

# Modern English rocks Texas-style country bar

The first impressions weren't pleasant. A massive neon sign screaming "Charlie Starr," gigantic plaster cacti on the front doors, and wagon wheels decorating what appeared to be a converted shopping center.

Yes, Charlie Starr was something of a Gilly's (Texas-style) country bar. Cowboy hats were the norm. How, then, did your faithful "alternative" music writer happen to be patronizing the biggest country and western bar north of the Mason-Dixon line?

The occasion was a concert by Modern English, the authors of such hits as "I'll Melt With You." The concert itself was outstanding. Modern English exceeded my expectations, and I truly had a good time (although I couldn't afford my usual massive intake of alcohol, it was still a lot of fun). Outside of several obnoxious cowboys (apparently my particular style of uncoordinated, spasmodic dancing is offensive to country sensibilities), the bizarre setting contributed to the experience.

MODERN ENGLISH played to a fairly small crowd, especially considering the size of the place. I pointed out to several members that Springfield (where Charlie Starr is located) doesn't exactly have a reputation for a progressive consciousness; it was recently featured by *Newsweek* magazine as a typical American small town (read: backward).

Michael Conroy, the bass player for the five-piece band, said that smaller crowds could often be more fun to play in front of than larger ones. Certainly, the audience

## The ALTERNATIVE View By RALPH REDMANN

reaction is more immediate, and often more honest, than in large arena situations.

In any case, Conroy agreed that the sound was good. Charlie Starr has an excellent public address system, and the band sounded as good or better than on their vinyl releases. Actually, people are more familiar with the band through their video releases. Currently, they have four (including a recent video, which may not have been viewed yet. I don't watch enough MTV). Conroy, a principal writer for the group, doesn't make any apologies for that.

"VIDEO IS AN immediate, arresting medium," he said. "We're in a television culture, so we have to adapt what we do to that culture." Their videos, I'd like to point out, aren't nearly as hokey or pretentious as most commercial ventures.

Their background, especially their musical influences, aren't particularly "video-oriented." Emerging out of the post-punk explosion caused by the success of such ground breakers as the Sex Pistols, Conroy cites the experimental heaviness of Wire or the Buzzcocks as influences. Older bands that Conroy still appreciates include Genesis and Yes.

Currently, Conroy likes Simple Minds (who are along the lines of XTC, Ultravox or U2) and, among American bands, REM

or other Mitch Easter produced bands. But there are a few things he doesn't like about the current music scene.

Hardcore, for instance, he characterized as "Garbage." Although one could justifiably say that both the Buzzcocks or Wire are proto-hardcore, "the American hardcore scene is re-doing old music. It's a lot like the English bands that are doing heavy metal right now—it's old hat."

I WOULDN'T CLOSE this article without a plug for their new E.P., *Ricochet Days*. It is supposed to be very good, and what I've heard certainly backs that up: I haven't, however, been blessed with a copy of the album, so I really can't give a full review.

Well, enough about old news. There is some alternative music this weekend, notably with Wright State's own May Daze. Figure 4 is probably the best band tomorrow—they have a clean, ultra-accessible sound perfect for every "new waver" here on campus. Listen for the power pop song "Victoria" or the ska influenced "Threw It Away."

GIANT, A quasi-progressive metal/jazz/Top 40 band, will also play.

followed by The Keepers. The Keepers combine some new music covers with near-perfect covers of 60's music.

Of course, rain may make the last couple of paragraphs obsolete anyway. Look outside to see if May Daze is on or not.

If it isn't, then those who're just dying to see a band can go to Gilly's downtown, where the techno funk of GAM, will be featured on Friday and Saturday nights.

Also Saturday night, the rhythmic noise of Lead Pencil will be assaulting eardrums at Studio One, off Main Street downtown. This show should be a lot of fun.

ONE OF THE PREMIER rock acts of the last 10 years, The Clash, will play at Hara Arena this Tuesday. Rockabilly original Joe Ely will open for The Clash, in what looks like might be a good show.

Let me close this long column with news of an upcoming contest in *The Alternative View*. A date with a genuine local rock and roll start will be offered to the lucky winner of an essay contest, which asks the question "Why Would You Like to Go Out With Mr...?" Further details in upcoming Redmann columns.

### Classifieds

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