

PS

EDITED BY ADRIAN THRILLS

REPLACE IN MY HEART!

THE REPLACEMENTS
Tim (Sire)

THE QUESTION with The Replacements is always going to be something like "why are they not bigger?" And the answer, unless something drastic happens, will be "because they're not dumb enough". There's an intellect to this music, an administrative depth, a play of textures and a reference-spotting game of wits. Sometimes it's as if they've taken everything they've ever loved and hurled it through a series of three-minute funnels—the Was Not Was technique without the shine: this can be abrasive music—and other times the reference-chopping is overtaken by pure parody. Very clever. Very funny. My cup of tea.

But there's more to it than that. First, underneath all the wry humour there's a real edge in there, a proper talent—and we could go on for ages about guitar gambits and rhythmic juxtapositions without making that clear—and there's also the ability to stack parody so high it topples into the realm of the real. In every song a subtext, in every cliché a crying-jag.

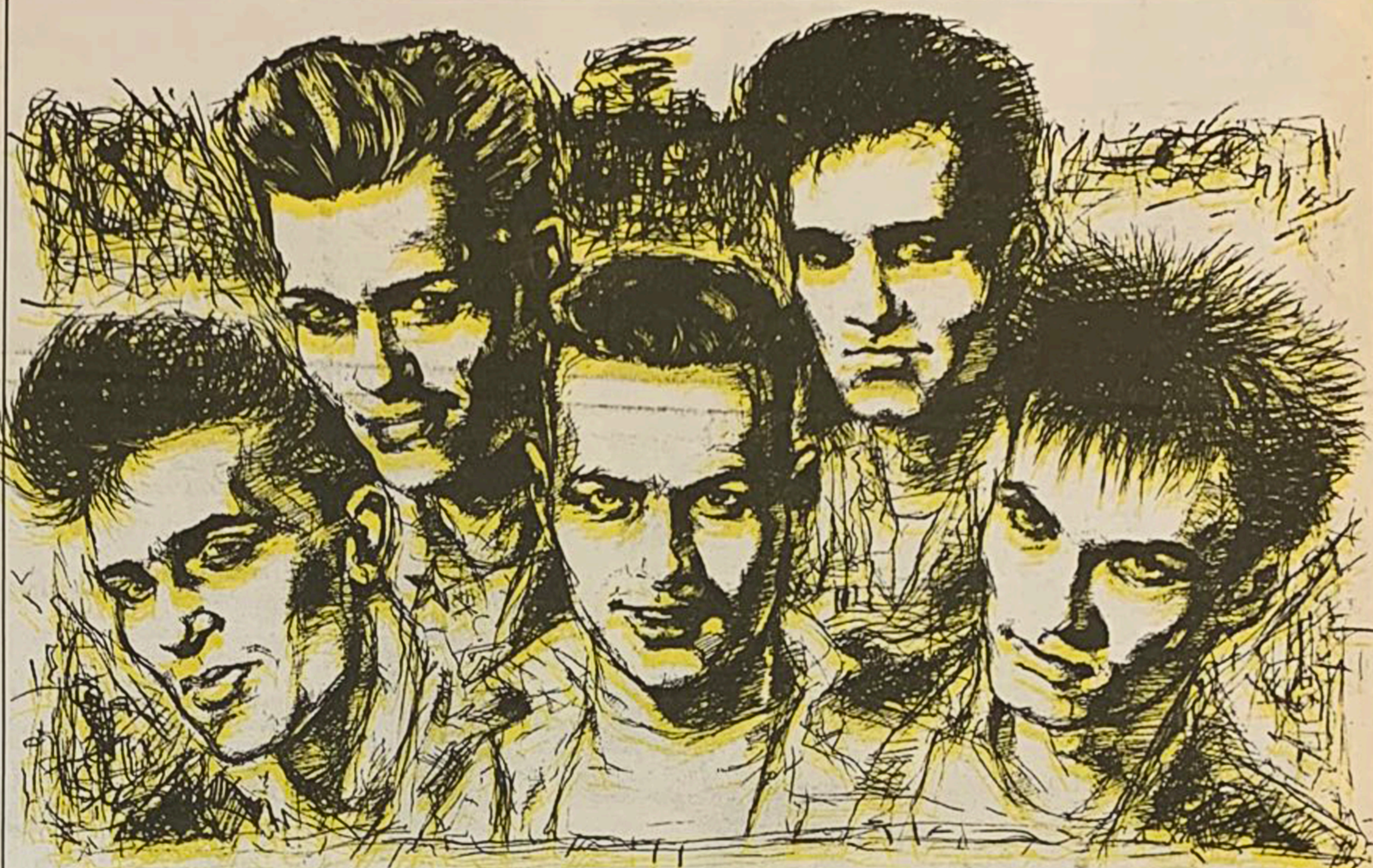
So we get a wide spread of tracks, a range so disparate you can't take it in at one glance: how can all these things co-exist on one album? Here we have a few tight little sentiment-jigsaws and loser's laments—"Well, a person can work up a mean thirst after a

hard day of nothing at all" is, I think, the bottom line here—up against a scrambled noise-vortex that sounds like rock music's exit wound.

The Replacements' intelligence works in several ways. The sentiment of 'Here Comes A Regular', for instance, is distilled into an acrid brew of wino-lament precisely because of its understatement and, what's more, Paul Westerberg knows he can have you dabbling at your eyes without forfeiting his role as jester; it's as if he were showing us how to be miserable and waiting for our reaction. 'Waitress In The Sky' is as good a piece of needle-hopping arrangement as you'll find—they've taken 'Spirit In The Sky' with Bolan's 'Hot Love' and kneaded them together into a cute little quarrel. Here, Westerberg is a dustman (sanitation engineer) out to malign the pretensions of his air stewardess: "Strutting down the aisle, big deal you get to fly/You ain't nothing but a waitress in the sky".

And you'll love the more brutal rock-overs ('Hold My Life', 'I'll Buy'), songs which tear themselves apart on their own hard surfaces, or—best song on the album—the stark misery of 'Swingin' Party' which triggers a whole climbing-frame of sour memories. Mind you don't cut your wrists on those jagged little guitar-breaks, Paul.

William Leith



The Clash, by John Geary.

NO WAY, JOSE

THE CLASH
Cut The Crap (CBS)

THE MAN in the belligerent tie and mega-decibel suit leans forward, and I quote:

"We're representing the audience! That's the ticket we were elected on, representing the audience!"

Not for The Clash the customary CBS Securitor van to deliver their new LP. In time-hallowed tradition, Kosmo Vinyl, their hired gob, is despatched to bring down the tablets from the mount. Eagerly, S Wells seizes the holy writ and brandishes it out of the window at shoals of startled Swedish mods passing below.

"You've got to show the kids!" he bellows. "The kids have got to be given new hope, new inspiration!"

Insurrection fails to ignite. "Talks a good fight, ha!" sneers the crop-haired poet. Yet eight years ago The Clash changed young Steven's life. Once just a mild-mannered spotnik, upon hearing 'White Riot' he blossomed into the goddess commie and female impersonator we know today. Now the agents of his transformation earn nothing but his withering contempt. Do they deserve to fall so low?

Joe Strummer has been tarred and feathered by punk's hard-liners more often than he'd care to remember, and so it's no surprise

that 'Cut The Crap' strenuously continues the repurification process begun by Jones' sacking, and last year's tours and accompanying interviews: the punk revival, and we'll get it right this time. Soft-soul and stadium-pop rule the airwaves whilst pub-rock reinvigorates the grass-roots and sets the scene for the mobilisation of the youth. No sell-out in '85. Right, Joe? Right, Bernie? Strummer and Clash manager Bernie Rhodes are co-credited with all the songs here, and may safely be assumed responsible for this bizarre attempt to wind back the clock.

Back in '77 amphetamine guitars and terrace-anthems came naturally as gut reaction to the first thwarting of youth's expectations in British society. But the dole queues have lengthened and been lived with for a long time now, and the solution implied in The Clash's musical rhetoric and embodied in their sleeve communique sounds like just so much vague, self-glorifying bluster: "Wise MEN and street kids together make a GREAT TEAM... but can the old system be BEAT?? no... not without YOUR participation... RADICAL social change begins on the STREET!! so if your (sic) looking for some ACTION... CUT THE CRAP and Get OUT There."

Wise MEN? Personally, I find

Joe coming across as halfway between Che Guevara and a scout-master a bit dodgy. Would you trust the leader of the self-proclaimed last gang in town who just happens to be knocking on 35? Isn't that a little old for gangs? Perhaps naively I don't doubt Strummer's sincerity, but a big question mark has got to hang over his marbles, Ron.

In their efforts to shake off the cargo of global dabbings they've acquired since '79, The Clash have largely succeeded. The occasional urge to spice the Westway reviverama with a funk riddim, brass countermelody or streetlife hubbub usually ends in a studio brawl—the price of purity. That purity is Legoland towerblock rock, Sham 69 for '85, snub-nosed guitars bullying the troops and railing at the bastions of privilege whilst full-throated terraces (that's us, remember?) roar their approval.

It's a hyperventilating mess, an empty ritual that'll pull in the punters for as long as The Clash throw the right shapes and pose in their priestly vestments of bullet-belt and red bandanna—the Grateful Dead of punk rock. Even the sleeve, a marketing director's idea of Ye Style Punke, reassures the faithful that The Clash still keep the flame.

Produced by one Jose Unidos (Joe United), 'Cut The Crap' sounds like a lot of money has

been spent to sound guttersnipe basic—not so much garage as multi-storey car park. Nonetheless, Strummer's blabberings have never been harder to make out—a blessed relief if the few lyrics printed set the standard for the rest. Where's his knack of a pungently well-turned phrase?

Amidst a handful of thuggishly appealing riffs, most tunes here echo better ones on previous Clash records, except for 'We Are The Clash', which, ironically for such a desperate vote of self-confidence, heists the Sex Pistols' bludgeoning chords. No future when there's such a rich past to fall back on, eh?

Only one song here cuts the crap, and you know it already. 'This Is England' soars like a monument amidst its jerry-built neighbours. Well-constructed, tuneful and sung with overwrought conviction, 'This Is England' presents an exciting panorama of oppression such as would have dignified 'Give 'Em Enough Rope' seven years ago. I don't buy Strummer's romanticism of grinding reality, but the tune's ace—The Clash's last stand.

But for the rest, who the fuck do they think they're kidding?

Mat Snow

NAT'CH!

10,000 MANIACS
The Wishing Chair (Elektra)

I'D LIKE a peek into Natalie Merchant's drawers.

An autumnal scene of spilt *pot pourri*, I shouldn't wonder, drifting across wizened sheets of nib-embroidered note paper and bark-hued hardbacks worn shiny by the constant clutching to a pounding calicoed bosom. Oh, and diaries, lots of them; faithfully furnished with landmarks and bad marks from high chair to high school and lain yearly to rest amidst the eiderdown of perfumed dust.

Not some stationary-fixated peeping tom's fantasy this, but honest speculation on the sources of our literary mite's quirky Quink cobwebs of rose water perfume—now firmly hitched to the other Maniacs' diffident folk-rock accompaniment on their second LP and major label debut.

'The Wishing Chair' finds a straighter, finer line than previously through her halting, humourless yet distractingly perceptive words, and the credit for this must go to the five boys earnestly sawing away in the backroom; notably the owlsh Dennis Drew's proprietous keyboards and the boffin-like Robert Buck, whose guitar 'devices' have swapped brusque atmospherics for more supportive structures.

But veteran folkie producer Joe Boyd, wise enough to cover his tracks on REM's 'Tales Of The Reconstruction' (he had his reputation to consider, after all), comes to the fore on this assignment too, sheathing messy arrangements in muted mixes and forcing Merchant to sing out, thus evoking non-judgemental memories of the hearty Maddy Prior.

But the songs are too shrewd to become ensnared in our lurking whimsy: 'Maddox Table', 'Among The Americans' and 'Everyone A Puzzle Lover' take grimly unsentimental views of social and societal injustice (similarly the pacifist 'Grey Victory' and 'My Mother The War'—re-recorded tracks from the 'I Ching' LP), while 'Lily Dale' and last summer's 'Can't Ignore The Train' single are far more personal yet no less acute meditations. Only a real ale 'trad arr.' called 'Just As The Tide Was Flowing' and the brush-fired reminiscences of 'Arbor Day' suggest possible follow ups, proving that whatever this bunch of gently morbid, swaggeringly meek musicians have learnt from the three minute pop song, they've chosen to barter for a finer, less hard-wearing weave.

Bill Prince

THIS IS WHAT SHE'S LIKE

SADE
Promise (Epic)

THE GOOD...

Sade donated some of the studio time allotted 'Promise' to the Dammers/Wyatt/SWAPO single, a laudable, unpublicised act.

'Promise', follow-up to the ubiquitous 'Diamond Life', outscored its predecessor by having a couple of interesting songs on it. 'Tar Baby' ("cut through two decades like a hot coal") could, in a less carefully calculated world than Ms Adu's, be about herself. The word, I think, is intriguing.

The final cut, 'Maureen', is her most mindsnagging song to date, firstly because its subject—female friendships—is a rock rarity, and secondly because the source of its very real sadness is ambiguously double-edged. The line "Maureen, you'll never meet my new friends" could reflect

Maureen's death-disappearance or Sade's stardom-induced elevation to a social circle that inevitably excludes her past.

THE BAD...

But two reasonable songs do not a decent LP make and the other seven are horrid little confections, banal and timid.

'Diamond Life's jazzy haze is here lightly, foppishly augmented by hints of soul classicism but, with the first track including a direct lift from a Marvin Gaye lyric, and the second's chorus relying on an old Smokey Robinson LP title, it's done with either mucho self-consciousness or the clumsiness of a hungover rhino.

And of course, the music hasn't changed one jot. Sade's determinedly unidimensional coo is still danced bootlicking attendance by marshmallow rhythms, icing-sugar guitars and that glutinous, honey in yer

lug'oles sax. The effect, insomnia sufferers will be reassured to know, is much as before.

AND THE UGLY...

Alright, so 'Promise' is a harmless enough waste of vinyl and cardboard, but the hoopla that will surround it, and the vestal personage of Sade, emits a decidedly foul odour. It's the smell of a heady hallucinogen concocted for massive public consumption—of hype, bullshit, dilettantism and wishful thinking.

All this blather about 'the natural sound of the '80s', about classiness and about the triumph of style for its own sake, is an enormous, craftily constructed, lovingly maintained and sickeningly pervasive CON.

C, O, N... CON!
Call me a Luddite, call me a Stalinist, sneer from the depths

of your designer label beaut-suits and call me a wart-ugly style-cripple, I don't care, the fact remains that through TV, through *The Face* and the gaggles of terrified trendhopping mags that toe its partee Party line, and through records like 'Promise', we're being sold, in the name of the holy grail chic, a set of escapist, elitist, self-congratulatory, status quo-loving, consumerist, I'm alright Jeremy' values. Stuff like compassion ('Wind Of Change' glaringly notwithstanding), humour, warmth, guts and community have no place whatever in this diamante life.

Sade's record—blushingly inoffensive in itself—is a monument to all this nonsense. You'll be happier and healthier without it, and that's a 'Promise'.

Danny Kelly