovitz Photographs* (Rolling Stone/Pantheon) showcases a veteran rock lensperson. *Throb*

(Quill) shows off Police guitarist Andy Summers' black-and-white camerawork—mostly grainy souvenirs of band tours (hotel rooms, restaurants) and female anatomies, preferably without heads. His esteemed colleagues supply visual interest. *Sex in Rock* (Crescent) is all color and all come-on, with ludicrous captions exceeded only by ludicrous choices: Julio Iglesias in a three-piece suit?

Rock film buffs should seek out *Rockorama* (Delilah), with over 350 stills from celluloid epics. Rock sociologists can examine *The Role of Rock* (Spectrum/Prentice-Hall), Don Hibbard and Carol Kaleialoha's often insightful "Guide to the Social and Political Consequences of Rock Music."

Not one but three different rock quiz books challenge aficionados' acumen to varying degrees: *Rockquiz* (Perigee/Putnam) by Joshua Feigenbaum and former TP editor Dave Schulps; *The Ivy League Rock and Roll Quiz Book* (Delilah) by Jack Lechner; and *Illustrated Pop Quiz* (Proteus) by Barry Lazell and Dafydd Rees.

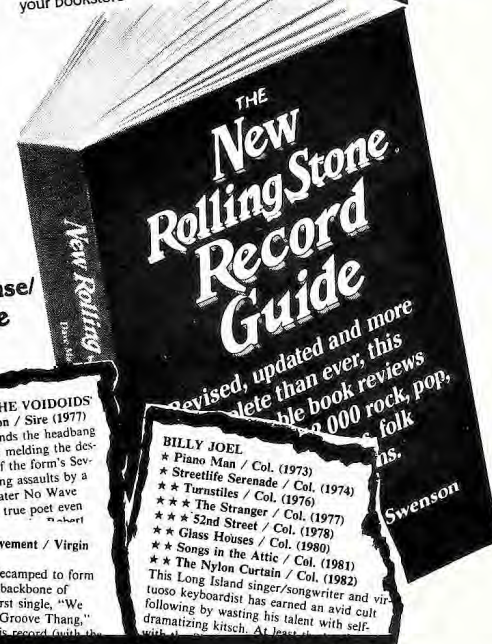
The Catalog of Cool (Warner), edited by Gene Sculatti, takes off from a terminally hip rock viewpoint to suggest other areas of likely interest. Finally, *The Complete Air Guitar Handbook* (Long Shadow/Pocket Books), by John McKenna and Michael Moffitt, is a clever parody of both self-help books and rock fandom.

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MICHAEL JACKSON
★★★★ The Best of Michael Jackson / Mo. (1975)
★★★★ Off the Wall / Epic (1979)
★★★★ Motown Superstar Series, Vol. 7 / Mo. (1980)
★★★★ One Day in Your Life / Mo. (1981)
★★★★ Got to Be There / Mo. (1981)
★★★★ Ben / Mo. (1981)
★★★★ Thriller / Epic (1982)
Like Stevie Wonder, Jackson has been capable of sustaining an artistic persona from preadolescence into adulthood, and theorists of rock's eternal attachment to youth notwithstanding, his music has grown richer and more intelligent with each passing year. Michael Jackson is no longer an optional pleasure for those who pretend to know about American music. He has become a necessity. — D.M.

Random House/
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RICHARD HELL AND THE VOIDOIDS
★★★★ Blank Generation / Sire (1977)
Seminal album that transcends the headbang limitations of punk rock by melding the desolate slum screeds of one of the form's avatars with shattering assaults by a band that prophesied the later No Wave.
HEAVEN 17
★★★★ Penthouse and Pavement / Virgin (1981), Br. imp.
Half of Human League decamped to form the electro-pop and funk backbone of Heaven 17. While their first single, "We Don't Need This Fascist Groove Thang," was simply marvelous, this record (with the

BILLY JOEL
★★★★ Piano Man / Col. (1973)
★★★★ Streetlife Serenade / Col. (1974)
★★★★ Turnstiles / Col. (1976)
★★★★ The Stranger / Col. (1977)
★★★★ 52nd Street / Col. (1980)
★★★★ Songs in the Attic / Col. (1982)
★★★★ The Nylon Curtain / Col. (1982)
This Long Island singer/songwriter and virtuoso keyboardist has earned an avid cult following by wasting his talent with self-dramatizing kitsch. At least

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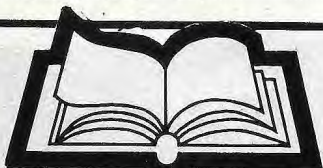
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The Trouble with Bowie

By Mick Farren

It's not without a certain irony that we find ourselves sliding into 1984 with David Bowie the biggest thing in pop this side of Michael Jackson. It's not just that Bowie has survived to experience a date he once sang about. His current dazzling success tends to defy common wisdom about popular culture.

Bowie's been in this game for close to 20 years. He is well past the age when Mick Jagger was first called a boring old has-been. His radical changes of style would have totally alienated the fans of most other artists.

Yet you hear few unkind words about David Bowie. He is one of the few pop stars even the most vitriolic icon-busting critics seem unwilling to attack—either as man or legend. Jim Morrison is one of few others who enjoy such a hands-off situation, and Morrison has been securely dead for over a dozen years. Bowie, however, remains quite visible, hopping from one foot to the other continuing a career.

Don't get me wrong, I am not a Bowie hater. (I already feel some of you reaching for your poison pens or worse.) I have huge reserves of admiration for David Bowie, both as an entertainer and a technician. He is without doubt one of the most consistently bright and innovative rock practitioners—and, unlike virtually any of his rivals, he has managed to parlay pop stardom into a credible career as an actor.

The trouble I experience with Bowie? Whenever he comes under discussion and the folks around the bar start to get rapturous, a still, small voice pipes up in the back of my mind to remind me:

This is the man who recorded "The Laughing Gnome."

There are a number of moments like this in Bowie's career. Together, they make me less than secure about his ambitions and motivations. Of course, everybody makes mistakes. With Bowie, it's the *quality* of his mistakes that gives pause.

For example, let's go back to the very start, when he'd just ceased to be David Jones: One minute he wanted to be Keith Relf, the next, Anthony Newley. *Anthony Newley?* What lurked in the psyche of the young David that wanted to be Anthony Newley?

Not just the young David, either. A few weeks ago I saw Newley himself on the *Tonight* show. He was promoting some dumb musical he's written based on the life of Charlie Chaplin. He sang. It was the first time I'd witnessed this not terribly attractive business in many years. I'd pretty much forgotten what he sounded like. It was chilling. Bowie still has that delivery. Through all these years, and all the way to Mars and back, Bowie still carries the Newley legacy.

I had misgivings when I first heard about the Ziggy Stardust concept. Bowie was clearly very eager to succeed, and there was nothing wrong with the music, but so much of the story seemed to have been a melange of H.P. Lovecraft and Robert Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*. I was certain someone would call him

out for plagiarism.

Nobody did. Ziggy drove the youth of the world bananas (and would-be bisexual). Since then, many have felt they owed Bowie a debt of gratitude for starting the first craze they could remember that had absolutely nothing to do with the '60s.

What made Ziggy run? Aspects of Bowie's behavior could be explained only by an overwhelming desire for public acceptance. Far from having a burning desire to say something, he seemed willing, particularly in the early stages of his career, to say anything if he thought that was what the crowd wanted to hear. I started to think that maybe his major talents were the abilities to borrow and synthesize; he could also predict, at times with uncanny accuracy, the moods and needs of his audience. He was more like a shrewd politician than a driven artist.

As with many shrewd politicians, it's hard to tell exactly what Bowie's politics—beliefs, if you like—actually are. His songs are clever but always oblique. It was never clear which goon squad was coming to town, and whether Bowie stood for or against them.

I recall him making an overtly political statement only once. During a bout of what was reputed to be cocaine psychosis, Bowie announced that Britain would do well to become a fascist dictatorship, with himself in the Hitler role. Apologists pointed out that this was a naive and addled statement made by someone attracted by the trappings and charisma of fascism, but who was definitely not a death camp enthusiast.

I didn't buy it. As far as I was concerned, it was one of the man's most dubious statements. That everybody else forgave and forgot filled me with total amazement. Bob Dylan deep-sixed his career by becoming a born-again Christian; when Bowie announced he'd like to be a Nazi, everyone was extremely understanding.

The most popular aid to understanding David Bowie has always been the celebrated reptile theory: At regular intervals Bowie sheds his entire creative personality to reveal a new one formed beneath the old. I can't quite come to grips with this either. The cracked actor flitting from role to role may explain Bowie the performer/interpreter, but not the creator/innovator. To be able to drop a concept or "personality" at a moment's notice indicates a shallowness of thought. This fatal trendiness may inspire my doubts about Bowie.

The shallowness, if it exists, hasn't done Bowie any harm. He is the leading white pop star, with many millions stashed in the bank (Swiss, no doubt). His current image is upright if not totally straight. In traditional superstar manner, his name appears in the gossip columns, linked with Susan Sarandon. The uncut version of the "China Girl" video shows his current image to be decidedly heterosexual. More importantly, Bowie is making a smooth transition from pop star to movie idol—a transition that has eluded most aspiring rockers, particularly Mick Jagger.

David Bowie is riding so high that his thoughts must now, at least part of the time, be focused on a place in history. He has yet to have what you'd call an enormous hit movie, and he has yet to explore the possibility of directing or anything approaching serious writing. He has conquered most other worlds.

Once again, I admit my admiration for the man. But, from Anthony Newley on, I still have all these unanswered questions. There are more. Are the native Australians in the "Let's Dance" video objects of compassion, social comment or just Pacific chic?

Far be it from me to trigger a Bowie backlash. I don't need the hate mail. Let's just say that the hottest item of 1984 is a mass of questions that haven't been answered satisfactorily for two decades. That must say something about the times we live in. ■

media eye

By Karen Schlosberg

The record business is on its feet again, so they say. Rock music is becoming a big-bucks industry again—so they say. ABC's *Nightline* and *20/20* have recently run features on the resurgence of the biz, and one of the contributing factors cited by both was the video industry.

Nightline focused on the infamous record industry slump (remember that?). A motley crew of record-biz types threw in their two cents—everyone from producer Tom Dowd to Eddie Money to Toto's drummer to the ubiquitous Clive Davis to Graham Nash. (Wait a minute—didn't someone say something about rock music?)

The general consensus was that the slump was (a) greatly exaggerated and (b) partly media hype. Davis said the traditional media are always waiting around for rock to die. He also quipped that the "A" in AOR stands not for Album (Oriented Radio) but Arthritic.

Graham Nash looked (god help us) like nothing if not an aging punk, all gray spiked hair and emaciated as ever. He commented that, thanks to the prominence of videos, musicians will fit music to videos rather than the other way around. Frightening.

The implications of that idea were explored a bit more in the *20/20* segment. Is there now an image prerequisite for assuring a group's popularity? Randy Newman, not just another pretty face, stressed video's danger because of its emphasis on cosmetic values. Even Daryl Hall, who *is* a pretty face, mentioned that musicians should be careful not to think of themselves as actors.

Too much thought, effort and money are already being put into the style of the video and not the substance; Rod Stewart remarked somewhat irritably (on a "Private Reel" on *Friday Night Videos*) that he didn't even know what the hell his "Baby Jane" video was about! Rock videos place cuteness above sincerity—how else to explain the success of that plastic band Scandal? And when is someone out there going to realize that *no one* knows how to lip-synch?

As I keep reminding myself, this video age has just begun. There are still quite a few bugs that need working out. With MTV weathering allegations of racism by loosening up—slowly—the next Big Issue to be addressed is the very touchy issue of taste.

MTV is going nowhere fast in terms of taste. Gratuitous sex mixed with gratuitous violence is the norm; all too often the two are literally tied together—bondage is in vogue these days. Some of the most vulgar, offensive visual images around are to be found on music videos. Who's in charge here, anyway? One MTV staffer says that if he had kids he wouldn't let them watch it.

On the other hand, where does responsibility to viewers stop and censorship begin? No one is forced to watch MTV, but it's the only game in town. MTV's quality control needs tightening up; to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and myths is irresponsible. Only a refusal to show such videos—or in some cases, editing them—will cause bands/directors to stop making them.

Some of the prime and most easily remembered candidates for the Schlosberg scale of Gratuitous Sex & Violence are:

Ministry: "Revenge." Nasty and vicious. GS&V: 10.

Krokus: "Screaming in the Night." GS&V: 9.

Golden Earring: "Twilight Zone." GS&V: 7.

Duran Duran: "Girls on Film." Edited or unedited, still unnecessary. GS&V: 7.

Bryan Adams: "Cuts Like a Knife." Gee, we don't know what to do so let's show a woman changing into her bathing suit with lots of skin. GS&V: 6.

Billy Idol: "White Wedding." No, I don't find leather asses wiggling in my face funny. GS&V: 5.

Billy Idol: "Dancing with Myself." This is one of my favorite songs. I like the video, but *why* that shadow image of a woman in chains? GS&V: 3.

Remember, the key word here is *gratuitous*, which reflects attitude. There's a world of difference between the nudity in David Bowie's "China Girl" video and "Girls on Film."

Lorrie Snierowski from Cincinnati writes:

"While I was on vacation in July, I watched MTV for at least an hour daily and was driven to log 'exploitation sightings.' Forty to 60 percent of the videos' content was sexually exploitative and offensive.

"The most distressing element was that none of the featured female performers failed to cooperate in self-exploitation. Pat Benatar, Dale Bozzio, Terri Nunn, Bananarama all complied blandly rather than subvert the female-as-sexual-accessory image perpetrated by their male peers.

"... It's bad enough to have MTV pandering to male video producers' warped notion of male teens' insecurities and fantasies. What really concerns me is the number of preteens who watch this stuff; it's a big hit among my friends' grade-school children. What is it doing to their minds? The message they're getting is pure '50s: men call the shots, women are passive—and if they're not young, impossibly beautiful and infinitely available, they don't exist. No hint of the complexity of real relationships.

"The worst offenders are TP's erstwhile darlings, Duran Duran, with their recurrent images of sweet Aryan youths at the mercy of Third World temptresses—a truly noisome fusion of racism and sexism rendered more repulsive by its tasteful presentation, so different from the cartoon buffoonery of a Billy Idol."

I'd like more readers' comments. Please send me lists of videos you find offensive and why. Try to be fair—separate the music from the video. For example, I'm no fan of heavy metal—I find most of the music offensive, let alone the videos—but Ministry shows that HM is not the only offender, or even the worst.

Keep image and attitude separate. I think ZZ Top's "Gimme All Your Lovin'" video is kind of cute, although it's been lambasted as sexist trash. The love-lorn look of that hick mechanic makes all the difference.

On the Tube

I am a complete sucker for anything on television that's advertised as having a plot about rock. However, I've yet to find one that actually is. Cases in point:

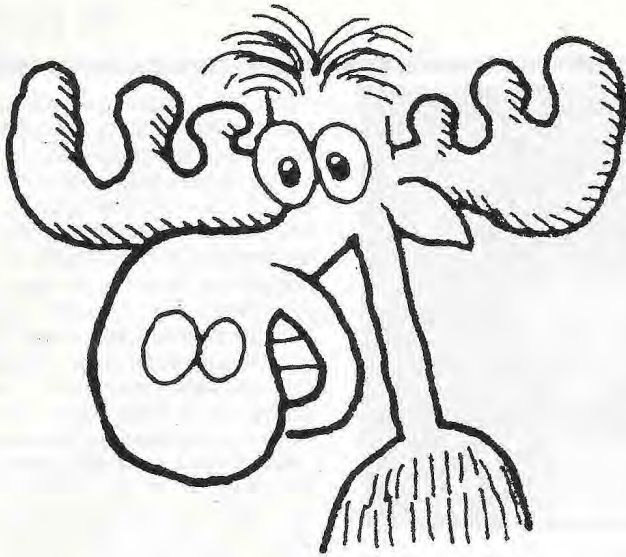
- One of my perennial faves, *ChiPS*, again graces this page with an episode about a so-called rock star: Wimpy Donny Most wears fiendish makeup, breathes fire, and sings songs about the Devil. Sound familiar?

His character, "Moloch," hears voices in his cassette player warning him of his impending doom. His car bursts into flames, he's accused of backwards masking, and at the end his manager is taken away in handcuffs after trying to kill him. This should only happen in real life. Trash.

- One of my sentimental faves from last year, the late *Tucker's Witch*, ran an episode in which Tim Matheson played a "rock-magazine [sic] reporter" and Catherine Hicks a "new-wave singer." That plot got lost real quickly in the usual detective/murder/chase nonsense. Their idea of new wave was to throw in some syncopated hand claps—which did do a lot, making whatever Hicks sang sound somewhat realistic.

The funniest bit concerned a pretend rock photographer nicknamed "LP" who was a coke dealer on the side. Taking a picture of some pseudo-punkette, he tried getting her to look angry: "Remember the last time your mother refused you a second dish of ice cream?"

- Before its untimely demise, one of my other sentimental faves, *Square Pegs*, showcased the



Bullwinkle © 1982 Jay Ward Productions
Drawing used by courtesy of *Stop!* magazine.

prodigious talents of ultimate space cadet Johnny Slash and his band, Open 24 Hours. They performed their magnum opus, "I'm Tired" ("I'm totally tired"). "Songwriters are the poets of our times," rhapsodized Lauren. "Look at Elvis Costello." "Do I have to?" asked Patty. I will miss that show.

□ □ □

New entries on the non-cable music scene: NBC's much-heralded *Friday Night Videos* (*Media Eye*, TP 89) has no annoying veejays, though there are lots of announcements. The programming is the usual, heavy on the commercial side. The "Private Reel" interviews, intercut with videos, are fun if slightly surreal. No interviewer is shown, leaving the viewer voyeuristically watching the pop star blather into the void. But *FNIV* is far and away the best commercial video show available on a national basis.

FM-TV. Yech. They cut off the ends of the videos and run crawlers with mostly inaccurate "information." And those indescribably offensive dancers are the WORST! GS&V: 25. After them, the Solid Gold dancers look like the Royal Ballet.

TMT is appalling. "Tomorrow's Music Today"—with Toni Tennille as a co-host? I could overlook that if the show wasn't so awful. *Music Magazine* is a little better, showing everyone from the Divinyls to the totally hateful Wham! (Those boys ought to be horsewhipped—but then they might like it.) The two hosts, though, are cardboard; the woman wears so much lipstick it makes my mouth crawl just to watch. Meow.

A newer arrival, NBC's *Rock TV*, promises a series of concerts. The first was an enjoyable set from Culture Club—just the concert, with an occasional commercial. Very nicely done indeed.

In and around NYC, *New York Hot Tracks* is strictly for the dancing crowd. This video spin-off of the popular "urban contemporary"

radio format features black acts, but shows anyone with a popular dance tune, regardless of color.

Watsamatta U. Dept.

Last time around I asked everyone to sweep out the mental cobwebs and let me know what you remembered about cartoon depictions of rock. The response was wonderful!

My query about a '60s-style crooner on *The Flintstones* yielded gold. The first (and ultimately most popular) response came from an editor at, as they say, "another" rock publication, who called to say the Beau Brummels were on *The Flintstones* as the Beau Brummelstones; the group even had an album cover with their cartoon counterparts on it. They sing "Laugh Laugh," sharing the bill on the "Shinrock" teen show with Fred Flintstone. Fred is supposed to perform the "Flintstone Frantic," but sits on a tack before going on and invents the "Flintstone Flop."

The *Flintstones* episode I vaguely remember featured "Jimmy Darrock" (Darren) and involved surfing. Darrock sings "Surfin' Craze" backed by the Fantastic Baggies.

Then there's the "Twitch" episode. This southern boy with a twitch and a guitar is supposed to sing at a charity show of Wilma's but eats some pickled dodo eggs to which he's allergic. Fred lip-synchs to "The Twitch" and saves the day. Fred Presley, hmmm...

And how could I forget Brian Epstone and the Termites? (Neither did Lisa Brewster.) Or the Way-Outs, who wore space suits? Jane Shishido feels they were the first futurist band. ("Eat your heart out, Bowie!")

But on to bigger and better... *The Jetsons!* Remember Janie falling in love with teen idol Jet Screamer? His eloquent hit was entitled "Eep Op Ork Ah Ah."

No, J.M. Frenchette, you were not dreaming about seeing a Rick Springfield cartoon. Thank you, Phil Collins ("not the famous one") for mentioning it.

Chad & Jeremy keep popping up in the real world. We last revealed this dynamic duo with another dynamic duo, Batman and Robin. I had reported that Chad & Jeremy were held for ransom by Catwoman (Julie Newmar), but Greg Nicoll thinks otherwise. He recalls the singers being menaced by the Siren, portrayed by none other than pre-*Dynasty* Joan Collins. (And to think I remember her as the sweet and tragic Edith Keeler in *Star Trek!*) The Siren could shatter glass and do other bits of mischief with her voice. She stole Chad & Jeremy's voices, and Batman was called in to get them back. Any confirmations?

Other notable guest stars on *Batman* were Lesley Gore, as the Catwoman's assistant, and Paul Revere & the Raiders, performing at a party thrown by the Penguin to get people to elect him Mayor of Gotham City.

Tommy Boyce & Bobby Hart also garnered a few misty-eyed reminiscences. Their most important appearance was on *I Dream of Jeannie*, where they formed a group with the navel-less genie and went to see a famous record producer—none other than Phil Spector.

Another cameo for the Standells: *Ben Casey*. Jim Finnigan reminds us of a *Get Smart* episode involving a rock group with mind-control powers in their music and lyrics. He also says his college roommate "swears" that "rock's greatest moment on TV occurred in a nightclub scene in *The Girl from U.N.C.L.E.*, when the band in the scene sang a song called 'Oink! Oink! My Hungarian Mama.'"

We'll close with one of my all-time fave cartoons, *Rocky and Bullwinkle*. David Sadowski related a series of rockable notes, the most memorable being the adventure of the Metal Munching Moon Mice. The MMMM spend most of their time eating TV antennas, which does evil for the careers of our two heroes. Bullwinkle picks up a ukelele and starts to sing; his music hath charms to soothe the savage MMMM, and they become Bullwinkle fans. Cloyd the Moonman calls our moose "a regular Elvis Pretzel." (Sadowski notes that the show was produced between 1959 and 1963.)

Enter Boris Badenov, who wants to control the munching mousies. He dresses up as a Moon Mouse, picks up an electric balalaika, and starts singing "You Ain't Nothing But a Moon Mouse" and "Don't Step on My Blue Suede Tail." But Boris loses to the greater talent of Bullwinkle, who promptly gets a swelled head and decides he needs a manager.

Enter "Colonel Tomsk Parkoff, Show-Biz Manager. Teenage Idols a Specialty. Audiences Controlled"—alias Boris. He books Bullwinkle into the 100,000-seat Colossus Stadium for a free show for the MMMM, and changes our fair moose's image. We next see Bullwinkle in a sequin jacket with neon lapels, snakeskin shoes and a blond pompadour.

Boris decides to kill 100,002 birds with one stone, and wires explosives into Bullwinkle's now-electric ukelele. But Bullwinkle, pro that he is, tunes up backstage. Boom go the MMMM, but our heroes are intact. Somehow.

Now *that's* rock 'n' roll.

□ □ □

Keep those cards and letters coming in! Let's get those lists of offensive videos. And many thanks to all who have written in so far! ■

video

By Ira Robbins

After several years of clumsy, mostly fruitless attempts to produce commercial rock videotapes of any merit, software manufacturers are finally showing signs of audience awareness and quality control. We're not airborne yet, but 1983 was the year home rock videos got off the ground.

Sony introduced "Video 45s"; several manufacturers discovered the salability of promo clips; international companies started to release British productions in the US. There is now more variety—in both bands and contents—available to the consumer than ever before. And there is now sufficient activity to insure the development of a supportive market and innovative efforts to reach it.

This column has reviewed most of the rock-oriented videocassettes released over the past year. With the acceleration of production, that may become harder to do in the future. Meanwhile, here are some recent arrivals of possible interest to TP readers:

Police Around the World (I.R.S. Video, 77 minutes) is a fun-filled romp across six continents—filmed in 1980 and 1981 on a mammoth tour—that shows the Police's wit and humanity while presenting at least excerpts from 16 stage performances. This informal view includes staged silliness—Andy Summers being demolished by a sumo wrestler in Japan, a visit to the Pyramids in Egypt, etc.—and cinema vérité—manager Miles Copeland sorting out logistical disasters, a ceremonial luncheon in India, traveling—besides concertizing. Even a non-fan of the band (like myself) can find this a solidly amusing journey, and a rare instance when content exceeds the ordinarily soporific "live" format.

Girl Groups: The Story of a Sound (MGM/UA, 65 min.), produced by Delilah Films/Books, adapts the book of the same name for the small screen. Alan Betrock's history of '60s female vocal groups has yielded a videotape primer, with vintage footage of the Supremes, Shangri-Las, Ronettes, Exciters, Angels *et al.* alongside newly-recorded interviews with people like Ellie Greenwich, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, Mary Wilson and Ronnie Spector. Like Delilah's *The Compleat Beatles*, issued earlier this year, *Girl Groups* serves as both history lesson and nostalgic entertainment.

Two films converted post-haste for home availability are **Flashdance** (Paramount, 95 min.) and **Liquid Sky** (Media Home Entertainment, 114 min.). Having managed to avoid the former all summer, I was astonished at what a pathetic excuse for a film it is. None of the hoopla is even remotely justified: It's not fun, not sexy, the "dancing" is lame and the music (except for "Maniac") awful. Incidentally, this is likely to become the best-selling videocassette ever.

Taking a hard left from such crass commercialism, *Liquid Sky* comes in a box marked "cult" on the spine. Unfortunately, it's no better, just more oblique. Produced and directed by Soviet émigré Slava Tsukerman, this sci-fi/new-wave/art-decadent load of nonsense



KATE BUSH

got great reviews when it opened theatrically in four cities this summer.

Liquid Sky couples a dumb alien-invader plot with drug addiction, sexual promiscuity, the New York club scene, role-playing, the fashion world, and a couple of other things. Suffice to say that once the plot thread is lost (shortly after the credits), there's nothing but queer makeup and clothes, and snazzy visual effects to sustain the film; those wear out quickly. Anne Carlisle stars in two roles (one male, one female), and co-wrote the inane script. Bizarreness alone isn't enough.

Sony is still figuring out what it should put on its stereophonic "Video 45s," and how long they should run. A holdout from the second release (reviewed in TP 90) is **Bill Wyman**. His three songs, led by "(Si Si) Je Suis un Rock Star," provide an entertaining if somewhat simpleminded 10-minute diversion. The clips rely too heavily on visual puns, but they're fun for a couple of viewings.

Sony's latest offering includes *Blotto*, whose **Metalhead** hasn't a serious molecule in it. The title track intercuts the face-pulling quintet rehearsing in a garage with them stunning a huge audience in a rock palace. There's also "I Quit," a little story about shoving a job, and the 1981 oldie, "I Wanna Be a Lifeguard." The images are too literal, but *Blotto* has a good comic sense, making this seem like a rerun of *The Monkees*.

The other Sony release this month is **Danspak**, a five-song sampler of the worst of New York mecha-dance crap. Produced and directed by video artists Merrill Alighieri and Joe Tripician, the tape matches monotonous, pretentious music by Man Parrish, Shox Lumania, Richard Bone and Living to clichéd, boring visuals that flash between positive and negative. Only Living's

"Boat Talk," with 13 performers in diaphanous costumes and a dreamy setting, holds any musical or visual attraction—and not much at that.

Two British productions—both unadorned concert jobs—are now available in America: **Adam and the Ants: The Prince Charming Revue** (CBS/Fox, 76 min.) is a boring 1981 presentation featuring an ornate stage set-up and Adam's least listenable material (largely from the *Prince Charming* LP). No wonder he sacked the band shortly afterward; still, he deserves much of the blame for this tedious and grating sludge. Even Adam junkies will find it tough sledding, mild beefcake notwithstanding.

Kate Bush Live at Hammersmith Odeon (Thorn EMI, 52 min.) was recorded back in May, 1979 and has been sold in the UK for two years. One wonders what held up its US release so long, but since Bush has yet to perform (except on TV) in America, a 4½-year-old videotape is better than nothing. The multi-talented Bush comes off as an agreeable English dancehall version of *Taxi's* Simka; it helps if you like high soprano singing. Maybe this will help get her career off the ground here.

Other new releases of note: **The Rutles**, shown on NBC-TV in 1978, is now available as a videocassette that must be owned by anyone with a sense of humor (and a VCR). **Valley Girl**, lightly praised by Karen Schlosberg in *Media Eye* (TP 89), has made it to the tube (where it belongs)—as have **The Trip, Bikini Beach**, the Rolling Stones' **Let's Spend the Night Together** concert flick, and Pink Floyd's **The Wall**, starring Bob Geldof. ■

* * *

Despite the accidental omission of a contest address, we received over 1,200 entries for the Thorn EMI videotape sweepstakes (TP 90). The five lucky winners of videocassettes by Duran Duran, Soft Cell and the Who are:

Cathie Villegas (San Francisco, CA)
Mike Miller (Mahtomedi, MN)
Hang Yin Lee (New York, NY)
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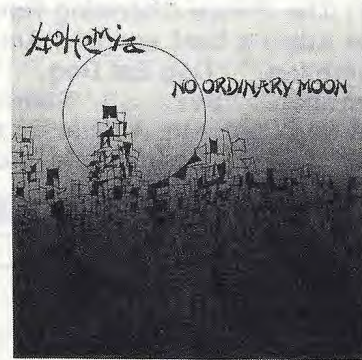


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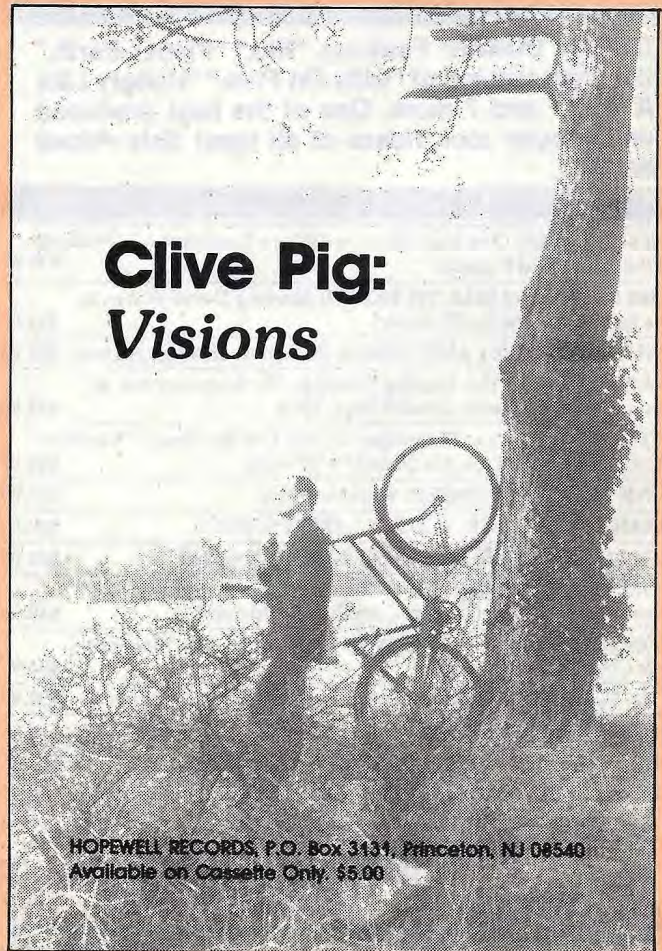
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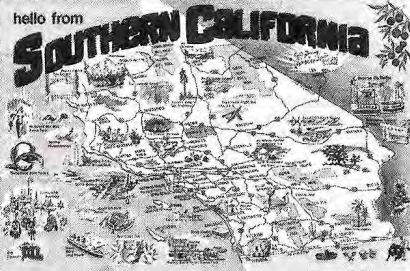
AMERICA UNDERGROUND

"From sea to shining sea!"

LOS ANGELES

SAN FRANCISCO

RICHMOND, VA



By Jonathan Taylor

Hey, "new music" is bigger than ever now, right? With the USA being MTV'ed, everything is groovy again, right? That's the word around these parts nowadays. After all, **Dream Syndicate** is recording for A&M. Smart, jazzy rockers **What Is This** signed with MCA. Neo-country-rockers **Lone Justice** are on Geffen.

But leave it to **X**, still the most important band in Los Angeles, to point out the ironies. In "I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts" they lament that for all the new attitude around, bands like **Black Flag**, the **Minutemen** and the **Fleethers** are still struggling.

Indeed Black Flag's Greg Ginn was sentenced to jail and a stiff fine after losing a legal battle with Unicorn Records. And Chris Desjardins has at least temporarily disbanded the Fleethers.

Los Angeles stays right on top of the trends: Rap clubs and rock discos are all over, and break dancers are *de rigueur* at major social events. But most of the more adventurous acts have difficulty making ends meet. Here is the cream of the crop that is at least trying.

Actually, you gotta wonder how hard **Red Hot Chili Peppers** or the **Joneses** are trying. The Peppers play frenetic, goofy hardcore punk-funk, emphasis on the punk. The Joneses are equally wild, and even more garagey. Both are developing substantial followings.

Tex and the Horseheads have been working in a similar though more theatrical vein, but it looks like the group is on hold. Early intellectual punks the **Angry Samoans** are off hold with a new album, "Back from Samoa."

Post-punk continues to flourish. (Doesn't this style deserve its own name by now?) The **Shadow Minstrels** are the best of the lot, mixing moody, jazzy and rhythmic music. They've put out a fine debut album.

Savage Republic is more severe and unpredictable, but always intriguing. **Cathedral of Tears** is a new synthesizer-



By Cary Tennis

The **Looters** and the **Uptones** are my two favorite unsigned local bands. The Looters play burning, African-influenced funk; the Uptones play ebullient ska. You will hear from them. Another African-influenced group of note is **Big City**—five men, two women, highlife.

The **Black Athletes** are not African but from some other dark, mysterious continent. **Silvertone** plays rockabilly. **Esmeralda** has a stunning contemporary cabaret act. **Anvil Chorus** is into the classics but doesn't sound like ELP. **Frightwig** is a female answer to Flipper. The **Invertebrates** play art-funk anarchistic dance music using movies and slides. The **Repeat Offenders** "have many different talents."

Boy Trouble: Watch out for them. The **Tibetan Boy Scouts**: brilliant saxophone madness. **Ibbilly Bibbilly** and **Plastic Medium** also have great sax sounds, as did the now defunct **Geeks**—a post-Parker melee of barking, honking and shout-singing.

Ginger Coyote, *Punk Globe* editor, likes the **Fuckups**, **Two Sex**, **MDC** and **Toxic Reasons**. **Patsy Kline** is marvelous. **Screen of Dreams** and **Paris Working** are worth seeing, as are the **Toiling Midgets**; the **Zasu Pitts Memorial Orchestra** (led by Steve Ashman) and **Naomi Ruth Eisenberg**.

Amazing Sammy replaced the rest of the **Wild Nixons** with a VIC20 computer and now works in indecipherable code. What a performer!

Arkansas Man is great if you can stand it. **Peterbilt** is great if you can't. Aaron, Peterbilt's first-rate drummer, is now with **Romeo Void**, who are working on a new album. R. Void's Debora Iyall has a backburner project called **Debora et al** with Aaron drumming, Dan Newsome of Peterbilt on piano, and Void saxophonist Benj Bossi. It's a breathtaking medium for her poetry. If you like poetry.

DJ Lebowitz's **Lounge Thrash** is sort of poetic. Berkeley's **Art Faggots** are *tres amusant*. The **Perfect Strangers** play a



By Jeff Lindholm

Richmond may have a history of Southern conservatism, but the local music scene bears little resemblance to the lifeless statues that grace Monument Avenue. Pop-rockers **Single Bullet Theory** and the **Dads** both inked record contracts with CBS affiliates in the past year. A vast array of other bands contribute a variety of sounds to the area.

The hardcore punk field is hyperactive. Trendsetters **White Cross** have released a full-length album, "What's Going On," and toured nationally. The **Prevaricators**' EP features a loud-and-fast version of "Hanky Panky." Other bands include **Honor Role** and **Beex**.

Last winter saw an abundance of synth bands, but only one seems to have survived: the all-female **O-Boy**. Attired like Technicolor bag ladies, they are definitely fun to watch and have appeared on USA-TV's *Hot Spots*. The new and very visual **Yeast Men** offer bleeps, boops and improvised vocals. Unfortunately for the natives, **Surrender Dorothy** decided to play Holiday Inns in Holland.

Richmond boasts a small but active reggae/African music community. The **Awareness Art Ensemble** plays self-penned tunes that show a heavy Bob Marley influence; their first album has just been released. The **Oneness of Juju** had a hit single in England and have opened for King Sunny Adé. These and other bands are quite civic minded, often playing in prisons and parks.

The **Orthotonics** offer quirky jazz dance music. Their twisted horns, minimalist guitar and surrealist lyrics draw crowds of art students. They are hard at work on an LP, with possible support from German producer Michael Tesch.

The recently resurrected **Heretics** are finally gaining acceptance. These former Orthotonics disciples have learned to tune their guitars and now play conga-driven toe-tappers.

The **Good Guys**, featuring the Gore brothers, can hang a ska beat on songs like

AMERICA UNDERGROUND R·E·V·I·E·W·S

BY JOHN LELAND

Pop Music

CYCLONES: Out in the Cold (EP)—Plexus. With "You're So Cool," their 1981 debut, this trio politely became part of the New York/Hoboken pop scene that has spawned the Bongos, Beat Rodeo and the Individuals.

Two years later, the pop ingenues have grown up. Their endearing awkwardness has given way to assured confidence. **Out in the Cold's** four cuts are rich in surf guitar lines and buoyant hooks. I'm not convinced the Cyclones could rock their way out of a paper bag, but they'd certainly make life in the bag pleasant. (PO Box 270, Gedney Station, White Plains, NY 10605.)

INSECT SURFERS; Sonar Safari (EP)—Wasp. Surf music from the sandy beaches of Washington, DC? The absence of shorelines and tan lines seems to be getting to these landlocked hang-tenners. The demented **Sonar Safari** includes an apocalyptic beach tune ("Sound of the Surf") and requisite instrumentals ("Twenty 9," "Blue Line"). "Barricade Beach," a former TP flexi-disc, is a remotely haunting tale of a social order gone slightly off kilter. "Open My Eyes," the Nazzy nugget, remains boppily enigmatic. Throughout, guitar and organ vie with each other for degrees of cheesiness. Insect Surfers recycle '60s punk and surf into frothy pop kitsch. (821 North Taylor St., Arlington, VA 22203.)

PRACTICAL STYLISTS: "General Beat" b/w "My Bed"—Pyramid. Not exactly Nashville's pride, the Practical Stylists play jazzy pop that changes direction a bit too fluidly. Technical proficiency makes even the tough changes sound easy, but all that bouncing around becomes distracting. Nice ideas, though; maybe the band can apply its talents to less precocious ventures. (PO Box 23506, Nashville, TN 37202.)

Psychotic Reactions

SLICKEE BOYS: "When I Go to the Beach" b/w "Invisible People"—Twin Tone. DC's Slickee Boys have been making anachronistic garage rock since the summer of '76; their latest single sounds as dated as anything on **Nuggets**. Unlike some more archival retro punks (Flestones, Chesterfield Kings), however, Slickee Boys don't labor over a perfect reincarnation of the '60s sound. No maracas or harmonica here; these two hot songs have plenty of beef. The A-side's a poppy beach number, while the flip unveils monster-movie creepiness.

GAME THEORY: Pointed Accounts of People You Know (EP)—Rational. Smart people can sometimes turn unchecked self-absorption into good sharp pop. Game Theory applies its overactive cerebrums to fey psychedelia. Scott Miller writes clever pop puzzles that would be oppressively catchy if they weren't so damned tough to track down; just when you think you've got a hook, it twists, stops or takes off. And the lyrics: "She can afford to have metal and glass exact." You figure it out. Game Theory teases, remaining playfully out of reach. (2410 E. 8th St., Davis, CA 95616.)

MANUAL SCAN: Plan of Action (EP)—Dance and Stance. This bunch adds a touch of cool sophistication to a classic SoCal garage mentality. Songs are underconceived (a plus), with one or two soul-punk guitar hooks but no tendencies towards blues grinds. Even with a fuzzy guitar, Manual Scan's tight arrangements keep the sound clean. The five songs here are all winners, and the band sounds deliberate throughout. (PO Box 0000, San Diego, CA 92110.)

SECRET SYDE: Hidden Secrets (LP)—Mutha. Cretinous acid fiends from South Jersey cut their cryptic imagery and drug references with an OD of unhealthy fuzzed guitar. This is one overtly psychedelic record that jumps. The key is an indefatigable R&B foundation and a cache of virtuously stupid bass lines. Side one's four strong tunes elicit favorable psychotic reactions. Then the Sydemen fall into a familiar trap, opening side two with about eight minutes of unfocused navel contemplation. The band is at its most visionary when it pushes beat over beatness. (103 Locust Ave., West Long Branch, NJ 07764.)

In the Tradition

BOYSTOWN (EP)—tmi. Winning melodic sludge rock from Pittsburgh. Low-budget recording slurs Boystown's guitar-heavy bottom but can't obscure its heart. Rebecca Bellamy's gutsy vocals overcome the formidable accompaniment; she soars, wails, cries and moans while the band kicks up a storm. Four driving songs make this a great "underground" record. Let's hope for a higher recording budget next time around. (PO Box 19024, Pittsburgh, PA 15273.)

FIRETONES: Trouble (EP)—Warner Sisters. Rod Firestone used to front the Rubber City Rebels, whose "Young and Dumb" was one of the great unsung American punk singles of the late '70s. Now he's

LOS ANGELES

based band started by the former lead singer of **TSOL**.

One of the more exciting new projects has former Wall of Voodoo big kahuna **Stan Ridgway** collaborating with ex-Gang of Four drummer **Hugo Burnham**. They should have a single out near the end of the year, and an album soon after. The remaining members of Wall of Voodoo are scouting around for a new singer.

Rockabilly and *nuevo* country are still vital. The aforementioned Lone Justice is most renowned; **Blood on the Saddle**, a fun bluegrass-garage band, is getting there. Veteran rockabilly singer **James Intveld** and his **Rockin' Shadows** are staples on the local scene. **Melvis and the Megatonnes**, led by the androgynous gatekeeper at Club Lingerie, is a new favorite.

There's hope for us all yet. ■

Jonathan Taylor is music critic for the Los Angeles Daily News.

SAN FRANCISCO

big poppy dance groove; like **Big Race** and **Stiff Upper Lip**, they're liable to get popular.

The **Contractions**, **No Sisters**, the **Hostages**, **Hard Attack**, **Norman Salant** ("King of Electronic Saxophone Modification"), **Vauxhall**, **Farmers**, **84 Rooms**, the **Varve**, the **Stirrups**, **Z-axis** and **Fade to Black** are all good bands.

For that matter, so are **Blue Ruen**, the **Artichokes**, **Ouch Cube**, **D.D. Downer** (at times), the **Black Dolls**, **Deda**, **Greed, Inc.**, the **Employees**, **Terminal Man** (wow!), **Jain**, **If Then Why** and especially **Fast Floyd** and the **Famous Firebirds**, **Love Circus** and the **Warring Snails**.

OK! Sixty-one bands, and not enough room to describe them. Go see them if you can find them. ■

Cary Tennis is in the Repeat Offenders, a San Francisco band.

RICHMOND, VA

"Mountain of Love" and the "Paladin Theme." Currently moving in a pop-funk direction, they have a single, "James Watt," and are planning a five-song EP. Tour dates cover the East Coast.

Monday Week and **Ten Ten**—the latter a "super group" consisting of former members of other local bands—are two new groups playing real rock 'n' roll songs you can sing along with.

The newly opened Floodzone studio's staff is scouting for talent and hopes to document what's going on for posterity.

Unofficial headquarters for music fans is the Plan 9 record store. Besides hard-to-find albums, it stocks all local recordings and a supply of spare guitarists. ■

Jeff Lindholm is a contributing editor of Throttle magazine.

leading a sweaty guitar band called the Firetones, like the Rebels playing strictly unenlightened 4/4 stuff. The Firetones thus run into the same problems the Flamin' Groovies had: a truckload of musical integrity, but they're too inflexible to "condescend" to the stuff that bends ears. They rock like crazy, even if no one's listening.

YOUNG CAUCASIANS: Pop Quiz (EP)—Wasp. The Young Caucasians are an unassuming guitar-and-organ band that doesn't let its limitations get in the way. They rehash familiar sounds and strategies, yet make them compelling. An occasional Chuck Berry lick meshes with the Farfisa sound; the drum break you've been waiting for materializes on cue. Matt Hahn's sweaty no-soul vocals come on honest and direct. Traditional without being dated, backward without being nostalgic, **Pop Quiz** cooks with a modest fire all its own. Best cuts are the ones about girls. Of course.

THE SOURCE: Picture Window (LP)—Wasp. Another strong record from Wasp. This outfit plays folky pop-rock, with an occasional synthesizer thrown in. Sometimes the band funks things up: "Mobutu" is an unfortunate stab at ethnicity. A lilting rhythm usually merges electronic and organic tendencies in a relaxed groove. Pretty neat.

THE IMPOSTERS: Mask (LP)—Dublab. "Imposters" is right. These sharpies come on like prairie greasers stuck in a time warp. With a handful of tunes about hanging out, going to the picture show, and getting laid, the group waters down its snappy guitar rock with hackneyed attitudes. The playing is nifty in several directions—power pop, 'billy, even ersatz reggae—but the vision of adolescence summons cynicism much more than kicks. (1537A 4th St., Suite 107, San Rafael, CA 94901.)

Northern Songs

THE VERGE: "Habitual" (EP)—No Crust. The Verge is a surprisingly vibrant trio from Albany, NY. Thomas Rella mixes buzzsaw guitar assaults with loud, ringing atmospherics. Thomas Murray's hyperactive bass attacks on the good foot. The band flies through four angry-and-noisy tunes without a misstep. Three talented rockers tackling Gang of Four's angular funk might sound like this: lotsa brawn pushing precariously close to the edge. To the verge? (PO Box 7188, Albany, NY 12224.)

LUMPEN PROLES: "She Wasn't Home" b/w "Positive Thinking"—No Crust. Another really fine record from Albany. (And betcha Prole drummer Bill Rella is related to the Verge's Tom Rella.) Like the Verge, the Proles play adult political rock, and use two lead singers. The Proles play slower and lower, but are just as muscular. "She Wasn't Home" is dangerously intense on an innocuous theme. "Positive Thinking" goes after bigger fish: "Your motives are certain/But your means are not justified in the end."

DEGRADS: "Frontal Lobotomy" b/w "I Saw Bobbie Sobbing in the Lobby"—Ronto. Quirky fun from upstate NY. Bobbie's been stood up, and her friends tell off the absent beau: "You're a stuck-up jerk." A scathing indictment over a lightweight pop ska groove. "Frontal Lobotomy" mixes nose-picking obnoxiousness with Tommy-style vocal exchanges. Degrad's are smart—Harvard grads and shit like that—but this is one condescending record. (151 Evandale Road, Rochester, NY 14618.)

Sounds of Science

JEFF AND JANE: "Special World" b/w "Mother Told Me"—J&J. Seminal downtown NY techno-arties Jeff and Jane Hudson have brought their futuristic dance music to Boston. Jeff moans "Special World," a disembodied track that's banal to little purpose. Jane's "Mother Told Me" is another story, with perky rhythms and sassy singing. Jeff should loosen his narrow tie.

JOHN ORSI: Can You Draw Attention (double single)—Lilith. John Orsi is one smooth hombre. He keeps his simple, mildly electronic tunes interesting with changes in volume and time signature—arty, but more idiosyncratic than pretentious. The sound is spare to get the most mileage out of found noisemakers, like a drum pad and a metal sheet. (Box 4420, Riverside, RI 02915.)

The Real Thang

DON MORRELL & THE METEORS: "I Get Enough" & "Dizzy" b/w "Don't Forget Me Darlin'"—Shadow. Greasin' it back in NYC, Don Morrell scores with bouncy rockabilly. The A-side cuts are fast 'uns, riding an R&B piano blowout. "Don't Forget Me Darlin'" is a soulful but oddly unaffected ballad. Morrell could ease up on the affected rockabilly intonations, but he writes a good tune. (126 West 22 St., New York, NY 10011.)



JASON & THE NASHVILLE SCORCHERS

JASON & THE NASHVILLE SCORCHERS: Fervor (EP)—Praxis. These modern cowpokes play rollicking C&W that's a step closer to the prairie than Rank and File's pop hybrid. Affected croonings and stock lyrics dissipate some heat, but the Scorchers keep a lot of wood in the fire. Rampant guitars threaten to mow over the hoedown, and there are nice harmonies throughout. (REM's Michael Stipe sings backup and cowrote a song.) If Jason can lighten up on the country clichés, he and the Scorchers will be a potent force. (152 Kenner Ave., Nashville, TN 37205.)

Punk Yourself

THE PREVARICATORS: No Kidding (EP)—Zero Degree. This meaty guitar punk is aimed pointedly at the sissies on the hip scene. Steve Hunter's screaming keeps up with the sonic overdrive without adding focus or melody. "Ode to Mr. Ed" is an amusing if obvious rip; "Livin' in Khaki" and "I'm So Cool" are too small-minded lyrically for the band's fat attack. The oldie "Hanky Panky" gives the Prevaricators the direction their own songs lack. (Box 14532, Richmond, VA 23221.)

HEART ATTACK: Keep Your Distance (EP)—Serious Clown. Ed Bahlman, the mastermind behind 99 Records, here produces Long Island's finest hardcore punks. The title track sets straight-ahead thrash against jerky neanderthal rhythms, giving Heart Attack's aural barrage more variety than most hardcore noise. Lyrically, the band is stuck in a familiar rut, but the busy musical shiftings obscure this sufficiently. (162-41 Powells Cove Blvd., Whitestone, NY 11357.)

Depressed in California

CHROME: "Anorexic Sacrifice" b/w "Beacons to the Eye"—Subterranean. San Francisco's demonic noise boys released this single along with their boxed set anthology. The complete corpus must be damn near unassailable; listening to both sides of the single was enough to make me run for my anti-depressants. Long, drawn-out guitar fuzz (as opposed to fuzzed guitar) plods along over fossilized rhythms, falling occasionally into funereal grooves. Those are the bright spots. (577 Valencia, San Francisco, CA 94110.)

SAVAGE REPUBLIC: "Film Noir" b/w "O Adonis"—Independent Project. Hard to figure out just where this band is coming from. "Film Noir" is a murky drone heavy on the *noir*, set over a Joy Division-type groove—deftly done, but humorless. "O Adonis" is a Greek instrumental, taken from the movie *Z*. This distinctly low-budget recording comes swathed in a fancy cardboard sleeve. Let's get our priorities straight, guys. (PO Box 66103, Los Angeles, CA 90066.)

Reel Life

X CHECKER: Girl Rock (cassette). Sexy dance music from Hawaii. Breathy female vocals pout over synth orchestrations or sinewy guitar blues. Good recording and spare arrangements make the four tunes listenable. (PO Box 5637, Kailua-Kona, HI 96740.)

ZOOGZ RIFT: "Amputees in Limbo, Phase III" & "Can You Smell My Genitals from Where You're Standing?" (cassettes). The man behind these psychotic tapes is sort of a rude West Coast R. Stevie Moore. "Amputees" is punky Beefheart, with jagged angles and funny lyrics; "New York, New York" may never live down the treatment Zoogz and his Amazing Shitheads give it here. The "Genitals" tape consists of 52 cuts performed either on solo Casio organ or solo Mattel Synsonic drums. Best of the way-out titles: "Beating the Fuck Out of Rocky" and "Get Lost You Ugly Cunt." For 10 bucks Zoogz will create a unique tape just for you—no refunds. (18620 Hatteras St. #265, Tarzana, CA 91356.)

ACTION FACTION (cassette). No salient data on this band, but anybody that records "Subterranean Homesick Blues" is OK by me. The three originals are smooth bluesy numbers that paint a bleak view of the future. Despite nice jangly guitars and paranoid political lyrics, the Faction needs more bite. The Dylan cover is drab funk. Maybe I should rethink my social standards.

FASHION JUNGLE (cassette). This Maine guitar/organ group plays complicated, tense pop. Drums roll and crash in a rapid series of turns and little climaxes. The rest of the band scoots busily along. Romantic melodies mate with intellectual lyrics: "I wipe away the moisture from your eyes/Crocodile tears on an alligator sleeve/Synthetic passion on a synthetic weave."

AMERICAN DANCE BAND: Shut Up and Play (cassette). Rockabilly strains, as opposed to strained rockabilly. This presumptuously named trio makes loose country swing that recalls old Chevys and greasy take-out food. On the ballads our Dance Band stumbles into Eagles territory, but the stompers do indeed stomp. Nice relaxed slide guitar. (PO Box 1357, Cedar Ridge, CA 95924.)

POP SQUAD (cassette). Touted in last month's Saskatchewan scene report, the Pop Squad is a promising trio from the North country. Szymon Choynowski leads a heady assault with ringing guitar and spacey vocals. Bass and drums define the parameters within which Choynowski wanders to give the Squad its poetry. (14th Ave., Regina, Canada SK S4P 0W7.)

Noise Annoys

BEASTIE BOYS: "Cookie Puss" b/w "Beastie Revolution"—Ratcage. An insufferably obnoxious dance record. Even if "Sucker M.C." didn't give you a headache, this satire on rap/scratch/dub urbanity should irritate your gray matter. Nasty debris litter a mindless funk groove, as our protagonists search for Cookie Puss: "Hey man, you got Cookie Puss' number?" The plot sickens: "These pussy crumbs are making me itch/Maybe I should scratch." (Enter DJ scratching.) "Beastie Revolution" spoofs "Pass the Dutchie." Single-dimensional hip gets a deserved comeuppance. (149-03 New York Blvd., Jamaica, NY 11434.) ■



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reviews

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CULTURE CLUB Colour by Numbers Epic

Pop sociologists must be tempted to seek a deeper meaning in the success of Culture Club and Boy George in the stodgy old USA. After all, George's androgynous, exotic bearing would seemingly guarantee rejection by a cautious middle-of-the-road audience. For us non-analysts, however, the answer is evident: Give folks a great voice and a catchy tune, and you'll hook 'em every time.

George and crew have learned that lesson well. *Colour by Numbers'* 10 well-crafted songs never fail to please the ear and rarely threaten to make waves. Like *Kissing to Be Clever*, this second effort combines everything from reggae and gospel to easy listening and country. The result is a consistently delectable meringue nobody could hate.

Like Smokey Robinson, to whom he's been compared, George's wonderful singing has a tantalizing, soulful ache. Unlike Robinson, George doesn't always cut loose and howl. Up-tempo numbers like "It's a Miracle" and "Church of the Poison Mind" are thoroughly agreeable, but George's overly proper delivery doesn't give anything away. By contrast, backup singer Helen Terry's fervent wailing sometimes threatens to shove George out of the spotlight.

At slower tempos, the Boy is passionate and persuasive. His vocal sparring with Terry on "That's the Way (I'm Only Trying to Help You)" has the intensity of a revival meeting; he croons like his heart might break in "Black Money." Anyone who can hear the beautifully sad "Victims" without getting a lump in the

throat must be ready for the morgue.

Colour by Numbers is an always nice and occasionally inspired record that promises plenty. It doesn't indicate whether Boy George will eventually grow bold enough to really bare his emotions. But wouldn't that be swell?

—Jon Young

STRAY CATS

Rant n' Rave

EMI America

ZANTEES

Rhythm Bound

Midnight

No one can accuse the Stray Cats of selling out. Their million-selling US debut album, *Built for Speed*, is as righteous a dose of (neo-)rockabilly 'n' blues as any steadfastly obscure revival band could produce.

Built for Speed, however, had the benefit of being culled from the Stray Cats' two British albums. The all-new *Rant n' Rave* allows for no second guessing. So how do the Cats play it?

Safe, for one thing. That means going back to Dave Edmunds as producer; Edmunds's studio expertise has sparked the band's best recordings. It means ditching the R&B experiments of *Gonna Ball* (the previous UK album) for sure-fire uptempo stuff. It also means *Rant n' Rave's* paltry 10 tracks don't even cross the 30-minute line.

But at least the Stray Cats are still playing it—purebred rock 'n' roll, that is—and better than ever, from the evidence. Brian Setzer's multi-chorus guitar solos remain a joy, paying homage to Scotty Moore and Chuck Berry before taking off for a jazzier realm. His singing is finally catching up to his playing in finesse, with expressive efforts replacing the lackadaisical delivery of yore. Bassist Lee Rocker and drummer Slim Jim Phantom continue to provide minimal but effective support.

The songs here are all original, if heavily indebted to tradition. The opening "Rebels Rule" uses Ricky Nelson's "Long Vacation" riff to fuel its appropriately anti-school sentiment. The closing "How Long You Wanna Live Anyway?" is an Eddie Cochranesque pounder à la "Something Else." In between are more espousals of the Stray Cats' goodtime ethos of cars ("Look at That Cadillac," "Hot-rod Gang") and romance ("Sexy + 17," "Too Hip, Gotta Go"). The country-tinged "18 Miles to Memphis" describes touring fever. "I Won't Stand in Your Way," *Rant n' Rave's* sole ballad, is a hybrid of doowop backing (courtesy Fourteen Karat Soul), piano triplets (Geraint Watkins) and superhumanly restrained band.

Everywhere else, *Rant n' Rave* lives up to its title. MTV exposure may have set the Stray Cats apart from the rest of the rock-revivalist pack, but the group has chops as well as looks.

The Zantees don't appear on MTV. Stray Cats fans, though, might want to check out this band's ragged-but-right approach to rockabilly. Method singer Billy Miller values persona over

such niceties as enunciation. Drummer Miriam Linna also sings *con brio* on "I Need a Man" and "I'm Ready."

The heart of the Zantees is the two-guitar team of brothers Bill and Paul Statile. Both are proficient in rockabilly's chromatic single-string solo style, and provide a dual-carburetor rhythm thrust (although Linna and bassist Jumpin' James are no slouches either.)

With a shrewd choice of material that swings as well as rocks, *Rhythm Bound's* one-take looseness is as enjoyable to hear as it must have been for the Zantees to play. —Scott Isler

DEPECHE MODE Construction Time Again Mute/Sire

YAZ

You and Me Both

Mute/Sire

The ghost of Vince Clarke hangs over new albums by his former band (Depeche Mode) and his recently-defunct "current" band (Yaz). Clarke's trademark of shiny, precise melodies and abrupt rhythmic hooks set musical standards from which the electropop scene is only now starting to break away.

Construction Time Again shows a definite maturing in Depeche Mode's sound—a maturation as much technological as musical. Under Clarke's tutelage the band initially played rather flimsy mechanical-pop; the advent of more sophisticated drum machines and synthesizers gives these new songs a warmer, more varied feel.

If there's any holdover from the old days, it's a certain lyrical naiveté despite weighty subject matter like contractual obligations and corporate greed ("Everything Counts") or imminent nuking ("Two Minute Warning"). But this can be overlooked when balanced against the muscular, Heaven 17-ish hooks of "Everything Counts," or the somber tape loop at the core of "Pipeline" (which smells like input from producer and Mute founder Daniel Miller). At this rate, Depeche Mode may yet become a force to be reckoned with.

Clarke, on the other hand, takes the second Yaz(oo) album in the opposite direction—which is to say, *he* hasn't changed a bit. His music is still as hard, glittering and exact as a diamond—and just as cold and inorganic. Indeed, were it not for Alison Moyet's husky singing, Yaz would be virtually unlistenable. Clarke's *modus operandi* utilizing the inbred ultra-regularity of his machinery effectively subverts all melody (save Moyet's voice) into beat. The end result, while inarguably danceable, does not make for hummable tunes.

When you get right down to it, Yaz had a practical reason for throwing in the towel: the Eurhythmics, who took many of Yaz's traits—precise, dance-oriented beat, soulful female vocals—and made them even more palatable for mass tastes. For better or worse, Yaz was an experiment that failed. —Robert Payes

BIG COUNTRY

The Crossing

Mercury

Out of the UK they came, swathed in a blizzard of hyperbolic praise. Daring to oppose the bully of musical fashion, Big Country wield their trusty six-string weaponry to drive the synth villains into the sunset of pop oblivion.

Big Country leader Stuart Adamson was second banana in the once-brilliant Skids; bassist Tony Butler and drummer Mark Brzezicki have sessioned for Simon and Pete Townshend, the Pretenders, Virginia Astley and others. Although Big Country has been slagged in the British press for being quasi-heavy-metal (i.e. guitar-oriented and commercially successful), American record company hype and enthusiastic radio programmers have paved the way for instant stardom here, despite the band's stylistically awkward coupling of a hip, intelligent image and visceral rock playing.

The enlistment of producer Steve Lillywhite lends credence to the theory that Big Country is coasting into America to the tune of U2. That band's forthright guitar and raw-edged sound whetted heartland appetites for more. Big Country's Skids-like soaring riffs (with a Celtic feel—Adamson's Scottish upbringing) infuse the album's best material with rousing spirit and a trademark sound. The songs that lack such embellishments, however, offer little to excite the ear or impress the memory.

The Crossing is thus a decidedly mixed blessing. While "In a Big Country," "Fields of Fire" and "Inwards" (all on side one) show Big Country to be exciting and original, the rest of the album drones on to little effect. Lyrics are consistently thoughtful and almost poetic, the playing and production unimpeachable—but take away the few zesty tracks and you're left with mostly second-rate filler.

Big Country makes a welcome contrast to a lot of current soundalike bands, but they're not the ultimate panacea. Ignore the hysteria, and give them a chance to live up to their notices in the future. —Ira Robbins

GANG OF FOUR

Hard

Warner Bros.

I know a woman who *loved* Gang of Four. She had all their records, and saved her pennies to buy tickets for their next performance. When she heard this record on radio she took the money and bought socks instead. Sorry, Gang. True story.

Gang of Four used to promise power and grit. The imaginatively titled **Hard** is often deficient in the former and almost completely lacking in the latter. Indeed, most of it could be mistaken for ABCDuran.

What the hell happened to these guys and gals? They sack drummer Hugo Burnham for being politically incorrect or some junk like that, they bury the guitar six feet deep in the mix, and Jon King starts singing like Jonathan King—that soppy Anglo-croon glomming up our airwaves. Hasn't the Gang considered the implications of being *musically* incorrect?

It's not even a matter of a group with a good rough edge going slick on us. Last year's "I Love a Man in Uniform" was truly knock-out disco. But **Hard** is so mushy that people weaned on "Armalite Rifle" and "Anthrax" will

probably turn to thrash music for solace.

The opening "Is It Love" is dire indeed, a marching song for the Little Bowie Army. MFSB strings enter and exit limply, and most of side one is more of the same. The tragedy is that you can hear saviour guitar off in the distance like a movie hero pleading for help from within a locked closet.

Side two quasi-blasts off with "A Man in a Good Car," a promising track, though the guitar is still only at half-power. Maybe somebody woke up the engineer who must have fallen asleep on the mix console. If so, he was promptly put to bed, because it's back to Dick Clarksville with the aptly tuned "It Don't Matter."

Bassist Sara Lee's unrelenting white funk has its moments, but ultimately overpowers and homogenizes the record. Guitarist Andy Gill needs to reassert his presence and at least meet Lee in volume. A mire of additional singers clog up the pores of this music like a layer of butter. Or margarine.

It's all just a matter of taste, isn't it? **Hard's** sound isn't exactly unpopular these days. Some people are going to come back for seconds of this record. And some people are going to buy socks. —John Walker

X

More Fun in the New World

Elektra

In 1980 X became the wunderkinder of American rock with **Los Angeles**, a frenzied and lurid portrayal of life and love in the decadent chic of Hollywood Boulevard. For all of its rough edges, the album showed tremendous promise. X's disparate motives carved a rocky hybrid of blues, rockabilly and punk. The dark poetic pretensions of John Doe and Exene Cervenka were kept in check by the nuts-busting guitar antics of former Gene Vincent associate Billy Zoom—and vice versa.

Three years and as many albums later, the wunderkinder have become elder statespeople of a thriving rootsy scene. On **More Fun in the New World**, the group that touts itself ironically as "the last American band to get played on the radio" expands **Los Angeles'** sharp vision to the rest of this big country.

It's a mighty task. X has always been longer on heart and ingenuity than on innate talent, so living up to its promise presents many difficulties. The band relies on passionate intensity to level any songwriting obstacles. As its ideas stray farther from home, X shows signs of confusion.

More Fun in the New World is hit and miss, but the edge goes to the hits. The country meanderings of last year's **Under the Big Black Sun** come into sharper focus; the punk overdrive gets some time off, but Doe's desperate honesty is even more affecting in subtler contexts.

Like the Blasters, X's American identity is ideal for the country's current depression. "New World" looks at disillusionment in the bars and small industrial cities of Reagan's America. "Poor Girl" is a bleak but sympathetic tale of loneliness. On these and a handful of other tunes, Doe and Cervenka become moving voices for the masses, without stumbling into romanticism or condescension.

On the other hand, there's an inexplicably lame rendition of Jerry Lee Lewis's "Breathless" (from the movie remake of the same

name), and two indifferent non-songs. "I Must Not Think Bad Thoughts" strings together line after line of unconvincing rhetoric. And it's a confused band on "True Love (Part Two)" that ventures into funk by lifting the Doobies' "Long Train Running" guitar riff to accompany one-liners from '60s chestnuts and folk standards.

X may not integrate new ideas too smoothly, but at least it has the determination to make them work. **Wild Gift** remains the definitive X album; like **Los Angeles**, **More Fun in the New World** promises even better to come.

—John Leland

JONATHAN RICHMAN & THE MODERN LOVERS

Jonathan Sings!

Sire

Jonathan Richman entered national rock consciousness in 1976 with an album of five-year-old demos. Instant standards like "Roadrunner" and "Pablo Picasso" not only denoted original songwriting talent, but also forecast the minimalism and anti-style of the Ramones, and all who followed their lead.

But Richman then proceeded to retrogress at an alarming rate—first reveling in innocence, then devolving into sheer childishness. As acoustic instruments replaced the original rock bite, and his lyrics got more and more inane, Richman seemed increasingly divorced from reality. His retirement from recording a scant three years after his career got off the ground was a relief to those no longer tuned to his wavelength.

Suddenly, Richman has returned—complete with a new record label, new band, new attitude, and newfound (recovered) genius. **Jonathan Sings!** is not a drastic departure from previous records. Rather, it is a total revitalization: great melodies, incisive but typically awkward lyrics about love and life (not ice cream and insects!), clever arrangements and simple, creative production.

His new outlook allows him to view the world from various angles. In "The Neighbors" he swears to marital fidelity; a female voice responds skeptically. "Not Yet Three" finds him taking the role of a baby protesting parental insensitivity.

The band rocks (complete with honking sax) on "Give Paris One More Chance," among others, yet can drop to a soft shuffle for "You're the One for Me." They even manage neat doo-wop vocals on "This Kind of Music." The five-piece consistently maintains the ragged-but-happy spirit that infused all of Richman's work after the original Modern Lovers.

Jonathan Richman has never sung with more confidence or skill (within the confines of his adorably clumsy vocal style). It's great to have him back in our lives. —Ira Robbins

TOM TOM CLUB

Close to the Bone

Sire

If ya need hot white crossover funk, forget about that British junk. The Tom Tom Club is throwin' down, their latest is the baddest sound. It's syncopated, frisky too, with reggae folk, a touch o' blues; it's colder than a heart attack,

and Chris Frantz is a maniac. He's got one track where he raps lead, I tell ya jack, it's guaranteed, ta make ya freak an' shake ya pants, to smile, smirk, hip-hop and prance. And when the Weymouth Sisters sing they ring the bell and pluck heartstrings, with twitterings sublime and shy, that make me glad that I'm a guy. Their worldview's optimistic too, and set against a friendly groove, sublimely, slinky when it moves, at times covert but not uncouth, with talk of interracial joy, that may bomb in south Illinois, but inner-city dance club floors will bounce until your feet get sore, an' when you've danced till you can't move, then dig the dialectic too.

The Tom Tom Club speaks out here on the battle of the sexes, to tout female equality and emotional cathexis. It isn't preachy, but it's strong, straightforward information, upon a subject that we know still causes much vexation. They talk of marriage, babies too, with loving exaltation, and, as I've said, promote a trend of mass miscegenation. The spirit that's displayed throughout is cheerful and bucolic, a realistic, feminist democratic frolic. There isn't any cynicism, any shuck and jive, just the kind of looney tunes that shout out "I'm alive."

Last words about the music played by Tom Tom Clubbers all, complex rhythmic arithmetic with the power to enthrall. Tina's relaxed fatback bass creeps on ya like a grin; it stuffs the funk up on yo' face and smears it on ya chin. Guitars stutter, keyboards mutter in soft ascending runs that have been designed to blow your mind an' animate your buns. The drummer Frantz has fourteen hands he loves to tease and please, the synthesizers chirp like flocks of drunken birds in trees. In closing let me simply state this record stands the test, and when they

hear it UK bands are sure to be distressed. It's black, it's white, it jams all night, it wields a whippin' stick that'll knock those trendy haircut bands into a jealous snit. For humanistic thinking heads and talking dancing feet, the Tom Tom Club is still the champ, the one they'll have to beat. —j. pfunk

NEIL YOUNG Everybody's Rockin' Geffen

Here at the Kollege of Musical Knowledge Crisis Center, we've received a number of inquiries about the new Neil Young album, **Everybody's Rockin'**. Most people who've encountered this record experience sensations of alarm, anger or bewilderment—sometimes all three at once—and want to know why. We can't give individual responses, but we'll address the most common queries herewith.

Is this a rockabilly record? No, it isn't. Young does appear on the cover hunched over his guitar, wearing a pale pink suit and greased-back hair. And the 10 songs on this 25-minute LP are indeed bare-bones rock 'n' roll (structurally, anyway), dominated by heavy vocal echo. But the stiff, almost petrified performances are light years away from the primitive abandon of real rockabilly. The fruity chorus that shadows Young every step of the way recalls Ricky Nelson, not Elvis Presley.

Is Young making fun of good old rock 'n' roll? Probably not. He's muddied the waters by trying to accomplish two things at once. Young uncovers unappealing truths about bygone days in "Payola Blues" and "Kinda Fonda Wanda," an unpleasant exercise in sexual nastiness.

When he exclaims in the title track that even Ronnie and Nancy are rockin', you have to concede that rock hasn't transformed the world.

On the other hand, Young also tries to have fun pure and simple, with mixed results. His campy reading of Slim Harpo's "Rainin' in My Heart" is an insult; too many songs are the same rolling blues with different lyrics. "Cry, Cry, Cry," however, really cooks, complete with Elvisisms, and "Mystery Train" chugs right along.

What does Everybody's Rockin' ultimately signify? Nothing. Young's last LP, **Trans**, was an equally perverse display of synths and distorted singing. Next time, who knows what he'll do? Uneven but intriguing, **Everybody's Rockin'** is above all a forceful reminder that Neil Young is a totally idiosyncratic artist who doesn't care *what* his audience thinks.

—Jon Young

ROMAN HOLLIDAY Cookin' on the Roof Jive/Arista

MONSOON Third Eye (UK) Mobile Suit Corp.

In this age of dance-or-die tyranny, it's a relief to find two entertaining albums that are not devoted to staying in step with the happy-foot army. Roman Holliday and Monsoon both craft slick singles that are aimed at the British charts, but each melds the pop formula to an anomalous style; the result is both novel and familiar. All sorts of silly hybrids have scored hits at one

Continued on page 72

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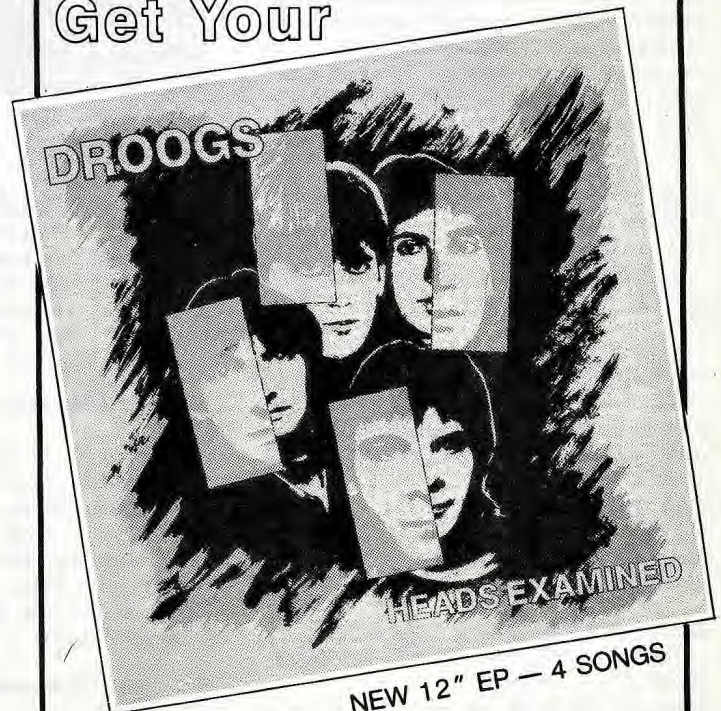
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hit & run

By Jon Young

ANIMALS/Ark

(IRS)

The original quintet, and everyone's functional. Most important, growly Eric Burdon's still the self-indulgent slob who helped write the rules for Bruce, John Cougar *et al.* One quibble: Much of the material's too literate and modern for Burdon's neanderthal talents. Next time, greasier and dumber!

BAUMANN/Strangers in the Night

(Portrait)

Ex-Tangerine Dreamer Peter Baumann relays weak echoes of everyone from Devo to Styx without exhibiting any vital signs. He doesn't even show off his synth prowess, so what's the point? Speaking of tame, the blah title track makes Sinatra's original seem almost raunchy.

BEACH BOYS/Rarities

(Capitol)

This fascinating assemblage should delight the most jaded Beach Boys collectors. High points: two charming **Wild Honey** out-takes ("With a Little Help from My Friends" and the Box Tops' "The Letter"); a German version of "In My Room"; and an early mix of "Good Vibrations." Bravo Capitol!

ADRIAN BELEW/Twang Bar King

(Island)

Whatever Belew's learned from those intellectuals in King Crimson and Talking Heads, his second LP boasts a spirited innocence they lack. His zig-zag guitars and whacked-out vocals have the quality of a spontaneous, irresistible celebration. Try the howling version of the Beatles' "I'm Down" or the roof-raising instrumental "Paint the Road," and you'll be hooked.

T-BONE BURNETT/Proof Through the Night

(Warner Bros.)

Behind that soft face lies a mind racked by modern horrors. **Proof** contains troubling accounts of phonies ("The Sixties"), victims of circumstance ("Fatally Beautiful"), media manipulation ("Hula Hoop") and spiritual distress ("Shut It Tight"), wrapped in a bright folk-rock package that offers slight consolation. After the dark visions and moral outrage, Burnett trills sweetly, "I will hold on to this hope/That life is not a gruesome joke." That's the spirit! Dour and fascinating. Guests include Pete Townshend, Richard Thompson, Ry Cooder and Mick Ronson.

ROCKY BURNETTE & THE ROCK

'N' ROLL TRIO/Get Hot or Go Home!

(Kyd)

Hungry for some real gone rock 'n' roll? Rockably immortal Johnny Burnette's son Rocky bellows his dad's classics, including "Tear It Up" and "You're Undecided." He's backed by the incomparable Paul Burlison, who played smokin' guitar on the originals, plus legendary Sun guitarist Roland Janes. Don't be surprised if your speakers catch fire!



JOEY HARRIS AND THE SPEEDSTERS

J.J. CALE/#8

(Mercury)

Tense? Irritable? Y'all just need a shot of ol' J.J.'s sultry swamp guitar and laidback voc'lizin'. As the album title suggests, sleepy-time delights like "Money Talks" and "Livin' Here Too" vary not a whit from previous platters. Nor should they; why change when you've got the right funky stuff? Richard Thompson guests.

CHEAP TRICK/Next Position Please

(Epic)

Sadly, good old Cheap Trick has slid into middle age. Once a truly joyful noise, now they get by on momentum, sounding uncomfortably like ELO at times. There's nothing bad here—excluding a clunky cover of the Motors' "Dancing the Night Away"—just none of the uplifting freshness of old. Todd Rundgren produces; big deal.

C.S. ANGELS/Land

(Jive/Arista)

Better known as Comsat Angels (renamed in the States for legal reasons), this intense British foursome still weaves a haunting web of moody singing and moonlit melodies. Just to show they're entertainers too, the Angels pump up the tempo to curb monotony. Not fun; not forgettable, either.

D-DAY

(A&M)

You can dance to Texas' D-Day, but the band's blustery epics belong in a meaningful off-Broadway musical. "Strange Feelings," "Desperation," etc. are textbook examples of overkill (cf. Teardrop Explodes or Wah!). English Beat producer Bob Sergeant oversees the commotion.

MICK FLEETWOOD'S ZOO/I'm Not Me

(RCA)

Ace drummer Fleetwood's second side project showcases a worthy band (including rockin' Billy Burnette) and a slew of well-crafted Cal-pop, but it's shapeless. Apparently nobody felt like taking charge. Taken individually, however, many tracks shine—especially the topsy-turvy "I Want You Back," guest starring Lindsey Buckingham, and "I Give," a neat evocation of Brian Wilson.

PETER GODWIN/Correspondence

(Polydor)

Don't be misled by the synthesizers; Godwin's just another oily crooner of tired love songs. With only amour on his mind, he should be able to find *some* way of making the subject interesting. No such luck. "The Art of Love," "Soul to Soul," "Young Pleasures," etc. are as dull as their titles.

JOEY HARRIS AND THE SPEEDSTERS
(MCA)

Joey Harris (an American, although this LP was recorded in Australia) deals with the regular guy and his ups and downs. Unlike Springsteen, Petty, Cougar *et al.*, he doesn't belabor the issues, preferring a streamlined attack that's far more persuasive. Even the biggest bummers should be kept in perspective.

JO JO ZEP/Cha
(A&M)

Jo Jo Zep and the Falcons spewed out some of the screechiest bar band rock ever. The revised Jo Jo Zep finds Joe Camilleri looking to Kid Creole, Hall & Oates and other suave sorts for pointers on acting upscale. Result: He's now more polished, less trashy and definitely less fun.

KATRINA & THE WAVES/Walking on Sunshine
(Canadian Attic)

Former Soft Boy and pure popster Kimberley Rew writes the songs, classy Katrina Leskanich belts 'em out, and presto! You've got a fond look back at the mid-'60s that works in the present. From cascading folk-rock to big-beat soul, these trim ditties sparkle in a way that's rare nowadays. Swell titles: "Going Down to Liverpool" and "I Really Taught Me to Watusi."

KOYAANISQATSI [soundtrack]
(Antilles)

"Koyaanisqatsi" means "life out of balance" in Hopi, and Philip Glass' soundtrack strikes an appropriately ominous note. Hypnotic choral and orchestral tides ebb and flow constantly, never swelling to a cathartic climax. Not for children or the faint-hearted.

KRISMA/Fido
(Atlantic)

Cross Kraftwerk with Laurie Anderson and you'd get this adorable duo. With flaky vocals by Christina Moser and Maurizio Arcieri, and comical burps and blips from a Casio, Krisma subverts the cliché of futuristic coldness by being both ultra-mechanical and ultra-charming. Now even the terminally *au courant* can have a silly record without sacrificing their principles.

ANNABEL LAMB/Once Bitten
(A&M)

Like the Motels' Martha Davis, Lamb has a cool, calculated sensuality that's perfect for high-tech cocktail lounge music. Her dedication to the right pose, though, will leave you begging for a little warmth. Ray Manzarek guests on a decent version of "Riders on the Storm."

LOCAL BOYS/Moments of Madness
(Island)

Hooray for the return of unsung great Andy Fairweather Low! He can compress a lifetime of bad luck into one compelling groan better than anyone else. With estimable vets Pat Donaldson and Jerry Donahue, Low makes a half-hearted attempt to be more of a nice, chipper performer and less of a loser on the barroom floor. Of course, with material like "All Heartache 'n' No Fun," good cheer doesn't stand a chance.

MIKE'S MURDER [soundtrack]
(A&M)

A.k.a. the new Joe Jackson record. Side one has five vocal cuts in the urban-contemporary mode of *Night and Day*. (Is it my imagination, or does Jackson grow more raspy and petulant

with each outing? Enough, already.) Side two contains three smooth, faceless instrumentals.

MINOR DETAIL
(Polydor)

If you must have electropop, John and Willie Hughes aren't a bad selection. The perky siblings don't even qualify as trendies, since they espouse an unironic optimism that's downright corny. Proof: lyrics like "Tomorrow is a bright new day" and "Love can never let us down" set to equally sugary melodies.

MOTELS/Little Robbers
(Capitol)

Having a hit sure helps. *Little Robbers* is more confident and coherent than last year's *All Four One*, and Martha Davis's torch-rocking is less mannered. Regardless, the Motels are still too canned; every last note has obviously been plotted beforehand. Imitation life.

ELLIOTT MURPHY/Murph the Surf
(Courtisane)

One of many former "next Dylans," Murphy might today be tagged the next Lou Reed if he weren't a seasoned vet himself. Heedless of fashion, he's still the hip romantic, talk-singing tales of small-time winners and losers with unflagging earnestness. Suckers for urban angst will forgive the variable quality of the material.

NINE WAYS TO WIN
(Duke)

Ho-hum, another Mutt and Jeff combo longing to be Soft Cell. Singer Jonathan Hughston's breathy narcissism owes more than a little to Marc Almond; too bad he doesn't have Almond's titillating sleaziness as well—or better still, a new angle.

PAYOLAS/Hammer on a Drum
(A&M)

A most fitting title. Canada's Payolas rail against hypocrisy and champion Everyman in booming, anthemic songs that recall later Mott the Hoople. By no coincidence, Mick Ronson produces (again) and Ian Hunter guests. All concerned have built a stirring wall of sound, but "No Prisoners," "I Am a City" and others would be more effective with subtler treatment.

WILL POWERS/Dancing for Mental Health
(Island)

"Will Powers" is photographer Lynn Goldsmith and heavy friends, including Sting, Steve Winwood, Todd Rundgren and Nile Rodgers. Although this hybrid of rap, dance-rock, and self-help instruction pretends to be facetious, the profusion of jive platitudes like "Be thankful for your problem/It's a gift in disguise" reveals the underlying seriousness. Obnoxious.

PETER SCHILLING/Error in the System
(Elektra)

Without blushing (or acknowledgment), Schilling sighs a little number called "Major Tom (Coming Home)" that resembles the Moody Blues minus the lushness. Elsewhere, plenty' electro-bubblegum, powder-puff arrangements, and the blandest singing in a month of Sundays.

SIR DOUGLAS QUINTET/Quintessence
(Varrick)

Doug Sahn and crew merit sainthood for their tireless preservation of great traditional music styles. *Quintessence* features the patented Sir Doug blend of Tex-Mex, blues, country and R&B—in other words, no-bullshit rock 'n' roll with roots intact. Highlights: honkytonk fever on "Rolling Blues," and a sexy slow burn on "Got It Bad for You." Bottoms up!

SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY AND THE JUKES/Trash It Up!
(Mirage)

Chic's Nile Rodgers helped Bowie top the charts. Can he work a miracle producing the less illustrious Southside? Nope! For all his glitzy uptown embellishments, Rodgers can't hide the fact that Johnny's a pedestrian soul singer, and songwriter Billy Rush is a predictable plodder. Maybe after five or six beers. . .

WHAM! UK/Fantastic
(Columbia)

Despite all the attention ('cause they're white and British?), Wham! merely reworks the slickest American funk 'n' soul conventions. But if you can overlook a tepid copy of the *Miracles* "Love Machine," these likable thieves will put you in an exuberant groove that's sure to please—and maybe even chanting "Enjoy what you do" *ad exhaustion*. ■



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Continued from page 69
time or another; these two groups have (or, in Monsoon's case, had) the skill and songwriting to be more than flashes in the pop pan.

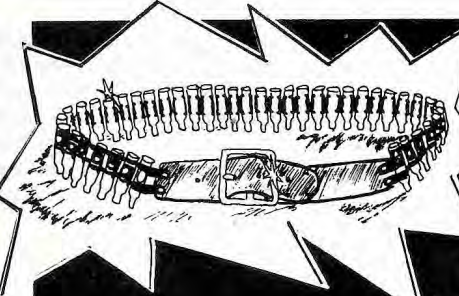
Roman Holliday, a young London septet, begins where Joe Jackson left Jumpin' Jive, only without the reverence. The band plays modernized '40s swing with a dose of '50s rock 'n' roll. However, the songs (all originals, most written by singer Steve Lambert and guitarist Brian Bonhomme) don't use jive lingo or dated subject matter. **Cookin' on the Roof** is filled with infectious, fresh tunes given style and character by a pair of horns, excellent vocals and tight arrangements.

"Don't Try to Stop It"—issued, along with three other album cuts, on a preceding EP—has an exemplary vocal chorus and a quiet doo-wop bridge that colors it more '50s than '40s. "Motor Mania" employs more swing references, but slap-bass adds a rockabilly roll. "I.O.U." downplays the horns in favor of a

Madness-like straightforward bounce with a big backbeat. "Jive Dive" fingerpops through evocative pseudo-jazz with vocals that aspire to the Mills Brothers *cum* Brian Setzer. "Stand By," the high point here, is a concise ditty with an unforgettable horn chart, catchy chorus and dynamic drumming.

While Roman Holliday is one of a number of English groups borrowing swing sounds, they could probably shelve the "gimmick" and still come off well. **Cookin' on the Roof** may sound a bit silly after the current infatuation passes, but Roman Holliday has the earmarks of a band likely to outlive the moment.

Monsoon is quite a different matter. Essentially a studio group, it consisted of singer/face Sheila Chandra, an English teenager of Indian extraction who had previously acted on British TV; musician/producer/songwriter Steve Coe; multi-instrumentalist Martin Smith, and assorted free-lance players. Drawing inspiration from George Harrison's '60s raga-rock but



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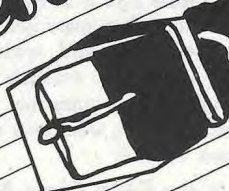
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adapting it to modern fashion, this crafty bunch's pop vehicle has everything: foreign instruments, a winsome singer in exotic dress, spiritual/philosophical concepts behind the lyrics, and a spot-on collection of musical hooks. Crass? Sure, but what great pop isn't?

Third Eye, released after Monsoon's announced dissolution, consists mostly of material issued on singles in 1982 and 1983. Fortunately, stylistic continuity prevents any chopiness; this is definitely an album, not a hodge-podge of divergent sides. Despite the ghost of the *Help!* soundtrack, **Third Eye** is an enchanting blend of styles and haunting material, written primarily by Coe with and without Smith. Chandra has an obvious sensitivity for mock-Indian melodies; her cronies mix Eastern and Western sounds into a wondrous tapestry that sounds almost natural!

"Wings of the Dawn (Prem Kavita)" is a beautiful chant-like melody laced to a tamboura drone and Bill Nelson's e-bow guitar; the playful "Third Eye and Tikka T.V." sounds like Nehru-jacketed Donovan; "Shakti (The Meaning of Within)" has a propulsive tempo and Abba-like vocals, with a soaring chorus and hand-clapping in the finest Phil Spector tradition. Amidst the many graceful originals, a rather dull reading of the Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows" (even with guests Dave Balfe and Merrick) is redundant.

Third Eye is a successful marriage of cultures, and of commercialism with adventure. It's an odd artifact, but a thoroughly enjoyable record—and you can't even dance to it.

—Ira Robbins

MAIDEN AUSTRALIA

A&M

TIM FINN

Escapade

A&M

MENTAL AS ANYTHING

Creatures of Leisure

A&M

HUNTERS & COLLECTORS

A&M

Ready for the Down Under Sound? Sorry, there isn't one! Men at Work's success may have American labels signing up musical talent from Australia and New Zealand with unprecedented eagerness, but there's no particular style to wrap up in a neat package.

For quick proof of down-under diversity, consult **Maiden Australia**. This 12-track compilation covers plenty of ground in apparently aimless fashion. Among the ingredients: moody sensitivity from the Expression; R&B raunch by Sunnyboys; the trendy twitching of Machinations; and Wendy & the Rocketts' metallic teen-pop. Of more collector interest, perhaps, are an unimpressive non-LP Split Enz track, "No Exit," and a rousing live version of "Women in Uniform," recorded in 1978 by Skyhooks.

What these artists *do* have in common is an American deal with A&M Records. **Maiden Australia** is thus an informative if not very satisfying sampler. Here's a look at three of the label's more notable new LPs from that exotic corner of the globe.



Split Enz singer Tim Finn's first solo venture, **Escapade**, is consistent with the course his band's been following of late. Once a weirdly garbed outfit playing surreal tunes à la early Genesis, the Enz have become progressively more mainstream without giving up their melodic sense of oddball humor.

Continuing the process, **Escapade** is a gorgeous album chock full of classic pop songs Elton John or Paul McCartney would be proud to claim. Finn deals exclusively with love, whether lamenting disharmony in the bouncy, reggae-fied "Fraction Too Much Friction," or considering past joys in the haunting "In a Minor Key." Most of all, he seems happy and willing to come out and admit it—a jolt after Split Enz's elusiveness. "Not for Nothing," the LP's stand-out, sways like a gentle breeze, both corny and affecting. Finn's bittersweet voice and eloquently simple lyrics are guaranteed to touch all but the hardest hearts.

On a less upbeat note, **Mental as Anything's Creatures of Leisure** returns to the woefully humorous vein of last year's **If You Leave Me, Can I Come Too?** These five guys are apparently completely luckless in love, yet smart enough to find their troubles amusing. A loose, drunken groove and sorrowfully witty tunes suggest a cross between Hank Williams and early Elvis Costello.

The twangy "Bitter to Swallow" bounces along merrily. "Brain, Brain" pits an ethereal melody against the mutterings of a mind "digesting things that are not rational." Even the inner sleeve offsets grim printed lyrics with hilariously grotesque drawings of embracing, slobbering lovers. You'd have to go a long way to find a more entertaining look at the absurdity of human suffering. (NB. The Australian version differs by two tracks and is even better.)

Now for the booby prize. **Hunters & Collectors** comes from the fashionable "art is pain" movement inspired by Joy Division, Public Image and other gloomy Gussies. This anonymous band's groaning vocals, whiny guitars and thudding basses sketch out an all-too-familiar bleak landscape on compositions like "Towtruck" and "Lumps of Lead." Though the closing nine-minute "Run Run Run" does cast an impressive feverish spell, it's scant reward for the preceding grating self-indulgence.

—Jon Young

TRANSLATOR No Time Like Now 415/Columbia

America seems to be breeding a new strain of bands in the 1980s. Ignoring the voguish allure of Euro/synth dance music, a slew of true-born populists have emerged, emphasizing songs over style. R.E.M. leads the pack by dint of their commercial breakthrough, but Translator is also in the forefront, alongside bands like Rank and File and the Blasters.

Translator's debut, **Heartbreaks and Triggers**, established their solid songwriting and wide stylistic variety. **No Time Like Now**, although not as consistently stimulating, contains enough first-rate numbers to make it a worthy, if not ideal, followup.

Again we hear the band (excellently produced by David Kahne) in different modes, from subtle reflection ("The End of Their Love," "I Hear You Follow") to kinetic energy ("L.A., L.A.," the potential hit "Un-alone"). Transla-

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tor performs effortlessly throughout.

At a hair over 43 minutes, **No Time Like Now** could stand some prophylactic pruning; the second side suffers from creeping tedium. But there's a lot of fine music—and some thought-provoking sentiments, in keeping with the band's socially responsible attitude—in these grooves. Evidently unhampered by the usual second-album material shortage, Translator continues to demonstrate uncommon creativity and original thinking. This must be their time. —Ira Robbins

BAD RELIGION Into the Unknown Epitaph

Say a guy—an intelligent but quiet sort—showed up at his company's annual picnic in the

buff, with a sparkler sticking out of each ear and his toenails painted dayglo blue. You'd pretty much have to regard such behavior as highly questionable, regardless of intent. His co-workers wouldn't "get it," and the guy would likely be filing for unemployment a day later.

Now say one of America's premier punk bands (on the basis of one certifiably great album) put out a second LP brimming with acoustic guitars, synths, and post-'67, pre-'77 sensibilities. Again, highly questionable, right? Yet LA's Bad Religion has done precisely that with the release of the aptly titled **Into the Unknown** (complete with 2001-inspired cover art).

The album's eight tracks owe more to Manfred Mann than the Sex Pistols. There's even a four-part(!) ecological opus, "Time and Disregard." You could spend the better part of

an afternoon deciding to which year between 1968 and 1976 **Into the Unknown** is most beholden.

An act of derring-do, or of confusion? A challenge to doctrinaire punk aestheticians? A prank? That **Into the Unknown** is not only listenable but frequently enjoyable must prove *something*. Cascades of hooks and instrumental shenanigans—acoustic guitars in tandem with electric fuzztones make for aural fun—should cut through most listeners' bewilderment.

Into the Unknown has its weak cuts, and suffers from a samey sort of sound. But high points like the opening "It's Only Over When..." are high indeed. It's not often that a (relatively) established band will take such ludicrous chances for two whole album sides; let's just hope this doesn't cost Bad Religion its "job." —Don Howland

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BONGOS
Numbers with Wings
RCA

RUBINOOS
Party of Two
Warner Bros.

THE BEAT
To Beat or Not to Beat
Passport

ROMANTICS
In Heat
Nemperor

The state of modern American pop is rather like that of a cellar-dwelling baseball team that can't be bothered to buckle down as long as a few fans still come out to the park. Compared to the cream of the British crop, these records—with the exception of the Bongos'—simply put a new tread on worn formulas, barely masking the dearth of fresh ideas underneath.

The Bongos stand apart from the pack with their first major-label release, the mini-LP **Numbers with Wings**. Though they play it a bit safer for RCA than they did for PVC (on their Velvet Underground-meets-Marc Bolan **Drums Along the Hudson LP**), these five new songs are as dark, seductive and sensual as a siren call.

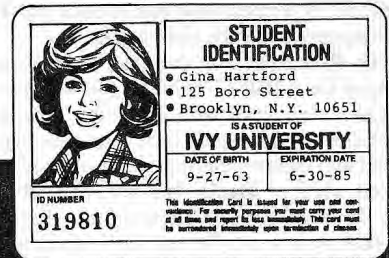
Numbers with Wings is closer in spirit, if not execution, to **Nuts and Bolts**—last year's semi-acoustic side trip from Bongos Richard Barone and James Mastro—than it is to **Drums Along the Hudson**. There are no out-and-out rockers here. The music is more about mood

than melody; mysterious chordal maneuverings and balladlike tempos are redolent of Lou Reed's reflective *noir* side. This is a record to get lost in—indeed, you wish there were more of it.

Not so with the Rubinoos' **Party of Two**, a would-be shindig that never gets off the ground. Formerly a spunky little pop quartet with two fine, fun albums on Beserkley, the Rubes have shrunk to singer Jon Rubin and singer/multi-instrumentalist Tommy Dunbar on this five-track mini-album. Todd Rundgren's Utopia backs up this disbanded "band," with Utopia itself producing. It's a dreadful mismatch; can you imagine early Blondie paired with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir?

The record's pop values are dated instantly by ungainly Utopian synthesizer swoops and massed voices, recalling disco-era ELO. An on-the-ball producer would have restrained the boys from singing the fingernails-on-blackboard chorus of "If I Had You Back" a few dozen times too many. Rundgren and the Rubinoos seem bent on building frothy little starcastles in the sand that go nowhere except off my turntable. Based on his work here and with Cheap Trick, executive producer Rundgren appears to be losing his grip as pop producer nonpareil; the Rubinoos sound redundant on their own record. Back to the drawing board.

The Beat (a.k.a. Paul Collins' Beat) doesn't falter quite so badly, though **To Beat or Not to Beat**—yet another five-track mini—sounds like three different bands: hiccuping, Tom Petty-style rockabillys on "Burning Desire" and "Dance, Dance"; LA wimp-rockers on "Making You Mine" and "All Over the World"; and a clattering, metallurgic Cheap Trick on "Give



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Me the Drugs." It's all a bit schizo. "All Over the World" kicks in with a catchy chorus, but is undercut by a guitar solo that sounds like Toto wafting over from the next studio.

The Romantics, by contrast, have a surer grasp of their craft. Trouble is, you won't want to touch their craft with a ten-foot tone arm. Once closer to pure pop, their music has degenerated into heavy-breathing arena-rock with the merest whiff of Yardbirds-cum-Liverpool hard pop. In **Heat** is a full-length album of grungy riff-rock so moronically simple it makes the first Stooges album sound like the Mahavishnu Orchestra. Why they bothered to print lyrics—biker-bar come-ons without a shred of wit or intelligence—is a mystery on the order of the Korean Air Lines disaster. If this is powerpop, Loverboy is on the cutting edge of the avant garde. —Parke Puterbaugh

MARC & THE MAMBAS Torment and Toreros (UK) Some Bizzare

Imagine a depressing hole of a cafe packed with a crowd of psychotic, terminally ill sleazebags. On the bandstand is a rag-tag collection of emaciated zombies, dressed in black, playing cacophonous melodies on rusted instruments. You can hear the clanking of skeletal fingers whenever anyone moves. The air is rank with the stench of debauchery, depravity and pessimism. Some drink slime from crusty cups, some grope themselves under the filthy table tops, some rub against each other on the dance floor in an orgy of boredom and self-loathing.

Suddenly the verdigris lighting grows even

dimmer. A slim young man steps reluctantly into the shuddering spotlight to announce the night's featured act.

"Cocks, cunts, fence straddlers, let's hear it for Marc and the Mambas." The crowd is largely indifferent. Some boo, some yawn, some throw rotten fruit, but most ignore it, choosing instead to delve more deeply into their self-destructive predilections.

This is the alluring picture painted by Marc Almond, late of Soft Cell, on his second "solo" outing. The liner notes contain the advice "if you're going to wallow, wallow deep"—advice which Almond and his accomplices duly take. This is one of the most ruthlessly cruel and heartless records since Lou Reed's **Berlin**.

Most tracks on **Torment and Toreros** reek of despair, depression, drugs, murder, rape, suicide, sadism and other forms of cold-hearted psychic violence that scratch the soul with the indifferent claws of a rabid jungle beast. There is music that some say grows on you; **Torment and Toreros** festers, pulling you down into a dark whirlpool of corruption and hopelessness.

This is not to imply that the performers or performance lacks passion. Almond and the various Mambas play with a cold fire that turns the unfolding of these dreary dramas into a frightening display. One is drawn in and appalled, entertained and repulsed, at the same time.

Almond's singing goes from vicious yelps of self-pity to vengeful growls of brutality to resigned whimpers of unbelieving shock. Affected and mannered in the extreme, he plays each role to the hilt and remains convincing throughout. The Spanish-flavored cabaret music, ranging from understated to histrionic, is a perfect

B-movie nightmare soundtrack. Playing and production impart a brilliant, surrealistic sheen that complements and intensifies Almond's obstreperous vocalizations.

This is not a record everyone's going to like. But those with a propensity for the dark side, as Uncle Darth would say, should let it slither into the space where their hearts used to be. It's a nasty little jewel and the perfect companion for the long, cold, gloomy months ahead. —j. puke

CABARET VOLTAIRE The Crackdown (UK) Some Bizzare

Cabaret Voltaire has this image of being weird, inchoate, right out on the edge of music. So why was this album—admittedly my first exposure to CabVolt music—rather staid-sounding?

Unquestionably, **The Crackdown** is going to seem pretty bizarre (note correct spelling) to those unaccustomed to anything outside the musical mainstream. Rhythms are regular and precise; sequencers often dominate, and alien sounds slide in and out of the mix. Vocals alternate between "found speech" tapes and Stephen Mallinder's somnolent voice. Melodies are tenuous at best, lyrics (when decipherable) blank and murky. These aren't "songs" so much as aural environments, although danceable enough to reside on the label that gave us Soft Cell.

Cabaret Voltaire works (if at all) on an emotional and subconscious level. Tin Pan Alley tunesmiths they're not. **The Crackdown** did not move me, but that shouldn't be taken as a blanket panning —Robert Payes

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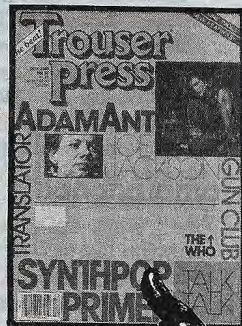
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green circles

By Jim Green

PUBLIC IMAGE LTD.: "This Is Not a Love Song" b/w "Blue Water"—(UK) Virgin

So what is it, already? John Lydon doesn't provide many clues, although the overall impression is a view of personal/political economy. Lydon almost sings (!) on this upbeat if faintly ominous dance-rock tune that's totally unexpected from PIL. "Blue Water," an announcement of suicidal intentions, is more typical (i.e. tedious) with slow, ugly music to match its sentiments. The 12-inch adds a remix of the A-side, plus (in memory of past glories?) the original—not a remake—of "Public Image."

AfterJ*A*M

STYLE COUNCIL: A Paris (EP)—(UK) Polydor

Paul Weller and Mick Talbot continue noodling around in various directions on this third post-Jam outing. "Long Hot Summer" (available in a short version on seven-inch) is Weller's deluxe summer lounging number—rather slight as a song but quite well-produced. After a few listens it becomes enjoyable fare, if not overly memorable.

"The Paris Match" is also decent but unremarkable save for some French lyrics. A new version of the instrumental "Party Chambers," "Speak Like a Child"'s B-side, substitutes meaty organ for the annoying synth flutings of the original. "Le Depart" is Talbot's poignant solo piano showcase. (Hard to believe he got his start with—gag me with a plectrum—the Merton Parkas.)

Note that US Polydor has released "Introducing the Style Council," a 12-inch of the group's three A-sides (including two versions of "Summer") plus three B-sides, including "Paris Match" but not "Le Depart" or either version of "Party Chambers."

BRUCE FOXTON: "Freak" b/w "Writing's on the Wall"—(UK) Arista

The gem of the after-Jam. Foxtan gets instrumental help from some hornmen and backing vocalists I've never heard of, plus ex-Hitmen guitarist Pete Glenister (put that man in a band!!) and Members drummer Adrian Lillywhite, whose brother Steve produced. Besides cranking out a killer bass riff, Foxtan shows no lead vocal credibility problem on the dance-funk "Freak." The mellower, almost MOR-ish flip is fully equal to Weller's efforts in that area. Let's hear more on the order of the excellent A-side.

TIME U.K.: "The Cabaret" b/w "Remember Days"—(UK) Red Bus

Rick Buckler's post-Jam group includes Dave Parsons (ex-Sham 69), Danny Kustow (ex-Tom Robinson Band), Nick South (who played with Robinson in Cafe Society) and Jimmy Edwards (ex-Toys). Their pleasant pop-rock is reminiscent of less boisterous Small Faces and (wonder why?) Tom Robinson. A bonus single features an inane "radio interview show" with snatches of these and other songs.

TRACIE: "Give It Some Emotion" b/w "Tracie Raps"—(UK) Respond

Tracie's possessed of a swell voice; too bad the song isn't up to snuff, being rehashed '60s soul. Producer Paul Weller, who also (with the Soul Squad) accompanies her, attempts to spice up the proceedings with unnecessary dub techniques; a separate dub version on the 12-inch goes even farther, to no great avail. "Tracie Raps" sends up superstar "interview" dribblings just like on her "House That Jack Built" 12-inch; well-intended, no doubt, but boring.

THE MAIN T POSSEE: "Fickle Public Speaking"—(UK) Respond

This 12-inch (extended and instrumental versions of the same song) is a collaboration between Weller (production and music) and ex-Department S vocalist Vaughan Toulouse, who wrote the lyrics dealing with the vagaries of fame. There's nothing special about *this* dance-funk groove, though the refrain (and other female backing-vocal riffs) insinuates itself after a while. Toulouse comes off much like Captain Sensible on "Wot" with digestive trouble.

Apocalypse Now

SISTERS OF MERCY: "Temple of Love" b/w "Heartland"—Brain Eater

This Leeds quartet rebounds brilliantly from

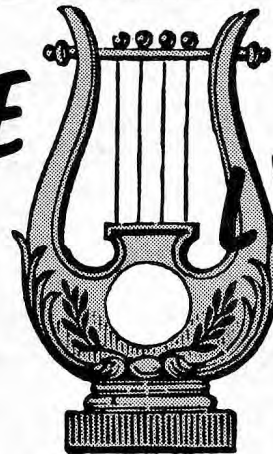
the fine "Reptile House" EP (*Green Circles*, TP 89). "Temple of Love," one of those mystical expositions I can usually take or leave, displays a lot more thought and cleverness than the run-of-the-mill epic trotted out with nauseating regularity by heavy metal bands (not to mention all too many synth-heads). Andrew Eldritch's deep voice is the centerpiece to guitars whining and pealing like so many electric bells.

"Heartland" is similarly effective, in lower-keyed fashion, but the real treat is on the 12-inch version: an extended "Temple" allows a longer intake of its adrenalin rush, and the extra "Gimme Shelter" (yes!) almost resembles an apocalyptic hymn, relentlessly repeating its warning. Neat stuff, fellas!

ALIEN SEX FIEND: "Ignore the Machine" b/w "The Gurl at the End of My Gun" & "Ignore the Machine (Dub) (Under the Thunder)"—Relativity

Like Sisters of Mercy, these Brits use a rhythm machine and roar along with punk/metal guitarisms. But the music is rawer, more slash-chord oriented, and offkey vocals are from the whiny, post-Johnny Rotten school. Virtues: The inexorable beat, and, amid the usual punky nihilism, some incisive lines that *sound* right in context ("I watched you burn last night," "rotting in your stockings," etc.). ■

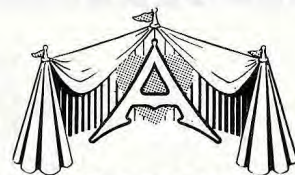
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By Kenn Lowy

STEINBERGER GUITAR

So this is what the world is coming to: plastic guitars that sound as good or better than wooden (and non-fireproof) ones.

Concert-goers may have seen the Steinberger bass in action. (Policeman Sting has been using it for a while.) The new Steinberger guitar looks just like the bass (except, of course, it has six strings): black, no visible tuning pegs at the top of the neck—overall, a strange-looking thing.

The body is not made of wood. Steinberger opts for a mixture of Thorne & Kevlar, two fiber-reinforced materials. The guitar is finished with an impact-resistant polyester gel coat that Steinberger claims is "impervious to moisture and temperature variations."

A lot of thought has obviously gone into the design of this instrument. The arrangement of the fibers gives the guitar high sustain characteristics and a unique tone quality. There are two pickups with a three-way pickup selector switch, volume and tone controls.

If you're used to a guitar's head piece, you may find your hand sliding right off the end of the Steinberger's neck. It's also a bit strange tuning the guitar from the bottom of the instrument. But these are minor points, and Steinberger players will tell you (as one told me) that it doesn't take long to adjust. The guitar's action and tone are quite good, and if you like distinctive-looking instruments this will definitely be of interest. It sells for around \$800.

Altered (Sound) Images

Some of the keyboard instruments I've reviewed in the past can be altered for better results. Give New York tinkerer John Cote your Korg KRP-77 programmable rhythm machine (reviewed in *New and Neat*, TP 88) or Roland TR-606, and he'll give you back a rhythm machine with separate outputs for each voice!

This takes the machine into a totally new area. It enables you to mix down a percussion track to process some sounds, add more punch to the bass drum or slap-back echo to the snare, etc. The fee for this "operation" is cheaper than you'd expect (under \$70), and I think well worth it. (You can contact Cote at AA Services, 131 Barrow St., New York, NY 10014.)

Richard Marriott and Robin Whittle modify Casios, normally the MT-30 and 31. They've done work for Tuxedomoon, Eric Drew Feldman (a Captain Beefheart/Snakefinger vet), and—ahem—Wrinklemuzik (i.e., myself).

Marriott and Whittle add several switches. One will sustain the note (or notes) you play, and any additional notes as well. A second sustain switch cancels out old notes as you play new ones. Two tuning switches offer a one-octave drop and variable tuning. (Try a two-octave drop—great on organ sounds.) There's also a distortion switch and two modulation switches, for depth and rate. This



custom job costs about \$150, but it enables the Casio to do a lot more. (Marriott was based in San Francisco but seems to have vanished while Whittle is at 42 Yeneda St., N. Baldwyn 3104, Melbourne, Australia.)

Let Me E-Bows Go Loose

Ah, a re-release of my all-time favorite guitar device: the energy-bow, or e-bow. First marketed in the late '70s, the e-bow is a small hand-held string driver that vibrates a single guitar string. It works best with electric guitars; you can control attack and decay by sliding up to or away from the pickup. Different types of pickups (e.g., humbuckers, single coil) will yield different effects and tone colors.

This is not a toy you can play in 10 minutes. The e-bow requires practice and patience to develop a technique. It runs on a single 9-volt battery; the new version uses less power so the battery will last longer. The original e-bow was chrome while the new one is made of black plastic and has a slightly better grip. The new e-bow has one other difference: Where the original would kick in when it sensed the vibration of a string, the new one has an on-off switch.

What effects can you get with an e-bow that you can't achieve with feedback and a little processing? After four years I can come close to duplicating violin sounds, flute sounds and synthesizer lead sounds. I can also make one hell of a whale sound (admittedly not an

essential effect). Add processing, and a world of new sounds opens up. Once you get a feel for it, what you're playing won't sound anything like a guitar.

Bill Nelson is an e-bow fan. Listen to the leads on "Another Day, Another Ray of Hope" (from *Chimera*) or his *Love That Whirls* LP. My own *Wrinklemuzik* EP has a live e-bow solo on the B-side that's a good representation of this gadget's capabilities. On hearing it, e-bow designer/manufacture Greg Heet asked me how many overdubs there were. There are none!

The new e-bow sells for around \$75. If you don't see it in your local music shop, write Heet Sound Productions, 611 Ducommun St., Los Angeles, CA 90012.

The Beloved Rogue

The last *New and Neat's* review of the Moog Rogue referred to its drawback of a "1½"-octave range. This was an unfortunate typo. It should have read "two and a half octaves"—quite different from one and a half, but nonetheless still not enough for me. I also wrote mistakenly that Moog has patented the oscillators; the patent is on electronic filters.

I'm still unimpressed with the Rogue, but there are plenty of other Moog synths that are worth their price. (Check out the *Memory Moog* if you've got lots of money to spend for a good synth on the level of a Prophet 5.) Any keyboard, guitar or device, however, is only as good as its user; a talented musician can make any instrument sound good. ■

ABBREVIATIONS

81: January 1983 issue
ad: autodiscography
au: America Underground
ff: Flexi-file
fr: Fax 'n' Rumours
gc: Green Circles
hr: Hit and Run
hs: Hot Spots
hello: Hello It's Me
me: Media Eye
qc: Question Column
sdtrk: soundtrack
" ": album

a

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CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

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Hoffman Estates, Ill.

First impressions are hard to shake. A decade ago Peter Gabriel fronted an arty little combo called Genesis. Costumes aside (ah, those batwings), the guy could paralyze with a look, bewitch with a twitch. He was equally convincing in the guise of lecherous octogenarian or silver-lamé-clad "rock star," and told rambling, entrancing little tales between songs.

Having shucked Genesis quite a while ago, Gabriel is now an acclaimed artist in his own right. His wickedly complex, off-the-wall pop music somehow manages to get on radio.

Gabriel's August performance at suburban Poplar Creek couldn't miss. He had a crack band (bassist Tony Levin, synthesizer player Larry Fast, guitarist David Rhoades and drummer Jerry Marotta); an ingenious building-block stage, by turns stark and spectacular; an irreproachable repertoire; and, yes, commanding stage presence. Add a full house of appreciative fans, and you've got an Event.

Besides current standards ("Shock the Monkey," "Wanting Contact," "Biko," *et al.*), Gabriel even tossed in an early post-Genesis goodie or two: the eerie samba "Humdrum," a solo keyboard rendition of "Here Comes the Flood," and the obligatory but delightful "Solsbury Hill." It was your basic well-rounded, entertaining semi-spectacle.

But you never quite forget first impressions—the surprise, the novelty. Most of all I missed his stories, although, judging from the response, nobody else did. If Gabriel wasn't inspired, he was still great. And that ain't no crime.

The Call, in the unenviable position of opening for the hero, had the advantage of being personally introduced by him. (Gabriel hand-picked this bunch for the tour.) They're an intriguing quintet whose specialty is sinuous, hypnotic, stripped-down funk, vaguely reminiscent of early-to-middle Gang of Four.

A swampy sound mix rendered singer Michael Been's lyrics incomprehensible and most keyboard sounds inaudible. But the Call elicited a positive reaction from Gabriel's crowd, particularly with a two-fisted version of their signature tune, "The Walls Came Down." **Moira McCormick**

KING SUNNY ADE AND HIS AFRICAN BEATS

Wax Museum
Washington, DC

Washingtonians may be jaded by all the visiting dignitaries, but they still show up when a *real* king comes to town. King Sunny Adé's return to DC had the 1000-seat Wax Museum turning 'em away, even at \$14 a throw. The audience, younger and whiter than at Adé's last local show, didn't seem too familiar with his juju music, but the African prince-turned-pop-star captivated them from the start.

A little before 9:30 a single guitarist walked onstage, picked up his instrument and began to play a short, repeated melody, kicking off a 90-minute set. Other musicians joined one by one; by the time Adé walked out, 19 colorfully dressed Beats—eight percussionists, five singers, four guitarists (including a pedal steel player), a bassist and drummer—were bouncing about the stage.

Adé and the Beats were as exuberant live as they are subdued on record. The pedal steel—Adé grew up listening to a number of American artists, including country star Jim Reeves—was used oddly, sounding almost like a synthesizer. Adé's own guitar leads were often shrill, rapidly strummed bar chords which cut harshly into the otherwise melodic tunes.

As the night wore on, the Beats grew looser, more innovative; rhythms were brought to the foreground; vocalists danced about the stage during instrumentals, strutting in an odd goose step. The King presided over all, cueing instruments and dancers in or out with a nod, a glance, a flip of his wrist.

After a short break the band returned for a 45-minute encore marked by the arrival of "money-pasters," crowding onstage to reward the musicians with tips pressed to their damp foreheads. As the stage became littered with \$5 and \$10 bills, the Beats thanked the pasters—and the rest of the audience—by cutting loose on a 20-minute, samba-flavored piece which soon outstripped the instrumentalists' ability to keep up with the percussion. The guitarists filed offstage; the singers stayed and danced, finally strutting away in a line. The percussionists, still pumping

away, left as they had arrived, one by one. Finally only a lone talking drum remained, echoing through the club.

Adé made his American debut here last winter, and went on to a much-praised tour of the US. With nearly worldwide success, he is fast on his way to becoming a truly international pop star. The question of whether he can succeed in this country was answered at the Wax Museum: The crowd, hips swaying to the "synchro system," shouted "Emijo!" to the grinning African Beats. "Dance on!"

W. Vann Hall

ALTERED IMAGES

Golden Bear
Huntington Beach, CA

Altered Images' live performances have been consistently slagged, primarily for weak playing and an overall absence of dynamics. After last year's personnel change and the addition of two musicians to augment the concert line-up, there was every reason to believe this first date of their new US tour would pack a feisty, determined wallop.

Wrong ('em) Boyo.

Sure, the playing was adequate. And the packed club had that buzz that tends to surround the initial gig of any interesting (?) band's tour. But there was nothing the least bit inspiring—or inspired—about the set.

The subdued backing by the "new" Images would have made sense if vocalist Clare Grogan had demonstrated enough charm, energy or vocal strength to carry the load. A captivating figure she ain't. Aside from a couple of bursts where she looked like the girl with the four-way hips, the diminutive singer moved about as much as her mike stand. She's capable of a creamy, compelling croon, but Grogan emphasized her warbly delivery that's become less and less engaging—the one that suggests she's taken a hit of helium before each song.

Even the song selection was puzzling. Of course, the band drew heavily from its new *Bite* LP. But they opted not to perform "Happy Birthday." And you'd think a group with three albums out could get through a 65-minute set without playing one song ("Don't Talk to Me About Love") twice.

Wrong ('em) . . .

Duncan Strauss

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