

# THE HISTORY OF

# ROCK

1982

A MONTHLY TRIP  
THROUGH MUSIC'S  
GOLDEN YEARS  
THIS ISSUE: 1982

★  
FROM THE  
ARCHIVES OF  
NME &  
MELODY  
MAKER  
★

## NICK CAVE

*"Irresponsibly violent"*

STARRING...

THE JAM

THE CLASH

THE STRANGLERS

FUN BOY THREE

DEXYS MIDNIGHT RUNNERS

OZZY OSBOURNE

PHIL COLLINS

THE CURE

U2

PLUS! THE WHO | NEIL YOUNG | FELT | WHAM | MILES DAVIS | LEMMY



# 1982

MONTH BY MONTH



## Welcome to 1982

“IT’S GOT A bit straitlaced of late,” says Lemmy, speaking about his interviewer’s employer, the *New Musical Express*, but also incidentally about the world in general. “If I want to read about CND or unemployment, I’ll buy the *Times*.”

The Motorhead frontman is right and he’s wrong. Things have certainly got serious. In addition to the suspicion there will be an imminent nuclear attack, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher now offers the young people of the UK some more concrete worries: high unemployment and a war in the south Atlantic.

Duly some of the music of 1982 is serious too. Records by the Clash and Robert Wyatt address specifically the violent dramas unfolding at home and on the global stage. The explosive music made by our cover star Nick Cave, and his group the Birthday Party, meanwhile, offers a dramatic and cathartic release to the dissatisfaction of the time.

Perversely, it is also a time for a flowering of glossy “new pop”, which seems actively to represent the Conservative Party’s policy of putting yourself first. Duran Duran are in their imperial phase. On a happier note, The Jam, a vibrant force since punk, decide – at the peak of their powers – to quit before they become as complacent. Nor are UK artists the only active ones. Writers meet US superstars like Rick James, rejoice in new work by Marvin Gaye and impressive shows by Neil Young and Talking Heads.

This is the world of *The History Of Rock*, a monthly magazine which follows each turn of the rock revolution. Whether in sleazy dive or huge arena, passionate and increasingly stylish contemporary reporters were there to chronicle events. This publication reaps the benefits of their understanding for the reader decades later, one year at a time. Missed one? You can find out how to rectify that on page 144.

In the pages of this seventeenth edition, dedicated to 1982, you will find verbatim articles from frontline staffers, filed from the thick of the action, wherever it may be.

That might mean talking with Paul Weller about “art school wankers”. Having a cup of tea with Kevin Rowland and Van Morrison. Even discussing drugs, (and The Slits) with William S Burroughs and Brion Gysin.

Perhaps, in such stimulating company, there’s reason to be optimistic, after all. Even an old hand can ignore some of the bad stuff.

“You might get rid of some of that,” Lemmy tells *NME*’s Gavin Martin. “You look like a fun-loving lad...”

# Contents

## 6 News

Bowie is Baal. Ozzy bites a bat. Rick James explains his remarkable rise. Introducing Felt and Monsoon.

## 12 U2

"We built this band about a spark," says Bono, as the singer explains his take on God, "Zeppo" and the magic of being in a band.

## 18 Live

New Order develop their technological and emotional new music.

## 20 Ozzy Osbourne

An audience with the singer (and his dwarf) in the bar, at the Alamo, in jail and then, finally, onstage.

## 26 Depeche Mode

The unassuming Basildon band ponder life without Vince

Clarke. New album *A Broken Frame* might not please the critics, but it shows a possible way forward.

## 32 Albums

Robert Wyatt's *Nothing Can Stop Us*. Along with new ones from Iron Maiden, Richard & Linda Thompson, and Jimmy Page.

## 34 Fun Boy Three

The new post-Specials formation. Lynval Golding recounts his horrific recent attack, "Ghost Town" and the demise of their former band.

## 40 News

Joe Strummer is missing! Introducing...Yazoo and taking an American politics lesson with Gil Scott-Heron.

## 46 Everything But The Girl

Immediately before they join forces,

Ben Watt and Tracey Thorn explain their present music and what they hope to achieve.

## 50 Albums

The new Roxy Music album. The Clash's *Combat Rock* lines up against Duran Duran's *Rio*.

## 52 The Associates

Billy Mackenzie and Alan Rankine explain their unique, operatic, potentially world-beating sound.

## 56 Scritti Politti

Green Gartside talks political theory and soul. Scritti, he says, are actually a one-man band.

## 60 Live

Miles Davis comes to Hammersmith with a band featuring guitarist Mike Stern.

## 62 The Clash

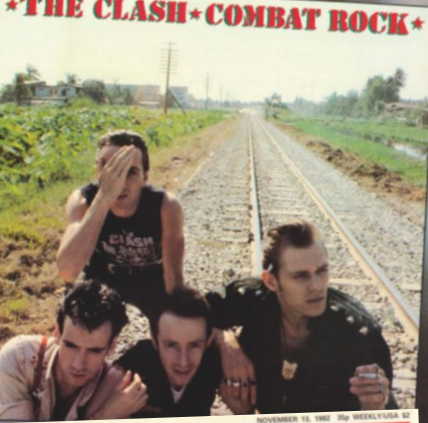
Joe is back! But now Topper's gone! The band account for their strange recent developments—not least the fact they're in the charts.

## 66 The The

A promising, slightly paranoid young musician called Matt Johnson talks nightmares, sell-outs, and his unique one-man band.

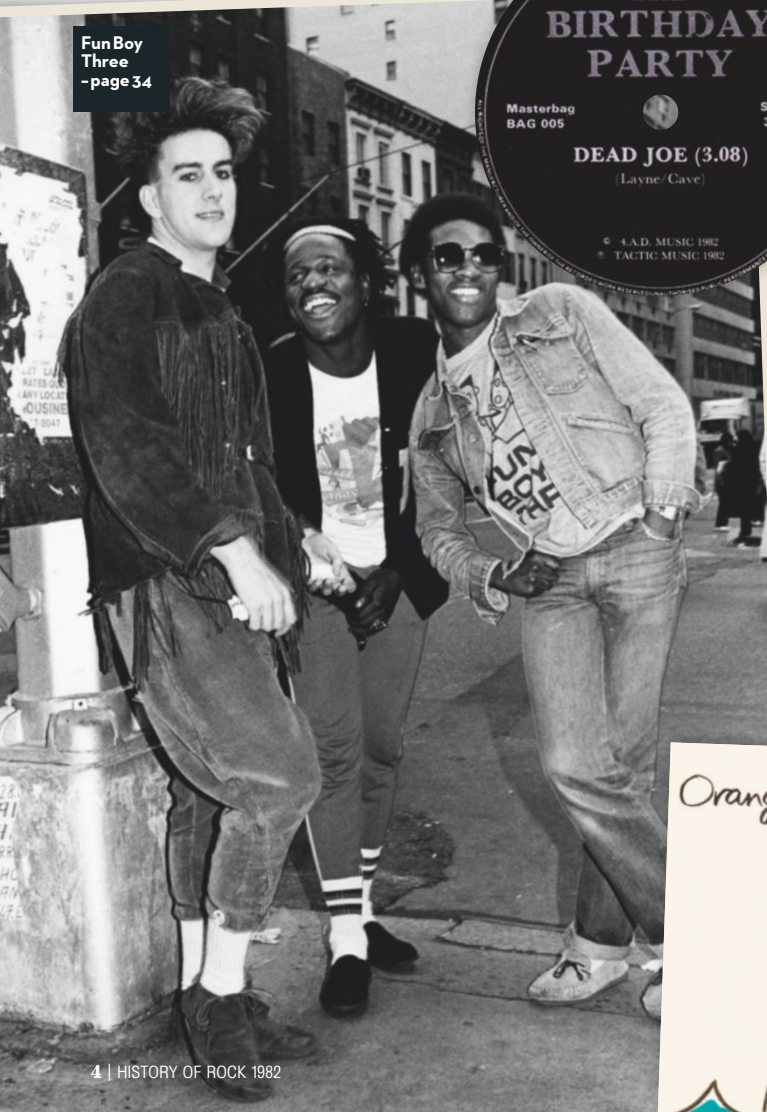
## 71 Letters

The Cure, wronged by *MM*-twice! The Jam vs The Clash! These and more from the mailbag.



PAUL NATION / GETTY

Fun Boy Three  
—page 34



## 72 News

Robert Wyatt releases a new single, "Shipbuilding". Introducing Eurythmics. Lemmy gives a state of the rock world address.

## 78 The Birthday Party

Nick Cave and his band take a violent rampage across Europe. "Eeech," he says, "I've got blood on the end of my boot."

## 84 Albums

*It's Hard* by The Who. *The Party's Over* by Talk Talk. Meanwhile, look out bands: Paul Weller reviews the singles!

## 86 Dexys Midnight Runners

A searching interview with Kevin Rowland, now pursuing a new sound and a new look. "You think my clothes are scruffy?"

## 94 Live

Talking Heads and the Tom Tom Club storm Wembley Arena.

## 96 The Stranglers

After years in opposition, The Stranglers find themselves in





The Jam  
-page 138

the heart of the mainstream, and enjoying success with "Golden Brown". It's "not about heroin".

**100 News** The nation's newest TV channel launches a new pop show: *The Tube*. Jimmy Page in court. MM vs Bauhaus. Introducing... Wham!

**106 Orange Juice** Edwyn Collins unleashes vitriol on the "new pop". A new member, Zeke Manyika, brings an interesting backstory.

**110 The Gun Club** From the Blondie fan club to the blues... Jeffrey Lee Pierce's life has been a strange trip. A journey through American roots.

**114 Albums** Marvin Gaye's electronic, sensual new work, *Midnight Love*. A debut album from Psychic TV. On import, Prince's new one 1999.

**116 William Burroughs** The Final Academy brings Burroughs to Britain, accompanied by his pal Brion Gysin. The influential pair talk drugs, control, and The Slits.

**120 Live** Neil Young returns to the UK with a band featuring Nils Lofgren.

**122 Culture Club** A fry-up with the new king of clubland. Boy George wryly enjoys the limelight.

**126 Duran Duran** The band defend themselves against their critics. It's all down to Roxy, they confess.

**130 Phil Collins** The singing drummer reveals how his marriage came to an end, and how his solo career came to be. And yes, he can still be the drummer in Genesis, thanks!

**134 The Cure** Frontman Robert Smith ponders the nature of his band, and insists that people who think The Cure are miserable have simply missed the joke.

Derek Block presents

# THE CURE

PLUS GUEST

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THE HISTORY OF  
**ROCK**

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**Time Inc.** Subscription rates: One year (12 issues) including p&p: UK £119.88; Europe €179.40; USA and Canada \$203.88; Rest of World £155.75. For enquiries and orders please email [help@magazinesdirect.com](mailto:help@magazinesdirect.com). Alternatively, from the UK call 0330 333 1113, or overseas +44 330 333 1113 (lines are open Monday-Friday GMT, 8.30am-5.30pm ex. Bank Holidays). Back issues enquiries: Tel: 01733 688 964. [www.mags-uk.com](http://www.mags-uk.com)



REX FEATURES



# 1982

JANUARY - MARCH

OZZY OSBOURNE, U2,  
DEPECHE MODE, FUN  
BOY THREE AND MORE

## A tramp with an ear for a song

**MM FEB 13** David Bowie stars in Bertolt Brecht's *Baal*.

**A**FTER A LENGTHY period of inactivity, except for buying Mari Wilson singles at the Virgin Megastore, David Bowie returns to the public eye at the beginning of March.

He makes his BBC TV drama debut on March 2 in Bertold Brecht's *Baal*, an hour long production, which is terribly meaningful and full of Brechtian social comment. Bowie plays his less than urbane self, appearing as a tramp with an ear for a song.

To mark the occasion, RCA are releasing an EP of songs from the play on February 26. Bowie sings five Brecht compositions, "Baal's Hymn", "Ballad Of The Adventurers", "Remembering Marie A", "The Drowned Girl" and "Dirty Songs".

Bowie, meanwhile, is reported to be going into the studios in the spring to record his first album of new material since *Scary Monsters*.

David Bowie in the  
title role of director  
Alan Clarke's 1982  
adaptation of *Baal*  
for the BBC



"Me and Neil [Young] were like students in life": Rick James in 1982

## "I'm not your usual American performer"

**MM JAN 23** "Y'see, I'm a street person," says Rick James. "I know the pimps, the dope dealers, the prostitutes, the junkies – and I love 'em."

**F**LASHBACK TO THE tail end of '81. A sacrificial policeman gets kicked around the stage of the LA Forum by super vixens. The Stone City Band – tall blacks in stacked heels – pump it hard and tight. And what do the kids do? They go apeshit, of course.

In the centre of this cartoon freak show, Rick James stands between two pillar-sized plastic joints which glow in the dark. The real prince of punk funk is wearing a see-everything spray-on space suit and a cool smile that silently says: "I've arrived and nothing but a full-blown earthquake can shake me down now."

It's true. After six months of hard touring, America is his... and he knows it.

A slick package of sex, drugs and rebel chic theatricals set to a soundtrack based around the double-platinum *Street Songs* has made the bad boy from Buffalo a star in teenage wet dreams from coast to coast.

Yet just one album back Rick was down and very nearly out. Too much of this and a lot of that gave him hepatitis. For a while his spectacular success in bringing funk to the masses looked finished.

Tired and introspective, he recorded *Garden Of Love*, a move towards soul and lush ballads that even his most devoted fans found hard to stomach. Today he reckons the record still has its merits, but through this failure he rediscovered the golden rule of showbiz: give people what they want.

"When I did *Garden Of Love* I was sick, my body was through, my mind was through. It all caught up with me. I was doing a lotta drugs, like cocaine and everything. But the master (that's God, not Berry Gordy) has a way of showing you when you're out of pocket and it's up to you to bring yourself back. He put that hepatitis on me. You know, I had to get my act straight or die. But I survived."

Naturally – he always does. Like it says in "Below The Funk (Pass The JJ)", he was raised in a New York ghetto along with seven brothers and sisters by a mother who helped run the Mafia's chain of illegal gambling to pay the bills.

As he lounged nonchalantly in the air-conditioned cocoon of an LA hotel, sipping lemon tea for a ravaged throat, the cruel realities of those mean streets seem a long way off. The fake stage lamp-posts and black

hoodlum scenarios may have brought the bucks rolling in but he maintains the reality is only round the corner.

"Y'see, I'm a street person," he declares in a final, I-take-no-shit tone. "My roots are from the street. I know the people on the street – the pimps, the dope dealers, the prostitutes, the junkies, the thieves – and I love 'em, y'know. And I relate to them, y'know."

Rick has a pretty low opinion of politicians and spliced between his high-camp stage antics are heartfelt raps and chants against everything from Ronald Reagan to the Ku Klux Klan.

"I know that's unusual," he admits, "but I'm not your usual American performer. I'm willing to discuss the Klan. Y'see, I really don't like them at all. And Reagan, I don't have much love for him either, so I just express it."

Whether any of these stands are carried further than the mega stadiums is another matter entirely. It's hard to suppress the nagging doubt that these days American kids buy their hip radical pose with a 10-dollar ticket. Not only will the revolution be televised, it'll be beamed round the world by satellite.

Saying he always expected to reach a vast audience, Rick shrugs off the old "responsibility to the fans" number.

"I think kids, schmids, y'know. They've got minds and I think they know what's right and what's wrong. I don't do that stuff for someone to follow or emulate, but I hope people appreciate the fact that I'm free of the bullshit, y'know."

"I don't expect everybody to smoke grass, but I think people pick up on me 'cos they realise where I'm coming from.

They've had so much bullshit; I think it's nice they've got someone they can really relate to without any of that glitter and glamour. I do shit and fuck and cuss, y'know, and they do. I'm not Donny Osmond or Michael Jackson. I'm me. Plain or dirty – that's honest.

"Trouble is, kids here today got everything: the money, the drugs. They're spoilt, they're soft, they got nothing to holler about. There could never be anything like a '60s movement now, 'cos these kids are just too stoned out!"

After being kicked out of one too many schools – "I never felt I had a need for them" – Rick joined the US Naval Reserve. Being underage didn't bother him, but a trip on Uncle Sam to see foreign places and kill the inhabitants did. He went AWOL, fled to Canada and met up with Neil Young. Together they formed the Mynah Birds, taught each other a few tricks and then went their separate ways. "It was great, because me and Neil were like students in life. I was a black beatnik. We were learning and starving to death at the same time."

Back in the States, after visiting India and South America, he began to realise his "predestined" path to fame and glory.

"I knew I could funk 'n' roll better than anyone. Like Bootsy [Collins] can't write – he can't really sing either. I mean, who wants to



hear 'yabba dabba doo' all the time, and George Clinton and the Funkadelics write about spaceships and bop guns all the time. The world was ready for me, y'know."

He was right. It was. *Come And Get It* and *Bustin' Out Of L Seven*, his first solo albums for Motown, both sold more than a million copies.

As more tea lubricate his throat and the morning moves into afternoon, the ostentatious Rick James ego seems to take over from the quieter James Johnson, a homely figure who likes to breed horses on his ranch and listen to classical music.

Like a young Muhammad Ali, his talents run deep. As well as producing he sings and writes all his material, plays numerous instruments, manages his own career and still finds time to churn out hits for his protégé, Teena Marie.

Combine these elements with an incredible crossover appeal and you can see that James has more in common with Marley (he even braids his hair to look like locks after the Masai warrior tribe of Africa) than a piece of soul beefcake like Teddy Pendergrass. A point he readily agrees with: "I do feel I had something in common with Bob, because he was a street person too. And he believed in the ganja and I believe in Mary Jane. He was also very much involved with the politics of suppressed people, which I'm into also. I'm outspoken, I say what's on my mind, y'know."

Now that he's back on top following the relative failure of *Garden Of Love*, and fully

recovered from his brush with the reaper, I wonder if he feels he could ever fall from grace again.

"Well, if you start thinking you are a god then you're on the verge of being taken out," he replies without hesitation. "Jimi Hendrix thought he was a voodoo child from space who could drop 90 pounds of acid, take all the heroin he wanted, smoke all the week, snort 10 pounds of cocaine and go outside naked and not catch a cold.

"He was a crazy nigger for thinking some shit like this. He was nothing but a nigger who played real good guitar, real good. And he shoulda understand that, know what I'm saying?"

Whether we'll ever see the golden ass of Mr James waving around on a British stage is still uncertain. He says he'd love to come to England, but then again so did Elvis. For the time being he's written a musical for Teena Marie and a semi-autobiographical book.

"We hope to film that," he announces with a lascivious grin. "It's a great love story: sex, drugs and funk 'n' roll! It'll be hot to trot, I promise you that!" *Ian Pye*



**NME FEB 20**  
The Bauhaus frontman reveals his favourite things

### Books

**The I Ching**

**The Picture Of Dorian Gray** Oscar Wilde  
**Les Chants De Maldoror** Isidore Ducasse  
**Narziss And Goldmund** Hermann Hesse  
**The Prophet** Kahlil Gibran

**Auto Da Fé** Elias Canetti  
**Demian** Herman Hesse  
**Psycho Cybernetics** Arthur Rimbaud  
**The Vatican Cellars** André Gide

### Films

**Salò (20 Days In Sodom)** Pasolini  
**Casanova** Fellini  
**The Grid** Joanne Woodward  
**Midnight Express** Alan Parker



**La Cage Aux Folles**

**Les Enfants Du Paradis**  
**Cabaret** Bob Fosse  
**L'Age D'Or** Salvador Dali, Luis Buñuel  
**Jaws** Stephen Spielberg  
**Mr Smith** (a B-movie)  
**Orpheus In The Underworld** Jean Cocteau

### Records

**The Trogs** Tape  
**Venom** Engineers  
**The Royal Wedding Service**  
**Humpty Dumpty** Various Artists  
**Sparky And The Magic Piano** S and the Magic Piano  
**Swan Lake** Tchaikovsky  
**David Jay and René Halkett**  
**Desert Shore** Nico  
**Theme from Coronation Street**  
**Theme from Crossroads**  
**Theme from Stingray**

### TV programmes

**The Royal Wedding**  
**Soap**  
**Venom Snipers**  
**In The Altogether**

### Pastime

Stalking the Capercaillie

### Car

Reliant Robin (Plastic Pig)

### Colour

White

### People

The Prince and Princess of Wales  
Dorian Gray  
Quentin Crisp  
Glenda Jackson  
Oscar Wilde

## Anti-rabies shots

**MM JAN 30** Ozzy bites the head off a bat.

**I**S IT A bird? Is it a plane? Is it a bat? Well, yes it is. Some unfortunate soul decided to lob a bat (*fledermaus* to you German opera fans) at Ozzy "Bites The Head Off Doves" Osbourne during a concert in Des Moines, Iowa, last week.

The Ozz, knowing a good snack when he sees one, instantly bit the head off the bat and lobbed the corpse back into the audience. What he didn't realise was that bats happen to be among the champion carriers of rabies on the planet.

Ozzy (did you know his real name was John?) is currently reeling under the impact of several tons of anti-rabies shots and the thought that this particular disease takes about 14 days for its symptoms to show up. Also, the American cops are desperately attempting to find the kid who brought the bat because he too is probably infected.



May 29, 1982: Ozzy at the Alpine Valley Music Theatre, East Troy, Wisconsin

## Goin' away **MM FEB 6 RIP** Lightnin' Hopkins

**S**AM "LIGHTNIN'" HOPKINS, one of the greatest of traditional blues singer-guitarists, has died in a Houston hospital of cancer. He was 69.

Lightnin' was born on a farm near Centerville, Texas, and raised in Texas bluegrass country. He learned from his two guitar-playing brothers and also came under the influence of his cousin, Texas Alexander. But his principal early inspiration was Blind Lemon Jefferson. He also picked up on the guitar work of Lonnie Johnson, who often worked with Alexander. Hopkins was already making a living on the streets and in the joints of Houston's black section during his teens. And Texas remained his home base for the rest of his life, although he travelled quite a lot in later life - reaching Britain with the American Negro Blues Festival show in 1964.



MARK WEISS / GETTY, PAUL NATKIN / GETTY



February 19, 1982:  
Lawrence (left) and  
Gary Ainge in Golden  
Square, London

"The only good thing about psychedelia," says Gary smugly, "was Brian Jones' hair."

But, deny it or not, Felt are psychedelic. They take for granted their listeners' active imaginations, exhibit shock and surprise if their motives and methods are questioned. "There's no message in the words at all. I just look on it as poetry, really - imagery."

Lawrence is unsure to what end, if any. "I dunno... I just look on it as putting words together to sound... I dunno... you just look at the lines and think, 'That's good!' You don't have to understand them. That's what I do; I read stuff and I don't understand it. I just think, 'Phew! That sounds brilliant!'"

Felt can also be classified psychedelic because they're naive, self-obsessed and intellectually lazy, prone to acting on impulse and expecting others to comprehend why. Their music is a moving mosaic,

## "If it tingles, it's in"

MM FEB 6 Introducing... "naive, self-obsessed" Birmingham band Felt.

**T**HE FIRST TIME I talked to Felt, we sat around tense and tongue-tied. Soon after, their second single, "Something Sends Me To Sleep", bombed without trace, their bassist and guitarist upped and left and my feature never appeared.

The last time I saw Felt, they died a million deaths. Two scruffy boys strummed shyly on stage to some 8,000 of Stafford's great unimpressed; they earned themselves £150 and bought a new set of bongos. They lost face, pride and reputation.

Looked, sounded - literally were - half the band they used to be.

Funny that... they still are. Felt today are Lawrence, their small, cocky creator, and Gary, their secretive drummer.

An album, their debut, is released this week by Cherry Red Records and features Felt - a quartet! Yesterday's Felt.

Time to explain. Felt Mk 1 was Lawrence cobbling together a single called "Index" in his Birmingham bedroom. Corny, eh? Felt Mk 2 was Lawrence and Maurice jamming together for something to do. Felt Mk 3 actually took to the stage, with a mate called Nick - "a complete musical novice" learning bass, writing a fan letter to The Fall, cadging the boys three support slots on tour and then playing drums - "like Moe Tucker - badly!"

Felt Mk 4 found Nick back on bass and Gary in on drums - "He saw the ad we put in a shop window." Gigs and assorted accolades followed, a studio booked, the album underway and then... there were two. Something to do with conflicting dress sense and "nylon pockets".

Felt Mk 5 were under-rehearsed, sad and songless, left not-so-high and scarcely dry-

eyed on the eve of *Futurama III* and that crucial ton and a half. "It was disgusting," muses Lawrence, embarrassed. "We knew it would be terrible... but I thought, in the back of my mind, that it just might work out. But it didn't..."

The album, fortunately, did. *Crumbling The Antiseptic Beauty* is a six-track exploration of one person's vision. Recorded last summer, Lawrence considers it "one of the best albums I've ever heard".

**"I was going round going, 'It'll appeal to everybody - it's like Simon & Garfunkel'"**

"We were just like four fans, really, and this is the record we always wanted but couldn't buy anywhere; everything we wished for our favourite records.

"I wanna mention some bands, but if you print 'em it'll sound like we're jumping on a bandwagon - which we're not - but anyway, I was listening to Television and

The Byrds, mainly American bands, but everyone had something wrong with them.

"I'd think, 'God, the cymbals are awful,' or 'If only they hadn't used a bass on that.' I couldn't buy a complete album that was perfection, so we put in all the things that we really liked listening to and came up with this."

This is, in fact, a hypnotic, cymbal-and-hi-hat-less evocation of atmospheres with vocals mixed so low that, even if they meant anything, all meaning would be lost. It's also brilliant.

At the time of recording, it was out on a limb, as far from James Brown as it was from James Taylor. A million miles from the dancefloor. Unique.

Now, of course, what with all this summer of love stuff floating about, it's almost uncannily in vogue. And Felt, of course, want no part of it.

a nostalgic mantra. Their extended solos are nothing to do with versatility or expertise; their songs embellish their solos instead of the other way round. Their songs are, in fact, their solos, and they're haunting, not hackneyed.

"'Birdman' is like a dream or something," says Lawrence, "it just goes on and on. 'Fortune' is just Radio 2 stuff and 'Evergreen Dazed' - the instrumental one - is so easy listening it's untrue!" Last year he was convinced that *Antiseptic Beauty* would conquer the world. He was wrong and now he knows it. "I was going round going, 'It'll appeal to everybody - not just the young but your granny as well. It's like Simon & Garfunkel!'"

His future plans veer more towards easily accessible three-minute pop songs because, he says, "the British best-selling album of all time was *Bridge Over Troubled Water*. He grins. "The music that people are buying most is stuff you can sit down and listen to at home."

Felt Mk 6 will be a trio. They'll never attempt to replace Maurice - "He was our favourite; we were working with our hero" - nor his cheap guitar with the wonky pick-up that "made a sound like pins popping in your head" and was stolen by a mohican in - of all places - Malvern.

"If I ever catch up with that bastard," says Gary, "he'll be the last of the mohicans."

Future Felt will live up to their names: a dull mixture of amorphous insulation and vivid emotion reflected in tranquillity. "I don't have any technical terms for it," says Lawrence. "If it tingles, it's in."

The last time I heard Felt, I dreamed a million dreams. *Steve Sutherland*





Sheila Chandra: "This record might prove a common denominator"



# "A whole new attitude"

**NME MAR 13** Introducing... *Monsoon*, featuring former *Grange Hill* star Sheila Chandra.

**HEARASWEET** naive voice of reason and it flows from the lips of a 16-year-old Asian girl.

Don't worry, this isn't an introduction to the latest in a long line of child gurus, leading the way to Nirvana from the back of an armoured limousine. This voice more modestly belongs to Sheila Chandra, ex-pupil of *Grange Hill* and presently singer with Monsoon.

Monsoon are an Anglo-Indian fusion led by one-time Status Quo arranger Steve Coe and their first major single - "Ever So Lonely" / "Sunset Over The Ganges" - looks set to chart, if sales eventually match its current airplay. An exotic blend of the oriental - sitar and tablas - and the accidental - guitar and keyboards - it is immediately appealing, persistent without being too pushy.

It's a long way from the corny cultural crossovers like those well-meant George Harrison instigations of a decade ago, which inevitably only reached Western ears. The more obvious participation of Indians makes "Ever So Lonely" the most positive Anglo/Indian pop form yet and one that might this time be listened to by both English and Asian communities.

Steps have been taken to bridge the wide cultural gap before, by the provocative Alien Kulture and the muddy gloom-mongers Safe House, but Monsoon's is the first to slip straight into the mainstream - well, since the insipid Biddu. However, Sheila is sussed enough to know the record's most immediate attraction is its novelty value.

"People are bound to take it first of all as a novelty," she asserts, "something different, that they haven't heard before, and they'll compare it to something they know, like George Harrison. But I hope they'll go further than the comparison and realise there's something more to be explored in Indian culture than George Harrison."

Getting through to the Indian community might have proved more problematic if Sheila wasn't Indian herself. Born of an Indian father and half-English/half-Indian mother, she's grown up with the two cultures and has a pretty good grasp of the difficulties Indian kids have relating to both. She has had the advantage of a mother who encouraged her to attend stage school, which led to her winning a part in *Grange Hill*'s second series and her eventual meeting with Coe.

"Steve had a lot of Indian friends, which obviously had an influence on his writing, and he wanted an Asian singer," says Sheila. "He heard some demos I made for Hansa Records [which came to nothing] and arranged a meeting."

The closeness of the Indian community has always mitigated against a cross-fertilisation of ideas, especially in pop and rock. Pop music as it is often represented is quite often alien to Asian ideals of familial loyalty and stricter morality. Sheila herself has suffered slightly because of different standards.

"There was once a mention in Jaws in *Sounds* with all these puns about saris and that's fine," she recalls. "They mentioned tandoori and after that they needed a word starting with 'T' to continue the alliteration that meant pretty girl. It read 'tandoori temptress', though temptress wasn't perhaps the best word to use.

"I realise it wasn't meant literally," she laughs, "but obviously you have to be a bit careful because an Asian might take it the wrong way. I was a bit taken aback when I saw it. What people have to realise is that with this type of [mixed] music they'll need a whole new attitude to deal with it."

Hers was only a slight case of misunderstanding; other Indian kids' embracing of Western culture could lead to greater, more disruptive tensions. "Ever So Lonely", hopes Sheila, might have some soothing effect.

**"Young Asians say it would be easier for their parents to accept if there were an Indian singer"**

"Young Asians have always said that it would be easier for their parents to accept pop if there were an Indian singer."

Conscious of her role as community representative, she thinks her presence might counter the media myth of dissolution, thus facilitating easier communication.

"If this record is successful it could add another more moderating influence," she conjectures. "It could become a talking point in the Indian community.

Before, Indians often got their music from Indian-language film soundtracks, so they would always have different topics of conversation from English youth. This record might provide a common denominator."

Or it might turn out to be just another novelty hit. Time will tell if "Ever So Lonely" has a more lasting impact. Wait and see. *Chris Bohn*

► The forthcoming Jam album, *The Gift*, is set for release on March 12 and it comes in a special candy-striped bag with what Polydor describes as "an extra special picture label". Produced by Peter Wilson, with art direction and design by Paul Weller, the album features Steve Nichol on trumpet and Keith Thomas on saxes. Track listing: "Happy Together", "Ghosts", "Precious", "Just Who Is The 5 O'Clock Hero?", "Trans-Global Express", "Running On The Spot", "Circus", "The Planner's Dream Goes Wrong", "Carnation", "Town Called Malice", "The Gift". *MM Feb 27*

► John Cooper Clarke has three tracks on an album recorded at the Poetry Olympics at London's Young Vic theatre last year. The album will be released on the new All Round Records label on February 19. Also featured are contributions from poets like Roger McGough, Heathcote Williams, Michael Horowitz, the wonderfully named Atila The Stockbroker, but no Paul Weller. *MM Jan 23*



► Depeche Mode have a new single out on Mute on January 29. "See You" and "Now This Is Fun" is released to coincide with the group's British tour. *MM Jan 23*

FIN COSTELLO / GETTY

# 1982

JANUARY - MARCH



July 31, 1982: U2 play a set at Gateshead Stadium before headliners The Police take the stage

# “We want a gut-level reaction”

An encounter with U2 as they continue to convert hearts and minds on the road. Frontman BONO helps to articulate their values. “U2 is not about fashion,” he says. “I can tell when a singer is singing what’s in his heart, or if he isn’t.”

— MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 6 —

**D**OWN THE LIFFEY from the sea and up past the stately grey of Trinity College, the wind whistles down the ear. “Hey, Bono, how’re yer doin’?” Robbie and Donal greet U2’s singer with a flash of teeth. They’ve spent £20 each on getting the train down from Belfast for tonight’s concert at the Royal Dublin Society Hall and have been wandering around the centre of the city looking for members of the group.

The three of them chat like old friends, though Robbie has only met Bono once before—backstage at a gig, when he swapped shirts with Adam, U2’s bass player. He’s wearing the prize paisley trophy shirt ready for tonight’s big event.

Just five hours later, Robbie’s priceless shirt is soaked in perspiration, caught in the tangle of grins, hair, flesh, smiles and limbs that erupt as the first reverberated shivers of The Edge’s guitar arch across the ceiling and splinter. There’s some very special magic in »



the air tonight... The concert is a symbolic homecoming for U2, the local heroes returning to their city of birth after a year spent seducing hearts in foreign parts, but that doesn't even begin to explain what's going on in here. The way U2 transform this massive cattle hall of several thousand people into an uninhibited expression of mass joy has to be experienced to be believed.

It's impossible to talk solely in terms of the group's "performance" or the electrifying atmosphere, as if the two can be taken separately and analysed; U2 and their audience are realising an intimate, two-way celebration.

"Your knees go weak, your adrenaline starts to go crazy, your bones just seem to rattle and blood shoots up your veins." Bono is trying to describe what it feels like when the group trigger that kind of reaction. "You think, 'Right, there is something about this band!'"

"You see, we built this band around a spark—we could only play three chords when we started, but we knew there was an excitement within just the four people, and even when playing to just 10 people we seemed to communicate that. We put our lives on the line and just kind of went for it... and when you see the reaction you just feel... phew! It's very hard to talk about it, really."

Bono continues, almost at a loss for words, scarcely able to believe that he's all part of this. "One thing I'm into is the type of people who are into us. They're prepared to give, they're a reaction-orientated audience.

"It's everything that we wanted when we were a garage band. We just wanted that total thing, people just up."

A few years ago, when U2 were just beginning to build up a following in Dublin, they found their fans weren't getting in to see them when they played pubs because they were all underage. "They were the same age as us!" says Bono, incredulously.

The group obliged by playing a gig in the local car-park, and at the RDS Bono dedicates a song to everyone who was there.

The strangest thing is that despite the forbidding size of this cold hall it still seems as if they could be playing in that car-park—the communication is that close, the excitement that feverish, the message that direct. The following day the Irish government falls.

**U2 ARE CURRENTLY** the biggest group in Ireland – possibly the biggest ever – and hot property in Britain and America. U2 are also all between 20 and 22 years old and live at home with their parents in Dublin.

The group's comparative youth is essential to their character; theirs is a natural enthusiasm, a deep belief in the positive side of human nature. U2 play music that is richly rewarding, spiritually uplifting, so lacking in cynicism that it borders on naivety.

The defences are down, everything is offered, every inner emotion bared – and that's some big risk; it makes them vulnerable to doubters (and there are plenty). It also pays rich dividends to those prepared to invest their trust.

And how have these four coped with the pressure of being acclaimed as Ireland's finest? Has fame gone to their heads?

Mercurial guitarist The Edge (they really do call him that in everyday conversation; his real name is Dave) seems so unaffected that it's almost uncanny. When Pete Townshend hung around with the group last year, he said he felt like giving up guitar when he heard his playing... yet watch The Edge on stage; there's none of the usual strutting antics and immodest manoeuvres associated with guitar "heroes", just a slight shuffle of the hips and a cascade of sound that can send sparks.

The Edge meets the fans after the shows (and looks exhausted afterwards), talks quietly and exudes unforced, natural charm and good humour. The story is that he only takes his guitar out on formal occasions... never practises, never rehearses, never thinks about the instrument too much, but just lets it flow.

"I tried to do the soundtrack for his guitar once" says a popular Irish vocalist. "I plugged the guitar in the way he does, set up the machines the way he does and got the same plectrum and played the same chords he does. And after I was making this pitiful noise one of the engineers came up and said, 'You know

something? I've been watching him for a year now, and I do it every day, and I can't figure out. I don't know what he does or how he does it!'"

How about Larry, U2's thunderous drummer? Does he go around throwing TVs into the hotel swimming pool or crashing Cadillacs through plate glass?

Larry is, in fact, the group's quiet guy. Blessed with boyish good looks, a disarmingly smile and an apparent fear of the camera—he tries to hide behind the others—he's shy, rarely saying a word. Larry spends a lot of time with his girlfriend.

In the three days I spend with U2, Adam, the oldest member, is the only one who goes out for the traditional post-gig wind-down; out to a disco after a concert at Cork City Hall. The manager—also the gig promoter—is a middle-aged man who fusses around, taking souvenir photos and advising the DJ to play an endless stream of U2 records (which are totally undanceable, it would seem).

Adam sits and signs for the inevitable autograph hunters—no chance of anonymity here. He has an air of refinement and maturity, a man who savours good Guinness and oysters.

But where does all this leave the singer, the one who addresses the audience as if he knows each member personally?

Vox means "voice". Bono Vox talks... and some. But he's not a gab-merchant or idle attention seeker... it's just that he's got so much bubbling away inside him that he's got to get it out somehow. As a fully-paid-up over-the-top person, Bono has few rivals.

"Pete Wylie is the only person I know that can out-talk me," he says about his Wah!-mate. "He fills in the gaps where I have to take breaths!"

If the other members are the special ingredients of U2, I suspect Bono is the catalyst, the match that lights the fuse. "Life is the

permanent possibility of sensation," is one of his favourite quotations (though he can't remember who said it), and he seems to spend all of his time putting the dictum into practice.

"Without sounding a total idiot, I can't remember being bored over the last 10 years," he lolls in soft Gaelic tones. "An hour on my own is just special to me; I just don't get bored; there's too much happening."

U2's tour of Ireland is actually only three dates, Galway, Cork and Dublin (Belfast has been cancelled owing to a floor collapse at the hall); they can only play the largest venues. In a listeners' poll run by Dave

"We built this band around a spark – we could only play three chords"

July 3, 1982: U2 play a festival date in Torhout, Belgium





"There are too many people hiding behind the haircuts": U2 (l-r) The Edge, Bono, Larry Mullen, Adam Clayton

Fanning's late-night rock show on RTE, Ireland's national radio, U2 took six places out of the 50 top classic tracks of all time, capturing the first place with "11 O'Clock Tick Tock".

Travelling between Cork and Dublin, the group use two modest estate cars and Bono spends most of his time engaged in conversation. He's not very excited by much contemporary music, he says, though he goes wild when played a tape of The Associates and loves Elvis Costello – and is more interested in people like Lennon, Dylan, classic punk (Clash, SLF) and early Who ("Live At Leeds was a very important record in my life").

It's not that Bono doesn't want to keep up with the current trends... it's more that he hates what they imply.

"There's too many people hiding behind their haircuts," he opines, and his eyes light up when the phrase "cocktail mentality" is mentioned.

"The cocktail mentality," he repeats, savouring the phrase. "Yes, I like that... the cocktail mentality!"

"The star-trip is more in vogue now, with the kind of wallpaper bands, than it was with ELO and Zeppo and all those," he complains. "It seems the whole gloss thing is so strong now, and in '76 we maybe naively at 16 had the belief that music is more than that. We wanted a gut-level reaction, an aggression, a heartbeat.

"U2 is not about fashion. We don't want to be in fashion, because being in fashion is going out of fashion, you know?"

**BONO GETS EXCITED**, stresses his words, becomes animated and agitated. I get the feeling he's been waiting to say this to somebody from the press for a long time, anxious to out across his ideas and reassert some sanity.

"If people like that sort of atmosphere in music, fine, but what I'd like to see is people burning the rulebooks... the rulebooks that say they have to like this type of music and nothing else. I think people should broaden their vision... There's some great music happening on ethnic fronts, like African music, and I'm particularly interested in traditional Irish music.

"I want music with the X factor, with that heart and soul"

"At the same time I'm sure there are some great pop songs, but I want more out of music than just that. I want music with the X factor, music with that heart and soul. I don't want to sound pretentious, but to me truth is like a two-edged sword, it cuts deep. I can tell when a singer is singing what's in his heart, or if he isn't. There's a big difference, and there's a lot of glossy pop songs that can maybe make us cry, but it's a bit like watching *Lassie* or *The Little House on the Prairie*, you know; it's not real emotion.

"The trust is when that singer is saying something that comes from right down within him, and it affects you right down within you... and that's when you start talking about great

music, as distinct from nice music.

"Like the word 'nice' is a horrible word... music for lifts, music for supermarkets. I think that's fine if you're into shopping or going up and down, but I want more than that. Is that wrong? Is it wrong to want more out of music? I'm not suggesting U2 are Wagner, but when it comes to it we're just four people playing music the way we see it."

U2 don't just ignore the conventions of a 25-year-old rock 'n' roll tradition, they deliberately push them aside and breathe their own new life into the body. It's nothing weird or radical – just voice, bass, guitar, drums – but it's the belief and imagination that counts. And U2's music can't help being influenced by the Irish tradition – it's laced with a lyricism and melodic sense that's missing from so much English rock.

"The Irish aren't into much bullshit, really," says Bono. "They're not into designer jeans, you know? They're a more down-to-earth race, and I think they see through the fashion angle pretty quick. The Irish are also a very aggressive race, which makes for good rock 'n' roll."

The audiences at Cork and Dublin are aged predominantly between 14 and 20, but it's not age – at least in the literal sense – that's the defining characteristic, it's the attitude. U2 fans are open, accepting, enthusiastic, emotional – they've not yet given themselves up the cause of cynicism or world-weariness. You can be 40 years old and be young enough for U2... or 15 and too old. »



Cynicism is “the city sickness”, thinks Bono, a protective veneer developed as a reaction to life in small spaces on top of people.

But how can you have rock’n’roll without an accompanying sneer? Tradition states that rock is rebellious; common practice assumes it’s implacably a threat. Grease back your hair, bare your teeth and thrust out your groin and the captains of industry will be quaking in fear on the top floor of Harrods... or is it often just an excuse for not rebelling, for not doing anything that genuinely threatens the structure of society? Who is more subversive – a Barry Manilow fan who’s a militant shop steward or a member of The Fall?

“That old cliché of rock’n’roll rebellion is a joke at this stage,” says Bono. “It’s so conservative you could actually write a rulebook, you know, on how to behave as a rock’n’roll rebel... and I think rebellion starts within your own heart. I think going out and getting pissed and shouting and dyeing your hair red is not necessarily any indication of a menace at all.”

Unquestioning conformity doesn’t seem quite the angle either. “When I was 16 and couldn’t cope with the idea of getting a job, getting married up, growing up and dying – I wanted more and almost fought to break out of that rut. In the ’60s you had this love-and-peace movement where people were rebelling against the standards and hypocrisy of their

parents’ lives, and they broke out of that. And I think rebellion... it’s just that the rebellion was diluted by escapism, through drugs.

“That’s how, if you like, the world dealt with it, it calmed it down. And with punk it’s the same thing, but what does it turn into? Tribalism, another form of escapism. I like to think of our music as a celebration, just breaking down those barriers.

“This country has been cut in two for too long, you can see the scars on people’s lives, and now with mass unemployment in Britain you can see scars there too. Great music should be able to break down those barriers, class barriers or whatever.”

Can music change people’s lives?

“Well, in ‘Rejoice’ I said, *‘I can’t change the world, but I can change a world in me.’* Music can possibly direct you and change you as a person.

“I think the ultimate revolution is the one that goes on in a man. I’m not saying, ‘Join the revolution, be like us’... where you go is your decision.”

But U2’s desire is to communicate seems so extreme it’s almost like a kind of crusade, isn’t it?



## Awkwardly naive

**MM DEC 11** U2’s live show becomes a spiritual crusade.

**A** GLASS SPIRE SHATTERING, the action of The Edge’s guitar makes for a spellbinding exhibition, so the presence of ham is tragic. Casting the youth-bound parent-baiting of countless predecessors to the wind, U2 managed to breathe life into the crusty old carcass of rock’n’roll by paradoxically celebrating some of its oldest traditions when they burst into public view two-and-a-half years ago.

Their denial of rock’s useless fake outlaw mythology – surrogate rebellion for those too chicken to operate more subversive schemes – stood in stark contrast to the yahoo nastiness of those who surrounded them (Killing Joke et al), and if their glorification of the crowd and remarkable lack of spite seemed sometimes overly forced and awkwardly naive, it somehow didn’t really seem to matter too much.

U2 put themselves on the line and played with an intelligently sculpted force that could, amazingly, sweep away all nagging doubts and sceptical world-weariness.

A year ago came the revelations of religious fervour, and hints that this might penetrate their music to a deeper, less ambiguous level during the subsequent period in hibernation gave cause for concern.

The group’s performance at the Lyceum on Sunday confirmed these fears; U2 are emphasising the crasser aspects of their appeal, their anthems to the joys of youth gradually being taken over by something that seems to resemble a spiritual crusade,

their attitude becoming increasingly conservative. That now they emerge from a year spent hidden from the public gaze (having completed a third album) and then play a set based overwhelmingly on their first LP, *Boy*, is not only an act of cowardice but an inversion of the spirit of dynamism that gave the group their initial thrust.

The obvious conclusion must be that U2 don’t feel that their new songs come up to scratch, and though musically nothing to be ashamed of, the material on view suggested a static demeanour, the presentation a vulgar sentimentality.

“Surrender”, one song, was a cue for white flags to be run up poles (the album is called *War*) where they fluttered in an artificial breeze, and with the stage

shaped like the stern of a galley, the viewer could be forgiven for expecting Bono to slap thighs in deference to Crusoe.

Anyone else who had the nerve to sing “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” to an audience would at least be covered by the saving grace of irony, but when Bono gets involved in such a dodgy venture the most frightening thing is that he really does mean it.

This embarrassing hokum ill-becomes U2. To call for “surrender” at the end of this most

**“Surrender” was a cue for white flags to be run up, fluttering in an artificial breeze**

depressing, disheartening of years is not only to invite ridicule from the hard-bitten but to flounder hopelessly in the eyes of their sympathetic periphery. The answer to the “war” between “good” and “evil” was never that simple, and to suggest otherwise is tantamount to mystification.

I respect honestly held religious views when they’re kept in the inside pocket, or even flashed about occasionally, but object to the use of the drip-feed. As for pantomime, the last one I saw was *Dick Whittington* at Golders Green Hippodrome. It closed about 15 years ago.

Remember what the converted used to shout as they ran up the aisle of Billy Graham’s marquee? Well here’s news. I do not surrender.

Lynden Barber

There’s one thing standing between you and assembly-line rock. U2.

From Ireland. A band that’s different, smart, manic, haunting, intense. And one of the most electrifying live acts in longer than you can remember.

**U2 OCTOBER**  
Produced by Steve Lillywhite. On Island Records & Tapes.

U2. Featuring the Green Tornado, Bono, on vocals. The Edge, the man of a thousand guitars. Adam Clayton, bass. Larry, drums.

You’ve blown it if you miss this tour:	November 17	Providence RI	November 28	Los Angeles CA	December 11	Washington DC
November 13	Albany NY	Philadelphia PA	November 29	San Francisco CA	December 12	Hartford CN
November 14	Boston MA	New York NY	December 7	Detroit MI	Watch for additional dates to be announced!	
November 15	New Haven CN	Asbury NJ	December 8	Cleveland OH		



Bono seems a little defensive.

"It's not a plan. We don't say, 'Let's be aggressive, let's really communicate and be passionate.' Sometimes to think about it is to destroy it. U2 is natural, we're really just four people—within ourselves we have a very strong relationship, like a love between the band, which spreads into the crew, our sound engineer, to the management, and even to the record company, and then spreads into the audience."

And what about Bono's religious beliefs, I venture tentatively? It's a subject that's so easy to latch on to and blow up out of proportion. Do people have a stereotyped idea of his views?

"I think people understand now that I'm not religious, they understand that I'm nearly anti-religion... When I talk of religion I'm talking about the force that's cut this country in two. I'm not religious at all, but I do believe in God very strongly, and I don't believe that we just kind of exploded out of thin air, I can't believe it."

"I think it's the spiritual strength that's essential to the band. People have got to find their own way; I'm not into standing up and saying, 'Hey, you should be into God!' My own life is exhilarating through an experience I feel, and I feel there's no point in talking about something which should be there in your life anyway. You don't have to preach about it."

Has he always felt the same way?

"No, when I was 16 I really had a hunger, I wasn't going to accept... I'm quite violent, actually. 'I Threw A Brick' is an attempt to use that kind of violent image. It's like seeing a reflection of yourself in the window and seeing who you are just for a split second, and you realising you don't like what you see."

Has U2 changed him?

"I've changed as it's gone through. When it started I was very drunk on being in a band, very confident, it was everything. I couldn't see the wood for the trees. You get bitter, you knock other bands... I had a lot of hate."

"That's changed in my life. U2 has broadened my experience and allowed me to realise that wherever you go in the world, people are still flesh and blood, and if they would only realise and stop hitting each other over the head."

But wishing or singing about it isn't going to make it stop, is it?

"No, you can only make it stop in your own life. U2 has helped me realise that wherever you go people are being cheated." And what about views in the rest of the group? Is there a high degree of concurrence, or the usual tensions?

"There is a natural friction, wonderful friction," says Bono. "I don't think our egos are self-egos; we've a band ego. I can say to The Edge, 'I don't like that thing you've just played,' and he doesn't go, 'And I don't like what you've just done'; he goes, 'You must be right, otherwise you wouldn't have said it.'"

Bono is keen to talk about *October*, the group's second album. When it was released last autumn they deliberately kept clear of the press. Bono says he didn't fully understand it at the time.

"I'm much happier talking to you now, because *October* now is clearer in my head. I listened to it last week for the first time in ages and I couldn't believe I was part of it. It's a huge record, I couldn't cope with it!"

"I remember the pressure it was made under; I remember writing lyrics on the microphone, and at £50 an hour that's quite a pressure. Lillywhite was pacing up and down the studio... he coped really well. And the ironic thing about *October* is that there's a sort of peace about the album, even though it was recorded under that pressure."

Like Bono, it's taken me several months to fully come to grips with the record. Initially I found that some of its spiritual side grated; the word "rejoice" used repeatedly in two songs, for instance...

"That old cliché of rock 'n' roll rebellion is a joke at this stage": Bono clammers up the stage scaffolding in Belgium



"I'm not religious at all, but I do believe in God very strongly"

"A lot of people found *October* hard to accept at first," says Bono. "I mean, I used the word 'rejoice' precisely because I knew that people have a mental block against it. It's a powerful word, it's lovely to say. It's implying more than 'get up and dance, baby'."

"I think *October* goes into areas that most rock 'n' roll bands ignore. When I listen to the album, something like 'Tomorrow', it actually moves me."

**A**ND NEXT? THEY'VE already completed a new single, as yet untitled, and have tried out controversial Blue Öyster Cult producer

Sandy Pearlman in the studio. Bono says they want less of a "cinematic sound" and denies that their interest in Pearlman contradicts this aim.

"He produced the second Clash album, and it's raw, and I like that aggressive sound. And also he puts himself out... In America he was flying around to every city we played just as a fan. I like him"

The only result of the studio trial is "a sort of psychobilly" track which they couldn't complete because "we need 48 tracks for it". One possibility is that they'll use three different producers for the next album. In the meantime I'll stay at home and play the records; bathe in their lush romanticism, revel in their blunt aggression, dream of another time, another place... like that special night at Dublin RDS. Anybody can fall in love with U2 if they want to. You, too... Lynden Barber •

Songs  
of  
praise

# 1982

JANUARY - MARCH

# Divinely physical dance music



**MM JAN 30** *New Order slug London with passion*

**F**IRST THE RESOUNDING echo of the cumbersome mythology surrounding this group, then the subsequent, inevitable dismissals and sneers. Now, perhaps for the first time, it's possible to listen to New Order freely, untainted by excessive fears or prejudices.

Not that they don't share responsibility for some of the more unfortunate aspects of their image. Nobody can control the stupid dead-pop-star religion, for sure, but New Order seemed too keen to encourage the growth of some special aura, quite happy to be shrouded in mystique on some sacred pedestal of musical greatness.

There was the reluctance to speak to the press, of course, and those portentous lyrics and self-important song titles - "The Him", "Truth", etc, but it didn't stop there - these tendencies found a natural reflection in the music, too. When does passion stray into pomp and dignity into posturing? Their first album seemed to suggest they weren't even sure themselves.

To judge New Order properly the myth needs to be shattered - they're ordinary, down-to-earth people who happen to have a bent for music, right? - and at tonight's gig, in a small, high-ceilinged student hall, they oblige perfectly.

Humanity, frailty? At first things look like becoming a disaster. On "Denial", the second number of the set, Bernard Albrecht seems totally out of touch with what the others are playing, his guitar cutting in and out at inappropriate junctures. Whether it's incompetence or just a technical fault (bad monitors?) doesn't seem to matter though; from here on New Order launch into

a selection of some of the most divinely physical dance music you're likely to hear all year.

Live they aren't all dark and gloom at all. Those negative tints are there to add emotional shadings, not to dazzle; stand watching in too much awe and you'll miss out on some of the pure joy involved in their music.

## Stand watching in too much awe and you'll miss out on some of the pure joy in their music

New Order provide a much-needed slug of passion tonight, reviving nerve endings that have grown tired from under-use. Too many groups at the moment are content with just playing, making sure they've got the notes right; New Order are more concerned with the way they play, pushing themselves to the limits on every song, forcing the pressure at all available points.

There's two responses to all this - stand and gawp (as most of the audience did, still obsessed by the myth, no doubt) or throw yourself into the music with the spirit it demands.

General preconceptions of what kind of rhythms constitute "dance music" are still so narrow - too many people assume that "white rock" ain't for dancin' and "black funk" ain't for listenin'.

New Order are proving that's not necessarily so; their last piece, an irresistible application of Giorgio Moroder's electrodance ideas (in much the same style as "Everything's Gone Green", excluded from the set), hit a gloriously punishing level of intensity from the first note and never let up. New Order may only have just begun. *Lynden Barber*

GARY LORNE



New Order's Bernard Albrecht: it's the way he plays it

1982

JANUARY - MARCH

# “I’m a bit over the top”

It’s been a very strange couple of months for **OZZY OSBOURNE**. His arena shows are all selling out, but what with the bats, the doves and, now, the Alamo, it’s been a chaotic ride. Here, he spills all: on prison, abattoirs and the correct way to hang a dwarf.





Ozzy Osbourne  
in 1982: "I'm a  
clown, a terrible  
old showbiz ham.  
I'm not a singer"

GETTY

April 5, 1982: after the death of guitarist Randy Rhoads in a plane accident on March 18 and the subsequent cancellation of eight dates, the *Diary of a Madman Tour* arrives at NYC's Madison Square Garden



### — MELODY MAKER MARCH 20 —

**O**N THE OTHER hand, there's a fist; and on the fingers in great big letters, he's tattooed his name: OZZY.

"Which one of yew's Allin Jownz?" he asked, bleary-eyed beneath a greasy sheep-dog fringe.

"Him," [photographer Tom "the Chief"] Sheehan graced, a portly Judas in CAFC colours.

"Yew the one Tony Iommi whacked, intcher?" Oz continued, tail up for bar. This was true: four years ago in Glasgow, Tone settled an old score by beating me senseless in a hotel car park.

"The last time I saw yew," Oz said, trying to attract a cocktail waitress, "yew were flyin' across the bonnet of a car, covered in blood... Is that the scar? Nasty."

The waitress arrived to take our order; the Chief and I went for the Heineken; Oz asked for water, said he'd had a rough old night: "I'd 'ad a few drinks, slapped the band about a bit and ended up in the canal."

The waitress returned with our drinks. Ozzy looked at the glass of water. "Fuck it," he said. "Bring me a Heineken and a large brandy... Yew know," he continued, turning to the hack, "what Tony did to yew, that was really offside. Yew was just a scrap of a thing. Real skinny little punk in a leather jacket an' chains, as I recall. An' he just went whackwhackwhack. He was a monster, Iommi."

This talk of Black Sabbath's guitarist was making me nervous; I asked Ozzy how the old tour was going...

"Grayyyt!" he exclaimed, brightening. "The dwarf got hit by a lump of frozen liver the other night."

The dwarf?

"Yeah... we've got a dwarf on the road with us."

Exchanging worried looks with Sheehan, I asked Ozzy what they did with the dwarf.

"We hang him," Ozzy said. "During the ballad."

Ozzy said it was that kind of tour: crazy. The other night, the cops had found some kids trying to smuggle a cow's head into one of the concerts.

"It's been happenin' ever since I bit the head off that bloody bat," he said.

Oh, yes: the bat, Ozzy's most recent cannibal outrage.

"I honestly did not know it was a bat," Ozzy claimed innocently. "Yew know, these kids're always throwin', like, plastic toys... so I just grabbed this thing, bit the head and thought, 'Fuck me!' And it was flappin'..."

Opposite me, the Chief was turning queasy and muttering something under his breath about voodoo; I asked Ozzy what raw bat tasted like.

"It was like eating a Crunchie wrapped in chamois leather," he replied informatively. "It had real leathery skin and the bones went *crraaack*... I tell you, though, I suffered for it later. I had to have these rabies shots. Real bad news, man.

Terrible. Imagine someone injecting a golf ball into your leg. I mean, it's such a thick solution, it doesn't disperse. Agony. The syringe was like a bicycle pump. The nurse told me to walk around. It would've been easier to fly. I told 'em I didn't want any more..."

But, Oz: what if you actually contract rabies?

"Buy me a muzzle," he said, whipping back the brandy, reaching for the Heineken.

**S**HEEHAN WANTED TO take the snaps outside the Alamo, the shrine of Texas liberty; a cherished national monument to the American spirit. A kind of adobe John Wayne, the Alamo is an old fort in the middle of San Antonio where 200 Texan heroes died holding off a Mexican army of thousands to win independence for the Lone Star State.

This seemed colourful enough, but Oz said he'd have to go off and change. He came back dressed as a woman, in a baggy blouse and ill-fitting culottes with white socks that stopped short of his knees; and on the knees were two tattooed, smiling faces, whose eyes blinked when the skin around them wrinkled.

"You never told me he was a roarer," the Chief hissed.

"I thought you'd know," I said, negotiating Ozzy toward the nearest taxi. And it all seemed to be going so smoothly...

The Chief was a-snapping, Oz was a-posing, the sun was a-shining in a bright blue sky.

Then Ozzy decided he needed to take a piss; so he pulled down his trousers and went where he stood, pissing all over the front of the shrine of Texas Liberty itself.

"That's the man, officer, that's him!" cried the redneck vigilante with bulging eyes.

Ozzy had just clambered into an alcove halfway up the front of the Alamo; he looked down on the Texas Rangers like a transvestite gargyle.

"Get down, boy," the lead Ranger glowered, hand on his pistol hip.

The Rangers surrounded Ozzy, who now had the brim of his cowboy hat dangling around his neck. The bulb-eyed redneck put the finger on Oz:

he'd been seen urinating on the Alamo. The Rangers flinched at the sacrilege, looked ready to lynch the hapless Ozzy.

"It was the most terrible, terrible thing ah've seen in mah lahf," the swollen-eyed vigilante bleated, close to tears of agonised disbelief and untinted fury.

"This true, boy?" the Ranger asked, almost afraid to believe it.

"There's the STAIN!" yelled one of the gathering hanging party.

The San Antonio Police Department arrived; they weren't listening to any arguments: they were booking this beano in the weirdo drag. Ozzy still couldn't see what all the fuss was about.

"Mister," the lead Ranger simmered, "when you piss over the Alamo, you piss over the state of Texas."

"Oh," said Ozzy, impressed.

"Uhhh... by the way, why have some of your bullets got yellow tips?"

The Ranger's face purpled up like an excited bruise.

"Boy," he said through clenched teeth, "if you hadn'ta got off that wall, I'da showed you whut they whuz for."

"Name," barked the SAPD patrolman.

"John Osbourne," Ozzy answered. "But me mates call me Ozzy."

The cop took off his hat, looked at Ozzy.

"You ain't the guy who eats bats, are you?" he asked and Oz nodded lustily. "Fourteen years on the force an' I ain't missed a single freak," the cop continued. "Mister, we are taking you in."

And off they went in the wagon.

**D**ARK-EYED SENORITAS WITH bulging bellies hung around the walls, waiting for their men to be released; it was a busy afternoon at the San Antonio lock-up. The floor was littered with cigarette ends, the chewed up butts of peoples' lives. Behind the wire and the mesh and the bars, the guards looked like they knew they'd never get out either.

Clangclang go the jail guitar doors! With a single bound, Oz is free.

"They put me in a cell with a murderer," he gushed as we escorted him to the elevator.

"He'd just bitten out his wife's throat. He was covered in shit and blood."

"Lucky," Sheehan said, "they didn't put him in with the Birdman of Alcatraz."

**O**ZZY WAS 16, growing up in Aston, a grim Birmingham suburb; his only ambition was to become a Beatle, preferably Paul McCartney.

He lived in a two-bedroomed house with his father, his mother and five other children. It was a surprisingly musical background.

"Me mother was always entering talent competitions," he chuckled, "and me dad was always drunk singing in bars."

Ozzy couldn't keep a regular job, drifted in and out of employment and eventually into petty crime. "It was just a way of getting along, you know. I had a whole racket going, a whole big underground thing. I had this hideout place in an old cricket pavilion. It was like a bloody department store. I had everything there. Cigars, booze, the lot. I was only 13," he sighed nostalgically.

Eventually nicked for attempting to steal a colour television set that was simply too heavy to haul from the scene of the crime (Oz tried to get it over a wall; it fell on him, pinning him to the ground), dear old Ozzy was sent down: three months in Winson Green prison.

"In actual fact," he said, "this tattoo was done by a guy who was in there for three murders. He beat three prostitutes to death..."

Apart from the convenient tattooing facilities, what else did prison have to offer?

"Nothing," Ozzy insisted. "I tell you, when they sent me down, it frightened the shit out of me. When you go in there, it just degraded you. It's like you're no longer human. They give you a number and that's your life. That's your only identity. You're not a man anymore, you're prisoner 1237486.

"I experienced some wild things in there. When I got out, I sat down and cried my eyes out. That place was like a sewer. I don't believe people should be put in luxury cells with colour tellies and maids, but there's a point where you have to draw the line. To be locked away from your loved ones is one thing; to be forced to live in absolute filth another.

"And most of the people in there had been sent down for things like non-payment of maintenance or driving offences. We used to have an hour's exercise a day and I met this guy who'd worked in the meat market with me, and he said he was in for four years. I thought he must've robbed a bank. I said what did they get you for?

"A box of Mars bars and 40 Park Drive," he said.

Recently, he was bemoaning the severity of English tax laws; someone told him the money went to a good cause: the state. Ozzy exploded.

"I said, 'What's the state ever given me?' Three months in Winson Green. That's all the state's done for me: put me in jail and caused my mother and father countless years of misery. You know, I watched my father die of cancer at the age of 63. And I looked at him and I thought, 'You poor bastard. What have you seen of this world? You've seen a war. You've seen poverty. You've scrimped and saved through your tiny little life, to be put in a fuckin' closet in the death ward of a hospital...' I thought I'd rather die of a fuckin' overdose than end up like that. At least that'll be the way I want to go.

"After being in prison, I knew I wouldn't go back, and I knew that I wouldn't be told how to live, what to do, when to work, when to have me tea break. I saw me father going through all that. The man never missed a day's work in his life, and he dies in this closet. There's no dignity in it. And there's millions like him. You know, why don't they have a state funeral for somebody like that, instead of some arsehole who's probably ripped the country off and led us into war..."

I wondered whether rock'n'roll and prison had been the two alternatives in his life.

"Actually," he said, throwing me again, "I never really thought about becoming a singer. I always wanted to join the merchant navy or the army or something. I went to join the army once. They wouldn't have me. The guy turned around and said they wanted subjects, not objects. I didn't get through the door. I thought, 'Great. If they call me up for the next war, I'll tell them to fuck off.'"

"They put me in a cell with a murderer. He'd bitten out his wife's throat"

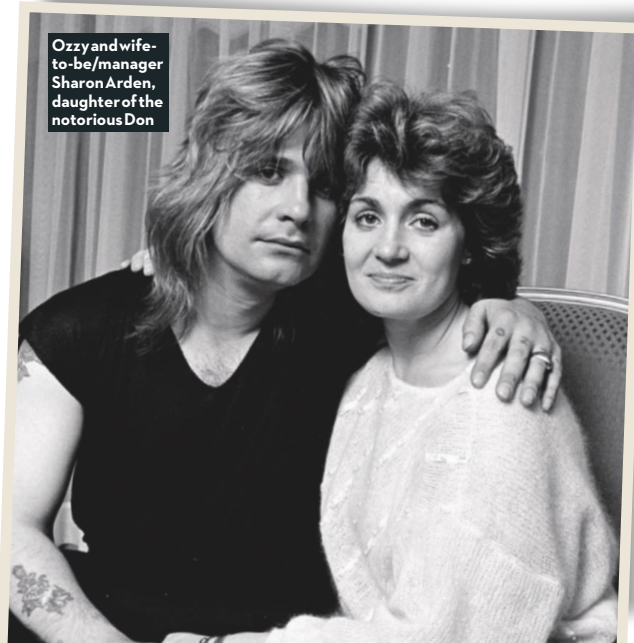
**B**ACKSTAGE AT SAN Antonio's cavernous Convention Hall, Ozzy and his band were preparing for that night's extravaganza.

Thinner than Sutherland's disappearing thatch, guitarist Randy Rhoads was slipping into pipe-cleaner leather trousers; bass player Rudi was back-combing his hair; drummer Tommy Aldridge was bouncing heavyweight sticks off his biceps; former Rainbow keyboards player Don Airey was telling me how much Ritchie Blackmore had enjoyed my piece on Castle Donington two years back.

"I'm thrilled," I said. "I never realised he was a fan."

Sheehan, meanwhile, was chatting up John, the tour dwarf. John looked pleased that he'd finally found someone on the tour that he could talk to without having to stand on a chair. Across the room, Ozzy was squeezing himself into a pink chain-mail leotard fronted by a great big codpiece.

"They put me in a cell with a murderer," he was telling someone »



who hadn't heard about the afternoon's adventure outside the Alamo. "He'd just killed his entire family. With an axe."

Oz tried to make himself comfortable in the codpiece, and noticed John.

"Ere, John," he said, "when we hang you tonight, don't forget to wriggle..."

**OZZY SWIGGED HIS** beer and said that he'd always been a very soft kind of person; he was one of those guys who watched a daft old movie on the television and ended up with a Kleenex overdraft. His reputation for outrage was accurate, he confessed; but he was usually provoked.

"I think in this world you have to shock people," he said.

"Especially in rock'n'roll. It's expected of you. But it has got to the point now where if I'm sitting quietly, people come up to me and ask me if I'll mill. If I'm not screaming off the chandelier or throwing members of the band against the wall or pissing over the Alamo, people think, 'Oh, he's ill. Best get the doctor.' Sometimes, I just want to sit down, have a smoke, think about the day. But it's impossible."

And were all these outrages committed on impulse?

"Honestly, I don't even know what I've done usually. When I got nicked at the Alamo, I didn't even know what I'd been done for. 'Pissing over the state of Texas'. Fuck me..."

Biting the head off a dove at a record company reception seemed rather more premeditated than showering the Alamo; a damned sight more grisly, too.

"You've met these people," he said, pleading mitigating circumstances. "These record company executives in their satin tour jackets. They're a pain in the arse. It's all, 'Hi, Oz, really great to see you. Love the album.' And they don't give a shit really. As long as they're selling enough records so they can go to these conventions once a year in the Bahamas and go raving mad and party it up at my expense."

"The original idea was to get these two doves and throw them up in the air, cause a bit of a stir. Then I thought, 'Fuck it.' And I bit the head off one of them. I thought, 'Right, I'll give this lot something to think about.' And then I did it. And they freaked out. I just wanted to make those people sit up and say, 'Hey! This guy is for real. He is nuts...'"

Do you really think you are nuts, Oz?

"Nah," he grinned, taking aboard the rest of his beer, "I think I'm a bit of an eccentric. I think I'm a bit over the top. I just don't care. That's what frightens people."

We've already heard about the kids turning up with a cow's head at his gig; just as bizarre were the rumours currently hot on the wire spreading the word on Ozzy's pre-gig pastime of sacrificing puppies, blowing up goats. Just to get him in the right frame of mind, you understand, for the musical holocaust of his performance.

People were beginning to believe all this. Baton Rouge was already making threatening noises about banning him. Surely the old legend was getting a tad out of hand.

"It is getting heavy," he agreed. "Especially here in the States. Anything sensational, you know, they just go for it. I'm desperately frightened that some guy's going to blow me away. It just frightens me, 'cos some of these guys are nuts, they want to take it too far."

"All it is, you know, I'm a clown. A terrible old showbiz ham. I'm not a singer. You've heard the show, you know that. So why do they take it all so seriously?"

"I just get people off. I'm their joint, if you like. They smoke me and they get high. People say, 'Don't you realise what effect you're having on people's minds?' And I say, 'Look, go home and watch the television news. There's much worse things happening. Don't give me a hard time. Go back to your television station and look at the news, and you'll see six people being blasted in a bank raid, and they'll show you the blood and the guts.' What effect is that going to have? They don't give a shit over here, they'll show you everything. Murder's a way of life here..."

Lennon was gunned down, he said – who could've predicted that? Of course it could happen to him.

"It's an occupational hazard. It does worry me, but I can't let it stop me doing this. Because if it's going to happen, if somebody's out to do you, they'll do you. And I think there's a lot of people out there capable of doing it. Actually, I do believe that 90 per cent of the audience is sicker than I'm alleged to be. Listen, there's a point in the show where we throw liver and offal at the audience and the kids'll be clamouring to get a piece in the face."

"I fail to understand it, really," he continued, touched by a genuine bewilderment.

"Why in this day and age do people like to see so much gore and disgust? I mean, I'll give it to 'em if that's what they want. They're paying money to see me, so I'll do whatever they want me to do."

"But I often say to myself, 'If I was in the front row of a show and some prick on stage threw a great big piece of shit all over me, I'd get up there and punch the guy out.' That's why I got the dwarf to throw the liver. He's too small to hit."

This seemed like an honest enough definition of commercial cynicism; but was there a line where he put an amen to exploitation?

"I dunno, there's just a point where you know you've gone far enough. Like, at the beginning of this tour, we were going to sell tour humps

instead of tour T-shirts. T-shirts with HUMPS! And club feet!" Chuckles consumed him at the very memory.

"But then I said to Sharon [Arden: manager/constant companion], 'What if we 'ad a son and he came home from a concert covered in shit with a hump on his back and a club foot?' It'd be a bit bizarre."

"Where the 'ell 'ave you been?"

"I see Ozzy Osbourne!"

"Gerrup those bloody stairs!"

"That's why I got the dwarf to throw the liver – he's too small to hit"



**I HAD TO LOOK** twice and even then

I wasn't sure that I wasn't suffering some violent Heineken-withdrawal hallucination. The taped overture had reached

a climax of apocalyptic frenzy; the entire audience was on its feet, Zippos aloft, Ozzy's name on their lips; a 10,000-strong chorus, baying for their hero, the froth already foaming at the corners of their mouths.

And on the stage, the curtains were slowly parting and I was blinking hard, cursing the morning's Heineken binge. Sheehan looked just as amazed; I knew then that it was for real. The stage was dwarfed by a towering set that looked like a nightmare vision of some diseased Camelot. Torches blazed high above towers and battlements, arches and turrets; there was a drawbridge, a portcullis; chains-a-dangling, thick, heavy, covered in dank moss.

An empty throne stood imperiously at the head of a flight of stairs that swept down to the front and centre of the stage.

POW! An explosion shook the auditorium, probably popping zits in the furthest gantries, miles away from the stage. There was a whirl of smoke, a flash. And Ozzy was suddenly on the throne, apparently beamed in from nowhere. He was holding aloft a massive, neon-fronted crucifix.

As he waddled down the stairs, belly wobbling under the pink chain mail, the mascara already running tearfully down his chubbied-out cheeks, the drums pounded through the PA.

Tommy Aldridge, surrounded by more drums than a popular witch doctor at a public exorcism, was rising slowly on another dais, behind the throne. Behind Tommy stood his drum roadie, dressed like a medieval executioner.

Randy and Rudi romped on from the wings, amps cranked up well past the legal limit, thrashing away as Oz carried them into "Over The Mountain". The audience knew the words better than Ozzy, but loved him anyway; and he responded by turning on the fireworks, hanging the dwarf, setting the band loose on pyrotechnic solos that burned off the ears and made nonsense of the average digestive system.

The cheers from the audience drowning even Randy's jet-fuelled riffs, I retired back to the stage, ears ringing like alarm bells, my heart trying to argue its way out of my chest. From the high arch above Tommy, John the dwarf was hanging from a scaffold, little legs kicking beneath his monk's habit. For a moment, he looked like Sheehan and I feared – that



the roadies had lynched the wrong little chap in the backstage pandemonium...

Then the Chief was at my shoulder, muttering darkly about voodoo, and we watched the finale, with Ozzy advancing out into the audience on a giant hand; and we winced to our very souls as the hand exploded with a force that would've reduced the Alamo to rubble and Oz tumbled into another spotlight and flung himself into a hoarse, dangerously berserk body-check version of "Paranoid".

I first heard that song when I was making my debut on acid; it still sounded terrifying.

**DALLAS: OZZY AND I** were enjoying an early-afternoon sharpener in the bar of the Fairmount hotel. That weekend, the Fairmount was hosting a beauty convention; we were surrounded by decaying Southern belles with skins like stretched Formica. Their eyes glistened with an artificial sheen; their teeth clearly slept in separate beds; their mouths were greedy, their tongues rattled; their perfumes clung in the air, like stains on a sheet; they believed that they'd never get old, were mostly already dead.

We were talking about his current success in America (*Diary Of A Madman*, his second solo LP since leaving Sabbath, was shifting units on the *Billboard* chart at a rate that was exhausting his accountants); we moved on to the present tour, and I wondered whether after nearly 15 years he hadn't seen enough of the world's hotel rooms. He'd go on forever, he said; right now, he felt like the Bing Crosby of HM, with three generations of fans coming to his concerts, but he'd go on until they stayed away.

Was there anywhere that dulled his enthusiasm for touring?

"Germany!" he yelled with some conviction, attacking another lotion. "Hate the place. I hate their arrogance. And they don't know when to laugh. The only time they laugh is when they're starting wars. The war hasn't finished for those bastards. They still hate everyone in the world. Germany, it's got this cloud of doom and depression hanging over it.

"The most happening place I went to in Germany was Dachau. There was more life there than on the Reeperbahn. Belgium's the same. If you want to get depressed, go to Belgium. The worse thing that could ever happen to anyone would be to have been born in Belgium. It shouldn't even happen to a Belgian. Belgium's probably just a good place to die..."

Alex Harvey just did; of a heart attack, I told him.

Ozzy was immediately contrite.

"Whorra bummer," he said.

"Well, there you go... I suppose the same thing's going to happen to me one day. The price you pay, I suppose. The death rate in rock'n'roll is phenomenal. You live at 100 miles an hour, 24 hours a day; and your body can only take so much stress."

So what do you do to wind down after a tour, Ozzy?

"Do you know what I really like doing?" he declared, almost overtaken by his own gush of enthusiasm.

"Fishing and shooting," he beamed. "Enjoying the countryside."

Uh, what exactly did he like shooting?

"Rabbits. Pigeons. Pheasants. Vans. Policemen."

Given his previously expressed concern for the way the world was running down (we'd been talking about a song of his called "Revelation (Mother Earth)"), all this hunting and killing seemed contradictory.

"Not at all!" he insisted eagerly, between gulps of alcohol. "I eat what I shoot. I don't just go bang! I don't leave the bodies there to rot. I go hunting for food. I don't just kill, there is a purpose. I mean, if



there's a crisis, a food shortage or a war, I'll know how to survive. Most people wouldn't. 'Oh, the butcher's closed, where am I going to get some meat?' You won't hear me whingeing. I'll be out with me gun.

There's so much hypocrisy about all this," he complained bitterly. "Like there's this guy interviewing me once and he's got this big fat greasy steak in front of him on his plate. And he says, 'Don't

you think biting a dove's head off is cruel?' And he's tucking into his rump steak. So I said, 'Listen, mate, you're the one who's eating a cow's arse on a plate.' I said, 'Don't you realise what you're eating?' He says, 'Food.' 'Don't you realise that food used to hop around a field, mooing. Minding its own business. And now you're eating its arse off a plate.

He couldn't accept the idea that I might've bitten the head off that dove to show up all these hypocrites... That's why I do these things."

Was there a stunt he'd committed, an outrage he'd caused, that he actually regretted; or could he justify everything with such persuasive humour?

"I've done some terrible things to animals," he finally confessed, after some deliberation. "When I worked at the slaughter house, I used to do some grotesque things which I really don't want to talk about."

Turning pale, I was frankly relieved. Ozzy went on.

"I was just a kid then," he mused reflectively. "I was just screwing around. I'm sure everyone's done something they regret... I once sawed a sheep's head in half."

It was dead, I hoped.

"No," he said. "It was alive. It wouldn't have been any fun if it'd been dead."

I presumed that he'd used a high-powered chainsaw, to get the job over with quickly, if not without a considerable mess.

"It was a hacksaw, actually," Ozzy remembered, and his elbow automatically went into a sawing motion: a slow, deliberate momentum.

I was feeling thoroughly nauseous.

"The look on your face!" he roared, laughter doubling him over onto his knees. "It's a killer!"

I suspected a wind-up; Ozzy insisted that the story was true. He was still laughing; I joined in, clocking in at chuckle central, though I didn't know why.

"One thing's for sure," Ozzy bellowed, guffawing into his drink as we both howled, "the sheep weren't laughin'..."

One of the convention's beauticians came over and asked Ozzy if he'd have his picture taken with a group of her friends; they were all fans; had *luuuuuuuuuurved* the show in Houston. Ozzy agreed; the beautician went off to organise her chums.

"Old witch," Ozzy said, watching her fuss. And then he was away, pulling faces for someone's Polaroid memories. *Allan Jones* •



April 5, 1982: (l-r) Bob Daisley, Rudy Sarzo, Ozzy Osbourne, Tommy Aldridge and Bernie Tormé (Randy Rhoads' replacement) at Madison Square Garden

# 1982

JANUARY - MARCH



ILPO MUSTO / REX

Depeche Mode: (l-r)  
Andrew Fletcher,  
Martin Gore, Dave  
Gahan and Alan Wilder



**Tough times for DEPECHE MODE. Vince Clarke has left, and their second album has been panned. The Basildon boys have the support of local mums, and urge fans to stick with them for the long haul. "I mean we've only just started having to shave every day!"**

“Punk  
hasn't  
changed  
anything”

## — NME MARCH 20 —

**A** PART FROM HIS clothes, which are meticulously modish, Martin Gore's baby blond curls, bashful expression and exceptionally sweet smile make him look like the boy in Bubbles, Millais' famous Victorian advert for Pears soap.

His group mate Andrew Fletcher looks comparatively harsh by Depeche pop standards: sandy hair sticks up straight from his head and his manner, although chatty, tends toward dry. It's a dark Dave Gahan, the singer with the soft face and sunny smile, who opens the door of his parents' semi-detached house in the satellite suburb of Basildon.

There seems to be something in the air which encourages clear complexions, wholesome electro-pop, clean-cut teen culture and untroubled eyes. The taxi from the station bowls along the wide, smooth roads between the low, grey rows of modern estate housing, past broad sweeps of spring green. On the surface it's a closed world of comforting order, easy affluence, unchallenged conformity and modest domesticity. Depeche Mode — a little flushed from the drowsy afternoon combination of sunshine, central heating and a flaring fire — sit in the small, square cosy living room of a house identical to the ones they all share with their respective parents.

A bright, neat girl sits at the end of the settee, quietly flicking through a magazine. Dave Gahan makes coffee, although he drinks hot chocolate himself. Audible through the wafer-thin walls, now nearer, now farther, come the thin tones of Dave's younger brother, a squatter, pudgier version of Dave himself, as he wanders through the house with a small Casio keyboard.

"He usually plays it in the loo," says Dave, "because it's got good reverb in there."

All over Basildon, Andrew tells me, young synthesizer bands are starting up, despite the lack of rehearsal rooms or places to play. For Depeche Mode, who smile and reminisce their way through an afternoon at home, it doesn't seem so long ago that they were playing house-gigs themselves to a small audience in pyjamas with additional soft toys and teddy bears.

Time has flown, they think, since they caught the commuter train to the bank, the insurance office and college every morning. Because Depeche Mode signed to an independent label for no advance, they were still doing day jobs when "New Life" was at Number 20 in the charts, and a week after they finished work on *TOTP*. Four months ago Andrew Fletcher had never flown, now he finds air travel no more or less exciting than catching the 7 o'clock train into town.

This is the first day off Depeche Mode have had in months, sandwiched between a trip to Spain and a spell in the studio. And although they were looking forward to an uninterrupted reunion with old friends and family, they've amiably agreed to do one more interview. Depeche Mode are just too nice to say no.

"Every day there seems to be something," says Dave resignedly. "Up until a certain point you do begin to wonder what good it actually does."

Does being nice come naturally?

"Not any more it doesn't," says Andrew, whose irony is in counterpoint to Dave's ready chatter and Martin's shy, attentive silence. ("He's got a lot to say, but he never says it," explains Andrew. "He's not very good at interviews.")

"You're thrown into something and you act naturally and that's what comes out. Then you're known as being nice and cute all the time, and when you've been touring for three months, you just want to explode. But when you're surrounded by nice people who are so friendly, you trust them, if they say something then it is hard to say no. Dan

(Daniel Miller of Mute) has done so much for us, you can't get stroppy with him. All the people in the office really work hard for us, you can't upset them. The main thing is, we've been so lucky, you feel, why should we be arguing? We've got somewhere and we should work."

Depeche Mode aren't a rock 'n' roll band, they tell me, and they don't enjoy the traditional tour trappings. At their Hammersmith Odeon concerts, which they filled twice in a fortnight, their show was remarkable for its fetching simplicity and lack of spectacle, its narrowing of distance and rejection of elitism, its guileless involvement and unselfconscious innocence.

Yet here they are between tour and LP, still bubbly but worrying a little about becoming blasé over continents and countries, jets and helicopters, video and TV. Dave Gahan's got a swelling sty on one eye from infected water in a Spanish shower.

"If I'm wearing sunglasses in the pictures, you'll have to explain it wasn't trying to be cool, I'm embarrassed about my eye."

Is there any way in which they can avoid stepping into the spiralling restrictive trap of success?

"We don't want anything," says Andrew.

"We just carry on from day to day. We haven't got any ambitions. Our ambition is to buy a house or something like that."

"Obviously to be more successful would be a good thing," adds Dave. "Or to just stay as we are now and keep releasing good material."

"Things don't happen so fast that you don't really know what's going to happen," says Martin softly.

"To go back now would be really hard,"

Andrew continues. "There's so many people we have to pay. It's the album-tour-album-tour trap that's the worst thing. That's why Vince (Clarke) left, he probably felt that he was getting

“Our ambition is to buy a house or something like that”

trapped because that's what he saw in front of him. He looked at it with a bigger scope than we did, I think. He looked ahead more.

"The only point of bitterness is the fact that we're really working hard and promoting his material and he's doing what we want to do but can't."

"Vince has got all the time in the world now," adds Dave. "He's done a few adverts, a few jingles. Peter Powell's got a new programme out and he wrote the theme tune for that. We were offered a Tizer advert but we just couldn't do it. It would be really good if we had the time to do things like that, just look at it in a bigger way, different ways of earning money."

Far from falling flat on their fresh faces, as some feared they would do when primary writer Clarke left, Depeche Mode have recruited new member Alan Wilder (not present today since he's only temporary), and gathered new strength since "See You" has taken its proper place in the most exhilarating chart for months.

Why do they think some people relate to them so well?

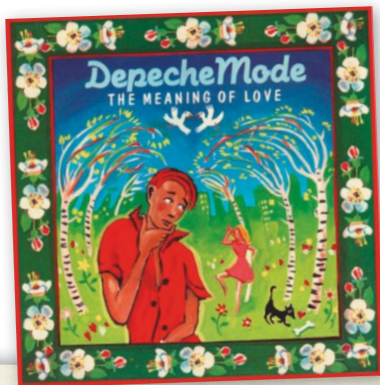
"I suppose it's because they see us as the boy next door," says Dave.

"The blokes see us like lads, electronic versions of the Angelic Upstarts," adds Andrew. "You get those sort of people outside the dressing room door going, 'Oi, Andy!' You have to speak to them in your best Cockney accent. You go, 'Yer, alright, 'ang on.' You get the little girls that you have to be really nice to because they're like your little sister."

Andrew blushes just a bit.

"It's a funny sort of audience," says Dave. "I think they just see us on the same level as them really. It's good in a way, 'cos they're not embarrassed. I remember going to gigs and being embarrassed to move 'cos it's not cool to dance. I remember going to see Gary Numan at Hammersmith and just sitting through the whole gig. You're really enjoying it but you can't get up and go HUURRAAY! At our gigs they aren't embarrassed about anything."

Depeche Mode may jokingly fantasise about running on stage and doing scissor jumps, detailing a roadie to pull them across the stage on a go-kart attached to a piece of string and feel gently aggrieved by Paul Weller whiningly calling them wimps; but in reality their artless lack of ego is



often seen instead as anonymity. "There was a thing in *The Sun* reviewing our single and it said 'another record by a faceless group'. I think people who read music papers might know about us, but the general public couldn't put a face to the name," says Andrew. "People say, what's it like to be famous? But there's no difference. When I walk along in Basildon they might recognise me, but if I go up to London and walk along the King's Road, I wouldn't be recognised."

"I think it's better not to be hip, it's definitely safer," says Dave.

"I remember when we first described ourselves as a pop band and Andy went wild!" adds Martin slyly. "He said we've had it now! How can you be a rock 'n' roll star and walk into the house and see your mum..."

"...have a fight with your brothers in the living room..." adds Andrew,

"...and you've got all your sisters in the house," continues Martin.

"We don't go clubbing in London or anything," adds Dave. "I don't know how bands can do that. They're touring the world and they've got records out every week. They must be so tired."

"We don't get massive guest lists with stars on them," says Andrew.

"I think that's why people relate to us. We don't attract that sort of audience. We're not a liggers' band. Backstage there's just a load of our friends from Essex."

Are Depeche Mode puppets of Mute maestro Daniel Miller, the pretty faces fronting an electro-pop masterplan? Somehow it doesn't seem that simple.

"Daniel's boys," smiles Dave. "Daniel's like a friend really. "It's not like a business relationship. He comes everywhere with us. In the studio he doesn't actually take part in the recording apart from the producing. I'd say a lot of other producers take more part than Daniel does."

They don't feel they're being manipulated?

"It's hard to say," replies Andrew equably. "He advises us what to do, but we find it hard to say no, so in a way he does."

By those who don't understand the place in pop for such a sweet and optimistic celebration of potential, Depeche Mode are often crudely dismissed as lightweight. Would they like to be taken more seriously?

"I think what we do is very easy, that's why it's good," says Andrew. "But we're on an independent label. We've never been hyped, we never advertise. That's one reason why we never get into the top five. They can't afford to give us that final push to No 1. When you sell as many records as a group that gets to No 3 or No 4, and you only get to No 8, you start to wonder why."

"None of us are on an ego trip. We do things as they come along," says Dave. "It's a job, we moan about it, but I couldn't see us doing anything else. In three years' time, Martin might be a producer or a general writer. Andy might be making synthesizers. We've done something in a different way."

Depeche Mode are the fast way forward to the future. *Lynn Hanna*

## — MM OCTOBER 2 —

**T**HE MIDDLE-AGED MUM on the Basildon train greeted Dave like a son, long presumed lost, safely home from the Falklands. "Like your new one," she beamed, juggling her shopping. "Good one... the best one yet." Dave blushed hard, accepting accolades shyly.

"Depeche Mode attempting to twist pin-up appeal into nursery neurosis is like asking the Banshees to play 'Little Deuce Coupe'."

I'd written these words two days before, summing up my attack of their new LP, *A Broken Frame*. Dave flushed hard, taking insult to heart.

"Of all the bad reviews, yours was the one that hurt most," he insists over a fast-diminishing pint. (Yes, it's true; these Basildon boys don't drink Babycham!)

"But at least it read like you'd actually listened to the record!"

Still simmering from the half-expected critical lashing administered by the weekly big four, Depeche Mode are holed up in rehearsals, taking deep breaths, turning the other cheeks and thanking the Lord for the mums of this world.

It's a year now since *Speak & Spell* launched their ridiculously simple synthesised translations of established pop clichés into the charts; a year, that is, since Vince Clarke built his reputation as a stylish pop writer only to quit the fold and tout his talents with Yazoo, a year that's inevitably twisted the cowardly critical acquiescence that accompanies any new culting the crest of a wave into frowning familiarity.

Last December, Depeche Mode could do no wrong.

"Now we can't do anything right," moans singer Dave Gahan.



Flossybarnets:  
Dave Gahan and  
Martin Gore

## Signs of extra variety

**MM FEB 20** Depeche Mode air some new numbers and a fresh face at BBC Paris Studios in London

**W**HAT A WAY to start. Alan Wilder dances in Vince Clarke's shoes and his first Depeche Day in the home country involves knocking out a *Top Of The Pops* performance then dashing down to Paris Studios for an *In Concert* with Talk Talk.

There he is... hair red (neat), suit well pressed and fingers tumbling over the favourites.

Not a startling 40 minutes from the Mode. They have been harder, tighter and better practised – still, this is the first UK appearance for a while and there's plenty to worry about.

Will the new boy make good? (He did.) Will the new numbers stand up? (They do.)

Let's talk about songs. Martin Gore is a

romantic soul under his flossy barnet. All those twirling lines that spin through "See You" have mates in the rest of his efforts. Maybe they don't punch you out as fast as old Depeche, but they wrestle you to the ground and keep a foot on your brain.

Vince's departure must have

brought a few moments of head scratching and Depeche Mode are still in a pensive mood. It's done them good as there are signs of extra variety and silkier twist winding round the familiar TEAC drum track. Even that's been shaken around by new sounds and rhythms which feint for the head then fall at your feet.

A handful of gigs will pull the fresh stuff as taut as favourites such as "Puppets" and "What's Your Name"; they're not there yet. *In Concert* never saw the light of oldies such as "Photographic", "Dreaming Of Me" and "Ice Machine", but there was time to air "See You", "This Is Real Fun" (even stronger than the record) and

a newcomer which was the bullet of the show, "Meaning Of Love". This is heavy metal, isn't it? Well, it's something. What a chorus, crashing

around the ears as if the band had given the PA a push and sent it reeling into the crowd.

I wish I could chat chat about Talk Talk, but there's not a lot to say. The coast of poppy emulsion isn't thick enough to hide the stubby rock 'n' roll wall behind it. *Paul Colbert*

## The songs wrestle you to the ground and keep a foot on your brain



# Marks the end of a beautiful dream

**MM SEP 25** Post-Vince Clarke, the second Mode album receives a pasting

**Depeche Mode** *A Broken Frame*  
MUTE

What a difference a year makes. The Depeche Mode of '81's *Speak & Spell* seduced their way into our hearts and into the charts with unblemished innocence; the synthesized soul brothers of cartoon punks, the Ramones.

The role and execution were essentially simple: perfect pop with no pretensions. Such (a) cute timing could scarcely be dismissed as contrived, such sublime straightforwardness blossomed beyond all critical sniping.

But, though in many ways ambitious and bold, *A Broken Frame* - as its name suggests - marks the end of a beautiful

dream. Now Vince Clarke's (selfishly?) split the market, *A Broken Frame* sounds sadly naked, rudely deprived of the formula's novelty.

Whereas past pilferings were overlooked as springboards towards an emerging identity, the larcenies of *A Broken Frame* sound like puerile infatuations papering over anonymity. What it also illustrates is that growing up in public is much the same as it was in the '60s - that once established as a commercial viability, pressure, pride or self-opinionation invariably pushes a band beyond compounding their capabilities and fuels daft aspirations to art.

To be fair, the one factor in favour of Depeche Mode's commercial decline, the sole grace that saves *A Broken Frame* from embarrassment, is that their increasing complexity sounds less the result of exterior persuasion than an understandable, natural development.

It may lack Vince's

gossamer sleight of hand, the ponderous "Monument" may sound positively ugly compared to the wry "Boys Say Go" but *A Broken Frame* is closer to *Speak & Spell* than its tricky veneer might suggest.

The lyrics have matured from wide-eyed fun to wild-eyed frustration, but the weary words of "Leave In Silence", just like the glib ones of "Just Can't Get Enough", are words and nothing more. In attempting the balance Yazoo get away with, the new Depeche Mode overstep the mark. Vince is adept at

conjuring musical moods and Alf's voice is earthy and human enough to con us there's emotion

behind their candyfloss, but the Mode remain essentially vacuous.

"Shouldn't Have Done That", the album's most ambitious departure, proves beyond doubt that Depeche attempting to twist pin-up appeal into nursery neurosis is like asking the Banshees to play "Little Deuce Coupe". The boys' pluck should be applauded and we should be grateful that they refuse to tread water.

But the plain fact is, they're drowning. *Steve Sutherland*



"I suppose, at the beginning, we were flavour of the month, the new, young, fresh... y'know. Everyone's gone through that. Haircut One Hundred, ABC... we've watched them all get the same as we got - 'Oh, they're wonderful!' and then suddenly, 'Oh, they're bad!' I think it's disgusting. You spend three months in the studio working as hard as fuck to put out a good album and..."

"It's like a year at work," Andrew Fletcher intrudes, obviously agitated, "and you get your appraisal at the end of it from someone who doesn't really bother."

"I don't think it does you any great harm," reasons sole songwriter, Martin Gore, through his lop-sided grin. "I mean, you can't say it doesn't concern you because it does but I don't think people decide whether to buy a record or not on the strength of a review."

"The worst thing is," badgers Andy, bitterly unassuaged, "say you're in a pub or something and people shout 'You've ad it!' - when that starts to appen, once you've become an established band, it puts so many pressures on you. We shouldn't have to put up with that."

"We produce our music and we get criticised by people who are... nothing really, people who've never done anything like we have, football hooligans who don't deserve to be on earth really. See what I mean?"

This verbal venting of bottled-up bad feeling is occasioned, not so much by the fact that *A Broken Frame* has been panned inconsistently as overambitious, underambitious, senseless and pretentious, as the fact that the band feel they've been wilfully misunderstood.

"The thing you've gotta remember," Andy insists, letting the skeleton out of the closet, "is that eight out of the ten songs on the last album were Vince's and Martin doesn't write like Vince."

"The new album is different not because we've deliberately changed but because Martin wrote the songs, not Vince."

"We'd been playing the songs on that first album for a year and a half," Dave reveals. "We went in and whacked them down - we knew exactly what we was gonna do. It would have been so easy to go in and do that album again but you can play safe or experiment a bit more, and we experimented."

"I don't play *Speak & Spell* at home any more. At the time it was our album but looking back, it was just a collection of songs and I'm sure Vince would agree that what he's doing now and what we're doing now are real albums."

"It's not false, it's not overproduced, it's just us - how we were feeling at that time, how we're feeling now. What we've done is natural and if people can't accept that - well, that's the way it goes - there's nothing you can do about it."

"I think the worst thing is if you do things to please other people, if you give them the obvious and make money from it. I don't think any of us want to be big stars and have ten Rolls-Royces and all that crap. All we want is to be a successful band and for people to buy our records and appreciate what we're doing."

"I think people have got over the fact that Vince has left now," adds Martin, pensively, "and we have, too. At the time it put pressure on me because I've never been a prolific songwriter and, when Vince was writing, I just didn't feel the need, I was lazy about it."

"That's dying off now. At the beginning, when "Only You" came out and Vince was on every front cover, 'Vince and Alf', 'Alf and Vince', 'Alf's voice' and everything - even going into the Mute office, everything was Yazoo this, Yazoo that - it was hard. But we've faced the fact that they're massive now!" Martin laughs. "And obviously we're taking a big risk with this album - our popularity might suffer because of it."

"But we're in a really weird position," Andy insists. "We're a very young band, we're only about 20... 19 when we made the first album, and we're still growing up in certain aspects."

"We're not like most 30-year-old musicians in a band set-up - we're seeing things we've never seen before, listening to different music all the time and, as we grow, we're sounding different."

"I mean we've only just started having to shave every day!"

Fair enough. No one's asking Depeche Mode to jog on the spot - very glad they aren't, in fact - but what precisely these changes are that soured the sweet simplicity of *Speak & Spell* into the clumsy

## Sounds sadly naked, deprived of the formula's novelty





Depeche Mode cover from the critical mauling of second album

poetics of *A Broken Frame*, and whether these changes work, are different issues altogether.

"I think they work," Dave Gahan frowns. "I mean, when we started out, we didn't intend to do anything, we didn't plan out ten years and say 'we're going to do this'. We just wrote songs and went out and played them and got our deal through that.

"I mean, a lot of bands get credit for what they do and where they go – to the Bahamas to record their album, to Sri Lanka to record three videos – but so what? Who cares about that? What it's about is recording music and selling music to the public and if people like the music, then they're gonna buy it. That's all it is..."

"And we never take the public for a ride," Andy claims, pointing out that the Mode have never released money-spinning remixes or picture discs.

"People don't give us enough credit for the things we've done. Like, we manage ourselves, we've stayed on an independent label, we've always refused to be tempted by the large sums of money and we've had five top 20 singles on the trot with no hype – just on our music alone!

"I mean, it seems to be the thing at the moment to slag off electronic bands but I think that's a bit of a fallacy because there's only about three real electronic bands and there's about three million that play guitars."

"So really, we're doing something different," Dave claims. "Just because we're not getting up there and getting down on our knees and giving it all we can with our guitars or whacking away at drums doesn't mean we're not a good band."

"At the moment it's back to what it was before punk – punk hasn't changed anything. It's all back to big limousines and all that crap," mourns Andy. Surprising really, since many would cite Depeche as instrumental in the establishment of our new shallow pop.

"We don't lead that sort of life!" Dave howls at my accusation.

"We don't! I never rode in a limousine – I don't think I've even been in a Rolls-Royce."

"We didn't ask for the screaming girls," Andy insists. "We wanted to keep away from that. We just believed in what we were doing."

"We never really aimed for our music to be fashionable dance music," Dave continues. "We're not telling people what to do or what to wear."

"What it's all down to is the music. Punk was all look – people say it brought back the grit but it was a look, it made people dress in that way. I don't think you can write about banning the bomb or politics – it might do something for the band but it doesn't do anything for the public."

"All the big punk bands are just sell-out groups anyway," says Andy.

"Take The Clash, right, they go about politics 'n' everything yet they're on the most capitalist label in the world!"

"We just try to please ourselves," says Martin simmering down.

"As long as a song's expressing to me what I want it to express to me, that's what's important. I just sit down and write them – I don't really intend them to say anything in particular."

It's exactly this denigration of the potential of pop to move people, this forgettable matrix of patronising little in-jokes that allows Martin to claim that "The Meaning Of Love" was "intended to be sickly".

"The thing is," says Andy, cynically honest, "I don't think *A Broken Frame* is the tester, really.

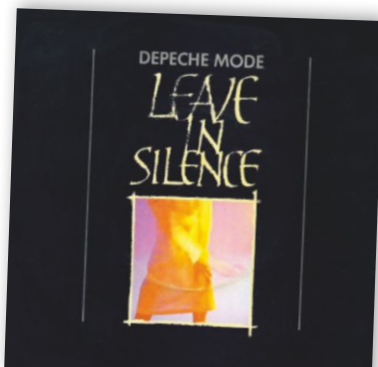
I mean, I hope a lot of people will go out and buy it because it's us and it's got three hit singles on it. I think the next album will be the real teller..."

"That's it," enthuses Dave, grasping the wrong end of the stick. "It's always the next thing. We haven't lost any of the excitement for it. Like the next single – who knows what it's gonna be like?"

And time will tell who cares.

Steve Sutherland •

"People don't give us enough credit for the things we've done"





Iron Maiden: Bruce Dickinson & Co come up with the goodies

## ALBUMS

### Iron Maiden *The Number Of The Beast* EMI

For some unknown reason – personality defect I suppose – I keep expecting Iron Maiden to fall flat on their faces. God knows why, because they’ve come up with some sterling records in the past and I suppose there’s no reason why they shouldn’t continue to do so.

Perhaps it’s because they lack distinction that I don’t take them seriously enough. They don’t have the single-mindedness of Motörhead, the sure feel for music, the breadth or delicacy of Rush, nor the sheer instrumental skill of, say, Sammy Hagar.

Despite this, they keep on coming up with the goods and admittedly, they have surpassed themselves with *The Number Of The Beast*. There are two main reasons for the success of this album.

First and most obvious is lead singer Bruce Dickinson. I never

really rated him with Samson and I thought Maiden had made a fundamental error in selecting him to replace Paul Di’Anno. Instead both sides benefitted – Bruce Dickinson improved considerably and so did the band. On this album Dickinson lays claim to being one of the best hard rock singers around. (Sure about this Harrigan? – Ed.)

The other great strength of this album is the standard of songwriting. Steve Harris, who’s written five of the eight songs here and composed two of the others, has finally fulfilled the potential he’s previously only suggested. “Children Of The Damned” is a Sabbath-influenced song which Ronnie Dio and Co would have been proud to write, while “Run To The Hills”, their current single, is a punchy

stormer performed with immense passion.

Thankfully the band as a whole has managed to cut down a bit on the old harmonised twin lead guitars, which were getting to be a bit of a pain, and they’re ringing the musical changes more. Clive Burr is getting away from his occasional ‘everything including the kitchen sink’ drumming style and guitarist Dave Murray and Adrian Smith are playing with a lot of class – most noticeable on “22 Acacia Avenue” and “The Prisoner”.

Well done, Maiden. You’ve come up with a goodie. *Brian Harrigan, MM Mar 27*

### Jimmy Page *Death Wish II Soundtrack* SWANSONG

In the days when “Stairway To Heaven” was always number one in the Peel poll, Jimmy Page losing his plectrum was front page news. But fashions change; if you blink you’ll miss one disappearing.

Disappearing as quickly as Jimmy Page’s reputation. It’s pathetic that Page should allow his first solo album to be associated with such a provocatively unpleasant film.

You know the story anyway – Charles Bronson as the world’s unluckiest householder gets duffed up, learns his daughter dies at the lusty hands of LA muggers, and goes around topping everyone under 25.

The justification, of course, is that the punks would only go to prison, and the pistol is mightier than the parole.

Just because Page happens to be director Michael Winner’s next door neighbour is scant reason to be involved with such a dubious project. Bronson’s wooden acting is matched by Page’s dreary score. It’s pretty much your standard Hollywood soundtrack, with synths replacing plucked strings to indicate suspense.

There’s sufficient gut-wrenching guitar to keep ardent Zep freaks happy, notably on “Who’s To Blame”, which also has a vocal

from Chris Farlowe. Eight years on from the original *Death Wish* soundtrack (which was scored by Herbie Hancock) this is a very questionable album, morally and musically.

What does 1990 hold? An ageing Bronson as the Toxteth Vigilante with a soundtrack from Jimmy Pursey? *Patrick Humphries, MM Feb 20*

### Robert Wyatt *Nothing Can Stop Us* ROUGH TRADE

Inquisitive, worried, sometimes probably depressed, Robert Wyatt looks at the world and its bloody history of oppression, mourns for the victims of injustice, but refuses to be bullied into total despair.

*Nothing Can Stop Us* is a celebration of the ability to survive in a world that mostly resembles a cross between a madhouse and a carnage factory; it’s a moving testament to the stubborn determination of ordinary people to battle through the messy frustrations that daily afflict them, the courage with which they stand up to ignorance, prejudice, and the threat of violence.

Aligning itself with an international struggle for freedom and independence, *Nothing Can Stop Us* is a political record. Wyatt, however, avoids the familiar, shallow, romantic association between rock ‘n’ roll and rebellion (*Sandinista!* by The Clash serves as a perfect example). There are no false heroics here, no cheap clarion calls to man the barricades.

When Wyatt sings the socialist anthem “Red Flag”, it’s with an almost forlorn regret that the struggle for class equality will never be won. Again, though, he refuses to surrender to grief or helplessness; the ideal is still worth fighting for.

Scanning the flashpoints of global conflict, Wyatt simultaneously attempts to illustrate the spirit of international resistance by assuming the most appropriate musical settings at his disposal.

To the extent that it recreates a variety of potent folk/ethnic styles, *Nothing Can Stop Us* is something of a musical travelogue; but it’s never content with superficial atmospheres. It looks beyond local colour towards a greater understanding of the importance of music and song, especially in Third World societies. With “Caimanera” and “Arauco”, Wyatt feeds the original South American rhythms



THE ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK · MUSIC BY JIMMY PAGE

## DEATH WISH II







of this LP; a melancholy belief, maybe, that this is the natural order: a belief that we must learn to live with our suffering, the infliction of grief; a belief, too, that whatever the betrayals, the tragedies, life will go on. Wyatt has compiled an important LP. *Allan Jones, MM Mar 20*

and melodies through the filter of his own musical imagination without losing the rebellious fervour that initially inspired their composition.

"Caimanera" (better known as "Guantanamo") is especially striking, with Wyatt's vocals swirling high above Harry Beckett's warm flugelhorn.

A similar vocal technique (familiar to Wyatt aficionados) is applied to "Born Again Cretin". A bitterly ironic, angry song about the imprisonment in South Africa of Nelson Mandela, "Cretin" reminds us that rage isn't the exclusive property of inarticulate youth, can be expressed without the howl of guitars and a lot of ill-tempered bellowing. Wyatt's rage has a dignity, a solemn poise, a poignant edge.

More blatantly ironic, Wyatt's version of "Stalin Wasn't Stallin'" has a thrilling momentum that evokes the original's stirring patriotism and still manages to expose the frightening banality of its sentiments.

With telling force, Peter Blackman closes the LP with a reading of his poem, "Stalingrad", which evokes the heroic battle for that city with an affecting gravity. A more intimate, emotional violence is approached from diverse angles on the versions of Chic's "At Last I Am Free" and Ivor Cutler's "Green". The Chic song is a lonely, elegant evocation of personal heartbreak eventually overcome, while Cutler's morbid Celtic obsessions are brilliantly set against an arrangement that features tablas and shehnai courtesy of Disharhi.

Perhaps the most memorable performance is reserved for Wyatt's reading of "Strange Fruit"; originally recorded in the '40s by Billie Holiday, it deals with a gruesome clarity with lynching in the Deep South. Wyatt sings the lyric like he's exhausted by the horror of the violence the song so vividly documents. It's typical of a kind of sadness that infiltrates much

### Richard and Linda Thompson *Shoot Out The Lights* HANNIBAL

It's like there's a sort of rock 'n' roll wilderness, where cults are consigned to rot amid the dead flowers. It's a long way from brightly lit twin cities of Fame and Fortune.

Richard Thompson has perversely shunned those blandishments. Instead, over the past ten years, he and Linda have concentrated on a series of brilliantly constructed, emotionally searing albums.

*Shoot Out The Lights* is their first album since the patchy *Sunnyvista* three years ago. Let's not pull any punches, it's a stunner, their most consistent work since the classic *I Want To See The Bright Lights Tonight*.

Like all great albums, the riches are revealed with each play. The title track smacks of vintage Thompson in its brooding, sustained intensity. "Wall Of Death" sees Richard returning to his fairground fascination and is sensitively sung by Linda, with an irresistible chorus. Typically, Thompson sees the "Wall Of Death" as a symbol of hope, but only by risking everything.

"Walking On The Wire" dwells on a similar theme, but takes it into deeper, darker areas. "Did She Jump, Or Was She Pushed?" is a chilling, remote observation.

It's not an album of unremitting gloom, because burning at its heart is a bright light of optimism. The songs are so tightly disciplined there's no need for flamboyant instrumentation. Thompson's eloquent guitar sees to the colouring and Linda's singing extracts every ounce of emotion from the lyrics. It is an album of textures, finely wrought by a craftsman who's been in the wilderness for too long. Welcome back. *Patrick Humphries,*

*MM Mar 13*



Alexei Sayle:  
Liverpool comedian  
is no Benny Hill

### SINGLES

#### Classix Nouveaux *Is It A Dream?*

LIBERTY

Funny old world isn't it? There they were, every pundit's tip to flourish in '81, but Sal and the nose brigade somehow missed out. On the basis of this hilariously mannered, sickeningly contrived mess, the public for once is proved right.

*MM Feb 27*

#### David Bowie

##### *Baal* EP RCA

Bowie's fascination for Bertolt Brecht isn't so surprising. All that drama, angst, brutal descriptiveness and vivid seediness... plus the fact that Brecht

wound up in Berlin. This is a five-track EP, taken from a forthcoming television adaptation of Brecht's first play in which Bowie plays Baal, a reprobate poet-singer who bags off with a lot of women, murders his best mate, and dies of pneumonia. Only the morbid "Drowned Girl" features the music of Kurt Weill, the others are all set to music by Dominic Muldowney. In the circumstances critical analysis is pointless - Bowie's back to sounding like Anthony Newley and appears to bleed a great deal in the process.

*MM Feb 27*

#### Monsoon *Ever So Lonely*

PHONOGRAM

I've often wondered why the charts have always been rather short on Indian music, but I think this little pop gem will change all that. Monsoon's 16-year-old singer Sheila Chandra has a lovely voice and coupled with Steve Coe's sensitive pop

production - reminiscent of Dammers' side of "The Boiler" - I see a fine future for this.

*MM Mar 20*

#### Felt *Something Sends Me To Sleep*

CHERRY RED

So, Sutherland wasn't lying. This is sparse, insistent and ultimately gripping. It's been out before and Steve reckons they're capable of better, but it's nevertheless a confident, powerful introduction. *MM Feb 27*

#### Bauhaus *Kick In The Eye*

BEGGARS BANQUET

The Bauhaus boys don't seem to like me. Pity because I really like this. Mind you, it's the only half (in)decent thing they've ever plonked out, and a certain Mr Bowie could have more than a mite to do with that. "Kick" has actually been out walkies before on a much tighter leash and, as the Northampton dracs don't seem to be gaining the notoriety I expected of them last year, I doubt this one will creak open the ol' coffin lid and swoop up the charts any more than it did last time round.

*MM Feb 20*

#### Alexei Sayle *'Ullo John! Gotta New Motor?'* SPRINGTIME

Fact of life: good comedians make lousy singles (exception is Benny Hill's "Ernie"). And lousy comedians are even worse. Sayle appears to have gained some dodgy credibility with 'new wave comedy', but being socially aware and not telling racist jokes doesn't automatically make him

funny. This sends up people who buy new cars and make small talk - and it's a dud.

*MM Feb 27*



# “Togetherness is more important”

— NME FEBRUARY 13 —

**I**TAIN'T WHAT you wear... it's the way that you wear it. In a bald flash of bold fashion, the Fun Boy Three lope languidly into the foyer of Coventry's Belgrade Theatre like a team of modern pentathletes limbering up for an afternoon's training.

Clad in their craggy kit—dread-plaits and sweatshirts, moccasins and tracksuits—the three interlopers cut a stark and imposing spectacle for the city-centre shoppers and some startled schoolgirls.

“I think I might come 'ere and see a play someday,” muses the mischievous Neville Staple, oblivious to the turning heads of the baffled bystanders.

“A play? You'd 'ave culture shock!” retorts the droll Terry Hall.

The third Fun Boy, Lynval Golding, meanwhile, shies away from the horseplay and concentrates instead on the entrance to Shades discotheque, not far down the road. It was there that he was viciously assaulted, beaten and almost killed in a mindless, totally unprovoked attack five weeks ago.

The scars and stitches that Lynval received that night remain in the deep, surly furrows that mark the right side of his face and neck, making it difficult for him to move his head more than a couple of inches. He still allows himself a withering glance in the direction of the pub doorway.

“I'll never set foot in that place again,” he murmurs before heading back to join Neville and Terry for the photo session.

Lynval spent a week in hospital, the first night in intensive care, and is due to see a specialist shortly to determine whether his sight has suffered any lasting damage. Three white men, meanwhile, have been arrested in relation to the attack.

On the surface, Lynval has been recovering well. He meets the photographer and I off the train with a grin and a can of Heineken and he deals with the numerous well-wishers keen to remind him of something he'd sooner forget. The mental bruises, though, cut deeper than his facial scars. He was conscious all the way through it.

“I remember just staggering around. It was like dancing across a tightrope, trying to balance myself. I could feel myself going... falling... but I just kept »

**After the demise of The Specials, three members form the FUN BOY THREE. Terry Hall, Lynval Golding and Neville Staple talk urban violence, explain the Specials split, the surprising truth behind “Ghost Town”, even the appeal of “punk” band Bananarama.**





The lunatics take over New York City: (l-r) Neville Staple, Lynval Golding and Terry Hall

thinking that I had to keep myself together. The worst thing I have ever experienced was thinking that I was going to die.

"The evening after it all, I couldn't get to sleep because I had a real fear of dying. Even at 3am in the morning, after I'd been stitched up and I was starting to nod off, I just had to pull myself together and stay awake. It was just awful.

"I'd never been in hospital before and it just totally freaked me out. When they started to talk about my religion and next of kin and everything, I began to think, 'BLOODY 'ELL, I'M GOING TO DIE.' I'd never experienced anything like that before. I was in the intensive care unit and all I could hear was the guy in the next bed coughing all night long.

"At first I didn't realise how badly I'd been cut up. It wasn't until I tried to get a glass of water and couldn't hold the glass that it hit me. My nerves were all dead down that side of my body. I couldn't do a thing. I was like a little baby. I suddenly realised that I was pretty badly hurt."

**I**N SPITE OF the horror of the attack on Lynval, the Fun Boy Three have good reason to be guardedly optimistic about their future. Their debut single, "The Lunatics (Have Taken Over The Asylum)" was a sizeable chart hit, giving the trio an early confidence boost in the wake of their departure from The Specials in the autumn.

Their second single—a cocksure cover of Jimmie Lunceford's '30s swing standard "It Ain't What You Do (It's The Way That You Do It)"—saw them team up with a tough and torrid Bananarama, London's all-girl vocal triplets, and that now looks set to emulate the success of its predecessor.

Then there is the trinity's debut album, *The Fun Boy Three*, due for release by Chrysalis at the beginning of March. The two sides of the LP showcase the two main lyrical concerns of the Fun Boys: Side One deals ambitiously with global problems via tracks such as "The Lunatics..." and "Life In General", while Side Two takes things down to a more personal level in songs like "Ain't What You Do" and "The Telephone Always Rings".

"I felt really sad for the people that did this to me... they're sick"

It is a brave debut, the group's rough-and-ready attitude to the recording studio producing some challenging, untutored pop noise: each song is built up from a rhythm box base and then recorded and mixed by producer Dave Jordan in just one take for maximum spontaneity.

The songs are usually stark and straightforward, respecting one tradition in the use of classic Jamaican three-part vocal harmonies and toasts but challenging another in the rejection of the rigid instrumental roles of The Rock Band.

Such a free-and-easy approach sometimes results in sprawling, heavily percussive excuses for songs and rambling, indulgent instrumental excesses. At their best, however, the Fun Boy Three make music that is active and enticing, music that says things that need saying without being grey and worthy, music that is strong and vital because of the simplicity of its statements—a set of sounds that make a mockery of the divide between rebel music and the new pop.

The Fun Boy Three are as straightforward in conversation as they are on record. They are also a motley crew, the extreme differences in their personalities giving them their greatest strength as a group.

Fun Boy One Neville Staple has an excess of natural energy and is the most ebullient member of the trio. In the space of one afternoon, he manages to try his luck good-naturedly chatting up almost every young woman he comes into contact with. When it comes to the

interview, perversely, he is the quietest of the three, a reticence he puts down to his recent throat operation.

Fun Boy Two Terry Hall, he of the deep-set Vulcan eyes and shaven sideburns—"Once a week at my local Coventry barbershop"—is dry and laconic. He will occasionally grin to himself at the realisation of some deep irony in the conversation, but it will be something he usually keeps to himself. In The Specials, he said little. Now he will talk openly and intelligently, relishing the comparative freedom he enjoys in the Fun Boy set-up.

Fun Boy Three Lynval Golding is the most thoughtful, reflective member of the band.

IVAN HOUTEN / REX FEATURES

FB3 with Bananarama collaborators: (l-r) Sara Dallin, Siobhan Fahey and Keren Woodward





One of the most humble musicians I have yet met, he is also the group's most loquacious spokesman. The plaintive sadness of his best Specials songs – “Why?” and “Do Nothing” – is in sharp contrast with the courage and optimism of the man attacked and nearly killed in a Coventry nightclub last month.

Somewhere between the two, lies the heart and hope of the Fun Boy Three.

**Your reaction to the attack was very noble. Most people would feel only anger, or maybe a thirst for revenge, but you were humble and forgiving. It must have taken a lot of inner courage given the state that you were in physically.**

**Lynval:** The thing is that I'm not the sort of person who likes people fussing around after me. I'd rather keep it to myself. I'll go through the pain and I won't tell anyone that I'm going through the pain, even if it means going through hell. I'd never been in a hospital before and I felt embarrassed about ringing the bedside bell to bring the nurses running. I'd rather keep it within myself.

The other day, though, I got really annoyed. I was feeling really low, really down, and I just thought to myself, “Why am I going through this agony when the person that did this to me is suffering no pain?” I had a really hard time over that... but I still think that drawing blood from that person isn't going to solve any problem. That's not going to make it better.

The best thing to do is show the other side. Show that the only way forward is not to be as violent and silly as they are. I don't believe in revenge like that. I don't believe in drawing someone else's blood.

At the time, I felt really sad for the people that did this to me. Someone that goes out with the intention of killing someone has to be in need of help. They need to be put in hospital and looked at. People like that are sick people. It would be wicked of me to go out and attack such sick men. These people are disturbed! It's like the person that shot John Lennon... these men are ill.

**Are you any the wiser now as to the exact circumstances, or the motives for the attack?**

**Lynval:** It was just weird. I just walked into something that I didn't know anything about. It's not as if I went out to get into a fight. I didn't throw a punch... I wasn't prepared for anything. It came as a total shock, just as if I'd walked into a brick wall. Now I'm just asking myself why? I just can't work it out really.

**Do you look on it as a racially motivated thing, or was it just some personal dispute that you got innocently caught up in?**

**Lynval:** I think it was a personal thing in that these white guys were looking for revenge over something that had happened to them a few weeks ago. But it was also a racial thing in that the white guys that did it went into the club with the sole intention of getting as many black guys as possible just 'cos they were annoyed with one black guy.

**Neville:** One tried to have a go at me and I just jumped out of the way because it had nothing to do with me, but if I'd known that Lynval was going to be attacked, I'd have been in there too.

**It's bitterly ironic that you should be the victim of such a mindless act after writing a song, “Why?”, that condemns just that sort of thing.**

**Lynval:** “Why?” was written about what happened to me about a year ago in London when I was beaten up outside the Moonlight Club, but the song seems to have even more meaning now. It's all in that song. After this, I don't know what I should say next, really. You just get confused.

All I was saying in that song was, “Why do you have to do things like that?” and it still happens. What do I say next? The greatest thing would be to actually get through to the people that did this to me. You've got to keep on. I'm not the sort of person who gives up. If I believe in something, I'll carry on regardless. I might get hammered and god knows what, but I won't shut up. I'll keep on singing songs like that.

**The Fun Boy Three's break from The Specials last year seems to have been planned well in advance. Your debut single was in the charts only a couple of weeks after the split and the fact that Lynval and Terry did all the interviews around the time of “Ghost Town” hinted at the various factions that were pulling the band apart.**

**Terry:** It was planned in advance, but there was no real point in telling the others when we first started thinking about breaking away. It would only

have caused friction. Some of them probably knew it was on the cards anyway...

**Wasn't it deceitful to form the Fun Boy Three behind the back of the rest of The Specials?**

**Terry:** It wasn't deceitful. They knew it was coming. Originally our last gig was going to be the Campaign For Jobs at the Rainbow. But the three of us decided

to stay on for “Ghost Town” and an American tour just to see if there was any way that we could hold on. By the time we got back from that tour there was no way. The Specials had become one big joke. Jerry was drafting people into the band and the first we'd know about it was when they turned up on stage! And then you'd have people walking off stage during sets! I'd be doing my compere bit, introducing the members of the band, and when I looked around half of them weren't there!

**Lynval:** We all tried very hard to keep the band together, but the politics within the group just weren't right. We just couldn't communicate with each other any more. We couldn't work together any more. That was the worst thing, the thing that annoyed me the most.

**Neville:** It got to the stage where we didn't all have a say in what The Specials were doing. But we're not kids, so we should have a say. People can't be yes-men all the time.

**Just after the second album, *More Specials*, you took a six month break from touring and recording as a band. Was that the trial separation that preceded your divorce from the rest of The Specials?**

**Lynval:** I think that period really helped us. It showed the three of us that we could work together. The three of us went into TW Studios last January and put down some demos. What we did then was the Fun Boy Three in its original form, well over a year ago. There were a lot of rumours of unrest in The Specials around the time of “Ghost Town”.

**Terry and Lynval were said to be unhappy with the way their solo compositions turned out on the “Ghost Town” EP.**

**Lynval:** I was far from happy with the way “Why?” turned out. The production was lousy, particularly as we'd done demos of the same song as the Fun Boy Three which were much better.

**Terry:** The trouble with those songs was that we always had to have a guitar part and a bassline and so on just to accommodate The Specials as a band. I wanted the song “Friday Night Saturday Morning” to be recorded with just a piano and vocals, as if it were being sung by a bloke in a pub, not by a band.

**What about the “zoot” image that you were pushing on *Top Of The Pops* at the time? It seemed very forced. It looked as if you'd nicked it from Blue Rondo À La Turk.**

**Terry:** I wasn't very keen on it at the time. It was as if the skinhead image had gone out of fashion and we had to find the next big thing and ended up in zoot suits.

**Neville:** I hated the way we looked in the “Ghost Town” video. I looked a right stuffed prat in me double-breasted jacket! It was as if we had no ideas of our own and had to follow somebody else. We had to copy someone and at the time it was Blue bloody Rondo!

**You must have been happy with “Ghost Town”, though.**

**Neville:** We were happy enough with the song itself, but we didn't get any credit for our part in writing it. I wrote most of the lyrics to “Ghost Town”, Jerry did most of the music.

**Lynval:** The lyrics of “Ghost Town” came from a trip me and Neville took to Jamaica. Kingston is a real ghost town. The place is a complete wreck and that was what gave us the idea for “Ghost Town”. It was the first time I'd been to Jamaica in 20 years and it was frightening! You go downtown and you get people begging you for a dollar, begging you for the shoes on your feet!

“Ghost Town” was inspired by Jamaica, but it's about Britain too. We're going through a similar thing over here. Coventry is supposed to be an industrial town, but now that all the industry is closing down, it's becoming like a ghost town.

**I thought that “Ghost Town” worked particularly well as an EP, a complete package. The three tracks went together really well, including Terry's “Friday Night Saturday Morning”, the one that people tend to overlook. »**

**Terry:** The thing about that was that it showed the two sides of Coventry. On one hand you have unemployment, the youth getting angry and fighting, and on the other you have the typical Friday-night scene in the taxi queue, the vomiting and pissing.

**It's a very vivid portrayal of the traditional working-class weekend binge, the Locarno drinks, the hen party and their leather bags, the pie and chips at the taxi rank and so on. But you look on that sort of life with disdain, almost contempt, just as The Specials did in the past in songs like "Nite Klub" and "Stereotype".**

**Terry:** "Friday Night" is about me. I was saying, what's the point in me going out and doing all that? But I wasn't knocking it. That's what I used to do every weekend. I was always getting turfed out of clubs and chased and beaten up.

Then I got to 21 and began to think, "Fuck it, I don't want to get beaten up any more." That lifestyle was great at the time, but you get enough of it after a while. It's a mundane song about a mundane lifestyle.

**Neville:** I don't go out and get pissed up. I might have a drink but I always like to know what I'm doing, so I don't get drunk. When you get pissed, you're not in control of that.

**Lynval:** Then again, I'm the complete opposite... I'll still go out and get absolutely paralytic! It'll probably be about six months before I get to the stage where I can do that again, though. I used to feel really free and easy in clubs. Now I'm going to be really paranoid. Last week I went to London for the first time since I was beaten up. I went into a pub and I just couldn't handle it! There was a load of people around and I just started shaking. I couldn't feel comfortable; I'm going through the same thing that I went through after being beaten up in London. It took me a long time to be able to relax in a club after that.

**The Fun Boy Three seem to be a far more democratic group than The Specials ever were in terms of songwriting and recording. Is that an intentional reaction against the frustrations you felt towards the end of The Specials?**

**Lynval:** Because there are only three of us, we tend to be a lot closer than we were in The Specials. In The Specials, we were really close at first because we had one thing in mind – to get the 2-Tone thing across to people. We were close then, although we were never really friends. It was more of a working relationship.

The great thing about the group now is that we have no fixed instrumental roles. I enjoy playing more now, because I'm not just confined to the guitar. I can play the drums, bass, piano... it's a totally different ball game now! I used to enjoy playing in The Specials, but I also had a longing to play other instruments as well. The Specials never gave me the chance to do that. We've got a lot more freedom now.

**The link-up with Bananarama looks like a pretty sharp move. How did that come about?**

**Lynval:** We just heard their single and that was that. We knew immediately that they were the right lot for us.

**Terry:** We like the idea of having sidekicks and we liked the way Bananarama looked in their pictures. We wanted people that we could nick ideas off, people that could nick ideas off us. It was obvious when we saw Bananarama – three girls doing more or less the same as us.

We enjoy working with Bananarama 'cos they don't have



any studio experience. That suits our way of recording fine. It's more natural. They don't know all the tricks of the recording studio, so they just went in and sang. They didn't know what "cans" were. They called them headphones. It was like being in a punk band again.

**Your method of working, recording and mixing each song in just one take must leave a lot to chance. Wouldn't just a little discipline**

**be a good thing in the recording studio?**

**Terry:** But recording the way we do is more disciplined than the conventional way! If you don't rehearse everything beforehand, you have to give it your full concentration when you actually record a song! You don't have four weeks or whatever to come up with a certain song. You just have to go in and do it.

That's the best way to do it. In The Specials there was always this really intense pressure in the studio. Every record had to live up to the last one. Sometimes we had to follow a No 1 like "Too Much Too Young", and that does put a lot of pressure on you.

**I would have thought that sort of pressure could also act as an incentive, a kind of creative tension.**

**Terry:** It can also restrict you, 'cos you think you always have to write absolutely wonderful songs. But since we left The Specials our attitude to recording has completely changed.

**The sort of liberties you allow yourselves now can also result in the kind of indulgent garbage that PiL sometimes serve up. Are you aware of the dangers in such an anarchic attitude to the recording studio?**

**Terry:** In a way, yeah, but it's more like a hobby with us. It's something that really matters to us. We just want to go against the whole process of writing, rehearsing and recording a song the way we did in The Specials. We record for ourselves, but we release records for other people. If we record something unlistenable, then naturally we don't release it.

**The Specials hit a new peak – artistically and commercially – with the success of "Ghost Town". Wasn't it something of a gamble leaving the group when you did, a matter of weeks after their biggest hit?**

**Terry:** I suppose it was a gamble leaving when we did. We'd have been a real laughing stock if we'd fallen flat on our faces. The fact that people have taken to us pretty well has been great. If we hadn't left The Specials when we did, we'd probably have been stuck there for the rest of our lives.

**Lynval:** I'd hate to see the British music scene become like the American scene where everybody plays safe and sounds exactly the same as every other band. I'm glad that there's a place for groups like us. In England, when it comes to new ideas, our young musicians can be the most creative and original in the world.

**Did The Specials achieve what they set out to do?**

**Lynval:** By the time we split, yeah, I think we had. We achieved one of our aims, which was to make the youth a bit more aware of things around them.

**Terry:** I think that's all you can hope to do – make people aware. I mean "Ghost Town" was No 1 in the chart and there were still riots and fights long after that, so it didn't achieve anything as far as stopping that. It just highlighted it. It's the same with the anti-racist songs. It might help make some kids more aware, but it doesn't stop racism.



Terry Hall: "It was a gamble leaving The Specials when we did"



"Seven years ago we'd have been throwing bricks at each other": Fun Boys in the studio, 1982

**So where do the Funboys stand in the current scheme of things? Post-punk rebels?**

**Neville:** Me a rebel! We've always been rebels! It's the way we grew up, so we don't need to talk about no street credibility or nothin' like that. It's not something that we think about. We're not middle class. We're from the street, always been street boys. We know what we're singing about 'cos we're from the same level.

**Terry:** It's like racism. We don't need to talk about it, because we've all been through it. It's pretty ironic how the three of us are together now when seven years ago we'd have been throwing bricks at each other! I can remember being in the same gang fights as these two guys, only we were on different sides! We were the kids we sang about in *The Specials*.

**Neville:** We don't need to go on about all that street credibility shit, 'cos that's where we come from. I'll tell you this. Everybody that's on the street wants to better themselves. They're all sick of the streets! They have ambition.

My dad said one thing to me and that was, "Try and make something of your life." That's what I'm doing! Your roots are always with you anyway. I still get up to things that I shouldn't. I don't nick things like I used to, but I'll still mix with people that I shouldn't mix with. That's just something that's within you, something that you can't break away from.

**Lynval:** I still see Coventry as my home. I'd like to travel, maybe spend some more time in Jamaica, but that's not my home the way that Coventry is. People in Jamaica think that me and Neville are foreigners. To them, we weren't Jamaicans, even though we were born there. We talked differently and we lived a different lifestyle.

Home is where you lay your head, not where your parents' roots are. A lot of Rastas think that their home is Ethiopia and they want to go back there. But to me, home is where you are happiest, and I'm happy here.

**Do you feel part of any black British culture?**

**Lynval:** In some ways I do, but to me togetherness is more important than being part of that culture. I went to see Black Uhuru play in Birmingham last year and it was the heaviest atmosphere that I'd ever

"I adjusted 'cos I know there's good and bad in all races in the world"

encountered. Just 'cos I don't smoke ganja I was getting hassle from all the dreads. Those guys took the piss out of me just 'cos I didn't smoke. But if I smoke that stuff I just end up flat on me back! It's not me.

I think that a lot of the black and Indian kids in England are really confused. They have rejected their family's way of life and they don't want to know about their ethnic cultural background. They consider themselves British, which is what they are. They weren't brought up in Jamaica or India, and they wouldn't be able to live there if they went back. England is their home.

A lot of those kids feel disenfranchised. They are the first to be denied the material rewards that the British educational system promises them. But I know all that, 'cos I've experienced it. When I first came over here from Jamaica I was 11 years old and I had to go through all that discrimination at school.

I went through hell trying to adjust. It was very difficult, but I adjusted 'cos I know that there's good and bad in all races in the world. As long as you realise that, you can't go wrong.

**Despite all that you've been through, your message seems basically to be one of hope.**

**Lynval:** It has to be. You've got a small band of people preaching hatred, but they're only a small minority. It's important to realise that. Most people are not racist. If the majority of people were, there would have been a lot more bloodshed in this country than we've seen so far. I feel that people are beginning to come together more, even the Indian and Pakistani kids.

They're all part of the same culture, really; they've all been brought up in the same country. I don't think we should try and separate ourselves. Togetherness is more important.

People have had three years of bands telling them that there is no future. At that rate, they're going to start believing it, which is just plain stupid. I still think there is plenty of hope.

It's all down to the way you use yourself.

There's always hope. *Adrian Thrills* •



IVAN HOUTEN / REX FEATURES



# 1982

APRIL – JUNE

THE CLASH, GIL SCOTT-HERON, ROBERT WYATT, YAZOO AND MORE

## “A serious rethink”

**NME MAY 1** Ahead of a UK tour, Joe Strummer goes missing...

**THE CLASH POSTPONED** the first two dates in their “Know Your Rights” UK tour this week – at Aberdeen (Monday) and Inverness (Tuesday) – because lead singer Joe Strummer has gone missing. And the remaining 18 dates in their schedule are in jeopardy, unless he shows up without further delay.

He was last seen on Wednesday of last week, when he completed a phone interview with a Scottish newspaper. He then walked out of the Clash office – and at press time on Tuesday there was still no sign of the elusive Strummer. So now the band’s manager Bernard Rhodes is appealing for help in finding him.

Rhodes told *NME*: “Joe’s personal conflict is – where does the socially concerned rock artist stand in the bubblegum environment of today? I feel he’s probably gone away for a serious rethink. The first two dates have been postponed, but we must have him back Wednesday (28) at Edinburgh. Please can you help us find him?”

“We are concerned about it, but I think he will be back once he gets wind of how important it is. At the moment we’ve got everything on hold and it’s costing us a lot of money. If I knew where he was today then we would be playing tonight.

“I think Joe has just gone away to examine what it is all about. He’s not gone religious or taken drugs or anything like that. He was feeling really positive about things but I think he feels some resentment about the fact that he was about to go slogging his guts out just for people to slag him off, saying he’s wearing the wrong trousers. It is a bit of a drag. He just got the feeling people were being belligerent about things.

“A lot of people want to destroy the group, but that won’t happen because we are an international group. But they could still destroy The Clash in this country – which we don’t want to happen. Everyone is making out that punk is old-fashioned, but it doesn’t look as if anything important has taken over from it. Joe was one of the people who came up with punk and he’s been through the whole thing, so if people are going to turn around and blow him out they’d better make sure there’s someone better to take his place.

“The kids are going to have the opportunity to get their money back for the postponed shows. They can either save it to buy a new ticket when the gigs are rearranged or they can go out and spend it on a new pair of trousers.

“But we’ve got to find this bloke. He’ll get a bollocking when he gets back, but it’s still better that he comes back.”

Anyone with information about Strummer’s whereabouts should contact Sheila at the Clash office (01-485 8113).

### Stop press

**A T PRESS TIME** *NME* received a report from *The Face* journalist Steve Taylor, who had shared a compartment with Strummer on last Thursday’s boat train to Paris. Strummer was travelling with a girlfriend and was “looking tired, wearing shades, travelling light and consulting a cheap paperback guide to Paris. It looked like he was planning to stay in the city.”

WALTER MCBRIDE/GETTY





Joe Strummer:  
socially concerned  
rock artist goes  
AWOL



Yazoo: Alison 'Alf' Moyet and Vince Clarke

## “You’ve got to have freedom”

**NME APRIL 17** Introducing...Yazoo. “It’s nice to have a vocalist who sings with feeling”

**O**NLY A YEAR ago Mute was a pioneering cottage industry operating out of front rooms and cupboards. Today, three Depeche Mode hits on, they have a West End office and an improved cash flow that supports an expanding, diverse roster, which now embraces two German groups and...Yazoo.

Who?

Let me introduce you. Yazoo are two, one of whom you should already know and the other being the surprise element that makes them an even more unlikely combination.

Yazoo are Vince Clarke and Alf. Alf is female and tall. Vince floated to the top of the pops pile in the Depeche Mode bubble, while Alf barely survived the gruelling bars ‘n’ grime circuit of Southend and Canvey Island blues clubs and bars.

Though both come from Basildon and have known each other for years, their still sounds like an impossible match – something like Kraftwerk fronted by Maggie Bell. But their debut single “Only You” argues otherwise. It adds a new dimension to the passing electro dance, the novel element of emotion coming not only in the deep swell of Alf’s voice, but also in the heartfelt sentiment of Vince’s words and more sombre arrangement.

Best of all, it’s not a clumsy hybrid of two incongruous forms so much as a crafty use of two highly distinctive voices – his electronics

and her singing. It couldn’t have worked any

other way, as Alf’s too much of a purist to even consider messing up the blues with a synth!

“Yeah, I’m a traditionalist,” she asserts.

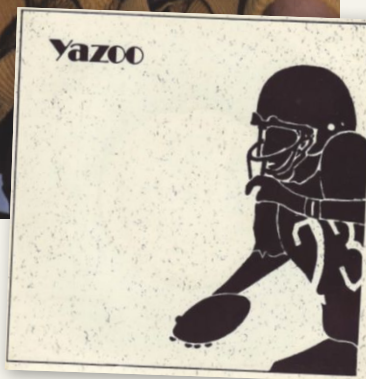
“I can’t accept the fact of blues with synthesisers at all – you can’t bend the strings of a synthesiser can ya?”

“Anyway,” points out Vince, “we’re not setting out to do anything in particular, like blending blues and pop. The stuff we’re doing in the studio, neither of us would’ve done anything like it a year ago.”

Neither of them would’ve crossed paths a year ago. Then, Vince was writing the Depeche Mode hits, which eventually alienated him from the grind that goes with success. He left during the charting of “Just Can’t Get Enough”.

“It wasn’t that I was unhappy, I needed a change from the whole atmosphere,” he says simply. “The recording, tours and interviews – it was all too concentrated, heavy, getting like a job really. You’ve got to have the freedom to move around, but it was too businesslike.

There was no room for doing anything other than that which people expect of you.



“I didn’t have any particular plans, other than staying at home to think. But after a week I got fed up of doing nothing, and so I decided I’d like to do ‘Only You’...”

Alf, on the other hand, had all the time in the world. Her blues band couldn’t get work and thus eventually fell apart.

“We were too rootsy to be commercial,” she says. When she got a call from Vince she swallowed her distaste for all things poppy and frivolous and gave it a try.

“At the time, Depeche Mode never impressed me,” she giggles. “I never listened to chart music at all, I wasn’t even exposed to it before I was with Vince, let alone impressed! The only chart stuff I really like is Chas and Dave!”

How does Vince feel about the blues? His face assumes a slightly embarrassed diplomatic expression, until Alf nips in.

“He hates it, don’t ya Vince? You say it’s really boring.”

“I like, erm, goodtime R&B,” he stutters. “I can listen to about three minutes of it, Dr Feelgood, what with its beat ‘n’ that, but actual Muddy Waters, naah, it’s not got enough textures for my tastes.”

Alf begs to differ. Vince holds his ground. How on earth do they get on in the studio? That’s no problem, they point out, as each is aware of the other’s abilities.

“I think Alf now accepts the synthesiser as an instrument in its own right, not just something that makes funny noises...” says Vince.

Though Alf and Vince have approached music from opposite extremes – he the flighty and ephemeral, she the traditional and enduring – Yazoo doesn’t really compromise either. Armed with a

battery of new instruments, including a micro composer bought on Vince’s Depeche earnings, each studio venture is as much a trial for him as Alf. He’s excited by the possibilities opened up by new technology, talks of experimenting with subliminal low frequencies to create odd intangible

atmospheres, but all that is still up in the air.

More concrete is Alf’s voice, which has given him greater incentive to value words for their meaning as well as their sound. “It’s nice to have a vocalist who sings with feeling,” says Vince. “It’s something you don’t get with most electronic bands. Those

feelings add a whole new texture. I think the voice is the most important instrument.”

Because the combination has been such a success, what began as a one-off now looks like becoming a more permanent proposition.

“Yeah, this is a group,” grins Vince. “This is not Vince Clarke, ex-Depeche Mode....”

“And Alf is not a project,” adds Alf with a defiant smile.

I’m not about to argue. *Chris Bohn*

### Theirs sounds an impossible match – like Kraftwerk fronted by Maggie Bell

Exile on Oxford Street: more than a thousand Stones fans vied for £5 tickets to the 100 Club



## Inequitable and inflationary

**NME APR 10** Blank tape levy debate in Lords

**T**HE MUSIC BUSINESS finally got its Parliamentary debate on the proposed new copyright laws. It came last week when Labour Lord Lloyd of Hampstead - expressing the precise sentiments of the industry - initiated an attack on last year's Government Green Paper on copyright.

He balked, in particular, at the handling of the home-taping question, accusing the Government of being lax in its support of copyright owners. He was endorsed by Labour Lord Willis - author of *Dixon Of Dock Green* - who suggested the Government "didn't care a tinker's damn..."

The Government's answer to all this was that it was still officially in a period of consultation, but nothing was said to suggest it had changed its view that a levy on blank tapes was anything but inequitable, inflationary and unlikely to get to those with the greatest claim.

## More surprises on the way...

**NME JUN 5** Stones spring a West End set

**T**HE ROLLING STONES played a surprise gig at London's 100 Club on Bank Holiday Monday. At 4pm, posters went up around the West End and the 350 tickets, priced £5, were snapped up as crowds estimated at over 1,000 besieged the ticket outlet.

The Stones played a two-hour set; and their appearance lays to rest rumours that they would be playing the Venue or Brixton's Fair Deal. "Neither of those places were ever under consideration," said a spokesperson, though more surprise appearances are planned throughout the country.

Rather less than grunted by all this were The Lydia D'ustebyn Swing Orchestra whose gig was scrapped at the last moment to accommodate the Stones. "Fancy cancelling us for that bunch of clapped out creeps," said Miffed Ms D'Ustebyn. "Of all the lousy joints in the world, they had to pick on the one we were playing in."

Or words to that effect.

➤ Rumours are growing that former Led Zeppelin vocalist Robert Plant will shortly be returning to live work, and speculation has intensified this week with the news that his debut solo album is being released by Atlantic on June 25 - titled *Pictures At Eleven*. Produced and part-written by Plant, the LP also features Phil Collins and Cozy Powell (drums), Jezz Woodroffe (synthesisers), Paul Martinez (bass) and Robbie Blunt (guitar). *NME Jun 5*

➤ Funboy Three's Neville Staple is snapping his Shack label back into action. The upcoming single is "It's A Brand New Day" by Coventry band Splashdown, and it's produced by Neville with former Special Lynval Golding. Release date is June 25. *NME June 12*



➤ David Bowie is poised for a return to the concert platform later this year, after his three-year incursion into films, TV and theatre. *NME* understands that he is planning a string of London concerts in late summer or early autumn, probably at Wembley Arena - though it's not certain they will materialise, as Bowie's penchant for changing his mind is well known. But our sources indicate that he's determined - at the moment. *NME Jun 5*

## A bizarre flying accident

**MM MAR 27** Ozzy Osbourne's guitarist Randy Rhoads is killed

**O**ZZY OSBOURNE'S LEAD guitarist, Randy Rhoads, was killed in a bizarre flying accident in America last week. Rhoads, who was 25, was killed in Orlando, Florida, along with the Ozzy tour bus driver, Andy Aycock, and the band's wardrobe mistress.

Aycock, who held a pilot's licence, was flying the plane and, according to a spokesman for Osbourne, he was going through a series of stunts in it. During one manoeuvre, the plane's wingtip smashed into the back of the tour bus, causing extensive damage to both. The plane flew out of control, crashed into a house and burst into flames.

The future plans of the rest of the band are unknown. The remainder of the US tour is in doubt but it seems likely that they will find a replacement for Rhoads, who was discovered by Ozzy two years ago when the guitarist was playing in an LA band called Quiet Riot.



Randy Rhoads: dead at 25

Gil Scott-Heron:  
beyond the cool  
and nobody's fool

## “Killing is old fashioned!”

**MM APRIL 17** Gil Scott-Heron lays down the law on Reagan, and the new black politics

**N**IGHT DESCENDS AS the sun's light ends, and black comes back to blend again. The last poet of the apocalypse is on the loose, threatening to sing a new song from *Evita*: “Don't Laugh At Me Argentina!”

For 12 years now, from Johannesburg to Montego Bay, the precious words of Gil Scott-Heron have rained down on us like gold dust. A searing storm of invective which began with his first novels *The Vulture* and *The Nigger Factory*, raged on in verse, *Small Talk At 125th And Lennox* and finally curled around a series of crucial albums tracing the pain and absurdity of contemporary oppression.

His running commentary on the black experience is unrivalled. His perceptions transcend race and his observations - “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” - haunt the radical consciousness.

Still angry at 33 - check the latest bulletin, “Reflections”, for a withering commentary on Ronald Raygun (his spelling), the poor man's John Wayne - he fills any room with a lean

six-foot-plus frame and a personality to match.

Beyond the cool and nobody's fool, he speaks in the deep, honey-textured voice that has grown to enrich his music and sports a badge on which a well-known B movie actor says in a bubble: “Give Me Your Social Security By Sundown!”

The son of a Jamaican professional soccer player, he grew up to see the American dream as a cruel nightmare and turned back to roots long before that quest became one more TV serial. While the focus may point to the west, the source of ideas is international.

“That's one of the big problems with America today,” he says. “They think the rest of the planet revolves around them. They don't have any consideration for other people and

other cultures. In that respect, while I deal in American terms, I am very against trying to overwhelm people with what America is or is not.”

Today he lives in Virginia - “because there's less distraction so it's easier to work” - but back in the '60s he helped spearhead the black revolutionary movement in New York and, until recently, his records all carried a logo that seemed to epitomise the street romanticism of the day.

That logo - a mean-eyed gorilla wearing combat gear, ammunition belts and toting a Communist AK47 rifle and a Mexican joint - has vanished, but according to Gil his spirit lives on.

“See, I didn't drop him because I don't believe in violence anymore - I never did. I'm sorta against people killing each other - killing is old-fashioned! I guess we'd just used him 'bout as much as we could.

“Like we always saw this armed gorilla as non-violent anyway. Gorillas are vegetarians, they're monogamous, they're family-orientated and yet they're hard to deal with when they're provoked. And in our community we're often provoked.

“The reason we do the song ‘Gun’ (on *Reflections*) is not because the people have guns but because the police do. And one out of five black men shot in the community is shot by a policeman. So we feel we have every right to defend ourselves. But you will never see us going into someone else's neighbourhood and doing something to offend them.”

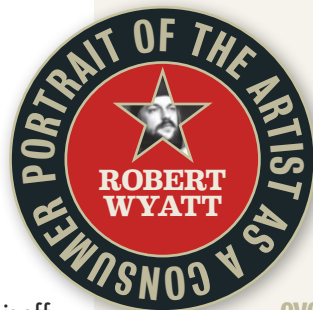
Gil's gorilla recalls the time the Black Panthers stalked the streets armed to the teeth, both for propaganda and protection.

“The idea there was that some people thought it was necessary for us to be armed to defend ourselves and make a stand. Y'know, the police walk down the street like armed desperados.

They got the guns here, the nightclubs there, they got the dog and the riot-sticks and the shotguns and the rifles in the car. You're supposed to feel at home in your neighbourhood yet you're really under siege.”

The fact that so many community leaders,





many of them ministers, were killed, attacked, beaten and shot caused the emergence of The Panthers. "It became symbolic of our struggle and determination to survive and defend ourselves at whatever cost."

But ultimately the activist arm of the black movement failed, not just through establishment repression, but because it lacked the depth of support needed to sustain any long-term survival, he feels.

"People who couldn't be bought were incarcerated by interminable legal proceedings or simply murdered. These were the three alternatives of repression. However, the Panthers also realised they didn't have the full understanding of the community as to where they stood and why."

Cue for Gil Scott-Heron, "See, I feel my chief potential not only lies in my ability to perfect my art but to disseminate ideas. Before people can be organised they have to be informed, and a lot of people try and skip that step on the way to activism. In other words activism is further down the road. If there's no grass roots education you can't organise the people."

He sees the overblown superfluous leaders of the movement as largely irrelevant now,

suggesting future tactics will have to be more painstaking and less outlandish. He cites Eldridge Cleaver, for example, author of the celebrated *Soul On Ice*.

"There's a work thing involved in organising people. It has more to do than just standing on the corner popping off. There's actually some organisation to be done. And as far as that's concerned, a lot of people who've been known as black leaders never led anybody as far as here to that door!"

"Before you can go and change the world you need to get your house straight. Then you need to deal with the next house and then the neighbourhood and then the community. A lot of people jump straight to changing the world before they've done any of the elementary steps that would lead to that possibility."

"A lot of folks were mesmerised by the chance of making statements that would bring the media running. That's why I did 'The Revolution Will Not Be Televised'. It seemed that more than changing the community they wanted to enhance their image as black leaders."

In 1975 Arista released a single called "Johannesburg". Though it's probably his best known number in Britain, in the States it's an obscurity, as is the album it's lifted from. And the reason doesn't require a lot of imagination to guess:

politics and radio airplay in America mix like oil and water and not much better elsewhere.

America may be waiting... but not to hear about the problems of black South Africans. It's a tribute to the man who after years on the frontline can shrug this off with a philosophical indifference.

"I don't suffer from not getting airplay," he says. "They suffer from not hearing me! I never equate a lack of Americanisation with suffering. I don't suffer from a lack of anything as far as America's concerned. The thing is they didn't want to know about South Africa, just like they didn't want to know about slavery or the genocide committed against native tribes of their country."

They didn't want to know about rap, either. He's been using those hard-nosed street rhythms for years, and then suddenly New York and London discover rapping.

Maybe it had something to do with the fact that all the cowboys and gangsters in Gil's songs hung around the White House and not Studio 54. Whatever, he remains open but

critical of the latest line in street jive.

"Y'know, if I turned in some of that stuff when I was in the seventh grade they would have kicked my ass. But you can't chastise young people for being young. You can't jump on folks who want to dance. The black movement is about that too - letting young people be young."

"And beyond that, a lot of young people are now seeing that it was a mistake to put Raygun in power. He got 26 percent of the registered vote, but only 59 percent of the registered voters bothered to vote. There was no choice. It was either this jackass or that jackass."

The real question now then is what are you going to do about your B-movie president?

"Well, I'll tell you what we're gonna do - we're gonna learn to do without him! We're gonna stop being extras in his features, right?"

Ian Pye

**"Before you can change the world you need to get your house straight"**



**NME FEB 20** The former Soft Machine and Matching Mole man casts a discerning eye over cultural artefacts

### Songs

Hopelessly Without You Carroll Thompson

You Bring The Sun Out Janet Kay

Love Don't Live Here Any More Rose Royce

Every Little Bit Hurts Brenda

Holloway

I Put A Spell On You Nina Simone

Love Me Tonight Trevor Walters

### Tune

Peace Ornette Coleman (from *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* LP)

### Recent LP

Wynton Marsalis

### Drummers

Max Roach, Connie Kay and Brian Abrahams.

### Arrangers

Melba Liston ("A trombonist who's worked with Dizzy Gillespie, Charles Mingus, Quincy Jones and - a particular favourite - on Randy Weston's *Tanjah* LP.")

Fela Kuti ("I know he's only got one arrangement, but it's so good it doesn't matter.")

Philip Loutev ("A Bulgarian choir arranger, a kind of Bulgarian folk version of what Gil Evans did for Miles Davis.")

### Soviet musicians

Alexei Koslov - jazz reeds player and arranger

Igor Brill - jazz keyboards

Folk and jazz from the Southern USSR

("I like Soviet jazz very much. It's unusual in that the musicians are often highly trained formally, but they also play very fiercely, avoiding formal straitjackets.")

### Films

Ceddo Ousmane Sembene (Senegal, 1976)

Death Of A Cameraman Faliero Rosati (Italy, 1978)

The Outsiders Mrinal Sen (India, 1977)

India Song Marguerite Duras (France, 1976)

### Some authors I like

Jean Rhys, Frantz Fanon, Jack Santa Maria

### Radio programme

Alex Pascall on BBC Radio London

("He does the *Black London* programme, which is a community show that actually responds to what people want to talk about - a breakthrough in radio. He also plays records nobody else plays: soca, calypso and music for older black people in England - Nat King Cole and suchlike - which I like because I'm old, too.")

### Political commentators

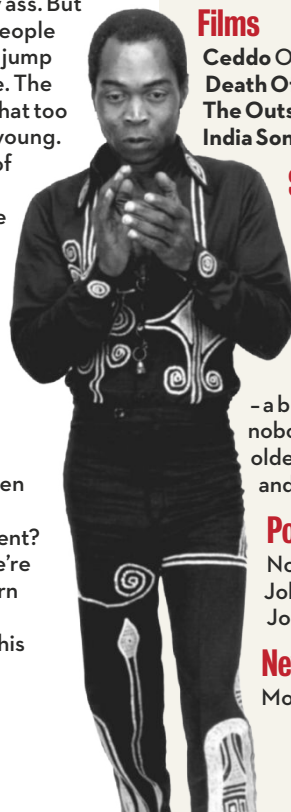
Noam Chomsky

John Pilger

Jonathan (as opposed to David) Dimbleby

### Newspaper

Morning Star



1982

APRIL - JUNE



March 25, 1982:  
Tracey Thorn and  
Benn Watt by the  
River Thames in  
Richmond, South-  
West London



# “Cut off from what is fashionable”

**Introducing two young talents. Ben Watt is a lyrical songwriter who has worked with Robert Wyatt. Tracey Thorn leads Hatfield's MARINE GIRLS. They have worked together on a single as EVERYTHING BUT THE GIRL. Perhaps it's a one-off?**

— MELODY MAKER APRIL 24 —

**C**LOUDS TUMBLING ABOVE us, the sun on the run; a woman on a park bench, crying; and Ben Watt attempting to define his views on pop music. “Actually,” he said, “I used to sneer at it until quite recently. I never thought it was important. I thought it was disposable. Now I realise that it's really very important and vital. The most essential thing is the ability to communicate. And pop music communicates. Simply and directly.

“I think that it's important that there's a balance between a fizziness in pop music and the seriousness of, if you like, un-pop music. Like, in the theatre, if you look at the literary stage, it's always an examination of the human condition and a continual dissection and pointing out of human failings, telling us how awful we are and what a waste of time it is being alive. Which is perhaps the kind of feeling that Ian Curtis and Jim Morrison expressed. »

DAVID CORIO / GETTY

"But bands like Joy Division have to play off bands like Haircut One Hundred, because at the same time, we need an examination of ourselves and a pointing out of how awful we are and we need to have our spirits lifted, to be shown how marvellous we are or can be.

"If we were continually bashing our heads against the wall saying how weak and frail we are and what failures we all are, we'd probably end up topping ourselves, as some people have done. So we need bands like Haircut One Hundred and Orange Juice and fizzy pop bands, to prove we are marvellous and can just dance and forget and be entertained..."

Ben Watt paused to light a cigarette. "Oh dear," he said, "I'm afraid I'm not feeling terribly articulate today."

Ben was listening to a lot of music, but very little of it was actually saying anything. The immediate impulse was to form a band, but he didn't know any musicians. No problem; he'd play on his own; just a guitar, voice and maybe some backing tapes. He hustled a gig at a club in Richmond, run at the time by Mike Alway of Cherry Red, the independent record label. This was in October, 1980.

Alway was impressed but not convinced by Ben Watt's performance at the Richmond club; he asked him to record a demo for Cherry Red. Ben went home and wrote 10 songs in 10 days, went into Alaska studios in Waterloo to get them down on tape. "To my amazement, Cherry Red actually liked them. They said they wanted to sign me; I thought they were mad. Really, I mean, those songs were just awful. I couldn't listen to them now. They were dreary and tuneless. Joy Division was the big thing at the time; they kind of defined the prevailing atmosphere.

"Listening back to the original demo tape, I think, would be excruciating. I'm sure it sounds diabolical. I now realise that those songs were written from the head, not the heart. I remember at the time, I wasn't completely convinced by them; now I know why. I don't know how I wrote those lyrics. They were so ponderous, so serious. Boring, really.

"You try to be really serious at 17, try to make out that you're older than you are. It wasn't until last summer that I realised that you can get across a lot more if you're prepared to write about yourself. If you can write about your own emotions it's a lot more effective than a lot of vague philosophising about the state of the world. I'm just relieved that I realised that in time."

**THE MOST RECENT** recorded example of Ben Watt's confident talent is a 12-inch EP on Cherry Red. It's called "Summer Into Winter", and as its title suggests, its mood is generally autumnal; poignant and reflective, the songs reach out for fading innocence, declare affections for passing loves.

"Walter And John", with Robert Wyatt supplying a touching vocal counterpoint to Watt's yearning lead, evokes a childhood friendship, regrets the eventual separation with a drifting, melancholy elegance. More sensual, "Aquamarine" is a deep-sea boom of echoing guitars and

voices that anticipates the rich acoustic grace of "Slipping Slowly" and "A Girl In Winter", which find Watt located in the kind of territory most recently occupied by John Martyn. There are intimations here, too, of Tim Buckley (*Blue Afternoon* and *Lorca*) and Dino Valente.

"I think the gentleness and the swirliness of the songs that went onto the record were complemented perfectly by Robert," Ben Wyatt said, explaining Wyatt's presence on the 12-inch. "I just knew he'd be perfect. The softness of his approach, the trickling, watery piano style he has, his voice, they were all so right for the mood of the songs."

Too young to clock the original releases of Wyatt's formidable solo LPs, *Rock Bottom* and *Ruth Is Stranger Than Richard*, Ben picked up on Wyatt through his Rough Trade singles, notably "Strange Fruit". That led him back through Wyatt's previous work and eventually into his living room.

Wyatt had been approached by Cherry Red to appear on "Summer Into Winter", he'd expressed some interest, but a definite commitment was slow in coming. Ben was about to start a university course in English and Drama in Hull, and was becoming increasingly impatient with Wyatt's prevarication.

"Finally I said, 'Right, I'll just go and see him.' I just wanted to get something sorted out. I phoned him and he invited me around and by the end of the afternoon it was all settled and he said he'd really like to do it."

What were his impressions of Wyatt?

"I was rather shocked, actually," he said, "by his melancholy. I don't know, perhaps he still hasn't come to terms with the fact that he was once a great drummer and he's now in a wheelchair. And it's been, like, eight years since his accident, but I got the impression that he still finds it hard to come to terms with the fact that he'll never do again what he really wanted to do: be a great drummer.

"I remember talking to him after we'd done his session for the 12-inch. We were sitting in the doorway of Alvic studios waiting for his cab, and it was very sad. I asked him if he was ever going to do another album and he said he didn't think so, he had no real aspirations. He didn't know what to do next, but he really felt there was something else he should be doing at this time in his life, but he really didn't know what it was. He felt he was just drifting from day to day.

"One of the main things that seemed to engage him was politics. His political convictions have become very, very strong. Like, he's got El Salvador stickers on the wheels of his wheelchair. I just hope he feels encouraged by the reviews of *Nothing Can Stop Us*. I mean, he should be recording, he's so talented."

Another, perhaps more curious, focus for Ben Watt's admiration turns out to be Paul Weller.

"I have a massive regard for Weller. Which is quite strange. If someone listened to my 12-inch, they wouldn't think that I'd be into Paul Weller. But I really do admire him. I think it's perhaps the earnestness of his lyrics that I like. The bitterness with which he sings them. The total conviction.

"Sometimes I get the feeling that he's not particularly well informed and that he tends to generalise, but that may be because he's selling to a young market, and I don't think especially subtle imagery would mean very much to them."

Don't turn over the page yet: there's a little more. Who should be waiting for Ben when he turned up to enrol at college in Hull? Why, Tracey Marine Girl! Since Cherry Red had just signed that sheerly wonderful combo, they suggested that Ben and Tracey might get together to while away those lonely hours on Humberside. They did, working under the name Everything But The Girl. They've cut a forthcoming single, a beautifully haunting version of Cole Porter's "Night And Day".

"She's a great singer and I'm a competent guitarist," Ben said, "and the common ground was jazz. She's really into great singers like Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. We've rubbed off on each other in the sense that she's introduced me to a lot of contemporary pop music that I'd never listened to before, like Aztec Camera and Orange Juice, and I've shown her a lot of things that I was into, like The Doors and John Martyn.

"I don't know if we'll do any more work together, though. There's been

talk of an album and Thomas Leer has said that he'd like to produce it, but I'm not really sure. What I really want to do is an album of my own. Cherry Red have given me the go-ahead for that, and I'm very grateful. As a few people there have commented, they're very possibly the only company who would've signed me. Because my music is very unfashionable, I suppose.

"Which isn't to say that I cut myself off from what is fashionable. I mean, I don't sit at home all day listening to John Martyn, Kevin Coyne or Robert Wyatt. I listen to them as much as I listen to Haircut One Hundred, Orange Juice or the Marine Girls or Scritti Politti. It just happens that when it comes to my music, I write in a certain way. And I think it would be foolish to go

out and try deliberately to write a fashionable pop song if it's not in you.

Actually, I think it would be quite nice if fashion came to me. I'm certainly not going to chase it."

Allan Jones

— NME APRIL 10 —

## "There are difficulties in being an all-girl band these days"



Everything But The Girl

**I**T WAS BY the shore of the modest boating lake in London's Regent's Park that I first encountered the Marine Girls, three young women who appear to have an unnatural



fascination with all things maritime. The Marine Girls don't sing solely about the seaside. It just seems that way sometimes – their two cassette albums have been called *A Day By The Sea* and *Beach Party*, the latter distinguishing itself with the tracks like “Holiday Song” and the murky “20,000 Leagues”, while their distinctive home-made handbills are liberally sprinkled with sand-shuffling slogans like “Go Dolphin Go” and “Catch The Cod”.

But there is something more than the merely fishy going on here. The Marine Girls are crafting some of the most memorable, melancholy love-pop since the post-punk heyday of Buzzcocks and Undertones.

The Marine Girls sing what guitarist Tracey Thorn calls “drippy love songs”. And she should know, for most of those whimsical and occasionally ironic songs come from her perceptive pen – vignettes that are in turn vulnerable and vitriolic, capturing the joy, the uncertainty and the bitterness of an affair with conversational ease and unpretentious honesty.

Like most good bands, the Marine Girls began as a hobby. Tracey, then in the sixth form at Hatfield Girls School, had quit as guitarist in local group The Stern Bops and was looking for new musicians. She found them in her classmates Gina and Jane, the latter's younger sister Alice later joining as an additional vocalist.

Early performances were confined to bedrooms, parties, sheds and garages, one of these surfacing on the C30 cassette *A Day By The Sea*, to be followed by the more ambitious *Beach Party*, now available on vinyl on the TV Personalities' Whaam! label. Other than this, the girls contribute one track to the Naïve compilation *Rupert Preaching At A Picnic* and recently released their debut 45 “On My Mind”, an *NME* Single Of The Week.

Like *On My Mind*, the *Beach Party* cassette was released on the small Essex independent In Phaze and produced by the label supremo Patrick Birmingham. Despite its low-budget lo-fi approach – the 16 tracks were recorded and mixed in just two days – the album contains some stunning music, Tracey and Alice sharing vocals with Jane bossing the bass and Gina, who has since left the group, contributing the chiming guitars.

Like many female groups, the Marine Girls' music is completely devoid of the cack-handed bluster often associated with your average male rock band. The trio don't even possess a drummer, although Alice occasionally chips in with some hand percussion. This more natural approach to the propensities of sound gives them a deftness of touch that gets their witty words across with the minimum of fuss – even the more epic of their tunes rarely exceed two minutes in length.

**S**OWHERE DO we go from here? Down to the lake I fear, to hear the Marine Girls' story in their own words in the Saturday afternoon of Regent's Park. The sun is shining, so I decide to get my feet wet and we hire a couple of rowing boats, head well away from the shore and hear Tracey explain her songs.

“At first they might just sound like wimpy little love songs, but they are all about things that have actually happened to me. They're all about someone, but we never say who each one is actually about. Sometimes if something happens, I'll write it in my diary as a song. I couldn't just sit down and say, ‘Right, I'm going to write a song about unrequited love, 'cos that would be really crappy!’

“I don't know if people will look at it as typical girlish stuff. There are difficulties in being an all-girl band these days. There are pressures on you to be either this wonderfully glamorous trio of females like Bananarama or to go completely the other way and do something like The Raincoats and come across as strong feminists or whatever. It's difficult to try and do something in-between and also show intelligence and some perception of what it is to be young.”

Tracey, Jane and Alice will probably shortly be accused of coming on too winsome and childlike for their own good, although their persons are very much their own and not some contrived exploitation of their obvious teen appeal. And the sweet surface of their songs should not hide what is basically a hard and honest, realistic and unromantic approach to affairs of the heart. Of the 16 songs on *Beach Party*, there is hardly one that portrays a completely happy and harmonious relationship, the love-lines always containing a subtle twist of bittersweet vitriol and irony.



April 3, 1982: (l-r) Marine Girls Tracey Thorn, Jane Fox and Alice Fox boating in Regent's Park, London

“Quite a lot of people think that we're just cute little girls singing about lovey-dovey things,” says Jane. “But they just can't have listened to the

words of the songs. And nobody would be able to call Alice ‘sweet’ to her face and be able to get away with it!”

The Marine Girls' refreshing and original approach to their music and the fact that they are female might just be coincidence, although I can't help but feel that they have benefitted in some respects from never being part of the schoolboy rock tradition, taking up their instruments at a slightly later age and with a wonderfully untutored individuality.

“In some ways it is limiting not being able to play your instrument very well,” says Jane. “But it also gives you more scope in that you'll find a new way in which you can play it. You play it in an unconventional way 'cos you are desperate to get some sort of noise out of it. It's an advantage in some ways and a setback in others.”

Their current sounds is light and melodic and probably all the better for that. But would they ever consider tightening up towards something a bit more robust?

“Sometimes I think our sound is just great as it is,” says Tracey. “It is clean and bright and there is nothing there cluttering it. On the other hand, it is also very tinny. I can never decide – it might be an idea to have a percussionist or another guitarist, but not a drummer. That would destroy it, 'cos we put most of the emphasis on the singing rather than the playing – the harmonies and backing vocals.”

Rather than start hunting for a major record deal, the Marine Girls are reasonably happy with things as they are at the moment. With Alice still at school, Jane hoping to go on to study printmaking at college after her foundation year in St Albans and Tracey at university in Hull, the looseness of the independent world suits them fine for the time being.

With the Easter holidays now approaching, they are hoping to resume live work for the first time since last summer and have arranged a local date at Ware in Hertfordshire and one further afield in Birmingham in the coming weeks. Their leisurely, fluid attitude to the band, however, does present its problems, particularly with Tracey resident in Hull for most of the year, where she is also working on a single under the name *Everything But The Girl*.

“Sometimes it means that we don't practise for 10 weeks and we haven't written any new Marine Girls songs for a while,” she reflects as we head back for the shore. “If you're in a band it helps to see the other people and bounce ideas off one another.

“Obviously we've had to rethink things lately, 'cos so many things have come up at once with the single and exams and my solo stuff. It never occurred to me that I'd have to think so seriously about the group before. When we did our first cassette, we only pressed up copies so that our friends could hear us. We never actually expected people to want to buy it.

“We used to treat things as a real joke. The interest people have been showing lately has given us a real incentive.” *Adrian Thrills* •



Roxy Music:  
invading your  
emotions with  
deadly precision

## ALBUMS

### Duran Duran *Rio* EMI

When Duran Duran's debut album started sneaking up the charts, the taste-arbiters tutted dumbfounded and hastily rewrote the rock 'n' roll rule book. Pre-DD it had been customary to chastise any old thing, irrespective of emotional or musical merit, if it didn't attempt to express some environmental opinion. It was expected, at the very least, that pop should try to change the world.

Duran Duran put the kibosh on that, shoved a good half decade of hysterical angst and squat mentality back in the closet, and snipped the purse strings from a legion of hypocritical breast-beaters using punk and its protest as a shabby short-cut to glutinous stardom. Along with Spandau, the Human League, even Altered Images, DD couldn't care less about changing the world... but they changed the face of pop regardless.

Pride in the art, the image and especially the SONG ousted cheap dole-queue patronisation and had the temerity to suggest, by active example, that to be young and poor and unemployed needn't necessarily lead to the morgue.

Now, though, there's only Duran Duran left. Spandau tried to dictate terms three or four times too often and the trick wore thin before skill could take over. Altered Images actually altered their image, leaping scared from Siouxsie Sioux's

coat-tails and re-emerging pathetically paedophilic... and Duran Duran? Well, Duran Duran toured, gave people tunes fit to sing along to again and then, to top all, they made *Rio*.

*Rio* is the true culmination of the much misunderstood New Romanticism - energetic, proud, enthusiastic, joyous; something to escape FULLY into. It cultivates the class that makes Roxy great, it encompasses almost every trend and rhythm going, embraces everything from funk to Thin Lizzy and still sounds unmistakably like Duran Duran; an unashamed new breed of rock band, the unrivalled masters of melody.

Specifics? Where to start? *Rio* scurries off like a speeded-up film of a Saturday shoplifting spree in a crowded store full of musical clichés. The hit single, "My Own Way", gets a reworking that shapes up into a full re-definition with a right bruiser bass-drum muscling through gaggles of gossiping guitars to that lonely beauty on the edge of the dancefloor, and effectively Sweeney Todds those Haircut wimps with one savage belch from the bass.

"Last Chance On The Stairway" boasts what has to be the ultimate catchy chorus, "Save A Prayer" is smooth and slinky and seductive as silk, while "Lonely In Your Nightmare" is a HIT. If there's a duff 'un

here, it's "The Chauffeur", which is a bit too ponderous for its immediate company. If there's a catch, it's that - honest to God - *Rio* is so good, and defines such an exuberant majesty, where the hell do they go from here? Steve

Sutherland, *MM*, May 15

### Roxy Music *Avalon* POLYDOR

Immaculate, out of reach, pristine and contemptuous, Roxy Music have simply sailed away. Out of the blue and comprehensively (as their accountants would probably tell you if pushed) into the black.

From shock troops of the avant-garde to gossip columns and household names, a faultless progression. "But where's your soul - you've a thousand faces/ I'll never know," writes Bryan Ferry in "True To Life". It doesn't matter, actually. Technology sees to that.

Writing about *Avalon* is very similar to reviewing an Eagles album. Both parties have everything sewn up, from artwork to inside leg measurement. I should tell you that I'm not immune to Roxy's sensuous blandishments.

## ALBUMS REVIEW 1982

Everything about *Avalon* has been precision-honed and upholstered with velvet specifically to seek out those most-intimate little

places inside your Total Exclusion Zone. Once they've got this far, there's nothing you can do about it.

Roxy invade your most fatuous, potent emotions with deadly precision. Y'know that old saying about every good cliché containing a kernel of truth? Well Bryan Ferry knows it, too. Ask anybody what they think about "More Than This", for example, and they'll either tell you it's a classic pop song or they'll sneer. If they sneer, they're lying.

"More Than This" has been equipped with just enough pace to launch

surprise attacks from jukeboxes and radios everywhere, and is of course armed with one of Ferry's most exquisitely haunting melodies. Not to mention those immaculate little stings of guitar.

Elsewhere here, the Roxy personnel exhibit considerable cunning in their ability to filter almost anything into their lush soundscapes. In "The Space Between", genteel suggestions of funk are topped off with some discreet saxophone from Andy Mackay. In "India" (never waste a single B-side), the guitar suggests remote whispers of the Raj in an instrumental which never strays far enough from AOR safety to upset anybody.

But throughout all this, from the unambitious mid-tempo of "The Main Thing" or the achingly delicate chord changes of "To Turn You On", the thing I miss most is the humour which Ferry used to wield. Behind the weary man-who-has-known-sorrow image there used to be an acid and self-mocking wit. Perhaps their new listeners frown upon such indulgences. After all, if you've got to the stage where you need coffee-table albums

like this, humour is the one luxury you can't afford. Adam Sweeting  
*MM*, May 29

### The Clash *Combat Rock* CBS

With macabre irony, The Clash present their would-be assassins with the first round without a shot



being fired. As the real blood washes up on the stony beaches of the Falklands, The Clash come crawling from the bunker in their best wasted-guerrilla togs and deliver a record called *Combat Rock*. You almost have to laugh.

But, as usual, there's more to the new Clash LP than the packaging (which is especially unpleasant this time).

*Combat Rock* is a fairly logical successor to *Sandinista!*, 18 months on, but it's leaner and more concentrated - still eclectic, not very electric. Lots of layers. Because of their sloppiness, The Clash frequently manage to persuade the listener that they can't write tunes anymore and don't give a toss. This isn't true - the music here is varied and mostly works. Their attitude and subject matter remains ambiguous, though, often delivering attractive imagery but leaving you with doubts about its motivation.

They give you the worst first with the tedious "Know Your Rights", a non-single if ever I heard one. "Murder is a crime! Unless it was done by a policeman or aristocrat." How quaint.

The Clash wish they'd been born ten years earlier. They're steeped in '60s 'radical' sensibility, preoccupied with Vietnam vets, street poetry, guerrillas, death-as-film noir.

So, you have Allen Ginsberg delivering a few lines about urban angst as a preface to "Ghetto Defendant", a song that could easily have been written in Chicago in 1968. "Ghetto defendant/it is heroin pity/not tear gas nor baton charge/that stops you taking the city."

Eldridge Cleaver Joins The Clash Shock.

It's strange that the blood and broken heads and napalmed children can seem so romantic now. There's a darkness here, yes, but it's distanced, a zoom shot from a low-flying helicopter. Like editors of old documentary film, The Clash re-process imagery through the shifting lenses of their music - reggae, some funk, hints of salsa, scene painting, a bit of rock.

But is voyeurism valid? You could argue that "Guns Of Brixton" was prophetic, but you didn't even have to go there to know that. It's all on TV, innit?

Similarly, "Red Angel Dragnet" here finds Paul Simonon changing the scenario but singing the same song, this time about New York's Guardian Angel vigilante subway patrols.

"Just freedom to move, to live, for women to take a walk in the park at midnight." It's intercut with quotes from Paul Schrader's script for *Taxi Driver* - "Thank God for the rain to wash the trash off the sidewalk..." The subject is serious, but the inspiration is someone else's. The song isn't really about the people's fight against street violence; it's about a Martin Scorsese movie.

With "Sean Flynn", same again. It's ostensibly inspired by the Vietnam journalist and son of Errol, but doubtless The Clash have nicked the idea from Michael Herr's *Dispatches* or *Apocalypse Now*.

"You know he heard the drums of war, each man knows what he's looking for." Strummer sings it over slow drips of percussion, with a few splashes of guitar and a minimal bass and drum pulse. It's eerily effective, a lingering piece of atmosphere....don't look for anything more.

Seen this way, *Combat Rock* is merely showbiz; a demonstration of the boundaries rock 'n' roll can never cross. But it's a record, not a book, and the music is increasingly effective the more you listen to it. The Clash have always been able to throw in a few surprises to keep you guessing, though the hard, dry mix means you have to work at it.

But anyway, the tough, ragged dance beat of "Overpowered By Funk" is swiftly effective. "Car Jamming" has a persuasive jerking motion fired up with hard rhythm guitar, and "Rock The Casbah" is a seductive Latin shuffle driven by chunky piano chords. "Straight To Hell" is plaintive, quietly desperate.

And to finish the LP, there's the off-the-wall "Death Is A Star". It's a dark little vignette of love and death, sung breathlessly by Mick and Joe with a little spoken narrative from rap-man Futura 2000. Cocktail piano tinkles a tango over an acoustic guitar strum. It's strange and moody and I like it a lot.

Result: I like the record, hate the title. I have doubts about the more exploitative aspects of The Clash and the way they milk death and repression until they become meaningless, but I'll be listening to *Combat Rock* for a while yet. Does this review tell you anything you didn't know already? Adam Sweeting, *MMM* May 15

Anti-Nowhere League: been to Hastings, been to Brighton...



## SINGLES

**Bananarama & Fun Boy Three**  
Really Saying Something DERAM

The Funboy Three's radical mask sure has slipped some.

Physical appearance must be the sole cause for hiring them, 'cos it's becoming increasingly obvious that the Bananas CANNOT SING FOR TOFFEE. Three voices get boring without a hint of harmony, whatever the quality of the vocal chords (and here it's low, so low); this version of a song by Motown's Velvelettes suffers accordingly.

Great tune, gels, but remember it ain't what you do; it's the way that you do it.

Just to save this record from being a purely naked exercise in capitalist marketing techniques, the B side saves the day, a Funboy instrumental swathed in heaps of atmosphere, the Fungirls wisely kept down in the mix. *MM* Apr 3

**The Rolling Stones Going To A Go Go** ROLLINGSTONES

The trouble with the Rolling Stones is they never let go of anything. Despite their quite extraordinary ability to keep



abreast (c.f. "Start Me Up", *Black And Blue* funk) they'll periodically trip themselves up by nostalgically invoking their past, thereby spoiling it.

*NME* Jun 12

**David Bowie Cat People** (Putting Out The Fire) MCA

Judged by name, the latest Bowie associate this time round should have ensured better results. The music has been written by Giorgio Moroder for Paul Schrader's new film, *Cat People*. So why does this song conjure up images of long-haired rock bands wearing tight satin trousers? Eno, your catalysing talent was more essential than you have been credited for.

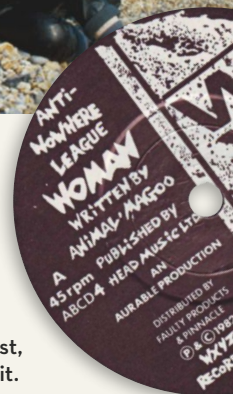
Come back, immediately. *MM* Apr 3

**The Clash Rock The Casbah** CBS

The Clash's faith in rock as (in this case corrupting) catalyst for social change is as unshakeable as the Muslim faith they've inane chosen to mock. Clash-bah! *NME* Jun 12

**Anti-Nowhere League Woman** WXYZ

"Seriousness that asserts itself. Never believe in it. Never confuse it with gravity." Jean Cocteau said that. The Anti-Nowhere League are not serious. They are nothing to get offended about. *NME* Jun 12



# 1982

APRIL - JUNE



January 30, 1981: a rare live appearance by Associates Alan Rankine (left) and Billy Mackenzie at the University Of London Union



**THE ASSOCIATES** have a low opinion of pop. Rather than play the game (or indeed play live), they're doing completely their own thing – which well fits the Scottish band's uniquely eerie and dramatic sound. "We've never really got on with anyone in the music business," says singer Billy Mackenzie.

# "Just horrendous"

— NME APRIL 24 —

**O** NA STRETCH of lush greenery in the heart of Edinburgh, a couple of men in white shirts and dark trousers are enjoying a spot of judicious exercise. Taking great care not to exert themselves unduly, the pair gently tease and amuse a brace of whippet puppies, cutting a faintly ridiculous spectacle in the shadow of the haughty splendour of the city's castle high behind them.

The two men are Billy Mackenzie and Alan Rankine, singer and chief instrumentalist respectively in The Associates. The two dogs are Thor and Tonto, Billy's new pets and an excuse for him to devote a larger chunk of his daily routine to an outdoor life.

As we amble through St Cuthbert's Burial Ground in a blaze of spring sunshine, Billy warns his dogs not to go picking >



DAVID CORIO / GETTY

at any loose bones they might find under the marble headstones, while Alan wryly surveys the shoppers up on nearby Princes Street.

Mackenzie – who sings soul with a scope and grandeur that shames most of his contemporaries – is dressed impeccably in a navy mohair suit, the jacket draped casually over one shoulder and the trousers tapered to the knee to resemble a pair of jodhpurs. His unruly black hair flops over his craggy Celtic features, but there's a fire in his deep-brown eyes, a sparkle that seems to gently ridicule everyone around him. His manner is casual to the point of being almost offhand. This suave assurance is shared by Alan Rankine.

After spending most of last year based in London, the pair have now drifted back to Scotland; Billy back to his native Dundee and Alan to Linlithgow, a small town between Edinburgh and Glasgow. They claim the move away from the capital means they lead a healthier, less hedonistic lifestyle – one which allows them to concentrate more on their work.

Billy: “The better shape I’m in physically, the better I feel I am musically. I’ve got to be dead straight to give my best. I don’t need any drugs to influence my thoughts and I don’t drink much these days. If I do, I just go off my head and get upset, start crying, walk about the house and start kicking things. It’s basically down to the fact that I can’t stand hangovers... the pain of feeling someone sticking sand in your eyes.

“As I’ve said before, I relate music and emotion to athleticism. Athleticism is really important. The cover of our first LP, *The Affectionate Punch*, was a way of saying that, with the two of us hunched together at the start of a running track.

“That’s one of the reasons I’ve got these two wee dogs. When I was living in London I was just drinking myself silly to try and relieve the boredom and ended up feeling rotten all the time. That’s why I’ve moved back up to Scotland and started to exercise myself; I just hate feeling under the weather.

“Actually, sometimes I get this horrible feeling that I’m growing up. My voice is starting to lower and I’m starting to act more like an adult to people like this wee niece of mine. I keep her away from the puppies and little things like that. I’m getting a bit worried about myself.”

The Associates are not a group to stick to the simple formulae beloved of the major record labels. As a legion of other bands theorised about subverting the numbing cycles of the music business while slipping languidly onto rock’s eternal treadmill of albums and tours, The Associates let their actions speak louder than their words.

Last year the band released seven singles, most of them on the London independent Situation 2, a subsidiary of Beggars Banquet. They refused to make an album or play live.

It was an oblique strategy but one which brought its dividends when – after signing to Warner Brothers at the end of last year – their stately single “Party Fears Two” brought them the wider chart success that their persistence deserved.

Five of those seven singles – “Tell Me Easter’s On Friday”, “Q Quarters”, “Kitchen Person”, “Message Oblique Speech” and “White Car In Germany” – are now available, with various B-sides, on a Situation 2 German import album, *Fourth Drawer Down*.

As a document of the quizzical, haunting pop music created last year by Mackenzie and Rankine, the LP is an essential compilation. It would have been even stronger if their other two ’81 singles, “Kites” and “Bounceback”, were also included.

That, of course, would have been too simple and straightforward for The Associates: they release their records with a wonderfully spasmodic irregularity and the two remaining singles in fact surfaced on different labels; “Kites”, a cover of the Simon Dupree standard, under the guise of 39 Lyon Street on RSO, and “Bounceback” on Polydor.

Billy: “We just put a load of singles out for a laugh. We sometimes do all these daft things just for the sake of it, just to try out different approaches. The good thing is that we never have anyone on our backs, no record company to bother us. Even Warners leave us pretty much alone. They know we’ve got a lot of good pop songs, so they just leave us pretty much to our own devices and on a good day we let them hear what we’ve done.

“We’ve never really got on with anyone in the music business. I’ve yet to come across anyone in an influential position in a record company who has any idea. Basically, they’re all just stupid and their ideas are rotten, just completely tasteless. Just look at the work that they do! All those disgusting records and horrible artworks. Most of it is just horrendous.

“Basically, there was no one that we could trust, no one that we could put our faith in, so we just had to stop working their way. We had to just stop and put our faith in our wee selves.”

Before moving to Situation 2, The Associates had been signed to Chris Parry’s Polydor-affiliated Fiction label, but found the set-up too limited for their expansive aims. The flexibility they enjoyed on an independent label allowed them to nurture and refine their telling talents, so that they are now much better equipped, both musically and mentally, to handle the massive pop success that will surely come their way in the coming months.

So, does signing to Warner Brothers signify a move towards a more populist, mainstream approach – a coming in off a limb?

Billy: “I think it’s a quite natural way to go. Doing all those singles last year has given us the confidence, the ability to talk back to people and get our own way, even with someone like Warner Brothers. I suppose we are getting more mainstream musically, but not in a wacky way. Our next single, “Club Country”, is still a real cross-pollination of ideas. It’s quite cinematic. I think quite a lot of our songs are quite cinematic, but with more of a steady dance beat and more of a storyline to them.”

Would they consider using a “name” producer – a Rushent or Horn – to sharpen further the sound? Their five Situation 2 singles were all self-produced, with the help of engineer Mike Hedges, but better production facilities are surely now also available to them.

Alan: “To tell the truth, I think if we went for a Trevor Horn production, people would get fed up with seeing us in the charts. I know that we have songs to achieve that sort of success. It probably will happen that we have a few more hits this year, but I wouldn’t want it to happen too

quickly. I don’t want to slag off people like ABC, but it does seem that they are doing everything too quickly.”

Billy Mackenzie has been singing for as long as he can remember – since about the age of four – entertaining aunts and uncles and ladies across the street with that dulcet, dignified voice. His childhood days were hard but happy; his home was on the Catholic side of Dundee, and his family is half-Scottish and half-Irish, with a shot of gypsy blood.

Billy: “We always used to be very open about things in our family. I was always allowed to do what I wanted. I had all the freedom in the world from the age of five

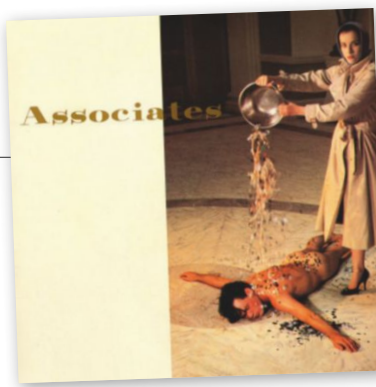
onwards. I’d get up to all these terrible things and never get touched for it. Then I might nick a biscuit or something and I’d get done in!

“I always knew that I could sing. I used to be in school choirs and everything and I got in the cub scouts when I was a wee boy just because I could sing ‘The Sound Of Music’ for their annual musical. On the Irish side of my family, the musical tradition has always been really strong, just as dancing always is, and I just absorbed it all up.”

After leaving school at 15 and bidding his time as an apprentice electrician, Mackenzie worked selling whisky in a London Scotch house and travelled to America and New Zealand, before returning to Dundee to open his own

“The themes on *Sulk* start off quite moody but end up very elated”





second-hand clothes shop, an enterprise now run by his brother. This interest in style is still reflected in his own quirkily original dress, assorted hats and berets being a speciality. In a recent *NME* Portrait Of An Artist, he had the impetuosity to list Italian casual wear 1952-'59 as a fascinating fashion fetish.

Billy: "Up in Dundee it's easy to get hold of good clothes quite cheaply. I just really like the feel of good materials. The Italians in the '50s were really good at that. It was all '50s suits and trousers, the sort of stuff that places like Robot are doing now.

"There was a big market for it in a place like Dundee because there were a lot of soulboy types who would be really into all those cuts. We used to be able to get £20 or £30 for a pair of trousers back in 1976.

"This all happened when I was about 19. It was just a great opportunity. I already knew that I was able to sing, and this gave me the opportunity to do something else – design clothes and do window dressing. It gave me a chance to pursue those different angles. For me, it was a very similar thing to the songwriting. It's just the thing of making strong decisions, putting this here and that over there."

**T**HE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN Mackenzie and Rankine dates back to 1976. Billy had been fronting a blue-eyed soul band in Dundee for two years – "a sort of cross between Harold Melvin and the Average White Band" – when he met Alan at an audition for a cabaret group in Edinburgh.

Alan: "We just clicked. Hit it off straightaway, partly because we shared an interest in film music. Musically, our partnership has always worked really well because we have the same interests. On a personal level, we haven't always seen eye to eye, but in the main things go OK."

Unhappy with what they were both doing at the time, the pair pooled resources and formed their own combo, playing the Scottish cabaret-club circuit for 18 months and earning over £100 a week apiece for their dedication.

Alan: "It was great training, because you could play basically what you wanted to play. It wasn't just a matter of rehashing all the standards. We could play whatever we liked as long as it sounded classy and wasn't as loud as the club jukebox. We did a bossa-nova version of 'The Fool On The Hill', stuff like that!"

Billy: "We were dead naive about it all, and we started writing our own songs for the set, all these really stupid cabaret-type songs. They were all dead humorous. The most famous one was 'The Shadow Of Your Lung', which was basically 'The Shadow Of Your Smile' with added corny lyrics and a saxophone. I would be playing that and the people would be going loony!"

On the horizon, meanwhile, a musical watershed that was to have a profound effect on their future direction was looming loudly.

Billy: "We were doing all these daft songs about the same time as punk was beginning to emerge, and it seemed to fit in quite well with our ideas. One of the songs we were playing pre-punk was called '20,000 Years Of Mental Torture', which had punky lyrics and a real *Batman*-type theme tune, all real ramalama stuff. So when punk came along, we could immediately relate to it. Musically, punk was based around *Batman* riffs.

"I don't think of our songs as being unusual, but I suppose they are to a lot of people, because there are a lot of odd sounds in them. I'd hate anyone to think that our music was 'weird', because I just can't stand that sort of thing."

A colleague, when I told him that I was to interview Mackenzie, told me to find out just what the hell he was on about in those vague, intuitive songs of his.

Billy: "If you listen to everyday conversation, people don't always talk in straight lines anyway. Conversation can sometimes get really abstract, so why can't a song be like that? People don't always talk fact. You have to have a wee bit of nonsense in your life.

"My lyrics are a bit like the kind of people I like. I can't stand down-to-earth, normal people all the time. I get nauseated after about an hour. I need to be around people who have strange personality quirks.

"Sometimes my lyrics start to nauseate me a bit too, so I start to slip in something

a bit daft to keep myself interested.

"I don't really like doing interviews that much, because there are no really strong tangents with this group, other than talking about the songs. And I'd rather just do the songs than talk about them really. You either like them or dislike them.

"People like David Byrne really get up my nose, theorising about things all the time. As far as I'm concerned, you do it and people take it or leave it.

With us, the songs either hit the button or they don't."

**S**IGNING WITH WARNERS at the end of last year doesn't mean they'll break their ties with Situation 2, who are set to release the German *Fourth Drawer Down* compilation and are also planning to make the band's early sessions for *The John Peel Show* available as another set of singles.

The band's next single for Warners, "Club Country", is released next week, to be followed by an album of new songs, *Sulk*, on May 14. As if that is not enough, their debut album *The Affectionate Punch* has been remixed and recut by Fiction, with the band's consent, and is to be reissued shortly. Mackenzie and Rankine, meanwhile, are due back into the studios in June to begin work on songs for what will be their fourth LP!

Such proliferation seems to come naturally to the pair. They reckon to have at least 60 more songs down on demo tape, including two, "18 Carat Love Affair" and "Waiting For The Loveboat", that are already earmarked as future singles. I wondered whether having such a library of songs on file took some of the spontaneity out of recording?

Billy: "I don't think so, because once we start work on them again, it all sounds fresh and we start to change them around. The riff of 'Party Fears' was five years old, but we changed bits here and there to make it sound fresh. But we like demo songs for future reference, just to have some basics to refer back to... or go back and laugh at!"

There is also Billy's involvement with the British Electric Foundation project *Music Of Quality And Distinction*, an album on which he covers two songs, Bowie's "Secret Life Of Arabia" and Roy Orbison's "It's Over".

Billy: "They asked me to do those two. I don't think I would have chosen to do 'It's Over', but I was able to bend the melody to find my own way of singing it. It was the same with 'Secret Life'. I twisted the song to suit myself."

*Sulk*, the forthcoming Warner Brothers LP, should be a fair indication of whether the group are able to maintain and build on the momentum of their five Situation 2 singles of last year. So what are we to expect from *Sulk*?

Billy: "The themes on it start off quite moody but end up very elated. I don't want it to sound like some great concept, but that's the way it progresses. But, to be honest, I think that there's only one really great song on it, which is one called 'Skipping'. That's the only song that we've ever recorded that I can just sit back and go 'aaaaah' and really relax to. It's got a really good vocal sound... not just my usual screeching hysterics! I just feel that I'm using my voice in a much more suave manner."

And at that he bursts into a fit of mocking laughter and lolls back onto the lawn beneath the castle and starts to chide Tonto and Thor, as if negating any pompous statements he may have made in the interview, leaving me to ponder just what precisely drives this singularly odd couple in their pursuit of pop class and excellence.

Alan Rankine best sums it up in what I take to be a reference to Chris Parry, their former producer and label manager at Fiction Records.

"Let me tell you," smiles Alan. "There's this inane little New Zealander who once came out with the line, 'What we're dealing with here is a couple of talented and uncompromising megalomaniacs!'"

Adrian Thrills •

# THE SECRET LIFE OF THE ASSOCIATES

Adrian Thrills uncovers the inner thoughts of two "uncompromising maniacs".

# “A one-man show, if you like”

Introducing a new version of **SCRITTI POLITTI**, a “sort of production company” for the works of Green Gartside. Now less about the politics of his early work, his debut album will be “something like a milestone in British pop” – although it should have been out a year ago. “I’m just very confident,” he says.

— MELODY MAKER MAY 29 —

**W**HO ARE SCRITTI Politti? If most of the pranksters gaining spoonfuls of praise from a hyperbole-fixated music press turn out on close inspection to be so much stagnant pondweed, then Scritti are the lilies floating serenely over the scum.

If the current demand for a bright, gleaming pop in our pubs and clubs means that built-in-obsolence is the rule, the music of Scritti is an exception, an irresistibly attractive brand of song infused with sumptuous depth and keen intelligence.

But who are the purveyors of this seductive blend of sublime new textures, velvet soul and heart-moving pop? Who takes the credit for the mellifluous flood of melody, uplifting rhythm and bounce and fibres of funk-and-think being poured into honeyed moulds under a collective Scritti Politti banner?

Once Scritti were tiny in fame, an almost archetypal Rough Trade recording group – politics upfront, image intellectual, music like chicken wire. Now Politti are bulging with reputation and drenched with promise, collecting wildly enthusiastic accolades from press and a rapidly growing band of cognoscenti by the cartload.

Last year’s “The ‘Sweetest Girl”” single announced the transformation. The current single “Faithless”, a sponge of gospel-flavoured liquid, is the confirmation; the long-awaited album *Songs To Remember* (due for release any moment now on Rough Trade) is the blossoming of the style.

When interviewed for the *MM* just after the release of “The ‘Sweetest Girl”” several months ago, the name Scritti Politti referred officially to singer and songwriter Green Strohmeier-Gartside, rhythm person Tom Morley and organiser Matthew Kay, though the ever-voluble Green completely dominated the conversation.

This time, though, everything’s gone Green; his is the sole face for the photo session, his is the chosen voice for the interview – though »



LAWRENCE LAWRY / PHOTOSHOT





Green Gartside in 1982: "No way am I prepared to end up another lost cause in British pop"



**Green in performance:**  
 “I was interested in all sorts of post-punk deconstructionist twanging and banging”

Matthew turns up to keep a generally silent watch on the proceedings.

“It just came about quite naturally as a result of the fact that Tom never actually said anything in interviews,” explains Green as first pints sink to stomachs in the opulent surroundings of a Mayfair public house.

“It just became increasingly apparent that it was sort of a one-man show, if you like. There’s me who writes, arranges and makes all the decisions about everything, and Matt who puts them into practice. Tom didn’t play on ‘The Sweetest Girl’ or ‘Faithless’. I haven’t seen hardly anything of him since.

“I mean, he really doesn’t do anything at all. It’s very nice for him, considering he gets a wage, but a bit ridiculous.” (A phone call to Tom later establishes that he did, in fact, programme all the drum machines and computers.)

Hold on – aren’t we heading for a sticky, blubbery me-situation here? Aren’t journalists the ones who are supposed to throw around first-person singulars like confetti and indulge in the practised art of the slag-off without a second thought? More clarification.

“All the old claims to this pseudo-collectivism that went on, that were enormous back in the very early days – I remember we posed for

a photograph, 40 people standing in a kitchen making tea – in retrospect a lot of it was a lot of hot air. All that has gone and this is where we are now, just down to me. Which it always was.”

But who are Scritti Politti? Matthew stumbles when asked – it refers to a “collective to a degree” – and Green sounds vague.

“We exist nominally as a group, and there are a pool of people who make the records – they might change, depending on what sort of records I would like to make.”

A conclusion: Scritti is a “kind of production company”.

**S**ONGS TO REMEMBER may be unfortunately titled in view of new albums from Vic Godard and the Gang Of Four (respectively called *Songs For Sale* and *Songs Of The Free*), but it’s a name that is at least apt.

Green has turned his musical concerns away from the scratchy experimentalism of post-punk independence – he doesn’t deny those days were a necessary part of his musical learning process, incidentally – and has focused on pop.

But this is not the pop that snaps, cracks and fizzles brightly and then dies. Scritti pop is multi-layered, immediate and accessible enough for instant consumption and superficial listening, and constructed with enough care, intuitive feeling and lyrical interest to ensure a wider and longer-lasting set of responses.

Scritti music is fresh and airy, mixing black influences like lovers rock (also the title of one of the album tracks), soul, funk, gospel and jazz with the kind of natural melodic sensibility inherent in the best pop.

Though there are no immediately obvious musical parallels, *Songs To Remember* could turn out to occupy a similar position at the helm of the ’80s as Stevie Wonder’s *Music Of My Mind* did in the ’70s – an inspirational injection of vision into the pop and soul mainstream, turning traditional virtues into sharply contemporary style.

Musing agreeably on the Wonder analogy, Green says he did listen to the man’s work at the time, though it’s not a comparison he’s really thought about. He takes it as a huge compliment, nevertheless, and confesses that he can easily

foresee Scritti Politti selling vast quantities of records. Green not only possesses heaps of talent, but knows it.

“I think the LP is something like a bit of a milestone in British pop, quite honestly,” he opines unselfconsciously.

“I do think that. I’m pretty proud of it; I do think it’s quite a remarkable record, and I will be extraordinarily angry if it doesn’t get the exposure and the sales it deserves. You learn as you carry on that things in this industry aren’t always earned by merit.

“I’m glad to see ‘Faithless’ is starting to pick up the kind of reviews it deserves. Did you see Martin Fry’s thing in *Smash Hits*? He’d made it his single-of-the-month or something, he raved

over it, which was nice. Things like that mean a lot to me, particularly other musicians really respecting it.

“It’s very important that the machinery of the industry locks in behind you – that is why Matt’s important. No way am I prepared to end up another lost cause in British pop, one of those greats about whom people end up saying, ‘Why didn’t it happen?’ I don’t think that’s very likely now, because we’re wise to it.”

When asked if he thinks it likely that within a year he will be “a star”, Green replies in the affirmative without a moment’s hesitation. And does

“I’ve got  
 40 songs  
 stockpiled that  
 I think are  
 wonderful”

he look forward to that situation?

"I guess so. I shouldn't imagine it'll be awfully different from the way things are at the moment. I'm just very confident, I've got 40 songs stockpiled that I think are wonderful and I'm just waiting to record them, and record them well. We, at least, are an unstoppable machine; it's just a question of dealing with it all concertedly and sensitively."

Considering the contemporary ambiguity of the concept of "pop", it may seem as if Scritti Politti simply know a good bandwagon when they see it. Not so.

Recorded with bass player Nial Jinks (who's since departed), keyboard player Mike McAvory, backing singers May, Jackie and Lorenza, Robert Wyatt adding keyboards on "Sweetest Girl", "Asylums (In Jerusalem)" and "Lovers Rock", the album dates back to 1980, preceding the current pop boom by a considerable period of time – "It's a shame the album didn't come out when it was made, in the spring of '81 it would have been quite remarkable," comments Green.

The decision to opt for pop fame came about during a long illness (psychosomatic – not hepatitis, as reported in last week's paper) when Green indulged in large amounts of reading, bringing pop to the centre of the intellectual stage. The resultant change was dramatic: not only had there been a conscious decision to shift musical emphasis, the results reeked of an unmistakable maturity. Had the switch been difficult?

"No, it's a question of simply making the decision that there are now standards that you want to attain and just simply do whatever's necessary to get them," says Green. "I have a fairly good idea of the elements I want in something; I talk it over with Adam Kidron [Scritti's producer], get the necessary hardware and individuals and go and do it.

"I think it's the writing and arranging that really matters; I tend to have fairly firm ideas about how those might go and they come to me quite easily."

Was there any point where he realised he had the capacity to write strong melodies and arrangements that held the possibility of commercial success?

"Yes, well, I think I always knew it, but fought against it very often for the first however many years because it didn't seem the proper thing to do. At the time I was fairly anti-pop and I was interested in all sorts of post-punk deconstructuralist twanging and banging, whereas I used to sit down and write a lot of the songs that then weren't recorded, that were nice, very simple, very lovely tunes."

**SCRITTI INTERVIEWS, AT** their worst, can degenerate into unwieldy, impenetrable language as Green lights the blue touchpaper under the didactic fireworks spilling out of his brain.

An illustration: after interviewing them several months ago I rang Green to ask for a translation of one of the more oblique passages in his structuralist theory of pop. He was out, so I left a message.

Late on a Sunday night, the article written and typed up, I received a phonecall from Green from what sounded like a crowded pub. He'd received the message and had "taken some notes", he said, before launching into a stream of theoretical consciousness lasting two or three minutes and expressed in weighty academic jargon.



It ended with five classic words: "Does that make things clearer?"

Any attempt to make theoretical sense out of the jungle-world of music must be of interest; Green's seemed especially pertinent – he celebrated the primacy of pop in terms of its position as a channel of mass communication – but seemed unnecessarily dogmatic.

He was, for example, prepared to dismiss less popular forms of music – jazz, in particular – as "marginal", and therefore not really of great importance. He now admits to a change in attitude since that earlier interview, mentioning an interest in doing "jazz-based things" in the future.

"I've eased up a bit on all the broadsides I was firing at every faction other than burgeoning pop," he comments. "I think you can relax a bit. It comes with gaining confidence as well, you don't feel it necessary to carve up history in quite as rigid a way. At the time I was quite scared by the trap of marginality and just how stultifying the discourse around it is. Listening back to the LP, there are definitely some jazz influences in it."

He waxes lyrical about Jamie, the sax player heard to particularly good effect on the 12-inch version of "Faithless".

"It takes my breath away to hear him play," he enthuses, adding that he used to listen to "black loft import jazz" at about the same time as he was buying records by Sparks, Rod Stewart and traditional English folk singers.

Though current songs are lyrically less "Big-P Political" than those of yore, Green still sees Scritti Politti as "a profoundly political undertaking".

"On almost any political map you'd have to acknowledge that pop music, in its history, in its entirety, was a significant political phenomenon – and that's looking at things in a very traditional political way."

A former left-wing activist, Green now rejects the theoretical approach of the organised left as being "reductionist" (ie, oversimplifying complex phenomena). The political influence of pop "would have to be subversive", he says, citing the fact that in some places it's banned as evidence. "In Vietnam and China they're hysterically afraid of it."

Green doesn't see Scritti's music as being in any way "propaganda" in the crudest sense of the terms. "The stuff I'm putting out at the moment is a lot more intuitive after years of fairly heavily theorised stuff; it's more likely to be appreciated a bit more intuitively, do you know what I mean?"

"But I could quite easily be polemical again and use it to those ends, or a lot more literal again. Songs like 'Sweetest Girl' and 'Faithless' were in a way about not having any belief in a cast-iron guarantee to your own beliefs. It's about baseless, shifting ideology, with no anchors of an immutable truth."

“Faithless’ was, in a way, about baseless, shifting ideology”

**FAITHLESS, GREEN SEEMS** to have such a strong belief in his own ability that it can border on arrogance, but there's a frail side to his nature too – he refers to some of his past experiences of live performance as "nightmarish", which partly accounts for Scritti's current reluctance to undertake any gigs.

Possible alternatives include singing to backing tapes à la Heaven 17 and concentrating on video promotion.

But first things first. *Songs To Remember* are songs you will remember. *Lynden Barber •*

# THE SWEETEST GROOVE

Everything's gone GREEN, the voice of SCRITTI POLITTI tells Lynden Barber. Black and whites: Tom Sheehan

**W**HO are Scritti Politti? If most of the pranksters gaining spoonfuls of praise from a hyperbole-fixated music press turn out on closer

refers to a "collective to a degree" – and Green sounds vague. "He isn't necessarily as a group, and there are a pool of people who make the records – they might change, depending on what sort of records I would like to make." A conclusion: Scritti is a "kind of production company".

the pop and soul mainstream, turning traditional virtues into sharply contemporary style. Missing aggressively on the Wonder analogy, Green says he did listen to the man's work at the time, though it's not a comparison he's really thought about. He takes it as a huge compliment, nevertheless, and knows a good bandwagon when they see it. Not so.

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was buying records by Sparks, Rod Stewart and traditional English folk singers. "Though current songs are lyrically less "Big-P Political" than those of yore, Green still sees Scritti Politti as "a profoundly political undertaking". "On almost any political map you'd have to acknowledge that pop music, in its history, in its entirety, was a significant political phenomenon – traditional political way."

# 1982

APRIL - JUNE



Miles Davis: the Prince of Darkness returns to the stage at Hammersmith Odeon in April 1982

# Spellbound

**MM** APRIL 22 Miles Davis weaves his magic

**M**ILES HAS CERTAINLY worked on his band since he unveiled it for his much heralded return at last year's Kool Festival in New York. Both it and the leader seemed certain and committed at Hammersmith, and if it wasn't the new direction that everybody anticipates with Miles, it was a good clean synthesis of several past directions, and not a note of narcissism in evidence.

Ill-health may have left him limping and as confined in movement as a man in stitches, but his chops are ferocious. Miles spitting spaced singles can indicate the speed and mood of a piece like nobody else, but his economy tends to turn the rest of the team into windbags. Ex-Blood, Sweat & Tears guitarist Mike Stern, in particular, detailed to wring out the climaxes, came over as repetitive and empty grandiose as a Heavy Metal hero.

Stern is the link with Miles' Fillmore period, using those Hendrix techniques that fascinated Miles and Gil Evans, and have proved so tricky to house. Jazzers, not averse to a bit of loose-washer rhetoric on other instruments, will find the acid sound of it on guitar plain unpleasant, while the density of volume makes a poor equivalent for the layers in an orchestral ensemble.

There were times when the rub-a-dub drumming and jerking guitar created brutal obstacle courses for the horns, cancelling all possibility of lift, float, soar, swoop or cadence. Bill Evans' tenor, which can drive like Wayne Shorter, often sounded as if it were shaking the bars in frustration.

Like Ornette's Prime Time concept, it's a pretty chewy prospect for the listener, but it certainly ain't facile, cash-in or bad-ass. Two drummers, electric bass and electric guitar doesn't give you much of a middle shot to orient.

The first half finally threw out some clear compass bearings from the past as the amplitude sank in the West, casting a purplish muted mood for Miles' ruminations around a "Summertime" theme. This was magic.

Evans churned in, Stern strummed a relevant jazz solo, and Miles grabbed back the action, bipping and chirruping with savage accuracy. Mino Cinelu did some wet-finger stuff on the hand-drums with Miles breathing a few hairline cracks on the eggshells.

After the interval, the old Gil Evans palette reigned supreme, Spanish tinge and all. Miles established the hush with a few dabs of keyboard, and Evans sighed flute over Al Foster's bells and chimes. Trumpet slid in, choked tone, a quiet drizzling of intense beauty. Every note was precisely placed on the subtly tugging and building groundswell of rhythm.

This cast the spell of great musicianship, and right on cue came cries of "Gerronwivit!" from the traditionally discerning Odeon audience, starving for a few volts of guitaristics. Stern obliged, Foster dished out a backbeat, and Miles cut loose with the full range, before monitoring the mood back down.

Lovely duets and unisons between Miles and Evans over a forlorn funk preserved the feel of "Saeta", padding and circling and swatting together, interacting like the great days of Miles and Shorter. Miles Davis is back all right, not peddling yesterday's fish, not perhaps quite what you want, but delivering some profound goods none the less. *Brian Case*

HAMMERSMITH  
ODEON  
**LIVE!**  
APRIL 22

# “A real shock”

**In spite of setbacks —  
JOE STRUMMER going  
AWOL; Topper leaving —  
things are going better  
than ever for THE CLASH.  
Never mind the Falklands,  
Combat Rock is  
in the Top Ten!**

— NME MAY 29 —

**H** ALF-PAST ONE ON Portobello Road. Past the chippy, opposite the bookshop, within earshot of a man with an amplified mouth-harp honking and scything through Little Walter's greatest hits.

The sun comes down hard on the cast of the street parade, on the bikes and push-chairs and the stalls, a crowded pavement where money changes hands, time is passed and everybody seems to be waiting for something different to happen.

And it does: one by one, The Clash appear. First Paul Simonon, dressed in his usual black, then Mick Jones in khaki pants, bleached denim jacket and huge Rasta cap, then Joe Strummer, greasy, stubbled and buttoned into his trench-coat.

“OKAY! HERE WE GO! JOE'S BACK AND TOPPER'S GONE! WHAT ELSE DO YOU WANT TO KNOW?”

That's approximately what Kosmo Vinyl had said a couple of hours earlier on the phone, so we deal with that.

This is Saturday, while the FA Cup Final is going on, and the previous Thursday, The Clash reunited in Amsterdam to play the last-ever gig with Topper Headon. Strummer had returned after weeks of rumours — working as a navvy in Marseilles, fished up out of the river in Glasgow, what did you hear? Did you believe it? — from a sojourn in Paris, during which time an entire British Clash tour was cancelled

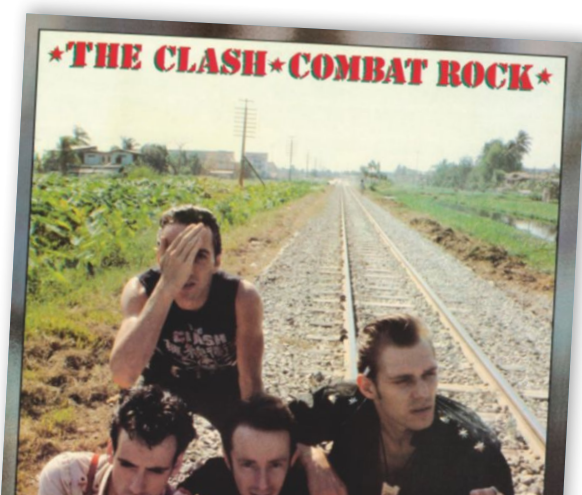
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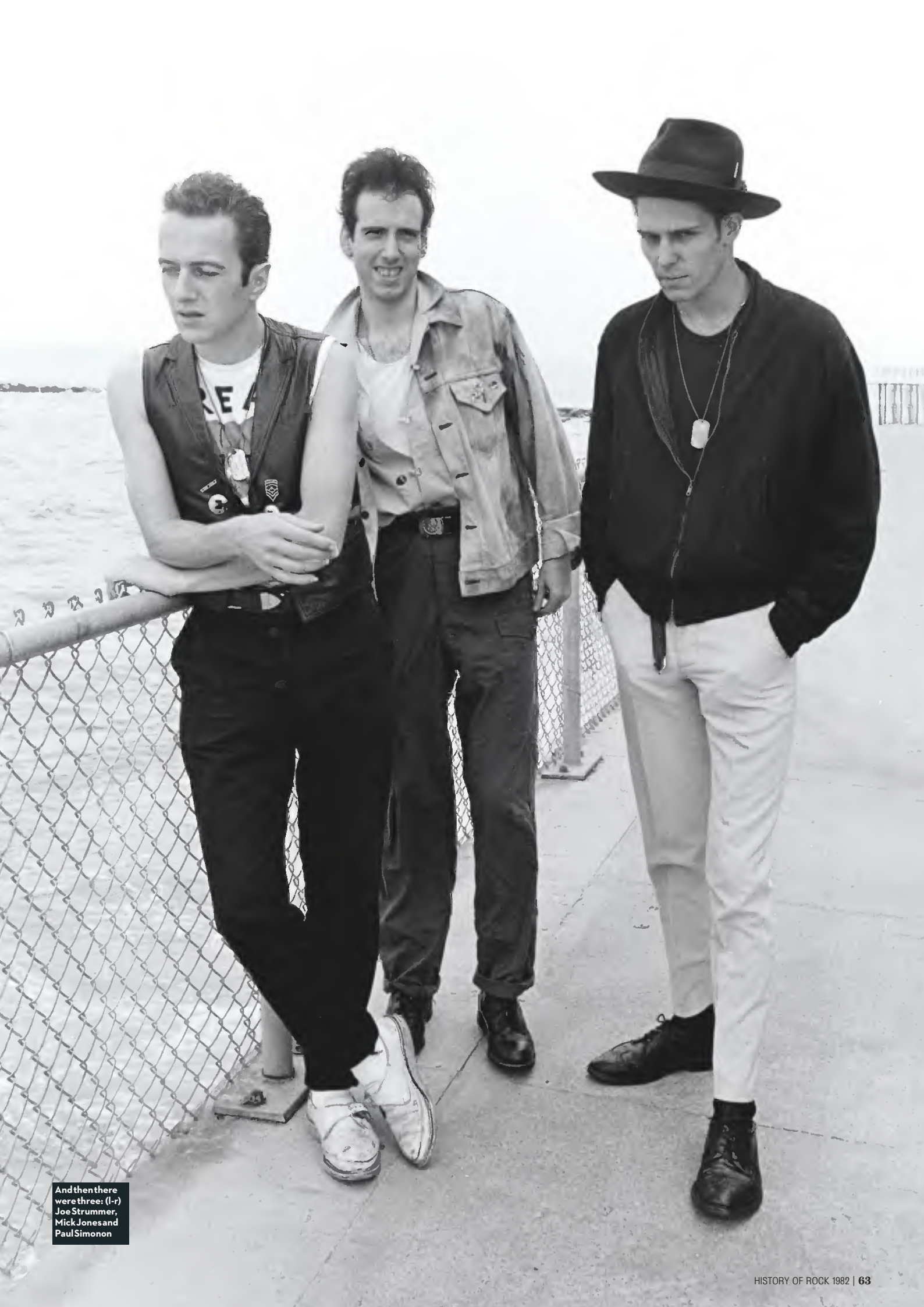
and rearranged, and *Combat Rock* had reached number two in the album charts.

Obviously, there are a few things to discuss.

First, Topper. Why'd he go?

“It was his decision,” Strummer replies. We're squeezed into a booth in the corner caff: Strummer hunched in the corner, Simonon and Jones opposite, Kosmo Vinyl at an adjoining table and Bernard Rhodes leaning over Strummer's shoulder anxious to answer the questions first. »





And then there were three: (l-r) Joe Strummer, Mick Jones and Paul Simonon

"I think he felt... it's not too easy to be in The Clash. It's not as simple as being in a comfortable, we're-just-entertainers group, and he just wanted to do that, just play music. He's a brilliant multi-instrumentalist – what used to be called that – and it's a bit weird to be in The Clash at the moment. Well, it was. He has to sort of strike out in another direction, because I don't think he wants to come along with us. There are things that we all want to do..."

"We all feel the same," Jones chips in, "and he don't, really."

"We're going to continue as a trio," resumes Strummer.

"I'm going to play the drums," announces Simonon brightly. "We're gonna get some guest drummers in, and they're gonna play with us whenever we want to make a record or play some shows."

OK. Why'd you vanish, Joe?

"Me? It's a long story."

Gonna tell it?

Strummer sighs. "Well... it was something I wanted to prove to myself: that I was alive. It's very much like being a robot, being in a group. You keep coming along and keep delivering and keep being an entertainer and keep showing up and keep the whole thing going. Rather than go barmy and go mad, I think it's better to do what I did, even for a month."

"I just got up and I went to Paris... without even thinking about it. I might have gone a bit barmy, you know? But anyway, I went to Paris, and I knew that there'd be a lot of people.. the fans were disappointed, the road crew had sold their motors to pay the rent fucking around with this lot. I knew a lot of people were going to be disappointed, but I had to go, and I went, and I'd recommend anybody else to do that if they have to."

"And once I got there... I only intended to stay for a few days, but the more days I stayed, the harder it was to come back because of the more aggro I was causing that I'd have to face there."

What about the agreements that you'd broken by going? Were you thinking of them?

"Yeah! We'd never blown out other gigs except for the time that Topper got stabbed in the hand with a pair of scissors. Even when the gear doesn't arrive and we're in a foreign city and the

trucks are held up at the border, we'll still play the show by borrowing stuff off the support band or whoever we can get it from. We've got some pride in that direction – the show must go on blah blah – than to cut out permanently, you know?"

So what would have happened if you hadn't gone?

"I think I would have started drinking a lot on the tour, maybe. Started becoming petulant with the audience, which isn't the sort of thing that you should do... but it's very different now that Topper's left. It's back to the old trio now," he concludes with what can only be described as anticipatory glee.

So what did Paul Simonon and Mick Jones feel about the wandering Joe's pilgrimage?

"Well, I felt that anything he does is all right," replies Jones, staring out from under his cap. "Obviously we were disappointed that we weren't going off on tour and everything, and we were disappointed that some of our fans would be disappointed, but – I said this before while Joe was away – I felt sure that whatever he had was a good reason. And he's such an extraordinary person that it was fine: we could handle it. Hold the fort was what we did."

Were you in contact while Joey was away?

"No," volunteers Simonon. "We knew he was all right because he phoned his mum. He'd told her to keep schtum but I think Kosmo wore her down."

While you were away, did you consider not coming back at all, doing the full vanish?

"I don't think I had the... it's pretty hard to do that, to disappear forever."

"Bernie was saying," says Jones, indicating in the general direction of Rhodes' manic grin and impenetrable shades, "Now this is like Brian

Jones or Syd Barrett or something, now you're one of these groups' so it is possible to vanish forever. OK! We're The Pink Floyd now! And," he continues, warming to his theme, "Joe was Syd Barrett."

Yeah, but he didn't vanish physically.

Jones considers this. "Ah no, that was Vince Taylor, wasn't it?"

Was Joe thinking while he was away about what was going to have to be different when he got back?

"No, not really, I was just pleased to have an... escape. It's great bunking off work, really great – as you well know – and it was a bit of that. I was just enjoying being alive. I just wanted to prove to myself that I was alive... that I existed, that it wasn't over. It was OK. We're doing this firstly for ourselves..."

"And it helps clear the air, anyway" – Simonon – "The fact that he went just cleared the air and made you realise more of where you stood individually as well as to two other people, three other people, or whatever. I knew he was coming back."

Strummer picks up the thread again. "I was saying that we're supposed to be doing this for ourselves, and when you lose sight of that, you're in trouble, because you start to think, 'Those people out there don't really care' – that's the people who come and see you and buy your records. It's been a bit of a desert for us lately, but we're Number Two this week with the album – which is a real shock, I can tell you..."

Obviously! While the sheer fact of a record's presence in the charts is not necessarily a relevant signifier, *Combat Rock* is the most extreme and direct Clash album since the first, and its ready acceptance and acknowledgement by the purchasing public indicates that there's far more support than is often supposed both for The Clash themselves and for the militancy that they once again represent.

See, The Clash had become first accepted, then absorbed, then declared quaint, obsolete, null and void. As soon as it became 'safe' to like them and they started touring the States, it then became 'safer' not to. It was a short step from American pundits hailing them as the new greatest rock band in the world – the new Stones! The new Who! – to British True Punks and post-rock hipsters alike to regard them as just another Anglo-American success story, like Costello before he withdrew, or The Pretenders. Not hard enough for the Oi Polloi, too rockist for the dancetariat.

And I mean they really show their roots: there's good old Greasy Joe with his rockabilly fetish, and Ranking Paul skanking with the system, and Mick's such a poser, always playing too loud... Plus all

SHINKO MUSIC / GETTY



"I wanted to prove to myself that I was alive": Joe Strummer explains his 'disappearance'







this romantic rebel guerilla chic, all the ethnic snippets...hopeless, boys. Hopeless.

The trouble is that – in the wake of *Combat Rock* – none of that washes any more. Listen to the way Strummer sings “Straight To Hell” or “Ghetto Defendant”. What you’re hearing is not a presumptuous or impertinent attempt to associate with the alleged glamour of revolutionary war or urban repression, but genuine compassion for the victims of organised human stupidity and greed; an expression of a desire to draw attention to intolerable circumstances and to mobilise public opinion towards eradicating them. I don’t know about you, but I respect that compassion.

*Combat Rock* was – as is obvious to anyone with any knowledge of the logistics of record-making – written, recorded and designed and packaged long before the Falkland Islands represented anything to anybody who didn’t have relatives there, but synchronicity is not a myth and this album isn’t just selling because it’s good product from a popular band. I think it’s selling because a large and significant number of people want to hear what it says. There’s an edge on the album and there’s an edge on The Clash again.

So what do The Clash want to do?

“We want to consolidate something – like us,” replies Jones. “Coming together and then exploding out. Out of captivity, the captivity of people’s expectations of us... and of being contained by the music industry, that situation of not being able to get out.”

So how do you get what you want out of them without them getting what they want out of you?

“Simple!” snorts Strummer. “Make sure that you’re in a position to be able to say what you want, make sure that you’re ahead. But as soon as you’re not in a position to do that, if you’re not independent enough to do that, if we couldn’t keep this thing going to the right pitch, then we’d be... CBS were coming around to us saying, ‘Right, we’ve got these suits here and we’ve got a nice little number written by Andrew Lloyd Webber...’”

“And a nice idea for a new haircut,” interrupts Jones.

“...and that would become what we were putting out. It wouldn’t be anything to do with us. You have to be independent enough to remember what you were there to do in the first place, or you’re fucked. They’ve all got their lawyers and their legal scene well worked out before we were even born. It’s very hard to go in there and not go under. I mean, the whole game is to get you so that you owe them so much money so that you can’t say, ‘No, I don’t wanna do that’ without them saying, ‘So how are you gonna pay this?’”

Bernard Rhodes at this point launches a high-velocity dissertation on the subject of Control In The Media and the fact that The Clash don’t seem to reap the benefits of the airplay shop-window. (This is, after all, only right and proper. I, for one, don’t want a load of depressing rubbish about knowing your rights and not heeding the call-up on my shiny yellow airwaves.)

“...In fact,” Jones sums up. “We’ve written a song about it. It’s called ‘Complete Control’ and we hope to have it out for the summer.”

Well, you can bypass the radio if people will buy your singles whether they get airplay or not.

“We can do that because we’ve always put singles out whether they got played or not. People have said that we should just do albums, but we like singles too! But since ‘Capital Radio’ we haven’t been played on Capital Radio.” Mick doesn’t sound too surprised about that, as it happens.

“I never thought we’d be Number Two in Britain. I really didn’t,” Strummer muses. Rhodes quietly tips a slug of brandy into Joe’s cup of black coffee. “There really seems to be something against us here... over the last few years, since we started going round the world.”

“People don’t understand,” Simonon interposes fiercely, “what ‘Bored With The USA’ was about. They haven’t got a fucking clue. If people say ‘Oh, The Clash did ‘Bored With The USA’ and they’re always going over there’... they don’t understand the bloody song in the first place!”

“I think Britain is really insular” – Strummer – “They don’t realise that there is a world out there. People who spend any amount of time in London can’t believe anything outside London exists. I like to travel...”

“Maybe they’ll just think we’re Van Halen with short hair”

This would appear to be the case.

Another new factor in the existence of The Clash is the removal of one of the all-time great millstones: their financial debt to CBS Records. This liberation is due to the much-abused and admittedly unwieldy *Sandinista!*, which has quietly and unsensationally contrived to be purchased by approximately 197,000 people in this country alone. They are now out of hock for the first time, a state of affairs which they find highly satisfactory. It is, after all, at least as valuable in terms of independence as cash.

Kosmo Vinyl recounts that nearly every American college the band had visited last time round had featured a bulletin-board offer to tape anybody’s choice of an hour’s worth of *Sandinista!* for around \$3. American release of *Combat Rock* has been delayed so that the sleeve can be reprinted without the ‘Home Taping Is Killing Music’ health warning. “We don’t care how many people tape our records,” he declares proudly.

What The Clash are in the process of becoming is – in spite of CBS Records – a genuinely underground band (I am choosing, thoroughly arbitrarily, to define an ‘underground band’ as one which is denied access to radio and TV exposure for reasons other than unpopularity). This means that their music actually has to be sought out. To see The Clash you have to go to their gigs (whenever they happen to be), and to hear The Clash you have to buy their record (or tape it off someone else who’s bought it). Embarking on this course means an awful lot of hard work: it means that the band have to stay in touch with their audiences and keep their interest – and in the case of The Clash, that also means retaining their trust – in order to make sure that their work continues to be sought out. Especially in the current climate, one is unlikely to hear “Know Your Rights” or any of the vital album tracks on daytime radio or down the pub.

Likewise The Clash are almost messianic in their intensity when it comes to ‘providing an alternative’ on the US live circuit. “Maybe they’ll just think we’re Van Halen with short hair,” Strummer will surmise grimly. “Maybe they’ll just be grunging out on the bass and drums and guitar.”

“Maybe we could put on false beards and stovepipe hats and stick pillows up our T-shirts,” suggest Mick Jones helpfully, “and put out a nice country and western song to get on the radio there... then we could do some dance stuff for the hipper areas...”

Three the hard way. I mean, up the hill backwards isn’t half of it. In terms of conventional careerism, The Clash are nuts. They are a gang of loonies. They are out of their fucking minds. They have created an objective which – virtually by definition – debars them from utilising crucial means necessary to achieve it. If they doubt their ability to get successful without getting sucked in, then they’ll set it up so that they won’t succeed. In other words, not getting sucked in is more important than succeeding on any but the most stringently prescribed terms.

The Clash are totally unreasonable. They work on the principal that the distinction between method and objective is artificial and spurious, and that therefore compromise must be kept to a minimum (noises off: rising murmur of “CBS! CBS! ‘Train In Vain!’” etc). The thing is that the amount of compromise necessary to get a single as hard as “Ghost Town” or “Going Underground” on the air does not appear to have been crippling.

However, I admire The Clash’s intransigence, and the best of *Combat Rock* is as powerful as anything anybody’s done for a while. Long may they continue to piss everybody off.

**J**UST NOW THERE was almost a minute of uninterrupted gunfire on the radio, and the sound was almost too neatly set off by a police siren outside. Right now everybody’s supposed to be jacked up to the back teeth with war fever, but just the same there’s that dippy song about peace from the Eurovision Song Contest as Number One single last week and *Combat Rock* mashing up the album chart. There was a song I wanted to hear just then, but it wasn’t on the radio. It went: “*It could be anywhere/Any frontier/Any hemisphere/No man’s land/There ain’t no asylum here/Go straight to hell, boys.*”

Charles Shaar Murray •

1982

APRIL - JUNE

# “I see myself becoming more cynical”

Introducing **THE THE**, project of an amiable if rather paranoid new talent, **MATT JOHNSON**. “I’ve been having weird dreams, almost nightmares lately,” he whispers. “I started dreaming I’d sold myself to the devil!”

— MELODY MAKER MAY 1 —

**M**ATT JOHNSON KNEW hell was a mistake in judgement – he couldn’t avoid it. For reasons unknown he was condemned to skirt the abyss and wrestle with a cruel crisis which could never be solved. Adolescent bedroom angst seemed like a party compared to this tortuous misery. No sleep, body cramps, a threatening sense of futility... “I find it hard to come alive,” he wrote to anyone who would listen, “when I’m hollowed out from the inside.”

That line eventually drifted into a song, “Time (Again) For The Golden Sunset”, and the song became part of a collection, and as Matt patently had no particular place to go the whole experience was encapsulated forever on an album called *Burning Blue Soul*.

On this he explored the joys of melancholy with a nakedness that could have only been equalled by John Lennon on a gigantic existential downer. And although you may be thinking that this is just another chapter from *Being And Nothingness* complete with mind-shattering profundities – life as a meaningless comma in the sentence of time – you harbour those doubts in a crock of bad faith.

Beyond the teenage torpor that fills long grey macs and humourless indie records is the real thing, and Matt Johnson is so real, you don’t know whether to laugh or cry. See, he knows his music is close to an open wound but he »

**BIG MATT'S  
USED  
RECORDS**



"A lot of the new electronic groups have just substituted the electric guitar for a synth": Matt Johnson photographed in 1981

can still chuckle to himself when he sings: "A hundred thousand people today were burned/I felt a pang of concern/What are we waiting for...I...A message from the Pope?/I think he got shot...AS WELL!"

*Burning Blue Soul* was released at the end of last year on 4AD and almost universally ignored. Astoundingly, because Ralph Steadman (the well-known illustrator of weird and dubious events) declared it to be one of his all-time faves, the powers that be have decided to reissue Matt's masterpiece on this slight bubble of publicity.

It's just not good enough, though. A record as crucial as this needs pushing if it's going to surface through the slurry of popular product. The brilliant Thomas Leer, his only contemporary in new-age electronics, suffered a similar fate in the uncommitted but well-intentioned hand of Cherry Red. As a result both have made devastating records and been rewarded with cult credibility and sales that ensure only a bountiful future of baked beans on toast.

At least Ralph Steadman got it right, because *Burning Blue Soul* is a bona fide 22-carat Desert Island Disc. It begins with a near-classical storm of sound on "Red Cinders In The Sand", establishes a vast breadth of range and vision and pulls this big picture into Side One's salvation, "Icing Up". It's a song that begins with bulging droplets of electronic rain which slowly beat out the rhythm of welcome relief at the end of a harrowing journey.

Side Two is no less impressive, opening on the uplifting "(Like A) Sun Rising Through My Garden" and finishing on one of his best pieces, the delirious "Another Boy Drowning", which passionately aches with a worldly resignation and ends with a defiant discharge of bottled-up tension. It wouldn't be going over the top to say this record stands altogether alone.

But it can't have escaped your notice that the self-important drama of pop is drenched in casual hyperbole, so when it comes to describing something of genuine quality there's barely anything left to reach for. You certainly can't expect the man himself to sing his own praises. A more modest and likable young dreamer would be hard to find.

By fusing the tradition of literary songwriting with a far-reaching feel for 21st-century electronic wizardry, Matt Johnson is playing Jim Kirk to Leer's Spock. Where the latter is menthol cool, Matt comes on all hot and emotional; burning soul indeed. Most significantly, both, like Germany's DAE, have understood the implications and possibilities of the modern synth, its power and glory. And to top it all both play every instrument themselves.

Maybe Matt Johnson is so refreshingly down-to-earth because he knows that not even Jim Kirk can beam himself out of an anxiety attack. With a crew-cut and tatty denims he looks like he just walked off a building site and not his second home, the recording studio.

An outwardly chirpy Londoner, he says his mum and dad, who run a pub, wanted him to be a cook, "but as I'd always been in groups since I was 11, I knew I had to do something in music.

"So I bought this book by Tony Hatch called *So You Want To Work In The Music Business*. It said if you wanted to be a recording engineer you could first work as a tea boy. I looked in the index and applied to all the studios. De Wolfe in Wardour Street were the only ones to reply, so I went up there and I got the job!

"I started as the tea boy but I made such terrible tea that they promoted me. By then all me mates had become electricians or greengrocers. I used



"When I feel really, really depressed, it's my most creative period"

future I'll probably concentrate on Matt Johnson. I'm still not sure about the name, though. Somebody once said it sounds like a cross between a cowboy and a car salesman! Can't you see it, Big Matt's Cars!"

To date *Burning Blue Soul* has sold around 3,000 copies, a paltry amount, absurdly out of balance with the record's worth. Its relative commercial failure has at least taught Matt one or two lessons about the vagaries of the pop process.

"Some of the reviews were encouraging to a degree," he says, "but I never really got behind it and did any gigs or promotion. Mind you, neither did 4AD really. I suppose I was naive enough to think that because the album was there and because it was a good one it would do something, but of course things don't work like that, do they?"

Rather than getting bitter about the record's obscurity, he sees the whole experience as a form of apprenticeship. "I reckon I've done my time being the boy - y'know, the trainee - 'cos that's what it's like on an independent to some extent. It's all very well and idealistic - you do what you want and have a free say - but you do what you want as long as you don't spend any money. That's the kind of philosophy involved. These outfits sit on things whether they're brilliant or not. Quite honestly, it makes me sick."

Talking of which, had he recovered from the dip he took when he made... *Soul*? "Well, last year when I did that album I was nearly suicidal most of the time and I suppose I'm a depressive basically. I get that a lot. My life's always been downs and ups, but when I feel really, really depressed it's my most creative period. At least I can turn something like that to an advantage and create something, though; a lot of people can't."

Grey, earnest apocalypse merchants is one thing Matt can't stand, so don't drop him in that black hole. Where exactly he does fall is hard to say, though. "I've been lurking between electronic things and songs, really," he muses. "I love contrasts, and that's what I was after on the album."

His next moves include a single - "I'll try and make it a bit more accessible maybe" - and a joint single with Soft Cell's Marc Almond. Despite his roller-coaster psyche, he appears resilient and irrepressibly confident, dismissing most of the opposition.

"Let's face it, OMD songs could have been done by Adam Faith. A lot of

the new electronic groups have just substituted the electric guitar for a synth. They haven't really made any headway at all. I realise now that I want to be successful. I was green

to get £18 a week, 10 went on travel and five to me mum, so you can see I had it tough when I was little!"

After meeting a few people "who got me into older groups like The Velvet Underground", he started messing about in the studio in a misguided attempt at becoming the next Throbbing Gristle. "I thought I was being very arty, you know, very meaningful."

In the wake of a couple of non-starter groups he formed the confusingly named The The, not a well-known typing error but a loose collection of friends and associates. "See, I always thought that people seem to be put off

by the idea of a solo artist. They seem to prefer a group identity, so I invented the name The The even though it's really only me most of the time."

The The released a single on 4AD and a single on Some Bizarre as well as a song on their sampler and a similar contribution for Cherry Red. Meanwhile, to complicate things, Matt also formed The Gadgets (not to be confused with Frank Tovey's Fad Gadget), who have their third album out soon.

Didn't he think such diverse projects would diffuse his energies and widen the focus just when it needed narrowing down? "Well yeah, actually I think that's a good point and in

# THE DEFINITIVE ARTICLE

THE THE? An agitated stutter? No, the definitive article, boasts The one and

If at first they sound familiar, they are not quite what they seem. His forthcoming 12-inch

enough before to think that it didn't matter. But to bring what I do to people's attention is my definition of success. I want people to hear my music. I won't compromise and I think any changes have been natural, not forced. Besides, I'm so broke it's disgusting!"

As he says on "Another Boy Drowning": "I wanted to be like Bob Dylan, until I discovered Moses." Let Matt Johnson lead you out of the wilderness and pray for his next depression! *Ian Pye*

## — NME OCTOBER 9 —

**T**HE THE? AN agitated stutter? No, the definitive article, boasts The one and only The Matt Johnson with a cheeky if none-too-convincing grin.

Though The The—founded as a duo, expanded into a four-piece and finally shrunk to its present singular state—is Matt alone, the group still suffers from internal conflict. Indeed, it—he—is wracked by self-doubts, even now, when things couldn't be better. But then, if he had any more confidence in himself he would have settled for just Matt Johnson, the signature he put to one of last year's more neglected LPs *Burning Blue Soul*.

"The reason I re-adopted the name The The," clarifies Matt, "was so I'd be able to put a barrier between people and myself. I dunno why, but I just like to have it there. Partly because people tend to be put off when they see the name of a solo artist, I suppose. It kind of weakens the impression. Also by calling me The The, it allows me more flexibility, styles will constantly change, anything can actually happen. The The—the ultimate thing. The definitive..."

Which isn't to say he's trying to hide anything. On the contrary, his songs are almost intimately confessional—without being excessively self-indulgent or particularly purgative. Instead, they register his naive capacity to be amazed by the world and his struggle to make sense of it. The music is correspondingly inquisitive, thirsty for new—at least to him—textures, which he discovers through fresh, brash fusions of acoustic and electronic instruments.

If at first they sound familiar, they are not quite what they seem. His forthcoming 12-inch "Uncertain Smile", released by Stevo's Some Bizzare via CBS, exemplifies his approach. A disconsolate, unrequited love song, Matt's brittle blue tenor describes his melancholy condition, unashamedly inviting the listener to dwell in it while luxuriating in the music's lazy flow; yet the listener leaves it at the other end perversely bright and refreshed.

Matt Johnson's presence is similarly invigorating. Despite the introspective nature of his songs, Johnson is a cheerfully garrulous talker, whose nervous, non-stop banter begins from the moment we enter his few North London rooms and spin dizzily through countless anecdotes, quips and ideas, converting fret into self-effacing comic monologue. Should I have expected anything different?

"Well, years ago I used to bore myself and everyone else worrying about things," he confides, "but people don't really wanna know. They go off to the toilet and never come back! So I got to thinking people don't wanna put on music and think, 'Oh no, this is terrible.' But on the other hand you get some reassurances through recognition. Like I used to get some from reading Sylvia Plath, whose stuff is a lot more extreme than me. Like *The Bell Jar*, even though it had a happy ending—excepting she killed herself after that—well, I thought it was great. Because I could really relate to that, I felt more comfortable..."

"I had this really terrible flu once," he continues. "I thought, 'Fucking hell, I've got consumption. I was in bed sweating, my head moving so fast, and for some reason I picked up *Nausea* by Jean Paul Sartre, and again because I could relate to its agitated state, I felt consoled."

The point being?

"I would like to do music which has that uplifting effect, but which at the same time people can be drawn into and think, 'Oh this is great!'"

Though the LP he's currently recording continues the self-explorations of *Burning Blue Soul*—"It's probably more introverted in a way, because it's analysing the things I did on the first one and slugging them off!"—its buoyancy indicates that morbid introspection isn't Matt's natural condition.

"It'll probably be the conclusion of that phase," he assures. "Basically, once you've found out about yourself, you start looking around at everything else. It's a natural development. You can only harp on about a theme so long—you can't keep singing, 'Well, I woke up this morning...', which is what I've been doing in a way. I see myself changing a lot, becoming a lot more cynical."

Is "Uncertain Smile" and the whole CBS/Some Bizarre episode a first step? Not really. Confused and intimidated by big money matters, Matt simply left Bizzaro Stevo to handle the business side, which he did with his customary baffling logic. Through some inexplicable dealing he landed Decca with "Uncertain Smile"'s £8,000 recording costs, and after a midnight rendezvous involving CBS' Maurice Oberstein and a pair of policewomen atop a lion in Trafalgar Square, he clinched a contract worth £40,000 to The The.

"Stevo's a genius, in his own way," marvels Matt. "He can turn record companies upside down. His appearance immediately unsettles them! And he's not blasé. He could have made a fortune signing up reproductions of Soft Cell, but instead he's always pushing forward, looking for new things."

After three years on the dole and another three spent releasing records into obscurity—three LPs with The Gadgets, *Burning Blue Soul*, three singles and various compilation contributions, all before his 21st birthday—he's ready to accept the breaks Stevo's giving him. Predictably, his conscience hasn't let his tormented soul enjoy the anticipatory thrill of a hit for free.

"I've been having weird dreams, almost nightmares lately," he whispers, "now that everything's started going really well and all. The other night I was in me bedroom, which is like a little coffin anyway, and I started dreaming I'd sold myself to the devil!"

"I was thinking I was going to die, like all these other people who'd died young and they'd sold themselves to the devil too! Then the ceiling was coming down and I didn't

“People tend to be put off when they see the name of a solo artist”

know what to do!”

Matt is neither Catholic, nor is he a drug user. "I don't believe in them," he asserts. "I was thinking, 'God, is this what I want?' Then I remembered this line on the new album, which goes, 'I'm becoming trapped in a tomb of my own making'. So even at this preliminary stage I can see things getting out of control, decisions being made without you..."

If the industry is the devil, who might be his conscience?

"I don't know whether you've heard him, actually, but his name's Foetus." Foetus! You mean You've Got Foetus On Your Breath! Phillip And His

Foetus Vibrations? Foetus Over Frisco? Foetus the self-appointed scourge of the music business, that extraordinary masked avenger behind the underground hits "Tell Me What Is The Bane Of Your Life?" and "Custom Built For Capitalism"?—I don't listen to anything else!

"Yeah? Innee great! I told Foetus once: 'Fucking hell, you really put me to shame, you're saying all the things I wish I could say, but I'm not...' He's a 10 times more extreme version of how I feel. And he's got the guts to do it, whereas me, I'm one foot in one camp one in the other, afraid to jeopardise things."

No need to worry, Matt. The The might not be a fully formed Foetus, but it's more than the germ of a great idea.

*Chris Bohn* •



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# Readers' letters

**MM JAN-JUN** The grim truth on The Cure, damned digital, Cope v Smith and more...

## Cure evil

Steve Sutherland's review of The Cure at Hammersmith Odeon (May 3) was a farce. He is, of course, entitled to his own opinions, but a report which devotes no space whatsoever to dealing directly with the live music at the gig in question is unlikely to command any great respect.

Instead of giving details about the concert, Mr Sutherland chose to churn out the depressingly familiar list of critics' generalisations, whether or not they were relevant to the particular event. As a result he asserts that the songs were, "too intimately miserable to communicate anything other than boredom" while admitting, almost in the same breath, that "the audience, strangely, gets off" on The Cure's set.

My suspicions that the review had been written several hours before the gig began were confirmed in Mr Sutherland's disconcertingly blasé admission that he "sneaked off without so much as the slightest twinge of guilt."

I had always imagined reviews were for criticising bands on current evidence, not for reproducing a tired catalogue of preconceived biases. It seems I was wrong.

**CHRIS GOODBRE, address not supplied (MM May 29)**

## Porn under a bad sign

We're writing about Adam Sweeting's review of The Cure's *Pornography* (MM, May 1).

Did he actually have his ears open when he listened to it, because the line "Is it always like this" comes from "Siamese Twins" and not "The Hanging Garden" as stated.

It seems to us that he made up his mind he would hate this LP before even putting it on the turntable: there's nothing but criticism all the way through.

The member of staff who commented "miserable buggers" has obviously never bothered to go backstage after a gig to talk to the group. They're the friendliest group we've met.

If you, Adam, actually went to a gig and witnessed these songs live, apart from just judging them by one listen on vinyl, then maybe

you'd actually feel some of the warmth, and not the coldness you write about. Would you like them to sound like Duran Duran or any other groups who are flooding the charts at the moment with their meaningless quick-selling commercial lyrics and pop image?

**SARAH AND JANE, Park Road, Didcot, Oxon (MM May 15)**

*Adam Sweeting replies: Sorry for the stupid mistake, but it doesn't alter my opinion. I don't dislike The Cure, just Pornography.*



## You Jam fools

After seeing The Jam at the Apollo this week, walking off stage after an hour (they did come back for an encore), it seemed to me that Paul Weller may have his principles mixed up. If The Clash can play for two-and-a-half hours at £3 a show (the Jam was £4.50) then why don't the Jam give a bit more?

**PAUL GORDON, Wyndway, Carrickfergus, NI (MM Apr 24)**

*It's quite simple, Paul. What takes Joe Strummer two-and-a-half hours to say, Weller's got over in the first half hour and with far more literacy and power - Paolo Hewitt*

If The Jam are solely concerned with message, why do they tour? If Weller can make all his statements in 30 minutes, why has he made so many albums? Perhaps he's partly motivated by a desire for easy wealth. (And now The Jam are established, wealth does come easily). Ooops, sacrilege...

**C. J. STEVENS, Hunts Road, Stratford On Avon (MM May 8)**

*Yes, it's Bash Paul Weller week. Well me and Paolo think he's fab. God, at least he tries.*

## Stolid air

Dear John Martyn, I have just listened to *Glorious Fool* again and am not quite clear whether this is a John Martyn record or a Phil Collins vehicle. After your

beautifully sensitive and technically perfectly produced *Grace And Danger* this is the biggest load of shit I have ever heard from you. Of course, I know that both yourself and Phil are capable of knocking anyone's socks off, so can only think this is all down to the label change and the quest for commercial recognition. You don't need it. Please, John, get back to where you're really at.

**JOHN WINCH, Nurnburg (MM Jan 16)**

## Mortal synths

I recently heard a comment about the growing use of synthesizers in 'Pop Music'. While many young misguided pop fans couldn't care less, highly trained musicians could become redundant.

Many pop stars from the past knew the value of using live orchestral accompaniment; Frank Sinatra and Nelson Riddle are great examples. It will be a sad day for music if future generations are conned with electronic sounds produced by computers or robots. Please encourage your readers to vote for live music, and not to accept this electronic noise as a substitute for the REAL THING.

**ALANS. GOTTS, Parkview Road, Croydon (MM, Mar 27)**

*Nah mate, keep music digital.*

## You're fired!

The next time that Lynden Barber is about to write one of his offensive articles might I suggest that he bear in mind two important points. First, there's a well-known saying: "The customer is always right." Second: the customer also pays his wages. If for one have had enough, and I shall no longer be helping to pay the wages of any of you.

**NEIL MARTIN, Rockdale Avenue, Downend, Bristol (MM, March 6)**

## Can't cope

I would like to make it quite clear that Julian Cope has never been near my bedroom, although judging by his recent photographs he no doubt would like to be.

Also, any fool knows you don't put LPs near radiators (which I never had where I lived when I 'knew' Cope). He must have imagined it during one of his flying-jacket fantasies.

**MARK E. SMITH, The Fall (MM Jan 9)**





# 1982

JULY - SEPTEMBER

ROBERT WYATT, LEMMY, ADAM ANT, EURYTHMICS, STONES AND MORE

## Plaintive but appealing

**MM SEP 4** Robert Wyatt set to launch "Shipbuilding"

**T**HE EVER-WONDERFUL ROBERT Wyatt applies his plaintive but appealing pipes to an Elvis Costello-Clive Langer song "Shipbuilding", which gains a Rough Trade singles release this Friday (3). Back-ups are handled by Steve Nieve of The Attractions (piano), Mark Bedders of Madness (bass), Martin Hughes (drums), Clive Langer (organ) and Elvis himself joining Wyatt on harmony vocals. The B-side is "Memories Of You", an evergreen ballad penned by original ragtime pianist Eubie Blake.

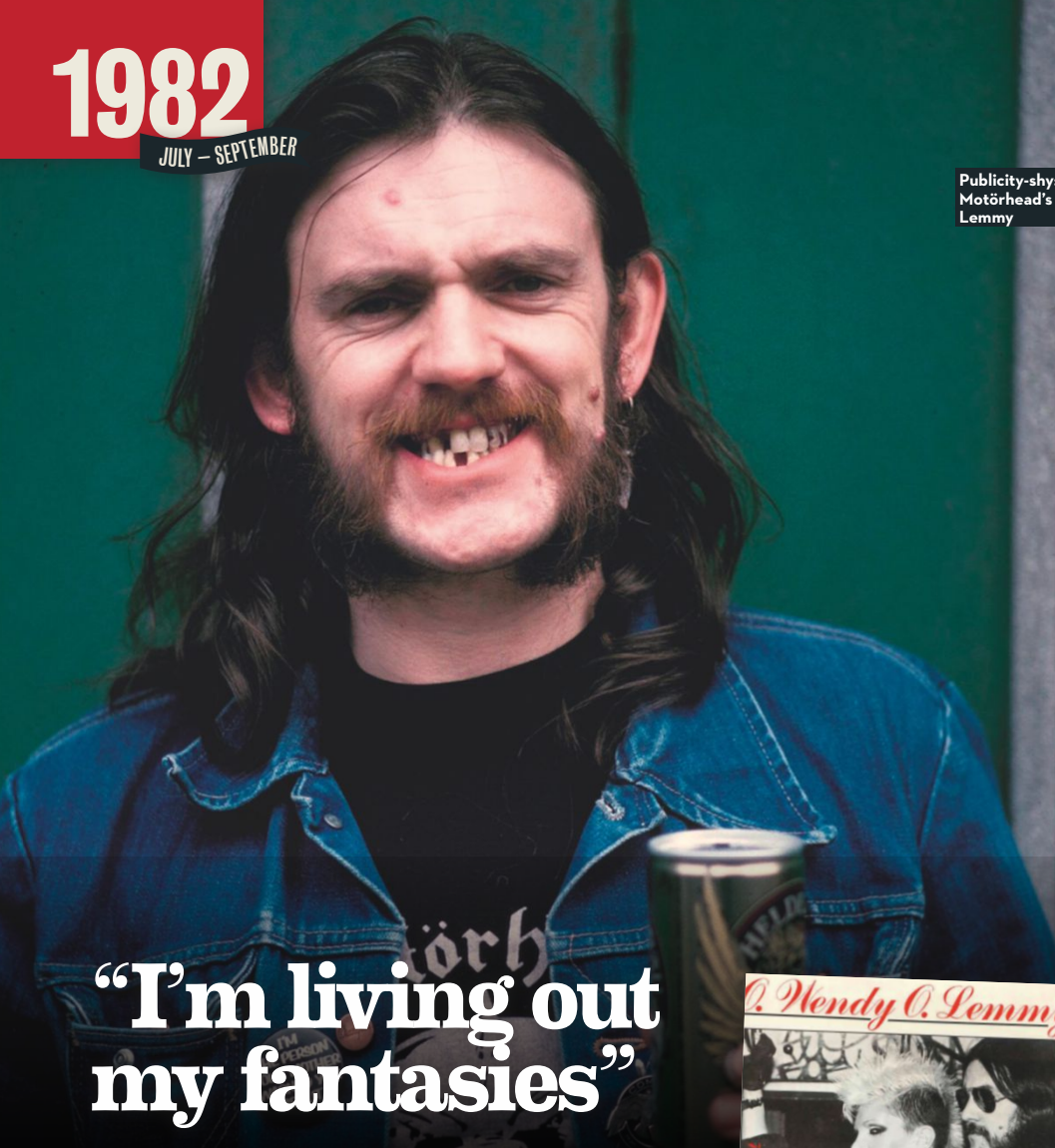


ADRIAN BOOT





Robert Wyatt:  
all-star lineup on  
latest single



Publicity-shy: Motörhead's Lemmy

## “I’m living out my fantasies”

**NME SEPT 18** Lemmy and Wendy O. Williams record “Stand By Your Man”. Lemmy shares his thoughts on *NME*, the Motörhead split... and the Nolans.

**I**T’S A MARRIAGE of extremes – the queen of American punk lobotomy and the clown prince of terminal gross-out home-made heavy metal. Wendy O. Williams of The Plasmatics, with her sellotaped tits and Mohican haircut, and Lemmy of Motörhead with his gnarled rabid vocals and years of conscientious drug abuse, decimating the sacred cow of country music and the paean to servile femininity “Stand By Your Man”.

From the other end of the transatlantic blower Ms O. Williams tells how this made-in-hell’s kitchen hit-bound sound came about.

“I always liked Motörhead because for them nothing was sacred and that’s how The Plasmatics feel as well. We met last year in New York and decided to do the most outrageous thing we could think of and this was it.

“The original was such a sexist song, but Lemmy improved it by writing new lyrics. Country music has always been symbolic of conservative lunacy, especially with the roles guys and girls have. To me, people should have the freedom to do what they want.

“Tammy Wynette is backing George

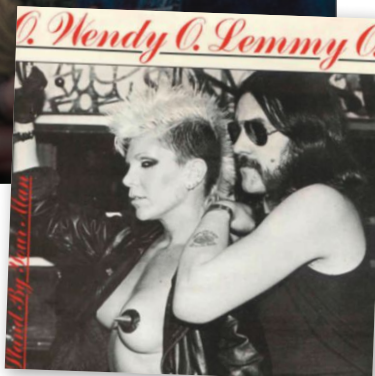
Wallace for re-election as governor of Alabama and Wallace is one of the biggest lunatics America has ever produced, he’s for segregation and all that shit. ‘Stand By Your Man’ has been Wynette’s theme song for years and she’s been married four or five times, so what the hell’s she talking about?”

Before hanging up, O. Williams said that a third Plasmatics LP recorded in Germany with The Scorpions’ producer was ready for release, and there should be a chance to see the group and her not-so-endearing old charms when they come to Europe early next year.

Meanwhile, back in his London record company office chasing vodka with small cans of Special Brew (very effective), Lemmy intimates that the

partnership may be renewed at a later date. He and Wendy may go out to Nashville to record an LP – although the likelihood of them ever getting out alive seems to make that pretty unlikely.

“I don’t know what *NME* are making of all this. What do they reckon up there?”



Desperate publicity stunt are words not far from people’s mouths with regards to this.

“Really? I’m sorry to hear that. (So are we! – *NME* staff.) I figured we were getting enough publicity – if anything Motörhead have been over-publicised. So you can put that one under the fuckin’ carpet right away.”

Whether he needs the publicity or not, broach any topic and Lemmy’s likely to have something to say about it.

### On the single:

“We did it for fun and to turn people’s heads around. I think the punks and Motörhead’s fans are pretty polarised – us coming together should shake them up a bit. We wanted to destroy a few misconceptions about Motörhead and about The Plasmatics. Richie Stotts, the guitarist with The Plasmatics, is a really innovative guitarist and the solo he plays on the record is one of the best solos I’ve ever heard on that type of record.”

### On *NME*:

“I take it for granted that it’s not the *NME*’s cup of tea because it’s got a bit straitlaced of late. You look like you might get rid of some of that, you look like a fun-lovin’ lad. It’s getting to be an interesting as the *Financial Times*; I can’t believe it’s so boring. It devotes a lot of time to things that have nothing to do with music. If I want to read about CND or unemployment I’ll buy *The Times*, it reports on that stuff a whole lot better. The *NME* seems to think it’s the conscience of the nation’s kids.”

### On rock ‘n’ roll:

“People seem to have forgotten rock ‘n’ roll is supposed to be fun. It’s all so serious – artistic licence and all that bullshit nowadays. All it is, is the stuff your parents would never listen to.”

### On stardom:

“The best thing is being able to cash cheques without a cheque card. I wanted to be in a rock ‘n’ roll group since I was 13. I’m just living out my fantasies – it’s wonderful stuff. You can’t go wrong, can you?”

### On country music:

“Yeah, I like a lot of country music. I like a lot of different stuff – Joni Mitchell is a fuckin’ genius, ABBA make perfect pop singles. I like Dolly Parton, she doesn’t give a shit.”

### On the Nolans:

“We’re mates, have been for years. The Nolans are very funny, actually. No one ever gives them credit for being human beings; to most people they’re just four pretty faces who sing all these sweet songs. I suppose it’s the same with me, people get an image of you through the media and think it’s the reality. But if the truth were known, The Nolans are really four feisty little fuckers. Our manager was talking to Linda Nolan at the bar and he dropped some money on the floor and bent

“People seem to have forgotten rock’n’roll is supposed to be fun”

down to pick it up and she goes, 'While you're down there...' and his brain nearly came out of his ear. Because The Nolans aren't supposed to say things like that."

### On Belfast:

"We used to go there quite a lot even in the mid-60s when I was in a group called The Rockin' Vicars. We got banned because we wore clerical collars onstage. We got all these letters in the papers - 'I invite your prayers to stop this heathen mob coming over here debasing our religion.'

"Every time Motörhead do a tour we play Belfast. There's so many groups don't and I can't understand it. It's fucking phenomenal - Belfast's crowds are the best in the world. I think people are shitheads for not playing there - apart from the reception you should do it anyway. It's only over the bloody water."

### On Van Morrison:

"I used to know him for a while after he'd left Them. I remember him sitting on a bed in our hotel room really down in the dumps. 'Times are bad,' he said, 'times are very hard having to work with a bloody showband, I can't get a gig anywhere.' Then in two years he put out *Astral Weeks*. He's a really dirty singer, one of the great old shouters. A bastard though."

**L**EMMY ADMITS TO being "fed up to the teeth" answering questions about Fast Eddie, who departed Motörhead after the recording of "Stand By Your Man". He's made friends with Eddie again, and they jammed together at Reading. Lemmy has now enlisted Bryan Robertson - formerly of Thin Lizzy - as his permanent replacement. But is there not a danger that die-hard Motörhead fans will feel betrayed by Lemmy's collaboration with Wendy and look elsewhere for their enjoyment, just like Eddie? "They don't have to buy it if they don't like it, it's just a one-off. There'll be plenty more Motörhead records which won't have changed much from the old ones. Then again, who knows? Maybe I've just ruined my entire career by releasing this record."

He opens his mouth, revealing two rows of cracked brown and yellow teeth, gaping holes and broken fillings, and gives a long, loud cackle. *Gavin Martin*



Adam Ant: urges his fans to shun roguesingle



**NME AUG 21**  
Ben and Tracey list each and every favourite

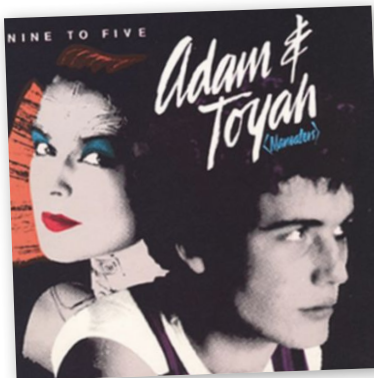
## Song 'a favour' to Derek Jarman

**NME JUL 3** Why is Adam Ant denouncing a new single?

**A**DAMANT, WHO was last week divorced from his wife Eve after seven years, has issued a statement denouncing the release of the single "Nine To Five" by The Maneaters on EG/Polydor Records.

He explains that in 1977 he was asked to put some Toyah Willcox lyrics to music for the soundtrack of the film, *Jubilee*, in which it was performed by a fictitious group called The Maneaters - with Toyah as their singer. He agreed as a favour to Derek Jarman, even though it was a low-budget session - and, he claims, it was agreed that his name should appear only as a co-writer and in no way associated with Adam & The Ants or Adam Ant.

Adam now claims that the record is being released in a completely different capacity, implying that he's playing a major role on it, though he actually took part only as a session musician. He believes it to be a sub-standard record, and advises his fans not to buy it - and as he doesn't wish to profit personally from 'inferior product', he'll be donating all his royalties to charity.



## Worth £30

**NME JUL 10** Topper Headon steals a bus stop. He fought the law...

**F**ORMER CLASH DRUMMER Nicky 'Topper' Headon is to be sent for trial on a charge of stealing a London Transport bus stop. Topper, 26, was granted bail at Horseferry Road court last week after being accused of taking the bus stop - worth £30 - in Fulham Road, London, in March. He was also charged, along with 23-year-old Donna Gardner, with receiving a stolen Technics amplifier, and a cassette and record deck. Headon and Gardner, both of Fulham Road, were committed to trial at the Inner London Crown Court. Both were granted unconditional bail.

### BEN WATT

#### Heroes

Paul Weller  
Sunil Gavaskar  
Kevin Coyne  
Bill Evans  
Orson Welles  
Bob Dylan 1961-64

#### Songs

**That's Entertainment** The Jam  
**Just Like Gold** Aztec Camera  
**So Strange** Kevin Coyne  
**Eight Miles High** The Byrds  
**Everything Happens To Me** Billie Holiday  
**Muddy Mouth** Robert Wyatt  
**Solid Air** John Martyn

#### Books

**Frankenstein** Mary Shelley  
**Vile Bodies** Evelyn Waugh  
**Henderson** The Rain King Saul Bellow  
**Getting Even** Woody Allen

### TRACEY THORN

#### Heroines

Billie Holiday, Lesley Woods, Siouxsie Nico, Astrud Gilberto

#### Songs

**Let's Get It On** Marvin Gaye  
**The Sweetest Girl** Scritti Politti  
**Until The Real Thing Comes Along** Billie Holiday  
**Makes Me Sad** Vic Godard  
**Desafinado** Stan Getz  
**Summertime** Ella Fitzgerald & Louis Armstrong  
**You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go** Bob Dylan

#### Films

Badlands, The Misfits  
Assault On Precinct 13  
Payroll

#### Books

**Jacob's Room** Virginia Woolf  
**Wuthering Heights** Emily Bronte  
**On The Road** Jack Kerouac  
**Strait Is The Gate** Andre Gide



Shocker: Wendy O. Williams



ROCKY W WIDNER / GETTY, DAVID MCCOUGH / GETTY, GETTY

# "A tough number"

NME AUG 21 Introducing, from the ashes of *The Tourists*...Eurythmics

**"THIS TIME,"** SAYS Dave Stewart, with a determined air and a ginger beard, "we want everything to be exactly as we want it to be. We feel like we're coming out, really, coming out the closet. And when you come out the closet, you've got to have your clothes on, you know what I mean? With 'nay tatties on yer plate' as they say in Sunderland."

Right, right. But what the hell is he on about? He's on about Eurythmics, which is himself and partner-in-vinyl Annie Lennox, and he's on about the lessons they've learnt from their old group *The Tourists* and the masterplans the duo are hatching for the future. Nowadays, Stewart and Lennox amount to the very definition of a small mobile unit - they've even been known to turn up for radio sessions pulling their entire equipment in a trolley behind them. Fleeing the pressure of the band-format and of hits-at-all-costs, Eurythmics now pursue a scheme and a dream of flexibility, self-determination and job satisfaction. Artistically, if not yet commercially, the approach is showing signs of paying off.

To recap briefly: Annie and Dave emerged gratefully from the ruins of the disbanded *Tourists* (a band once popular, but not much missed) and pointed themselves at producer Conny Plank and his studio in Germany. Fruitful goings-on ensued; helped out by musician pals like Holger Czukay, and a debut Eurythmics LP *In The Garden* appeared last year. A promising beginning it was: all sensuous electro-mood, melody and mystery...and decent tunes. A single, "This Is The House" followed a while ago.

But it was Eurythmics' recent 45 "The Walk" that suggested they'd finally cracked

the combination - especially in regard to Annie's singing. The first album was intricate but definitely low key, a reaction against *The Tourists*' strident '60s pop, and the vocals "were like a woman singing to herself as she did the washing-up," says the woman herself. "But my voice was denying itself. It was an experiment to sing in that unaffected way, but it was like I was just using one colour from the whole paint box of choices."

The unleashed soulfulness of "The Walk" saw her finding a way forward from that: "It was an emergence. It really is a landmark for us - in our development as writers, in mine as a singer. We've put our flag down there with "The Walk", and the next steps forward will follow on from there."

Eurythmics was financed by an RCA

advance to start with, and now the group function courtesy of a bank overdraft. It's lucky, then, that they're "rediscovering the joys of doing things simply," hidden away in a small self-built studio, with limited but ingenious equipment. Friends guest on recording and help out for live dates, but increasingly it's down to the two of them. They've even shrugged off management.

Plans for the future performance are wide-open: they could take in a full-blown line-up, plus backing singers, or get stripped back to acoustic

essentials. Freedom of option is everything.

The *Tourists*' history, as they tell it, was one of squabbles - "the relationships were such that if looks could kill, we'd all have been casualties" - and of compromise. Now, the guiding principle is that both should like all that's put out in their name: "And that's a tough number. There's no excuse then, you're responsible for what's released."

Annie Lennox: "In the old group, I felt like a prisoner, chained to something, like some silly dancing doll... In Eurythmics, we expected the music we were going to make to be the opposite of what people who came to see *The Tourists* would like. And we wanted it that way; we wanted the danger of that. People would just see me as that figurehead I'd become - but they're only seeing one

tiny aspect of you that's been blown out of all proportion.

"It's like a monster following you around, even in the streets, and I had to get rid of that. This was one of the reasons I changed the way I looked, or why I wore a wig. It was to say, 'That person from the past doesn't exist any more. I have a right - anybody has a right - to change and grow and develop. And not be put down for it.' One thing I learned about compromising yourself to any degree is that the only person who really pays for that, in the end, is you."

Paul Du Noyer

**"Anybody has a right to change and grow and develop. And not be put down for it"**



Mick Jagger; just call him Lucifer. Italians confused as to the nature of his game.

## "A danger to Italian youth"

**NME JUL 3** The Rolling Stones face trouble in Italy.

**T**HE ITALIANS SEEM to have lost their marbles over the prospect of an imminent tour by pop group The Rolling Stones. Like the group themselves there is a belief in Italian political circles that the year is still 1969 or thereabouts and that Rolling Stones group equals drug-taking, anarchy, devil worship, and smelly feet.

The biggest row has occurred in the Tuscan city of Florence where a council decision to ban the band was followed by street demos by thousands of youth. The Florence council seems to have split roughly in three directions: those on the right who sought to outdo each other with scare-raising stories on the nature of British pop groups; and those on the left, particularly the Communist and Socialists, who saw the issue as a chance to woo young (youngish?) voters.

Among the very coolest contributions was that by Mario Cristina Fiochi, president of the right-wing Anti-Drug Coalition, who claims to have discovered involvement by 'Rolling Stone group' in devil worship, Mafia drug circles, the CIA and MI5. "They are a grave danger to Italian youth," she concludes.

Lead singer Mick Jagger, a member of the MCC and former dance partner of HRH Princess Margaret, has so far declined to dirty himself entering the debate.

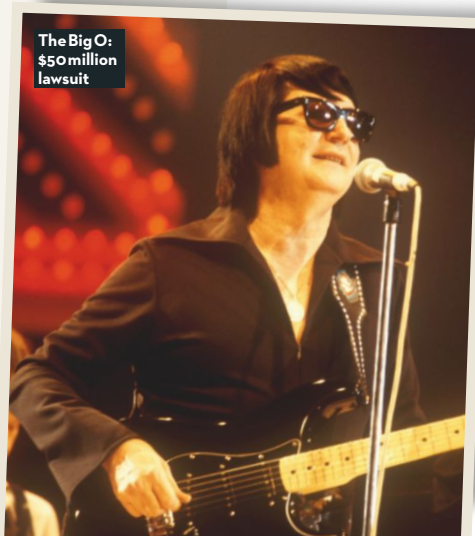
So far there seems to be no threat to concerts planned for July 11 and 12 in Turin. And this is just as well, says our Italian correspondent, "since 32,000 tickets went in two days like hot cakes."

As well as hot cakes, there are plans to release 15,000 coloured balloons during the shows and the president of the Turin regional council, far from crabbing at the expense, has praised the Stones for "bringing culture to an industrial city".

Mick Jagger is 107.

### NME JUL 3

**H**OMETAPING MIGHT be killing music, but the Rolling Stones weren't too proud to beg blank tape manufacturers TDK to sponsor their German concerts. The group's choice of tour underwriter has caused their record company EMI considerable embarrassment, as they're prime movers in the record industry's campaign against cassettes. EMI are quick to point out, though, that the sponsorship didn't signify the group's endorsement of either TDK product or home taping in general. Just why a group who made a cool eight million dollars from American T-shirt concessions should need 'sponsoring' is perhaps a more pertinent question.



## Swing his manager

**NME SEPT 4** Big O's royalty battle

**R**OY ORBISON, THE 'Big O' of Top 20 hits during the '60s, including three number ones, is suing his manager Wesley Rose for a not-so-cool \$50 million.

The mismanagement suit, filed in Nashville, claims \$25 million in compensation for lost songwriting royalties, excessive foreign administration fees and tour gross commissions, while the other \$25 million is logged against 'punitive damages'.

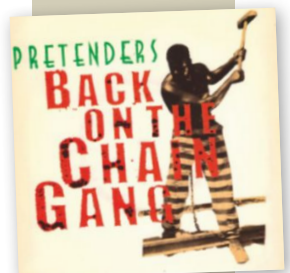
According to Orbison, Rose, one of the most respected businessmen in Nashville and the son of Fred Rose, Hank Williams' co-writer and manager, has been on the make since 1958 when Acuff-Rose publishing - a company operated by Rose and country legend Roy Acuff - first obtained the rights to Orbison's "Claudette", a song that became an international hit for the Everly Brothers.

Orbison, whose life has been somewhat grief-stricken - his first wife, Claudette, died in a motorcycle accident and two of his sons died in a fire - claims that one contract heavily weighted in Rose's favour was obtained while the singer was 'severely depressed'. It is also claimed that half of certain royalties were never forwarded and that Orbison's current wife, Barbara, was misled when signing a 1969 agreement regarding her future interest in copyright renewals.

The suit follows an audit of the Acuff-Rose books, instigated by Orbison last year.

► BBC's *QED Guide To Armageddon*, featuring ex-TV Smith Explorer Eric Russell spending two weeks in a fall-out shelter, has been rescheduled for next Monday and Friday showings respectively. Originally set to run during the Falklands crisis, it was then postponed so as not to upset sensitive viewers. *NME Jul 24*

► Remaining Pretenders Chrissie Hynde and drummer Martin Chambers are presently recording a new single "Back On The Chain Gang", their first since the death of James Honeyman-Scott and the departure of Pete Farndon. Bassist Tony Butler and ex-Rockpile guitarist Billy Bremner dep for the departed and Chris Thomas is producing. They point out this is not a permanent lineup. *NME Jul 24*



► Patti Smith has announced that she will begin to release some of the work she has taped with husband Fred 'Sonic' Smith since her retirement to domesticity in the Detroit suburbs two years ago. Most of the work was done with Fred's Sonic Rendezvous Band. The SRB, who appeared in Britain several years ago as Iggy Pop's backing group, incorporated veterans of the same Detroit scene which made Smith famous as one of the MC5. *NME Jul 17*

# “Violence as a profession”

**THE BIRTHDAY PARTY** crash land into Europe. Their violent – sorry, “passionate” – shows are a feast of fists, fire and noise. “Eeeech!” says singer **NICK CAVE**. “There’s blood on the end of my boot.”

— MELODY MAKER JULY 17 —

**B**INGO HAD FELT on the outside most all his life. At school, he avoided the grossest HM, even in the crack marines he’d styled his hair long under his beret and turned on after lights out to the Pistols and Patti. When he fled his privileged post as a helicopter captain’s batman, quit the wife and kid in Plymouth and set his sights on self-discovery, he had little to show for his 21 years beyond numerous tapes of the John Peel show, memories of Rotten live, two nerve-steeling stints on the Belfast estates and the sort of physique only a certified psycho would think of tangling with.

Drifting from job to job, flat to flat, he felt in aimless command of his desired free destiny, but somehow missing his spiritual goal. Then, one fateful night last year, he hit upon The Birthday Party, and neither Bingo nor band were ever the same.

“I’d read this interview where this bloke Nick Cave was saying that all English audiences were stupid, like sheep, so I went along to the Rock Garden to prove him wrong,” Bingo said.

What he saw and heard that night were his road to Damascus; what he started to do shocked even him. Stunned by their power, command and commitment, obsessed by the way their bold confrontations turned his bottled-up tensions into fierce self-expression, Bingo became a stage-front familiar, regularly roughing Cave up, becoming more and more embroiled in an escalating ritual of machismo and pride. He’d force Nick to beg for release from frequent vice-tight grapples. He’d bite through drumsticks and microphone leads. He’d even been bruised and scarred by Tracy Pew’s bass for pinning Cave to the floor of a stage at the North London Poly. As audience expectation warped and waned with the band’s notorious reputation, so Bingo’s role became more perverse.

“I had to force it further and further,” he explained. “The Birthday Party lost me loads of girlfriends, but I just had to do it, had to push further until, at Hammersmith Palais, I blew fire at them from the crowd. I’d never done it before, practised a couple of days in advance »

DAVID CORIO / GETTY

November 25, 1982: Nick  
Cave with The Birthday  
Party at the Ace Cinema  
in Brixton, South London



with meths but still burned my mouth badly –lost a whole layer of skin inside, but it was worth it!”

Backstage, Cave demanded to meet his maniac fan and the blistered Bingo became the band’s new minder. Love and hate are so often the same. Fear, of course, is another dimension, so when he stalks in the room with a furrowed brow, shakes his head and mutters: “Uh oh! They’re really mad out there!” you know he’s not talking ’bout showtime at Butlin’s...

Cologne’s Stollwerck Club makes the set of *Escape From New York* look like some neatly designed suburban retreat. A disused chocolate factory crumbling behind two 12-foot wire fences, gutted of anything remotely plunderable, vandalised windowless and wantonly graffitied, the harsh concrete corridors stink like urinals.

Many corners are puddled with vomit and a uniquely psychotic breed of Euro-punk-hippy wanders around in straggling tribes, begging, gobbing and scratching their asses.

The last time The Birthday Party played here there was trouble. Subtly billed as “the most violent band in Britain”, they’d drawn a mangy crowd of mutants so intent on upholding the image of outrage that one of their glue gaga-ed rabble had clambered onstage and pissed down Tracy’s leg. Strangely enough, his head wound up split open by the machine heads on Tracy’s bass.

Tonight looks like it’s going to be even worse. A welcoming posse of nazi punks, anti-nazi punks and good ol’ unaffiliated hell’s angels are scrapping outside in the refuse tip of a yard. A scarcely less volatile cocktail of motiveless rebels are sardined inside the sweat-fungied walls, and as one of the weary Party accurately complains: “It looks like a gas chamber out there!”

Rowland S Howard, the Party’s tubercular poet, is pacing the backstage cell in agitated anticipation of a hostile reception for his opening slot,

## “It’s definitely a clash of ideas rather than a cohabitation of ideas”

the door, flushed and soaked but beaming. Ecstatic. What a pit, eh, Lydia? “Yeah.”

Won’t be coming back here in a hurry?

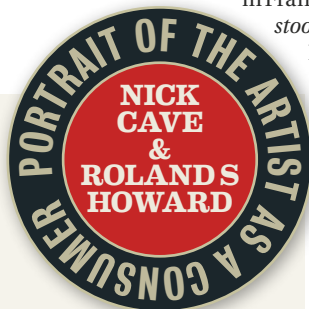
“No, but I like to try everything once – they seldom ask me back anyway. Did you see? Boys touched me tonight! I like that! Usually they don’t, they’re scared I’m gonna kick them or something. Rowland! Boys touched me! One finger first, just to see if I’d bite!”

Lydia’s brief nightly performance consists of a totally improvised 10 minutes or so ear-bashing an audience who don’t understand one word of her babble and a frantic rendition of Iggy Pop’s “Funhouse” at the end of The Birthday Party’s set.

“I never get psyched up,” she draws, “I just charge out on stage and say the first thing that comes into my head.”

Tonight on stage, this is what she came up with: “*It would be so much easier to walk out and go home! Don’t just stand there! Rip it up! You’re so uninspired! Does it hurt?! What did you do to deserve this?*” Tomorrow in Frankfurt she’ll say: “*Don’t just stand there, stooiid! Don’t you love me?! I doubt it!*”

Profound? Profane? Piffle? Last night in Hamburg was a stunning success. One punter clapped.



## “One fine damn mess”

**NME APR 4** Birthday Party loves and loathes.

### NICK CAVE Best Things

- Anita
- Wise Blood* (book/film)
- Cyrano De Bergerac* (book/film)
- The Stooges
- Carolyn Jones
- The Fall
- Evel Knievel
- Brad Dourif
- Johnny Cash
- Samuel Beckett
- George Jones
- Tanya Tucker (“San Francisco”)
- Robert Mitchum
- Ed “Big Daddy” Roth

### Deathlist

- Supertramp (“Dreamer”, “Bloody Well Right”)
- Crucial 3
- Stevie Wonder (“Sunshine Of My Life”, “Isn’t She Lovely”)
- Dave McCullough

### ROWLAND S HOWARD Things That Make Life Worth Living

- Hypnosis
- Carolyn Jones (as an alcoholic and Morticia Addams)
- Night Of The Hunter* (book/film, L.O.V.E./H.A.T.E across the knuckles of Robert Mitchum/The Preacher)
- “The Story Of Love” (original song – The Saints)
- Raymond Chandler

### Anaesthetics

- Lee Hazlewood (“Some Velvet Morning” – put manic surrealism and reversed country & western guitars in the American Top 40)
- Manhattan Island (loud volley of jazz drum fire)
- “Gloomy Sunday” (A song. American radio promotes the practice of suicide)
- The Bark Tree (book by Raymond Queneau)
- “After The Fireworks” (song by The Tuff Monks/Emotion/Dirt/One fine damn mess)
- Chucklebusters (anything – writing, drawing, etc)
- Klaus Kinski (and all other practising vampires)
- “Walk On By” (Song. Pain and anaesthetic)
- Adulterers Anonymous (book by Lydia Lunch)
- “The End” (song by The Doors. End of this list)



Actress Carolyn Jones (1930-1983) as Morticia Addams

**THE ORGANISER DELIVERS** a breathless bulletin: “There is much fighting in front of the stage.”

“Good,” Nick Cave sneers. “I hope the pigs kill one another.” The organiser flees. Lydia started to explain that 10 minutes is not only enough but “perfectly too much” for her to express herself, and that she’d like to write a book called “101 Concepts Of Art” for other people to implement so she wouldn’t have to put herself out turning theory into practice. Bingo wanders by just in time to catch her decadent swansong...

“Honey, I’m the laziest girl in town.” “But you’re always mentally active,” he chides.

“Yeah, my brain’s always working but my body would rather do something else, like lying down. Ten minutes is too much – I think I know when enough is enough.”

The organiser rushes back, flushed with panic: “Would you go on stage now PLEASE! They’re all going totally wild!”

“OK, OK,” Nick snarls, annoyed. “Maybe they’ll all piss on us tonight like the scum that we are. Hey! We can’t go on yet – there’s too many punk girls licking the microphones.”

No matter what the obvious associations and dubious attractions of the Teenage Jesus, 8-Eyed Spy and 13.13 founder touring with The Birthday



Party, no matter how deeply they share the same macabre fascination for death and self-indulgence, no matter how little their audience seems to mean to them, the crucial difference between Lydia Lunch and Australia's most intoxicating export since Foster's is that The Birthday Party don't give a hoot about enough being enough.

The gnarled and brooding "Kiss Me Black" is barely beginning to unfold its dark paranoia when Cave whiplashes his boot into the crowd and a girl reels back, nose bleeding. As he covers beneath a shower of fists and attempts to make his apologies, a barely human lump of muscle and mange slips a claw inside its coat. Bingo's uncoiled; up and on him like a startled cat. He struggles back stage left, moments later, brandishing an eight-inch piece of metal pipe.

Meanwhile, Tracy's getting riled. Three dope-smoking Mexican girls are gobbing on the ex-con's fresh-polished slacks, tarnishing his brand-new spurs. "Beer, beer. Give us beer," they demand.

Suddenly, his patience snaps and a flurry of kicks catches one of the girls in the thigh. He winces as his privates grind against the penknife he keeps in his front-trouser pocket to make his meat-hustling swagger look better equipped. She gobs back, unhurt but visibly shaken that a simulated performance should break the bounds of ritual and explode into real pain.

And the Party play a blinder. Nick collapses and writhes in epileptic fury. Tracy struts and sweats, never smiles. Rowland glowers like an animate death's head. The spittin' image of a deranged door-to-door bible-seller who sleeps in his suit, Mick Harvey plays with one hand in his pocket, carves out vicious chords with the other. Phil Calvert smiles and drums like a butcher.

**B**ACK AT THE hotel, they demand a late-night interview that turns into a squabble. Where they agree, they sound weary.

"I'm afraid you're flogging a horse that's very long in the tooth on this tour," Nick begins.

"To be honest, I didn't want to do this tour. Most nights I get something out of it, though – even if it's only exorcising my anger." This is from Rowland.

"I'm surprised you're still together" – this from the hack.

"So am I," Rowland concludes.

A second interview requested the next day, to clear up the carnage from the first, only contributes further to the public misinterpretation of a widely misunderstood band.

"Our public image is inaccurate in that it takes the very obvious aspects of the group – which I suppose is inevitable – and makes it seem like that's the only thing to it." What Rowland is talking about is violence and, more specifically, the way Nick and Tracy say and do things for effect that the others often regret. "Personally, I think our band is a real battle of personalities," he says.

"It's definitely a clash of ideas rather than a cohabitation of ideas," Nick agrees.

"The band's just a little monster we've created that we don't seem to have any control over any more," Tracy sneers.

"It's like the nerve reaction when you pull off a spider's leg and it keeps on kicking..."

I think back to the morning when Rowland, Mick and Tracy exchanged punches over who should sit in the front of the van and wonder if there's any point in The Birthday Party doing interviews at all.

"Not a lot," muses Phil.

"They're so often misinterpreted either by the reader or the writer... just like when we play. It's inevitable for any group that hasn't got a really formulated idea of what they're supposed to be..."

The confusion and conflict, the inter-band bickering that brings this group to the brink and gives it that edge, will eventually blow it apart.



August 5, 1982:  
onstage at The  
Venue, London

Here's the drunken bones of the first night's confrontation. Nick: "Personally, I think there's still far too much humour in our music and I'd like to make the stuffiest, stiflingest, depressing record out."

Tracy: "Would you?... Well you can get yourself a new bass player... I wish you'd told me in private."

Hack: "Does working with Lydia alter the way you work?"

Lydia: "Well, they always wear my makeup."

Nick: "There may be some influence... that's yet to be seen."

Lydia: "Yet to be obscene."

Hack: "What's your link?"

Lydia: "Brilliance... No, I didn't say that... Extreme passion."

Hack: "I hear you're going to be doing an album with The Birthday Party as well as writing a book of 50 one-act plays with Nick?"

Tracy: "That's for us to know and you to find out, buster."

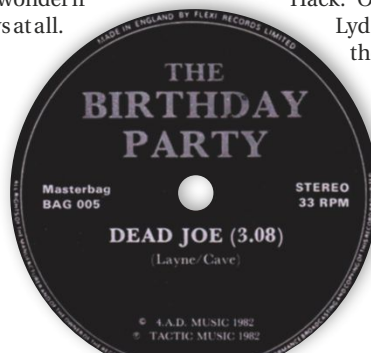
Hack: "OK, tell me about your new album then, Tracy."

Lydia: "I think *Junkyard* is the best album ever recorded in the history of the world."

Bingo: "I second that."

Nick: "It makes a stand for violence for its own sake and violence as a profession... It's irresponsibly violent. Eeeech! There's blood on the end of my boot. I just think, occasionally, maybe tonight, we can be irresponsibly violent... so there!"

Hack: "Do you feel answerable for it?" »





The Birthday Party backstage at The Venue, May 15, 1981: (c/wise from left) Mick Harvey, Phill Calvert, Tracy Pew, Rowland S Howard, Nick Cave

## “Every record happens to be really bad”

**MM NOV 27** The Birthday Party review the singles – two of which pass muster.

**PROLOGUE:** Consider the written word struggles to convey sarcasm. Peruse accordingly.

**Carly Simon Come Upstairs** WEA

**TRACY PEW:** What was that?

**The Church Unguarded Moment**

CARRERE

**NICK CAVE:** We're basically proud to be Australian, but that's totally embarrassing to us. We're desperately in search of some other groups who can help us – not that we're here to promote Australia or anything – but it would be nice if some other Australian groups came up with

something that was interesting. Apart from the fabulous Go-Betweens and the equally fabulous Laughing Clowns, I hate them all. The Church are just helping to promote ill-feeling towards Australia.

**ROWLAND HOWARD:** This record does have the remarkable honour of being about the worst written song I've ever heard in my life, particularly as the singer, Steve Kilbey or whatever he's called, considers himself to be the best songwriter in Australia. Ha! They're just an offensively smug Tinkertoy group!

**TRACY PEW:** Australia really loves them and thinks they're gonna pull Australian rock out of its ditch. What a fallacy! This sounds like a high school garage band's composition played by session musicians.

**The Damned Generals** BRONZE

**TP:** The self-appointed original punk-rock group have produced another gem, totally worthless and completely piss-weak.

**NC:** Puerile drivel. They're a bunch of squirts and we'll fight them any day! No, don't put that...

**TP:** We'll be in a hell of a pickle if you run your mouth off.

**RH:** I think you should put all that in the review.

**TP:** We'll arm-wrestle them anyway!

**Lene Lovich It's You, Only You (Mein Schmerz)** STIFF

**TP:** Thoroughly unoriginal.

**RH:** That's not entirely true, because this is the sort of thing that she came up with in the first place. It's just that everyone else has ripped her off in the two years she hasn't done anything.

**NC:** I admit she did come up with this trash in the first place, so she's responsible for the trail of slime, but in any case, this is a no-punches-pulled, enthusiastic, energetic piece of bullshit.

**Anomy TVC15** INNER LANDSCAPES

**RH:** Musically, the equivalent of someone scraping their fingernails on a blackboard.

**NC:** We hope they have a head-on with a bus.

**Bananarama Cheers Then**

LONDON

**TP:** A very amateurish singing group who should get lessons from... what's her name? That woman who taught the Sex Pistols to sing. Musically it sounds like Visage, which is a terrible thing.

**RH:** Midge has got a lot to answer for, hasn't he?

**Trevor Herion Kiss Of No Return**

IMPERIAL

**Screaming Dead Schoolgirl Junkie** SKULL

**RH:** Trevor Herion doesn't live up to his name!

**TP:** But this Glaswegian punk-rock group with very strange

haircuts make a very astute social observation.

**NC:** They're very scary, anyway!

**Vietnamese Rose The Young And The Free** LUNA

**NC:** Single of the week, nine out of 10. A delightful and beautiful song. The guitar riff refers back to certain country things I like...

**RH:** It's also the only vaguely positive record in the bunch; all the rest of them are just so incredibly morose.

**NC:** Yes, it seems to be reasonably unpretentious where the halitosis of British rock, which accounts for the majority of what we've heard today, is the fact that it totally lacks three things that make

a great record: a) a sense of humour b) a sense of irreverence towards music and c) that the performers have, if not their brains, then at least their hearts in their records. This song seems to have all those things.

**TP:** We threw our panties and hotel keys at the record player!

**Panther Burns I'm On This Rocket**

ROUGH TRADE

**RH:** Groups like this really don't live up to their reputation for being vaguely exciting and supposedly wild. For Christ's sake, it's so predictable; it just has a bit of feedback at the start, then it's a real let-down. Alex Chilton isn't on this, which would probably account for it. Alex Chilton is one of the very best people alive.

**Kid Creole & The Coconut**

DEAR ADDY ISLAND

**TP:** A repulsively packaged Christmas cash-in. If you ever get to see Kid Creole perform, they're so rancidly stinking dull...

**RH:** The most repulsive thing about it is that it's supposed to be clever, hip trash and it's really just bad trash. It offends me that they impress other people.

**NC:** I personally have never thought they've done anything worthwhile. They're a shitty group. Kill Coati Mundi.

**The Beat I Confess** GO FEET

**RH:** It sounds like they've tried to be adult, which is a shame.

**NC:** What single are we up to now? The 24th or so? I mean, we have a reputation for our negativism, but it just seems to me that we're being forced to be negative about every single we hear. How can we help it when we



Lene Lovich: responsible for a "trail of slime"

have 24 pieces of total shit placed in front of us? How do you come up with anything positive? This record's just rubbish. I wouldn't buy it in a fit. No, I mean, go out and buy all these singles, kids, and then listen to them and see if you don't agree with me and my backing group!

### Boney M *Going Back West* ATLANTIC

NC: Abominable.

RH: Not nearly as good as "Rasputin" or "Ma Baker". It's one of their horrible acoustic hymns.

### Siouxsie And The Banshees

*Melt* POLYDOR

NC: I'd like to point out that whoever did the cover... Gil Thompson... has plagiarised one of Gustav Klimt's better paintings. On the cover of "Slow Dive" he's rather clumsily stuck Siouxsie's head on top of the torso and...

TP: ...replaced the innocent face with Siouxsie's eerie monster head.

NC: Look in your Gombrich - you'll see the picture intact. The "Melt" cover is a similar liberation. I admire her taste, because I quite like the painter myself, although this version's rather cheap, supermarket art nouveau, chocolate box... I'm particularly upset about the "Slow Dive" cover because, when I hadn't developed properly, I did a painting of this for my matriculation. I mean, I admit to plagiarising the same painting, but I put my own scary monster head on it. I'd just like to say, I did it much better than Gil Thompson - in fact, it got me an "A". This is not to say I have anything against Siouxsie, because I think she's probably quite a nice person.

RH: I just wish she'd stop reading Stephen King books.

MM: What about the record?

NC: What about it? I think that was a really good review!

### Criminal Class *Fighting System*

HELL

NC: We lost as many braincells listening to it as they possess collectively.

### Rock Goddess *Satisfied Then Crucified*

(A&M) (B-SIDE)

TP: Possibly the only British new-wave heavy metal group worth listening to. This is the first piece of good ballsy rock from the movement for a long time. It's funny and it's actually loud.

NC: Jesus Christ! I know what it's like! They're obviously talking about sexual encounters and, personally,



I understand that title. "Satisfied Then Crucified" - I understand these girls!

RH: You can relate to girls with pimples on their wrists.

### Dr Hook *Rings* MERCURY

RH: Interesting how all Dr Hook records are about fucking, basically. TP: Yeah, they seem to have hit upon a formula of soft-porn, middle-of-the-road music for promiscuous adults.

NC: We would like to say right now, that we're totally in favour, total advocates of this new movement in American soft-porn music. We're totally interested in providing healthy sexual attitudes, basically - in particular amongst the young, because they've definitely gone off the rails!

### The Cure *Let's Go To Bed* FICTION

RH: It's just the vocal track off any Cure song over a dance beat. Robert Smith only writes one song these days anyway. It's sadder than I would have imagined. This is starting to depress me now.

NC: I can't believe this record. Perhaps we're getting old or something, but I just can't cope, I just can't relate to it at all. I think I'd better hang up my larynx. I don't know why groups do this sort of thing. Maybe, after five years of being in a band, one gets a bit sick of living in bedsits and so forth.

TP: It's called crossing over.

### EPILOGUE

NC: Personally, it doesn't surprise me that every record here happens to be really bad, apart from the two we've pointed out. Really, for the last two years, the only British group that I've thought are really worth anything are The Fall, because they seem to have a kind of mystery about their music, a sense of humour and a healthy attitude. They obviously care so much about their music that it doesn't occur to them to release anything that isn't true to themselves. They just seem to have so much charm and personality, whereas everything else seems to be made by people who haven't got much personality of their own or are so deeply rooted in British new-wave traditions that they can't escape.

This pile of bullshit doesn't upset me. In fact, I'm elevated by this session; it only makes me feel more comfortable in knowing what The Birthday Party is doing is right.

RH: I haven't bought a record for two years, and I have no intention of buying a record ever again at this rate.

Nick: "Personally? No... People get killed quite often at concerts by people like the Rolling Stones."

Hack: "So one more person getting killed doesn't matter, is that what you're saying?"

Tracy: "Well, if people come to our concerts and fight, it's nothing to do with us, stupid! We haven't made them fight."

Hack: "Yes, you have. By behaving the way you do and playing music that's irresponsibly violent, you incite them."

Tracy: "Who's irresponsibly violent, you fuckin' asshole?"

Hack: "Nick said you were."

Rowland: "Nick was being irresponsible."

Nick (*wearily*): "OK, I take it all back. I didn't mean it."

Hack: "I think you did."

Tracy: "You fucking crud!" (*He ups and storms out.*)

**I**N FRANKFURT, A cooler explanation is forthcoming. Lydia, in attempting to articulate the soiled ins and outs of her latest release, *13.13*, her formidable and volatile output and why she never develops a project, puts a painted finger on the pulse of the Party's problem.

"Just because you make a piece of work that takes a certain stance doesn't mean you're advocating it. I mean, when I'm up there wailing, I don't expect other people to start howling in the background. I think The Birthday Party are passionate as opposed to nasty. True passion may or may not be something you've experienced, but it can get so exceptionally heated that it turns almost into an act of violence.

"I never take into consideration how people are gonna react to what I write; if people can't get into the joke, then fuck 'em! I do what I want to do and hope it'll upset all the people who think they know me from the recordings before. I'm not like the Banshees - doing the same thing for five years to please other people. I express myself, so why should I repeat myself? I get bored to death."

"Everything I do is exceptionally momentary. I don't feel I've ever needed any band for more than 10 songs and, if people think my ideas aren't developed fully enough, they should reform the band and do it themselves. I please myself."

So why externalise your stuff at all?

"It's nice to think about fucking, but isn't it better to really fuck?"

Nick echoes her sentiments a couple of hours later: "I think there's a certain irresponsibility about the group in that we can incite a violent reaction or incite an energy into a crowd and just leave it at that without giving the crowd any aim or purpose or channel to focus their energy and violence upon. See, you're assuming our main objective's stimulation - it's not. Our main objective is to record for ourselves."

The artistically fortuitous, morally fascinating, mutually appreciative and musically stunning marriage of Lydia Lunch and The Birthday Party lurched to a halt at Frankfurt's Batschkapp and headed back to Berlin - the band's new base - to finish Lydia's next quickfire project and complement her duo single with Rowland - in your shops now! A brutal version of Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood's "Some Velvet Morning", it typically strips even the most fanciful innuendo down to sordid reality.

Backstage, Rowland slaps a punk for throwing beer in his face and Tracy floors the same punter outside for harassing Minnou, the tour manager.

"See! Me and Tracy knew he was a bad sort," Rowland grins in the back of the van. Mick turns to me somewhat sheepish and sighs.

"Personally, I find it offensive and embarrassing if either the audience or the band starts throwing punches or kicking - and I find the idea behind it offensive as well..."

I remember Tracy's earlier comment that bands whose members are prepared to sacrifice their personal identities to toe a corporate line are "disgusting spineless fish" and it occurs to me that, for The Birthday Party, art and life are one and the same. They mean the noise they make and the noise they make means business. We live in dangerous times.

Steve Sutherland •



The Who: stodgy onslaught from the dogged old warhorse

— ALBUMS —  
**REVIEW**  
 — 1982 —

**THE WHO**  
*It's Hard* POLYDOR

What's hard? Life? Being Townshend? Or breathing life into The Who - an old institution with no idea of its place in the current scheme of things?

Whatever the title's portent, this album sounds like it's struggling through a variety of difficulties and overcomes none of them.

I could say The Who's new LP improves on the previous one - *Face Dances* - although, frankly, that's not saying an awful lot. Where the previous effort was an aimless, random scrapbook of vague and half-realised musings, the present collection is at least consistent in addressing itself more or less to a single theme: how to live now, in the teeth of horror, without comfortable illusions or self-deceit. Trouble is, such is the material's scrupulous attention to honesty that you wonder why they don't acknowledge the final façade, and admit that The Who have become the band out of time.

With the exception of a couple

of tracks - significantly, the ones where The Who aren't playing like The Who - Townshend's songs are all but thrown away, tethered to a formula they've plainly outgrown. The group is a dogged old warhorse, loyally serving out its time in harness to a blinkered determination: rock will stand, right up to the day it keels over backwards. Or else they're a monument, grand and proud, but now caked in pigeon-shit and ignored by the new generation who populate the public square. Either way (for Pete's sake, and Roger's, and everyone's), there must be other avenues found.

There are three John Entwistle songs, all sturdy enough, but doomed to second-rate-hood in contrast to their company - even though (especially as) they make awkward attempts to blend with it. The bass-man should go off and relax and jam with Joe Walsh to his heart's content. Drummer Kenney Jones could look elsewhere, too; he'll not starve.

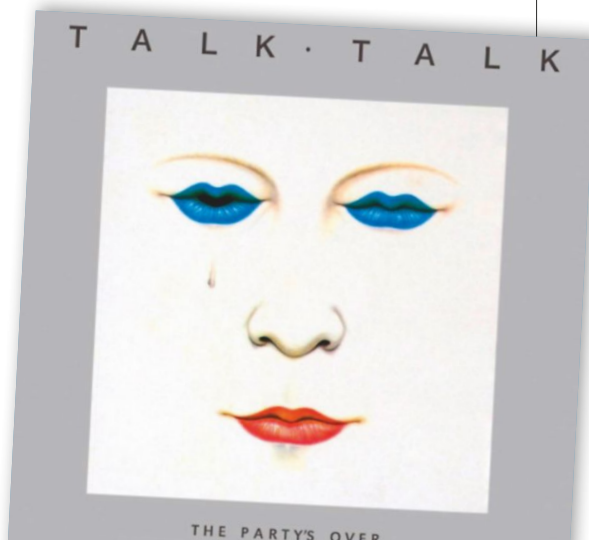
Roger Daltrey must have enough career options open, as well. The one thing he shouldn't be doing is

mischief to the stuff that Townshend's turning out nowadays. The songwriter's preoccupations now are nuclear oblivion ("Why Did I Fall For That", "I've Known No War"), and reconciling public faces with private truths ("Eminence Front"). Where the lyrics are subtle, all their suppleness is crushed by the need to tie each syllable to this lumbering tumbrel of trad-rock. Where the message is sensitive and self-doubting, it's demolished by the demands of one of the "great rock voices", which is more suited

(strait-jacketed?) to bronzed, brazen chest-beating.

For all I know, Daltrey may be genuinely aggrieved that "People are suffering... hungry... lonely..." ("Cook's County"); he may sincerely be worried by the destructive aspects of macho role-playing ("A Man Is A Man"). But is he the man to say it? It's not just him: the whole group, Pete included, feel obliged to play in a way that pulls the carpet from under them. Only the neat melodic invention of "A Man Is A

WARING ABBOTT / GETTY



Man", and the odd moment of sexual tenderness ("One Life's Enough") offer respite from an otherwise stodgy onslaught.

Even if Townshend's recent solo LP has its duffer music (the numbers unerringly chosen as singles), on the whole it suggested a more productive course for him to take: namely his own, his very own. Sod democracy for a lark, Pete. I like you better playing Hitler.

Paul Du Noyer, NME Sep 4

## Talk Talk

### The Party's Over EMI

A couple of OK 45s aside (and you'll find them both included here) *The Party's Over* marks the debut proper of Talk Talk, a young quartet formed around the songwriting of singing Southender Mark Hollis. It's a decent stab at classic modern pop - very orthodox in structure and very '82 in sound - and it's nothing that TT need to be ashamed of. It's a frustrating record, just the same, because for all their ambition, the group aren't really there, not yet.

Talk Talk's strongest attribute is the way they've got of knocking out good tunes. There isn't one of these nine tracks without a class melody line to its name, the "Talk Talk" number itself being a good example. And that ability suggests that the band will give a good account of themselves before they make or break. On the other hand...

The line-up dispenses with guitar, relying on voice and washes of synth to carry each song. But instrumentally, the result is slightly mushy and grey, badly lacking some hard edge or backbone. In other words: lush, but limp. Mark's vocals fit into this problematic picture all too well, being smooth and soft and lost inside the mix. He's also got this technique of croaking "Ooergh-Ooergh" at moments of emotional climax, sounding more like he's being strangled.

There's an impression of whinginess about this stuff, borne out by lyrics that are generally earnest and depressed, and sometimes give to E. J. Thribb-style poetry. If there was some toughening up done all around, more aggression and drive, and if the range of moods to be tackled could be wider, then it seems entirely feasible that Talk Talk might produce work with a genuinely epic stamp to it. As it is, the torch songs flicker but dimly. There's beauty here, but I'd love to see it blazing. Paul Du Noyer, NME Jul 24

# "Nice song"

**MM SEPT 4** Paul Weller gets some pleasure out of hating the latest releases.

**T**HESE DAYS, IT'S not so much picking out the classics from the good records, as more trying to find just one good record. I feel sorry for journalists after sorting through this week's releases; no wonder most of them hate music. So would I if I had to listen to this shit week after week.

These are only a small proportion of records I listened to, there were others but I couldn't face them. The sleeves looked like 1968 was back, the group names confirmed it. The music isn't worth mentioning. Why not talk about something else?

Week in week out, year in etc the same old cunts release their noise upon us, the papers have to fill another page and so it goes on. And this is the Golden Age Of Pop? Do me a favour. Still next week looms large, thank God.

## SINGLES

### Rip, Rig And Panic

#### Storm The Reality Asylum VIRGIN

Can I take this opportunity to say how underrated the Pop Group were/are? They were doing the funk fing years ago and a 100 times better than the new breed (heh heh!). Anyway this is nice - the beat don't drop and the horns are good. I'm a bit fed up with 12-inch records at the moment, but fortunately this is not a record. Oh good.

### Grandmaster Flash

#### The Message SUGARHILL

For me the Sugarhill label (along with Greensleeves) has been the most consistently good music maker in recent years, and this carries on the fine tradition. The words will stop it getting daytime airplay, but *The Message* could still give G. Flash a chart hit; I hope so. This is the first record I've heard for a while with some guts and meaning (without being meaningful). Single of the week, definitely.

### The Laughing Apple

#### Participate AUTONOMY

From Scotland, yet another ridiculous name. But the record's good, "Fight For



The public gets what the public wants...



Your Right" the singer sings. I think they're

from Scotland, anyway.

### The Cars

#### Think It Over WEA

WAAYHAAY! A new wave group! Glad to see the lads still wear skinny ties. This is the group OGWT raved over and the music papers gave a page or two to a couple of years back. The advertising slogan says "Shit music for cunts!" Got a nice ring to it, actually.

### Simple Minds

#### Glittering Prize VIRGIN

Modern hippy music; if they wore cheesecloth and clogs you lot wouldn't look twice at 'em. I still prefer Johnny and the Self Abusers. Now there was a band, what? Oh sorry, not to mention them, right, right.

### Depeche Mode

#### Leave In Silence MUTE

Another in the long line of the new wave of hippy music. I've heard more melody coming out of Kenny Wheeler's arsehole.

### UB40

#### So Here I Am DEP. INT

Sounds like Stevie Wonder. I had to check the sleeve again. More 'funky' than anything they've done before, the singer's quite good.

### Squire

#### Girl On A Train HI-LO

The original mod group, we were very influenced by Squire, great, great. Yeh, tell it like it is. Actually they're just another waste of good spunk.

### Men Without Hats

#### I Got The Message STRATIK

Oh I'm so robotic - I tick and tock - and I stare - etc, etc.

### Sweet Pea Atkinson

#### Don't Walk Away ZE

"Usual thing, swirling synth opens into a pulsating handclap bass drum and away you go"... courtesy of *Wish You Were Here*. Oh sorry that was the B side. The A side is much nicer; I like this, nice song. I hope it's a hit, really.

### Black Slate

#### Sticks Man

#### TOP RANKING

Very underrated group. I think they're great. This one is a standard workout, but pisses over most that don't even reach that.

### Sex Gang Children

#### Beasts ILLUMINATED

Oh very mad - I mean reeaally out on the edge baby. Funny old name innit?

### Rockers Revenge

#### Walking On Sunshine LONDON

MM's very own soul brother Paolo Hewitt raved about this, but I've also noticed he drinks a lot - is there a connection? This is the UK release of very inoffensive US disco (D Train, etc). The London sleeve is beautiful, though.



# 1982

JULY – SEPTEMBER



October 10, 1982:  
Kevin Rowland  
fronts Dexys  
Midnight Runners  
at the Shaftesbury  
Theatre, London

# “A pure sound”

Kevin Rowland explains the sound (and the look) of the new DEXYS MIDNIGHT RUNNERS. “People say that to us – they tell me that I overdo things, that I go over the top. I don’t fucking care, because that’s how it is, that’s how I want it to be.”

— NME JULY 3 —

**T**HE RAIN POURS down and the traffic piles up along London’s Notting Hill Gate as Kevin Rowland and myself make our way through the grey afternoon looking for a place to have some light refreshment and continue the interview which had started the previous day.

So we’re just walking along minding our own, not really saying or thinking too much, when there’s a loud banging from a shop front on my nearside. Hunched over a cup of black coffee at a window seat sits a familiar figure. Without really thinking, I automatically nudge Rowland. “Look, there’s Van...”

Thinks – VAN!!? What am I saying?

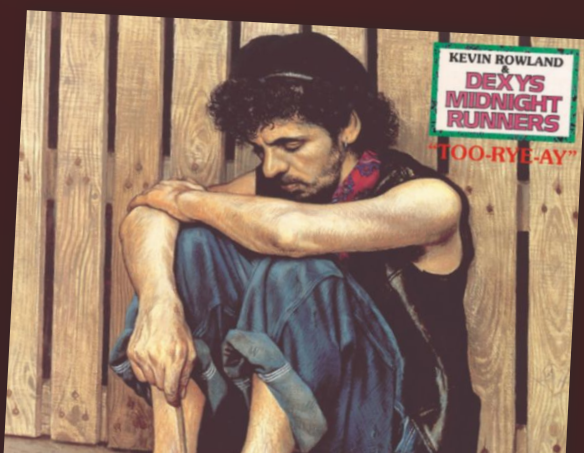
“Christ! It’s Van Morrison.”

If it had happened in a dream it would have been weird, but as it is, I’m still finding what was a purely-by-chance meeting hard to believe.

I mean – Van Morrison; I haven’t had his records off the turntable since Christmas, I’ve just spent my holidays in Northern Ireland so I could see three of his shows and there he is just sitting there.

Within a few minutes he’s talking away, openly and in good humour. Just talking about his work and this and that like someone I’ve known, albeit vaguely, all my life.

Morrison’s involvement with Rowland – although never actually consummated on records – dates »



DAVID CORIO / GETTY

back to before the recording of Dexys Midnight Runners' debut LP *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels*. Rowland wanted him to produce the record, and it got as far as Van coming to see the group in rehearsals, making his apologies and leaving.

Recently, Rowland again made contact and sent him a demo of two tracks from Dexys' second LP *Too Rye Ay*; they were "Celtic Soul Brothers" and "Jackie Wilson Says", the latter one of Morrison's own songs.

"Celtics" aroused the man's interest, and he's now very attracted to the freshness of the new string-based acoustic Dexys format, so much so that it's possible Rowland and Morrison will work together. Indeed during the course of our brief encounter, tentative arrangements were made for Van to visit a studio where Dexys are demoing some new material.

Although he never actually asked, I never told him I was a journalist. Morrison doesn't do interviews unless he retains the copyright on the finished article, so it's fair to assume he's suspicious of writers' motives. And I must admit that I still have doubts about whether or not it was ethically correct to start the article the way I just have.

But, hell! Van Morrison! I couldn't believe it.

As well as making music – live or on record – that blows nearly everything else around far far away, Rowland has in the past shared Morrison's suspicion of the press. The conversation he has with me is his first official interview (with the dreaded British music press at any rate) for almost two years. Why?

"Simply to promote my records. I want publicity for my records," he says calmly but bluntly. "Two years ago was different. I've changed quite a bit since then. It was important to me at that time not to do interviews; it was important to what I did then. It's a good job I did all those things or I think the music would have suffered. But there was lots of disadvantages as well (*laughs*), because they sort of got an open hand and could present us the way they wanted.

"I don't think of it as a big deal; the fact that I'm doing this interview now isn't important. Anyone who thinks that is kidding themselves; it's fuck all really."

From the raw punch and incision of their first single "Dance Stance" to the lusty celebration of their latest single "Come On Eileen", Rowland's Dexys Midnight Runners have seldom made anything less than GREAT music, and regardless of the frowns, the essays, the image-associations and character assassinations, that's what really matters.

There's a passion and force that runs through music like "I'm Only Looking" and "Let's Make This Precious" which stabs and pounds and lifts you up the way music, truly life-affirming music, should, but seldom does.

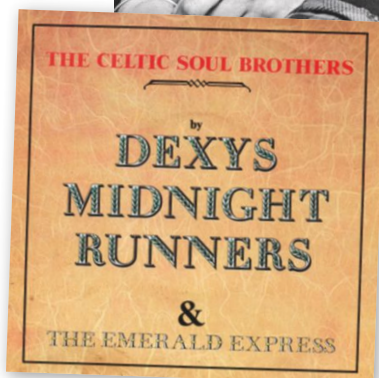
Following the release of *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels* in the summer of 1980, the first lot of Dexys did a runner, Rowland released "Keep It (Part Two)" – his favourite Dexys single – and put a new group together. "Plan B" – a furious gale of positivity and determination; one part "Come Round Here (I'm The One That You Need)", one part "Lean On Me" and five parts sheer resolution and inspiration – was unleashed but failed to chart because EMI Records withdrew support when the new group walked out of the label the same week it was released. The success "Plan B" should have had went to the inferior "Show Me": the group's debut for Phonogram and their first hit in a year.

In many circles, Dexys became scorned, and it was easy for even the most diehard fan to scratch his head and wonder just what the hell they were up to.

They could seem pompous, even ridiculous at times. Not because the qualities that they, and particularly Rowland, based their faith in were irksome; far from it. At a time when most modern music was simply



September 9, 1982: Helen O'Hara and Kevin Rowland at Diamond Sound rehearsal studios in Birmingham



peeing about, things like dedication and craftsmanship were more than welcome. But they were qualities to be worked with, not talked about.

The vindication came in November when the group presented the astonishing Projected Passion Revue over three nights at London's Old Vic Theatre; a show which, according to Dexys aficionado Adam Ant, should have been seen "in every town in the country".

The PPR was a riveting evening of entertainment. It was structured in a traditional showbiz (as opposed to "rock") style, but with a content that was at times frighteningly dynamic. Perhaps its only remote precedent was almost 20 years previously with James Brown & The Famous Flames'

revues at New York's Appollo Theatre. But really there are no comparisons to the near-cinematic force and phenomenom ranging from frustration to tenderness, from lust to passionate resolve.

**D**EXYS ARE JUST about to release the new LP *Too Rye Ay*, which features the Emerald Express fiddlers and a body of songs written over the past two years.

Surprisingly, considering the group's separatist approach, the LP is produced by Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley – who also produce Madness – but then that's because "they were the only ones who said they'd do it". Personally, I'll be surprised to hear a better LP all year (apart from the one released by that small man with the Belfast accent that I met on a rainy day in Notting Hill)...

Kevin Rowland is now 28; he didn't start making music (with his brother's C&W group) until he was 21. Born in Harrow, he left home at 17, travelling extensively and working in such places as Clacton, Glasgow, Aviemore and Liverpool.

"It wasn't like a student going on a summer holiday, I just really enjoyed the idea of wandering around. It sounds like a terrible cliché, but you don't half get a good feeling just wandering around and not knowing where you're going. You don't know what lies ahead of you – it could be an adventure or something, it's a really good feeling.

"Like in Liverpool I went from one extreme to the other. At first I was living with this group of people who were sort of like hippies. Well, they weren't anything else, dirty and dropping acid and listening to Hendrix all day. Actually, I quite like Hendrix, but I enjoyed winding them up. So



they'd put on a Status Quo record or something and say, 'Yeah Quo, man they're really, y'know.' And I'd sit there and nod and say, 'Yeah, but Kenny are really good as well', and that freaked them out. They couldn't see it was all the same thing.

"Anyway that came to an end and a few months later I was wearing a suit and managing a shoe shop in the city centre."

Right now, Rowland is wearing dungarees, drinking tea, smiling a lot and he'd admit he's much easier to get on with than he's ever been. Two years is a long time, so we've both got plenty to talk about.

**It's taken a long time for the LP to come out and there are four singles on it. Is it frustrating not to get the songs out a lot sooner, and are you selling the listener short?**

We fully intended to record the record this time last year, but the biggest problem we had was finding a producer. I'm such an incredibly slow writer anyway; I could never just pick up a guitar and write a song. Each one takes about a month or two months to write. I have one of these little recorders and I go around with it, taping ideas into it all the time and writing ideas in a little notebook... It's all part of a continuous process.

But I certainly don't think they're instant and they have to be out right away; I never get that feeling.

And I must admit I have absolutely no conscience at all about bringing singles off LPs. I think those songs are right for that LP; they all go together, with the past two years and what's gone on.

The record company didn't want to put "Liars" on the LP, because it makes it over 46 minutes. But it's on there because it fits in. We spent ages on things like the running order and the space between tracks. It's important when the mood changes that it changes in the right way; things like that have to be really right for it to sound good.

**The LP is credited to Kevin Rowland and Dexys Midnight Runners. Going by recent publicity pictures, Big Jimmy and Brian have left the group...**

It's more a question of working with a small nucleus of people, and it has been for some time. Jimmy and Brian will probably work with us again, but it will be more on a session basis, as it will be with most of the people we work with. I think the idea of groups is almost old-fashioned now. There's been too many of them. They all just go the same way and become really shallow, useless things. I just think it would be better to find a different way of working.

We should have done this a long time ago; it's better to have a small nucleus, and not have to worry about organising eight people. It's a burden financially paying out wages and it's unfair to them because they're sitting around half the year while I'm writing songs. They've never even tried to get session work, which is what they are going to do now. Their loyalty has amazed me, because they stayed around without any real success to speak of.

**How did you meet The Emerald Express?**

I saw Helen one morning at a bus stop just down the road from where I live. She was carrying a violin case, so I started talking to her. I'd wanted to use strings as far back as the last group, but it never really worked out. Anyway she and Steve came down to rehearsals and started playing, as simple as that. Her background is basically music college.

**What inspired the three Projected Passion Revues at the Old Vic last year?**

Well, there's lots of reasons. I can't just say one thing that gave me the idea. There was The Intense Emotion Revue which we did with the original lineup in 1980. Y'know, those six weeks of hell on the road, just going round playing everywhere.

**Oh, like a tour?**

Yeah, fuck, well what else was it? That gave me some of the ideas, because I was so fed up – I really wanted to put on a good show. I was getting ideas but on the road they just get scrambled and I thought, "Fucking hell, this

just isn't working", y'know. Going round those Tiffany's places, it was no good at all. It was just arguing all the time. I was driving the audience away at that point, totally.

If you're playing Tiffany's or the Lyceum or places like that, the audience are paying in and getting shoved around by bouncers and you can't get a drink at the bar or anything. Then you get thrown into your seats, if there are any. You just get treated like a prick. Who wants to go to those places anyway?

It's a really horrible atmosphere as well; before you go into those places they already have their own atmosphere set and there's nothing you can do to change it. I think if there was a group with a strong personality, they wouldn't have any chance of putting it over because they already have the horrible personality of the place fixed before you go in.

Also I do want to put on good shows, really good shows. Not bullshit, but something really good.

**When I interviewed you two years ago you talked of changing the face of rock music. Hardly due to Dexys, but the mode (an apt word) of the music has changed. What do you think of it now?**

What's changed about it? I think it's worse than its ever been. It's just shit, y'know. People say we've got the best going now and everything's great and this country – oooh, ain't it fantastic, the way everything here moves so quickly? I think it moves incredibly fucking slowly. They say we're years ahead in England; there's always something happening and then six months later... there's something else.

And it's just shit. I mean that synthesizer thing has been done to death. It's time somebody put up something different. That's all you get on the radio; I just don't like it – it's incredibly fucking boring.

You read the music press – well, I try to; I buy one every week, usually the *NME* – and I leaf through it and I try to read it, but when I get halfway through an article I just have to put it down. The way musicians go on about their music makes me sick.

And the way it's written! You just get the same thing over and over and over again, and you get the idea that the writer doesn't actually believe what they are writing. And when you go to see the group or you hear them and you wait for this great swirling sound or whatever to overtake you and sweep you off your feet, then you know it's insincere. Too many people are just writing about nothing, I suppose.

I'm just fed up with people coming up to me and telling me the likes of ABC are a good group.

**Martin Fry's got some good ideas.**

They might be a good comedy group or something; maybe they should develop that angle of it, I dunno.

**Do you spend a lot of time thinking about your group?**

Nah, not that much, no more than anything else. I've got other things more important to me.

**Dexys Midnight Runners have gone through three different "looks" – how have they all come about?**

I thought it was really funny at the time, because the media and lots of people sort of looked at us as Yorkshire miners or navvies or something. When in fact what it was, was not so much *The Deer Hunter* as *Mean Streets*. It was a very spiffy look, very Italian with the little 'taches and... (*clicks fingers*)... that hot, sweaty thing that surrounded the music at that time. I felt it was a very smoky image.

**And the next one, I thought it looked great but where the hell did it come from?**

Again I think it was just right for the music. It had a physical look about it as well with the boxing boots and those sort of trousers. There was also a religious feel to some of the music, so the hoods looked a bit sort of monastic. And the ponytails had that sort of discipline that came over with it.

**You placed a lot of emphasis on the physical aspect of the group last year. Was it similar to »**

“I'm just fed with people telling me the likes of ABC are good”





December 3, 1982: Dexys appear on Channel 4 pop show *The Tube*, performing "There, There, My Dear", "Let's Get This Straight", "Celtic Soul Brothers" and "Plan B"

**using dexedrine when the group began, that same sort of alertness and clearheaded feeling?**

*(Laughs)* Yeah, it was actually, though I think it's better to do it without any, y'know. But it was very important last year, running and all that. It definitely helped the spirit of the group. The togetherness of running along together just gets you involved. It gets that fighting spirit going.

We used to come into the rehearsal rooms in Birmingham still sweating from running, and there was all these other groups there and it just put us a million miles away from them. You realise you have absolutely nothing in common with them. It isolated us a bit more, which is what we wanted at that point.

**Is it important for you to live the lifestyle outside the group?**

Yeah, though we all falter sometimes. That's the only problem, we're all only human *(laughs)*. But yeah, it is very important because I'm not just interested in one thing, I'm interested in things that go right across the board, everything should project something. Everything from the clothes to the music should all tie in. And that look did suit last year, those Projected Passion Revues and everything. And this... *(indicates semi-gypsy garb)* ...suits this year.

**How do you explain this Celtic business. Is it part of your background?**

Well, it is from a long way back, but not in any great way. When I say it suits this year I mean us; I don't mean it suits everybody else, though I hope it does.

I've always liked songs like "Believe Me If All Those Endearing Young Charms"; my mum used to sing it when I was a kid and she'd had a drink or something. And I must admit I quite like the idea of being opposite to what's going on at the time. I think it's a good place to be and what we're doing is very opposite to what's going on.

I also feel it's a natural thing for us now to go totally acoustic, no electrical instruments whatsoever. I don't like to use words like puritan music, because I've gone on about that already. But these are the instruments for it, y'know—a pure sound. I feel a lot more confident now

than I did two years ago, about my music and about everything. I almost know where I stand whereas before I was really wary of everyone, drawing up ridiculous barriers.

**I remember the sleeve notes of "There, There My Dear" read, "Old clothes do not a tortured artist make." Is the new look not slumming it a bit?**

These are my best clothes. You think they look scruffy, do you? Nah, I'm only joking. Again it just feels right for the music. These are great clothes, they feel great. You go on stage in these and it just feels right to be playing "Burn It Down" in that new way.

Also there's a slightly comical edge to these, with the trousers being baggy, and I really like that. Everybody else is dressing up sort of strait-laced and we come in wearing these and it's like, y'know, here we are, a bit of hoedowning is even possible.

But I don't want to make too much play out of this being our Celtic thing. I think I did that before with "soul" and people say, "Oh they're just ripping off Otis Redding and get it totally fucking wrong." I don't really think this is a Celtic thing now, it's just us.



**You've always had a strategy for the group?**

Yeah, but things have had to be changed. I think we've made a lot of mistakes and a lot of things could have been done better. The plan for this year was to release "Celtics", have a hit with it and quickly follow it up with "Eileen", but the first part of the plan didn't work. I hope "Eileen" is a hit—I really want our records in the chart, otherwise it's a waste of time. I wouldn't keep doing this forever; I'd find another way of making a living.

Y'see, I fucking know our records are good, I don't need encouragement or reassurance. I know that they are better than the other stuff that is around and I want everyone to know it, not just a small clique of people.

**Do you think people have to come round to your way of thinking?**

I don't, y'see. I know what you're saying, but I think we're really commercial and very accessible, I really do. Now more than ever, though I never really accepted the criticism that Dexys Midnight Runners were a bunch of gloomy twats who made really depressing music. I think a lot of what we've done has been really strong and uplifting.

Y'see, I never had to sit down and think, "This group's going to be commercial or it's not going to be commercial"; I never thought that. Because the music I like is good tunes and words that get something over.

**What sort of music do you listen to?**

I don't listen to much music. Nina Simone a little bit, Ray Charles vaguely—the predictable ones really, I suppose. Van Morrison... Van Morrison more than anyone.

**What did you think of James Brown in Birmingham earlier this year?**

There was some moments there, I enjoyed it, but some of it was too noisy. But when he was on his knees singing "Prisoner Of Love" and they were all at the side egging him on, I thought that was really great because it was getting through to people.

People say that to us, they tell me that I overdo things, that I go over the top and overplay things onstage. I don't fucking care because that's how it is, that's how I want it to be.

**Would you say as a performer your interest is in human beings—how much they can be hurt, how much they can feel elated?**

That's an academic way of putting it. I dunno about analysing it in that way. I just know that it feels right to put over feelings. I don't like to use the word emotion, but that sort of expression is important. And taking it to extremes, because I feel those extremes.

It's like when we go on stage, the first couple of songs are always faked a bit. I think you have to do that to get yourself really going. Then after a while it becomes absolutely real. As soon as I play "Tell Me When My Light Turns Green" I look up and I don't have to think about anything else. I just know that it's there. And it takes off from there and there's no faking in it. There may be certain set things that you go through, but it just becomes real.

I think there's lots of things we've nicked off entertainers, because there's more than a casual approach to what we do. We've taken the whole show and the idea of presenting a show, and I suppose I just judge it by myself. I say, "If I was sitting in the audience, what would I want to see in there? How would I feel if I saw someone doing that?" I think you have to please yourself, because if you tried to please everyone you'd end up not pleasing anyone. I just think that if you've got people in a theatre the chances are there and you can present them with something a bit different.

**What's your relationship with the audience?**

Well, to compare the two things, that's what was so horrible about the last group. Like, when the first group started we used to get all these Madness and Specials fans and they'd be there *Sieg Heil*-ing and shouting for "Geno", and it was so fucking useless, I'd just end up arguing with them.

But now I really respect our audience, I really do. I think we've got a very intelligent audience.

I've never been interested in breaking down the barriers between the audience and the group thing. They've come in to see and that's what we say to them—come in, pay your money and we'll entertain you.

There's a tendency when playing in a big hall for a group to play to the first 200 kids, and we've always tried not to do that. We've always wanted to get the people at the back as well, get everybody and just pull them in. Rather than take it to them, have them come in.

I like to think of it as a celebration, but a bit inspiring as well. I like to move them, really move them. Grip them, really grip them—they should come out feeling quite tired. Like when you go to see a good film you get really involved with it and you come out feeling drained afterwards.

**You don't play a character on stage—do you think that threatens the audience?**

Again, it's hard to say not being in the audience. I think I'd probably find it a bit threatening if I was in the audience, and I think that's good. For one thing it's a whole lot more honest. I can't stand the shit people talk about the likes of Ziggy Stardust. You know—(mock reverential tones) "Bowie invented Ziggy and then Ziggy nearly took him over, became so big that he couldn't

control him." That makes me sick. I think that it's good to frighten people, to take them up, then really knock them and take them down softly and get them every way you can.

**Do you think Dexys are misunderstood?**

Yeah, definitely. Like when I say that it's not any great thing—like we're really misunderstood, you pricks. I'm not saying that, it's just a fact—we are misunderstood. Like, they think it's bullshit, that I'm telling lies. Y'know, what's all this projected bollocks? I think a lot of it's anger, but

I don't really blame people for getting that impression. But I do like the things that go with the music; the whole idea of a group and their music is a bit boring, you have to have something built around it.

**And those essays in the music press, did they help you get understood?**

Probably not. I'm not going to justify it. That was what seemed right at the time and I enjoyed it the way that people reacted to it all. But we wouldn't do the same thing now. I had plans at the time to do a lot more, but the group split up and that put a spanner in the works.

**Why did the first group split up?**

I think I was asking them to perform impossible feats, I wanted the pinnacles of achievement. It was a stupid situation, because I'd feel frustrated if they didn't come up with what I wanted and they'd feel stupid if they couldn't get there. Before, I think the problem was we'd kick out in a lot of different directions and people would just get the force of one thing. I think now the ideas and the music are more concise and more clearly stated. »

“I quite like the idea of being opposite to what's going on”

The post-*Too-Rye-Ay* lineup: (back, l-r) Helen O'Hara, John Edwards, Seb Shelton, Kevin Rowland, Mickey Billingham; (front, l-r) "Billy" Adams, Steve Brennan



**Right through the group, you seem to have based it on ideas and attitudes which mark what I'd take to be your own lifestyle or world view.**

Yeah, but differently now because that's one of the reasons the first group split up, because I'd based it around my lifestyle and I'd already been living in it before I met the group. I was really hated around Birmingham and I used to revel in it. For instance, take your friends The Au Pairs. Well, I used to write on their posters, things that would get them really annoyed like "Jane's got big tits" or "I fucked Lesley last night, signed Kevin Rowland". And they'd come along and go, "That's just what I'd expect."

I was just playing up to their stereotype of me. I don't think I'm a hardnut at all, but they think I'm a working-class thickie, so I was only too happy to play up the image for them. I just used to think of the most disgusting things I could get them really annoyed.

Because those people, they just can't see. They go on about the British Movement and the National Front and how everyone who joins it is evil, but they just can't see for one second why anybody would want to join something like that, because they're so far removed.

**There are rumours about what went on at EMI while you were there. Did you go through a lot of hard times?**

I don't mind all that. Anything I did was the thing to do at the time. I'm not saying what I did was always right. I did loads of stupid things, like the way I used to argue with EMI Records.

I just look back to the time now and wonder how I would have reacted to some prick coming into my office shouting and kicking things over, and I can't really blame them. I'd probably have a different attitude if I was there now, but at the time it was fucking pandemonium. It was like I knew that I was good and I couldn't understand why they weren't more interested, why they couldn't see what I was doing was better than the other stuff they had around.

Y'see, we came up with The Specials and that whole thing and people thought, "Oh yeah, here we go – it's time for the soul revival. We've had The Specials doing ska and here they come with another load of old songs", and they wanted us to wear suits, when in fact it was nothing like that.

I also wanted to do it a different way, and it was like those things with the press – I really enjoyed watching people's reactions. When we started in '79, The Specials would come into our rehearsal rooms in Birmingham and really wanted us to sign for their label, but I didn't like the idea at all – I just told them to fuck off.

Then at the other side of town you had The Beat and UB40 learning as fast as they could to get on 2-Tone. When all these groups came through, I think it might even have looked as if we were copying them.

Anyway, with EMI at the end we just really wanted to get out. Paul, our manager, stayed up every night for two weeks looking through a copy of the contract until he came across an option that they literally forgot to take up. If it wasn't for him we'd have never got out of it... But, I don't know, we pulled a few stunts that had made us real unpopular.

We stole the tapes of the LP, but that was much earlier – that was really fucking crazy, stealing the tapes of the LP. But what I'm really talking about is Paul grabbing hold of McLaren, because he was their golden boy at the time, and saying, "Hello, Malcolm", and then just cracking him in front of all the EMI blokes. That really put us down in their esteem.

McLaren had said a couple of things about us, and personally I have no respect for what he does, but we were just using him to get our feelings across to EMI and it worked.

**I always thought "Show Me" was an odd song for you to have written, but "I'll Show You" on the new LP sets it in perspective. A much more honest way of looking at "the kids" than most modern music.**

Those songs were meant to be all one song at one point. "I'll Show You" was going to be the B-side of "Show Me", but I thought the tune of "Show Me" was fucking useless. I hate it.

But the words are just from personal experience. I went back to see how the people I'd went to school with had grown up – the kids I thought were great. You probably had them in your school – real flash characters who had all the clothes and all the girls would always be after them. They were always the ones who'd have the first sex and they'd tell you about it. And you'd see their fags, their lighters and their watches and you'd think, "Well, when these blokes grow up they're going to really do something great."

Then you see them a few years later and they're ice-cream men or something, or a lot of them have had real problems because they were such big stars in the environment of the playground that when you take them out of it they don't know what to do.

**And the ones you think would sink are making something for themselves?**

Kevin Rowland holding a copy of Dexys' second album, *Too-Rye-Ay*, in July 1982



GETTY

# A FOLK HERO OF THE '80s

# KEVIN ROWLAND

It's funny, isn't it? But I always think that that lot don't really know. They always get somewhere, but it's probably more through determination and things like that. I suppose they do creep up later and they get wiser. But I've always had a soft spot for the guys in the song, because they've still got it in them and it's there naturally.



**The new version on of "Liars" on the LP is much better – who are the singers on that?**

That's the Sisters Of Scarlet. We just phoned up an agency and they sent them. One of them is Katie Kissoon – you remember Mac and Katie Kissoon? And one of them is Joe Brown's daughter

It was funny getting them to sing "Liars", because they didn't really know what they were singing, but they really put everything they had into it. I was telling them to sing harder, because at first they were a bit like foxy... black... chicks, singing very soft. I said, "C'mon, you've gotta give it some of that old Southern stuff." And I don't know if they were taking the piss, but they started to wave their arms about and shimmy a bit. It worked, anyway.

**Your music and stage show are a celebration of human qualities, but it's a celebration which seems rooted in a discipline and belief in the power of the human will.**

Definitely, that discipline and self-will thing is important, but it comes over in different ways. It may be more relaxed now, but there's still a very fierce attitude. It's almost like a religious thing, that's the connection for me more than anything. Not religion, what it is, but the ideas that come from it. The way they go about gospel music and that, I love it. The way they get so involved with it.

**Working themselves up to a state where something else takes over?**

Yeah, definitely. I went to an Adventist church, I think it was, one Sunday in West Bromwich. I just met the bloke walking down the road, a 40-year-old Jamaican fella. He grabbed me by the arm and said, "I'm going to church, where are you going?" It was like something out of a dream (*laughs*). He said it was one of those churches where you do a lot of singing and dancing and clapping and I thought, "Yeah, great, I'll go."

So we got there and there was only about 20 people in a really tiny room and they're all going bananas. They did the Lord's Prayer and it was just loads of spontaneity and singing.

Last year, I think that was in our music a lot. A sort of religious fervour, the real proud sort of staunchness of it. That's what I like about it.

**Is it based on a belief in God?**

Well, no. What I think it was, was more a belief in what we were doing. I do believe in God, though, but that's a different thing.

That feeling of religion does carry through; like "Until I Believe In My Soul" definitely has it. It's a basic fucking belief in God, but what I'm really talking about is a feeling you get. I mean, I haven't really got any religion – I was originally a Catholic, but I'm far from that now.

It's not something you can bring down to one thing, it's more an instinctive knowledge. I can't say why I believe in God, I just do. And it's not that I was brought up that way, because that stopped a long time ago. The realisation of the soul – that's what's important, that you have soul and it can be used positively.

**Like you can do lots of different things but eventually you realise there must be something else?**

Absolutely (*smiles*). And that's what "Until I Believe In My Soul" is about. About growing up and looking up to brothers or older people and thinking that they're sussed and wanting to be like them. Then when you get there you find there's nothing there, fuck all. So the back-up singers go, "That's all there ever is?" And I go, "Yeah, yeah, yeah", because I believe there has to be something else. And the realisation that you have to find it for yourself.

**Do you have a favourite track out of all the songs you've recorded?**

Well, it varies. I liked "Keep It (Part Two)". Lyrically I thought it was my finest hour, although the production leaves a lot to be desired. People

have said that that song sounds dead phoney. But the truth of it is, that was definitely genuine. Other times it may have been phoney to a certain extent, but people say they want real, raw passion and when you present it to them they don't really want it.

That was born out of a lot of trouble with the old group, that horrible tour and a combination of other things – some of it was written about a similar period earlier in my life. It was definitely recorded at the

right time, because I hadn't spoken to anyone in the group for three or four dates and when it gets like that, it gets sort of tense. So when we went into the recording studio I poured it all out to the microphone, I was talking to it. People have said the vocal style is exaggerated, but it was definitely genuine.

I think the worst thing we've ever done was "Love Part Two" on the B-side of "Celtics". We had some studio time booked, and although I was really fucked because we'd done the demo for "Eileen" the day before, I said I'd go in and do it. I forgot the notebook that I had with all the ideas in it and I tried to remember what they were, but it just came out really embarrassing.

**You spoke about the audience earlier and their importance to the group. Where does the intense emotion circle come into all this?**

Well, that's a different thing. It's just an idea to make it better than an ordinary fan club. Everyone who is in it has everybody else's address, so they can write to each other or just make friends, meet somewhere perhaps. People may have something in common... Well, they have one thing in common because they all like the group.

**I'm not in it myself, but in one of the newsletters you referred to it as The Intense Knitting Circle.**

You get the problem that people think it's music to commit suicide to and that we're all really depressed, which is just not true. I get letters

from people telling me not to commit suicide or letters that are sort of dead sympathetic to me. I just think... well, some of them are just fucking nutters.

"That was really fucking crazy, stealing the tapes of the LP"

**When the group started you locked yourselves away and listened to old Stax music and stuff like that. The material you're demoing now has a much more "folk" instrumentation. Is there a similar process going on?**

At the time of the first group it was definitely necessary to listen to all those old records, like a fucking brainwashing process almost, but now I think it's a more natural developing thing. I got a few folk albums as a reference, but they weren't really that much good to me.

I like the idea of putting strict boundaries around what you're doing. Like there's loads of groups and they'd rather have a free run. But I think it stretches you a lot more when you decide you're only gonna do that and build up the walls, because working within that does really stretch you.

**What are your other interests apart from music?**

Various. Like everyone else, I watch a bit of telly. There's some good stuff on TV, despite what people say – some of the plays. And the comedy programmes are good, like *Bilko*, and I really like *Mind Your Language*, though no one else I know does, but then my friend plays the caretaker in it. I like to watch athletics on TV; I'd rather watch athletes running round the track than watch a fucking group, because at least the athletes are stretching themselves. Feats of determination are definitely an interest.

**Is it important for you that your music should keep changing?**

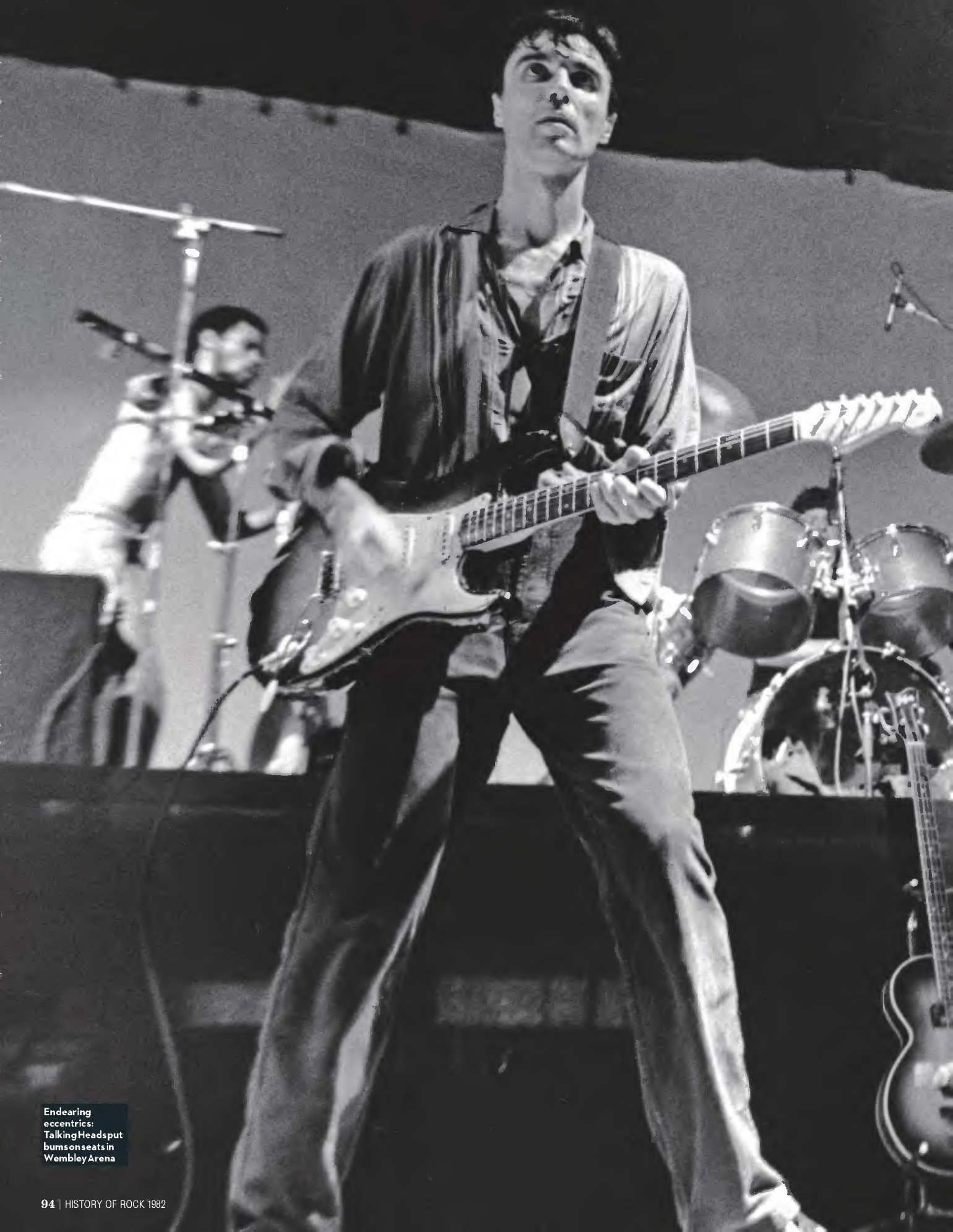
I think it has to change every year; I want it to be ever-changing and ever-challenging. Not just the music but the group, the whole fucking thing, always challenging and a little bit threatening at times as well, to kick things up once in a while, and just be... good, always good.

**What's the value of Dexys music for you?**

Well, it's only fucking music; we just try to do the best we can and use as much care as possible. It's no great world-shattering experience. Like I've said before, it's like a bricklayer laying bricks; you just use all the skill and care that you can and try to be the best at your trade. *Gavin Martin* •

1982

JULY - SEPTEMBER



Endearing eccentrics: Talking Heads put bumsonseats in Wembley Arena

# Strangely fun

**NME** JULY 24 *Talking Heads and Tom Tom Club*

**T**HAT FEAR OF music - or of ticket prices - which is keeping attendances down seemed to have struck again when Tom Tom Club took to the stage of a half-full Arena, suggesting that T. Heads were over-ambitious booking two nights at Wembley, instead of the accustomed smaller venues. Not so, though: by mid-evening there was barely an un-bummed seat to be seen, which was gratifying because here are two acts with more to recommend them than most. Even if I'd much rather they'd done more dates, in more intimate places, both the Club and the Heads could have sent very few away disappointed.

"On On On On" came Tom Tom Club with that very number, taken, like the bulk of this brief set, from their first album - the notable exception being a distinctly gimpy version of "Under The Boardwalk", to use a Bananarama-ese term. The Tom Toms, as you must know, are the offshoot group of the Head husband-and-wife team of drummer Chris Frantz and bassist Tina Weymouth - supplemented by Tina's sisters Lani and Laurie (the Weymouth trio in cheerleader-style mini-skirt uniform) plus Tyron Downie (keyboards), Steven Scales (percussion) and Alex Weir (guitar).

The rhythms are crisp; the mood is light and upbeat, a relaxed alternative to Talking Heads' more fractured artiness and sinister depth. "Wordy Rappinghood" and "Genius Of Love" wrap up the performance enjoyably, the latter featuring a nice interplay between the gruff brown vocals of the back-up players and the pink prettiness of the frontline singing trio of Tina, Laurie and Lani. In total, Tom Tom Club's music is intelligent without demanding too much of the listener, and tonight it made for an appealing kind of fun.

The contrast with Talking Heads, as it turned out, wasn't as severe as you might expect, for the headliners' set was an amiable affair in a strange way - right from the opening "Psycho Killer", which downplayed the song's manic intensity, coming on like an almost-breezy reintroduction between old friends. Throughout the show, David Byrne's familiar, neurotically normal stance is endearingly eccentric rather than disturbing, and the immediate point-of-comparison isn't so much Anthony Perkins as Basil Fawlty.

It's a more compact lineup than that on last year's segment of the recent live LP, comprising the crucial four plus Weir and Scales (of Tom Tom Club) plus Dolette McDonald on backing vocals and Raymond Jones who plays keyboards, freeing Jerry Harrison for a largely guitar-playing role. This is good news for anyone like me who feared we might be losing the essential discipline and structure of the sound, in favour of vaguer and over-extended rhythmic grooviness. As it turns out there's only one lengthy passage, leading into "I Zimbra", where the band surrender to a protracted funk work-out, and get boring in the process. That aside, matters are kept agreeably economic, strengthened by the group's winning match of the fluent and the clipped.

Even a full-size set can't find room for certified TH classics such as "Building On Fire", but we do get "Cities" ("the, uh, only song we do that mentions London," mumbles a bashful Byrne) and "Once In A Lifetime" and "Houses In Motion". It's "Life During Wartime", however, which lifts the show to a climax, picking up a momentum which takes us over into the encores of "Take Me To The River" and "Cross-eyed And Painless". New material is kept to a minimum - surprising when you recall how long it is since we had any new material from the whole band - and doesn't get introduced by name, anyhow. From the overall health of the show, though, there seems no real reason to fear for Talking Heads' continued worth and promise for the future. *Paul Du Noyer*

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**LIVE!**  
JULY 12



1982

JULY - SEPTEMBER

# “Guilty, your honour”

Their hit single “Golden Brown” (“not about heroin...”) suggests they may have mellowed. But **THE STRANGLERS** are as combative as ever, discussing motorbikes, martial arts and the occult. “If you’re not careful, you become people who dabble,” says Hugh Cornwell.

— NME SEPTEMBER 11 —

**A**MID THE BRIGHT motes of fairy dust caught floating in the spotlights of 1982’s *Top Of The Pops*, the recurring shadow cast by the murky presence of The Stranglers has been one of the year’s more bizarre chart events.

But there it has been: one camera cut away and a DJ’s plastic smile away from the raging limbs of this week’s chart sensation (is it a group, is it a dance troupe, is it a team of Moroccan tumblers?) and the old sewer rats are glowering out like the elder brother and his morose friends at a teenage birthday party.

Even more freakish, instead of slugging out the mawkish sweaty thud that their customary reputation would demand, the quartet have been piping melodies of almost saccharine sweetness. It’s been hard to avoid the suspicion that there’s some sinister sleight of hand at work here, some dark lake troll lurking beneath the innocent rippling waters.

Certainly many have dredged the lyrics to Hugh Cornwell’s mesmeric “Golden Brown” (incidentally, the group’s biggest single success to date) for some concealed meaning, and as for “Sweet Little Girl” – well, would you let your sister tell Jet Black where she was going?

Just as Cornwell denies any particular meaning to “Golden Brown” – “just a few words strung together” – so both he and Burnel deny any cold-blooded calculation in the shift of Stranglers music from the icy grip of *Black And White* to the tuneful ease of their recent hits. They see it as part of continuing evolution. “The last four or five singles haven’t sounded like The Stranglers, according to most people,” says Burnel. “They think there has to be one sound, but we’ve always changed.”

Now with a back catalogue of some seven LPs – most of them chart successes – and a fair litany of hit singles, The Stranglers are on one level one of the most unlikely long-term survivors »







L'EMINENCE

**NOIR**

of the late-'70s upsurge. They started older, already into their maturity, and with a music that was cited as having more in common with The Doors' '60s expeditions than the nouvelle vague of the time. "We never considered ourselves really part of what was going on," said Burnel, "nor out of it." In fact, the mainstream rock traditions of most of their output have helped maintain The Stranglers' momentum and appeal – never really in fashion, and therefore never really out of fashion either.

No one talks much of the Doors connection these days, long since displaced by the group's later musical wanderings, but the acoustic leanings of "Cruel Garden" and "Sweet Little Girl" may well have been inspired by a re-examination of another West Coast '60s phenomenon, Love – or at least, as much is intimated to me by their publicist. "Actually," says Cornwell, "most of the music that interests me goes back 300 years – Vivaldi and stuff like that."

Both Cornwell and Burnel ascribe good relations between the foursome as one reason for their longevity. "A lot of bands start off as mates at school," says Cornwell.

"Then the egos start coming out and they find they're not such mates after all. With us it was the other way round – we didn't know each other at all when we started playing and then we became friends."

Have you also handled the business better than some of your contemporaries?

"No, it was because we didn't handle our business better that drew us closer together. We had this terrible period around the *Men In Black* LP when we had so many misfortunes, disasters, over a period of 18 months that we came to the conclusion the only people we could trust were each other."

**I**N THEIR ENCOUNTERS with the gentlemen and ladies of the press, The Stranglers have variously abducted them, left them stranded in the midst of foreign wastelands, taped them to le Tour Eiffel, and otherwise berated and insulted them. To speak personally, I have always found Hugh Cornwell, the group's tall and somewhat angular guitarist and singer, an acerbic but agreeable quantity, possessed of a certain English diffidence and understatement. Now in his not so early thirties, he still looks like an eccentric chemistry teacher.

Jean Jacques Burnel, though, still looks like trouble. Not that he is anything but urbane and intelligent at our encounter (I meet the duo separately) – but there's a lithe, alert assurance to his physical presence – as well as a proven ability to take out hostile Australian policemen with a few well-aimed karate blows – that indicates a man unlikely to be daunted by the aggression of others.

Both men are in a confident frame of mind, optimistic about The Stranglers' future, which at present includes a new contract with CBS Records, pursuant on their departure from EMI. Cornwell: "We both realised it wasn't working and we came to an agreement to leave. They really got us by mistake, when they took over United Artists, our original label."

While EMI plan an autumn release for a Greatest Hits compilation, the group are currently ensconced in West Country studios for their CBS debut. Cornwell will also be making a stage debut as the raconteur and presenter of a dramatisation of *Hollywood Babylon*, magician and filmmaker Kenneth Anger's dirt-dishing tome on the Californian entertainments industry. Burnel's own solo career remains muted since his solitary *Euroman Cometh* venture stifled out. More pressingly, he's been banned from riding his beloved Triumph Bonneville, the result of driving the wrong way down a one-way street, on the pavement, during a bomb scare.

"And I told these two motorbike cops that they'd stabbed the British motorcycle industry in the back when they bought BMWs," he recalls fondly.

I ask him about his reputation for trouble.

"Guilty, your honour."

And violence?

"I've always had a compulsion to fight," he admits. "Not so much now. I've cooled down. Sometimes it's a question of honour, though; there are occasions I may have done the wrong thing."

Now 29, he's still committed to the martial arts he took up 10 years ago: "I'd like to take up Hapkido, because it's more artistic. Karate is more macho, it's not so subtle until you get higher up."

What have you got from it?

"It's helped me from becoming a down-and-out lush. It's easy to get a flabby body and a flabby mind..."

Like most musicians?

"They're a mess. And they're a mess mentally. They pack up their ideas and their bodies."

These days he spends a lot of time in France. His parents live there and he goes out with a French girl.

"When I grew up I insisted on being called John 'cos I was ashamed of being French and of my mum speaking in a broad French accent and being kissed in front of the school gates. Inevitably kids want to have a go at you."

He's been able to draw on his French heritage musically, notably on "La Folie", his personal tour-de-force on the album of the same title, a sombre piece of Gallic angst, intoned in impeccable Francais.

"I worked on that a bit to get the accent perfect. There's some kind of intellectual snobbery in New York arts circles about people wanting to do things in French and it can sound hammy."

The French music scene is looking up, he tells me – he produced Taxi Girl, one of the top groups in France. In general, though, "the French are still insecure about modern music... at least there's a situation where a lot of people want to make music, probably for different reasons than people in England. It's relatively easy here to have a hit, to be a bandwagon jumper. You can be totally obscure and still be this week's alternative chart buster. A lot of people in this country want to make money first of all."



Jean Jacques Burnel: "The idea of the nation state has run its course"

Does the Euroman concept still beat strongly in your heart?

"Yes, even though it gets a lot of knocks because people identify the EEC as Europe and can't distinguish a grand ideal from the price of butter tomorrow. The idea of the nation state has run its course and I think continentalism is the next great step forward."

He's in favour of a United States Of Europe, and remains unmoved by protestations that we are already surrendering our cultural and political identity to a centralised Euro-monolith.

"Mind you," he says, "the idea of a country lacking such confidence or self-respect that it seeks to emulate another culture – that's appalling. I once said 'Americans have no brains' just as a wind-up job, and it worked wonders. Our A&M contract was ripped up just like that. American record companies have this trip of 'getting involved artistically' and interfering all the time."

The conversation drifts to the subject of politics and The Stranglers', uh, political profile. Though they've been consistent in their support of CND, the Prisoners' Rights movement and other pressure groups, they've always avoided any rigid commitments to ideology. Sure, they've eulogised Trotsky, but equally Burnel has also evinced his passion for Japanese author and extreme right-winger Yukio Mishima.

"I find the idea of left and right rather absurd, that particular division. A lot of people think we're fascists 'cos direct action – like hitting someone – is meant to be fascist because it's not done by committee. Action seems to have been sewn up by the right.

"Then there's us digging Mishima. He was an ultra-right-winger, but he personified action, and will."

A dazzling writer, certainly, but how can you hold an outright fascist like him as some kind of hero? All that worship of the Emperor, the militarism...

Burnel is quite prepared to admit that many of the Japanese author's ideas were frightful, "but he wasn't just an old jingoist, he had guts, he actually set himself standards and lived up to them. He did what he said he was going to do and committed hara-kiri [ritual suicide by disembowelment] after he'd reached what he considered his peak, after his body had passed its prime... Another reason why people think we're fascist is because we wear black, which means right wing to most people."

**S**OWHYDO you always wear black? What has he got against colours? He shrugs and looks thoughtful. "Well, I do have a white jacket." I ask Hugh Cornwell the same question. What had he got against colours? He looks slightly nonplussed, raises a white plimsoll above the table and, on reflection, pulls the waistband of a pair of bright blue underpants above his belt and laughs.

"Well, you know we did that documentary film on the colour black. How, for example, the authorities use it to create fear or awareness. Look at the way it's used by religions, those women who have to wear complete black outfits..."

You do it voluntarily.

"It's a lot easier to keep clean."

And you use it to create this austere, sinister image...

"We look on it as a colour of neutrality; nothing is given away."

And the Men In Black? Most people seem to believe that the Men In Black are The Stranglers themselves – being an excusable misapprehension but a mere spin-off allusion according to the group. In fact, or so the theory goes, the Men In Black are the minions of dark forces, supernatural powers that seek to have dominion over Planet Earth. They tend to show up around inexplicable, paranormal events and manifestations. UFO contactees frequently have brushes with them, for example.

And... and the full Illuminati-style conspiracy theory of Ultraterrestrial domination is available for the curious in books such as John Keel's *Operation Trojan Horse* and Geoff Gilbertson and Anthony Roberts' *The Dark Gods*...

Crackpot stuff, of course. Of course. And yet there's no dispute that around the time The Stranglers first became interested in the MIB during 1979, a relentless sequence of troubles and misfortunes began to befall the group. Cornwell was jailed for three months on a charge of cocaine and heroin possession. Finances faltered. The group's artist/designer

Kevin Sparrow died on Christmas Eve, victim of drug and alcohol abuse. The group's management split with them. A tour manager died aged 24, of cancer. The quartet were locked in the jail of the southern French burgh of Nice for the best part of a week. All their gear was stolen as they entered America for a tour. Crucial tapes vanished, things fell apart...

Burnel wrote up the whole catalogue of misfortunes for *Strangled* magazine, the group's own publication, and of which they are rather proud.

## "There was a secret message on *Black And White*"

"A lot of it is to do with the occult," says

Cornwell when the subject of the Men In Black is raised, "with the unfathomable and inexplicable, and if you're not careful you become people who dabble in it, like a kid playing with a red-hot poker and not knowing it's red-hot and, um... well, we're still interested. The more you read about it, the more you realise the implications are incredible, the way events happen, the way the planet's going.

"Us poor buggers doing whatever we're doing, we don't really have a grasp of who's pulling the strings. We think it's the politicians or whoever we're told on TV. All our information comes to us third hand anyway. Most folks would say this only shows your inability to

accept the mundanity of political processes, a kind of paranoia..."

"Well, there's no doubt that throughout the last 2,000 years there are certain running systems in civilisation that are still around now. If they've existed for so long it would be naive to suppose they're not well organised and that they leave everything to chance. Being aware of their existence is half of the solution.

"I think the way people live their lives... we're creatures of habit, we adopt systems of behaviour. With that in mind, people aren't really aware of the forces operating on them..."

Cornwell talks of the role of "coincidence", random accidents of fate that aren't really accidents at all (of Arthur Koestler's *The Roots Of Coincidence*, for example, or Jung's theory of synchronicity). What, then, did that idea make of his own time in prison? Did he feel that was something that had to happen?

"Now it's over, yes, in a way I do feel that. It was a very good learning experience. My attitude to certain illegal substances was flippant and actually rather silly. It brought home to me the dependence others had on me. In a group, if you're out of action you're affecting them..."

How can you go from that realisation to making "Golden Brown"?

"Contrary to what is sometimes said, it's not about heroin. There's a lot of different things it could be about. People used to do this with old Beatles songs, finding cryptic messages.

"One Dutch journalist even thought 'Golden Brown' was about the white slave trade – you know, 'How long have The Stranglers been into white slavery?' Unbelievable..."

"There was a secret message on 'Have You Got Enough Time' on *Black And White*, a Morse code message that said, 'SOS This is Planet Earth. We are fucked.' One guy wrote in and told us."

We enter a protracted and tortuous dialogue about The Stranglers' Euro-ideals. He thinks my hostility quaint; I find his enthusiasm disconcerting.

"The EEC thing seems to have gone wrong, a lot of people are writing it off already, but how long has it been in existence? Only a few years, but it's something that must happen. You can see its growth among young people, the emergence of French and German music sung in their own languages – and these feelings and passions can exist inside a European framework.

"One area where the Euro-idealism is getting screwed up is with the no-nukes thing, which is a very positive and strong force. We played a No Nukes gig in Utrecht – I think it was the biggest indoor event in Holland ever, around 30,000 people. They weren't just Dutch, they were French, Belgian, German, Swiss – all you have to do is find an issue like that which goes right across the board.

"There's nothing wrong in being proud of being English, French or whatever as long as you realise that there are people who have the right to be proud of what they are. One thing I was very pissed off about was that the anti-nuke compilation album, *Life In The European Theatre*, wasn't a million seller. None of the audience I spoke to on our European tour had even heard of it." Neil Spencer •



# 1982

OCTOBER — DECEMBER

THE TUBE, BAUHAUS, PAUL WELLER, JIMMY PAGE, WHAM! AND MORE



November 5, 1982: Heaven 17 appear on the first episode of *The Tube*, miming to "Height Of The Fighting", "Who Will Stop The Rain" and "Let Me Go" in the studio



## “A tremendous coup”

**MM NOV 13** The nation's new TV station, Channel 4, launch a pop show: *The Tube*. Paul Weller, The Animals, Sting and Pete Townshend are on!

**B**EHIND THE GREEN door, Sting rubbed his half-grown beard, apparently pondering the meaning of it all, Scritti Politti's boy wonder breathed alcohol breath in a teetotal zone, Paul Weller looked as pensive as only he can and Pete Townshend's bleary red eyes gazed forlornly at a trailer for *Woodstock*. It's amazing what you can get in a tube these days.

Sitting round a long rectangular table in the mysteriously named Green Room at Tyne Tees Television's Newcastle studios, this unlikely assembly of old, new, borrowed and blue waited for their slot on Channel 4's debut pop show.

The Who were first scheduled to fill *The Tube*'s opening celebrations, but their American tour and Tyne Tees' deliberate lack of geriatric facilities meant a job for the group's spiritual heirs. However, as a link with the monochrome days of real mods and *Ready, Steady, Go!*, plus a name among others to drop, Townshend had been specially flown in.

His entrance and subsequent placing at the head of the table completed an unfortunate picture: a weary man sitting awkwardly as the reluctant messiah in the centre of rock 'n' roll's last supper.

But if the atmosphere in the Green Room was peculiarly repressed – everybody wanted to stare and nobody wanted to admit it – down on the studio floor the buzz of expectation was pleasingly infectious.

As The Jam set up for their last television appearance and the first of the show's weekly hour-long spots featuring a live group, the head of stills glanced their way and asked when “The Animals” would be ready to play. Then, corrected, demonstrated the crew's eager willingness to familiarise themselves with the vagaries of pop... “All right, The Jam Animals.”

Meanwhile, the hordes of technicians required to produce such an ambitious programme (as well as the core live performance there will be 45 minutes of interviews, videos, recorded features and more live appearances) rush towards the 5.15pm deadline at a pace which suggests somebody's put speed in the coffee machine.

Ignoring the tinsel-town pretence of *Top Of The Pops* and the uninspired drabness of *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, *The Tube* boasts a multi-levelled high-tech studio which visually represents its worthy intentions. Designed as half disco, half TV studio, the place is literally one to see and be seen in.

Divided by catwalks and adaptable stage areas, guests can either dance to the music, watch the numerous video screens or for those who want their 15 seconds of fame, pose in front of the hand-held cameras chosen to add to the programme's live atmosphere.

Again, unlike *TOTP* there will be no “professional” dancers throwing themselves around with mock enthusiasm; just those who have been able to buy tickets and transport themselves to the heart of Newcastle.

Countdown in the Green Room is ticked off as the assorted pop people gradually disappear to their dressing rooms and the Street Of Shame newshounds grumble to each other about their delirium tremens and the complete lack of any alcoholic beverage. Looking at their faces, the meaning of the Green Room is suddenly apparent.

The dodgy theme music starts up and eyes are drawn to the room's two TV screens. Local group The Toy Dolls are playing in the studio's long perspex entrance tunnel that gives the show its name, but we see hardly anything of the planned rush to gain entry. No, the cameramen weren't trampled to death, we learn later, the fans were “so fast they just missed them”. Such are the hazards of live TV. »

As part of a future policy, there's an interview with the entire staff of a fanzine that specialises in The Jam, scooter adverts and perversely denying their mod connections.

Pete Townshend gets his video thrown in before the coming interview and upfront in the proceedings there's a dash of tokenism – a black Birmingham dance troupe that would have been better suited to *Blue Peter* than this supposedly brash, irreverent pop blitz.

Link man Mark Miwurdz, spelt Minurdz on the posters, tells us about his soul revue called *Don't Cry For Me Ike And Tina*, and wins a mixed reaction and honorary membership to the John Cooper Clarke fan club.

A Duran Duran video passes by with less impact than a Bounty advert and the jewel of the show – Paula Yates – prepares to “interview” a face called Sting. Together with ex-Squeeze keyboards player Jools Holland, she has been chosen to bring a touch of class and experience to an otherwise fresh cast of presenters.

Anybody who reads her column in *The Screws Of The World* will probably already appreciate Paula's penetrating observations on the pop scene, and her showing on *The Tube* proved once again her unfailing ability to pinpoint an artist's significant talents.

Following a tease reference to Elvis Costello's remark that Sting needed a good clip round the ear for singing with that silly fake Jamaican accent, Paula moved on to tackle a dazzling myriad of subjects. She explained her foot was strategically placed behind the Sting posterior

in case he needed “a good poke”, made a mind-splitting connection with the follow-up enquiry about the current visibility of Sting's sought-after bum (he takes his clothes off in the film *Brimstone And Treacle*), and floored us all with a frank recollection of the infamous Ritz interview when ol' Stingo, as he's known to his mates, admitted he likes doing it doggy style on the kitchen table.

On top of all this, the handsome one had to put up with the first of many weary allusions to Paula's expanding tum (pregnancy, nudge, nudge, knoworranean!) and when he managed a look that suggested he'd rather be locked in a padded cell with Richard Branson than dallying with our Paula, his acting credibility rose by 10 points.

Getting as pink and ruffled as her preposterous sugar plum fairy dress, Paula stumbled back on a riveting question about the commercial potential of Stingo's original name (Gordon) and finally asked the sex maniac of her dreams (dashing Bob Geldof was too busy adjusting his cap to notice the swoons of his better half) if he was pleased to be back in his home town.

Of course, was Stingo's reply, “it's a really spunky place”. Sting, spunk! It was all too much for pouting Paula, who was now sniggering red-faced and searching for something even more mundane to say.

But the producers had other ideas and as we were whisked into a clip from *Brimstone... an indignant off-screen voice with a Jamaican accent could be heard saying, “Spunky's all right, isn't it?...”*

From the ridiculous to the sublime: Heaven 17 brought things back from the brink and who cares if they were miming? They invested the proceedings with the spark that had so far eluded a clearly treacherous format. And while Paul Weller was spikey, asinine and nervous in interview, The Jam's contribution really got things going, especially their tasty version of Curtis Mayfield's “Move On Up”.

One hour and 45 minutes had passed pleasantly and, with a few exceptions, *The Tube* actually

showed some promise. For producers Malcolm Gerrie and Paul Corley it was a vindication of Channel 4's faith in their ability to create a pop programme that would help spearhead the new network's shiny image. They were chosen in preference to LWT and Thames largely because of Gerrie's deserved reputation gained producing teeny shows like *Razzamatazz* and *Alright Now*.

The story goes that Gerrie came up with the ideas for 10 half-hour programmes and then left for a holiday. When they phoned him on

vacation he got the bad news first: his suggestion had been rejected; instead they wanted 20 105-minute shows to run for five months without a break, including Christmas and New Year!

“It was a tremendous coup,” Paul enthuses, “not only for Tyne Tees but for the North-East of England. We were very conscious of the need to move broadcasting

out of London, which can be so incestuous. If we can make this a success it'll be like Kevin Keegan playing for Newcastle!”

Bypassing what they call “the London attitude”, they've already put together material from the country's other major towns and cities, placing a special emphasis on unsigned bands. “Our research is getting so good,” Malcolm boasts in best Geordie, “that the A&R men are starting to follow us wherever we go!”

Aiming for an atmosphere that's as live as possible, they feel future shows should start with more studio action – Heaven 17, they agree, should really have opened Number One – fleshed out with coming features that include Clare Grogan, Captain Kirk, Mick Jagger and athlete Steve Cram.

Both cite the '60s show *Ready, Steady, Go!* as their guiding light.

Paul: “You see, *RSG* went out at peak time, and this in itself gives a show importance. It caused kids to question the values of their parents because it was so provocative. The BBC and ITV go wrong because they put their shows out at obscure times. They almost hide them away!”

Yet they also maintain their aim is to complement rather than compete with the institution everybody slags and still watches – *Top Of The Pops*.

“A show like that can't fail,” Malcolm points out. “What we want to do is show the groups that they can't, because of the nature of their rigid approach, and do it in a way that's not ivory towerish.”

Ultimately they would like to see *The Tube* become a forum for youth culture and maybe even change a few things, too.

“The thing about *RSG*,” says Malcolm, “was that you saw a new band on Friday night and on Saturday morning you went out and bought it. It actually helped alter the chemistry of the music scene. If we can do that then we'll have succeeded.”

It's obviously too early to judge just what impact *The Tube* will make, but right now in Newcastle the weekend starts at 5.15, on Friday night, going down *The Tube*. Ian Pye

## “It was a tremendous coup, not only for Tyne Tees but for the North-East”



Presenters Paula Yates and Jools Holland in the perspex tunnel leading to the offices of Tyne Tees TV that inspired *The Tube*'s title

Taking it all too far: Bauhaus at the Barbican, London, March 1982

## “Pose over purpose”

MM OCT 23 Bauhaus take issue with an MM journalist.

**T**HEY SAY EVERY hack's a frustrated performer, but when Steve “Sticks” Sutherland jacked in his school band to take up the humble position of *Maker* pen pusher, little did he ever dream that he'd find himself before a hostile packed house at London's Lyceum. The boys from Bauhaus – a pop band from Northampton – invited Sticks on stage to conduct a “public interview” before their sell-out gig last Thursday.

Seems the boys had a bone or two to pick about particularly snide past comments concerning their likeness to a certain Mr Bowie and so set the hack up for public humiliation.

Armed with a *Fosters*, our man came out fighting, introduced the boys to their partisan crowd as “Ziggy Stardust and The Spiders From Mars” and ducked a hail of plastic mugs. “Why,” the Stickboy wanted to know, “did Bauhaus take such exception to his comments and then go on to release ‘Ziggy Stardust’?”

“Ah,” said the popular boys in black, “because we’ve been knocking at the door of acceptability and it just seemed that it needed a fuckin’ good kicking. Once inside,” they adamantly assured the

audience, “we shall attempt to follow up with original compositions.”

Launching into an unprovoked rant, Sticks summed up 20 very odd minutes of verbal sparring: “I wrote those articles about you, right, because in my own small and, sadly, obviously ineffectual way, I hoped it would do something to actually stop you in your tracks because what I felt was happening was you were pioneering a push for pose over purpose [see, he even speaks in an alliterative fashion!], pushing forward the

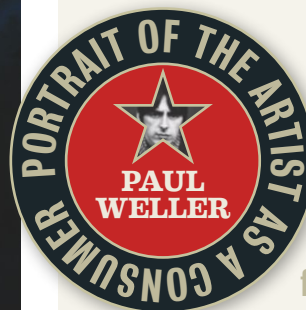
idea that almost anybody reasonably good-looking, tall and thin with a moderate yen towards theatricity would make it by saying nothing!”

The crowd reacted in the only way sane human beings could:

they bellowed, booed and threw things. Bauhaus, on the other hand, took it the only way a seasoned “pop group” could. They staged a wonderfully spontaneous walk-off.

Drunk on fame, Sticks refused to leave and made one final, largely inaudible speech, before stumbling off into well-deserved obscurity. *Bela Lugosi*

**“I hoped it would do something to stop you in your tracks”**



**NME NOV 13**  
The Jam's frontman on his favourite things

### Labels

Tamla Motown  
Stax  
Atlantic  
Trojan  
Verve  
Mojo  
Invictus  
Blue Note  
Sue/Island  
Skabeat/Bluebeat  
Greensleeves  
Charly  
Sugarhill

### Coollest cats

Steve Marriott  
Jimmy Smith  
Vaughn Toulouse

### No style

Dirty rock'n'roll  
“Rock”  
“Out of it”  
Music papers

### Style & hip

Keeping straight  
Cappuccino  
Spa water with a slice of lime  
Mr Byrites  
Roberto  
Carlos  
Europe  
Jazz and modern classical  
Symmetry  
Soul  
Clean

### Female vox

Dusty Springfield  
Aretha Franklin  
Millie Jackson  
Nina Simone  
Madeline Bell  
Sandie Shaw  
Dionne Warwick

### Male vox

Smokey Robinson  
Otis Redding  
Wilson Pickett  
Stevie Wonder  
Stevie Marriot  
Reggie King  
Levi Stubbs  
General Johnson  
Michael Jackson  
Muddy Waters  
Howlin' Wolf  
Terry Hall

### I want

A blue-and-orange tonik suit  
An imitation sheepskin three-quarter-length coat  
To get on with people  
To produce more records  
To own a clothes shop and coffee bar

### I believe

in Greek gods and goddesses  
(I've seen some in Oxford Street)  
In Orwell's politics  
In Common Sense  
In L.O.V.E.



## Cocaine “found on mantelpiece”

NME OCT 16 Jimmy Page is in court – barrister hints at client's plan for new band.

**J**IMMY PAGE'S CAREER neared a nose-dive at the Inner London Crown Court last week when he faced a possible gaol sentence after admitting possession of cocaine. But John Matthews, his QC, argued that Page was launching a new group which was to tour America and Japan early next year. “It would,” he claimed, “result in the loss of not thousands but literally millions of pounds in the next few years.”

Not only that, the ex-Zepper ranked alongside Annie and Julie Andrews in terms of innocence and purity. He had never relied on drugs and never became addicted, even though he'd admitted to taking small quantities for a short time during the '60s. And Page, who was found

with the cocaine in his pocket during a saunter down Chelsea's King's Road in late 1980, had not actually purchased the offending substance. It seems he had found the drug on a mantelpiece after a party at his home in Clewer village, near Windsor. “He removed it so nobody else would find it,” Matthews told the court. “Especially his small daughter.”

He refrained from mentioning that it was Pagey's music that had helped Charles Bronson wipe out a dope pusher in *Death Wish 2*, but even without that final nudge, the judge glimpsed the halo forming around the Page head and granted a conditional discharge, leaving music buffs to ponder

about the identity of the band the guitarist was to form in order to pay off the national debt.

Rumour had it that Page might figure among the plans for a revitalised Whitesnake. Unlikely, we felt, but nevertheless we posed the question to a Snake-person. “Unlikely,” he said.

Next came a phone call to Swan Song, Page's management company headed by Peter Grant. “Can you throw any light on the lineup of the mystery band?” we asked politely.

“Mr Grant will call you back if he has any information to impart,” came the equally polite reply. The call never came. *Fred Zeppelin*

**Old farts run free**

**Page escapes with scolding**

## “We knew we were going to be massive”

NME NOV 27 Introducing... new chart stars with soul on the dole, Wham!.

**D**ESPITE APPEARANCES, THE success story of Andrew Ridgeley and George Michael is no simple triumph of charmed innocence. A strong streak of native cunning and a shrewd commercial instinct have combined with the more slap-happy element of luck in paving the way for two new conquering pop heroes.

On the morning that I meet them, George and Andrew are pretty pleased with themselves, as well they might be with their first Top 10 singles – “Wham Rap” and “Young Guns” – confirming them as the latest chart darlings of a nation’s young hearts. And at 19, George and Andrew are still young enough to be part of a generation whose expectations of life after education are totally different from anyone who approached adult life before the present government was elected.

On a personal level, it’s about the choice between enjoying what you do or disappearing into depression. Wham! appear to speak simply from their own experience. Such a direct, enthusiastic appeal was bound to link up with a new wave of young consumers distanced from the pop process by an increasingly dreary parade of the calculated and artificial.

Wham! come from Watford, a town on the edge of North London’s urban sprawl, where they went to the same school until Andrew left for college while George stayed in the sixth form.

Both are boys who take their pleasure-seeking extremely seriously, and it was in ’78, as they remember somewhat solemnly, that they became involved with a suburban soul scene, moving on to affiliate themselves with the ska and 2-Tone musical movement when the discos slipped into a more limpid jazz-funk.

“Ska has that energy. That’s what we’ve always listened to, the stuff that’s got the energy at the moment,” says George.

While Wham! expended their adolescent energy in dancing and drinking, school not surprisingly took second place and their results suffered correspondingly.

“Andrew didn’t get our exams because he was being a college trendy. I was a sixth-form rebel – which didn’t take much,” George adds. “I think we both stayed on at school so we’d have an excuse to stay at home being lazy and wouldn’t have to go out to work. We both knew that all we wanted to be was pop stars.

“We’re both the types that should have got our A-levels with flying colours, but we were really lazy, so we didn’t. We spent most of the time round at Andrew’s house, mucking about on instruments and writing songs.”

Inevitably they gathered up a group – a ska band to start with. When they left school they signed on the dole and carried on composing. A year later their second single entered the charts and in retrospect made their short career look almost like a masterplan.

“We were both convinced that once the songs were heard by the right people we were going to make it. It was just convincing other people of that – like parents, that was the hard job.

“You’re surrounded by people who are trying hard and failing dismally, and you’ve got to convince your parents that you’re not one of those people. They don’t realise the difference between a hit

song and a bad song, they just think it’s totally a matter of luck. I always told them, obviously it’s a matter of luck, but it’s not all luck. If you write good songs for long enough, someone’s going to want to make money out of them.”

In the event their record contract came just in time, since George’s long-suffering father, incensed by his apparent lack of activity, was on the brink of throwing him out of house and home. “Now he just keeps asking when the money’s coming in,” he laughs.

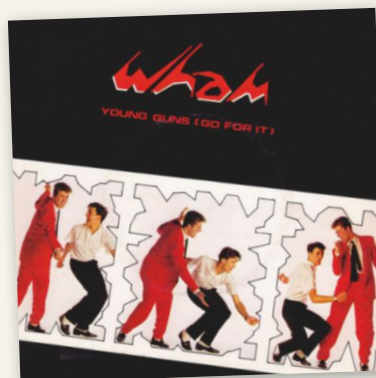
As we talk in a bar a few yards away from their tiny record company offices in the debby mecca of London’s South Molton Street, you can’t help feeling that these pleasure-loving, smooth-talking teenagers are the owners of two very hard young heads.

Wham! are inclined to bandy the jargon of markets, promotion and sales with a commercial candour that’s worthy of an experience ad man or a satin-jacketed rock executive. In part this is no doubt due to the necessities of understanding the rock rigmorale when you don’t have a manager.

“That’s been an advantage, definitely,” explains George. “We’ve had a lot closer contact with a lot of the areas.”

“We know the machinations a lot more,” adds Andrew.

Less charitably, it’s possible to speculate just how fine the line between a refreshingly realistic attitude to the entertainment industry and the dismally limited vision that characterises The Biz.





For the moment, however, the one debatable financial error Wham! have made so far is signing a contract so speedily – to Innervation, a small subsidiary of CBS, for a £500 advance each.

“We knew we were going to be massive, so we didn’t want a big advance,” claims George.

“It was the usual job of panicking and signing when you shouldn’t really have done it, but it’s got us where we are now, so it’s nothing really to complain about. Any mistakes that we may have made, we’d still do it again to be Number 10 this week. Every company has its advantages and disadvantages, there’s not much difference.”

After they’d signed to Innervation, they recorded a demo tape which had, says George, seven or eight major publishing companies chasing the rights on the strength of what he calls one “killer single” that they’ll release at an appropriate time. “A worldwide No 1,” explains Andrew, “Julio will be green.”

“I know it all sounds really over-confident,” George expands, “but it’s just like we’ve been able to judge our next steps all the way so far, so why not just keep hoping that you’re right? We know we’re right.”

Their first record, “Wham Rap”, now due to be reintroduced to the shops on the strength of “Young Guns” success, coincided with a wider realisation of the huge implications of a young dole-queue generation. A spirited fist shaken in the face of adult apathy and suspicious disapproval, “Wham Rap” is a refusal to be denied the good things in life, its slick sloganeering sliced into an exhilarating funk setting; a spontaneous emotional response rather than a stiff political cliché.

“We were writing about what was happening at the time that was really typical of most people,” George explains. “Obviously more with people in the North, they didn’t want to go out and do grotty jobs and yet there was nothing else.

“Where we were, Watford wasn’t that bad for opportunities, we managed to do decent part-time jobs. But in a lot of places there’s absolutely nothing. Somebody told me the other day, ‘Your record cheered up a lot of my friends – which is brilliant!’ We didn’t write it thinking let’s help kids or anything. We just thought let’s write about what we’re doing at the moment and make it funny.

“The idea of actually cheering someone up was great, because we were told that of the limited sales it did, 70 per cent of them were in the North. There were people who were throwing accusations at us for being irresponsible and talking about enjoying the dole when so many people can’t. At the same time, a huge amount can and we’re writing for them. They obviously got the joke.

“Some people are going to take any lyric seriously, however funny. We were thinking about doing one on a driving test, and you can just imagine people slagging you off for that. You know – don’t you think about all those people who have failed six times?

“We’ve done grotty jobs, so we weren’t talking off the tops of our heads. We’ve done all kinds of things – labouring, cinema ushers, warehouse work, cleaning, washing-up. We realised after a while it was better to stay at home.”

“Young Guns” – a witty condemnation of a dreary domesticity which can prove permanently crushing when undertaken at too early an age – has also met its critics who see an unpleasant male braggadocio beneath the sparring repartee of those crackling love-hate lyrics.

“What happened was that the lyric wasn’t as well written as it could have been, because George had to do it in the studio,” says Andrew. “The sentiment wasn’t truly expressed. It didn’t really come across.”

“At the same time, I didn’t think there was any harm in the lyric,” adds George. “It’s worked so well in every other way.

“The idea when we went in the studio was anti young marriage – of either sex. It didn’t mean to be anti young girls. It just seemed to us that the funniest thing we could think of relating to it was the way you get the boys up the pub saying, ‘Where’s so-and-so? Oh, he’s at home, she’s kept him in again. It might not be right or true of all situations, but it does happen a lot and we’re just commenting on it. That is what people listen to, and they think they know that situation.

“For people in that situation, the girl is the one to feel sorry for. In a lot of cases she’s not been brought up to expect anything more than to feel supported and secure. We were just looking at it as it happens. We weren’t taking sides. It was a comic observation.”

What Wham! achieved on their *TOTP* slot is an abrupt electric shock that jolts the programme’s flaccid system into instant charged action. Helped by Dee C Lee and with Andrew’s real-life girlfriend, blonde Shirlie Holliman, adding poignancy by posing as his screen partner, George and Andrew glide through a cut-and-thrust vocal comedy with flashy, fluid funk choreography that shames much of *TOTP*’s stodgy staple diet into comparative sleepy senility.

It’s young, fetching and funny, and with typical opportunism, Wham! have achieved the best of both worlds by using the skilled resources of professional session-men for the music, while ensuring their visual lineup is instantly attractive.

“When we first approached a record company, their first thought was we’ll get you a band together to move these songs. We said we didn’t really want a band. It’s better just to have ourselves as a front.

“What we’ve found is that so far we’ve had two songs that have been completely different and appealed to

different markets,” George continues. “Eventually we’ll have a certain sound that we’ll keep to, for a while anyway. You just work towards getting as wide a market as possible without making crappy

records. If we can keep up the spirit of the lyrics and the attitude in the record, then it’ll always sound like us, no matter who we have behind us. The idea is to keep up the attitude of the records, keep them sounding young and fresh and fun.”

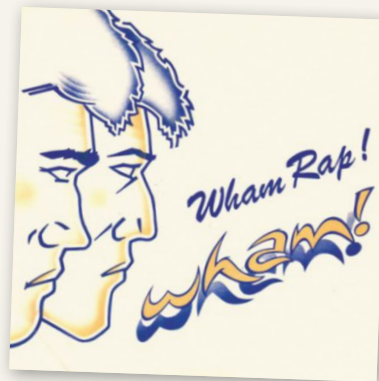
Their sparkling crystallisation of that vital, optimistic attitude has to be central to their sudden success. “I think people definitely identified with us on *TOTP*,” says George, “that’s why the sales shot up. On ‘Wham Rap’ we were playing and singing in terms kids could relate to. It’s not manipulated, it’s just that we’re trying to relate to as many people as we can, because there don’t seem to be many people doing it.”

Especially at a time when the people making pop music seem increasingly divorced from its audience. “It’s drifted back off again into all the big producers like your ABC jobs, your Dollars and Bucks Fizz,” George agrees. “And although some of those records are brilliant, they’re across the boards. There’s nothing really directing itself at the youngsters. Madness are the closest thing that so many people relate to, and even they, I think, are beginning to get a bit bored with what they’re doing. The music’s not as fun as it was.”

The biggest future problem Wham! will face is keeping that shiny bright sense of unspoilt ingenuity. “It must be very, very difficult. That’s one of the things we’re going to have to fight for, trying to keep a fresh sound,” George muses.

In the meantime they’re about to add a whole new meaning to their hallowed maxim of enjoying what you do. “We’re just about to have to work hard for the first time in our lives, I think,” admits George with the rueful reluctance of a dedicated hedonist. “We’ve managed to avoid it so far, but if we want to get further than this, we’ve got to work hard. This is just the beginning,” he sighs. “We’re aiming at youth, saying enjoy what time you’ve got, because it’s the best time of your life.”

“So far, anyway,” adds Andrew. *Adrian Thrills*



## “You work towards getting as wide a market as possible without making crappy records”



# “Hate can be positive”

**ORANGE JUICE** have been hailed as fathers of the pristine “new pop”, but Edwyn Collins doesn’t accept his offspring. “I hate them the same way I hated progressive groups in ’77,” he says. Can the reconfigured group recapture some of their early magic?

— NME OCTOBER 2 —

**H**ATE—WITHOUT wanting to sound faddish about such a thing—is once more where the heart is. “I’m getting more interested in punk again,” declares Orange Juice’s Edwyn Collins, his previously boyish mop mangled into an aborted *Eraserhead* number. He’s been announcing his allegiance by way of the Sex Pistols T-shirt he’s been wearing to London’s ritzier escape routes.

“Adrian Thrills came up to me at the Camden Palace and asked me why I was wearing a Sex Pistols T-shirt,” spits Edwyn contemptuously through goofy teeth, “and how come it wasn’t a Roger McGuinn? And I thought, ‘Fuck, pigeonholed again!’”

Pigeonholing Edwyn and Orange Juice might have been a national pastime, had they come up with the hits everyone predicted for them. As it is, they’ve been more simply passed over. But Orange Juice—Postcard muddlemind Alan Horne told us, and we subsequently told you—were going to be the alternative pop group. They were, we wanted to believe, the happy collision of lovesick guitars and adolescent curiosity, the embodiment of New World—Scotland, that is—optimism and youthful enthusiasm. Pop music for the young made and controlled by the young.

Until they were wrong-footed by the focus switching to the mainstream, it did seem they were it. When everyone else was buttoning up his black shirt against the cold, they »

STEVE RAPAPORT / GETTY





January 20, 1982:  
Edwyn Collins  
fronts Orange Juice  
at The Venue in  
London's Victoria

wore loud checks and warm smiles, covering up for their inadequacies with a heap of silly grins and bad jokes.

With the passing of time, though, amateurism becomes shamateurism. Live or on record, there was no audible improvement in Orange Juice. Where the bemused expression of those wonderful, if rough, Postcard singles rang genuine enough, it began to sound forced after it was cleaned up with Polydor money; and Edwyn's voice cracking up on their biggest chart shot—a cover of Al Green's "L.O.V.E. Love"—was more careless than cute.

Anyway, nobody needed to tolerate sloppiness in this new age of quality and distinction heralded by the ABC/Trevor Horn and Human League/Martin Rushent axis. What's more, Nicky Heyward has a goofier, more comfortable grin. His Haircut 100, Altered Images and the rest capitalised on the pop consciousness Orange Juice helped cultivate.

Hate? Or just bitter about being left behind, Edwyn?

"It's not a case of sour grapes," he counters caustically, "because I don't envy them, these groups who've put the 'a' back into pop music. Ha ha. I really don't. I know there are certain factions who insist that Orange Juice propagated this wonderful, golden age of pop, but quite frankly if I thought we'd been in anyway responsible, I'd feel we'd have a hell of a lot to answer for. Because I think most of it is shit.

"That's why I feel we've been misrepresented by the press, who've taken the more superficial and crass elements of what we did and amplified them, so they become twee. And because we haven't delivered, which to some extent I admit, we've become the scapegoat for this horrible saccharine movement.

"It's not that I'm bitter, it's just that I hate them," he continues. "I hate them the same way I hated progressive groups in '77; hate was the good thing about punk. I think hate can be very positive if it is directed in the right way..."

**T**HE POSITIVE SIDE of Orange Juice's hate is the renewed sense of purpose that followed their virtual demise on the release of their long-delayed, out-of-date debut LP *You Can't Hide Your Love Forever* on Polydor. They dumped on Alan Horne, fell out with each other and fell apart, only to regroup around Edwyn and bassist Dave McClymont. The present lineup is now completed by guitarist Malcolm Ross, from Josef K, and drummer Zeke Manyika, from Zimbabwe—the nation, not a group.

They meet me in pairs during the recording of their second LP, Dave and Malcolm outlining the schisms of the past, and Zeke and Edwyn mapping out the future. Alan, the first pair say, had to go, after planting the preconceptions in the press they later found difficult to live up to, and for the hold he had on Edwyn.

"It was Alan who said Orange Juice were going to be a pop group," accuses Dave, "that we would be on *Top Of The Pops* and have huge hits for Postcard. But I always thought we were like Pere Ubu! That's why I joined the group!

"Besides," he relates further, "I used to be very close to Edwyn, but once Alan came in I didn't speak to Edwyn again for about six months. I thought Alan was taking over the group, and rather than making some rash statement like, 'Alan! You're taking over the group', I crawled back to the flat and just whimpered."

Earlier drummer Steven Daly was purged simply because "I wouldn't talk to him at all, we didn't get on, so the rhythm section was rubbish. And we would just laugh at James..."

...Kirk, their previous guitarist, that is, who, in the revised view of things, carries the can for Orange Juice's shambolic reputation.



The second Orange Juice lineup: (c/wise from left) Malcolm Ross, Dave McClymont, Zeke Manyika, Edwyn Collins

"James was always dizzy-eyed, playing novel things on guitar and wanting to write stupid twee comedy songs, like those you get in musicals," sneers Dave. "A lot of people came to see us especially for James, because he would always do something wacky, like fall over."

Malcolm, the gawky shy boy from Josef K, entered the fray only to be repulsed by all the bitching. "All this backstabbing," he recalls with horror. "It was a horrible atmosphere. I just wanted to leave..."

As their most disciplined and composed member, Edwyn and Dave hung onto him and sacked the other two. Malcolm's splendid, terse style, which defined Josef K's series of excellent singles, isn't the only stabilising influence. There is also drummer Zeke...

Zeke, they rightly claim, is their most interesting member. An affable, easy-going 27-year-old veteran of various Glaswegian funk/reggae/whatever groups, he arrived in Scotland eight years ago as a political refugee from pre-Zimbabwe Rhodesia, where he was drawing too much attention through the black-youth-consciousness plays he was writing with other teenagers in the small hometown community in Rhodesia's heartland. His autobiography goes something like this:

"It was a crazy situation," he recalls. "I was working with other teenagers during the school holidays, writing plays and staging them. We used to invite our white counterparts over to see them, but they never came, except once, and then they all left early because they thought it was too political.

"The title of that play, ha ha, sounds really grand and pretentious now, but it was called *Search For Human Dignity*. It was just about people coming out of school, reflecting exactly what was happening to us.

We didn't think our parents understood the situation. Most of us thought that our parents were just weak for accepting all this nonsense for years. So we were alienated from our parents just as much as we were from the white people.

"The alternative was to do music, write plays, things like that to try and show them what we were going through. But this is the funny part—I didn't quite know what was happening at the time. My dad, who was a headmaster then, was secretly working for the Zanu Party [the then outlawed national party fighting for independence], his brother was in Mozambique, a young commander in the guerilla force. So he had good reason to be scared, because maybe I

"It was a horrible atmosphere. I just wanted to leave"

— ALBUMS —  
**REVIEW**  
 — 1982 —

# Good for you

MM FEB 20 OJ's debut LP is an artifice-free delight.

Orange Juice *You Can't Hide Your Love Forever* POLYDOR

I've been waiting on this for a very long time and, believe me, it's only because I can already hear some other dumb hacks tutting and tittering and scratching their beer-bellies in perverse preparation to pick this bright beauty to pieces that I'm about to make some attempt to anticipate most of their idiotic objections. And then I'll get down to the real business in hand and tell you why this is possibly the greatest record ever made.

Orange Juice can't play. Dubious but, admittedly, not groundless. Here and there a guitar will wander away in rapt excitement, or a drum beat may pursue it's own pleasant path. But Orange Juice don't need tightening up.

On the contrary, it's exactly this lackadaisical bent that constantly tricks and surprises. There's much more to Orange Juice than will ever reach the average muso's ear anyway. Like, did you know that former member James was bamboozled into wearing a square pair of McGuinn's because the others informed him it would make him play better? It worked. He did. Orange Juice magic.

Edwin Collins can't sing. Technically true. Our Ed does seem to have a mite more trouble than most keeping those eager young tonsils in tune. So what does that prove? Didn't Rotten sound like Albert Steptoe, Lennon like Jimmy Tarbuck, Bolan like Larry The Lamb?

Since when has pop's odd stray note meant anything other than the finest point

of expression, the bit where personality punctures a rigid song formula and really rejoices or hurts?

Orange Juice do this all the time and Edwin Collins is one fine fruity singer.

OJ have nothing whatsoever to do with rock's sordid history. They deal in songs, not poses. Life, not artifice. This record deals with human relationships and the games lovers play better than any other album ever made; it can be more cynical than Kraftwerk, more sexy than Oakey, more cuddly than the Mode and more crucial than Joy Division, purely and simply because it all comes so naturally.

Orange Juice eschew the whoop-de-doo, get-on-up, get-on-down myth of rock'n'roll ecstasy, see through transparent "chic cold misery" and refuse to pander to extreme expectations.

Orange Juice look, sound and want to be normal - want to love and laugh and sulk and cry and not make some melodramatic fuss all about it. Want, as Edwyn said "to take the pleasure with the pain".

So each and every song on this album is a brave potpourri of puns and romance, the busting giggle of a bunch of bright lads who are happy and healthy and absolutely convinced that there's more to a girl than a three-minute grope and then off down the pub.

Orange Juice, as it happens, drink orange juice. They say - and they're right - that it's good for you. *You Can't Hide Your Love Forever* is good for you too, makes you feel like flinging your hat high in the air, like skipping down the street when you think no one's looking, like you did when the postman delivered that Valentine.

Funny how it's always the records out on a limb that end up defining an era. Orange Juice ain't Status Quo nor some new salsa big band. Orange Juice are Orange Juice and they'll mix folk with funk if and when they please because it's there and they hate all these unwritten laws against it.

They understand entirely that having to catch the last bus home or the untimely arrival of a pre-date spot can be the greatest disasters in the world. And that tragedies go just like they come. Daily.

Orange Juice know these things because they're young and unwise and haven't yet learned to dull all their senses. I know by now that you've all guessed the end, so how could I possibly disappoint you? ...*Love Forever* Is my album of the year. Yes, already! *Steve Sutherland*

would draw attention to them and the more important work they were doing.

"Nevertheless, he was proud of my plays and encouraged me, though he told me to be careful. All the while he was smuggling books to Mugabe, during that 10 years Mugabe spent in detention, and I suspect he was passing on letters between people, acting as a link.

"After a while it started getting dead uncomfortable; the police started to follow us around, kept moving us on, preventing us from grouping together. We were becoming quite a noticeable group in the community. So my parents, who had some Scottish friends, suggested me going to Glasgow."

Didn't he want to return once Zimbabwe was declared independent?

"No, my parents wanted me to, but I was really settled in Glasgow," he answers. "I just felt a solidarity with the people here, I've never felt any conflict here. I just fitted in."

In the meantime, his father is now working from the Zimbabwe embassy in Yugoslavia.

Zeke hasn't exactly awakened a new political consciousness in Orange Juice, but he's an undeniably important presence, helping check their descent into self-parody and alerting them to the world outside the concerns of their love songs, acute though Edwyn's observations generally are.

"People always ask us about politics, because they think we're vacuous and that we don't know anything about the heavier side of life," despairs Edwyn. "But it's not really the case. I hate being portrayed as being naive about vices, sex and drugs, thing like that. Which isn't to say we are serious and this is the heavy political angle of Orange Juice; it's just when I read the *NME* Quotes Of The Year which had me saying, 'I do have ideas about politics and the world but I've forgotten them for the minute', I thought, 'Aw fuck, that's really asking for it.' What I mean is, I am quite naive about conventional politics, because I'm not that interested... but I think the lyrics are 'meaningful' in inverted commas. I'd like to think they're stimulating, in that we say things quite simply, communicating ideas succinctly. And some of them are quite accurate."

There wasn't much noticeable difference in the new group's first recorded collaboration, "Two Hearts Together", the sleeve of which had Dave and Edwyn staring dewy-eyed at prospective buyers. Furthermore, their new production company titled Holden Caulfield Universal suggested they were grimly hanging onto their youth by making an easy association with the hero of JD Salinger's *Catcher In The Rye*.

"Well, I just thought the novel was so evocative of adolescence, we'd take a little dig at ourselves," counters Edwyn. "It was meant to be self-demeaning; it was meant to be quite wry. Haha."

The overriding preoccupation of the brashly honest, painfully funny Holden was the deceit that seemed to go with adulthood compromise, which he saw blossoming in his "young adult" contemporaries.

Against his harsh ingenuousness, most everybody was exposed as phoney. I suspect "Two Hearts Together" would shrivel before his stern

gaze, but the flip's "Hokoyo" - written by Zeke - and the forthcoming single "I Can't Help Myself" are agile and intuitive enough to look Holden straight in the eye without flinching.

"I do feel there's a sort of strength back in the group," enthuses Edwyn. "Some of the songs on the new LP are the best we've done - a post-post-Postcard feel both in timescale and sound."

Unlike JD Salinger, Orange Juice might just survive the precocity of their early creations to become more than a one-shot wonder. *Chris Bohn* •



# “Completely burnt out and wasted”

**From LA: THE GUN CLUB and JEFFREY LEE PIERCE. Making vibrant new music from deep US traditions, his patron Debbie Harry wonders why he’s so depressed. “I’m deteriorating right here in front of you now,” says Jeffrey.**

— NME OCTOBER 16 —

1. *All dressed up like an Elvis from hell*

**J**EFFREY LEE PIERCE, eyes closed, lies on his back and groans about how wasted he’s getting. He doesn’t know what state he’ll be in by tonight’s show – when his group The Gun Club make their UK debut, a one-off at London’s Venue – or even if he’ll make it at all.

A sacrilegious crucifix hangs down over his leather jacket, along with a fearsome array of animal teeth. A red bandana is wrapped around his cowboy boot, and lank strands of Blondie-esque hair arrange themselves across his bloated face. This boy doesn’t look to be in good shape at all.

And yet, he says, he’d be happy with a job in the US Library Of Congress, buried in its archives of long-lost American music, exploring the bewildering richness of the continent’s folk heritage, its gory lore and legends and all the unsung heroes who forged it and made some precious makeshift art out of it all. His love and fascination for all that stuff is obsessive and his knowledge is impressive. But he still doesn’t look like anyone’s idea of librarian.

And The Gun Club, steeped as their music is in arcane influences and esoteric inspirations, don’t sound one bit like academic revivalists. It’s all there to be used, Pierce insists, not just to be stuck in some museum and revered. It’s not as if people have really changed since those old songs were written – the same passions, fears, still apply. So you don’t go back to the ordinals to pay sterile tribute, but to find fuel for your own fire.

Pierce is from Texas, grew up in California, and spent the rest of his time anywhere and everywhere from New York to Jamaica, New Orleans to El Salvador. Back in Los Angeles – “a desert. A great big boring, stinking desert. Everybody’s an alcoholic” – he started up The Gun Club with Kid Congo, who went on to join The Cramps. Pierce says he formed a group »

DAVID CORIO / GETTY



October 5, 1982:  
Jeffrey Lee  
Pierce with The  
Gun Club at The  
Venue, London



just to fight off the crushing, soul-destroying emptiness of life in that town, and so he could get into clubs for free. He thought they'd play maybe six shows and then explode back into nowhere.

But somewhere along the line The Gun Club came good. Last year they cut a great first album, *Fire Of Love*, for Slash Records. (Pierce, in his time, did some rock writing for *Slash* magazine, too.) What most people noticed first about the music was its deranged mutation of country blues (the LP even included a Robert Johnson song) howling out through a raw punk attack that raged and crashed like some awful pain-maddened monster, blundering out of the swampland undergrowth. Pierce rode that monster's back, mouthing savage incantations and spine-chilling images of death, vengeance, sex and voodoo magic.

He had lost all interest in modern music by 1979. He went back to Marc Bolan, Creedence, old R&B, then kept on "regressing". What drives him now is the rediscovery of pre-war white music—most of it forgotten, despised as hillbilly trash, much of it as spooky and potent as the black man's blues.

But for all that, he kept a fondness for Blondie; he met Debbie Harry when he presented her with an old Standells single at a record-store autograph session. He moved up to New York and helped run the group's fan club. And Debbie and Chris Stein helped Gun Club make another LP.

*Miami*, released the other week, is on Stein's Animal label and he produces it. Debbie Harry even sings on it. And *Miami* is another great album—smoother, more professional than its predecessor, but lacking none of The Gun Club's violent virtue.

## Shambolic but memorable

**MM OCT 16** The Gun Club's London date races towards melodrama.

**L**OOKING ALARMINGLY LIKE Debbie Harry with a fearful weight problem and sounding like Jim Morrison with Iggy Pop stuck in his throat, Jeffrey Lee Pierce waddled to the front of the stage, waved a bottle of plonk at the packed house and confronted it with a pulpy frown.

"Whaddya want?" Jeffrey scowled, his brow rippling like the folds of skin on a squatting porker. "How 'bout a medley of Rodgers & Hammerstein?"

The audience thought about this like they would think about a great deal else that would follow during The Gun Club's set: silently, with an almost static sense of enquiry. "No!" shouted some wag eventually, a delay of some length making it impossible to describe his response as anything approaching immediate.

This kind of hesitancy characterised the response of both the audience and this hack throughout The Gun Club's shambolic but naggingly memorable London debut.

Whatever lingering doubts and irritation were provoked by the senseless perversions they inflicted upon their occasionally cleaving material, it should be noted that they nevertheless maintained a kind of diseased authority; remained compelling even in disintegration and mucky confusion.

Responsible so far for two albums of confused standard, the one rough but stinging, the other by comparison timid and posturing, The Gun Club proved to be no more consistent live. Slipping in an early highlight, they featured "Texas Serenade" from the new LP upfront.

Musically, the Gun Club resembled a chorus line of exclamation marks. Ward

Dotson's lead guitar was a continuous shriek, a hysterically pitched counter to Pierce's brooding yowls and hyena screeching.

For the first 20 minutes, this was a potent combination: "Texas Serenade", "Run Through The Jungle" and "Fire Of Love" were all despatched with a blood-curdling venom absent from Chris Stein's production of the same songs on *Miami*.

"Like Calling Up Thunder" possessed the same black momentum: unfortunately it ran away completely with the group. From here on to Jeffrey's apparently frustrated and ill-tempered exit (to the sound of his own footsteps, it might be added), virtually everything was thrown away at a ridiculously frenetic pitch that obscured the spirit and drama of the group's songs.

Staggering fatly around the stage like a peroxide Meat Loaf, Jeffrey Lee did little to restore anyone's confidence. As the music twitched convulsively from one frantic climax to another, old Jeff hammed it up something dreadful, posing excessively around the mic stand and trying desperately to establish himself as a psychotic rock 'n' roll bandit: this was all unnecessarily melodramatic and dreadfully boorish of Jeffrey who clearly needs a clip around the ear for his behaviour.

Ironically, the spectacle of Pierce groaning on his knees and making the sign of the cross while the spotlight blazed around him like bristling halos extracted one of the few positive reactions of the evening. Shortly afterwards, seemingly miffed by a distinct lack of adulation, Jeffrey led his disgruntled troops into the wings. "All the best then, Jeff," we thought, scribbling our farewells in the margin of a beer mat. *Allan Jones*

### 2. The Fire Of Love

"**I**DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I wanted to call it. After you've written all these songs and put so much into it, and someone says, 'OK, what are you gonna call it?' It's so hard, I mean, figure out a title for all this shit, all this work? Title it? I wish it could just be blank... I'm a lot happier with this title, *Miami*, because it encompasses everything that's in there, in the record."

How's that? It just sounds like a place name to me.

"It basically has to do with my absolute conviction that Miami is the biggest death house in the world. The East Coast just sends all its unwanted old people down there to die. I saw people dropping dead in the streets. It was one of the most morbid things I've ever seen, like an elephant's graveyard. Decorated to look like a tropical resort! The whole idea that the Americans have created something like that seemed to be simultaneously the most amazing thing I could think of, and one of the saddest. Disgusting in one way, and ingenious in another!"

"There's a lot of young kids go down there too, and they've got nothing to do. There's probably more drugs in that town than anywhere else in America; tons of junkies. And all the West Indians, practising lots of magic. I just think that town alone seems to be the sum total of everything I wrote on that record. It's like, if I ever did something and they put me on trial, and had to do something with me, well, they should just send me to Miami!"

"I guess at the time I really felt pretty hopeless. Chris and Debbie were saying, 'Jesus, the world's not gonna end, what are you so depressed about?' Somebody said to me the difference between the first record and this one was the first was fiery and crazy, but this one's more like a dirge. That's exactly what it is, a dirge. At the time I was going backwards and forwards to hospital, I had a bourbon drinking problem, swollen liver, been on tour for about eight months. It was all these things coming to a head until you reach a point where you're just completely burnt out and wasted."

"The album probably sounds clearer 'cos we had money to produce it correctly. And Chris and Debbie took all this dirgey, self-centred neurosis and made it sound like a nice record."

"I'm in a better mood now, but last June I was just too damned self-destructive, too depressed about the friends I'd lost, the home I'd lost, the complete loss of identity when you don't live anywhere, just jumping from one town to another. All personal identity goes out the window. You don't have a mother or a girlfriend, 'cos they're way back, like a 100 years ago before all this shit started. That's when you get real morbid, like Hank Williams did. You gotta be careful, there's so many casualties."

### 3. The key to the highway

**F**OR THE FUTURE, Pierce sees himself developing the country strain exemplified by the last track of *Miami*, the dark and morose "Mother Of Earth". Beyond that notion, he's chronically vague about what happens next.

"Who knows? That's so long from now. Maybe I'll be a raving nazi by then, or convert to the Jewish religion. Maybe I'll have no control over what I'm doing. It's too bad all this didn't happen a few years ago, because I was pretty much a well-controlled kid. Now I'm too far gone..."

"I've got two opposite directions I wanna go in. I kinda like that chiming psychedelic sound, and on the other hand I like that real country &







November 11, 1982: Jeffrey Lee Pierce and Patrica Morrison, The Gun Club's third bass player, at the Peppermint Lounge in New York City

western thing. But I couldn't do that with The Gun Club. I'd have to start something new – the first drugged-out country singer or something. I would love to run around just writing slow E-minor country songs – every one about heroin and death! Play 'em all on the Grand Ol' Opry!

"But," he reflects, suddenly wistful, "they would probably never allow that. They don't have much of a sense of humour."

I mention the resistance to country music which still exists, maybe as the best old stuff has been buried, overlaid by three decades of saccharine rubbish.

"That's the damn Yankees. The northerners always take Southern things and slick 'em up for the major market. By the time they get over here you get a very diluted version. Whereas the Southerners live down there in that damned heat, and there's no money down there, it's economically destitute. A place like Mississippi is as badly off as El Salvador. And all those people down there are completely out of their minds. Absolutely. A lot of those people aren't controllable... I've started up all these bands now. I decided I got sick of doing just one band."

He wakes up out of maudlin reverie to tell me about his new projects. There's a group he plays guitar for, Tex And The Horse Head.

"We play all standards like 'Big Boss Man', make 'em all sound like 'Sister Ray'. It's like where Gun Club's set ends, this one begins."

Then there's a group with Dee Pop of The Bush Tetras, and more work with Stein and Harry. And then there's a plan for an act called Led Zeppelin, A Tribute To The Doors, the idea being they'd all wear blond wigs and not play a single Doors tune, or else do them skiffle-style... They tried, unsuccessfully, to enlist Ray Manzarek – "but I don't think he found it too funny".

#### 4. Good ol' boys

"I HATE ELVIS PRESLEY'S guts. He got so bad in his later years, this dreadful symbol of America. Typical Southerner,

"I'd love to run around writing slow E-minor country songs"

everybody in the South deteriorates. I mean, I'm deteriorating right here in front of you now! Everybody eventually becomes a big burnt-out, wasted alcoholic.

"It's just the style in that part of the world. They just can't seem to do it any other way. It's not a very healthy part of the country for me to be in.

"By the time I got to New York I was a raving maniac. Debbie got real worried about me. But all those country singers, the Texas people, they destroy themselves. Unless they make a lot of money, like Willie [Nelson] or Waylon [Jennings], or they hook up with a really good woman to straighten them out. But Elvis is

ridiculous, and people are so reverent about him.

"I think nothing's reverent. I guess I'm very blasphemous. I think everything should be made fun of."

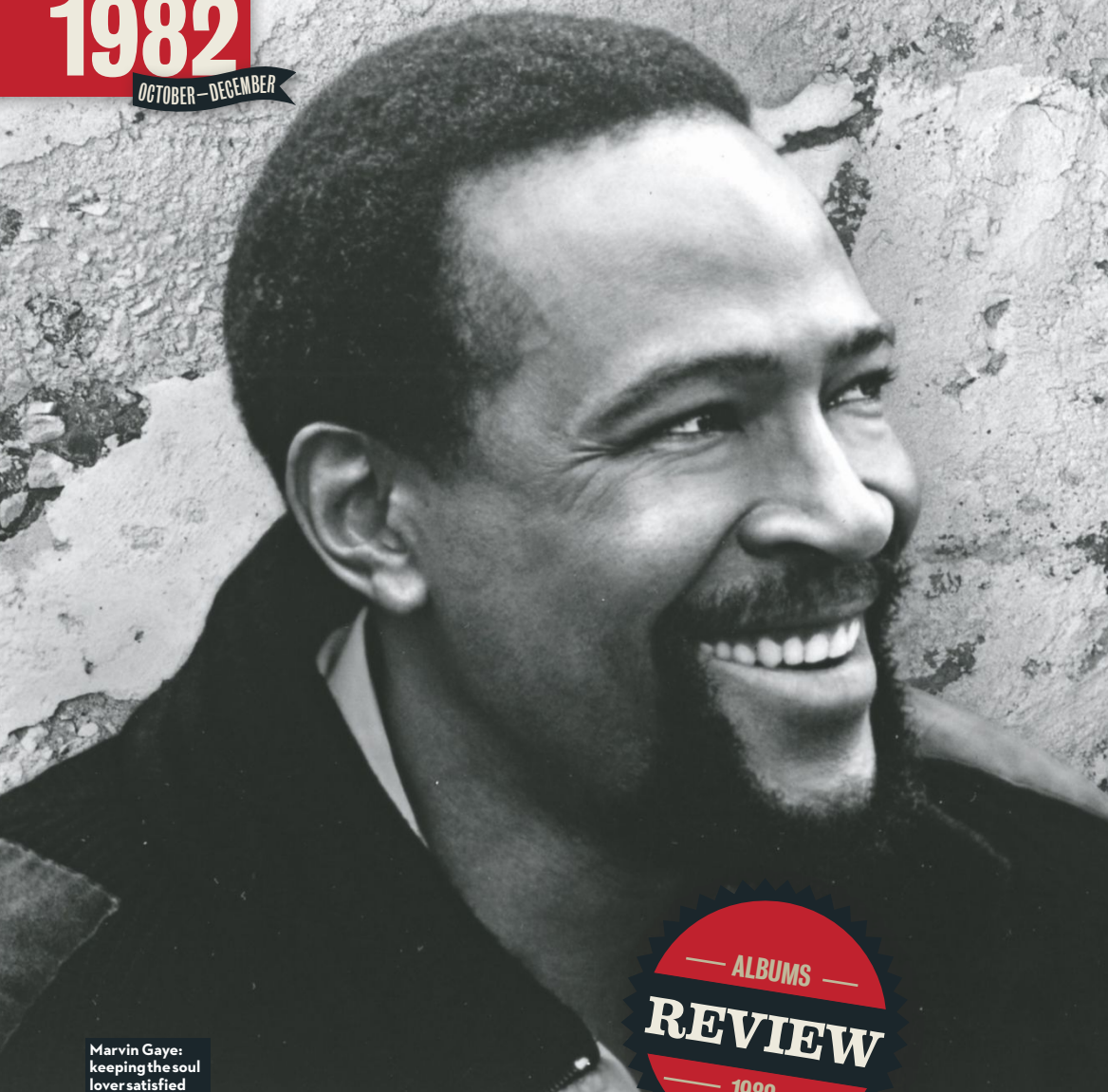
#### 5. The End

"I DON'T REALLY LIVE anywhere any more. All my stuff's in storage. I was in New York for a month that was the longest I spent in one place for a year. Friends start to become important to you, because you never see them at all. You're always arriving in towns like Norfolk, Virginia, or some shit, and you don't know anybody, and you look funny, and they all hate you, and think you're gay 'cos you're wearing a leather jacket... So you just stay in your hotel room and watch TV and..."

"Uh... It's all gonna come together eventually. I just wish they'd have a great big war or something. Just so people had something to do."

Relax, he doesn't mean it, he's not that far gone. Not yet. What I'd like to see Jeffrey Lee Pierce do now is make one, two more LPs like *Miami*. Then find some good woman to straighten him out. Then maybe take that job with the Library Of Congress. *Paul Du Noyer* •





Marvin Gaye:  
keeping the soul  
lover satisfied

— ALBUMS —  
**REVIEW**  
— 1982 —

## ALBUMS

### Marvin Gaye *Midnight Love* CBS

Nothing to equal the brilliant “(Sexual) Healing” here, but unquestionably the best LP Marvin Gaye has produced in a long time. Of course, over the years we’ve come to expect too much from Gaye, especially after the ground-breaking successes of *What’s Going On* and *Let’s Get It On*. In fact, the albums that came later — *Here, Here, My Dear* and *In Our Lifetime* — although not classics, have had to stand unfair comparisons with these seminal works and have suffered accordingly.

Gaye, too, seems to have suffered. Effectively ostracised from his homeland, America, for reasons of a dubious nature, last year found him holed up in London, depressed, miserable and unsure of his career. This year it’s a different matter. Freed of his Motown contract (he effectively disowned his last LP because of what he called “Motown’s interference”), he’s teamed up with his old song-writing companion Harvey

Fuqua. Together they’ve managed to produce material using electronic backing that finds Gaye in one of his most musically creative moods.

The songs here don’t rest on laurels, but try to push forward, Gaye trying his hand at everything; drums, synthesizers, organ, vibes, glockenspiel, even finger-popping. Gaye has written, arranged and produced everything, except for a couple of songs, and done it with masterful ease and confidence. One listen to “(Sexual) Healing” confirms this. Both sensuous and relaxed, it’s the best excuse, if ever one was needed, for sex. Most of the LP, dammit all of the LP, concerns itself with matters of the flesh and soul, whether it be the sinuous funk of “Rockin’ After Midnight” or the lush surroundings of “Til Tomorrow”. What makes these, and the rest of the songs work, apart

from the brilliant combination of stilted electronic rhythms

layered beautifully with drums, effective horn work, and discreet guitars, is Gaye’s voice.

A million times a year the word “love” is used and thrown away in songs. Marvin Gaye’s voice is one of the few that actually make you believe in the power of it. This voice can’t help it. Every insinuation, every word caressed, every little shout, spells sex. Gaye moves from one extreme to another, his voice contrasting in a fascinating manner with the electronics behind him, never one-dimensional, always intimate

and always human. He can pull you into his world without you noticing and, like the start of an infatuation, you’re totally hypnotised.

On *Midnight Love*, Gaye has proven that he’s not only more than capable of reclaiming lost ground but actually able to create pastures new. This LP is not a comeback but a continuation of a very special talent. Essential to all soul merchants and lovers.

Paolo Hewitt, MM Nov 13

### Prince

1999 WARNER BROS (US IMPORT)

Whether Prince has ditched the ideals which made his previous four albums so provocative for the lucrative lure of compromise, or whether, despite what the sales figures say, his influence has infiltrated mainstream pop to the point where his imitators go virtually unnoticed, the fact is that much of 1999 sounds disappointingly familiar.

Perhaps plagiarists such as The Time and Vanity 6 have forced his hand, perhaps the danger of self-parody called for a dramatic shift of emphasis but, whatever the motivation, 1999 sounds like a collection of crudely

calculated manoeuvres towards popular ingratiating. Gone is the essentially wide-eyed naïf eulogising the joys of sexual self-discovery; the Prince of 1999 is a stud without balls, paranoically obsessed with his position as first minister of sexual politics, strutting mucho macho bravado and sacrificing tender intimacy to boasting prowess. Whereas the breathtakingly explicit “Do Me Baby” from last year’s *Controversy* album unashamedly celebrated carnal ecstasy and, in context with “Ronnie, Talk To Russia”, proposed love as an alternative to man’s self-destruction, much of 1999 is hackneyed, bop-against-the-bomb, outrage-for-outrage’s sake. The imagery has grown self-consciously horny; the automobile-humping equation of “Little Red Corvette”, the jet-setting clichés of “International Lover” and nudge-nudge, wink-wink innuendo of “Let’s Pretend We’re Married” touting for cheap thrills and self-aggrandisement.



I suppose, in all honesty, it was commercially inevitable that Prince would become a cartoon of his former sensitivities, betraying precious insistence that any act of love is natural for an antithetical freak appeal. But when the fourth side of this, his first double album, boasts climaxes like the preposterously sensuous "Lady Cab Driver" and the wickedly self-deflating "All The Critics Love U In New York", I can't help but wish that the rest of the album's public exposures had remained his private indiscretions. *Steve Sutherland, MMNov13*

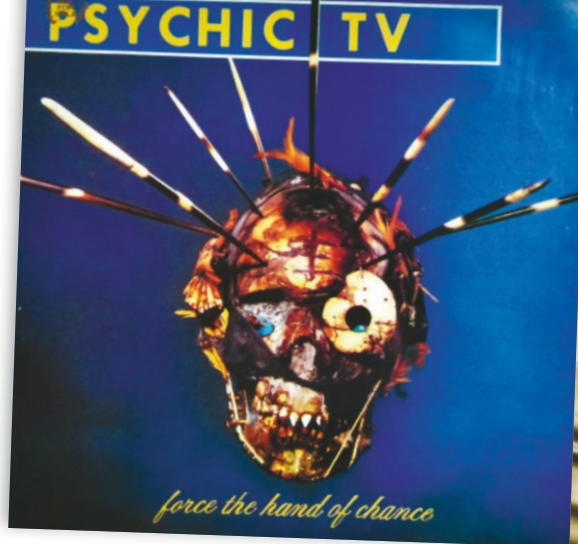
**Psychic TV**  
**Force The Hand Of Chance** WEA

Who and what is Psychic TV? The personnel are half of the defunct Throbbing Gristle, Genesis P. Orridge and Sleazy Peter Christopherson, plus ex-Alternative TV man Alex Fergusson, but the aims and motives behind the project remain shadowy. Sleazy and Genesis, the masterminds to Alex the musician, made this album after outside pressure to record again. Their long-term objective of breaking down the control systems that govern our lives remains their central concern, and this is but one expression of that desire.

There's something else going on here, too. When I interviewed them they were distinctly guarded on the subject of cultism, even going so far as to suggest that this was an area they were no longer interested in. Perhaps sensing my scepticism, they avoided all mention of The Temple Ov Psychick Youth.

As well as the *Force The Hand Of Chance* record, this package included 'Psychick Themes' made by 'initiates of The Temple' that will accompany portions of a four-hour PTV video.

According to the literature, many of the instruments have 'ritual or psychic properties' and the music was also designed 'for subsequent use by initiates of The Temple in their rituals.' On top of this, a small poster-pamphlet gives you the option of sending money to The Temple to enable merchandising and the purchase of a 'limited edition booklet, clothbound and



illustrated with many rare photographs on the history and ideas of The Temple'. Is this new-age hippy crap or what?

Some of the music on both of these records isn't that far removed from the awful chanting of the Hare Krishna brigade that has turned many a rocker's head in the past. The 'Themes' side is, I suppose, something of a bonus depending on where you're coming from, man, but I'm sure the knowledge that parts of it were made with 23 Tibetan human thigh bones, bicycle wheels and a New Guinea head-hunter's pipe will be enough to ensure your undivided attention. It begins with a slow Harold Budd/Eno-ish piano exercise, wanders into an unidentified wind instrument which proceeds to die on its feet in the most painful way imaginable. What sounds like a million flies buzz over the corpse before the funeral proper; then there's tinkling bells and other ersatz Eastern nonsense.

But the real surprises are on the *Chance* album. This includes vocals by Marc Almond, strings by Andrew Poppy from *MM* favourites The Lost Jockey, and the Beggar and Co horn section.

The mind-expanding lyrics are by Genesis. The music? Well imagine a dose of maudlin strings and simpering guitars spliced with canyons of the mind poetry and Ennio Morricone high drama. Or Jim Morrison as the Lizard King with no tail and half a brain. And if you don't get the message there's always the "Message From The Temple" (previously titled more appropriately "The Sermon") and American-style monologue that could be a perfect send up of the fake religious tone that infests this whole concept.

I conclude: The Temple Ov Psychick Youth is less than a twinkle in the eye of evolution and a bunch of bad spellers to boot. Beam me up, Scotty.

*Ian Pye, MMNov20*



Japan: return to elegance and emotional depth

**SINGLES**

**Japan**  
**Nightporter** VIRGIN

An arresting and unexpected single in the wake of their *Tin Drum* LP. Shaped round some elegant piano and with Dave Sylvian's vocals returning to the impressive emotional depths of "Ghosts", this should give the band's critics a little food for thought. Its affecting musical lilt actually reminds me of Kate Bush's "Army Dreamers".

*MMNov13*

**The Higsons**  
**Tear The Whole Thing Down**  
2-TONE

Thanks, one would assume, to the keen ear of producer Jerry Dammers, The Higsons have produced a record which at times sounds lovely – particularly the Stax-tinged horns. It slightly spoils it, though, when you've got some bloke whining away who has not the foggiest idea of how to sing. *MMNov13*

**The Undertones**  
**The Love Parade** ARDECK

Feargal Sharkey's tremulous vocals are shaking so much these days they will surely do him an injury. If that's the case

he won't be getting a private bed from the proceeds of this one.

"Love Parade" is their most disappointing single for ages and arrives at a time when they really needed something more rejuvenating to make up for lost ground. *MMOct23*

**Blancmange**  
**Living On The Ceiling**  
LONDON

The K-Tel answer to Simple Minds, the revoltingly named Blancmange have found themselves a mould and, of course, a shape follows. Pink, soft and powdery to taste, this will remind you of school dinners and other things too unpleasant to mention here. *MMOct23*

**Yoko Ono**  
**My Man** POLYDOR

For some reason we are not allowed to actually say what we think of the efforts of dear old Yoko. "Always-loved-you; well-some-of-your-stuff, but-this-isn't-my-cup-of-tea" is what gets into print, though "For-God's-sake-someone-have-a-word-with-her, dissuade-her-tell-a-lie-do-anything-but-don't-please-don't-let-her-put-out-any-more-records" is usually what is on the mind. *MMDec4*



FIN COSTELLO / GETTY

# “Life is a cut-up”

In London for *The Final Academy*, a musical celebration of his influence, **WILLIAM BURROUGHS** is joined by **BRION GYSIN** for an interview. “Dentists use music as a painkiller,” says Burroughs. “They always ask me if I want novocalm or music and I tell ’em novocalm.”

— NME OCTOBER 16 —

**T**HIS MIGHT NOT be the Garden Of Eden, but God strike me down if the sunshine don't bring it somewhere close. Breakfasting out on the patio – Chelsea Arts Club, September 30, 1982 – basking in the delayed summer heat are William Seward Burroughs and Brion Gysin, venerable serpents if ever there were a pair, whose forbidden fruit has been the most nourishing food for thought and savage amusement these past 23 years.

Nibbled at by every subsequent generation and taken up in earnest by *The Final Academy* students Psychic TV, Cabaret Voltaire, 23 Skidoo and Z'EV, it is still subjected to hysterical howls of moral indignation or ardent admiration, the polarisation itself confirming the pair's position at the forefront of what Jon Savage describes as “the information war” – or “the war between knowledge and anti-knowledge” (Genesis P-Orridge).

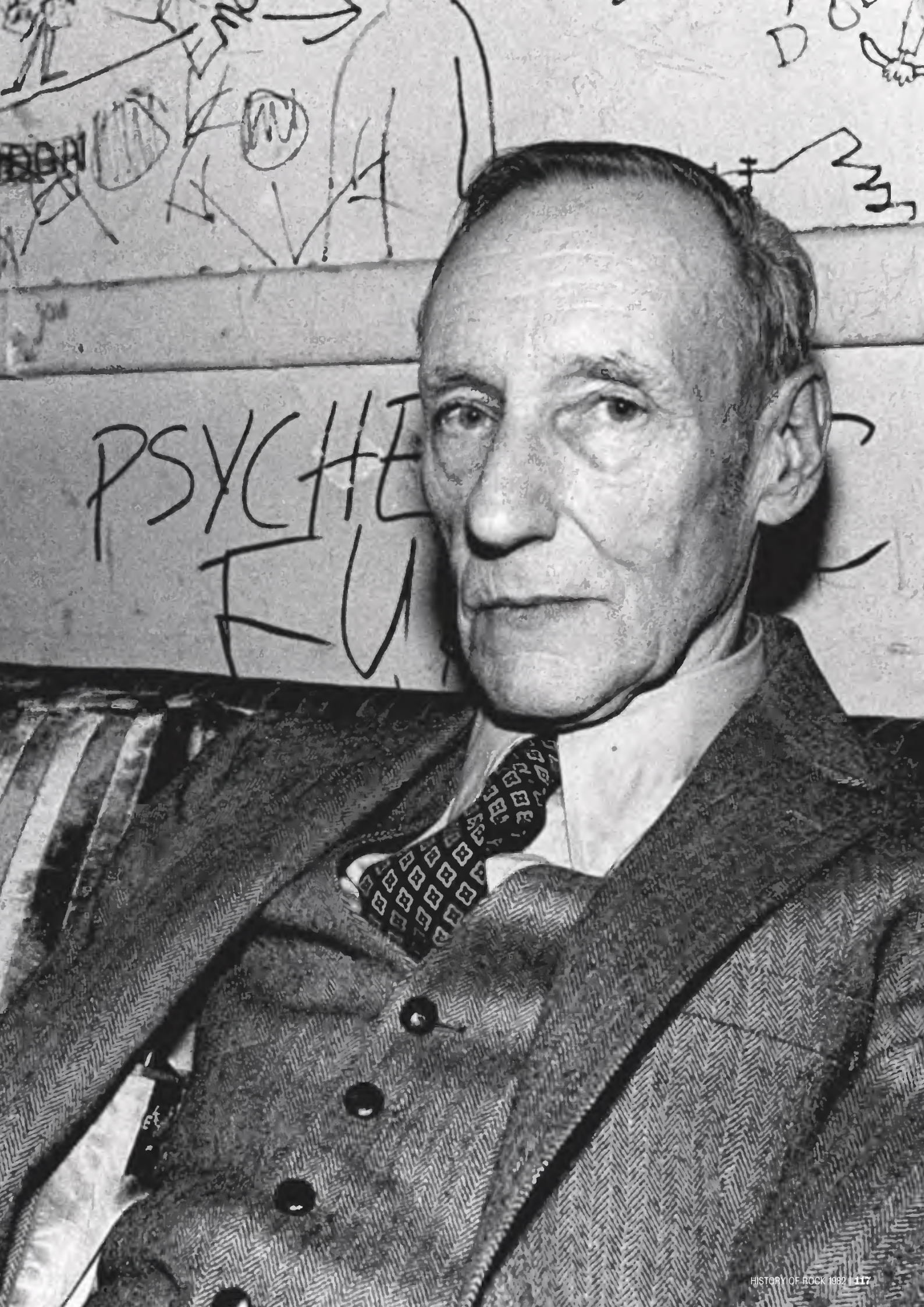
Burroughs entered it in earnest in 1959 with the publication of *The Naked Lunch* (his second novel after 1953's *Junky*), which described a phantasmagorical journey back from The Fall from God's grace to a hellish heaven of man's own dreaming via addiction, arousing sex fantasies and unsettling caricature of stereotypes – all pointing a way to violent shedding of conditioning.

Though the controversial campaigning, litigation and literary debate, which finally secured the right to publication in Britain, belongs very much to the lingering post-war puritanism of the early '60s, its impact on an individual picking it up for the first time today is probably as great now as it has ever been.

So the significance of its publication victory rightly pales besides the more lasting influence Burroughs has exerted in that same information war. He »

PAUL NAYKIN / GETTY

“The history of this planet is the history of war”: William S Burroughs in Chicago, March 25, 1981



was given the most effective weapon by his long-time friend and collaborator Brion Gysin – a British-born, Swiss national, American-by-choice painter and writer – who accidentally chanced upon the cut-up techniques – a mechanical method of introducing spontaneity by cutting passages into strips and permutating them, folding them into other texts – in Paris in '59.

The cut-up is their most potent legacy, but they've also amassed and exchanged an extraordinary amount of usable information and experiences. While Burroughs filled Gysin in on the details of his heroin addiction and his explorations of South America – his experiments with the telepathic drug yage, his studies of Mayan mythology and symbol languages – Gysin shared with him his 23 years in Morocco, introducing him to the trance pipe music of Joujouka and the work of Hassan I Sabbah. Sabbah, the legendary Old Man Of The Mountain, led a fanatical 12th-century sect of Moslems whose hit squad gave us the word "assassin". From Hassan Burroughs picked up the credo "Nothing is true; everything is permitted".

Between them, Burroughs and Gysin have merged magic and science with literature and art. Their writing is effective because it is so accurately informed and not a little mad, in that it resists conventional logic. They have made available all manner of mysteries, demythologised the workings of control organisms, and provided an index of endless possibilities via permutation, the methods of which are helpfully described in their collaboration *The Third Mind*, in Burroughs' *The Job* and *Ah Pook Is Here* and the Gysin book of interviews *Here To Go Planet R-101*. Their practice is the freedom of information, not the usual selfish guarding of secrets.

"That's the idea," enthuses Brion Gysin in a rich, youthful tenor that belies his 66 years, "putting an idea out that spreads by itself. We called that 'the open bank', as a matter of fact. Give away your ideas! Give away your stock!" He pauses, smiling. "I don't think it was such a good idea..."

Neither Burroughs nor Gysin are particularly rich, though since the former returned to America in the early '70s, he has upped his income with public readings and the increased royalties that go with long-overdue recognition. As Gysin still lives in Paris, the pair rarely see each other, except for the occasional conference or something like The Final Academy, an event, prompted by Genesis P-Orridge's admiration, which finally united the two mentors with the groups who've updated and adapted the cut-up to modern technology.

"I wouldn't be here except for these readings," intones Burroughs readily, "because I don't travel at all unless someone else is picking up the tab..."

That he travels still is some feat. If, when seated onstage behind a desk with two microphones, reading in that lovely parched faintly aristocratic crackle of a voice, he resembles an ageless, dementedly enthusiastic newscaster, face to face his 68 years are more telling.

His face is deeply engraved with the rigours his thin body has been through these past five decades. His head topped by a becoming cap, he sways back and forth on a cane like a sporting country gentleman, but I have no doubt that he can wield it as the deadly anti-mugging device he describes in a *RE/Search 4/5* interview. He and Gysin as usual are

forthcoming with information, triggering off each other's arcane anecdotes, odd theories and reminiscences. Yet within the hour's allotted time it's not easy to pursue lines so well documented in the plethora of extensive interview handbooks already available – mentioned earlier.

What follows, then, is more a series of codas and witty postulations on the pair's favourite themes. (Bold type crossheads are gleaned from Burroughs' readings and recordings, unless otherwise stated.)

#### New tunes for old words (Brion Gysin)

**BG:** ...That's why I used the cut-up thing back there [he was supported at The Final Academy for some routines by three musicians including Tessa of The Slits]. New tunes to fairly old words, which is one of the things about the convention, which is about the subject of cutting-up material. I don't use it any more, even though I discovered it, first put the idea across and everything. Like William I thought it was something you could go on from – it had more applications in other fields...

**WSB:** Remember, the cut-up principle of introducing randomness was actually the basis of strategy in World War II. Read Dr Neumann's book *Theory Of Games And Economic Behaviour*. Suppose you got three alternative flight paths. If the enemy find out which one you're gonna use, they're gonna intercept you, right? So minimise! You assume the worst has happened, that they know you're going to select one, but that information would be of utterly no use to them, because it would be a throw of the dice! We don't know ourselves which one we're going to use until the dice falls...

**BG:** This is a big step beyond the whole idea of codes – codes which could be broken. Here you have no coded way of doing it.

**WSB:** (*postulating*) Well, of course, life is a cut-up. The consciousness is cut by random factors as soon as you move; the only place where life would not be a cut-up is in a sensory withdrawal chamber! Oh yeah, I've been in one. They've got them all over the place now, six dollars an hour to go lie in these tanks. Oh well, it's just restful, just like being in a quiet place, that's all. I cannot but feel it's rather insanitary...

#### QUESTION: You mean they don't change the water?

**WSB:** Presumably they do, heh heh, but how can I be sure of that? This water I'm floating around in...

**WSB:** *The Place Of Dead Roads* is straighter narrative more or less, because narrative is more applicable to the material I'm using. The cut-up, like any technique, is useful in certain areas and not in others. People seem to think that one is obligated to use something because you have used it before, but it's not like that at all...

Though The Final Academy was in many ways a celebration of The Cut-Up, Burroughs has for the moment dispensed with the technique he has applied so relentlessly in writing and, to a lesser extent, the short films he made with the late Anthony Balch, in favour of a more straightforward structure.

This isn't to say his most recent novels *Cities Of The Red Night* and the as yet unpublished *Dead Roads* are any less adventurous. Both narratives leap back and forth through time, folding scientific fiction into hilarious genre parodies, the former of Graham Greene, pulp detective, the latter – from the extracts heard or read so far – of Western dime novels and movies. Both return to decisive points in history where, but for a specific incident, things could have gone either way. *Cities...* hinges on the hanging of a pirate, Captain Mission, who had set up a short-lived control-free utopia. What if?

**Stay out of churches, son. All they got is the key to the shithouse. And swear to me you'll never wear a policeman's badge.**

**WSB:** *Place Of Dead Roads* is a sequel to *Cities Of The Red Night*. What happened there was, like, commandos were parachuted behind enemy lines in time and they sort of cleaned up and drastically altered South and Central America. ... *Dead Roads* is the same sort of thing applied to North America.

They did South and Central America and the Catholic Church; now they're doing North America and the



Brion Gysin (left) and William Burroughs reunited at one of four nights of reading at the Ritzy cinema in Brixton, South London, during The Final Academy in late September 1982

protestant ethic and the Bible Belt... There's drastically fewer sexual scenes in ... *Dead Roads* than *Cities Of The Red Night*.

There's really not that many at all. It's really concerned with weaponry more than anything else. Weaponry on all levels. The whole theory of weaponry and war. The history of this planet is the history of war; the only thing that gets a Homo sapien up off his dead ass is a foot up! And that foot is war!

Now, there are more advances in medical sciences, say, in one year of war than there are in 20 or 30 years of stagnant peace. That's where all the big advances come from. In World War II, of course, there were antibiotics, and they really found drugs that would cure malaria, where quinine would only keep it down. There are all sorts of other vital, important discoveries. People need pressure to get anything done.

**BG:** And everyone gets more practice, that's all. As far as doctors are concerned, war's a field day!

**All arguments, all nonsensical condemnations as to what people "should do", are irrelevant. Ultimately there is only one fact on all levels, and the more one argues, verbalises, moralises, the less he will see and feel of fact. Needless to say I will not write any formal statement on the subject. (WSB letter to Allen Ginsberg)**

**QUESTION: Now that censorship has relaxed, are targets harder to pinpoint?**

**BG:** I don't think censorship has relaxed; it was beaten down quite legally! That's quite different. I don't think Mary Whitehouse, or whatever her name is, has relaxed for a minute!

**WSB:** It didn't relax voluntarily. These things never do. The French kings did not abdicate voluntarily (*he feints a chopping motion*). THWOCK! Heh, heh. Not very relaxed... Censorship was never an issue. You don't have to have something that is presumably forbidden or difficult, that isn't at all important.

A running sub-theme through Burroughs' four readings traced together his contempt for the "do-rights", those who for the sake of expediency will either work for the control organism or meekly submit to it.

"Junky: 'Doctor, when I die I want to be buried right in the same coffin as you' ... 'I'm putting you down for additional medication, son.'"

Or, from *Roosevelt After Inauguration*: "Hopkins, unable to control himself, rolled on the floor in sycophantic convulsions, saying over and over, 'You're killin' me, Chief. You're killin' me.'"

Better to "scan the horizons for new frontiers of depravity. This is the Space Age; we are here to go. We can float out of here on a foam runway of sheervileness."

**To Destroy enemies and, quite literally, make friends...**

Brion Gysin's Academy readings came from either his book of interviews, conducted by the young Englishman Terry Wilson, or a forthcoming novel – the latter read better.

**QUESTION: Tell me about your novel in progress, Brion.**

**BG:** 'S called *Bardo Hotel*... *Beat Museum* – *Bardo Hotel*, something like that. Pieces have been published here and there... The idea is that my hero dies and finds the old beat hotel [in Rue Git Le Coeur, Paris, where Burroughs and Gysin lived awhile, playing host to beat visitors], because he was very interested in the beats and he intended to buy this place and take it to this museum in California.

That's where he finds himself when he is dead. It's turned into a sort of Tibetan bardo to him: seven floors, seven rooms on each floor, and he has to go through all the floors of the hotel.

**WSB:** I think it's a very good format – between worlds you see the people waiting to be reborn, whether they're gonna make it back as a cow or not...

**BG:** Yes. Also unlikely people meet there... each floor is a sexual situation; levels of the hotel are sexual levels going right up to abnormality and then out – or back again!

**WSB:** Because, as you know, one of the great dangers of living between worlds like that is sex. That is what lures them back into reincarnation.

**BG:** That's right. *The hideous trap of the waiting womb* is continually spoken about in *The Tibetan Book Of The Dead*.

**WSB:** Absolutely! Say, if that's not a good pop song: "Closing that old womb door" (*pause/whirr/chuckle*) "Don't wanna come back no more..."

**BG:** Ha ha. I don't think The Slits would play that.

**WSB:** Well, there are whole batches of spells for closing the womb door in the Bardo Hotel; because you want to be sure you're going to make it! You don't want to close the womb door if you can't make it.

**Like a prisoner who killed his guard, he steps lightly through an open door.**

Sex, in an Eastern scheme of things studied by Gysin and Burroughs, is just one rite of passage. Other modes of transcendence include trance music such as that practised by the pipers of Joujouka, who Gysin incidentally brought to western ears – firstly at the restaurant he ran in Morocco, and secondly by leading the late Brian Jones up the mountain to record them,

What with the villager westernised, the sons of the pipers reluctant to continue the tradition, the music festivals of Joujouka are almost a thing of the past. Just when western scientists had begun to explore the medicinal properties of such music, too.

**BG:** ...Something enormously important has been lost, yes... It has been absorbed into small movements of medical therapy, actually. What the musicians of Joujouka did, they cured mental illness by music. There are institutes of musical therapy now in France. I don't suppose they know exactly what they're doing, but they know something can be done and they're trying things out, getting news about it where they can...

**WSB:** Of course, dentists have been using music as a painkiller for quite a long time now. They always ask me if I want novocalm or music and I tell

'em novocalm. Heh heh. You see, if there's a lull in the music, WHAM! There the pain comes back! It has to be pretty constant and loud. It doesn't matter what kind of music they use, it's simply volume, which will tell us the function of the scream is to kill pain.

**BG:** A lot of musical groups have realised this too, that it's just volume that counts...

**WSB:** It's just volume. One popstar said to the other, "Be good. And if you can't be good, be loud!"

The other mode of transport is less fanciful – ie, space travel. Gysin and Burroughs have looked back at the ecological nightmare of this planet, and have concluded that the only

place left to go is space. What has been done to this Earth in the name of its people and also to its people, of course, explains their obsession with control and the need to break its hold. But will man ever get off this planet?

Burroughs suggests the black hole as a possible exit. "How do you get from the surface of the water to the bottom without getting wet?" Burroughs asks. "Very simple. Whirlpool... Well, it can be compared."

Time and resources, though, are perhaps running out too fast.

**Any control machine needs time...**

"*Interpol and Deutsche Bank / FBI and Scotland Yard*" (Kraftwerk: "Computer World")

**BG:** Miniaturisation in time has occurred simultaneously with the miniaturisation in electronic equipment. The whole chip system has been brought about by people dealing with tiny fractions of the second; smaller quantities of time are continually being broken in on... William said, "Time is that which ends." Presumably this is the operation of using up very small particles. Detecting the various small movements of matter is using it all up, and once the thing is observed where is it going to go?

Brion Gysin has a bedtime story. It seems that trillions of years ago a giant flicked grease from his fingers. One of these gobs of grease is our universe on its way to the floor.

**QUESTION: Have we left it too late to leave this planet?**

**WSB:** Who knows? As the French say, who lives will see. *Chris Bohn* •

“You don’t  
want to close  
the womb  
door if you  
can’t make it”

# Uncommon beauty

**NME** OCTOBER 2 Neil Young and Nils Lofgren jam again

**J**UST WHAT IS it that has preserved the mystery of Neil Young through this past decade? Whatever it is, he comes perilously close to dissolving it every time he shows his face in public.

Thankfully that is none too often. After the morbid preoccupation of 1975's turning point *Tonight's The Night* - inspired by the OD deaths of two friends - he withdrew from the distracting media glare, retreated to his ranch and released a succession of bewildered, funny, curious and intensely inquisitive records, whose contemporaneity transcended trends and their own roughshod cross-cutting of styles.

They at once fuelled - and were fuelled by - the legend of eccentricity crystallising around his silence, which in itself has proved invaluable in preventing him from succumbing to the dissipating repetition and numb acceptance affecting his contemporaries. Where their responses have been deadened by the passing of years, his capacity to be surprised, amused or moved has only deepened. Just as you get a greater feeling of what it might be like to be American from maverick films such as *Melvin And Howard* than you would from a Spielberg or Coppola picture, so you are better off turning to Neil Young than the blockbuster rock and disco dominating the US charts.

His songs might be crudely drawn and vaguely incomplete, his records sometimes alarmingly inconsistent, but at least they have the sense of moving forward and taking things in. Live though - be it in Birmingham last week or on earlier tours, such as the one filmed as *Rust Never Sleeps* - it's all looking back, déjà vu. Less putting his history in some panoramic order than simply setting out to please by giving the people what they want.

Inevitably this means the slight-sounding but immensely more satisfying and entertaining work of these past seven years is ignored in favour of guitar rock staples extending from the comparatively recent "Like A Hurricane" back through to "Southern Man".

Of course, his choice of song is partly dictated by the circumstance of venue, but sticking with stadium rock standards is too easy, not to mention unworthy. Specially as they only serve to expose the one area where he has not made much advance. That is, his guitar playing. In case this sort of thing still interests you, I'll report that his soloing and duetting with old buddy Nils Lofgren (sadly behaving like a performing monkey these days) follow the same cautious progressions they always have done and always will, given his peculiarly lumpen rhythms.

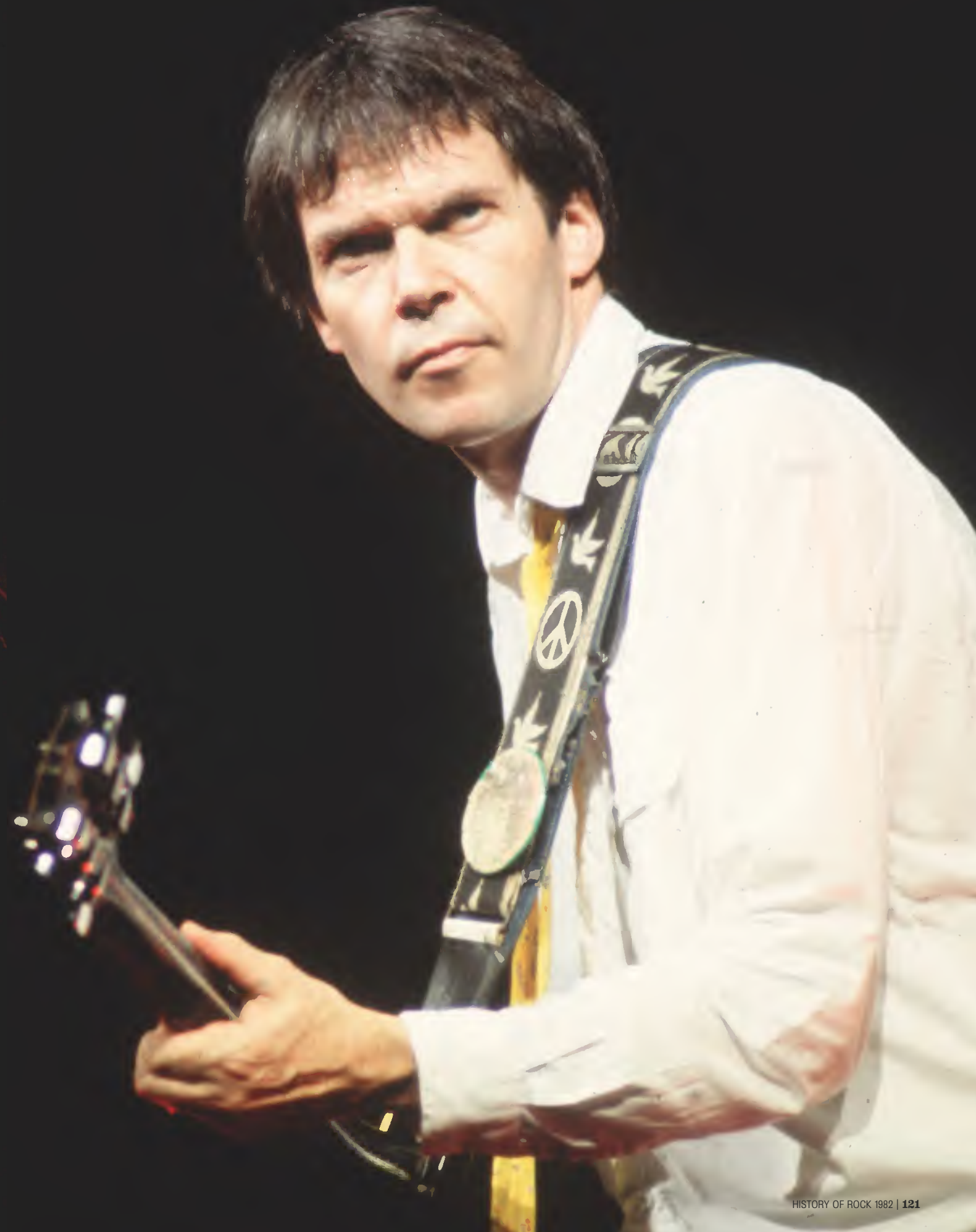
There are a few moments, though, where the two guitars knot together with uncommon beauty - something like the two snakes fucking on TV the night before, all slithering coils and rapture. Otherwise it's just so much shedding of dead skin.

It's a pity he feels such a strong need to please, as the excellent sound quality quickly does away with the distance and the disappointment of not being able to see anything, making the whole event far more personal than I expected. The immediacy of the now threadbare "Old Man" and "Needle And The Damage Done" have me yearning for the better "Thrasher" or, Lord preserve us, something new. On the other hand, songs from his forthcoming LP don't induce love on first hearing. Almost all those he showcases are undeniably playful, featuring him and/or Lofgren talking through their guitars, but the resulting homogenous sweep of sound is more Peter Frampton than a disconcerting Devo or Kraftwerk.

An unfortunate concession to modernity or genuine thirst for experiment? Even allowing him the benefit of doubt, he still - likeably - comes across as a delighted boy with a new toy. I wish I could share his joy. For the moment there is more pleasure to be had lying with the old snakes. *Chris Bohn*

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# “No fairy story”

**CULTURE CLUB'S BOY GEORGE** explains how a feisty character from Camden nightlife became a huge star, to the confusion of builders everywhere. “Look, don’t fucking slag me off,” he says, “cos if you do I’ll punch you. I’m always going to be like that.”

— NME OCTOBER 16 —

**I**T'S GEORGE'S BIRTHDAY—no biological landmark but a time of transition for a boy about town with big ambitions. Today is Tuesday, and Culture Club have a successful single that's just climbed the charts to No 3.

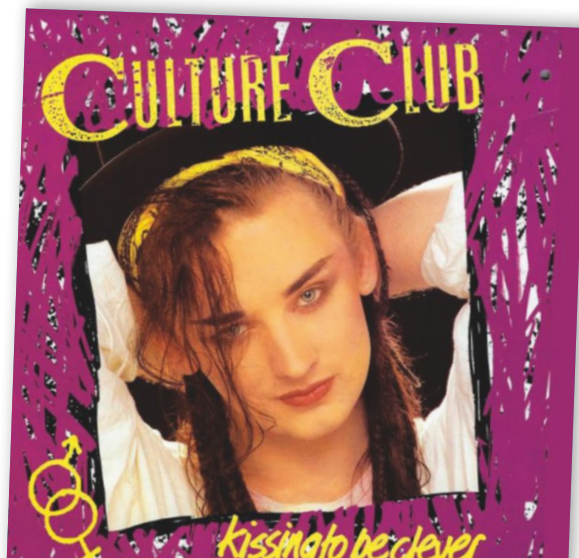
This same week has seen the release of their first LP. Tonight there's a concert for London's Capital Radio to be broadcast from Camden Palace. And, almost overnight, Boy George has become a bona fide popstar, a public figure with a famous face.

The Boy's full of beans, but not completely bowled over. He looks back on a life that's been crammed with fun, and turns towards the future with a trace of trepidation. For a boy who has always seemed accessible, unselfconscious and almost everywhere at once—whether working in a clothes shop off Carnaby Street or unostentatiously enjoying himself in the thick of London nightlife, there's an inkling of other considerations soon to be confronted...

“The other day I went into a hamburger place on Oxford Street. I was dressed up and I forgot. I mean, I don't feel there's anything to forget. I was hungry and I thought I'd better get something to eat. These little kids got round me in a circle, poking me.

“It was quite amusing, because they were going, ‘Are you the girl from Culture Club?’ And I said to them, ‘Well, actually, I'm not a girl’.

LISA HAUN / GETTY





Boy George:  
"I don't think I  
look like a girl, I'm  
just a bloke with  
an ego problem."

“It’s great, all that, because you don’t deliberately set out to do anything, and I really haven’t. I don’t think I look like a girl, I’m just a bloke with a bit of an ego problem, I suppose.”

**G**EORGE ARRIVES AT the Virgin offices immaculately attired, his long hair falling in a profusion of plaits from under a high hat, his face perfectly painted, the bone structure delicately shaded and his eyes emphasised with discreet shades of lilac.

Spend a few minutes in his company and George’s appearance and personality blend into a happy, lively, harmonious whole. But when we walk through West London to look for some lunch, strollers stop to gape and double-take. The Boy is as bold as brass and has the cheek of the devil. When a workman leaning from some scaffolding rudely attracts his attention, not sure at the distance whether he’s ogling an object of ridicule or arousal, George looks up sharply.

“Jump, wanker!” he shouts.

Boy George drinks tea and eats steak and baked potatoes. He’s an anti-elitist who squashes pretension and pounces on pomposity. George is shrewd and candid, occasionally spiteful and well attuned to the sheer absurdity of his own situation. Warm and witty, with one of those faces that explode into a smile, The Boy’s no fool and you’ll occasionally catch him shooting you an appraising look from under his long lashes. Just as Culture Club are making some of the most logical and delightful pop of the present, so George is all set to become one of the best of modern music stars. Sane in the right places and humane where it matters most, with sufficient self-respect not to take himself too seriously, George is garrulous and fizzy – but not too dizzy.

Point him in the general direction of a question and he’s off on a quicksilver catalogue of loves, hates, fears, desires and furies....

### Origins

“**IT ISN’T GEORGE** and Culture Club, it’s Culture Club – and that’s how it’ll always be. I really like the band... well, personally there’s a few things I dislike about them, because I’m a difficult person to get on with. I’m very temperamental and quite selfish in my opinions.

There was that big thing in *NME* about how I wasn’t in Bow Wow Wow anymore and how I should get my own band. I found Jon through Kirk Brandon from Theatre Of Hate. Jon’s been in a hell of a lot of bands and I knew I wasn’t capable of organising one. I met Michael in a night club. We wanted a guitarist who was just a competent guitar player, never heard of me, never been to any of the clubs, just someone who was really enthusiastic. I really liked Roy as soon as I met him. He was quiet, didn’t have a big mouth.

“That’s how it started. No fairy story; basically like a lot of bands. I wanted to get people who didn’t agree with me. It’s quite good that we got people who weren’t involved in that cliquey rock and roll thing. I hate the sort of people who come up to you afterwards and say, ‘Hey man the bass stack was a bit crackly’. That artistic crap. You think, oh God almighty help me, get me out of here. We’ll all end up like that, I’m sure. I hope not though.

“I believe in doing what you’re good at. If you’re good at copying pictures, you should do that; if you’re good at creating things, you should create them. There’s no Flash Harrys in this band. That’s the most important thing about Culture Club, that we’re fluid about what we’re doing. If you break up the single, it’s a bit like ‘White Christmas’ and ‘All You Need Is Love’. If you can really listen to it, and think what does it sound like? – that makes a good song to me.”

### The norm, fear and fashion

“**I’M JUST A** normal person. I’m not an Andy Warhol, I’m not a concept. I’m just a normal Hello John from down the road. I’ve got beliefs, but I don’t mean that’s it, black and white, and that’s all you should believe from me. Confidence comes and goes, it’s a human thing.

“Last night I was so pissed off; I think that was the

loneliest I’ve ever felt. People are being nice to you because... I’m cynical and if people come up to me and say, ‘Congratulations’, I’ll just say, ‘Fuck off’. Not because I’m trying to be an anarchistic little popstar, but because I don’t think I’m someone special and I’m not doing it for that reason. I don’t need people coming up to me and saying, ‘Now you’re OK, now you’re acceptable’. I don’t want them involved with my life.

“I’m not frightened of not being successful; I’m frightened of not being successful as a person. I’d much rather that people think, ‘Oh, he’s a happy person’, rather than, ‘Wow, isn’t he clever’? Because I’m not. It’s all luck and what you make of it.

“The only nice thing is that if a housewife comes up to you in the street and says, ‘I like your record’. You feel much better than if someone with a really sickly sneer on their face says, ‘Ooh, congratulations, it’s soooo good’. You just really want to punch them.

“I know why people hate me. The thing is, if you go to the Palace, those people are very normal. I’m not saying they’re idiots because they dress up or they don’t dress up, but their reasons for doing it are very silly. They really want to be normal and they actually fit into

that environment perfectly because they want so much to be like everyone else. I suppose I’m the sort of person who spends most of their time trying not to be like everyone else, which is probably why I’m so ordinary. I feel so natural in what I’m doing.

“It’s quite sad, that big fear of alienation. You get it at school, because you’re taught not to have a personality, it’s better for them if you don’t. I’m not saying I hate school, but I think it could be done a bit better. I think there’s a lot of things about this country that could be done better.

“It’s a fear of not being accepted by other people. I went through that at school, but it hardened me up. It made me more secure because I suddenly realised why people were doing it. I mean, I look at people and think, ‘Idiot!’ But if I meet them I’m prepared to back down. Unless people meet you on your level, they’re never going to know what you’re like, are they? They’re going to say, I don’t like him because he wears make-up. If they project their uprightness on you, that’s their problem.

“‘White Boy’ is not about white people; it’s about people who are shallow, see-through. At the time I started there were a lot of cynical people around me, who I don’t mix with anymore. Bow Wow Wovites and very trendy people. They were saying to me, ‘Ooh, your band’s really white, you should be tribal’. I just kept saying, ‘We’re a rock band, we’re going to do all the things other people don’t’. The song’s about this guy who kept saying, ‘You’re really white’. I was supposed to be upset by that.”

### Optimism

**GEORGE HAILS THE** waiter with a grin and a polite holler. “I’m leaving the mushrooms. I didn’t think they’d be like that. I’m optimistic.”

### Gender

“**ALL THE OTHER** countries are really frightened about the LP cover, because a lot of people just think I’m a girl. Of course I enjoy that, I love it! It’s great because I’ve got a certain female element to my character. But I’m not a poof. I’m effeminate in the way I look, but I’m not an effeminate person. I don’t like effeminate people. It’s like when you meet gay people and they say, ‘Oh hello’. That is put on, because I’ve done it, put on a very camp voice.

“You do need gay clubs, because if you’re gay and you walk up to someone in a club and they’re not gay, they’re going to punch you in the teeth, aren’t they, if you try and chat them up? But I don’t believe in the gay identity, that you have to be noted and recognised as a gay.

“In the album there’s a lot of references to gender. When we first started I wasn’t aware of it, but when we did ‘White Boy’ everyone was saying, ‘Who’s the girl’? That’s why I called myself Boy George.

“I really like symbols, so I decided to use the sex symbols on the cover. The picture was really androgynous. It’s a heterosexual symbol, but it doesn’t have to be. Things aren’t as black and white as they look, which is the whole idea.”

“I’m just  
a normal  
Hello John  
from down  
the road”



## Instinct and aggression

“**THERE IS AN** element of you which wants success, but you follow your instincts really, don't you? You want to have a hit because that's the whole idea of signing a record deal. But if you start worrying what other people think, you're useless to yourself.

“It's best if you don't lie to yourself. I don't mind about lying to other people—I do it all the time! If you can admit you're a creep to yourself, you're halfway to solving your problems. I always do what I feel is right at the time. Sometimes it isn't, but it's much better to take the chance. I believe in acting how you feel, I'm very like that.

“Of course, I get annoyed, I'm a human being, I'm not a star. It's not all this, 'Oh you can't embarrass yourself'. I'd just go up to them and say, 'Look, don't fucking slag me off, 'cos if you do I'll punch you'. I'm always going to be like that, it doesn't matter how successful I am. If they're going to slag me off, they're going to get it back.”

## Character and stardom

“**CHARACTER'S SOMETHING YOU** have to create; you can't get it by dressing up. I like old women that you meet at bus stops. They're characters, it's not someone who comes up to you and says, 'I was a punk in '76'. Remember that old rigmarole? I hated all that, such a load of shit.

“I've got a snotty nose. Sorry. It's very un-star-like, isn't it?”

Culture Club at Camden Palace for Gary Crowley's Capital birthday are shrill girlish screams and a shower of confetti. There's something wholesomely natural about a stage full of blacks and whites, males and females. Culture Club look good and are something worth watching, but there's no sly gloss or nasty attention-grabbing—two girl singers, one wearing glasses, have been chosen for more enduring qualities than mere appearance.

Culture Club make a lovely music that's clear and sheer and sunny and there's a pleasure taken in its communication that defies distance. In the middle of this musical melee, George is a warm, coquettish presence. Handing out posters, listening to small requests or dedicating a song to his sister, he has the gracious glow of a cherished but slightly snappish maiden aunt after two glasses of Christmas sherry. Something about the easy joy of Culture Club's performance turns a half-hour recording into a short celebration.

## Unity

“**I'VE GOT FIVE** brothers and one sister. It's a real Irish family. You don't have to accept someone's culture to like them. It's like being Irish, all this Catholic and Protestant thing. You don't have to dislike someone for being Protestant just because someone else does. That was the idea of using all the symbols on the clothes, so that it was like an everyman culture rather than one-sided.

“We've dropped the Star Of David now, because I've no intention of hurting people's feelings, and it's not a very good time for that symbol. I'm not anti-Arab and I'm not anti-Jew, but I don't like the idea of provoking people, sticking things down their throat.”

## Love, sex and marriage

“**OF COURSE I** fancy people, but I don't usually sleep with people I fancy. I sleep with people I fancy and then I really like them. I don't like people who are physically everything and psychologically nothing. People who've just got their sexuality are pretty sad.

“I'm not a sexy person. That's one thing about people who are into the band, it's not like, 'Phwoooaaar, I'd like to go to bed with George'. It's more they like what I say and the idea of me. You are what you give out to people.

“There's a lot of thoughtless people around. I don't believe in getting what you can out of people, whether it be in a relationship or business. I dislike decadence a lot, whether it's decadence on *Top Of The Pops*, with the mini-skirts and girls making



Boy George: the gracious glow of a slightly snappish maiden aunt after two glasses of Christmas sherry

themselves look like they're nothing. It's like the whole pop scene. I can look at something and think, 'Oh no, it's awful, please don't do it'. It's really hideous and false. The whole idea of calling the album *Kissing To Be Clever* is like the kiss of death, the kiss of life. The whole of that album is like a cynical love song. It's all about the new boy gender, it's all about pop.

It's a very pop album. The songs are very personal, but also they can apply to other people. It's almost like saying, 'Think about what you're doing, don't not do it because it's right or wrong, but think about it'. “The best songs in the world are love songs. But love applies to everyone. It doesn't just apply to a few people in the room with pink eyebrows and stilettoes on. Everybody falls in love and everybody wants somebody to love at the end of the day. I've been in love with somebody for about a year now, but it's a bit on the rocks at the moment. I don't play games with people. I don't not love them because they don't love me. It upsets me, but I don't believe in acting a different way. I'm into relationships rather than sexual encounters. Also, I'd never sleep with fans. None of the band would do that. I don't believe in abusing the position.

“I don't believe in marriage. If you love someone you don't have to prove it. The thing is, I can go two ways on that subject, because if you love someone you're going to want to keep them forever, aren't you? You can't be dogmatic about love; it's such a heart-rending thing. I'm sure I'd get married if I loved someone.”

## Hypocrisy

“**I'M LIKE THAT** – a hypocrite.”

## Honesty

“**AN HONEST HYPOCRITE**, I hope.” Lynn Hanna •

# “Five very ambitious people”

From the top of the pop tree, “small commando unit” DURAN DURAN take time to answer their critics. Chiefly: are they all style and no substance? “What’s wrong with being a careerist?” asks SIMON LE BON. “People should be rewarded for ability not need.”

— MELODY MAKER NOVEMBER 13 —

**A**S THE STRAINING cordon of policemen splits under the frantic pressure of budding femininity, the coach swerves away from Glasgow Apollo and speeds through the dark, wet backstreets.

Four hundred teenage girls screaming as one, weep, wave and stampede, gradually straggling off into pockets of damp, puffed disappointment. Soon the last gang of pursuers stumble back into the distance and a solitary figure keeps abreast of the coach, running as if its life is at stake.

The coach just clips through an amber light and still the figure keeps coming, dodging cars, barely avoiding a bus, madly ignoring the green cross code.

“Pull up! Stop!” yells Roger Taylor and the coach jerks twice and coasts to a halt. The automatic doors purr open and young Mark Duffy, heaving with exhaustion and excitement, staggers up the steps to rapturous applause.

“Please will you put ‘I was in your coach?’” he asks Nick Rhodes as the lipstick blond signs his programme.

“Please... otherwise my friends won’t believe me...”

Okay, though the incident’s true, you’ve read it many times before, Duran Duran, pop stars, teen idols, candyfloss gods to a new generation of gullible adolescents with more pocket money than sense. If only the stupid sheep would scream and lend financial support to the worthy likes of the Gang Of Four, the world would be a better place. Well... er... wouldn’t it?

I, for one, quite honestly doubt it and have caught a fair amount of flak in the past for being stupid enough to say so. Here, at *Maker Central*, my rapturous review of the *Rio* album is still the subject of sniggering ridicule and considered an unbalanced lapse of common sense.

But just why do the press find Duran Duran unacceptable? Do they pose some threat to jealously guarded traditional standards? Is it because they wear make-up? Just why do they offend mature sensibilities? And why do they sell so many records? Only one way to find out....

Yours truly nipped up north of the border with the express purpose of confronting Duran with their own reputation and giving them a rare right of reply. The interviews were conducted in dribs and drabs, usually individual, »

SHINKO MUSIC / GETTY





Five-headed beast: Duran Duran (clockwise from left) Simon Le Bon, Andy Taylor, John Taylor, Nick Rhodes and Roger Taylor

but sometimes in groups over a hectic three-day period. Nick Rhodes provided the most apt preamble:

“We are probably, in Britain over the past five years, the only band that’s known as five individuals—there is no one really major person in the band who has the personality which carries the entire band. We are five very different personalities as The Beatles were four.

“The press find it hard to cope with the fact that I might say something and then Andy might contradict me. It’s never a case of Duran Duran says ‘that’, because each member is a fifth of Duran Duran and our opinions are individual.

“There can be up to five contradictions at any one point. I think this interview is important because nobody’s ever asked us this before—we’ve never ever been able to level out how we felt exactly about all those things... I think it’s really interesting... about the reasons why...”

Appetite whetted? Here goes...

#### *Duran Duran are all image and no content.*

**NICK RHODES:** “BECAUSE we came over with a certain flamboyancy in the initial stages, a lot of people thought we were irresponsible and naive and didn’t deserve the instant success we seemed to be having because we were only getting that success due to our image and being in the right place at the right time.

“However, what they fail to realise is that John and I had been working on the idea of crossing Chic and the Sex Pistols two and a half years before Duran Duran. Both had records in the charts and we liked them both for different reasons so we thought: ‘Why not make something danceable with more energy plus some sort of Giorgio Moroder-type synths?’ We wanted to be striking like I remember Roxy Music were the first time they were on the *Old Grey Whistle Test*. I was what? Ten or eleven, and everybody at school the next day was talking about them. That’s the way we wanted it to be, bright and powerful.

“I look back at our pictures now from the ‘romantic’ era and I sort of chuckle at them. Then I think: ‘Well, it was very striking’ and then I think ‘what bands are enormous? The Beatles, Pink Floyd, The Rolling Stones... what did they look like when they came out?’ And I remember those little black suits and flowery shirts and thinking, ‘Image shouldn’t be taken so seriously, it’s something you can have a lot of fun with’.

“I mean, now our image is as we are—five individuals, but I think, if we hadn’t had that initial image, we wouldn’t have had such a big impact the first time we were on *Top Of The Pops*.

“I see no difference between us and Edwyn Collins of Orange Juice wearing a pair of Oxford bags with braces—it’s all image. Take Kevin Rowland—what a master of image he is! Just because he happens to wear an anorak and boxing boots instead of a frilly shirt and a pair of leather trousers, he’s a genius to certain political sectors of the music press.”

Andy Taylor: “How fuckin’ thick of the press to base their whole concept of a band on image and not on music.”

#### *Duran Duran are a sickly confection.*

**JOHN TAYLOR:** “THE sort of people we sell to, do not question our relevance to society and until they feel we’re giving them a raw deal, I don’t think we have to answer to anybody. I don’t see why we should have to satisfy what I consider to be petty semi-graduate university thinking. I’ve never liked soap-box rock—it’s just totally irrelevant to us.

“If you wanna know if we’re any good to anybody and on what level, ask the kids at the Apollo tonight and they’ll say: ‘While the show was on I loved every minute, I danced around and I wasn’t reminded how badly my father’s gonna treat me when I get back to my two-foot square flat in the Gorbals’. Who the hell wants to remember?”

Nick Rhodes: “We never intended to be uncompromising—that’s the thing. We never intended to be on Factory Records. We aren’t looking for pity; we’re looking for hit songs. We play a role in the entertainment business which has been necessary for a long time because it gives people enjoyment. I still love listening to other people’s albums, I like going to live gigs.

“I like seeing music on television and I like listening to the radio occasionally. If we and all the other bands weren’t there, it would be so drab.

I think we’re a catalyst for good environmental karma.”

Andy Taylor: “I don’t even know what catalyst means... I never did get my English ‘O’ level... but that sounds exactly perfect.”

Simon Le Bon: “I don’t see it that way at all—that’s like an opium of the people kind of thing. We have got something to offer people—an ideology that comes over in the songs. I’m trying to pick on something positive, give over a positive attitude rather than a negative one. “As soon as a band starts complaining about society, everybody says, ‘Oh, that’s a very valuable band—they’re pointing out all that’s going wrong’, but all they’re doing is repeating what comes on the news, which is stating the obvious.

“What we’re trying to offer is an alternative point of view, a point of view which says, ‘Okay, so this is going wrong, and this is going wrong’, but don’t just sit there and moan about it—if anything’s gonna happen, it’s only you that’s gonna change it, you as an individual, doing what you have to do, having confidence in yourself, in your own ambitions and ideas. You should go out and do it, rather than voting for some party who you think’s gonna do it for you.

“The only thing that’s gonna make anything better is if people work for themselves. Just because people have need doesn’t mean they should have what they need. Things don’t work like that. I mean, people should be rewarded for ability not need.”

John Taylor: “We’ve always tried to impress upon people a sort of individual positivism. I mean, I’m not God. I can’t say: ‘Yes my son, anybody who wants to do it can’, but I’m saying, ‘You’re never gonna get there without trying, that’s for sure’. I think we’ve made something out of nothing pretty quickly, we haven’t had it all laid on a plate, regardless of what some people say. Our success is an example, we’re not encouraging people to gang up and throw bricks at the Houses Of Parliament because that’s not gonna get anybody anywhere.

“That’s what annoys me so much about those half-baked journalists who accuse us—I was on the dole for two years! I’ve done that and I know it’s no fun but, by the same token, it’s no use sitting there moaning about it, regardless of whether you wanna job on the shopfloor at Leyland or whether you wanna be a pop star.”

Simon Le Bon: “That’s exactly the whole crux of it. I was in university, institutionalised to the extreme. There were times when I spent four weeks on campus without even venturing off! I had my food there; I could moan about politics and have deep political conversations and things like that but not actually do anything.

“Now I’ve split off into a small commando unit of very active people—everybody doing as much as they can, not doing a little bit in a big machine but doing a lot in a small machine, and that is the basis behind my ideology and I think, subconsciously, behind the band’s: that people are realising that politics aren’t the answer to any problems and are looking to do it themselves.”

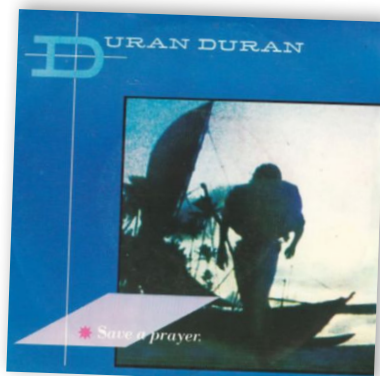
#### *Duran Duran are self-obsessed careerists who look to satisfy themselves within a capitalist system without so much as a passing thought for broader social welfare.*

**NICK RHODES:** “I don’t think it’s such a crime for a band to comprise five very ambitious people who take a lot of care over their artistic values and work hard to try and get through to as many people as possible.”

John Taylor: “We are careerists. I see music as my career, but it’s also my dream and what I do best so I’m very lucky in that respect. We have had to plan and too many people equate that with being a calculating concern and not with being professionals and perfectionists... or trying to be.

“We’re not naive. We’ve grown up with our success. I don’t think it’s grown up ahead of us. If you like, we’ve had five years of success in two years and I think we’ve probably aged five years in those two years, so we’ve grown parallel to our success. Look at all our contemporaries of two years ago—the Stray Cats, Visage, Spandau, Adam... they’ve all fallen by the wayside. All of them! We can learn from that—there’s two ways of looking at it: we can either go, ‘Nah! Nah!’; or, ‘It proves how easy it is to slip!’.”

Simon Le Bon: “What’s wrong with being a careerist? On the other hand, I agree with what Pete Townshend said, if you haven’t got an axe to grind, then you should be in cabaret. We have got something to say—just because it’s not screaming in agony doesn’t mean it’s not a statement. It’s hard







"We have far greater power over our audience than Paul Weller will ever have with his"

to explain, but we're interested in the whole scheme of things rather than just people among people. It's to do with living and dying.

"I just don't think you can destroy the living force, the living energy, by death. I'm very interested in genetics, which makes me sound like a fascist, but I see the human race as an animal coming to a crucial stage in its development. I don't believe that this force within people will allow the bomb to be dropped because there's a little bit of everybody in everybody else and the bomb is the first thing in history that's ever threatened the survival of the whole human race. If you look at people as genetic carriers, it cannot be allowed to happen.

"For me, that awareness changes the whole aspect of the world, it broadens your view of looking at things – instead of just being prepossessed with having fast cars and women and things like that, it broadens your mind. We're like adventurers, I suppose. I see us, in a way, venturing into the subconscious, into the mind which, for me, is the largest uncharted territory."

***Duran Duran exploit the fantasies of teenage girls and laugh all the way to the bank.***

**SIMONLE BON:** "If you value money more than communication, then there's a very large danger of that happening. But we're not in it for the money; we're in it to prove what can be done."

John Taylor: "I think we die an artistic death every night on stage. We almost become what our audience wants. For some reason we make fairly austere records... well, no grandiose, finely crafted and musical, and yet, when our audience come to see us, they want us to dance on stage.

"At the moment, luckily, it happens naturally, as part of our personalities. I mean, I've been a fan. I can relate to them on that level and I don't like it when people run it down. I think a lot of people go through that period of fan worship or whatever before they find themselves."

Simon Le Bon: "I think it's crazy. I feel like saying to them when they're standing outside the hotel in the rain, 'C'mon, you're gonna catch a cold. Go home and have a cuppa tea', but I've tried to tell 'em before and they won't go away."

John Taylor: "You are responsible for them. We have far greater power over our audience than Paul Weller will ever have with his because we really could stand on stage and say 'Go out and break the walls of Babylon! NOW!' And they would!"

Simon Le Bon: "I could think 'Great, all that power!' But I don't particularly want to do that. I don't have the right to do that. I think we've given ourselves a responsibility to be honest."

John Taylor: "Now is the pitfall time. There's a million traps waiting to be sprung – traps we could so easily spring ourselves."

Simon Le Bon: "The more success you achieve, the more hands come out either trying to drag you sideways into some unreal world of drugs and perversion, or there's hands trying to drag you down to the ground, back down to their level because they don't like to see you up there.

"If you've built your success on a tissue ladder of lies and deceptions and images, then it's particularly easy to be pulled down, but if you're honest –

and we are honest – you can stand on the ground that you've created with your honesty."

John Taylor: "The bigger you get, the more honest you have to be because you're living in the public eye and it's so easy to be tripped up. I mean, it would be very easy for me to say we were brought up on jazz and funk but then, if you started talking to us deeply about it, I'd trip myself up. Now if you start talking deeply to me about Roxy Music, I know everything they've ever done..."

Nick Rhodes: "As the Rolling Stones may well have been to Bo Diddley and Chuck Berry, so we are to Roxy Music."

***Duran Duran are too damn perfect!***

**ANDY TAYLOR:** "I forgot to send my dad a copy of *Rio* when it came out. I haven't had enough time to house-train my dog properly so it shits on the carpet..."

Nick Rhodes: "I lost my wallet the other day, I lost a camera a month before and I lost a bag two months before that..."

Andy Taylor: "I used to snap strings."

Nick Rhodes: "My Own Way", the single version released in Britain, was diabolical. I hated it."

Simon Le Bon: "I don't talk about mistakes, I learn from them."

***Duran Duran are arrogant little oiks.***

**NICK RHODES:** "IT'S not arrogance, it's confidence!"

John Taylor: "As long as the five of us keep it together mentally, there's nobody to move where we can move. There's nobody to move into the supergroup, megadrome status. The Human League may sell a lot of records, but they'll never play Madison Square Gardens. I think we will..."

Simon Le Bon: "I don't know. I'm not a prophet, I'm a singer."

John Taylor: "If you look at most of our interviews, one after another is a justification of our own existence. We've had to leap to our defence."

**MYSTRATEGEM WAS,** of necessity, the wrong tack; forcing confrontations over my priorities, not theirs. It was, at best, a start to understanding that Duran Duran's five-way fragmented philosophy takes no heed of the traditional, patently ridiculous notion that pop should be naive, overtly rebellious and prone to expressing liberal conscience. Their idea of freedom within the commercial medium of pop is the only mature, unhypocritical, honest option that they consider still open.

Duran Duran say pop shouldn't have to be anything at all and, therefore, can be anything. I recognised this conclusion too late in my limited time to tackle them on their terms. That comes next time.

But it's not too late for you to back off, tear off your blinkers, lay your preconceptions aside and listen to Duran Duran for what they are, not for what your puritanical expectations demand they should be.

Steve Sutherland •

# 1982

OCTOBER—DECEMBER



Phil Collins: "People say I'm whinging on, but I write songs as a result of what happened to me."

# “Christ, you can’t win”

A year after his breakthrough solo album, the down-to-earth PHIL COLLINS talks Genesis, breadbins, the Nolans and – of course – love and marriage. “She doesn’t like being alone,” he says of his ex-wife. “So she went off with a decorator.”

— MELODY MAKER DECEMBER 11 —

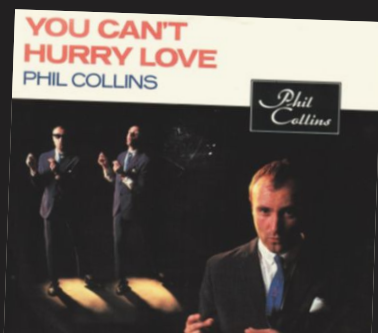
**I**F NOTHING ELSE happened to Phil Collins for another decade, it would just about balance the upheavals, activities and twists of fate that have filled the past two years of his life. Emotionally dazed by the break-up of his marriage, he walked into a recording studio and completed his first solo album *Face Value*, a documentation of the ties and tears he had lately shed.

Yet he continued to front Genesis, singing his way through their rosy fantasies. Genesis came under increasing attack as the epitome of the ancient, out-of-touch megastars, while *Face Value* drew almost universal acclaim. Praised on one hand, hounded on the other, Phil Collins had to develop a new attitude to his career.

He continued working with John Martyn and this year helped Abba’s Frida Lyngstad with the production of her album. A few months ago his second solo LP was released. *Hello, I Must Be Going* met with a more reserved reception. Undeterred, Collins

prepared a nine-piece band to take his own music on the road for the first time.

When you meet him, Phil Collins is polite but confident and has a snappy sense of humour that even edges towards ‘barrow boy’ proportions. He’s protective about how his music is performed, but open to argument on its value. He jealously guards his ‘down-to-earthness’ and rails at any suggestion of ego-stardom. Loyal to Genesis, which he sees as a “misinterpreted unit”, he’d like to spend more time on his solo »



PAUL MARVIN / GETTY

projects but won't entertain the idea of leaving the band. In one sentence: "I am now at the centre of anything I do."

**How does fronting your own show compare with playing in Genesis?**

It feels very different. Suddenly it's two hours of my music instead of Genesis material that goes back a long way, people come to see bits of this period or bits of that period. With the band, new material always goes down less well than old stuff, but I haven't got any old stuff.

It's less tiring because I'm singing in a range I've written for, instead of in Genesis where Mike or Tony will come in with songs written as they were written, really high. I get pissed off not being able to sing them night after night because you can't reach the notes you did as a one-off in the studio.

**Are you a perfectionist?**

Yeah, but a realistic perfectionist. We spent three weeks rehearsing just trying to get everyone playing together. I do get a bit frustrated, because to me there's only one way of doing it and that's the way it should be done. Any deviations downwards aren't right.

**Do you get annoyed with people if they don't do it the way you want?**

Very annoyed, yeah.

**You always seem to be working, do you panic if you have nothing to do?**

Yeah, but I quite enjoy what I do. I don't struggle to get away from it.

**Why are you like that?**

I don't know. I've never really done anything else. That's how my marriage broke up. I was always doing something, if it wasn't Genesis it was Brand X, if it wasn't Brand X it was a session.

**So why didn't that experience scare you into relaxing?**

Well fortunately the lady I'm with now knows what to expect. I'm sure my ex-Mrs viewed music as the other woman. I do say 'no' to more things now, I have to. I used to say 'yes' to everything. I've had lots of interesting production offers for people such as the Nolans, Manhattan Transfer, Air Supply, Climax Blues Band, Nina Hagen—an amazing cross-section—but all interesting to do... the Nolans, that'd be fascinating.

**Isn't there a danger of stretching yourself too thin?**

I know whenever I do anything I give 100 percent. People say you must be saving material from one group for another, but that's not true, it's a naive enjoyment of the whole thing. I don't do anything else apart from occasionally watch Rangers or go to my local pub... and I'm gonna buy a pub. We'll probably have a music licence. I don't do anything with my money; a pub seemed a good idea.

**Are you rich?**

I don't know. As far as I'm concerned I'm only worth what I've got in my bank account. I was looking at it and thinking, that's not really the result of 12 years with Genesis. I suppose it's all in theory—they give you gold and platinum albums instead of money.

**Are you happy?**

Oh yeah, happier. That situation two years ago when I went through my divorce... in some respects I'm loathe to keep talking about it because people say I'm whinging on, but I write songs as a result of what happened to me. I write happy songs now. When I was miserable and my kids weren't with me and I had a son that I worshipped and he wasn't there, I got depressed.

**Doesn't it seem ironic that if music caused the break-up of your marriage, you should immerse yourself in a solo album while the divorce was going on?**

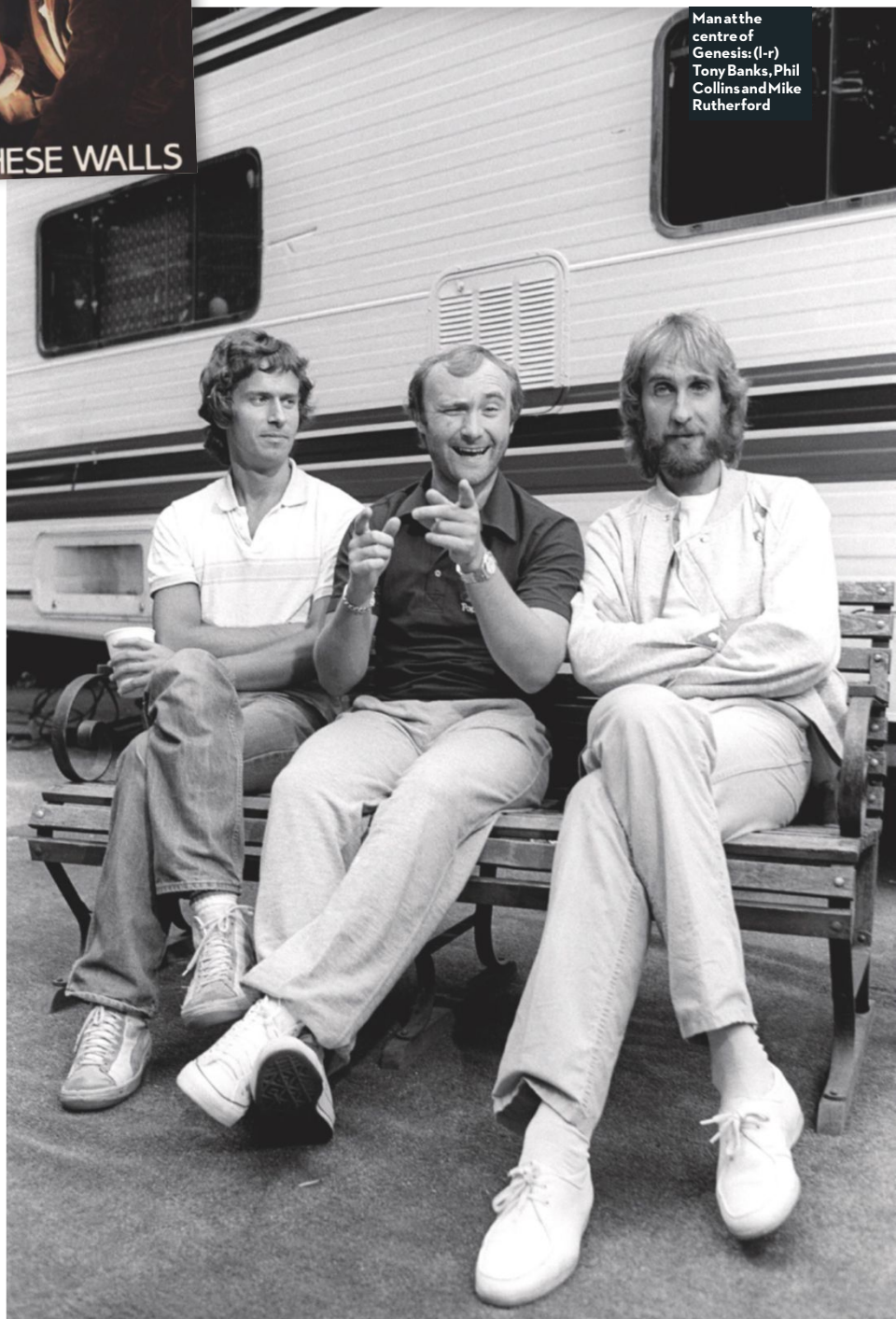
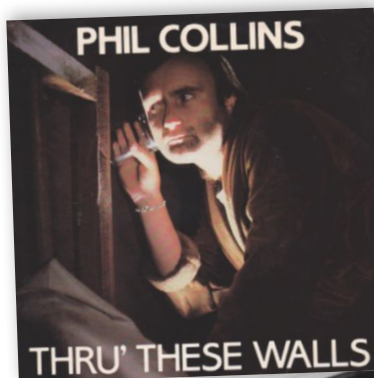
I didn't see music as causing it. In 1977 on New Year's Eve I said to my wife, 'I've got to go on the road next year, Genesis has to crack America'. And she said, 'Then we're not going to be together in 12 months' time.'

I thought I had to do it, I can't let the boys down, not realising I was one of the boys and I could say something about it. I just asked her to bear with me for one year. It'll be all right.

But she was one of those people who didn't like being alone. In the same way as you find someone who hates spiders and you put them in a room full, you can't say, 'They're only spiders, they won't hurt you', you can't tell them that. I was saying, 'Just another month', but she doesn't like being alone so she went off with a decorator.

**Face Value worked because you obviously had a lot to say and strong emotions to express. Hello, I Must Be Going, on the other hand, smacks of "Let's make another solo album". Haven't you just done retreads of that earlier material?**

No, I don't think that. I had a distinct lack of judgement on "Through These Walls" when I used the same drum fill as "In The Air", but to me that's where the comparison ends. It's my voice, I'm writing about the same sort of emotions. I still pull on that area two years ago.



Man at the centre of Genesis: (l-r) Tony Banks, Phil Collins and Mike Rutherford

Although it was a depressing time, I got stimulated by it, it was great to be that depressed.

It's a human trait that people feeling sad don't put on a happy album; they put on a sad one and wallow in it. I would have done anything to have got out of the depression, for it all to be right, but it had very positive aspects. It was the first time I'd ever finished a song. Before, with Genesis, I always had bits because I was too busy to complete them. Then I had all the time in the world.

**As inspiration it's fine, but haven't you dragged too much of your personal life into the second album – all the pictures of kids and friends in the centrefold?**

There are a couple of reasons for that. There is definitely a feeling of guilt about what happened to my marriage and, to be purely sentimental about it, I loved my dad; I had a dad, but my son isn't going to have a dad because my wife doesn't live with me anymore. They're going to Canada to live and I'll see them twice a year for holidays. It was something for him and also a bit different, maybe... oh... I dunno.

I suppose it doesn't help, if you're sitting on the fence thinking this is going to be another go at the solo album that would probably convince you. But I was criticised on the first album for putting 'Me-piano' instead of 'Phil Collins-piano'; it was 'too egotistical'. I mean, Christ, you can't win. I thought it would be an informal way of doing things. I took what I thought were humorous photos for the inside sleeve.

**Humorous to you, maybe, but to outsiders?**

I suppose so, that's what I'm finding. I'm not embarrassed to have a picture of my son in a Superman costume but I can see why it's misinterpreted by some people.

**Perhaps people are suspicious of someone in your position prepared to open their hearts?**

Probably, and I think that's sad. It's a drag people are embarrassed about that kind of sentimentality being shown. I wanted *Face Value* and *Hello, I Must Be Going* to be a matching set, something that felt like it was from the same bloke. There's a lot of preconceptions about what I must be like, because I'm in Genesis, the sort of background I must have. Like all these letters page things I keep getting in *MM* about the egotistical rock star. I really did read that on the tube and I thought, 'Fuckin' hell, if they could see me'.

**What sort of audience do you think you have?**

It's different from a Genesis audience, slightly older. Obviously in London you'll get a few diehard Genesis fans but it's not automatic. Last night was classic, I was singing "If Leaving Me Is Easy" and there's a couple in the front row and the bloke's got his arm round his girlfriend's shoulder almost as if he's saying, 'Darling, don't let that happen to us'. Sometimes I think: 'Oh God, not Barry Manilow, please'. I was saying to Mike [Rutherford] how good I thought his album was, and commiserating because everyone criticised it as being exactly what they expected. I thought that was the furthest thing from the truth, it was so atypical of Mike.

I'm fortunate in that I've done lots of things all the time, people don't know what to expect, but Mike and Tony are only associated with Genesis. In *MM*, Mike's last single was reviewed alongside Supertramp's crap single, really wimpish, everything people think we are, and that really angers me.

**But there must be fans of your solo material who ask why you still hang around with those creeps?**

I know, there are friends of mine who don't like Genesis albums. It's the



“Breadbin’ was in one song, what the fuck do you do with that?”

obvious question to ask – if your albums are more successful than Genesis albums, why hang around. The point is I do genuinely enjoy playing in the band.

The vibe for *Abacab* was great; we were back writing stuff as a group, which we do best. Left to our own devices we get something which is maybe too pompous. In *Abacab* we questioned a lot of what we were doing.

One of my stock answers to why I stay with Genesis is, 'I'll stay until we get it right'. There are still areas of the music I don't feel at home with. With Genesis, it's not secret, Tony knows I'm less enamoured with some of his stuff. It's weird because he's probably going to read this; he's changed an awful lot in the last year, he's a lot looser as a person. Tony and Mike come from public schools and they've been fighting that upbringing ever since.

I'm the singer in the group; I have to sing those lyrics. If someone's not a singer, they come in with lyrics that look good but aren't easy to sing. I've had all sort of things to cope with, I mean 'breadbin' was in one song, what the fuck do you do with that? One great thing about them singing on their own albums is they'll know what it's like.

**How long can it go on?**

I don't see why it can't go on for a while. We all get on better than we've ever done. We laugh a lot. There's a lot of humour in Genesis that is overlooked. Like for the last single we did a take-off of the Beatles "Twist And Shout" cover – the lettering was the same, we jumped off the wall in the same positions, we asked for the sleeve notes to be hammed up in the same pompous way as the original. Then someone in *NME* reviewed it who probably wasn't ALIVE when "Twist And Shout" was released, and took it seriously.

**Are you conscious of getting old, growing further from your audience?**

No, I still have the same 'youthful energy'. I get the same buzz out of what I'm doing.

**Do you think the rest of Genesis are jealous about your individual success?**

I don't think so. I'd like to think it's the doing of it, the playing the game rather than the winning. I feel... sorry is the wrong word, I guess frustrated for Tony and Mike that they can't be seen outside of what people think they are. If Mike's album had been out under another name, I'm sure it would have got better reviews.

I got *MM* the other day and read about Marillion, who were being compared to early Genesis. I felt really sorry for them, not only were they being criticised for copying, but they were being compared to a band no one likes.

**What would you like to happen next?**

I'd like to spend less time on the road with Genesis... because I'd like to spend more time on the road with my own stuff. There are other things I'd like to do but I feel everything I touch now, I'm going to ruin!

People said, when I took over John Martyn's album, it was all smoothed out. John got slagged off; there was this ultimate cult hero having been a guitarist on his own, who befriends Phil Collins and Phil Collins brings these other musicians in and, fuckin' hell, bang goes the artistic integrity.

John said to me, "I've been playing on my own for 12 years, I don't want to do it anymore, I want to play with a band," so it wasn't my decision.

I had the same thing with Frida from Abba. There was a classic letter in *Record Mirror* that said, "That fuckin' Phil Collins, he fucked up John Martyn, he fucked up Genesis, now he's gonna fuck up Frida."

Y'know, I feel I'll have to be really careful about what I do next... I'll probably fuck up the Nolans. *Paul Colbert* ●

# “I’ve never had any ambition”

**ROBERT SMITH**  
discusses a momentous year for **THE CURE** in the wake of *Pornography*. Do the band matter? Does anything? “We get hundreds of letters from people about what we’ve done,” he says. “It’s like a soundtrack to their crises.”

— MELODY MAKER DECEMBER 18 —

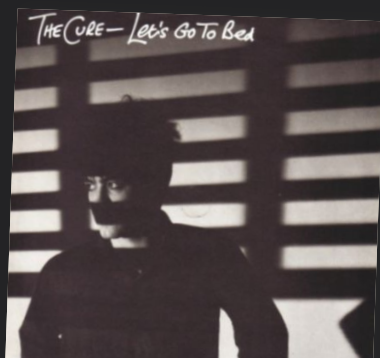
**W**HATEVER HAPPENED TO The Cure? Hardly a question that keeps me awake at nights, but part-time Banshee Robert Smith sits in the lounge of the Kensington Hilton, sips his ice-cool Perrier and worries whether it’s time to write his baby’s obituary?

“Do The Cure really exist any more? I’ve been pondering that question myself. See, as I wrote 90 per cent of the *Pornography* album, I couldn’t really leave because it wouldn’t have been The Cure without me. But it has got to a point where I really don’t fancy working in that format again.

“Being involved, for four years, I was getting really sick of being surrounded by the same people all the time—I just felt really stale, so I took a break and, in that sense, The Cure doesn’t exist, really. But, I mean, the name’s still there—though, to me, that’s unimportant.

“People keep saying, ‘You mustn’t break up’, because it’s become like an institution—that almost gives me an incentive to pack it in anyway. I think it’s really awful seeing bands just disintegrate slowly in a stupid way, »

EBET ROBERTS / GETTY





June 1982: Robert Smith on stage with The Cure in Europe during the Pornography Tour, which concluded with bassist Simon Gallup quitting

don't you? Whatever happens, it won't be me, Laurence and Simon together as The Cure any more. I know that. As to what will happen, I've no idea."

I wonder if you ever have any idea what The Cure were doing?

"I don't know. The last interview I did, earlier this year, was with a really avid Cure fan and he had this idea of what The Cure was like that was completely alien to me. When it first started, I didn't have any objectives or ulterior motives other than not to have to work, but, obviously, as time goes on, you develop certain ideas and follow them through in the hope that you're gonna mean something to a certain section of the population.

"I don't think we ever really achieved it. If I'd watched The Cure or bought Cure records, I know, being honest, that they wouldn't mean what I was hoping they would mean..."

Which was?

"It's impossible to articulate really, otherwise I could just have written a book called The Cure. It sounds really horrible, but it's more than just words and music. I've always aspired to be like the way certain bands affected me – Joy Division, New Order, the Banshees, Echo And The Bunnymen; there's a very few – but I think they've kept a sort of intensity.

"That's what I was always striving for with The Cure, but there were far too many things working against it, really; things of our own making like the anti-image and all that rubbish. Instead of trying to get rid of that at an early stage, we flirted with it so there was nothing to latch onto.

“It doesn't matter if we all die' – to me that's a really funny line”

bought stuff that we were producing, then that was reason enough for releasing the records.

"There was never any idea of covering a certain section of the market or broadening out and appealing to more people, which we could have done. I mean, over the years, a lot of record company people advised us what we should do, but I always thought that if it was forced, then it wouldn't be worth it, because I've never had any ambition to aspire to these heights of fame or of meaning something.

"I've never been a public face; I wouldn't ever dare to presume that people hold me up as some kind of figure, and if they did, they'd be really stupid because I'm too horrible to be a model for anybody – I

know that; I'm not just being self-effacing. I would never hold anyone living to be a model; I'd never aspire to be like anybody that's alive, because everybody's flawed – you can't gear your life around presenting yourself as something to be consumed by the people.

"I mean, people like Culture Club do – for a brief period of time, everything they do is geared to public consumption – but going back to what we were trying to achieve, we were trying to reach beyond that facade, beyond current fashion to actually do something that was gonna last."

What virtues and values should such lasting music exhibit?

"I can't say... I can't say why I like a piece of music. It's impossible to verbalise. Everything we've done has been instinctive – that's probably the main reason why it's been so muddled or, as you say, woolly – because it's all instinctive, because you never... well, hardly ever have pure insight. There's really no answers or solutions to anything we've done."

That's a cop-out. Your music hardly inspires frivolity – it's presented in such a manner as to suggest significance.

"But the first line on *Pornography* is 'It doesn't matter if we all die'. There could be nothing more throwaway than that. To me that's a really funny line..."

## Ever-darkening shadows

**MM MAY 1** Smith enters the abyss on album four.

“SIT ALWAYS like this?” shrieks Robert Smith in a song called “The Hanging Garden”, as though gagging as the realisation dawns on him. And indeed, this may prove to be his personal damnation.

The Cure's depressivist tendencies have become a sort of standing joke.

“Miserable buggers,” muttered one MM staffer as *Pornography* made its debut on the office turntable. I found last year's *Faith* impressive in places, managing to summon a certain amount of majesty to lift it out of its self-imposed parameters of gloom and almost uniformly funereal tempos.

This time around, I'm hard pressed to find any redeeming features. It was possible to view *Faith* as The Cure working single-mindedly to stake out some territory of their own, refusing to be hurried by new romantics or cult vendors of any stripe. And at least they threw in “Doubt” and “Primary” as breaks in the clouds.

But *Pornography* refuses to move on, replaces self-sufficiency with a refusal to peek through the curtains into the street once in a while, and finally plummets like a leaking submarine into depths unfathomable by man. Frankly it's unhealthy.

There's precious little melody to speak of. The opener, “One Hundred Years”, is perhaps the least depressing track and is merely intensely gloomy. Drummer Lol Tolhurst is aided by a busy drum machine

as he deploys mighty drumbeats alongside menacing synths and Smith's already desperate vocal.

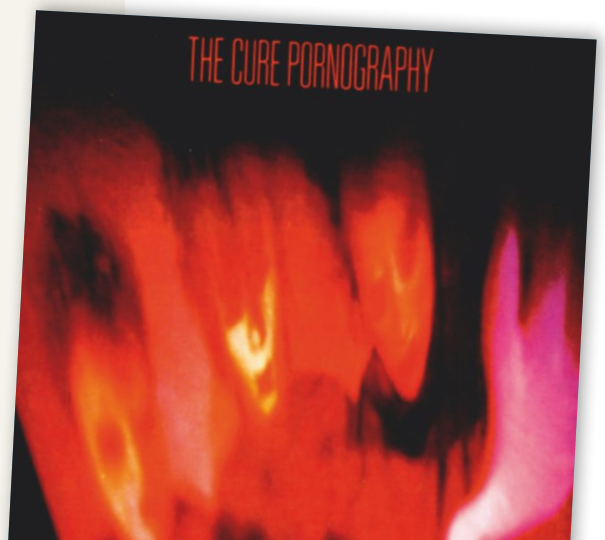
In isolation it's not a bad song. Taken as part of *Pornography* as a whole, it's merely another shred of incriminating evidence. The first line sung on the album is something like “Does it matter if we all die...” And then there's “waiting for the death blow”.

It's downhill all the way, into ever-darkening shadows. It's like a ghastly, inexorable submission. For The Cure (to whom all songs are credited), relationships are merely “creatures kissing in the rain”, great icebergs chipping shards of ice off each other as they pass in the smallest, darkest hours of the night.

Occasionally Robert Smith checks his watch to make sure the Reaper's on time.

“I will never be clean again,” Smith sings in “The Figurehead”, before the group decline inevitably to the dark shriekings of “Cold”, then into the hideous wailing stasis of “Pornography” itself. Finally it's as silent as the grave, passing through chilly marbled archways to the final rendezvous with the cold comfort of the slab. Not this time, thanks.

Adam Sweeting





Or a pretentious one?

"No, it's not pretentious—I really think that! I'm as convinced by arguments for the end of the world as I am for saving whales—it's a completely theoretical area. If I saw someone jumping on a baby, I'd probably go over and try to stop them, but at the same time, I can sit here and glibly say that it doesn't matter if we all die. It's a paradox that's inherent in everyone.

"It's not sixth-form angst or immaturity—it's unimportant whether you take it seriously or not. It's a paradox in that what we were doing, to most people, seemed really doomy and depressing and yet, as a band, we were almost absurdly happy.

"I know it's strange, but people are interested in us the same way as I'm interested in the confusion of other people. I mean, someone can stand up and say, 'I believe in God', someone else can say, 'I don't believe in God', and someone else can say, 'I don't really know,' and all three statements are the same.

Some people are attracted to belief, some people are attracted to the opposite and some are attracted to the centre, the middle-ground which is, I suppose, where we stood—not in relation to religion but in general. I don't know whether we were ever successful in conveying that."

Is that what motivates you to continue?

"I don't know... I've never really considered that I've had anything of importance to say to people on record and yet I sometimes underestimate The Cure's achievements—as I'm doing now—because we get hundreds of letters from people that are very concerned about what we've done; it's almost been like a soundtrack to their crises."

Exactly, The Cure were not a Cure; they were an ailment, pandering to the emotional afflictions of their listeners.

"No, it's not like being an incentive for someone to wallow in their own despair. You're criticising us for not uplifting people, but I'd far rather not attempt to write music like that, because I know I'd fail. I can't even inspire myself half the time, so I don't see how I could hope to inspire other people. It's impossible for me to justify what we've done, because it only really mirrored our experiences, it never really sought to do anything more than that.

"And, as to whether people should be interested in somebody else's problems or revelations, that's debatable, but it's apparent that they are, because people buy records and books. People are interested in what other people think—that's just a trait of human nature.

"I see the absurdity of making records more than most people and what's been considered my apathy hasn't really come from despair at what The Cure's been doing so much as despair at the futility of the whole thing."

Nevertheless, Fiction have just released a new single, "Let's Go To Bed", perversely credited to The Cure but really recorded by Robert and Laurence Tolhurst as a disco experiment; Laurence has packed in drumming and is learning keyboards; Simon Gallup has formed his own band and Robert has recorded a "pop" single with Steve Severin due for spring release. Meanwhile, the guitarist relaxes out of the limelight on

# Whimpering and wallowing

MM MAY 8 A pedestrian Cure pander to the doe-eyed fangirls.

**T**HE CLOSEST THE Cure ever come to touching a core of humanity beneath their fraught facade is, unwittingly, through the inherent, though probably accidental, humour that mocks their very name. Seldom have a modern showband saddled themselves with such a self-consciously stark and inappropriate misnomer; seldom have three young people in pursuit of a clutch of aimless atmospheres achieved so little with such panache.

The Cure—that's a joke. More like a symptom. Where contemporaries like The Clash play-act toy soldiers, point fingers, stick their necks out and look stupid advocating simplistic slogans, where Killing Joke share and shoulder despondency, offer no glib solutions but rally round nonetheless in blind, bitter anger, The Cure are content to whimper slightly and wallow, mirroring the meaningless mess of our lives—are, to be over-generously

positive, perfectly pedestrian. Here, in the Hammersmith Odeon, they'd dearly like to make an art-rock crossover and abdicate into stylish gothic performers à la big buddies the Banshees. But the place is too vast, the sound too thin and spineless, the light show too spartan and the songs themselves too intimately miserable to communicate anything other than boredom.

The audience, strangely, gets off on this image of three updated Al Stewart bed-sitter boy students squeezing their pimples and translating Camus prose into Shelleyan stanzas. Titles like "The Drowning Man" evoke O-level angst, melancholy musings like "Siamese Twins" and "The Funeral Party" beg mothering instincts from doe-eyed girl fans. The Cure need a good clip round the ear.

Not extreme enough to stretch to exorcism nor even to elicit widespread sympathy, they only ever urge participation when they wrap their moaning in Bunnymen melodrama and a half-decent tune and

churn out their biggest hit, "Primary".

As I sneaked out without so much as the slightest twinge of guilt or regret, Robert Smith was still demanding of no one in particular: "Is It Always Like This?" I wish some wag had shouted back: "It needn't be!"

What The Cure ignore in their stifling, senselessly cyclical self-examination is that rock music may never provide effective sociological answers, but through joy, release and a rare sense of community, it may act as preventive medicine.

And, as any doctor of words, tunes or potions will eagerly testify, prevention almost always pre-empts The Cure. *Steve Sutherland*



tour with the Banshees as a substitute for John McGeogh. Rumours abound that the replacement may prove permanent. How 'bout it, Robert?

"As far as I'm concerned, I'm just doing this tour. Never believe rumours."

What about as far as the Banshees are concerned?

"I don't know, we haven't really discussed it that much. I thought it would be very presumptuous to say something like that, but... well,

once a Banshee, always a Banshee. I don't think I've said anything in this interview, have I? It's all so ambiguous. It just perpetrates the wanton obscurity."

I wonder how much more you know than you're letting on?

"Well, that's the secret, isn't it?"

Ta. You've managed to not clear up the Cure and the Banshees mysteries quite successfully.

"Yeah. It's just a state of flux at the moment. As far as I'm concerned there's nothing clear-cut to say except... I know what I want for Christmas, *Melody Maker* readers—a hologram kit." *Steve Sutherland* •

“We were going to end up like the rest of them”

As it was in the beginning, so it is at the end of **THE JAM**.

Rather than fade away, Paul Weller wants to go out before the band becomes routine.

“Where do you end up? You end up like arseholes,” he says. Perhaps a new “English soul label”, might point the way ahead...

— **MELODY MAKER** NOVEMBER 6 —

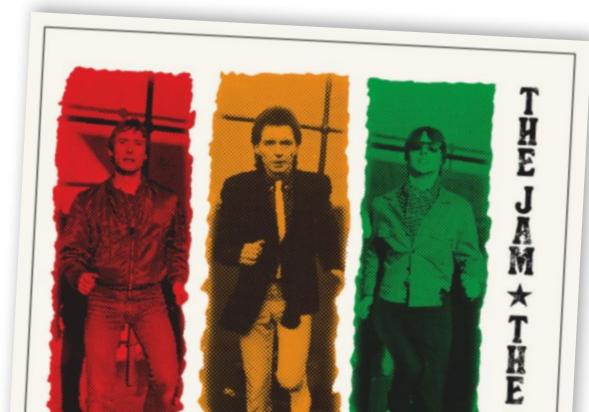
**N**OW WE'RE NO longer as thick as thieves... Last week, after 15 singles, six albums and innumerable tours both here and abroad, Paul Weller split The Jam. Arguably Britain's most successful group during the last few years, certainly one of the most talented, the announcement was premature.

Although Weller had come to his decision last June, he had originally intended to broadcast the news from the forthcoming TV special *The Jam are doing with Channel 4's The Tube*. Rumours, however, started circulating and Weller thought it better to come clean immediately.

Just why he's doing it is another matter. To most people, breaking up a band at the height of its career must seem incomprehensible; but then Weller, unlike so many of his contemporaries, is someone who actually believes in standing by his word, whatever the consequences.

It's exactly this belief in qualities like dignity and honour that has led to his portrayal in certain quarters as a dour, paranoid, miserable songwriter, incapable of raising a smile. What these people fail to comprehend is the enormous faith Weller has in music as a positive force and his breaking up of the group is perhaps the »

ERICA ECHENBERG / GETTY





Paul Weller on the roof of AIR Studios on Oxford Street, central London, while recording The Jam's sixth and final album, *The Gift*



Not fade away:  
The Jam at the  
Aragon Ballroom in  
Chicago, May 1982



finest example of this belief. Feeling threatened by complacency, Weller would rather give it all up now than cheapen in any way the reputation The Jam have built up over the years.

How many others would do the same?

We met Monday night at Polygram Studios, where Paul, with producer Pete Wilson, was putting the final touches to The Jam's final single, "Beat Surrender". This will be followed by a live album containing about 14 songs, and the band's farewell concerts. Already the news was out as papers reported that "close friends" of the group had spilled the beans.

The Jam never knew they had so many "close friends". We adjourned to a favourite Italian restaurant and talked about the split; Weller calm, but anxious to get his view across. Only thing was my tape recorder malfunctioned and everything said went to waste.

After a bit of characteristic moaning ("Call yourself a fucking journalist?"), we met the next morning in a local cafe, Weller in a cool, relaxed manner, hip to talking. Here then is Paul Weller's version of The Jam's beat surrender.

**Paul Weller:** The main thing is that security thing I was going on about last night. It really dawned on me how secure the situation was, the fact that we could go on for the next 10 years making records, getting hit records, getting bigger and bigger and all the rest of it. That frightened me, because I realised we were going to end up the same like the rest of them.

**Surely one of the perks of success is the security it brings with it?**

I don't think that. I think you've got to build it up and try and be successful otherwise there's no point in doing it. But I don't know about being secure, because I think if you want to be secure you shouldn't bother getting into music. That's the whole reason why I got into it. If I wanted to be secure I would have got another job; I would have been a bank clerk or something. Not knocking it, but that's not the reason why you get into it.

You get into music—well I did anyway—because it's different and I just thought that's where we are. The fact that for the next 10 years it would be an endless cycle of tours, LPs, tours, LP, singles and where do you end up? You end up like arseholes.

**I remember you saying that you were quite disappointed with *The Gift*. Did the situation start round about then?**

Well, it's not just that. I don't think we can take it any further, know what I mean? If it went on any further I think, for me, it would just be for the sake of it. I don't think we could achieve any more musically, which is the most important thing as far as I'm concerned. If we carried on just for the sake of

it, it would just bring our name down.

**In your time together, what do you feel The Jam have achieved?**

It's like I said last night, it's going to sound pompous anyway, but I think that we've shown that you can be successful, hugely successful, which we are, do that and still remain decent, still remain caring and honest. I think if we've done nothing else we've done that, and I think we're the first group to ever do that. I don't think anyone has stuck to their principles more than we have apart from smaller groups, the independent groups, but I mean for someone to be commercially popular as we have, I think it's the first time.

**Are you talking about the standard of star lifestyle and The Jam's avoidance of it?**

Yeah, exactly. We could do all those things if we wanted to. We could have massive great houses in the country, flash cars and everything, but it's not just the material things. It's the whole mentality, it's believing in it the way some people do. All these stars, all these wankers, you still get them now and we've never bowed down to that. We've always tried to remain what we are, so I think it's important to keep it as it is. If we had carried on, the whole thing would have dissipated just from the sheer fact of carrying on; it's got to lose its impetus sometime.

**Do Bruce and Rick feel the same way?**

I think so, yeah. I think they do. I'm probably a bit more dogmatic, but I still think they do believe in it, actually.

**You were talking last night about the strain of being the songwriter, main songwriter.**

Well, not so much that, just that I think there's been so much shit written about me, which is all right for your ego but I don't think it really helps towards you as a songwriter, because sometimes I can stand outside of myself and see this Paul Weller because he's been built up as such an established songwriter or whatever he is.

I want to get back to just sitting down and writing songs because I enjoy it, not because I've got any standards to live up to. There's loads of different facets of why I want to do this, but the main one, the one I really want to get across, is that I think we've achieved all we can.

**When did you stop enjoying songwriting?**

I think it's when you do constant LPs and you've got to get 12 songs, 14 songs, and it goes on year after year like that. It's not particularly the pressure, it's just boring.

**Was there any particular LP you wrote because you had to?**

I think *Setting Sons* was when I started doing that, it's just a drag. *The Gift* was a bit more enjoyable because we had that year when we didn't do an LP, so that was a bit better. But also it was the thought of the next 10 years, keep doing that for the next 10 years. I just want to get off the roundabout for a while.

**Over the years you've branched out a lot musically into soul and jazz, for instance.**

In tastes, yeah.

**Do you feel you could have pulled The Jam into those areas?**

I'm not sure, really. I think you could have done, but then it would stop becoming a group, because it would become like a vehicle for my whims. Any group that's only got one songwriter is always going to be pushed in the direction of whatever songs he's writing. And that's fair enough.

**But that's what would have happened with The Jam if you had pursued that.**

Yeah, but I think we would lose something if we did that anyway. I think if you're going to do something like that, then the whole group has got to be into that, it's all got to experience it and feel it. I'm not sure if it works otherwise.

**There's a lot of these really.**

I don't like the thought of imagining The Jam when we're 30 and old and embarrassing. All those things we've done and stood for. Like I said last night, I think we've always stood for youth. Those first punk bands, all the others always used to lie about their age and we were the only band that never had to because we actually were young, and I always thought that came across.

Even now, most of the new groups that are coming up are in their early twenties, and I think a lot of people forget that I'm only 24. I'm not exactly a teenager, but I'm still only a young man (*laughs*), only a boy really, but I think people forgot that because we started so young.

That's the other thing, the thought of being secure at 24; it just seems to be going against my sort of principle. It's like having a secure job or something. I think if you're going to be a writer, and I take myself quite seriously as a writer, I don't think you can afford to be in that situation. A certain amount is nice, like financial security, because I'd hate to have to worry about where my next wage is coming from. That would be a drag.

**A lot of people are probably wondering how you can give up such a goldmine, like The Jam.**

Well, that's it. Some other people have said that, but they've obviously missed the point or otherwise thought that I never really meant all the things I said.

It's like when people say that you're only in it for the money. If I wanted to

fucking carry on just for the money then I'd just carry on doing this for the next 10 years. But I want to be a good writer and I don't want to do it just for the sake of it. Also I want to enjoy some of it. I haven't had the chance to enjoy the last six years. I've never really had the chance to sit back and think about what I've achieved and what I've done.

All the time I'm thinking and looking for songs for the next LP or something for the next tour. I'm not whining about it, but if people want to know the situation, well that's it.

**But if you stay in music that's how it's always going to be.**

Not really, because I don't think you have the same amount of pressure. I don't think anyone really understands the enormous amount of pressure being in a really big group. If some of them experienced it for a while, then I think a lot of them would change their minds, be less cynical about it. Especially if you're a writer. If things are going well and everybody likes it, then you get the perks, but if people don't like it, then you get all the stick.

**Shouldn't matter if you believe in it yourself.**

You can't, because however much you believe in it yourself, things like that always get to you somehow or other in a pressurising way.

**What kind of relationship was it with Rick and Bruce?**

We used to hang about with each other, go out with each other socially. But obviously as you get older and you're meeting girlfriends and that, you split up and go separate ways. So that's just life, isn't it? But I think you tend to grow apart a little bit.

**As you grow older?**

Yeah, but if you live separate lives, then you're closer. But we've always got on really well, probably better as we've got older, actually.

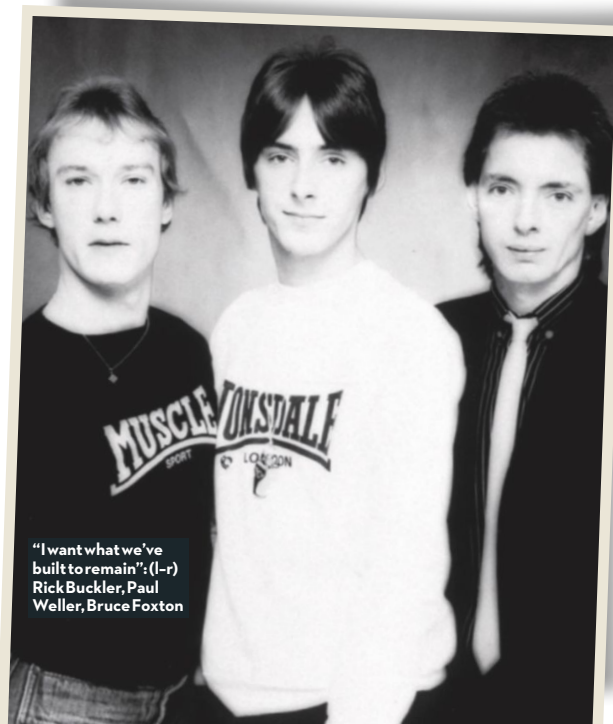
**When did you actually decide to split the band?**

I suppose about a year ago or so it's been on my mind. I actually made my mind up when we got back from Japan, I suppose. But the other thing

I want to get across is that I wanted to break the band up because I do care about it. It's not because I want to embark on a solo venture and I don't need Bruce or Rick or any of that old bollocks – like Bryan Ferry or Rod Stewart shit – it's just that I do care about the band. I want it – I'm not so much talking about immortality – but I want what we've build to remain.

Like you once said to me that you should lead by example; well, that's how I think The Jam should be. Like a guideline, an example for young groups coming up. I don't think there were any in the '70s; there were only people like the Pistols and The Clash.

“We've shown that you can be successful and remain decent”



“I want what we've built to remain”: (l-r) Rick Buckler, Paul Weller, Bruce Foxton

**What was the reaction of most people when you told them?**

Well, Rick and Bruce were a bit shocked really, but I think after a while they'll see that what I'm saying is right. It's all right saying that we can carry on, do another LP or a single, but the longer that goes on, the more that security thing gets you, because the longer it goes on, the more you worry about it ever stopping and it gets worse and worse. Does you in – does me in, anyway – and its unnecessary pressure, an unnecessary situation to be in.

So they obviously weren't particularly happy about it. I think everyone was a bit shocked. That's because we've become such an institution, such an establishment. What's the point of doing another LP for the sake of it? It's like The Clash, they'll be around in 20 years' time, they'll be celebrating their birthdays. They will. »



WEMBLEY ARENA  
LONDON  
**LIVE!**  
DECEMBER 1

December 3, 1982:  
a fan invades the  
stage during night  
three of The Jam's  
five-date residency  
at Wembley Arena

## Going down with all guns blazing

**NME DEC 11** Backed by horns and keyboards, The Jam bid farewell.

**A**T LAST, A rock career which ends with a bang, instead of a whimper, a squabble or an overdose.

The manner of The Jam's leaving carries a stamp of style and self-discipline, of honesty and suss—just the type of dignified exit, in fact, that their career deserves. It's so often spouted, this ideal of quitting at the top (and The Jam are, quite obviously, still at the top) yet it's so rarely done. Assuming Weller's got the resolve to make this break stay clean, then it seems he's chosen the best moment. I'm watching them go with a nice balance of feelings: half regret and half relief. Just right.

On the first night of the final five shows at Wembley, they start with "Start!" and the crowd barriers are rushed, and the event soars to a level of instant intensity from which it never descends until the very end. How do they hope to maintain such impact, such energy, over all the farewell dates to come? I can only wonder. What's clearest, though, is that the fact of The Jam playing Wembley means this thing has got as big as it should ever be allowed to get. While The Clash might make something valid of stadium rock, The Jam demand something more direct and personal. They don't make mega-band music; they're not about grand gestures and heroic poses, dimly viewed from a seat two miles away.

It's only the unique nature of this event, with all its attendant emotional charge, that saves the band's onstage graft from getting lost in space. And then "It's Too Bad" ("It's too bad we had to break up"). And then "Beat Surrender": not surrender in the sense of defeat, but as in giving yourself, as a positive

act, up to a rushing force of excitement. "Away From The Numbers" next, and "Ghosts", which momentarily lets the pressure drop from premature suffocation point. "In The Crowd", "Boy About Town", "So Sad About Us"...

It's not an obvious set, since the numbers played tonight don't include several Jam classics ("Going Underground", for instance). But it's good to hear a massive splash of the *All Mod Cons* album: when they go into its first two tracks you suddenly recall what a revelation that vital third LP turned out to be at the time.

From the title cut, with huge cheers for Foxtan's urgent little bass run, it's straight into "To Be Someone", an early stirring of Paul's broader writing abilities.

And later there's "Mr Clean"—maybe more predictable, lyrically, but still boasting one of his finer guitar lines, and a dash of melody to sweeten the bitterness. In-between: "Great Depression", "Smithers-Jones". Like Rick Buckler, Bruce might be facing the group's retirement with some reluctance; but both of them play with blatant determination to go down with all musical guns blazing—almost as

though they've resolved to cram another eight years' energy into as many single concerts.

"Precious" expands the sound—the trio are augmented by the full range of keyboard players, horns and back-up vocalists. "Move On Up", the Curtis Mayfield standard, gives an object lesson in how to do a soul cover properly: not an exercise in forging some other man's emotion, but a feat of capturing some spark of inspiration in the original, and matching its rhythm to your own pulse.

Vocal cords take a rest for the instrumental "Circus", but the *Mod Cons* era blasts back with "Tube Station" and "David Watts". "Pretty Green" and "Trans Global Express" send the set screeching up to a brink: the band withdraws, and there's a long, long wait for an encore.

Once they're back and we've had "A Town Called Malice" revisited, history is turned full circle with The Jam's first-ever release—"In The City". It's one of the few explicit reminders Weller makes in respect of this special occasion. He'd come on at the evening's start with a clipped "Hello and welcome to the Red Cow", and signs off with typically awkward gruffness: "Don't wanna get too sentimental or anything... but thanks for the last six years." Hardly anything else was said. But much, much more was felt...  
...including the beginning of a small lump in this spectator's throat as they took their final bow after the closing "Gift".  
"Think of the future and make it grow." Paul Du Noyer

**History is turned full circle with their first release, "In The City"**



And all these fucking groups, they're disgusting, a lot of them; I think they're obscene. What sickens me most of all is that I used to believe in a lot of them. I believed in all the stuff they used to come out with. Now you find out that they're a load of frauds, just a load of art-school wankers who want to be rock stars and that's all they'll ever be. I'm no part of that at all. I don't want to know about any of that. That's why I think The Jam have always been different. That's why I think ending it now will keep that. Like the sharp people will be able to perceive that and understand it.

**Over the years you've really grown disgusted at that rock-star trip...**

I really want to bring it down. I'd like to really do away with it or help towards pulling it down. A lot of the groups in the last few years – starting with PiL, I suppose – have said about doing that, but they all turn out the same. Either they end up doped out of their heads or otherwise, because their companies aren't selling records, they have to go out on the road and prostitute themselves.

No, that's a stupid thing to say, cut that one out, but they have to go out on the road in the end, so they all end up doing it. Like you see these groups, groups that say they really hate the rock scene and rock culture, but you see them in clubs out of their brains. Could be 1967 – all that's different is that their hair is a bit shorter.

**You went through that, though.**

Of course, and maybe I'm being a bit self-righteous about it because I've finished with it, but I think I'm right really and I regret it. I regret being so predictable to even get into it.

Mainly I'm just bored with it because I just find it so square and straight. These people must think they're really hip and they're not. It's like the whole rock myth about rock standing for rebellion, the *NME* mentality. How long has it been going on? What is it? Thirty years! It's sick, really sick, and they're still putting people up. Every now and then you get a new face who becomes The New Face Of Rock Rebellion... Ah, it just pisses me off.

**Rock music has no power, then?**

Nah, it's totally redundant. It's just a big empty fucking vehicle for nothing. It's like the emperor's new clothes – it's got nothing at all.

**But The Jam stood for it!**

Yeah, I suppose we have done so in our time. I think we all used to believe in rock when we started off. Like punk rock. Over the last few years I've realised what a lot of shit it all is. All this rebel stance.

**You still believe in music, presumably?**

Yeah, I still believe in music. I think you have to hit people with feelings. It's like when I think of all the greatest songs, my favourite songs – and most people are the same – they're always these melancholy ballads, a Smokey Robinson song or The Four Tops, and you realise it's because they haven't got any politics at all, you don't even think about the lyrics. I don't suppose that half the people know the lyrics to these songs, it's just the feeling that gets you. I think that's missing in music at the moment and that's what I'd like to set about doing. Try and bring that back.

**You're really turning your back on a lot of previous work here. I mean your – crass description, I know – political songs.**

I don't think I am, really. They're not political lyrics, anyway.



“Rock's like the emperor's new clothes – it's got nothing at all”

**Come on. Something like “Trans Global Express”...**

But I think that's got a great feeling about it, anyway. I'm not going to go out and start writing songs about tractors and chocolate (*grins*). I still want to write intelligent lyrics, but first and foremost you have to put feel first, otherwise it doesn't mean anything. You might as well write a book. If you're playing music, then do it. I think we've always done that, anyway. Our songs have always had really good melodies; it's never been a great barrage of political slogans, they've always been songs as well. Even if you did take away some of the heavy lyrics, put 'I love you' lyrics in, they would still sound really good as pop songs.

**Last night you mentioned being in a straitjacket, or The Jam being in one.**

Well, getting categorised is another thing, as a “political” writer. I think it's better if you try and appeal to people's emotions, get the better of their emotions.

**Sounds as if you're beginning to mellow...**

I don't feel mellow about it at all. I feel just as angry; in fact more angry about a lot of things I'm talking about. All those poxy groups – I'm still more angry about that than ever before. It's just that I find the whole Angry Young Man stance... How long can it go on for? Could I still do it when I'm 32?

Look at The Who. Can you think of anything more obscene? Or the Stones, who are even more obscene. Look at Jagger – he still believes he's a rebel, and what's even worse is all them young people do as well. People still believe they're rebels.

I don't ever want to be a part of that, because I believed in it. Everything I've ever said in songs I've always meant, and I think that should stand. I don't ever want to see that watered down, don't want to make a mockery of everything. I think if you carry on long enough, that's what happens. It's inevitable, really.

**Seems a shame it's got to end at Wembley Arena of all places.**

Well, the thing was as we're doing our last major concerts we want as many people as possible to get and see us. I don't really like Wembley, but I can see it from that point of view.

**Looking back, The Jam have probably had the most loyal following of any group over the last few years.**

Yeah, and this is us being loyal to them. I don't honestly feel that I could carry on any further with it and still put the same 100 per cent into it as I have done, because there are too many doubts about it after a while. Once you start getting a few doubts, I think you have to really look at things. If you've got any guts, you should look at things and think about them.

See, the thing is, anyone who really is into us and understands us will understand what I'm saying. Because I know that most of our fans, our real fans wouldn't want us to carry on either, watch us become embarrassing.

**What about your other projects like the Respond and Jamming record companies?**

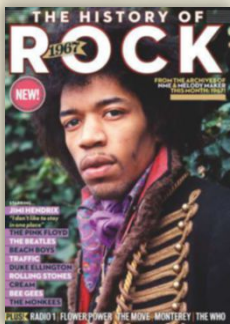
Yeah, I really want to build Respond up. I want to try and make it into an English soul label. I want to develop that English soul thing. It's not a particularly original idea. Loads of people have tried to do it, but I want to try it. And I don't mean a Tamla Motown, not a “Town Called Malice”-type thing, but an '80s version. I think it is possible. *Paolo Hewitt* •



February 18, 1982: Paul Weller at Polygram Studios in London, where he has been putting the final touches to *The Gift*

# THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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## THE HISTORY OF ROCK

1981

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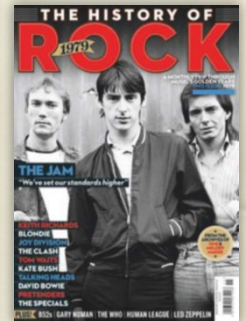
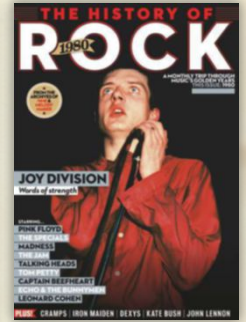
A MONTHLY TRIP  
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GOLDEN YEARS  
THIS ISSUE: 1981

**SPRINGSTEEN**  
"I haven't changed"

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- KRAFTWERK
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# Readers' letters

**NME/MM JUL-DEC** Bauhausers bite back, Phil Collins flips, heavy metallers grovel...

## 'Haus of fun

I still can't see the 'meaning' behind the Sutherland interview with Bauhaus either! It's "journalists" like Steve Sutherland who have continually knocked Bauhaus that "Ziggy" was brought out for. Steve kept insulting Bauhaus, calling them Bowie copies etc, so they turned round and did the thing least expected of them - reincarnated Ziggy. So what, there's no big thing about it, and true fans are glad that Bauhaus are getting to be recognised as a major musical force in Britain today. If people like S.S. continue to bite for the bait, then Bauhaus will carry on throwing it - they are just proving they don't need this sort of unnecessary abuse.

**GILL, Aldershot Road, Fleet, Hants (MM, Nov 13)**

To set the record straight, the point of the Lyceum interview was to amplify (not simplify) and therefore make abundantly clear, the absurdity of the interview situation. Furthermore, the retort "fuck off" may have been used in answer to one of Sutherland's pathetic 'questions', but may I point out that it was NOT issued from my lips. Not, my style at all Steve. (Put THAT down to the heat of the moment and someone else's temperament.) Predictably, the final write-up turned out to be the inaccurate, scrambled reportage that usually succeeds the event, and, in the case of the Lyceum, at least it was an event.

**DAVID JAY, BAUHAUS (MM Nov 13)**



## Genesis to MM: fuck off

Dear Adam Sweeting, I read with interest your short reply to the recent letter praising Elvis Costello's concert. I would like to point out however that Elvis did not support us on any American tour, and merely played with

Blondie and ourselves on a varied and interesting bill in Philadelphia. Knowing people close to and in the Costello camp, I would like to point out that he himself did not consider this combination 'debasement'. So why don't you fuck off and get out of our fucking backs, leaving your tasteless digs at the door?

**Yours, PHIL COLLINS, Genesis (MM Oct 23)**

*Adam Sweeting replies: Dear Phil, bollocks.*

## Reader to Genesis: you're great

I sympathise with Phil Collins (Backlash, October 23), but he can console himself in the fact that there are many people of all ages and backgrounds who appreciate the music of Genesis (anyone who went to Milton Keynes will realise this), including most of the musical critics in this country.

The only question needing to be answered is this: why do critics persistently build up talented musicians, only to knock them down again once those musicians have established themselves?

Perhaps the answer is that the music press can only flourish (i.e. sell a lot of papers, thus making more money for its critics) if the popular music scene is constantly changing. Or perhaps it really is their personal opinion (to which they are entitled) which I respect.

But is it too much to ask of your critics to show a similar respect to the personal opinions of myself and thousands who like Genesis in this country, and not to stoop to the pathetically disgusting sort of abuse handed out in reference to Elvis Costello the other week? The answer, I fear, may be yes. Even if your critics don't like them, they must surely admit that they are very good indeed.

And if they admit that, they may as well stop abusing them. If, however, they do not, then they must be fools/liars not to realise/admit their worth. Take your pick.

**A.G. LOVER, address supplied (MM, Nov 6)**

## More heavy metal please

I have been reading your mag for six weeks, I don't really know why I chose it when I decided I needed a music paper to keep me up to date, but it was probably because everyone around me read

*Sounds* and *NME*, and I fancied something different.

EXCELLENT! I really do believe that your mag is the best on the market. Congratulations on producing a music paper with a touch of class. But PLEASE can we see a bit more on Heavy Metal?

**GORDON LIVESEY, Chaffers Mead, Ashted, Surrey (MM Dec 12)**

*You obviously received the cheque. If I send another one, will you stop blathering on about heavy metal?*

## 1963 writes...

I'm a 17-year-old girl, who would love to correspond with boys and girls in England. I like swimming, listening to music, dancing, going to movies and writing letters. I'll answer every letter (if I get any).

**JAANA KANANEN, Odensalavagen, 19500 Marsta, Sweden (MM, Dec 12)**

## No surrender!

Well, The Jam may have split but they haven't broken "the solid bond in our hearts".

What The Jam have done for British music cannot be put into words, but they provided for us Jam fans honesty, passion, energy and, above all else, symbolised youth and new ideas. The Jam were one of the few bands who could generate the atmosphere of shared motivation at gigs and on record. They provided us with 'Trans-Global Unity'. If The Jam didn't get through to you then you couldn't have been listening!

**EMY, The Ace Face of Stirling! (NME Nov 20)**

## Channel 4 pleases hippy

May I be the first to, like, congratulate the guys at Channel 4 for, like, screening the film *Woodstock*. It really, like, blew my cosmic mind, like conveying the whole spirit of peace in a, like, really vivid way, maannn.

Sometimes we get like, really bad reception in the tepee, but this time we just managed to immerse ourselves in the whole vibrant scene. Thanks a lot maaaaannnn.

**FRANCIS COSMOS, The Commune, Himalayas (NME Nov 27)**

## What's this Channel 4 all about? Is it any good?

Apparently we in this part of the world won't be able to get it until late 1984. Am I missing anything?

**The Dyin' Scotsman, Oban (NME Nov 27)**



# 1982

MONTH BY MONTH



## Coming next... in 1983!

**S**O THAT WAS 1982. C'mon boys. C'mon girls... Because that's not it from our reporters on the beat. The staffers of *NME* and *Melody Maker* enjoyed unrivalled access to the biggest stars of the time, and cultivated a feel for the rhythms of a diversifying scene; as the times changed, so did they. While in pursuit of the truth, they unearthed stories that have come to assume mythical status.

That's very much the territory of this monthly magazine. Each month, *The History Of Rock* will be bringing you verbatim reports from the pivotal events in pop culture, one year a month, one year at a time. Next up, 1983!

### DAVID BOWIE

**AFTER A BREAK** for film commitments, the artist returns to reconsider his past work, and – at 36 – what the future holds. “I don’t think I would want to continue performing anymore if I didn’t think I could do something hopeful and helpful with my music, both for myself and my audience.”

### NEW ORDER

**NO LONGER ARE** New Order the refugees from Joy Division. A conversion to dance culture and immersion in the Puerto Rican nightlife of New York has set them off on a new tack. A single, “Blue Monday” is its impressive fruit. But can they take their fans with them? “Preaching to the converted isn’t any fun is it?”

### THE SMITHS

**MORRISSEY AND HIS** band make a flamboyant debut. “You see they understand that I really do mean it when I shower people in flowers,” the singer says. “They appreciate the honesty in that act. It was something I felt compelled to do because the whole popular music scene had become so grey and black, so dull!”

### PLUS...

**FELA KUTI!**

**SUN RA!**

**EINSTURZENDE NEUBATEN!**



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# THE HISTORY OF **ROCK**

1982

Every month, we revisit long-lost *NME* and *Melody Maker* interviews and piece together *The History Of Rock*. This month: 1982.

*"I am the king! I am the king!"*



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