

THE HISTORY OF

ROCK

1980

★
FROM THE
ARCHIVES OF
NME &
MELODY
MAKER
★

A MONTHLY TRIP THROUGH
MUSIC'S GOLDEN YEARS
THIS ISSUE: 1980

PINK FLOYD

*The Wall: "Roger began
it all by himself"*



STARRING...

JOY DIVISION

THE SPECIALS

MADNESS

THE JAM

TALKING HEADS

TOM PETTY

CAPTAIN

BEEFHEART

ECHO &

THE BUNNYMEN

LEONARD COHEN



PLUS! GRAMPS | IRON MAIDEN | DEXYS | KATE BUSH | JOHN LENNON

1980

MONTH BY MONTH



Welcome to 1980

THE REAGAN PRESIDENCY and imminent nuclear war notwithstanding (both on the minds of *NME* writers), as the new decade begins, the music press finds plenty of reasons to be optimistic.

The Specials are taking their 2-Tone aesthetic to America, while a passionate, cross-cultural ethos is on the rise in the shape of two other bands from the Midlands: Dexys Midnight Runners and UB40. Heavy metal, to the amusement of some, is in rude health. In Liverpool, psychedelia is enjoying a revival.

After a year of litigation, one of the major energies behind punk, Malcolm McLaren is also back with a vengeance. Some of his plans are actionably bad taste. Others – like the relaunch of Adam And The Ants as piratical pop stars – are stylish, eloquent and full of future possibilities.

Possibility, or at least what might have been, is at the heart of two tragic events of 1980. The death of Ian Curtis in May and the murder of John Lennon in December give the music press pause to reflect, and conclude that at the root of everything, music exists in order to celebrate life.

This is the world of *The History Of Rock*, a monthly magazine that follows each turn of the rock revolution. Whether in sleazy dive or huge arena, a territory Pink Floyd are invading and colonising with *The Wall*, 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 15th edition, dedicated to 1980, you will find verbatim articles from frontline staffers, filed from the thick of the action, wherever it may be. Comparing tartan with Spandau Ballet. Observing the rise of Tom Petty with Bernard Manning and Manchester City FC. Overtaking a truck at high speed, in a car driven by Captain Beefheart.

“Why aren’t you nervous, sir?” asks the Captain of the reporter.

Because in spite of the attendant peril, the ride is still so exhilarating.

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THE HISTORY OF ROCK

Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, 3rd Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU | **EDITOR** John Mulvey, whose favourite song from 1980 is *There, There, My Dear* by Dexys Midnight Runners **DEPUTY EDITOR** John Robinson *Shoot You In The Back* by Motörhead **ART EDITOR** Lora Findlay *Nerve Pylon* by The Lines **PRODUCTION EDITOR** Mike Johnson *A Means To An End* by Joy Division **ART DIRECTOR** Marc Jones *A Forest* by The Cure **DESIGNER** Becky Redman *9 To 5* by Dolly Parton **PICTURE EDITOR** George Jacobs *I Could Be So Good For You* by Dennis Waterman **COVER PHOTO** Pierre Rene-Worms **THANKS TO** Helen Spivak, James Hanman **MARKETING** Charlotte Treadaway **SUBSCRIPTIONS** Letitia Barry **GENERAL MANAGER** Jo Smalley **GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR** Paul Cheal **COVERS AND TEXT PRINTED BY** Wyndeham Group | WWW.UNCUT.CO.UK

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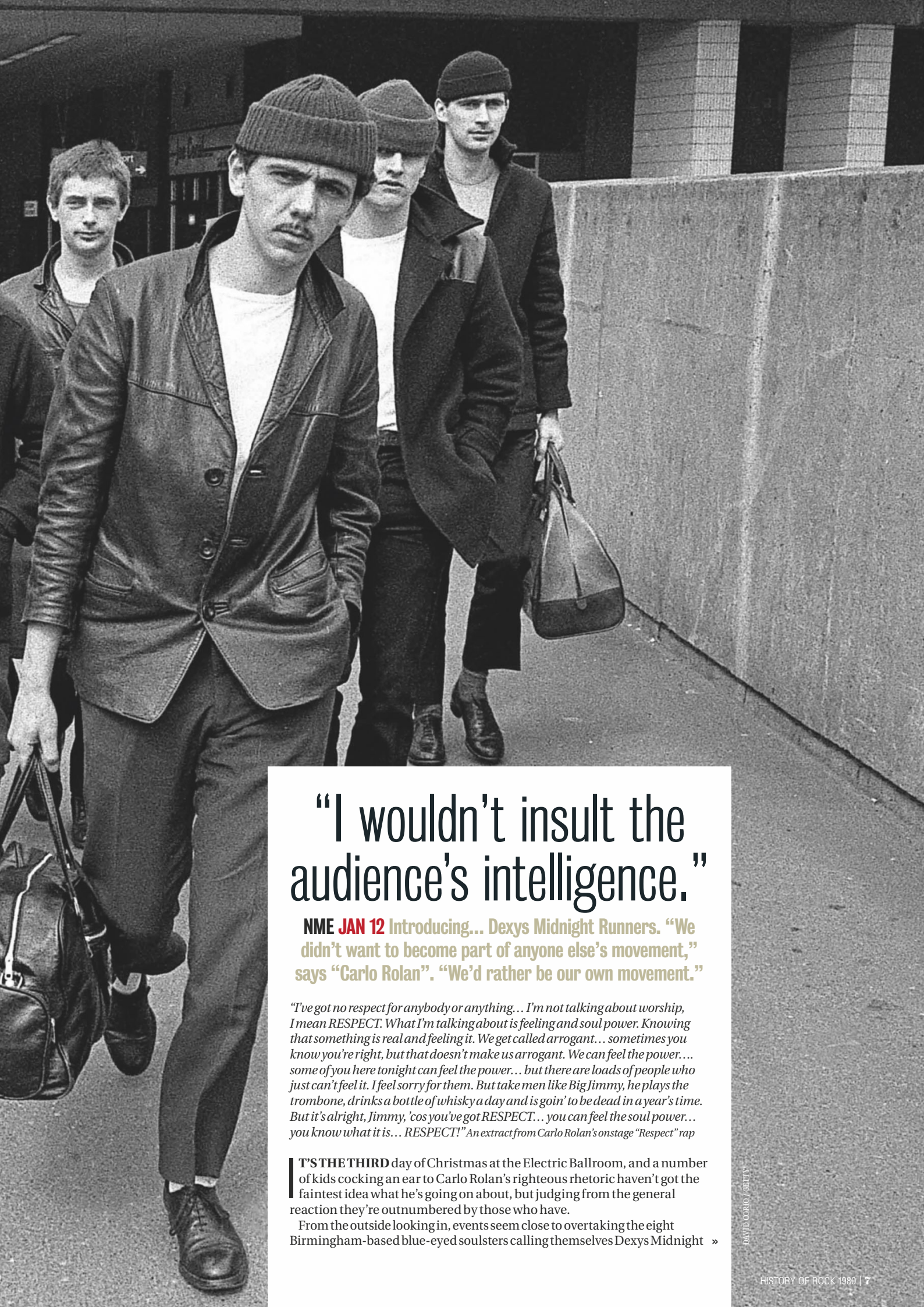
1980

JANUARY — MARCH

LEONARD COHEN, THE CRAMPS, DEF LEPPARD, TOM PETTY AND MORE



March 1980: Kevin Rowland (front) and Kevin "Al" Archer (far left), who co-founded Dexys Midnight Runners in 1978 after playing together in punk group The Killjoys, with bandmates in their hometown, Birmingham



"I wouldn't insult the audience's intelligence."

NME JAN 12 Introducing... **Dexys Midnight Runners**. "We didn't want to become part of anyone else's movement," says "Carlo Rolan". "We'd rather be our own movement."

"I've got no respect for anybody or anything... I'm not talking about worship, I mean RESPECT. What I'm talking about is feeling and soul power. Knowing that something is real and feeling it. We get called arrogant... sometimes you know you're right, but that doesn't make us arrogant. We can feel the power... some of you here tonight can feel the power... but there are loads of people who just can't feel it. I feel sorry for them. But take men like Big Jimmy, he plays the trombone, drinks a bottle of whisky a day and is goin' to be dead in a year's time. But it's alright, Jimmy, 'cos you've got RESPECT... you can feel the soul power... you know what it is... RESPECT!" An extract from Carlo Rolan's onstage "Respect" rap

IT'S THE THIRD day of Christmas at the Electric Ballroom, and a number of kids cocking an ear to Carlo Rolan's righteous rhetoric haven't got the faintest idea what he's going on about, but judging from the general reaction they're outnumbered by those who have.

From the outside looking in, events seem close to overtaking the eight Birmingham-based blue-eyed soulsters calling themselves Dexys Midnight »

1980

JANUARY – MARCH

Runners. In less than a month, Rolan has cut the life expectancy of Big Jimmy-Dexys' lanky crew-cut Scots 'boneman'—back from five years to just one, while collectively they've gone from the warm-up slot on the recent *Specials*/Selecter 2-Tone trek to currently mapping out their own headlining tour.

However, there are a number of pressing problems still to be surmounted—Big Jimmy's obsession with drowning himself in his country's most popular liquid export and the breaking-in of both a new organist and drummer being the least of them.

During the last six months, while their Black Country blue-beat brethren have firmly established themselves as a force to be reckoned with, Dexys have intentionally been keeping a very low profile, in an attempt to avoid being categorised as either 2-Toners or Mk2 mods.

As various sweat-soaked Dexys rummage through the pile of debris they call their personal effects in a cupboard dripping with condensation that also serves as a dressing room, Rolan and his diminutive guitarist Al Archer set about clarifying a few points.

The fact that anything carrying the 2-Tone brand name is currently synonymous with instant chart success while their first single for Oddball, "Dance Stance", is still bubbling under isn't causing them undue concern. In fact, in July, Dexys passed on a 2-Tone deal to sign with the EMI-distributed Oddball set-up.

"We didn't want to become part of anyone else's movement," claims Rolan. "We'd rather be our own movement."

"If we had seriously wanted to jump on the current bandwagon," says Archer, "we could have been Secret Affair ages ago. But we were very conscious of the fact that we might become too closely associated with that very strong 2-Tone image, when in fact we're into a whole different approach. A lot of people have already come to expect a certain type of music, a particular beat and a most definite image from every new band signed to the label, and automatically it's all down to whether or not you're as good as The Specials."

Fair comment, but I'm more interested in the fact that so early in Dexys career, Rolan feels he has to defend himself against accusations of arrogance in his onstage raps. This turns out to be a rather grey area of conversation.

"Maybe," Rolan ponders, somewhat unsure of how the rumours originated, "it's because on stage we give the appearance of being slightly cold and distant. Speaking for myself, I feel quite isolated from other musicians outside of this band, simply because I don't seem to have anything in common with them."

"Even before we started this band, Al and I used to hang out in discos listening to things like James Brown's 'Sex Machine' and War's 'Me And My Baby Brother', whereas all the other musicians in Birmingham were regular



"It's because we hold back on the visuals that we've been marked as cold and distant"

Rolan might display respect for the Stax, Atlantic and Motown label triumvirate, but surprisingly he claims to have been equally influenced by such British progenitors as Georgie Fame, Cliff Bennett, Zoot Money and Geno Washington. "The greatest soul singer in the world," is how Rolan refers to Washington when introducing the band's song "Geno".

Rolan defends Geno's talent with as much vigour as The Osmonds defend Marie's virginity. It transpires that when only 11, not only was Geno Washington the first live act he ever saw—his older brother took him along to a gig—but when the idea of Dexys Midnight Runners was first conceived in January 1978, Rolan turned to the recorded output of the flamboyant soulster.

"I was totally fed up with everything else at that time and so I started listening to all of Geno's old records and any other soul single I could pick up for 10p around the markets."

By July '78 the first lineup was rehearsing and exactly a year ago began playing around local youth clubs, where they built up a strong 14-15 year-old following.

"They were the kind of places where they only sold lemonade and crisps," Rolan recounts.

Since then it's been a gradual process of phasing out the oldies quotient in favour of their own material, gaining strength through the course of numerous personnel changes. In particular, the brass team of two saxes and Big Jimmy's gut-bucket trombone combine to produce a rich, raspy blast which no other British soul band has previously attained.

As a frontman, Carlo Rolan is quite subdued. In fact, he spends a large part of the set strapped to a guitar. The group policy seems to favour a slow burn rather than an instant flash.

"Sure," explains Rolan, "I could go out there and do that 'Are you having a good time? I wanna see everybody clappin' their hands' routine while the band just pumped out a Stax bass riff, but what's the point? I wouldn't stoop so low as to insult the audience's intelligence."

"If it ever seems like we're holding back it's because we're trying to avoid that kind of approach. We couldn't do that and ever hope to retain whatever integrity we possess. And it's because we hold back on the visuals that we've been marked as being cold and distant!"

And arrogant?

"Could be!" Roy Carr

concert-goers—they'd go and see Mott The Hoople or Bowie. Me, I rarely ever went to gigs."

Whatever their individual backgrounds, Dexys Midnight Runners are another in what seems like an endless succession of Birmingham-area bands using the '60s as a springboard into the '80s. Whereas their neighbours have excavated the blue-beat/ska motherlode, Dexys are reclaiming some of the long-lost civilisation.

Death by misadventure

NME MAR 1 RIP, Bon Scott, AC/DC singer dead at 33.

SOMETIME BETWEEN TUESDAY night and Wednesday morning of last week, AC/DC's vocalist Bon Scott died while unconscious in the back of a friend's car. The cause of death was acute alcohol poisoning, an inquest was told later in the week, before recording a verdict of "death by misadventure".

Scottish-born Scott had been with AC/DC since 1974, and appeared on all six of their UK-release albums.

Along with a musician friend called Alistair Kinnear, Scott had been at London's Music Machine until the early hours of Wednesday morning. After leaving the club, the pair drove to Kinnear's home in East Dulwich, by which time Scott was in an alcoholic stupor. Kinnear decided to leave him in the car to sleep it off, and returning to find him still unconscious later that day, he drove to King's College Hospital, where Scott was pronounced dead on arrival.

Despite the death of Scott, aged 33, AC/DC promise that they will continue.

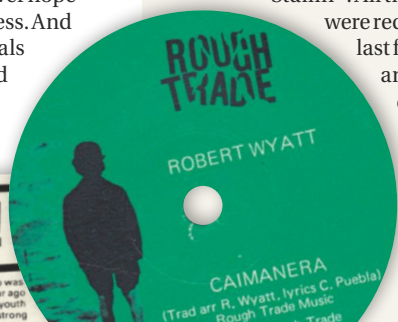
Return from exile

MM MAR 8 New recordings from ex-Soft Machinist Robert Wyatt.

ROBERT WYATT RETURNS from his self-imposed musical exile with a series of singles to be released by Rough Trade. The first, Wyatt's interpretation of "Caimanera", the Spanish original of "Guantanamera", is released in a fortnight, with Bill MacCormick on bass and Harry Beckett on flugelhorn. The B-side is Violetta Para's "Aracuna" sung and played by Wyatt with MacCormick on bass.

One of the other singles will be Wyatt's versions of Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" and Chic's "At Last I'm Free", and another features his a capella cover of the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet's "Stalin Wasn't

Stalin". All the singles' tracks were recorded over the last few weekends, and an album is being considered, though there has been no discussion yet about Wyatt playing live.



Dexy's: Funky Butt Fassst!

jump on the current bandwagon," says Archer, "we could have been

Mott The Hoople or Bowie. Me, I rarely ever went to gigs."

By July '78 the first line-up was rehearsing and exactly a year ago began playing around local youth clubs where they built up a strong



“Mangled, searing noise”

NME MAR 15 Introducing... Killing Joke. “We play the way we feel, we don’t pose,” they say, but **NME** isn’t so sure...

Killing Joke: (l-r) Paul Ferguson, Kevin “Geordie” Walker, Martin “Youth” Glover and Jaz Coleman

LET’S PUT IT this way: everybody’s looking for something to fall back on. Three years of rock iconoclasm have proved that no sooner is one poster torn down than another appears to take its place. There’s plenty of room on the hoarding, and lacking a piper to call the tune, we pay our money and take our pick. Punk, heavy metal, mod, modern, rude... they sound as hollow as I feel.

For a time this fragmentation seemed healthy. Now it just seems like it’s crumbling. Each style gives its adherents an elite status, a reason to look down on the rest. So they use that excuse to take it out on each other – instead of on the system that causes their discontent and their revolt and finally closes in like a fog on all the frail, frustrating aspirations of teendom.

What a sad and terrible waste of all that healthy, honest, confused and ill-directed rage. Shave your head, wear a bum-flap, buy a suit or stitch logos onto your back if you must compensate for feelings of inadequacy, but don’t squander that rage.

And don’t wait for your “leaders” to do it for you either, because all you do by following them is compensate for their feelings of inadequacy, often in cash, which only helps turn them into the very thing they – or some of them – set out to turn you against.

But people need something to identify with, and these days they’ll take what they can get. Last Tuesday I found myself amongst the bondage division, watching them trickle into a sorely under-advertised Killing Joke performance at the London University. An operative of Killing Joke’s Malicious Damage label pointed out a dim and stubborn regional punk crew who follow the band obsessively. “They’re looking for a leader,” he observed dryly. “Like everybody else.”

In the few months that have elapsed since Killing Joke released their “Nervous System” EP, a virulent cocktail of after-punk ingredients, they have come close to the

point of being handed the standard. So close, so quickly, and so slickly, that suspicions have been aroused. The previous weekend they played to a Lyceum full of people who had come to see Joy Division, after ads had given Killing Joke equal if not greater prominence on the bill. It turns out the promoter had naively entrusted the advertising to Killing Joke, who’ll take what they can get too.

They’re not so much unscrupulous as plain guileless. But experiences such as their short-lived and acrimonious liaison with Island Records will teach them cunning.

Meanwhile they kick out hard-nosed modern riff structures and spew out harsh, psychotic lyrics with sufficient conviction to make a dent in the pervading apathy, but not quite enough originality to be wholly persuasive. Nonetheless, a new single on Rough Trade called “Wardance” makes a predictably abrasive noise.

They don’t want to provide you with another entertainment. “No,” says their founding member, “we want to fuck them up in the process.” His nickname is Jaz, he plays

keyboards and sings, and he’s given to terse statements. About a year ago he and Paul, the drummer, put an ad in *Melody Maker* that put them onto a guitarist called Geordie, and soon after they found a bass player bearing an uncanny resemblance to Sid Vicious, called Youth. In 1977, Youth was “posing about down the Roxy”, Geordie was at school failing his A-levels, Jaz was living in a “hellhole called Cheltenham” and playing with Paul in a band run by someone called Matt Stagger.

“It was a good band,” says Jaz, “but it was his show, and towards the end it got sickly commercial and we just didn’t fit. It wasn’t being very honest, and when it comes down to playing, if you lie, it sounds like it.”

Killing Joke’s ambitions lie in the sphere of rhythm and noise. Youth cites Chic as an example of the rhythm. “All that sugar shit on top, forget that, but the rhythm’s there.”

like all the other bands, all clones who all like each other.” Jaz is not in a generous mood.

“Whereas we all hate each other,” adds Youth. “We’ve all got different ideas and out of that we’ve got a general direction. Someone will write a song, then it’ll be passed to someone else, censored, and passed on again. Sometimes it gets to the point where one of us will walk. If it gets past that point we usually end up with a good song.”

They all agree they want to provoke, but what they want to provoke is vague.

Youth attempts some sort of definition: “Changing the attitude to looking forward instead of back; doing something different instead of following something else.”

But they don’t want to dictate, nor foster violence, nor provide merely token aggression: “We play the way we feel all the time. We don’t pose.”

No, they don’t. They’re genuine. Genuinely limited. But they are good within their limitations, capable of generating some heat and sounding energetic and purposeful. So purposeful that you’re forced to ask what the purpose is. The answer lies in a tangled mess of handed-down ideals and private drives. Jaz says he had the idea for this group ages ago. What was the idea? “To form a group.”

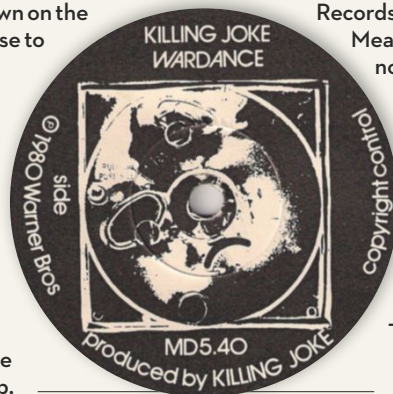
Youth grapples a little more patiently with the question. “It’s like with the skinheads. They stand there looking around, then they’ll decide to start bopping up and down. After about six or seven gigs they’ll start to wonder why – and then perhaps they’ll start changing, and that’ll be worthwhile. But in the meantime you feel like asking them what the fuck are you here for? Why are you doing it? You can see they’re not doing it because of the reasons you’re doing it.”

Confused? So are they. I ask if they know the significance of the red and the black – the international anarchist colours – used on their logo. Youth does, the others don’t. “We’re not into politics,” someone mutters.

The top-dog at CBS Records walks out halfway through their gig that night. “Good,” says the Malicious Damage operative. “That’ll keep CBS off their back.”

As I leave, a member of Killing Joke asks me to write something nice about them for a change. I lie and say I will. These days expediency comes cheaper than integrity.

Paul Rambali



“When it comes to playing, if you lie, it sounds like it”

1980

JANUARY - MARCH

FACT 14

"The music is incredibly simple"

NME FEB 2 Introducing *Durutti Column*, new on Factory Records, home of Joy Division. "I don't want to be on the dole much longer," says main man Vini Reilly.

"It's the kind of thing that takes time to sink in": Vini Reilly of *The Durutti Column* in Manchester, January 17, 1980

TONY WILSON, GRANADA TV producer and Factory Records major-domo, picks me up at Manchester Piccadilly for the drive out to Didsbury.

"The thing you have to remember about Vini Reilly is that the boy was very ill. He's had this problem with the stomach... He suffers from bouts of anorexia nervosa, where he can't eat anything for months. Sometimes you have to talk to him before five o'clock because that's when he eats. Afterwards he's usually extremely sick."

I look at my watch. It's still only midday. Wilson continues, his customary brusquely cheerful self.

"Actually, we had to make him step out of his illness to work on this *Durutti Column* album" - we being Wilson and his partner Alan Erasmus. "It was a risk. If you'd seen the boy, you'd know. I thought, 'That boy is either going to die or he's got to get better', and as people don't age..."

Opening the door on the terraced house where Reilly lives with his ma, we're greeted by a small, frail figure with bony fingers. Reilly is in his mid-twenties and is obviously extremely thin for his age. On the other hand, he doesn't look like he's about to shuffle off this mortal coil.

Wilson accepts a late Christmas gift from Vini, a small charm, with much thanks and then disappears back to Granada where he does whatever producers do for TV programmes like *World In Action*. He is also finishing off the editing for a film constructed from an improvised jam with Reilly, keys player Steve Hopkins and bassist and general knob-twiddling wizard Martin "Zero" Hannett (shown on Granada's *Celebration* arts programme last week).

These three are sometimes better known as The Invisible Girls, John Cooper Clarke's back-up team on both "Sleepwalk" and a forthcoming muse-and-music production that will be the word-man's third long-player.

Reilly, by his own admission, is not at all well. For the last three years he's suffered periodically from the psychological disease that stops him eating and the debilitating fits of depression that accompany this state. Now he seems relaxed and lucid, occasionally staring off into the corners of the room with an intense expression.

"The doctors can't find anything wrong with me," said Reilly softly. "All they do is give me tranquilisers and they make me go to sleep."

The *Durutti Column* has been functioning on and off for as long as Vini has been sick, although it's evident that working hard has been one way of staving off depression. The original *Durutti*s were a band with a part-time singer (Colin, an actor) who played melodic, newish wavish music with a bizarre swagger that now appears incredibly dated (witness their contributions to the "Factory Sample" double EP, FAC 2).

Vini's debut album, *The Return Of The Durutti Column* (FACT 14) is quite unlike the *Durutti Column* of "Factory Sample". It's mostly a solo guitar album, classically flavoured, tipping and modulating between themes with an appeal that haunts back to times past (childhood, personal reactions to the death of a parent, tune for lovers) and lightly structured sketches that have an electric flamenco propulsion. The music is Reilly's own, occasionally assisted by bass and drums but always translated through the able hands of Hannett.

"Martin reproduces echoes; finds a rhythmic pattern on the synthesizer. I gave

him 20 tracks and he selected the ones he could work with best. I didn't really hear the album from playing the pieces until the finished plastic."

As the original *Durutti*s fragmented into lethargy and Reilly's health lapsed, he had assumed that was the end of his musical career. But Wilson was adamant that he would work, and visited Reilly with a proposition for a solo album.

"I thought they'd go on without me, but Tony said, 'Look, you are The *Durutti Column* - now go ahead and do it.'"

Factory's success with Joy Division has meant that the label can afford to nurture talents like Reilly's or A Certain Ratio's without hurrying them into unnecessary deadlines.

"They have a lot of schemes now. There's an idea for a fun film, *Too Young To Know, Too Wild To Care*, which I'm scoring. Reilly confesses that he was terrified of being boring on his record and thinks that some people will buy it for the wrong reasons, either because they collect Factory artefacts regardless, or because

it's got a sandpaper sleeve.

"The music is incredibly simple, but I'd like anyone to listen to it and enjoy it, to get something out of it. It doesn't hit you; it's the kind of thing that takes time to sink in. What I really like is when aunts and uncles hear it and you see them tap a foot, or when a friend says they went to the pub and came home and got stoned and put it on. That's what it's for."

Reilly gently resents some claims that the record is ambient, or that it's a less

"I don't know why anyone would want to listen to my record, because I made it for myself"

THE EMACIATED LINE BETWEEN ART AND AMBIENCE

WILSON, Granada producer and Factory Records

imaginative version of an ECM album; cerebral music for washing-up.

"That's an insult. I could have been mathematical about it all, but every piece has a *raison d'être*, an inspiration. Some people, rock critics I suppose, listen to music in a false situation. I like Keith Jarrett, but I think all other ECM music is crap."

Steve Reich?

"Incredibly boring. You begin to suspect people's motives for liking that kind of thing. The whole elitist thing in music is desperately wrong. Truthfully, I don't know why anyone would want to listen to my record, because I made it to interest myself, but I do think music should have a place in society.

"It isn't fair that opera can get Art Council grants - though I have nothing against opera - when rock music, which is equally as important as an art form, is considered a lesser form of expression."

To my surprise, Reilly says that he likes to meet up with some friends "to thrash about with rock'n'roll, 'Jumping Jack Flash' and 'Johnny B Goode'."

It's obvious that he's happiest with a guitar in his hand. Reilly practises constantly, using a piano for ideas and studying composition from records and books. He's as interested in Benjamin Britten as he is in Ry Cooder, but in the words of the old Ed Banger & The Nosebleeds song which Vini co-wrote with Mr Banger while playing guitar for that combo, he "Ain't Been To No Music School".

Vini is anxious to play live again. He misses the honest reactions of a club audience.

"I started off playing sort of jazz rock with The Wild Rams, but with the Nosebleeds Ed would get a real response jumping across tables and confronting the people. Then I was asked to play on *TOTP* with Jilted John, but I don't respect anybody involved in that.

"With John Cooper Clarke I don't know what will happen. He's been greatly misrepresented. People pick up on the swearing, but there's a lot of very sad stuff too."

As the afternoon sinks in, we walk over to Hannett's house in a smarter part of Didsbury. The rest of the day is spent at Cargo Studios in Rochdale where Hannett is mixing A Certain Ratio's contribution to the Science Fiction Festival album. It's good to see such an informally mischievous person with such supple rolling fingers behind a desk. In the studio Zero can go totally indulgently insane.

But that's another story. Vini Reilly didn't come to Rochdale anyway. He had to go and collect his dole.

"It gets a bit difficult to tell them you can't come on a certain day because you're doing a television programme. 'You on television?' I get funny looks; I don't want to be on the dole much longer. If these things all work out, maybe I can earn enough to live without all that. The great thing about Factory - I want you to put this in - is that they never gave up on me."

And then he adds, maybe as an afterthought: "Factory can seem very serious. It gets taken very seriously. Really, though, it's just like a very good game."

Accentuate a very good game. It isn't played to lose. *Max Bell*

Indiscriminate prescriptions

MM FEB 2 Elvis' doctor suspended from practice.

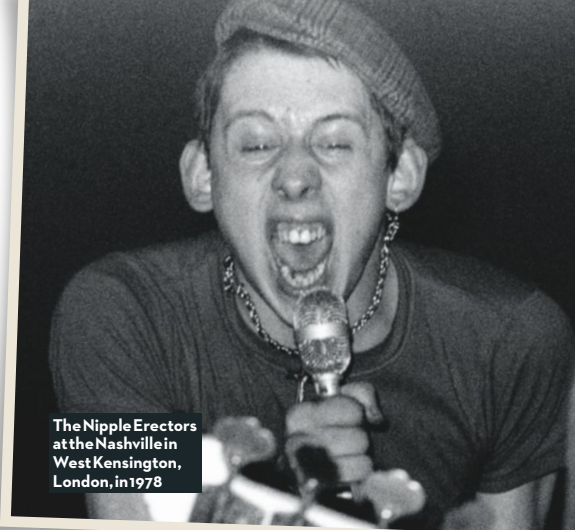
ELVIS PRESLEY'S PERSONAL physician, Dr George C Nichopoulos, appeared before the Tennessee Board Of Medical Examiners last week on charges of misconduct in his treatment of the King. Since his death in 1977, rumour has been rife that Elvis died from an overdose of drugs and not from heart failure. "Dr Nick", as he's affectionately called, admitted prescribing vast amounts of drugs for Elvis. He was found guilty of indiscriminately prescribing and dispensing controlled substance for 10 patients, including Presley, in the 20 months before the singer died. The good doctor has been suspended from practising for three months and has been placed on three years' probation, but the board determined that he had "no involvement" in Elvis' death.

Dr Nick, however, gave an insight into Presley's state. He portrayed Elvis as a "psychological" addict. When he went out on the road with El, Dr Nick said he carried three suitcases of drugs for the singer and his entourage. At the time of his death, Nick had prescribed 680 pills and 20cc of liquid uppers, downers and painkillers to Presley.

As far as the record goes, though, Elvis still died of heart failure, although there were traces of several potentially dangerous drugs in his body at the time of his death.

Harry Doherty

Elvis was a pill-head



The Nipple Erectors at the Nashville in West Kensington, London, in 1978

Two final gigs

MM MAR 8 The Nips, formerly The Nipple Erectors, disband. "Singer Shane will form his own band."

THE NIPS HAVE disbanded after disagreements and disillusionment about the way their current single, "Gabrielle", was handled by their record company.

The band have blamed Chiswick, who licensed the single from The Nips' Soho label, for its lack of chart success, and have disbanded "in protest", playing two final gigs at London's Rock Garden on Monday next week, and the Music Machine with The Purple Hearts on March 14.

Chiswick's Ted Carroll told the MM that promotional problems came when the band insisted on it being released just before Christmas - traditionally a bad time to try and break a new act - and coincidentally at the time when EMI's now-defunct Licensed Records Division, which handled Chiswick's promotion, was in its death throes.

The Nips' founder members, singer Shane and bassist Shanne, will go on to form their own bands.

RAY STEVENSON / REX

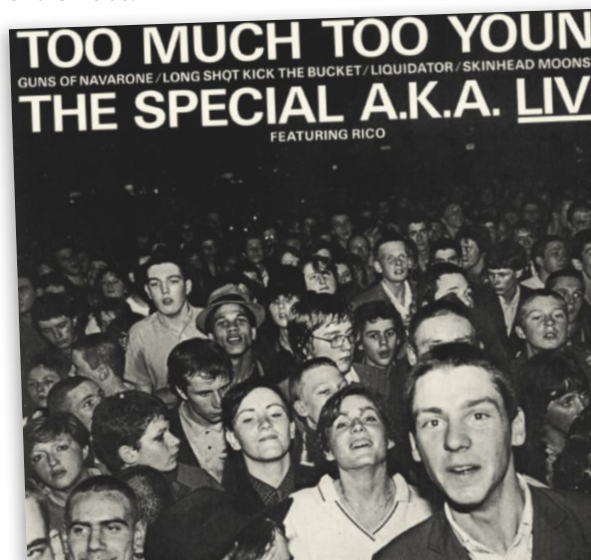
"A skinhead symphony" **MM JAN 5** More exciting Specials activity...

THE RELEASE DATE for The Specials' live EP "Too Much Too Young" has now been set for Friday next week, the day after the band sets off for a European tour. The EP was recorded at London's Lyceum and Coventry's Tiffany's on the recent 2-Tone tour, and includes "Guns Of Navarone" on the A-side and a "Skinhead Symphony" of "Longshot Kick The Bucket", "Liquidator" and "Skinhead Moonstomp" on the B-side.

The record was produced by Jerry Dammers and engineer Dave Jordan, and although no decision has yet been taken, it seems likely that the same pair will produce the next Specials album, to be recorded over the next few months.

The Specials return from a month in America at the end of February - they support The Police for a fortnight and then play two weeks on their own - and hope to have the album ready in time for their next British tour in May.

Meanwhile, BBC2's *Arena* is preparing a documentary on The Specials and the 2-Tone label, directed by Geoff Perks, whose last programme was the *Arena* doc on Sham 69. It will be broadcast in March.



1980

JANUARY–MARCH

“It’s grotesque,
it’s shabby,
it’s beautiful”

LEONARD COHEN is back with a new album, *Recent Songs*, and thoughts on his mother, the new wave and working with Phil Spector. “I feel that I’m producing entertainment,” says the owner of two gold discs. “I don’t think I’m producing instruction, philosophy or dogma.”

A black and white portrait of Leonard Cohen. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark jacket and a light-colored scarf. His hair is dark and slicked back. He has a slight smile and is looking directly at the camera. The background is dark and out of focus.

"My mother kind
of produced this
record": Leonard
Cohen relaxes at
his London hotel,
January 8, 1980

— MELODY MAKER JANUARY 5 —

LEOARD COHEN IS a happier man these days. Tired, but probably enjoying it, he's just finished a European tour, which included three sold-out London concerts. And still hundreds stood outside, disappointed and ticketless.

Cohen was born a year before Elvis Presley. The tour came to an end on the eve of the third decade of his involvement in rock'n'roll, which began with listening to Frankie Laine and the King back in the '50s.

"I always loved rock," he said. "I remember the first time I heard Presley, how relieved and grateful I was that all this stuff he and all of us had been feeling for so long had finally found a particular kind of expression."

Cohen cuts a strange figure in the rock'n'roll world. Touring is about the closest he gets to being an active participant, and looking at him, deathly tired after 24 hours and more without sleep following his final London concert, it's difficult to imagine him enjoying it.

"It's fun now," he admits. "But everybody on the tour has had a tiny nervous breakdown at one point or another. I don't know if it's the weather or the tour's intensity, or the music, or the combination of the people, but everybody has had to go through a radical re-evaluation of their condition on the road. We're enjoying it now because we've surrendered to it – they just carry our bodies from hotel room to the airport bus, and the music manifests itself each night..."

COHEN DOESN'T TOUR often, usually as frequently as he releases albums. *Recent Songs*, his eighth, has just come out, coinciding with the publication of a poetry-and-prose collection called *Death Of A Lady's Man* (note the spelling). It comes 12 years after the arrival of his first, *Songs Of Leonard Cohen*.

Following the relative spiritual impoverishment of *Death Of A Ladies' Man* (his Spector collaboration), *Recent Songs* is a return to his more melancholic character, though this time the work's romanticism is tempered by a tough strain of realism in the narratives, and the distancing effects of his experiments with such florid language.

Without that strain the album would be unbearably sweet, as the songs are set to a kind of Eastern European pastiche, incorporating a "sobbing" gypsy violin – Cohen's own words – and an oud player, alongside more conventional instruments. It's as courageous as it is easy on the ear, deliberately skirting so close to kitsch.

Cohen's not unaware of the danger of working so close to the edge. He explains: "Who would dare to write songs about swans and roses? I felt for some odd reason like rescuing such imagery from the backs of Christmas cards, and returning those symbols, those images, to a place of honour – if they ever had one. And also to use the shabbiness and irony of those images to really get something from it, as an ironic device to rescue their real passionate romance. If they're successful, they do create resonance and harmonics in the hearts of the listeners, and a landscape that they recognise as true.

"It's grotesque, it's shabby, it's beautiful, but then beyond all that you're willing to forgive these conceits if you recognise them as true."

The danger is that such devices disguise what you're trying to say – people might not look beneath the surface of the songs.

"I think the songs are guarded by those kind of devices, for better or worse. I don't know if it's a good idea, but in conversation people claim to

have trouble with those things, but then afterwards, the mind goes to work and tries to determine what the experience has been. And in the midst of the thing, I think everybody knows what's going on.

"People who want to hear the song, who've got that kind of appetite – there's no need for everybody to have the same – I think the songs penetrate directly and immediately, and it's only after the fact that you begin to examine why or what.

"On the other hand," he continues, "I don't want you to think I sit around thinking about how to get a certain effect, because that's like starting at the end. You feel a certain reality and struggle to articulate it – it's more like scavenger work rather than sitting at a great luxurious table, choosing one delicacy then another. You take what there is or what suggests itself. To me, the only thing I had to work with at the time were these clichés. I couldn't enter that experience through any other gateway but the clichés."

If it's not already evident, Cohen takes a lot of pride and care in writing. Sometimes, he says, songs are worked on for years, constantly examined and re-examined.

"Perhaps some spontaneity is lost by this process, but on the other hand I think that we're up to our ears in spontaneity," he suggests.

"I'm rather fond of new wave, because that had some energy. But I mean, for a long time we were getting pop music with the kind of lines that I can't believe seriously that any writer struggled over.

"I can't hear anything, besides ambition and greed, behind most of the lyrics that I've heard in the past four or five years. It isn't a matter of erudition or pedantry. It's a matter of consideration, and I don't find much around, whether it's in the Royal Academy or on the jukebox."

He's not preaching, or making judgements.

The urge that drives him to write obviously doesn't qualify him for Tin Pan Alley, though the lines separating quality songs and fast-buck pop went down with Dylan and The Beatles back in the '60s. Not to say that Cohen doesn't live from writing; only he lives for it, too, which is the vital difference.

It took some time coming, but he got a gold disc for *Songs Of Leonard Cohen* eight years after it was released, and another in Germany for the inaccurately named *Greatest Hits*. His music sells, but sells slowly.

"There are certain cranks, like myself, who need that kind of complexity to entertain them.

I feel that I'm producing entertainment – I don't think I'm producing instruction, philosophy or dogma."

"The only thing I had to work with at the time were these clichés"



PERHAPS THE MOST surprising move Cohen ever made was teaming up with Phil Spector, for *Death Of A Ladies Man*. The result was astonishing, not bearing the best-known characteristics of either. In Spector's case, the arrangements were mostly incomplete and empty, bare skeletons of tunes, which somehow worked by default.

Their soullessness matted the desolation of the songs, denuded of the dusky melancholy which Cohen usually drapes over his most painful moments. This time, bitterness came through undisguised, destroying the romanticism in the writer and replacing it with a brutalised clarity.

It contains his most cynical work, easily his most physical. Cohen's *Last*

Tango? Could be. Listen to the last verse of the title song:

"So the great affair is over/ But whoever would have guessed/ It would leave us all so vacant/ And so deeply unimpressed."

Or, from "Paper Thin Hotel":

"The struggle mouth to mouth/ And limb to limb/ The grunt of unity when he came in."

The album reeks of desperation, a last-ditch pitch at survival through the purging of pain. And, like most works born out of such an abject condition, it's highly compelling. It's brutality must have come as a shock to Cohen's long-standing admirers, and if it's ultimately flawed, it gets better with the passing of time.

Death... was made at a crisis point in Cohen's life. He explains:

"My own marriage was breaking up, and my mother was dying of cancer at the time. So I had to commute from Los Angeles to Montreal [his birth place] twice a week. It was a very trying time; my personal life was so chaotic—so many factors contributed to my condition, which was just a sense of a loss of control—a weakness."

There seems to be a very masculine approach taken with this album.

"I never looked at it that way. That's an interesting point... I mean, there were bodyguards, guns, barbed wire around at Phil's place when we did the album."

Spector producing a Cohen album is such a strange proposition in the first place. How did it come about?

"He came to a concert of mine in LA, and the fact that he didn't cause a disturbance indicated he approved of the music. We had a mutual friend, and we met one evening. I was over at Phil's home—and he usually locks the doors from the inside so you can't leave. As I couldn't get out of the house that night, we started working together and in the next 10 or 12 days we wrote six or seven songs.

"That part of it went very swiftly. When we were just working together alone, it was very, very pleasant. But when he gets in the studio he becomes Mr Hyde."

FROM THERE ON in, Spector's megalomania took control and their working relationship deteriorated. Cohen became so far removed from the record that he now refers to it as "Phil's album". Spector took the first-take vocal tracks away and locked Cohen out of the studios.

"The thing that's missing from the record is the intimacy that I established with Lissauer [John, his previous producer], who allowed me to tell the story of the song. But I couldn't possibly develop under those conditions with Spector—days and days of screaming, first takes, tapes being confiscated. It was just a waste of time, you know. But I was too weak at the time to do anything about it.

"I think the songs on the record are good. If the treatment was different I think it could have been a very acceptable thing. Even now I see certain aspects of its excellence. Not that I really care, as I should care.

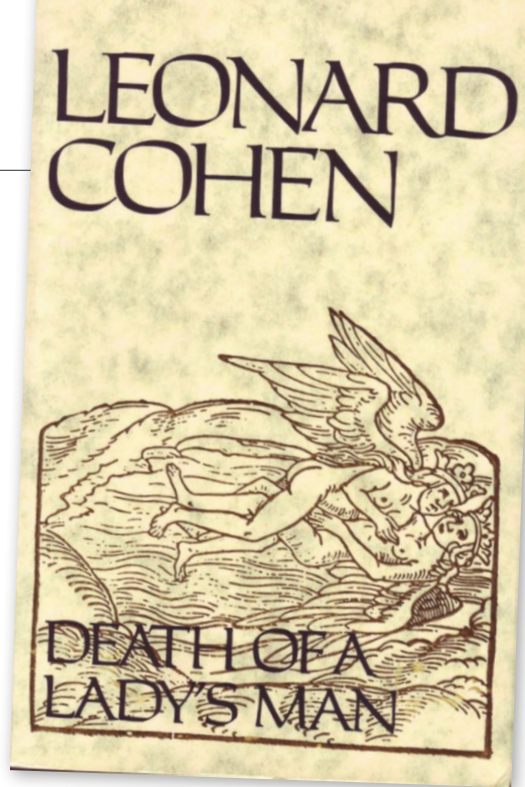
"But I do think there's something gay and manic about the album. The mix is very eccentric, but if you don't happen to be looking for me in it, which unfortunately I was, if you just look at it as a piece of music, it's very interesting. And it gets better. I couldn't stand it at the beginning."

But the process of creating it provided a necessary break with the past.

He says: "It was like the final chapter in any case; I'd reached that point that made me just pull up my bootstraps. Everybody goes through that. It also taught me a lot about the studio and influenced me to produce my own album—my experience with Phil taught me never to listen to anyone else's opinion again."

One might think he would have learnt from his experiences with Tony Palmer, the British filmmaker he brought in to film his 1972 European tour for a movie he could use to promote his later albums, as at that point he was on the verge of retiring from the rock scene.

Cohen was hoping for a straight documentary, but contends that Palmer, having just completed Frank Zappa's



"There were bodyguards, guns, barbed wire around at Phil's place"

That's just a digression. The change in mood from the Spector album to *Recent Songs* is marked. On the sleeve, Cohen credits his mother, Masha Cohen, with "reminding me, shortly before she died, of the kind of music she liked".

"My mother was Russian and she used to sing Russian songs round the house," he explains. "She was a wonderful singer, great deep voice. Actually, a week before she died I played her the Phil Spector record, which I had just finished. She sort of listened patiently to it and she said that people can dance to it. And then, later on, she said, 'Why don't you write songs like the ones we used to sing, you know, with a violin?' It was just a moment of conversation, a suggestion.

"I discounted that, as I discounted most advice about my work. But I think it took root, and I was introduced to the violinist Raffi Hakopian, who's Russian.

"It went from there. My mother kind of produced this record."

The violinist and the oud player Cohen used on the album are part of his present touring band. They're an odd-looking ensemble to be playing at an established rock venue, with at least three members above 40. But somehow it fits, as Cohen always has done, somewhere in the outer limits, making his own rules.

Did he ever feel divorced from the rock'n'roll mainstream?

"I probably am working somewhat out of what appears to be the mainstream. But I know secretly that I'm in the mainstream, and a lot of the other stuff in it is just fashion. And that older and stronger traditions that are just below the surface sustain the culture." *Chris Bohn* •

**Cohen: haunted
by Spector**



1980

JANUARY – MARCH

“Guitar solos are boring”

Engaging Yorkshiremen DEF LEPPARD explain the “New Wave Of British Heavy Metal”: “Thing about new wave, the bands were just like audience. There was a rapport. An’ it’s the same wi’ new wave heavy metal bands.”

— MM FEBRUARY 2 —

THEIR FIRST REHEARSAL studio was in an old building near the Sheffield United football ground. A single room, it cost them a fiver a week to rent.

After work on Friday, they’d go down there and rehearse, often until 4am. There were four of them. Pete Willis played guitar. He knew Rick Savage, who played bass. There were several drummers in those early months. Then Rick Allen joined. Pete and Sav were 17, Rick was 15. Joe Elliott had never sung in a band before, although he played a little guitar and had depped as a drummer in a local rock’n’roll band. They told him that he looked the part. He was tall and brawny, with a shock of curly blond hair; an identikit heavy metal frontman, really. They were persuasive. He joined them in October 1977.

They plundered Thin Lizzy and Bowie albums for songs for their early repertoire, playing “Jailbreak”, “Rosalie” and “Suffragette City”. They began writing their own songs, too. “Sorrow Is A Woman”, which they still play, was written then, though it was called “Misty Dreamer” in those days. Joe wrote the lyrics; Pete and Sav handled the riffs.

There was another song called “War Child”. Their faces twist with embarrassment now when they recall “War Child”. They dismiss it quickly as being derivative of Black Sabbath. “An ‘orrible fookin’ mess, it were,” Joe Elliott cries, his accent as thick as a girder of Sheffield steel.

They introduced “Emerald” to their repertoire when Steve Clark joined and they realised they had a mutual interest. They met again at a Judas Priest concert at Sheffield City Hall and started talking guitars. Pete invited Steve to a rehearsal. Steve was impressed. He was invited to join the group. He accepted.

They call themselves Def Leppard. Their intention was local fun rather than international success; at first they nursed no grand ambition. They debuted in July 1978, at Westfield School in Sheffield. They say they were dreadful, but copped the promoter for five quid anyway.

They were not satisfied rehearsing four hours a night, five nights a week; they’d spend weekend afternoons developing and refining their heavy metal assault, their armoury of bone-crunching riffs. And their local reputation grew into a northern cult. »



August 24, 1980: facing a hail of mud and beer cans from a section of the crowd claiming they have "sold out", Def Leppard take the stage before headliners Whitesnake at the 20th Reading Festival

SHEILA ROCK/REX

1980

JANUARY – MARCH



Def Leppard in 1979:
(l-r) Joe Elliott, Rick
Savage, Pete Willis,
Rick Allen, Steve Clark

REGULAR MUSIC PRESENTS

DEF LEPPARD
+ Support

Tiffany's, Glasgow, on Sunday 20th January
Doors open 7.30 p.m. — Tickets £2.00

Proof of age of over 18 may be required
741

Impressed by the enterprise of young punk bands who'd financed their own recording, they saved and scrounged enough money to go into Fairview Studios in Hull, where they cut a three-track EP of their own songs. They released it on their own label, Bludgeon Riffola

— "Ride Into The Sun", "Overture" and "Getcha Rocks Off". Those who know about such things will tell you that "Getcha Rocks Off" is destined to be remembered as a classic heavy metal performance.

They found an enthusiastic supporter in Andy Peebles, the Radio 1 DJ. Even John Peel played the record. HM aficionados in the music press began to shower them with adulatory notices. People were beginning to talk about them as one of the leading bands in the new wave of heavy metal, future threats to the supremacy of UFO, the Scorpions and Judas Priest.

Then, last summer, Phonogram released a single, "Wasted", a blustery performance marred by an indifferent production. Phonogram placed them as support on two prestigious tours, first with the American hard rock singer, Sammy Hagar, then with AC/DC. They estimate that they played to over 40,000 people on those tours.

Their impact must have been considerable. In this paper's reader's poll in November, they were voted into fourth place in the "Brightest Hope" category. In the same category in the *NME*'s readers' poll they were voted into sixth place, above more fashionable contenders like The Undertones, the Pretenders, the Gang of Four, Secret Affair and Selecter.

Def Leppard's first album is released in March.

FOLLOW THE MOON to the end of Sauchiehall Street. Turn into Tiffany's before you reach the corner, sprint up the stone steps into the glare of the foyer. Past the ticket office, quickly. There a few bouncers in their tight-fitting tuxedos; look at them, with their necks bulging out of their starched collars. The manager leads the way into the pumping heart of the ballroom.

The air is ravaged by the hysterical excess of Rainbow, screaming through the house PA. When the tape finishes, Zeppelin replaces Rainbow on the cassette deck. It's going to be that kind of night.

The manager declares himself pleased with the attendance: at least 700 headbangers so far, he estimates. Not at all bad for a Sunday night, especially for a band headlining its first concert in Glasgow. Mind you, he says The Specials played here on a Sunday and they had 2,500 rabid kids packed into the ballroom. And the police were squabbling outside on Sauchiehall Street with at least another 1,000. He rolls his eyes at the memory. One of the bouncers had been struck that night by a girl wielding a hat-pin. He and one of his men dragged her to the back of the auditorium. They tried to calm

her down. She stripped off her shirt and, naked to the waist, tried to run off. She was tackled by a police officer. She felled him with a well-timed kick in the balls. The manager chuckles to himself as he tells the story.

Tonight's audience is already pressed tight around the stage, fists clenched, punching the atmosphere in the familiar heavy metal *sieg heil*. Their feet are stamping, their heads shaking violently. The imaginary guitarists are out, too. Just a few for the moment, though — the Deep Purple Formation Dancers would not take to the floor in force until Def Leppard are on the boards and tearing holes in the fragile fabric of the local ozone.

The crowd around the stage began chanting. Their message was unclear at first. Then their ranting became ominously clear. "We hate mods, we hate the mods, we hate the mods... We hate, we hate, we hate the mods!"

Def Leppard were racing down the narrow staircase from their dressing room to the stage, Joe Elliott must have heard the chant. As the band plugged in and roadies made last-minute checks on equipment, popping up like greasy glove-puppets behind the amplifiers, Elliott grabbed his microphone.

"D'yer want us ter do soom Secritt Afferr songs fur yer?"

The reply was lost in a landslide of noise as Def Leppard smacked out their first powerchord of their set.

That first chord was like a grenade going off in your hand; surviving the rest of the performance was like living through Pearl Harbour.

The drummer sounded like he was shitting amplified house bricks. His bass-drum kicks walloped holes in the chest; each cymbal crash was a sustained opera of alarm. The guitars were a thick carpet of shrieking chords. And Elliott's voice came howling through the debris, like the devil calling in the damned for supper.

And this was just the first number. It left me more confused than a conversation with Robert Fripp.

The boys sure could whack it out with the best of them, as earlier observers have been quick to remark. I saw UFO a year ago at the Hammersmith Odeon. Compared to this lot, they sounded like schoolchildren rattling the railings with their rulers.

As a visual spectacle, Def Leppard are a whirlwind of frantic gestures, arm-swinging, head-shaking and microphone twirling. So completely do they epitomise the satin-and-leather flash of heavy metal, they almost

become caricatures. There were more bare chests on that stage than you'd find in a topless bar on Sunset Strip. Willis and Clark have perfected every manoeuvre in the HM handbook of macho poses, throwing more shapes in one song than the entire frontline of Thin Lizzy in an entire set.

One significant distinction should, however, be made between Def Leppard and their HM predecessors. Solos are infrequent, usually quickly despatched, more often tightly contained within the





blistering structures of the songs. Willis and Clark prefer to maintain the pace of the attack, which relents only for the obligatory moody ballads.

Of course, this did nothing to deter the denim-swathed ranks of phantasy guitarists. They lined up at the back of the crowd in neat battalions, heads down, right hands scrubbing their chests while the left rode up and down imagined fretboards. They were even more energetic and frantically nimble than the band. Whoosh! There went one, a vertical take-off from a standing start! Craaammmmm! There he went, smacking down on his knees, back bent over in an impossible arch, the back of his head dusting the ballroom floor. There was a marvellous moment towards the end of the set. The guitars dropped out, leaving Rick Allen alone for a brief drum flourish. Suddenly everyone was an imaginary drummer.

It's difficult making notes with both hands clamped over your ears, and dodging flying riffs that are threatening to tear off your kneecaps rather prevents one's assimilation of individual subtleties. However, I do remember that "When The Walls Come Tumbling Down" was an epic about apocalypse, complete with characteristic HM imagery of doom and destruction. The final encores, "Ride Into The Sun" and "Rocks Off", seemed standard hard rock outbursts, fiercely played and lavishly received.

After the gig it took at least four double vodkas and a sharp slap on the back of the head to recover the power of speech.

"Loud?" exclaimed Pete Willis at the hotel. "We only used half stacks t'night."

He looked at me as if I was the biggest wimp on the planet. I didn't reply. My ears were still bleeding.

WILLIS, ALLEN AND Savage have gone off with the road crew to the local fleapit. Rather appropriately, they have gone to see *Apocalypse Now*.

Elliott and Clark are in their hotel room fielding questions. Elliott is affable, forthright, confident; not at all the offensively cocky individual I had been led to expect. Clark is drunk and getting worse.

"We all knew when we started the band that it were goin' t'be heavy rock," Elliott is explaining. He has the kind of accent you hear on voice-overs for Hovis commercials. "We knew it weren't going t'be poonk. An' it weren't goin' t'be Lena Martell. We all knew it were goin' t'be based around Lizzy, Zeppelin, UFO."

I had wanted to know why such a young band had turned to heavy metal rather than punk, like most of their contemporaries. When they formed punk was, after all, the most fashionable trend. And Def Leppard shared both age and circumstances (bored teenagers, working class) with the majority of new punk bands storming the barricades in '77.

"We never thought about it," Clark blearily attests. "We just did what we wanted to do. We never thought, 'Well, punk is fashionable, heavy metal is dated – let's be fashionable, let's be a punk band.'"

"If we'd done that, it would've been unnatural," Elliott elaborates. "You get certain bands who say, 'We've tried for 18 months at bein' this kind of band. We're not gerren anywhere, let's be summat else. We'll change us name and change us image...' Like, apparently, there used t'be a really weird, heavy rock band called Black Widow. Apparently, some of them are now in Showaddywaddy."

He looked suitably aghast, as if someone had just walked over his grave.

"It would've been false for us to pretend we were summat we weren't," he continued. "It would've been wrong for us t'say, 'Right, we'll go and cut us hair and dye it blond and wear bondage trousers with zips all over t'place and be a poonk band'. But it's not that' we didn't like poonk. I thought t'Pistols were greet. It's a cliché now, but it did give music business a kick up the arse. People must've been gerren pissed off wi' bands like Supertramp. I like Supertramp mesel', but I can see kids' point of view – when there's nowt 'appenin' apart from yearly release of a new Supertramp album or Pink Floyd, kids'll get pissed off, look for summat new. So when they gerra band like t'Clash comin' up, they think, 'Worra great fookin' blast of energy.'"

"It would've been wrong for us to say, 'Right, we'll be a poonk band'"

Elliott is eager to stress the catholicism of Def Leppard's musical tastes, Pete Willis might be more empathically involved with heavy metal – "he only ever listens to UFO and Priest" – but Sav was into Queen and Boston, and Rick Allen was deeply into funk, especially Parliament and Funkadelic.

"I've got a case full o' tapes over 'ere," Elliott went on. "You can look through it, if yer like. None of 'em are heavy rock. The nearest thing t'heavy rock in tha' bag is Meat Loaf. I've got *Tubular Bells*, 10cc. I just like music. It's just that I don't think I'd like it as much playin' 10cc's music on stage."

"Thing about new wave," Clark said, looking up from his beer mug, "were that the bands had a definite feelin' for audience. They were just like audience. There was a sort of rapport. An' it's the same wi' new wave heavy metal bands. Like wi' old wave heavy metal band, like Rush, it were: 'Look at me. I'm in a band. I'm on a 10-foot stage. I'm above you.' There isn't the same

rapport. I fookin' 'ate that. We haven't got that attitude, that Sabbath, Deep Purple attitude. We believe that it's t'kids what count. Like, we'll put on show whatever... I could break me back, but I'd still play show even if I had t'be carried on stage. We wouldn't pull out of show just because we didn't have a proper soun'check or bollocks like that."

Whatever their own sympathy for punk, it could hardly be said that the punks had ever displayed a reciprocal sympathy for heavy metal, old wave or new. Didn't that smart a little?

"No doubt some would think so," Elliott replied. "But fact that Johnny Rotten might not like us don't mean it's goin' t'put me off likin' him. If I ever heard an interview where Rotten or Joe Strummer were sayin', 'Oh, Def Leppard – wharra load of bollocks!' I'd just say, 'Fair enough, he don't like us.' Tha's no reason fer me to go an' break all me Clash albums in half and say, 'I don't like you any more.'"

CLARK HAD ALREADY made one distinction between the old guard of heavy metal and its more recent youthful manifestation. Elliott thought there was an even greater difference.

"Frankly," he said, after some pause, "I don't think t'old wave of heavy metal bands are a patch on t'new wave. I'm not talkin' just about us now. You compare people like Purple and Sabbath wi' UFO, wi' Michael Schenker. Purple and Sabbath aren't in t'same category. I mean, Sabbath were just really heavy. No light or shade, no melody. UFO and to a certain extent Judas Priest, there's more variety wi' them. It's a totally different sound. Like wi' us it's more commercial. Some of our stuff, like 'Rock Brigade', if that ever came out as a single, it'd be commercial. It wouldn't just appeal to heavy metal fans. You can't compare summat like that wi' 'Paranoid' or 'Child In Time'. It's short, punchy. Its three minutes. It's straight though. Bangbangbang. Verse, chorus, verse, chorus, guitar solo, stop. That's it."

They didn't, then, approve of the old *Ben-Hur*-length guitar solos (and bass and drum solos) much favoured by their predecessors? They certainly didn't.

"Guitar solos are borin'," Elliott stated unequivocally.

"That's why we don't do any," Clark hiccupped. "We don't have half-hour drum solos like John Bonham wi' Zeppelin. We think it's borin'. We try to strike a balance between what Sabbath were doin' and what the fookin' Clash are doin'."

As far as the press was concerned, though, they were more likely to be treated with the derision traditionally reserved for Black Sabbath than with the often sycophantic reverence afforded The Clash: they would most often be seen as a kind of desperate joke, I told them.

"I can't understand that, to be honest," Elliott said. "In any kind of music – be it punk or heavy rock, or even country & western – there's always a brilliant artist and there's always a shit artist. Like, in heavy metal, where you get a really good band, someone like UFO, you'll also get your Motörhead. I think Motörhead are fookin' terrible. I saw Motörhead at Sheffield City Hall. After two numbers I had to put me fingers in me ears [*I knew the feeling*]. Lemmy's not got the sweetest o' voices at best of time. That night he had a cold. He sounded like a ferret bein' strangled.

"Wharr' I'm sayin' is there's good and there's bad in all »

The new Lords of Denim

sorts of music. But the press always seem to slag heavy rock wi'out thinkin'. Do you know why?" he puzzled.

I didn't. I simply pleaded guilty.

"I just don't see why they do it," Elliott continued, immersed now in the argument, giving his tonsils a hell of an airing. "I can't see how they do it. The Clash might be great, excitin' an' that – but musically they're not a patch on UFO. In my opinion, heavy rock is the second best music for the actual musical competence of people in't bands. Jazz rock I'd put top.

"People like Chick Corea and Billy Cobham, musically they're brilliant. To listen to I think they're borin'. I mean, one like... John McLaughlin – now he's probably t'best guitarist in't world. I dunno, but I couldn't watch him play live, sittin' cross-legged on t'bloody floor. I'd rather watch Chuck Berry play three notes and duckwalking, you know. I mean, you go to a concert, you expect summat to be goin' on. You don't want to see someone sittin' cross-legged on a bit of carpet sayin' prayers for audiences before he starts playin' guitar. I'd rather watch Clash, frankly."

Elliott pauses for breath, I rinse out my ears.

"I think," he says, "the majority of heavy rock bands are musically more talented than the majority of new wave bands. And probably put on a better show, too. I'm not sure, though – I imagine a band like The Boomtown Rats might put on a good show. But bands like the UK Subs, I imagine they'd be totally useless live, 'cos they're totally useless on record. That Charlie Arper, I think he's a waste of time. He looks old enough to be me grandad."

So you resent the fact that the press characterises heavy metal bands and their audiences simply as moronic headbangers?

"Course I do," Elliott said. "There is a lot of talent there. It really does annoy me that the press will knock a band 'cos they're labelled heavy rock. They say they're just another joke band, they can't play. But if they took the time to be totally unbiased and watched the bands they'd see a lot of people who can really play. Like Steve 'ere."

He threw his thumb over his shoulder at Clark, who was trying to light one of the two cigarettes he could obviously see in his mouth. "Steve can really play."

He paused dramatically.

"Steve were trained classical," he declared like a triumphant parent, commending his child on his first heart transplant operation.

I wondered, though, whether he thought that most heavy rock/HM bands didn't actually invite ridicule with their costumes, light shows, lasers, dry ice, leathers, perms and juvenile mysticism.

"There's summat in that," he said, sounding like Len Fairclough pondering a foreign body in his pint. "But I don't think the songs and the music do."

Clark took his nose out of his beer.

"I don't know what the kids think or what the press thinks," he said, his words sliding down his tongue like a runaway toboggan down the north face of the Eiger, "but when we do a gig, we don't think we're heavy metal. For me, someone like Black Sabbath, Motörhead or Van Halen – that's heavy metal. We're not into noise. We like volume, but it's got to be nice. We're trying to make music that's appealing and exciting. If you like quiet bits, we've got quiet bits in our show..."

I told him I couldn't hear them for the noise. He ignored me.

"...If you like loud bits, we do that too."

Elliott jumped in quickly to stress the variety of Def Leppard's material.

"You can't say all our songs are the same. There might be a basic

similarity because they're all hard rock songs, so you're going to get your guitar solo and your wailing vocals an' all that nonsense. But we do all sorts of different things. Some of the songs we do are slow, some we do are ridiculously fast, some we do are quiet, some we do are loud. And we do some that are fast and slow in the same song."

A veritable Noah's Ark of variety!

I WAS PREPARED, AFTER an incoherent outburst from Steve Clark about the virtuosity of mad kraut guitarist Michael Schenker, to go on to the next point on the agenda. Elliott had been thinking, though.

"Frankly," he said, "I can see your point, where you say bands like us might be inviting criticism because of the dry ice and the leather trousers and smoke bombs. But there's a certain obligation, certain unwritten rules you have to stick to. People expect things of you.

"If we ever did a tour of your Hammersmith Odeons and what have you, we no doubt would use dry ice in slow bits and open with an intro tape and have fookin' explosions every other second. It adds to the visual side of it. That's what people expect.

"But," he said darkly, "the music press would just go, 'Phahblahblah – it was all dry ice, leather trousers, open-necked shirts, gold medallions, wailin' guitar solos, all the usual stuff – let's get back to the bar...'"

I wondered where he had seen me in action.

"Thing is," he said, and I could sympathise with him, "because heavy rock has always been knocked, it will always be knocked."

"But," said Clark, "it'll go on. It's existed for 10 years, despite all t'other trends. And it'll last longer than mod or ska, or whatever revival it is."

This was unusually coherent for the guitarist. I asked him if he might explain the continuing appeal of heavy rock. He tried, rather bravely in the circumstances.

"People who listen to heavy rock are workin' -class kids. They're not interested in fashions and trends. They don't give a shit about what's happenin' in t'papers. They stick by what they know they like. They don't change image every week. Just 'cos there's supposed to be a mod revival, they won't sell all their Judas Priest albums and rush out an' get Secret Affair's album. They'll think, 'Fook it, I'll listen to what I want to listen to.' They won't change clothes just 'cos it's fashionable. If they want to wear flares, they'll fuckin' well wear 'em."

CLARK'S FLEETING REFERENCE to Secret Affair had conveniently brought us into the '80s. I wanted to know what Def Leppard thought of various performers. With no real idea in mind I reeled off a few names: Springsteen, Costello, the Pretenders, The Specials.

"We don't dislike any of 'em," Clark smiled cheerfully.

"The Pretenders," grinned Elliott. "Chrissie Hynde. I'd like to marry 'er one day."

"We don't dislike anybody really," Clark belched. "We like everythin'."

"I can't stand bands like Specials," Elliott blurted, destroying Clark's magnanimity. "An' what's that other load of tit tha's just coom out? The Beat. Can't stand 'em either. Tha's mod. Don't appeal to me. As far as I can see they're just revampin' an' ruinin' old songs. 'Tears Of A Clown' by Smokey Robinson were brilliant, but Beat have done it and I think it's a load o' rubbish. Same wi' t'Specials. An' Madness, I don't know if I like 'em or 'ate 'em, 'cos every time I watch 'em I just crease up. They're really funny t'watch. They remind me of Split Enz, to be honest, the way they kind of lumber about like idiots."

Clark is awake again. "Bands like Specials and Madness and the mods and th'parkas an' all that shit," he said, "all they're doin' is just revampin' what was happenin' in 1966. But what we're doin' isn't revampin' 1969 heavy metal. We're takin' them roots, but we're buildin' on 'em."

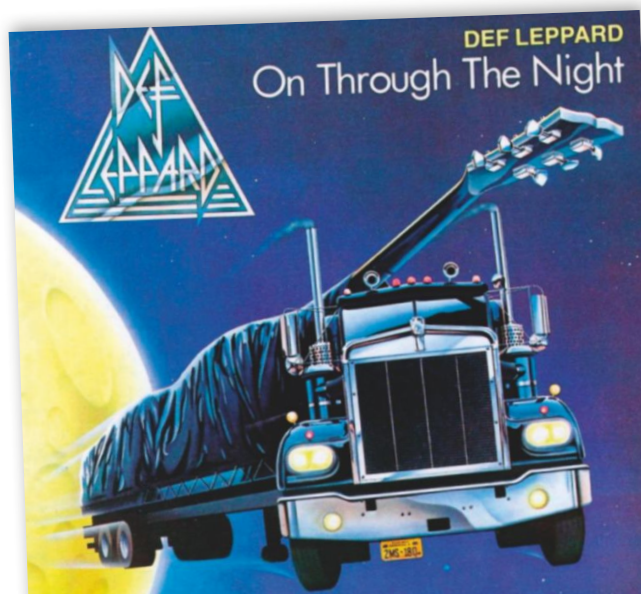
Exactly the same could be claimed for The Specials and ska, I protest.

"I don't know that much about ska," Elliott intervened tartly, "all I know is that they're revampin' summat that's older than heavy rock and they're not gettin' slagged for it. They're revampin' 1964 or whenever... like the

mods. Like, two or three year ago, The 'Oo were borin' old farts. Now they're t'heroes of all t'mods. Does that mean in 18 months their mod audience of now is goin' to be walking about wi' kind of Indian waistcoats wi' long dangly tassels?

"Ireckon," Elliott calculated, "that by about 1983, we should have all these parkas thrown on t'fire and they'll be gettin' headbands owt of cupboard again."

This argument had a certain logic; but weren't they really deluding themselves? Didn't even their kind of new wave heavy metal actually depend upon its predictability? The closer they stuck to the established clichés of the genre – in appearance,



sound and presentation – surely the greater the chance of success? They weren't really straying too far away from classic HM themes of sexual dominance, celebrations of hedonism, macho posing, apocalyptic ranting about the end of the world.

"Alright," Elliott argued. "So there are clichés in what we do. At same time I could run through thousands of punk songs that are all about the same old punk clichés. There they are, singing, 'I wanna be an anarchist, I don't wanna conform, I'm on the dole, I've got no money an' life's so hard...' All that crap. So you get some heavy metal band singing about death and destruction, astral trips t'moon an' all that. But we haven't got songs about death and destruction... wi' t'exception of 'When The Walls Come Tumblin' Down'. That's the only one. Most of our songs are more poppy than anything else."

"If you listen to 'Walls'," Clark said, "you'll realise that it don't revive all those things about death and destruction that you had in '69. It's lookin' forward. We wrote tha' songs perhaps a year before all this crap came around in Iran and Afghanistan. If you listen to the words: *All the people came together in fear of the end...*"

Yes?

"Well, it means something," Clark insists. "It's a prediction. It's not going back over that old Black Sabbath shit."

"It's in the future tense," Elliott added, trying, presumably, to be enlightening. "If you ever get the chance to read t' words when album comes out, you'll see that they explain exactly what would happen if there's a massive atomic war. If there is ever an atomic war, I reckon that 90 per cent of those lyrics will prove to be accurate about what'll happen."

He paused for a moment, considering this.

"Give or take the odd thing," he said at length. "Like the women bein' *'captured an' chained'*."

"That's a cliché," Clark said, farting wetly.

"Maybe," said Elliott. "But the bit about *'national suicide'*... you will get a lot of people killing themselves. And, like, *'America fell to the ground'* – you're goin' t' get buildin's fallin' down, you're goin' t' get kids left crippled, whether it's wi' atomic rays or wha'ever."

"Whole cities fallin' down," repeated Clark dreamily.

"A lot of it'll be like that. Of course," Elliott added modestly, "I'm not sayin' that I'm some kind of messiah who can see into the future."

"I'd like you to know that I haven't got one Black Sabbath album," Clark admitted suddenly, as if this had been haunting him since childhood.

QUICKLY ASKED ELLIOTT what Def Leppard thought about the other bands with whom they've been associated in the vanguard of the new wave of heavy metal. I mention Japan and Girl.

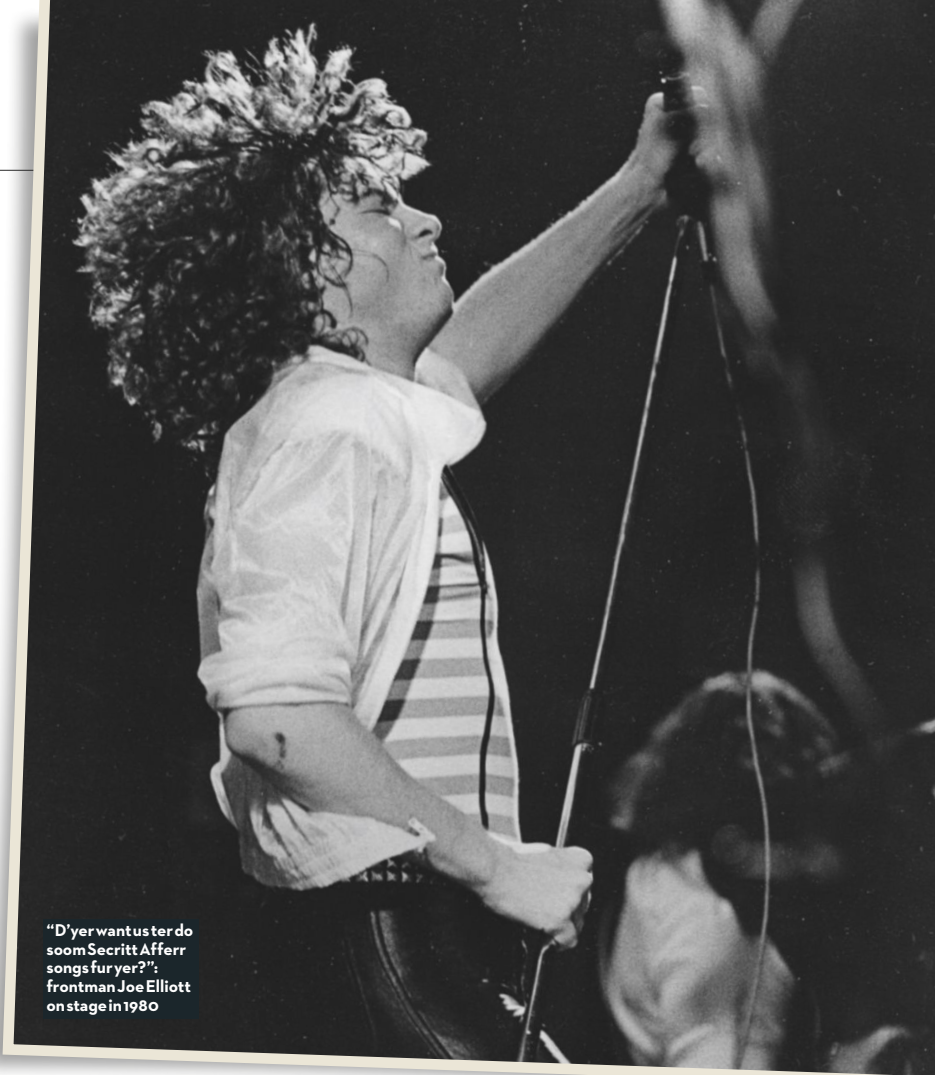
"I don't think Japan are heavy metal," he said authoritatively. "I don't think Japan are anything near to heavy metal. Japan to me are a brilliant band. I've got *Adolescent Sex* and I think it's a great album. But it's not heavy metal. The fastest song on it's a Barbra Streisand song, 'Don't Rain On My Parade'."

"I've never heard Girl, I can't really comment on them. But to be honest, I don't think they've got a future. Their image is all wrong."

"Yeah," said Clark. "How could a heavy metal audience freak out in front of a group that looks like a gang of transvestites?"

"I like Japan," Elliott insisted. "I saw 'em supporting Blue Öyster Cult. But if ever there were double bill that shouldn't have been, it were that. Wi' Blue Öyster Cult, you've got songs like 'Born T' Be Wild', 'an they attract a lorrer bikers an' tha'. An' Japan come on, an' they've got long hair and they wear makeup an' they look a bit, you know, poufish. An' they were gerrin' all this stick from audience: 'Gerroff, you fookin' poufs... Gerroff, you fookin' wimmin'."

"An' kids I've spoke to last couple of days say they saw Girl wi' UFO and they thought they were a bunch of poufters. I'm not sayin' they are poufs. They're probably not. But I don't think they've got a future wi' that image."



"D'yer want uster do soom Secritt Afferr songs furer?": frontman Joe Elliott on stage in 1980

"We're not into noise. We like volume, but it's got to be nice"

"I've been in trouble before for sayin' that birds don't buy records. But I don't believe women buy as many records as blokes. An' I reckon they'll appeal more to birds. An' I don't think birds go to as many concerts or buy as many records. Of course, you've got your exceptions wi' t' Rollers where it were totally all birds. An' a lot of birds probably buy disco records. There are bound to be exceptions. But I think there's a bigger percentage of t' lads that go to concerts."

Elliott is convinced of Def Leppard's own commercial success, though he admits it might not have been possible without the commercial breakthrough last year of both Judas Priest and UFO. I ask him why he thinks those bands finally found commercial success after years (15 between them) of unsuccessful stabs at the chart.

"They got airplay for a start," he said. "They tried to be more commercial. They made better records. They made commercial records. They didn't try to do in the studio what they do on stage. They made really good heavy rock albums instead of average heavy rock albums."

"They realised," added Clark, "that people don't want to see Jimmy Page playin' a 20-minute guitar solo wi' t' violin bow. It's out now. At same time, you don't want to go t' see t' Damned, who don't play a guitar solo all night. They want summat in-between. Summat between the Dooleys and Black Sabbath."

"The fookin' Dooleys?" Elliott asked, utterly confused. "Whar rayer talkin' about now?"

"We're the Dooleys wi' goolies," Clark attempted to explain.

"Why do you keep bringing up the fookin' Dooleys?" Elliott demanded, still confused. "What 'ave we got ter do wi' t' Dooleys?"

"We're in t' middle," Clark struggled to clarify his statement. "People are fed up wi' bands shoutin' about anarchy. There 'as t' be a balance between bands like Rainbow, bands wi' ripped knees in t' jeans, and Genesis. An' I think the balance is us. We can play but we can still *roar*."

Elliott looked at Clark, looked at me, looked confused. I was going to ask Clark to elaborate upon this point, but I didn't.

He'd fallen back upon the bed, unconscious. *Allan Jones* •

“It’s outlaw music”

“It has Vaseline in it,” say **THE CRAMPS, “so naturally it offends.”**

After a long journey, Lux Interior and Poison Ivy deliver a debut album, and wow as many people as they outrage – which is a lot. Says Lux: “We want to become unforgettable.”

— NME MARCH 29 —

THE NORMALLY MILD-MANNERED offstage figure of Lux Interior twists and writhes his face in a rare show of angry emotion... If looks could kill. Lux looks like he could spit a bucket of blood. All him and Poison Ivy Rorschach did was to walk into the buffet bar on York station and within seconds the entire room is staring at them.

Lux is wearing his habitual black undertaker’s coat, plastic trousers and a shiny top hat. Ivy trails him lovingly in gold-lamé pants and a pair of severe diamanté spectacles. For some reason the combination has tickled the imagination of all the other occupants of the buffet. They gawp over cheese rolls, their mouths a perfect question mark. Some people titter and nudge. Some people are outraged and point accusingly, openly offended at Lux’s appearance. Given the opportunity, they would like to exercise some physical violence on his large and harmless exterior.

It’s exactly the same on a train heading for Edinburgh where The Cramps are to play for many of their most fevered and committed fans. Lux looms down the corridor in crepuscular silence, oblivious to the horror on the faces of all the mothers who hide their children from this nasty man. Eventually some oafs start to laugh out loud, seemingly unaware of their own intense anonymity. Lux echoes their laughter back at them and the situation is suddenly ugly until Ivy hurries him towards the relative safety of a dining compartment.

After 15 years of being jeered at, Mr Interior is getting immune to the insults. “It isn’t an act we suddenly thought of, to look like this. I’ve always been a freak. The first gig we ever played at CBGB’s, we were completely out of tune for 45 minutes and the club owner Hilly Kristal told us we sounded like a total joke.”

Five years later, a lot of people would probably endorse Kristal’s opinion in spades. By much common consent The Cramps are inept musicians, actors, dumb Yanks. Another favourite line of reasoning goes like this: they’re so bad they’re good; they’re the best worst band in the world, amusing cult artefact that crawled out of a

mausoleum one day, like extras from *The Tomb Of Ligeia*. It’s true that they don’t like being in the sun too much (although they have to keep warm), but Ivy comes from Sacramento, California, and not Providence, Rhode Island.

Quite why they inspire this strange mixture of open hatred and patronising possessiveness is baffling to The Cramps. Although they admit that their appearance encourages »

LISA HAUN / GETTY



"We don't exclude anything, we believe in it all": Cramps co-founders Lux Interior and Poison Ivy, who met when the latter was hitchhiking in Sacramento, California, in 1972



a certain degree of suspended disbelief, they are very serious indeed about their ultimate ambitions.

Lux picks through a dead chicken and addresses the table. “When A&M in America sent out their guideline to the record stores they described us as a cult new-wave band who’d just recorded an album in Nashville. That really insulted us. Apart from the fact that we made the record in Memphis, to be labelled as a cult group is so horrible; it implies an elitism that we don’t want. I think The Cramps are a very commercial band. Once, our biggest ambition was just to get on a stage, but now it’s to aim for some kind of world domination.”

Ivy qualifies the statement with shy assurance, calling forth the double rock’n’roll spectres of blind faith and raw power. These two commodities were straining to breaking point long before The Cramps first came to England as support band on the Police tour of ’79. Night after night they fought long and hard against antipathy and collective blandness, and they didn’t stand a chance.

This time The Cramps are headlining a more sensible tour of small halls, colleges and clubs in an effort to convince Great Britain of their undoubted magnificence. So let’s state once and for all before we step into fiction that this group are not a contrived garage band with a penchant for Charles Addams and *The Munsters*. On a good night The Cramps make time stand still; they are utterly convincing proof of the scrambled mechanisms that constitute classic rock’n’roll. They live out Lux Interior’s assertion that any great simple rock’n’roll music mixes with any other – and anyone who can’t appreciate The Cramps’ vitality and surrender to the rhythm is missing the whole point that has fuelled the genre since Jerry Lee Lewis destroyed his first 88 and Little Richard dipped into his first makeup bag.

In New York, The Cramps are not very popular with the cliques of art-conscious new-music frauds. The American press would rather they disappeared for good. The nucleus of the group converged on New York City in late 1975. Lux and Ivy already had a blueprint based around an obsessive love affair with vintage rockabilly that stemmed from prolonged exposure to Cleveland’s premier radio stations and the genius of Alan Freed’s “Moondog”. The pair spent years scouring through the bins of every record store from Akron to Tallahassee assimilating a collection of oddities that would fashion their addiction for gone vinyl.

“When I met Ivy in California I was a psychedelic guru. I was tripping out. LSD and plastic were my biggest influences, more so than music. I’d always liked these weird records with strange-sounding names and after I started to listen to rockabilly I couldn’t listen to anything else. Joe Sasy [an eminent rockologist] said that it demands the most inexplicable leap of faith in any musical phenomenon. It’s such a wild, emotional sound; it demands that you question your own life.”

Lux looks down at his hand, a mangled confusion of purple bruises and open-sore cuts, the result of his nightly confrontation with this nation’s club ceilings. Apparently his lifestyle is not only a question, it’s an answer. “If people say I look silly, well I don’t feel it. When I’m trying to get gone I don’t think of anything else except getting out of my mind. It’s self-hypnosis, a different level of consciousness. I don’t feel the pain until afterwards, but when I smash my hand through a ceiling there’s nothing, it’s a trance.”

Ivy whispers her consent. “An abstraction, a state of nothingness.”

LUX IS DISAPPOINTED when he can’t reach that edge, even though it means he pays all his wages out in repairs to angry club owners. When the band played in Edinburgh, he clambered to the top of a precarious amplifier stack and hurled himself head first into the crowd. This time the manager of the hall, the Astoria, joined him on the boards and attempted to pull the power, but somehow Lux fended him off to the delight of all those of us straining



against a thin line of disgruntled bouncers. Even so, Lux feels that recent events have stifled The Cramps’ natural spontaneity. “When me and Ivy managed the band, we were a lot crazier. Sometimes I feel just like this week’s rock band. I want the audience to be surprised and shocked.”

Interior likens their music to the equation between voodoo, religion and catatonic music which inspired the afterbirth of ’50s rock’n’roll in the American South. “We’ve gone out of our way to deny any involvement in black magic, but we rely on voodoo in the same way that Sam The Sham and Creedence did. That’s the real thing, too. We don’t meet in Haiti and hold mass rituals, but we believe in certain powers. We have candles on stage for atmosphere, not effect, and we use Schwab’s Jinx-Removing sprays and John The Conqueror floor wax and – what’s that perfume called, Ivy?”

“Uh... Atom Bomb? No, Tigress. It all works. You don’t need to know anything about the occult to become powerful; you can feel it alone in a room.”

Lux and Ivy are pretty kooky, but they’re not deadpan stupid. The much-laboured and ultimately derogatory definition of their music as only a part of the trash aesthetic misses the point. For some of the current tour The Cramps have gone out with The Fall, labelmates on Miles Copeland’s IRS/Faulty Products shebang. Owing to a misunderstanding over double-headline status, the initial dates are beset with bad feeling and tantrums. After the Edinburgh night, The Fall’s lead singer condescends to offer Lux the advice that “you shouldn’t bother with all that Kiss theatrical shit. You don’t need it”, and The Fall’s manager insists on taking Lux in front of a mirror in order to show him how “ridiculous I look, to humiliate me”.

Obviously these slights are not just insulting and hurtful. “How can anyone tell me it’s theatrical? I’m sorry that we used the stage. That’s what a stage is for. I admit we’re still in love with a nonsense life, that we’re remnants from a time when we took acid and never came down, but I hate making sense all the time. I’ve had a million looks and a million names. In Sacramento I was Vip Vop, after the Isleys song. It’s on my driver’s licence.”

We talk about The Cramps’ overdue debut album, *Songs The Lord Taught Us*, produced in Memphis, Tennessee, by Alex Chilton. I wondered how they felt making a spiritual journey to the shrine of the musical form they have turned into a contemporary sound.

“It had to be an inspiration for us. In the South, rockabilly has overtones of fire and brimstone. It’s a fusion of country, R&B and holy-roller fundamentalism, the same way it was for Elvis. Those people drink strychnine and handle snakes and they also play Stratocasters; those are their rites. We’re coming from another territory, that’s all.

“But it isn’t a joke and the album title wasn’t a joke. Whichever Lord you believe in, we believe the Lord taught us those songs.”

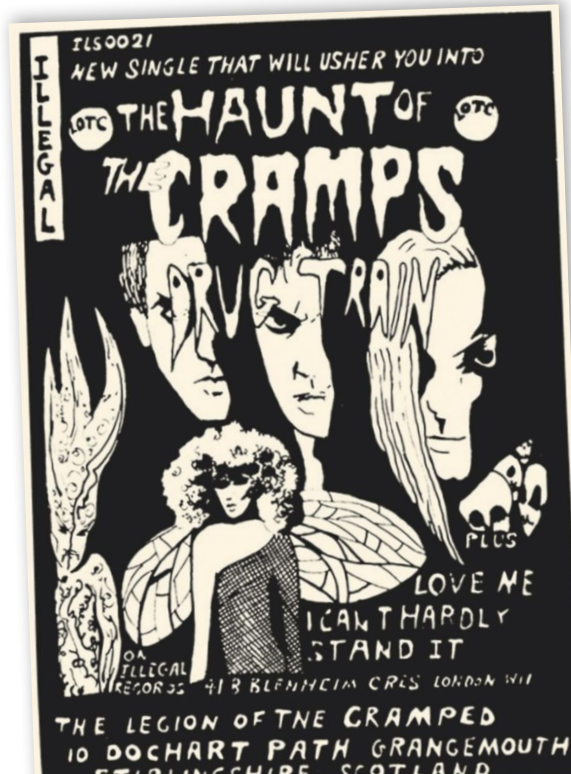
Are you religious in any more orthodox way?

“Well, I don’t want to go to heaven if there’s no hell. I see lots of both and

I want to live them both. We don’t exclude anything, we believe in it all.”

This acceptance of diversity can be traced and enjoyed throughout a range of material that belies their detractors. Cramps noise is an embodiment of forcefields like Chuck Pullens, Link Wray, Dick Dale, The Ventures, Surfari, Rivingtons and The Kingsmen. The first song they even un-learned was “Quick Joey Small” and amongst the outtakes on *Songs The Lord Taught Us* were an obscene version of “Louie Louie” and a cover of Tommy James’ “Hanky Panky”.

“The covers have to be songs that we could have written, and so is ‘Goo Goo Muck’. I think the only people who can judge it have to be living a rock’n’roll lifestyle. Be sexual beings. With rock’n’roll the search is over, it’s the end of a landscape. You can’t look at it like great art, it isn’t a painting or a sculpture, it’s outlaw music and it’s hard to do it right. It has Vaseline in it and naturally it offends.”



Ivy Rorschach dreamed the name Cramps one night as she lay in a semi-comatose stupor peering over an old Kinks album. "I wanted a name that implied a gang, something warped, a problem..."

Lux interrupts. "At the time in America there were no good band names any more. It was all Lightning Spot or Aerofeather, things that meant nothing. Everyone was into this sexual denial, hippy sensibility. We were called a glitter band..." He cackles immodestly. "The best thing about our audiences is that they're a mixture of the terminally unhip and the terminally hip. So you'll get a guy in a suit and tie standing next to someone with a nail through his head." (Which one's 'hip'? – Ed).

To this end The Cramps like their shows to be events and not just interludes in a social calendar. They've played to larger crowds but their forte is a club, at least somewhere where they can be seen and heard. "We don't want to be huge in a Madison Square Garden sense, but huge value-wise. We want to become unforgettable. Gene Vincent was never huge, but in many ways he's the biggest. Actually, Ricky Nelson was my first idol, Elvis was too strange..."

Ivy gazes at Lux with sultry admiration.

"You looked like Ricky Nelson back then."

HALFWAY THROUGH WRITING this thing I decided it needed a definite burst of adrenalin. There's only one way to appreciate The Cramps – on a stage – and a week after my notes had been pulled into some kind of shape I was suffering from withdrawal symptoms. The band's important London date in the Electric Ballroom turned out to be a minor letdown, predictably enough. They suffered from the most baffling sound problems and an audience who are still not ready to deliver themselves from all evil.

Because of this incoherence it was only really possible to enjoy The Cramps as spectacle, and from that perspective it's obvious that even on a bad night they are the perfect rock'n'roll band with images as attractively ugly as all the great performers.

Lux Interior is a naturally brilliant white singer straight out of the Presley mould with a line in lunacy that elevates him to the pantheon of the true eccentrics. Like Joy Division's Ian Curtis, Lux is a potent, underrated vocalist and he's here now.

Some people will insist that the thing is dead, sunk in a sea of safeness, but pessimism from a position of isolation and inverted idealism can't explain the appeal of an animal as untamed as The Cramp monsters. Besides which, those reports have been greatly exaggerated – rock in the graveyard is highly recommended.

One reason why The Cramps are as funny as they are serious is the fact that all of them are fans with fantasies fresh from overexposure to the pleasures of the flesh and the 45.

By way of an interlude, here are some of their favourite records:

Lux's Top 10

- "It's A Gas" – Alfred E Neumann
- "Mama Oow Mow Mow" – The Livingtons
- "Ballad Of Thunder Road" – Robert Mitchum
- "The First Singles From Outer Space" (NASA & The Sputniks)
- "Paralysed" – Legendary Stardust Cowboy
- "Yum Yum Yamaha" – Carol Connors
- "What Is A Fisteris?" – The Joker (AKA Mad Daddy)
- "Girl On Death Row" – Duane Eddy/Lee Hazlewood
- "Surfari" – Ward Darby & The Raves
- "Red Hot Mama" – Wayne Williams & The Sure Shots

Ivy's Top 10

- "Funnell Of Love" – Wanda Jackson
- "Golden Boy" – Tommy Jim Beam & The Four Fifths
- "Flamingo" – The Charades
- "Harlem Nocturne" – The Viscounts
- "Whistle Bait" – Collins Kids
- "She Set Me Free" – Charlie Feathers
- "Muleskinner Blues" – Dolly Parton
- "I Want Some Of That" – Kai Ray
- "You're Gonna Miss Me" – 13th Floor Elevators
- "Barracuda" – The Standells

"There aren't too many Brian Epsteins or Malcolm McLarens around in the States." Bryan Gregory, one half of The Cramps' guitar front, sits in his room bemoaning the lateness of his group's discovery and the reactionary nature of Americans in general.

"There are so many dull people; you can see that everywhere, it's so apparent. Even down to the fact that Americans have no creative shoes like they do here, where shoes have style, they're sleek and sexy. In America they're all" – Bryan searches for the appropriate insult – "hippies," he spits. "It's so boring."

Bryan Gregory and drummer Nick Knox, the other occupant of the room, are unknown factors in Cramps terms. Lux is the Garbageman, the wordman, the focal point and mouthpiece; Ivy is musical director, part-time manager, full-time skipper of an impossible team. Bryan and Nick have a reputation for being psychotic and they probably are. An impromptu talk held in Bryan's room does nothing to dispel the notion that these two honchos are quite happy to keep a distance from any aspect of normality, that they are synched into the communal doctrine of image and madness which oft befalls the hapless victims of brutal upbringing.

When Knox was a child, his father larruped him into order and didn't care about the weals. Under their Cleveland home, Pa indulged his love for ultimate deterrents in the form of a large and totally illegal arsenal, including a selection of police and sub-machine guns. Nick's first drum was a military model with a crank to keep the beat.

Knox is a terse, witty character with a nonchalant stare halfway between amused and bored. He keeps a tight rein on words. When Miles Copeland asked him why he spoke so little, Knox told him he had water on the brain which froze in cold weather.

Knox guffaws loudly and then starts to nod off. I ask Bryan why it took so long for The Cramps to get signed in New York City. *Songs The Lord Taught Us* could and should have been made three years ago, and even now the American release is weeks behind ours. "It made us struggle harder, which could be a good thing... but after a time you wonder if maybe they don't understand. We're popular in New York but you wouldn't know it. I got real angry when bands were getting signed after three months and we'd been around for ages. That was so unfair – they got the rewards immediately."

The reasons for his snubbing are obvious, though. Even by New York standards, The Cramps are peculiar, and to a record company their music is impenetrable. They are revivalist in a sense, but there's nowhere for a dull A&R man to plug in his new-wave marketing index. They don't even have a goddamn bass player! It'll never catch on.

Gregory has plans. He wants to direct a black horror film à la Roger Corman. "Lux is going to produce the next album, but I'm more interested in films incorporating some aspect of the band. I've got phenomenal ideas but no

bucks. I see that in the future..." Bryan drifts into conjecture.

Has he ever acted? "No, but I'm sure I could."

Knox: "I have."

Gregory: "But nothing major, no plays or anything?"

Knox: "I nearly got arrested once for being drunk and disorderly in a restaurant while I was acting. I was amusing my small circle of friends." Nick trails off into an involved story about falling off chairs. "The police in Cleveland don't bother with me. I look like a law-abiding citizen."

The last impressions I had about The Cramps before I stumbled off into the night are all totally unrelated.

One was Lux Interior's overview of modern urban living. "I've always thought of the city not as a centre of civilisation but as a jungle, and all the people who think they're so sophisticated are kidding themselves. The buildings don't make any difference; we're just the same as cavemen."

The other was the cautionary tale of ageing rockabilly original Tex Rubinowitz, whom The Cramps played with in Memphis. Rubinowitz is a perfect example of that correlation between religion, narcosis and the muse. Every night when he's touring, Tex gets completely pickled, topped, blotto, picks up any women who will and smashes anything that looks like it needs dismantling. After that he goes home to his Baptist mother and indulges a gargantuan guilt complex.

That kind of style money can never buy. The Cramps know all about style instinctively. How could they be bettered? For what you are about to receive, may the Lord make you truly gone. Amen. *Max Bell* •

"I want the audience to be surprised and shocked"

1980

JANUARY - MARCH

Masters of gothic gloom

MM FEB 16 Joy Division hone in on their vigorous despair.

UNIVERSITY OF
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FEBRUARY 8

AH, THE HORROR, the horror... where's Colonel Kurtz? Somehow the demented Brando figure is there, spiritually leading the new dance. Like him, today's purveyors have witnessed the failure of wanton destruction, as epitomised by punk, and in turn have retreated inwardly.

But whereas he translated his thoughts into some nightmare paradise of his own creation, recent bands' introspections manifest themselves in tight, uneasy rhythms, simultaneously despondent and obsessively exhilarating. Coming too late to lose themselves in furiously simple thrashes, they've composed out of that same frustration something more complex, but equally immediate.

Joy Division are masters of this gothic gloom, and they're getting even better at it. Since they played London last November with the Buzzcocks, they've added new songs, more vigorous than their predecessors. Less colourful now, they're getting closer to the despair that's been the core of their work thus far, and they're honing in on it by twisting purplish plots round slower rhythms, bringing the bass even further to the fore and allowing Ian Curtis's knotted-brow singing greater expression.

In other hands their songs would collapse disastrously, but Curtis' controlled balladeering makes lines like "*I remember/ When we were young*" (from "*Insight*") one of the saddest statements in pop, which is after all the province of the young, and that sung to the sweetest, most melancholic tune, too.

Perversely, they didn't play the great last single, "*Transmission*", but the next, "*Love Will Tear Us Apart*", was tantalisingly aired; featuring synthesizer more heavily to lightening effect, it breaks away from the claustrophobia into clearer surrounds.

Optimism on the way? Whatever, I'm prepared to wait. *Chris Bohn*

ROB VERHORN/GETTY



A high-contrast, black and white photograph of Bernard Albrecht, the lead singer of Joy Division. He is captured in a moment of intense performance, singing into a vintage microphone. His eyes are closed, and his mouth is wide open, conveying a sense of raw emotion. He is wearing a dark, long-sleeved button-down shirt. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on his face and the microphone, and deep shadows elsewhere. The background is dark and out of focus.

Joy Division's Bernard Albrecht (né Sumner) and Ian Curtis (right), whose "knotted-brow singing" is gaining greater expression

1980

JANUARY–MARCH

“I don’t have to prove it to anyone”

Having bested his record company in court (and made the great *Damn The Torpedoes*), TOM PETTY is on top of the world. He’s playing huge shows, is pals with Springsteen, even doing his bit for charity. “I used to say, ‘Fuck the whales,’” he smiles, “but now I think we ought to save them too. Why not?”



"In America we've gone from small venues to large halls overnight": Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers at the Civic Auditorium, Santa Cruz, California, in 1980

GEORGE ROSE / GETTY

1980

JANUARY – MARCH



Touring the late-'79 breakthrough album *Damn The Torpedoes*, which reaches No 2 on the US *Billboard* chart

— NME MARCH 15 —

THE PICCADILLY HOTEL in Manchester is an anomalous modern structure slipped neatly inside a multi-storey car park – an injection of glass and concrete at the core of a wraparound helter skelter. The ethos behind such a building is entirely American, the accent on efficiency and impersonality.

A desk clerk surveys the lobby with a glazed smile. “You’re welcome,” he parrots awkwardly at every satisfied customer. “You’re welcome.” The expression grates absurdly. I look carefully at the man’s nose; it doesn’t appear to be growing.

Around the bar we have some stars tonight, local boys. The hotel is host to a ceremonial dinner and testimonial booze-up in honour of footballer Joe Corrigan. There’s much hearty banter and slapping of manly shoulders as the famous players mingle with their tight-knit mafia of showbiz personalities and a selection of thick-set men in penguin costumes who resemble off-duty policemen. As snippets of conversation drift nearer it becomes apparent that they are policemen.

A very large gentleman wheezes towards the bar. He identifies himself loudly as Bernard Manning, all-purpose TV comedian and personage. Mr Manning, fresh from the cover of the morning

tabloids where his imminent death was gleefully forecast, gathers his cronies around him and guffaws.

“Aye oop, lads,” he addresses the bar in general. “Aye oop, bloody press boys have got me bloody dead! Lose seven stone? Seven pounds more like.” The bar erupts sycophantically. Mr Manning’s diet is obviously in abeyance. He’s a card.

Across the lobby another party of informally dressed young men amble out of the door and get into a large coach. They aren’t footballers though. One of them is very blond, good looking in an angular, undernourished way – pretty you might say. The football mafia stare at the intruders and muffled comments pass between them; personal comments and sexual allusions. Fat pink faces distort into a dreadful hallucination and their gaze turns to photographer Anton Corbijn’s metal suitcase. Perhaps he’s from the *Daily Mirror*; perhaps we’re snooping on their private “do”. Anton, who is Dutch, doesn’t have the faintest idea of what’s going on.

He’s lucky.

THREE HOURS LATER, a crowd of youthful Mancunian citizens are filing out of the Apollo in high humour. Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers have just finished the second night of their British mini-tour.

It had begun slowly. The audience was quiet, rarely letting polite enthusiasm extend into any celebration. Petty chastised them gently. Were they all on mandies? But by the end of the evening the Heartbreakers have won their reaction – a genuine one. They play four encores, including superbly weighty versions of the Everlys’ “Girls, Girls, Girls” and Eddie Cochran’s “Somethin’ Else”. The freshness of their attitude coupled with the quality of their... what the hell... musicianship is gratifying rather than surprising.

Tom Petty’s most recent album, *Damn The Torpedoes*, is placed at No 2 in the American charts; it may knock Pink Floyd off that wall any day now. He has two singles somewhere in the Top 30 and a third one waiting to join them in the wings.

For now Tom Petty has arrived and all that entails: the cover of *Rolling Stone*,

features in *Newsweek*, media pressures, what is euphemistically termed “heavy” management.

But it wasn’t always like this. Petty languished out 1974 in the backroom at Shelter Records, a label with a funky backwoods image, a small roster of idiosyncratic artistes and a homely method of promotion that suited JJ Cale, sunk Dwight Twilley without trace and upset Petty’s increasingly ambitious programme.

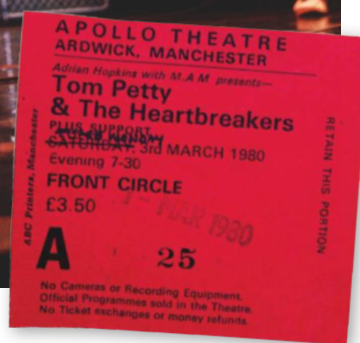
Prior to the Heartbreakers, Petty fronted a local Gainesville, Florida, band called Mudcrutch, a group he describes as “too peculiar for the time – there was such diversity in the material, there was no way we could survive.”

Mudcrutch eventually pared down to the Heartbreakers, leaving behind an unreleased album and one single, “Wild Eyes”/

“Depot Street”, the latter being a slight reggae-tinged tune guaranteed to attain instant obscurity in 1975.

The first Tom Petty album proper, released in 1976, was a curiously adventurous project for an unknown group, coming at a time when American airwaves were overstocked with complacent metal and pompous soft-rock regurgitations.

The band toured Britain during the height of the new-wave explosion and were bemused to find



themselves labelled in a similar category. It was a backhanded compliment that recognised Petty's talents for offering something new by bracketing him with the punks, even though his own tastes veered more towards the classic period of LA rock, stopping off to pay homage to Bob Dylan, Neil Young and the mid-'60s influx of Atlantic soul and Stax R&B staples, his acknowledged favourites.

A second album, *You're Gonna Get It*, received a more muted response, too much more of the same thing.

Throughout last year, Petty and the band were involved in a celebrated lawsuit with their current company MCA. There were no tours, an album recorded with Jimmy Iovine was put on ice by the American High Courts and the singer declared himself bankrupt. And now, ironically, Tom Petty finds himself in the position of being a hugely successful commodity, a face, living up to the expectations imposed on the likes of Bruce Springsteen.

He's managed by Elliot Roberts, who handles chores and buys the stamps for The Eagles, among others. The album responsible for all this, *Damn The Torpedoes*, has hoisted him above The Cars, Cheap Trick, The Knack. MCA couldn't be happier, Tom is their boy now – even if he is signed to a subsidiary label, Backstreet, overseen by the youngest tycoon in the business, Danny Bramson, a 27-year-old whose first album has sold more than one-and-a-half million copies.

TOM PETTY SITS in his seventh-floor hotel room overlooking Knightsbridge and smiles to himself. He is a very happy man indeed. Any advance warnings as to his tempestuous personality seem far-fetched now, alone together in a room. Petty drinks Coca-Cola and I drink his Jack Daniel's. He's on the wagon these days, having recently had his tonsils removed, a nasty goodbye to useless nodules when you're 28.

"I came here a bit before doc's orders," Petty drawls pleasantly. "Hospitals are dreadful places. I had three months of a really painful throat. I couldn't smoke cigarettes, have a joint, nothing. I haven't been that clear-headed for years. Some of my closest friends say it improved my character a great deal."

He chuckles and reaches for a Benson. "I can't live like a boy scout. As Mark Twain said when they told him to give up cigarettes or die, life ain't worth living without 'em."

The consequences of the operation offered Petty an ultimatum which he hasn't quite heeded – there was a danger that more live singing would affect his voice permanently and the British tour was severely truncated.

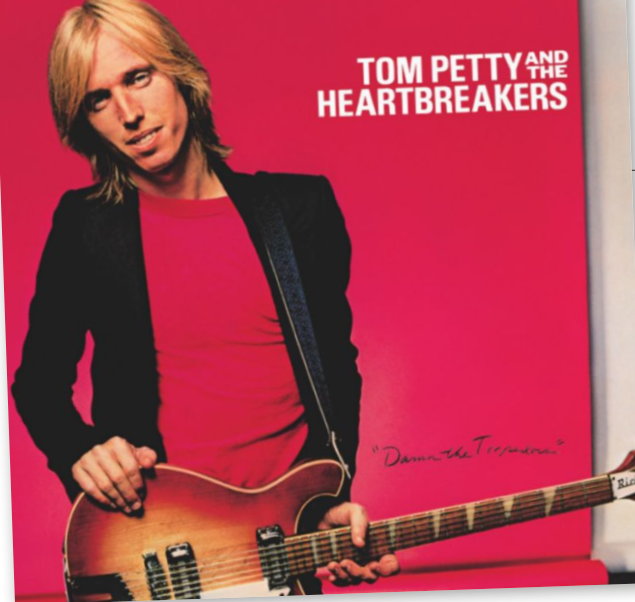
"I'd prefer to do the extended tour, because I like playing here – it's more of a challenge. In America we've gone from small venues to large halls overnight. Here they don't know the album. I get more satisfaction out of winning an audience round."

In Birmingham and Manchester, the Heartbreakers were almost starting off from scratch. Rows of seats at the rear remained empty and it wasn't until halfway through the show that the fans livened up. Petty insists that the set is designed that way anyway.

"I don't like bands with one sound that they play all the way through. I like textures – it makes people appreciate the slower stuff. It's not a rambunctious pace; it would be so easy to come out and rock and cause a riot. That's too simple. We're toying with the idea of playing more country songs now. Not Californian country rock, which became a bad word – it means drivel now."

Like The Eagles?

"Well, they're good at what they do. I think they're a good band." This doesn't quite ring



"I like textures – it makes people appreciate the slower stuff"

it's impossible to go somewhere and make up your own mind."

Generally he admits that there is a change in America for the better. "America's come a long way; I'm proud of America. If I'm gonna wave the ole US banner, I admire Cheap Trick and Neil Young for being loonier than anyone else. The main thing is, you can go to towns which were dead three years ago, places like St Louis, and there're hundreds of new bands all writing their own songs and all finding some kind of audience. That never happened before, unless you played Top 40. Now there's all these new audiences, that's healthy."

"Don't ask me what the music of the '80s will be though – just more of everything."

IN TOM PETTY'S book it's evident that anything that's rock'n'roll is fine and his comparatively recent success dictates a spirit of diplomacy. In 1976, Tom Petty straddled the divide between old and new with a knowing sneer. He was the up-and-coming gunslinger; he was going to be different his way. If most of his songs were about girls, the ins and outs of sexual relationships, rock'n'roll mythology, then his manner of presentation was assured to the point of arrogance.

His stage talk was deliberately incoherent and sullen, his vocabulary was straight-off-the-bat baseball parlance ("This is a song that I wrote about dis'girl" or "This one's about your general screw-up"). He shared Bruce Springsteen's love for the romantic image and the street-cool sass, always hep enough to stay close to the street but not dumb enough to get stuck on it.

"Well, we were the first American band who weren't punk who were doing that stuff, three-minute songs that weren't mush. Now, the first album doesn't sound as weird at all. I said a lot of things then that I regret, I was always shooting my mouth off. I was a big fan of a lot of that though;

I've always supported the lunatic fringe, because that's where it's all gonna come from. When we were here people always approached us as punk and we'd say, 'No, we're a rock'n'roll band.' We didn't fit that category. Then all we heard was punk this, punk that, and we said, 'Fuck punk!'

"We decided to let our hair grow till it's down to here, and they're starting to call us punks in America. It was absurd, these stupid labels. That's the time when they don't even know what a punk is in America, and one day I just said to a guy, as a joke, 'If you call me a punk again, I'm gonna cut ya.'"

Call
Tom Petty
the new
Springsteen
and he'll
cut you!

They took it seriously and printed it, big headlines, 'Call Tom Petty a punk and he'll cut you'. So now I get kids comin' up and asking me why I'm so down on new wave and I have to tell 'em – 'Fuck, I invented that new wave here for all you know.' I've always wanted that cleared up 'cos of the animosity it caused. The truth is that I'm glad we were here in '77. I used to laugh myself sick at the Sex Pistols' antics. Every day you could buy a paper and there was something outrageous going on."

PRIOR TO THE release of *Torpedoes* Petty's artistic life was shrouded in despair and depression. Any chance he had to capitalise on constant touring and a highly accessible image was threatened with extinction by a series of deadly lawsuits.

"Our first album didn't break until a year after we came here. We'd renegotiated a contract that said if Shelter was sold we'd the right to leave. That happened. Shelter was sold by ABC to MCA in one of those huge mergers that are happening every day. We assumed that we were then free and MCA said we weren't.

"Well, being kinda stubborn, I agreed to deliver an album but wouldn't take any money from them. I spent my own money making it and it was a very expensive record to make. Partly because of the lawsuits, it took 10 months. Then in the middle of recording MCA sued me, Shelter sued me, my publishing company sued me and so did a few other smaller people.

"MCA's a big dog for an individual to fight. I had nine lawyers contesting each case. While that's happening I've got constant offers from other record companies that would make me blush to tell you here.

"It reached the stage where it was almost funny. If I sing a song, do I own it? Me, the band and Jimmy Iovine [producer] were midway through and the US Marshalls were coming to the studio to steal the tapes, confiscate everything. We had to hide all the boxes, smuggle things in and out. I had to go on the stand and evade issues like, 'Where are the tapes? What songs have you written? Recite the lyrics.'

"I refused to do that. All they could do was beat me up mentally until I did it their way.

"Eventually I convinced the judge to let me go on a Californian tour so I could make some money. The MCA lawyers were telling the judge I couldn't do it because I'd incur all these debts and I couldn't show any security. So I said to the judge, 'But, Judge, there is no security in rock'n'roll', and he laughed and let me do it."

The resulting dates – the Lawsuit Tour (also known to posterity as the "Why MCA? Tour") – culminated in two sold-out shows in the Universal Amphitheatre, a large hall owned by MCA; an irony not lost on Petty. The booking agent and boss of the theatre was one Danny Bramson, who intervened between artist and company.

So was Petty satisfied with the outcome of his litigation?

"They didn't realise how serious I was. I spent half a million dollars of my own money, sold everything I had to get what was rightfully ours. It saved the group morale-wise, because I never believed that record would make it."

In America Petty maintains he has little or nothing to do with company men, preferring to let Bramson, Roberts and his English partner, Tony Dimitriadis, represent the Heartbreakers' interests. This managerial independence left British MCA somewhat in the dark with their new golden boy, and the fact they didn't provide any tour support for the band's five British dates did nothing to cement the relationship.

PETTY'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS the media is ambivalent, in line with the increased responsibilities that accompany mega-stardom.

There had been frantic last-minute negotiations between relevant parties to finalise this particular interview, and while the star of the show

accepted the questioning in good humour, I got the distinct impression that future media encounters would be charted out on a long-term graph. Bruce Springsteen doesn't talk to newspapers, neither does Neil Young, nor Joni Mitchell or Bob Dylan – and a man who stands every chance of joining and perhaps even surpassing all those luminaries isn't going to be spreading himself thin ever again.

It's obvious from talking to Petty that success demands a formal organisation to support it. In the past the band were "stricken with dreadful laziness, never used to be able to rehearse or take any time in the studio". Not any more. The production partnership of Petty and Iovine will be repeated in the summer and the two have a habit of calling each other daily to chart out the future.

Iovine has been in demand as a producer for several years now, numbering John Lennon (*Walls And Bridges*), Patti Smith ("Because The Night") and Bruce Springsteen among his clients, but none of them is as potentially explosive as Petty is now. The Heartbreakers' attention to detail encompasses a live show that sprawls majestically over nearly two hours – usually they're ready to quit before the audience. The set gives every impression of being spontaneous and loose, but is actually arranged to be the complete opposite. Where in the past Petty denied any involvement in theatrics and choreography, he is now in full command of every nuance. His own vocal performance is a staggering combination of the Byrds-like country delivery that is usually associated with his material, but it takes in a complete gamut of cross-references to the "classic" singers – Jagger, Bowie, Van Morrison, even Redding and Pickett.

Drummer Stan Lynch and keyboards rock Benmont Tench excel on harmonies. When Petty and Lynch duetted on John Sebastian's "Stories We Could Tell", the results would have nonplussed all those who hitherto refused to take the band seriously – The Everly Brothers didn't come into it.

The band's renditions of Solomon Burke's "Cry To Me" and The Isley Brothers' "Shout" are equally convincing, non-originals being integrated among Petty's own songs to give the act a sense of power and authority.

The only aspects of Petty's show that rankle now, and the elements that prevent him from aspiring to greatness, are the slightly silly raps that the singer uses in-between numbers. They work for one night but become predictable after three. That and guitarist Mike Campbell's occasional stage runs, which do nothing to increase the dignity of the group. Campbell just looks too nervous to carry off the role of dangerous performer and Petty's natural upstaging unsettles their balance as a rhythm-and-lead team par excellence.

It's clear that despite talk about group democracy this is Petty's show.

"The others all have cliques of fans who come to see them, but I'd stand out if I was the bassist, being blond and all. I think they're happy just to get the money. Benmont gets a much better shot on this last album.

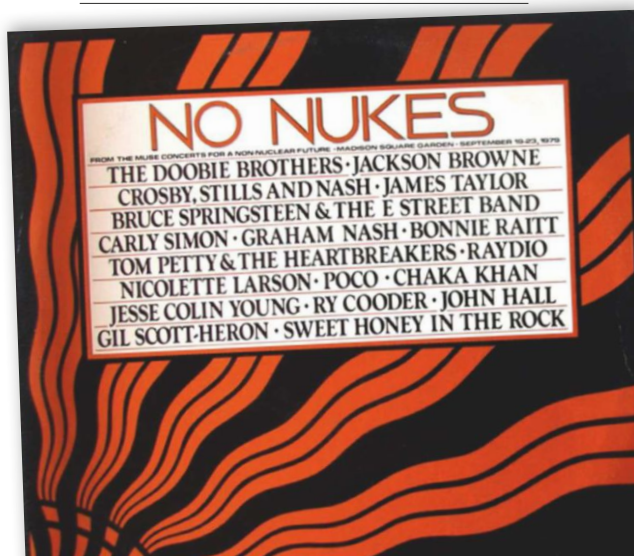
"We've always been cast in the 12-string sound; those Byrds comparisons. I know we sound like them at times, and God knows I've tried not to, but I get a bit tired of hearing them now. I don't think Roger McGuinn can do all the things people say he can. We're entirely different musicians really. Of course I'd be interested to see how he did 'Here Comes My Girl'. But he phoned me last year to ask if I had any songs for him and I couldn't come up with one that was suitable."

One of the smartest things Petty ever did was to appear on the "No Nukes" benefit on the same night as Springsteen. It was good for his credibility and increased his potential drawing power on the East Coast.

"While we were in limbo with the lawsuits I'd read all these articles in the *Los Angeles Times* about radiation creeping in. I'm not a very political guy, but I'm getting a bit worried. At least let the Russians bomb us – it would be so embarrassing to blow ourselves up.

"Mike [Campbell] and I discussed playing one of those benefits

"MCA's a big dog... I had nine lawyers contesting each case"





Petty's live show "gives every impression of being spontaneous and loose, but is actually arranged to be the complete opposite"

because we thought we'd draw a completely different crowd to the people Jackson Browne and Graham Nash get, the Woodstock types. When Bruce phoned me to play with him – and he doesn't usually have other groups on his bill – we decided to do it. We don't preach or send out leaflets. I haven't heard the album anyway – it doesn't look very interesting. I saw the show and that was enough.

"I've changed my mind about a lot of things. I used to say, 'Fuck the whales', but now I think we ought to save them too. Why not?"

It's possible to view this softening process with some cynicism, as part of the homogenised image that tends to accompany stardom, but Petty had no guarantee that *Damn The Torpedoes* would catch fire.

"If those people had kept on suing me I was going to be on a soup line. I've never got onto that channel about what is life? This time I had a few sleepless nights.

"The only thing I owned were my songs. I wanted to write anthems for underdogs, songs like 'Even The Losers' and 'Refugee'... The theme of the album wasn't self-conscious, but when I put it together, afterwards I could see it was about standing up for your rights, the ones that everyone has which can't be fucked with or taken away.

"Rather than get really graphic – 'They took me down to the court today and grilled me for eight hours' – I wanted to keep the common denominator of them as love songs with other connotations.

"They aren't necessarily boy-girl songs, but also I don't think the kids want to hear a record about the evils of the music business; that would be as boring as hell.

"The songs I always dug were the old R&B ones, I liked the innuendos. The old people thought they was just kissing, but you knew they were fucking each other's brains out. When Johnnie Taylor did 'Who's Making Love To Your Old Lady While She's Been Out Making Love', that spoiled it

for me 'cos that was a hit and afterwards all the black cats were just gonna say it.

"I am romantic, an old sap. All my values came out of the TV tube from the age of five. My whole love of the guitar came from seeing cowboys like Gene

Autry when they all had guns and guitars. It looked like the hippest thing. If you didn't have TV and movies, where would your idea of romance come from? Books probably, but I'm not a great reader."

If Petty is adamant in his opinion that rock 'n' roll is the great healer, the embalming fluid that negates the value of education, politics and the liberal arts, then he is only offering his own view.

"Linda Ronstadt called me up to support Jerry Brown, but I couldn't do all that stuff, I'd feel silly. I think if you can take people away from their problems for two hours, that's as likely to enlighten them as any political thing. I don't trust any politician. Period."

MEANWHILE HE'S ADEPT at accepting the bows and the plaudits while keeping one step ahead of the pundits and their slings and arrows. He takes his job seriously but is unconvincingly modest. He calls his songs "disposable", yet he risked bankruptcy for them. He says that songwriting is just fun – "I refuse to think of it as work" – but his game plan looks like very hard work indeed.

As for his philosophy, his attitude to the demands of the current lifestyle, that springs from an expression of naivety based on solid self-assurance.

"I've proved everything to myself. One of my favourite Dylan lines is 'I've got nothing to live up to', and that's what I feel. I don't have to prove it to anyone else."

Being in the public eye, being successful, being good-looking, embracing rock 'n' roll as a life force – all these are traits that idealists will use to undermine him. It won't make any difference.

Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers don't have any time to be complacent, and if he refuses to accept the role of spokesman on non-related (as he thinks) topics, does that make him a reactionary or a bad person?

To some people it does. But then some people think Bob Dylan would make a good president, that John Lydon should be prime minister, that Beethoven should have been a town councillor.

No, the rock 'n' roll that Tom Petty stands for is hopelessly naive, terminally young, won't change a thing. That's its charm. And when he encores at Hammersmith with the familiar Bobby Fuller number "I Fought The Law (And The Law Won)" you had to admire his cool cheek.

Tom Petty fought the law and the law lost. That was really something. Max Bell •

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1980

JANUARY - MARCH



Alex Chilton:
"sounds as if
he's just had his
head shaved
from the inside"



Like Flies On Sherbert

**Captain Beefheart
& The Magic Band
Shiny Beast (Bat
Chain Puller)** VIRGIN

Logically, this album doesn't exist. At least half the songs are four years old; it was recorded nearly two years ago, held up by a messy, nibbling court

case that stopped its British release last year, and is finally available many months after its release in America by Warners.

It's also only half the album originally intended by the Captain - the first version planned under this title included tracks like "Poop Hatch", "A Carrot Is As Close As A Rabbit Gets To A Diamond", "The Thousandth And Tenth Day Of The Human Totem Pole" and "Seam Crooked Sam".

With such a conception and birth, a stir round the entrails floats only minimal auguries of success, but with a master's sense and a master's band, Beefheart has juiced up a gem of an album. A fluke of timing has allowed the British rock ear to become freshly reacquainted with the trombone thanks to Rico's work with The Specials and others, and Bruce Fowler's oiled, bopping playing with the Magic Band slides in adroitly to add a new skin to Beefheart's robust musical flesh.

The characteristic signs and signals are there, this time with different names. The thin, jangly, slide guitar neurosis comes from Jeff Tepper and the kicking, vaulting backbeat bounds, Art Tripp-like, from the kit of Robert Williams, with Tripp also on hand with additional percussion and marimba, tying with Tepper to provide those ensemble percussion/guitar sequences that assert the authority of the music. Richard Redus plays urgent bass, gutty slide and bottleneck, and wistful accordion alongside Eric Drew's carefully integrated keyboards.

ALBUMS

Alex Chilton
Like Flies On Sherbert AURA

From The Box Tops to Big Star to The Cramps, via the bar (and very probably the head clinic), Alex Chilton's career has been unpredictable, lively and increasingly bizarre.

Like Flies On Sherbert is the sound of someone with nothing coherent left to say, talking to himself. It's an album of fragments, random notes, brief distractions; alternately absurd, funny, touching, disturbing. The songs exist as blurred sketches - incomplete, only vaguely realised.

"Boogie Shoes", its opening cut, is typical of the record's deranged style. The rhythm section coughs and splutters. The guitars wander in, late guests at the wrong party. Chilton's vocal is a swelling croon. The track hangs together like exploding shrapnel, no two instruments prepared to share

the same direction or emphasis.

The lusty bravado that Chilton brought to Big Star's *Radio City* never really emerges here. The cocky venom, the slovenly zeal of the likes of "Back Of A Car" and "Mod Lang" have given way to an exhausted impotence. Chilton sounds burned out.

"Hey! Little Child" cruelly reflects his tired lust. Over a stuttering backbeat, he drones an inane lyric, desperately trying to assert some kind of vanished virility - "Plaid skirt, flannel vest - silly nubile are the best," he lamely asserts as the band collapse about him. It would be hilarious if it weren't somehow so harrowing.

Chilton's version of Ernest Tubb's "Waltz Across Texas" is similarly painful. A fairly standard country lament is transformed into something quite extraordinary. Chilton caricatures the familiar country shine of the distressed cowboy,

but his performance is beyond parody.

It's as if he's trying to take the song's original sentiment to some desperate and definitive conclusion, seeing how far he can distort shape without losing its meaning. The performance, finally, has the emotional gravity of Gram Parsons' reading of "Wild Horses": a bleak, wasted epic.

The title track is no less reassuring. Over a sloppy, Spectorish backdrop, Chilton adopts a kind of grazed falsetto to proclaim: "What does it matter - it's so fine, fine, fine." You don't believe him. He sounds as if he's just had his head shaved from the inside. If Syd Barrett had been born in Memphis, *The Madcap Laughs* would've sounded like this. *Allan Jones, MM Feb 16*

— ALBUMS —
REVIEW
— 1980 —

**CAPTAIN BEEFHEART AND THE MAGIC BAND
SHINY BEAST
(BAT CHAIN PULLER)**



The album provides a travelogue through Beefheart's vivid Crayola imagination, as stacked and volatile as any of his best (early) works. None of the material matches the extremes of *Trout Mask Replica* or *Lick My Decals Off, Baby*, but the ability of Don Van Vliet to orchestrate his wildest visions has lost none of its power.

The slowly unwinding guitar figure on "Love Lies" cuts in with the mellow marimba backing and chugging trombone to build an air of almost tangible regret and sorrow, backing a lyric that easily betters the songs on *Bluejeans And Moonbeams* or *Unconditionally Guaranteed*. Vliet's wracked delivery wrings the song with a feeling of tortured romanticism.

His skill in counterpointing lyric with musical impression has always been one of Van Vliet's assets, and now that more rock lovers have had their ear-span widened by the groups fed by his early giant musical and experimental steps, the time is right for the circle to come full round. The best tracks - "The Floppy Boot Stomp", "Bat Chain Puller" and "When I See Mommy I Feel Like A Mummy" - all centre on the jaunty, jerky syncopation that drives from the drumkit, illuminating lyrics that are close, cluttered and as rewarding/redundant as the individual chooses.

Others are instant enough to be singles. "Harry Irene" is a delicately created period piece of Midwest Depression lore, and "Tropical Hot Dog Night" is warm and funky enough for wide appeal, especially with Bruce Fowler's joyous Mardi Gras trombone.

Spicing the mix are two instrumentals, "Ice Rose" and "Suction Prints", that could have come from a Zappa session but succeed where Frank tends to fail because Van Vliet is trying to create and not parody.

Closing with the trite little "Apes-Ma" poem, *Shiny Beast* settles as a more-than-satisfying glance through what in any other musician would be secret diaries and closed thoughts. It contains the elements of the work that made the man a justified legend, and while the release of the original, uniquely rewarding *Shiny Beast* would have scored deeper hits, this is an indispensable substitute.

John Orme, MM Feb 2



Peter Gabriel:
a "beautifully
cleansound"



edge that comes from a perfectly poised interplay (listen to the percussion colliding with the plunging bassline) and an innate sense of space. All praise must go to producer Steve Lillywhite, who has perfected that open-necked, brittle atmosphere he pioneered on the Banshees' first album. An utterly beguiling single. MM Feb 2

Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers *Refugee* MCA

Petty's perfected Dylan drawl (circa *Before The Flood*) hasn't got a great song to work on, but he makes it palatable enough, backed as it is with aptly swollen guitars and keyboards.

MM Feb 23

SINGLES

UB40 King GRADUATE

Disappointing debut from one of the seemingly few new bands playing reggae rather than ska. Nice line in mournful singing, though.

MM Feb 23

Wah! Heat Better Scream

INEVITABLE

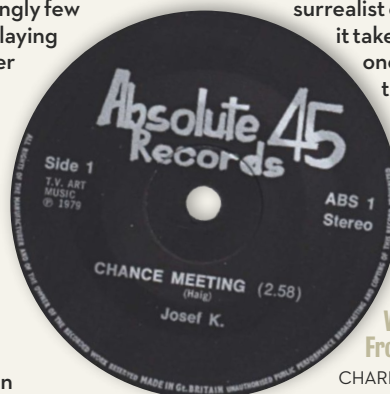
Debut disc on Liverpool club Eric's record label is (again) wonderfully packaged, and if the contents aren't half so startling, they've got a lot of merits; namely a brooding modern rhythm cut up with smart guitar and topped with a rich vocal. MM Feb 23

Talking Heads I Zimbra SIRE

Not the best example of the Talking Heads' fractured dance rhythm, but in such a lean, lousy week of heavy disappointments (Bowie), it'll have to do. The nervous chatter of the guitars starts off fine, but it's not enough to

cover the lengthy instrumental passage, and the organ comes in too late to rescue it. The song is a nonsensical African/surrealist chant, which, if it takes off, will prove once and for all that nobody listens to the words of chart hits.

MM Feb 16



Peter Gabriel Games Without Frontiers

CHARISMA

I admire Peter Gabriel for his constant self-appraisal and musical explorations. This time he's created a kind of *Lord Of The Flies*, an international playground with sombre implications: "If looks could kill, they probably will/In games without frontiers, war without tears." The sound is beautifully clean, with the sort of diamond

Iron Maiden Running Free EMI

The cover suggests that they're trying to break away from their elders' pernicious influence, portraying as it does a long-hair running away from a wall covered with idolatrous HM graffiti, but the contents are really more of the same. Unappealing. MM Feb 23

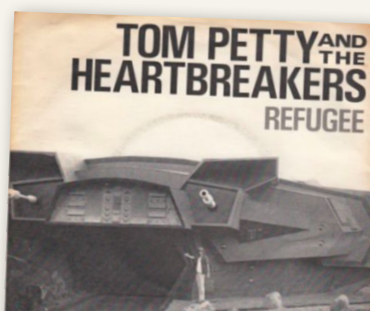


Josef K Chance Meeting ABSOLUTE

Serious Edinburgh band put perfect Lou Reed voice on top of a pounding drum/bass motif and juicy guitar/keyboards noises - mainly to indifferent effect. MM Feb 23

Felt Index SHANGHAI

An exercise in primitive monotony using one electric guitar, two practice amps and a cheap microphone. MM Feb 2



1980

JANUARY - MARCH



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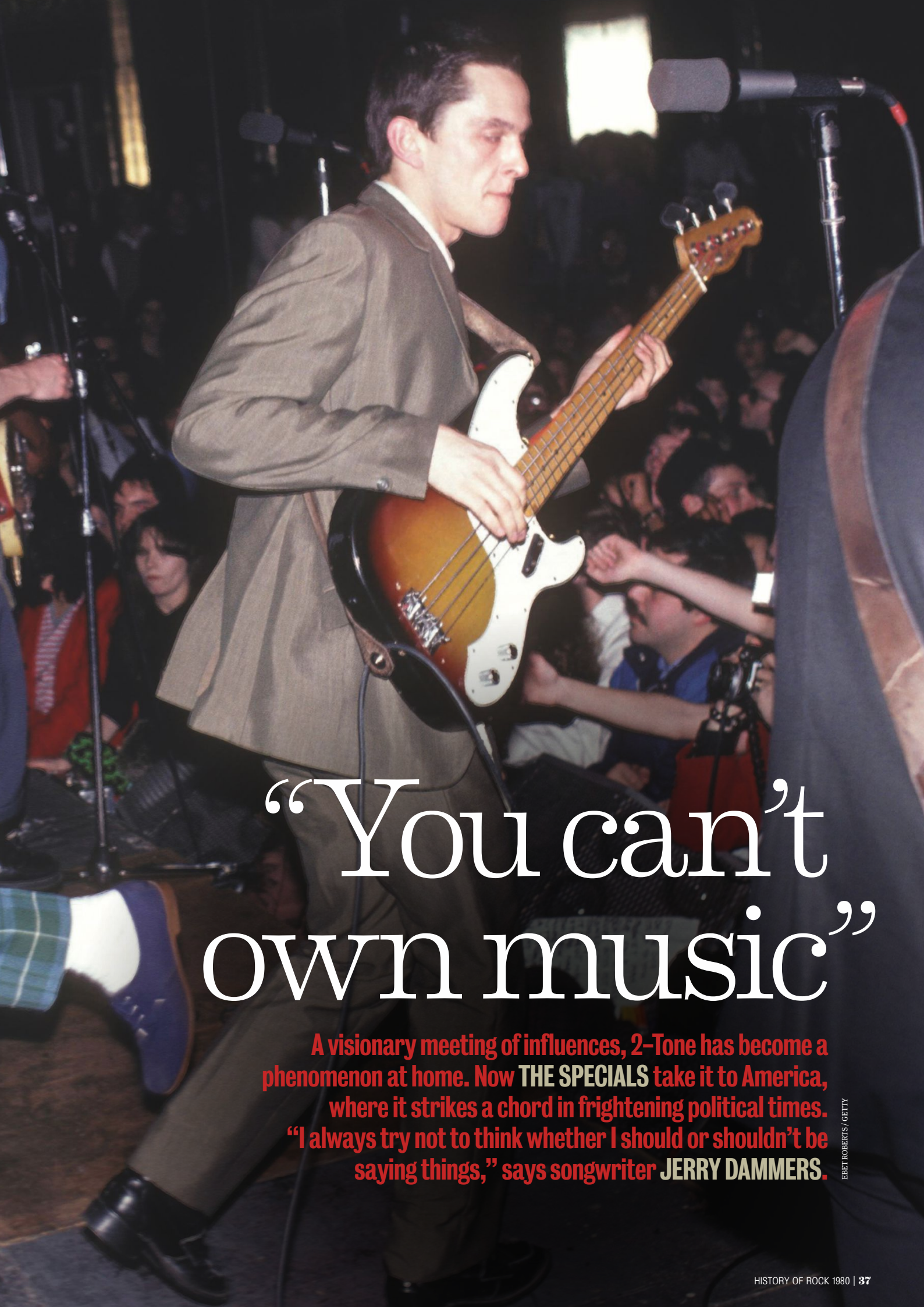
NEW NINE MUSICAL EXPRESS



THE 2-TONING OF AMERICA
SPECIAL A.K.A. IN THE U.S.A.
A page report inside



"At the moment it's just like some giant funfair": The Specials play one of their first shows in the States, January 1980

A man in a tan suit is playing a sunburst Fender Precision Bass guitar on stage. He is looking down at the instrument. In the background, a crowd of people is visible, some with their arms raised. A microphone is positioned in front of him. The scene is dimly lit, typical of a concert stage.

“You can’t own music”

A visionary meeting of influences, 2-Tone has become a phenomenon at home. Now **THE SPECIALS** take it to America, where it strikes a chord in frightening political times. “I always try not to think whether I should or shouldn’t be saying things,” says songwriter **JERRY DAMMERS**.

EBET ROBERTS/GETTY

— NME FEBRUARY 9 —

“**T**HIS IS OUR first ever gig in America...” Terry Hall fixes a stare on New York’s assembled culture vultures. “And we just can’t say how pleased you must be to have us here!” I’d never noticed before how much menace Terry Hall can wield from a stage when he has a mind to. His nervous, edgy stiffness is more than just a good foil for the loose-limbed, exploding frenzy of The Specials; it’s the eye at the centre of their hurricane, and it focuses on the self-conscious, scene-making faction of the chic uptown rock disco Hurrah’s – specifically those who came merely to see or be seen – with what can only be described as sheer scolding contempt.

“This is it,” he tells them, grinning almost sadistically at the thought of the nerve he’s about to touch. Grinning like only a boy who had looked at Johnny would know how to grin.

“This is it, my little petals. This is your last chance to dance before World War Three!”

That’s no joke. To the average liberal, informed young American facing the prospect of the draft, that is not very funny at all. To the average lobotomised, gung-ho young All-American it is yet more proof that the nation can’t count on its spineless, so-called allies in Europe to defend Democracy in what the media here has lost no time in proclaiming America’s darkest hour.

And to someone who thinks Iranians have every right to run their country how they see fit so long as he doesn’t have to live there, to someone who deplores any kind of imperialism be it Soviet or Western, sampling the undercurrents in an America that feels itself to be blackmailed at home and threatened abroad is no laughing matter either.

A cartoon in one newspaper depicts Carter and Brezhnev facing off astride their respective dominions with their flies undone, the exposed appendages drawn like missiles, Jimmy’s limp and Leonid’s stiff. And there’s no mistaking what they symbolise in a country that sees politics largely in terms of personality and machismo.

In Oklahoma City, the real hick cowboy heartland of middle America – where The Specials play to a rabid crowd who holler for *rack and rowl* when what they mean is Foghat or ZZ Top – an informal poll was taken at the local university. Eight out of 10 students said if there was a war, they’d be willing to fight. No one asked if they’d be willing to die, but then that’s not how these things are done.

It really is the dawning of a new era. Fingers are itching. And in the midst of it The Specials, with their message of fun and tolerance and freedom from stupid social pressures, and their admonishment to all the bullshit belligerent factions to “*keep on fighting till you’re dead*” for them and the beginning of the next phase.

They were woken up in Oklahoma City with the news that the “Too Much Too Young” EP had just made No 1 in the BBC chart. Their first British No 1! Most of them went straight back to sleep.

The night before, they’d proven to themselves something much more immediate and comprehensible – something much more valid, if ultimately just as transient. They’d felt it happen all over again, as it had before in Britain and then in Europe: the advent of the offbeat.

Seven hundred residents of the Bible Belt no-liquor state of Oklahoma, who – unlike their cosmopolitan New York cousins – had no idea what to expect, let alone how to respond when they got it, who have never heard of ska, blue-beat hats and tonic suits, whose fellow citizens think a crop is a “goddamn faggot military-style haircut,” who probably don’t even remember that Desmond Dekker’s “Israelites” and Dave & Ansel Collins’ “Monkey Spanner” were mild hits in the US in the early ’70s... they shouted *rack and rowl* but they got the Black Country skank and they loved it to the very last drop.

“I really envy them!” Jerry Dammers reacts to the hoped-for but unexpected mayhem that erupted in the small dowdy out-of-town theatre. Not so much like someone who’d been proved right as someone who never even gave a thought to being proved wrong.

“Can you imagine it?” he asks. “Fancy being able to hear all that great music for the first time. The whole bit: ska... mod... great! How can you not be knocked out?”

EVENTS HAVE ALREADY answered that question, and nobody needs to be reminded at this point of the phenomenal rise and rise of 2-Tone as a revolutionary musical style and predictable high street fashion.

Revolutionary? If that seems to be straining credibility, then remember that the last time anybody created a working hybrid of black and white music was back in the ’50s at the Sun studios in Memphis. Chris Blackwell of Island records, a long-time patron of reggae since the early ’60s blue-beat days (and not widely liked for it either) is convinced that The Specials could do for reggae what Sun did for R&B and what he’s been working at for years.

There have been blacks playing white music before and, more commonly, there have been whites who played black music – Dammers is fond of citing the Stones, who based themselves on Chess and Atlantic R&B, as a precedent for The Specials. But The Specials do more than take a black idiom and amplify the beat. They’ve added to it a specifically white British idiom. The result: punky reggae. An almost too obvious, logical conclusion to the tendencies of the past few years.

The sentiment and the noise is punk, and the beat and the style is reggae. Broadly speaking. And that’s the last time I shall make the distinction between black and white music in this context.

From now on the word is 2-Tone. But, if anything, The Specials are closest in feel to a group like The Coasters, who at their best were able to say something “meaningful” without the awful self-conscious seriousness that implies (as, indeed, were many other R&B groups).

The Specials make riotous, comic, socially aware, sardonic dance music. You can take them as seriously as you like, and no small part of their appeal must lie in the antidote they provide to rock’s prophets of an analytical future with their collars turned up against the cold winds of modern angst.

In other ways, too, they seem more like an R&B group from the ’50s than anything from recent memory. From a peculiar, personal angle they pull the bedclothes off some of the mutually destructive attitudes that still persist between the sexes despite over 25 years of teen music’s fearless celebration of the libido.

Some people find their angle personal to the point of being sexist, but underlying all their songs is the same simple, stubborn, sullen, punk resentment of the pressures to conform – be it to the domestic idyll, the gang life, the rat race, or whatever. And what would be really interesting would be to hear their songs rewritten from the feminine point of view. I doubt there’d be very much difference.

Despite the conviction he brings to them, Terry Hall hasn’t so far, written any of The Specials’ lyrics.

“I might throw in a couple of odd lines here and there, but Jerry wrote most of the songs that we’re doing at the moment. I’d feel uncomfortable about singing those words if I didn’t agree with them. What he’s basically saying is what I agree with and what the rest of the band agree with, otherwise we wouldn’t be in the same band.

“I’ve got the same feelings about girls as I have for boys. A boy could be a slag as far as I’m concerned. And a song like ‘Too Much Too Young’, about the girl not dealing with contraception... it’s just as much on the

boy’s head as it is on the girl’s. You’ve got to have two people to use contraception, and two people not to.”

Terry, at 20, is the youngest member of the group. He still wears a reminder of his punk upstart days in The Squad (who used to support The Coventry Automatics and try to ruin the PA before the CA’s went on) in the form of black eyeliner: “The old Dave Vanian crack.” Clothes are important to him, and so too was one J Rotten.

“At first, yeah. It was just the way he stood on stage and gazed for half an hour. I’d never seen anything like it. His stance was like an extension of standing still – it was like a meaningful glare. But I don’t stand still.”

The Squad came to an end one night at the George club in Coventry when they all got blind drunk and trashed their equipment. Soon

“This game
can be a bit
dangerous...
you get too
much praise”

afterwards, Jerry, who was looking for a singer, extended an invitation.

The disconcerting effect he and the rest of the group have on American citizens when they venture out into the streets doesn't bother Terry at all. Exactly the same thing happened in England and Europe at first, he says. His reaction to the Land Of The Free is equally bemused.

"It's alright. It's funny. I can't really take it all in as yet. In another few weeks I might be able to understand some of it, but at the moment it's just like some giant funfair." As far as Jerry is concerned, being in America is "more like a holiday for us. Something to spend the money from 'Message To You, Rudy' on."

JERRY WOULD BE happy to stay in cheap, shabby low-life motels instead of the Holiday Inn chains and play in rowdy, downbeat bars instead of the regular venues. "People talk about breaking America..." He shrugs. He's more interested in feeling the pulse of life here than in "opening up" any new "markets".

But while Jerry simply ignores all the usual considerations, Roddy Radiation (née Byers) feels them all too keenly.

"It's a weird life. You spend all this time travelling and hanging about just to spend three quarters of an hour on stage. That's what you do it for, but you have to put up with all this... sitting in a car or a van or a plane and feeling sick from a hangover or something. But then there's no better feeling you can get than being on stage. I couldn't imagine going back to my old job. I couldn't imagine it while I was doing it! I was always dreaming—used to drive the blokes I worked with mad."

Roddy worked as a painter and decorator for the local corporation for eight-and-a-half years after he left school. He's been playing guitar since he was 13, when he got an Antoria lead guitar and learned to play "Queen Bitch" in front of a mirror.

"People keep asking us what it's like now, but it's very hard to see the overall picture of what's going on. It's all a bit of a rush really, which is a bit worrying. And another thing I've thought about recently is that when we start writing some more songs, instead of writing about things we wrote about in the past, we're going to start writing about things we're doing now. Which is a bit like a sell-out to the kids, but I write about what I'm going through at the time. Imagine if I wrote a song about falling over in a Holiday Inn... bloody hell! Holiday Inn! Will The Specials break America or will America break us?"

Before The Coventry Automatics, Roddy cut his teeth in a club showband, playing interval music at bingo halls and "Y Viva España" at workingmen's clubs for two-and-a-half years. Then in '75 he formed The Wild Boys with Pete Davies, now the drummer with the UK Subs. The Wild Boys played it straight from the Doll/Stooges prototype, wearing leather jackets, DMs, and spiky hair to augment the obligatory switchblade sneer. The Wild Boys, however, were soon overtaken by their stylistic heirs—the punks—and The Automatics became a more interesting prospect. But their course ran by no means smoothly, and there was a point when the decision was taken to use the ska mould that almost caused Roddy to leave.

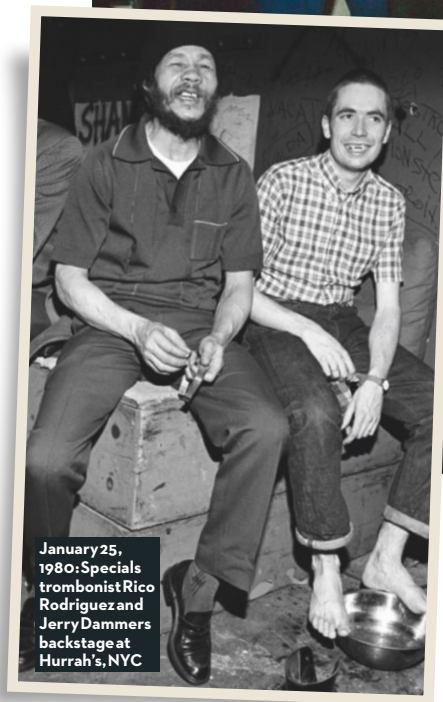
"Don't get me wrong—all I ever play at home now is ska—but I'd been with them a year and I'd worked out all these guitar things that I really liked, and a lot of those things didn't fit with the ska, so I had to rethink my guitar playing over again for every song. Having to do it just like that was a bit of a shock. For me it was like discovering ska, really."

"Where I came from it was like a mining village. I played guitar and my hair was a bit longer than all the skinheads'. It would just be me, a couple of mates, and my girlfriend, and we'd just get into playing music. So I used to get beaten up a lot, knocked about a bit."

"Then a while ago I started cropping my hair a bit and wearing Doc Martens, and it's weird now because all those guys who used to be skinheads have got their hair long and they're all into The Who. I've met a couple of them since and it's like we've changed over almost. In a way it's a nice bit of revenge. I'm going to write a song about it. I've got the riff worked out, but it's hard trying to get the words together."



The Specials in 1980: (clockwise from bottom left) Jerry Dammers, Horace Panter, Roddy Radiation, John Bradbury, Lynval Golding, Neville Staple and Terry Hall



January 25, 1980: Specials trombonist Rico Rodriguez and Jerry Dammers backstage at Hurrah's, NYC

"There's so much emphasis on what you say now, so you have to try and say it right. It takes a bit of thinking about to put it over to the best of your abilities."

I'm surprised to find that Roddy isn't bothered by this, and actually thinks it's a good thing—whereas I'm not so sure, despite the fact that it's the likes

of me who tend to cause this emphasis. What does trouble him, though, is the way the press inflate their subjects.

"This game can be a bit dangerous in that you get too much praise. That's a problem with groups. You get to the stage where you start believing all the stuff in the papers and you feel you have to live up to it. Then once you get into what we're doing now you start going to certain clubs where all the other bands go, and that's where you get the rock elite thing. I don't like it. I've been to a couple of these showbusiness parties and they're really boring."

Take his word for it.

WHICHEVER WAY YOU look, The Specials are there turning things inside out. The name itself, says Jerry, somewhat ruefully, "was supposed to be sarcastic".

On stage they put to rest the age-old gambit of a single dominant fronting personality. They've just made No 1 with a live EP, and their album, deliberately packaged with no regard for the rules of attracting the consumer, sounded like it might as well have been made at home, thanks to Elvis Costello's perfect rough-and-ready dull-reverb production.

"I don't think Elvis quite understood what we were aiming for," argues Roddy. "I think he still thought that it was like one section of reggae, then the next section's a heavy section, then another section comes along. »

"But I'm not knocking him at all. He got a great drum sound, and he was a lot better than having some hotshot producer who wouldn't even let us in to the mixing sessions. It would be nice if we could do it ourselves next time, though. Then you've got no one to blame."

Looking at photographs, and being around them for a few days, it becomes apparent that Roddy doesn't quite toe the group line on dress, slack though that line may be. On the related subject of gangs, his background grants him a sober perspective.

"I got out of that gang thing, but I can understand it. When we're all together – the group and the roadies – and you go out for a drink and there's a big crowd of you, it's a great feeling. You feel part of something. That's why a lot of kids get into those things. Great. Why not?"

"And something I learned when I was working with all those old blokes at the corporation was that you don't grow out of it. I found out that they were just as much like kids as anybody else. They still want to have a bit of fun."

"So long as it's just a bit of fun..."

TALK TO NEIL "Brad" Bradbury, the Prince Rimshot, a former arts and language student (among other things) who had long been a friend of the group but only joined them just before they cut "Gangsters", and he'll say it was Lynval Golding's guitar that caused the coming of the offbeat. The offbeat that changed the Coventry Automatics into The Specials AKA.

Talk to Lynval and he'll give the credit to Brad.

"Jerry and Brad used to share a house in Coventry, and before the band really got together we would be round the house talking about this sort of music. This was in '75 and Brad didn't have a drumkit at the time."

Nonetheless there were jams: Lynval on guitar, Jerry (who was then in a Brum band called Sissy Stone), Horace Panter on bass and Silverton, their first drummer, who played with Lynval in the Ray King Soul Band.

"Then a couple of years later when we first got the band together, Jerry said why don't we try playing a bit of punk here and bit of reggae there. I thought he was crazy, told him it would never work. But he said try it, you never know until you try it. And it didn't quite work after all. But he said no, it can work. He refused to believe that it couldn't. He's a very determined sort of guy."

"A while later, I brought a copy of 'Rudy, Message To You' down to Jerry's place because I wanted him to listen to it – to listen to the beat. And he just thought, 'Well, the beat is right... put it all together.' Because the beat is already there. It's the same sort of rock pattern. When Silverton left the band we were just about to try it. The last song we did with him, or tried, was 'You're Wondering Now', and looking back on it..."

"We used to rehearse in a pub, and he'd have his drums way down the back of the room. Jerry says, 'We'd like to try this song. We've learnt it, and it's sort of a blue beat.'"

"Before that we had songs where part of the songs were reggae, then they'd go into a rock section, then perhaps back into reggae. And it would throw people

off. Even then, Bernie Rhodes did help, because the guys were pushing and he would say, 'No, you're not ready yet.' So we sat down and looked at the whole thing and put a definite beat in it all the way through, sort of blended it together."

"All music will develop while it goes along. What we're doing is trying to mix different music to get a new music out of it. There's no harm in doing that because you're creating something new, rather than for instance just doing the Stax style of music that they did in the '60s without adding anything to it."

Bernie Rhodes managed the band for a brief spell during '78, and although he was to provide part of the inspiration for "Gangsters", none of them seem especially resentful of the wiry little self-styled anarchist.

Jerry maintains that Rhodes was always "the most radical member of The Clash", while Roddy merely faults his Machiavellian tendencies: "He wanted to split us up. He wanted Terry to join The Black Arabs. He likes to put musicians together like that, but you can't do that with people."

When it comes to musical direction and concept, Jerry Dammers, not a little reluctantly, wears that hat.

"Oh yeah, he's had sleepless nights," says Lynval. "Even in a pub sometimes you say, 'Jerry... Jerry... Jerry', and he's miles away, thinking about something. He's always thinking. Probably sometimes he thinks too far ahead. But it's good for the band, and it's helped us because we trust him a lot. We trust what he says, although there's times when we disagree. We wouldn't be a band if there weren't times like that."

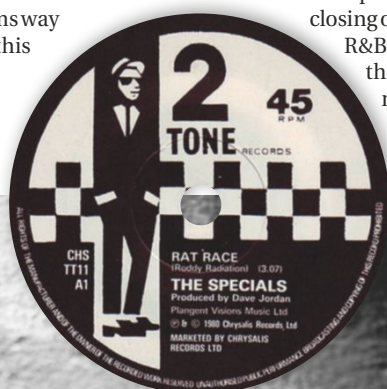
IN-BETWEEN NEW YORK and Oklahoma City there was New Orleans, the Tennessee Williams moonstruck madhouse town located at the mouth of the Mississippi river.

Religion is big in New Orleans, and where religion is big so too, inevitably, is death. The view as you approach on Highway 61 is littered with churches and graveyards, but as you hit the metropolis itself this gives way to more telling signs of the deep Southern party town, signs that say 'Breakfast – 24 Hours A Day'.

The Specials play in an old warehouse out by the sprawling railroad stockyards. Three thousand or so sons and daughters of Woodstock in fashionable quilted jerkins, most of them as high as the proverbial kite, have come to hear headliners The Police play polished English new-wave arena rock.

They don't dance, they just toke and gape. But for The Specials – whose rawness and undisciplined vitality sounds entirely opposed to the clean, homogenised output of The Police – at least 500 of them are ready to pogo.

That The Specials should come to New Orleans represents the closing of an international circle of sorts. It was Crescent City R&B, filtering across the Gulf of Jamaica via the local radio, that formed the basis for blue beat: a sultry shift of rhythmic accents. Jamaican migration brought the music to England and finally to the ears of Jerry Dammers (among others), who now brings it back,



October 30/31, 1980: The Specials return to the Hope & Anchor in North London to play two of a series of benefit gigs for the threatened venue



with a further shift of accent, to New Orleans.

In New York a journalist asked if The Specials would continue to play Jamaican music. “We don’t play Jamaican music,” replied Dammers. “We play English music.”

Jerry Dammers is – like everyone else – complicated. He’s resisting hard the pressures that come with being the maestro behind a veritable musical explosion, and prefers not to see it in such inflated, grandiose terms. He’s determined to preserve his equilibrium. He’s walking on gilded splinters.

A former art student whose taste runs the gamut of blues and rhythm’n’blues from its sources to the likes of Captain Beefheart, Dr John, the Stones and The Yardbirds, Dammers has worked in paint and in films as well as music.

A close friend of his from college days says of his “art” work: “They had the same style and almost the same themes as things like ‘Too Much Too Young’ and ‘Jaywalker’, which was a song they used to do in the early days. Two of his paintings are still on the wall of his house in Coventry. They even look like the songs.”

Dammers made three short animated films. The first was of a boxing match, a classic bout from the ‘50s between Rocky Marciano and British heavyweight champion Don Cockell. The second was called *Disco*, and featured a line of chorus girls dancing to a soundtrack of “disco/reggae” recorded by Dammers and Horace, who went to the same college.

“And the third,” says Jerry, “was a mixture of live film and animation. It was just walking down a street in Coventry, and you’d see all these people doing things, then suddenly it would change to animation. There was a bloke running along – a sort of football-hooligan type – who suddenly throws a brick through a window, and then in animation you saw the glass smashing.

“Then there was this old tramp – he was a mate of ours really – who pretended to fall over and spew up all over the pavement. The camera zoomed in on the spew and that was all bones and things bubbling away. There was an old woman crossing the street who got run over.

“Some of it was full animation, but a lot of it was done with cut-outs; a very tedious business. It was about that time the IRA were going around, and at the end some bloke put a bag under a car and the whole street got blown to pieces. Guts flying everywhere. I wanted to get the films on video, but those sods at college...”

“The first time we had a review in *NME*, or I thought we were going to get one, or I thought we were going to get one, I went in there to use their darkroom to develop pictures of the group, and they wouldn’t let me use the darkroom unless I gave them my films back. It was like three years’ work, every frame painted by hand. And I was really desperate because this was our chance to get out picture in *NME*, so I gave them my films back. I expect they’ve fucking lost them, but I’d like to get them videoed and show them to you, ‘cos people slag you off for going to art college but they don’t actually know what you do there. Maybe if they saw them they wouldn’t – I don’t know...”

Jumping forward a few years, Jerry explains that the first song he heard that inspired him to what would eventually become The Specials was Graham Parker’s “Not If It Pleases Me”: “That was it. That was the first song that made me think I could do something of my own!”

Prompted by this revelation, I tell him that until I saw the credits to their album, where all sources are rightfully acknowledged, I thought The Specials were about to do a Led Zep and plunder another folk heritage for their own glory.

“That’s funny, because the songs existed without those ska tunes at first, and they were put in as sort of musical quotations. Most of the songs were written over two years ago. Since then we’ve only done five new songs, two of which were Roddy’s, one of which was Lynval and Neville’s, and the other two being ‘Gangsters’ and ‘It Doesn’t Make It Alright’. It’s a common syndrome. You spend however many years it is making your first record, then you have six months to make the next one.

“Well, we’re lucky because we’ve got a backlog of songs, but we’ll have to learn them up. And it takes a lot of time for the words to... you realise after a while that some of the words were very silly – you can’t live with them. But when you’re playing, the words aren’t so prominent. So it’s going to be



“We trust what Jerry says, although there’s times we disagree”

a problem, because we’ll maybe write something and then six months later think it was a really silly thing to say.”

That might not necessarily be to the detriment of the songs, though.

“No, quite. The songs that I write – I always try not to think whether I should or shouldn’t be saying things. Like ‘Too Much Too Young’, for instance. Not to think whether that’s a good thing to write, but at the time that you think it, just write it down. Just put down your true feelings at the time.

“I think about ‘Little Bitch’ – I wrote that when I was 15 – and I can see now that some of those words are very sort of immature, but I still stand by it because that’s how I felt at the time. In the case of ‘Too Much Too Young’, the girl that was written about would probably agree with the song.”

Talk drifts to the subject of muzak, which seems to have a strange attraction for Jerry.

“It’s sick really, because they try and make music that actually isn’t going to distract the workers – so bland that you don’t even notice it. But if you actually listen to it – it’s not designed

to be listened to – it can be really peculiar. Who composes it, that’s what I want to know?”

A computer. You find out what the basic rules of it are – which elements combine to create the effect you want – and churn it out accordingly.

“A bit like 2-Tone, you mean?”

Not quite. And here’s why:

“2-Tone doesn’t exist. It’s not just a logo – that doesn’t mean a thing. It’s the music that counts. And how can you own music? You can’t own music. You can buy sheet music and records and so on, but you can’t own music. All these people are starting to come to me asking for something from 2-Tone – people who feel they’ve contributed and now want some sort of divvy. And I say divvy of what? 2-Tone? That doesn’t exist. It’s in them. They’re 2-Tone, not some daft design.”

Jerry’s philosophy of life for today, 1980, is simple. It’s a combination of Marx and Popeye. In the words of Groucho: “Whatever it is, I’m against it.” In the words of Popeye: “I yam what I yam.”

AFTER THE GIG in New Orleans, Dammers, Joe Stevens, Rico – who has been playing trombone for 30 years and has never been with a band as long as he’s been with The Specials – tour manager Frank, myself and a few others piled into a taxi to go to Tipitina’s club to eat alligator stew and pay homage to Professor Longhair, the barrel-house pianist whose pounding syncopated style played no small part in the creation of what he would barely recognise now as rock’n’roll.

This wasn’t any staid, reverent occasion where they roll out the Blues Legend for fawning scholars, no sir! This was a party. The joint was shaking like a creole dish and rocking to the backline beat. And Jerry Dammers was having the time of his life!

Dammers learnt to play most of his piano from Longhair records, so meeting the man and hearing him cut the rug on “Big Chief” meant more to him than these words can convey. He tried to explain as much to Longhair. “Thanks,” said ‘Fess. “I need all the help I can get.”

The night was crowned when Jerry found Toots & The Maytals’ rocksteady classic “Time Tough” on the jukebox – the first song that The Coventry Automatics ever played – and when Rico introduced us to Huey Smith, the Huey “Piano” Smith, sitting at the bar killing the midnight hours with Screwdrivers.

“Tell me, Huey,” asked Frank, “was this club named after the song ‘Tipitina’ or was the song named after the club?”

“That song was going for 40 years when I was born. It took me 16 years to learn it. And that was 30 years ago. Now ask me a question...”

The song is still going on. The heritage is still alive. That’s what Jerry was really talking about when he asked how anyone can own music. It’s not a commodity, not in the long term, and it doesn’t die.

It’s alive in The Specials now, and it will pass on to someone else when they’re gone. Maybe you won’t immediately recognise it, but it will still be there. As sure as the death and the taxes that it grants us escape from.

Paul Rambali •



1980

APRIL – JUNE

THE TEARDROP
EXPLODES, ECHO & THE
BUNNYMEN AND MORE

A chilling penetration

NME JUN 14 RIP, Ian Curtis, singer of “highly rated Manchester band” Joy Division. “The very best rock is part of a fight,” *NME* writes in its tribute, “something that actively removes prejudice.”

THE DEATH OF Ian Curtis, lead singer of highly rated Manchester band Joy Division, has provided the biggest shock of the past few weeks. Curtis, who was 22, took his own life – apparently after a domestic upheaval. The band had completed a new album called *Closer* shortly before the tragedy, and this is to be released by Factory records on June 27 – preceded this weekend by the single “Love Will Tear Us Apart”.

Joy Division played their first gig at the Electric Circus supporting Buzzcocks and Penetration in May 1977, after many months of excited preparation. Their name then was Warsaw, having rejected the Pete Shelley suggestion of Stiff Kittens. The name Warsaw was derived from “Warszawa”, a song on Bowie’s *Low*.

Warsaw were undistinguished but there was great belief and romance guiding them. Slowly, the noises formed. In the first months of their existence it was mundane business problems that hindered their natural growth. They recorded a four-track single, “An Ideal For Living”, and planned to release their EP using their new name Joy Division – Joy Division being the prostitutes’ wing of a concentration camp. »

LEX VAN ROSSEN / GETTY



Ian Curtis on stage
in the Netherlands,
January 1980: "He
leaves behind words
of such strength,
they urge us to fight,
seek and reconcile"

The Sound and the Fury

1980

APRIL – JUNE

Poor sound quality postponed the release, and even when it was put out as both seven- and 12-inch it created no stir, although something was obviously forming. In 1978 Joy Division felt isolated. Played a few gigs, met their manager Rob Gretton, who took away from them cumbersome organising duties and concentrated on developing their music.

Martin Hannett took an active interest in the group and he and Gretton became fifth and sixth members. There was no great plan behind Joy Division linking up so neatly with Factory Records. It was just a series of circumstances that eventually developed into a funny logic. Joy Division had a quarter of "A Factory Sample", contributing two Martin Zero-produced songs. These two were the first indication that Joy Division had a special understanding.

Following the Factory sampler, it was never certain that Factory could afford to put out another LP. And Joy Division, after early silly mistakes, were taking their time before committing themselves to a record contract. Finally Factory took the plunge, and just in time, as Joy Division had seriously considered signing to a Martin Rushent-run subsidiary of Radar Records.

"There was a point where we were thinking about signing, but we weren't rushing anything," Ian Curtis said. "We went down to London to see what type of working relationship we would have, but by that time we'd already agreed to do the first LP with Factory. So we decided to wait and see how that went. It started selling well, so we realised there was no need to go to a major."

The progress of Joy Division could be logically followed from record to record, but still the completeness and strength of their first LP, *Unknown Pleasures*, was unnerving.

The group had discovered their own potential, and had quietly, effectively travelled from one extreme to the other. On "An Ideal For Living" they were coyly boasting, "This is not a concept, this is an enigma." With *Unknown Pleasures* they were offering no clues at all. Every word counted; every line had a chilling penetration. Somewhere between "An Ideal For Living" and a few months later, when *Pleasures* was recorded, a radical transformation had taken place.

An audience began to look their way, but Joy Division never let go. They quietly established their independence, prolifically and ambitiously expanding on their already considerable originality. They played countless gigs but never made it seem that they were merely promoting a product. They created their own pace. They made it look so easy. "It" being something like a total lack of compromise.

Joy Division's powerful work will naturally persist and live on. The name Joy Division will not be used by Hook, Albrecht and Morris. The group had decided a long time ago that if any of the quartet should

– for whatever reason, in whatever way – depart, the rest, in cautious recognition of the fact that they were making something special, would change the name of the group.

There are no set plans for the future, but it must be said that Ian Curtis was not the major force in the group. He wrote and offered contributions to the musical makeup. Hook and Albrecht wrote the melodies, Morris composed the rhythms.

Curtis was a dazzling focus, but each contribution was equal. Hook, Albrecht and Morris are, for obvious reasons, impatient for the release of the remaining Joy Division songs.

There are many to come. Within a matter of days a maxi-single including a slow and quick version of the penultimate song of our time is released – "Love Will Tear Us Apart" (a song they had traumas in mixing). The LP *Closer* (with a hard "s" – as in "closer to the centre") is suffering production problems but should be out within six weeks.

Without being insensitive, we can thank whoever that it was complete. It is something you will never forget (Factory Records hurry to point out that the LP sleeve – a gothic portrayal of dead Jesus – was decided upon months ago. A photocopy of the sleeve pinned on an *NME* wall for weeks confirms this.)

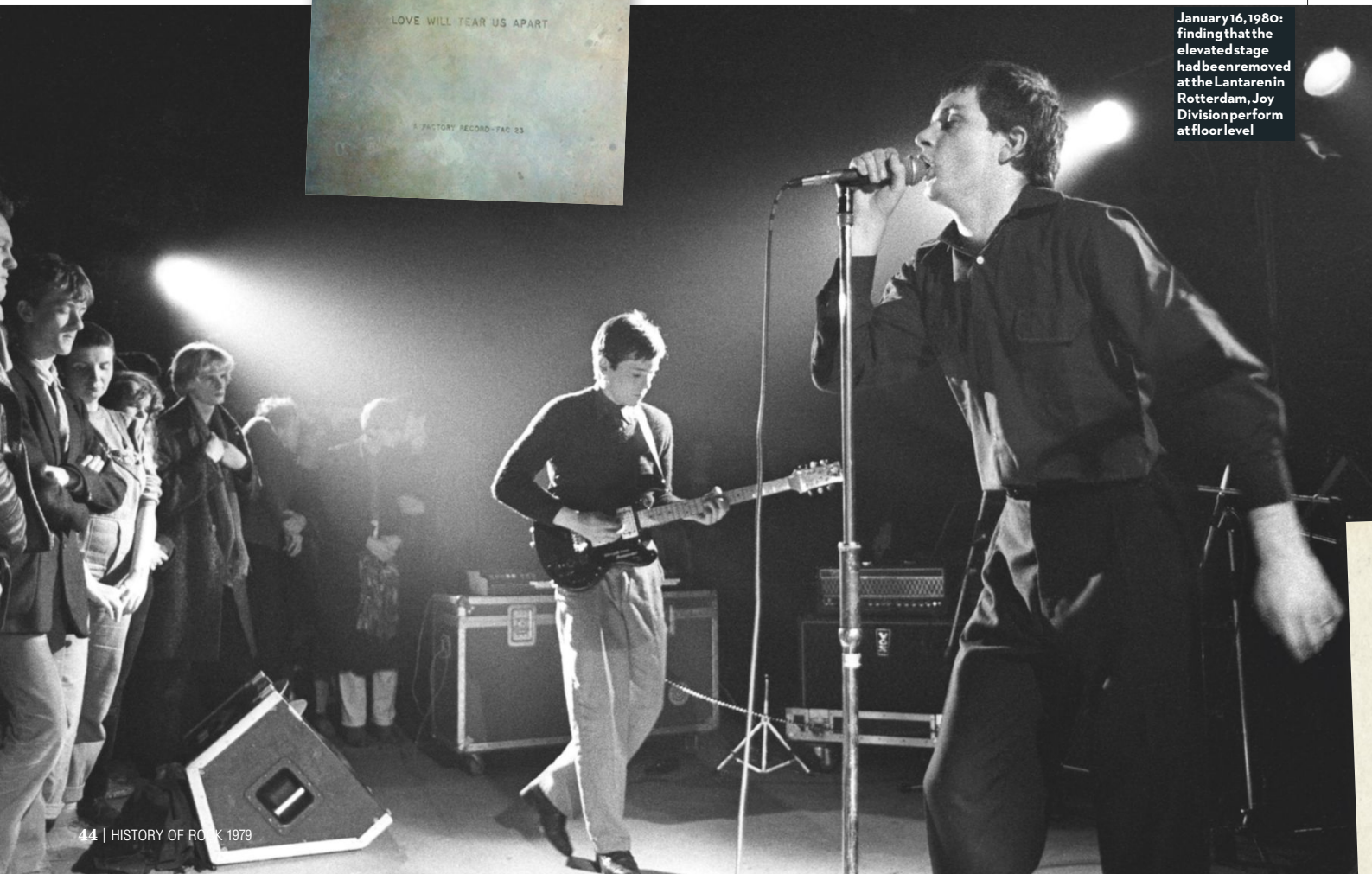
Ironically, because it probably would have happened anyway, there's a possibility *Closer*



They created their own pace, made it look so easy. "It" being a complete lack of compromise



January 16, 1980: finding that the elevated stage had been removed at the Lantaren in Rotterdam, Joy Division perform at floor level



will chart. So too the single. The name Joy Division means something more than it did a few months ago, due to both Curtis' departure and growing recognition of their magic.

Curtis always anticipated commercial success, but felt it was more likely to happen first in Europe and America. All that's swept out of the way now.

There's enough songs for perhaps half an LP, with live stuff making up the other half, that may somehow surface somewhere. For those despairing that they weren't one of the thousand and odd who found a copy of the *Sordide Sentimental* single "Atmosphere/Dead Souls", "Atmosphere" will be the B-side of a readily available American 12-inch re-recording of "She's Lost Control" (a song, incidentally, on the B-side of Grace Jones' next single). "Dead Souls" will turn up eventually, somewhere. And the flexi-single "Incubation", which you can get just by walking into a record store and asking for, is not a limited edition and will be re-pressed until everyone who wants one has one.

JOY DIVISION'S INNATE suspicion of the established music industry and their dissatisfaction with numbing routine extended to their dealings with the music press. Though it landed them a reputation among many journalists as awkward customers, their distrust of the standardised rock interview procedures was genuine and largely valid.

The original plan for a Joy Division feature had been for a journalist to spend a day with the band, with the interview of sorts only a vague possibility.

In the event, the formalised question-and-answer type interview in the dressing room was ruled out, largely by manager Rob, although the band themselves had differing opinions themselves on the subject.

While Morris and Albrecht seem relatively unconcerned about interviews, Curtis was against too formalised a set-up.

Peter Hook is the most hostile in his objections to the procedure.

"To me personally, it is redundant. I don't read interviews. I read music papers, but I can't read a question-and-answer interview.

"One of the best things I've ever read was Lester Bangs' article on The Clash in *NME*, 'cos it wasn't actually an interview but it was full of stories and things about the tour. That



A distasteful profit

MM JUN 14 Factory urges Joy Division fans not to pay for free flexidisc.

JOY DIVISION, PREPARING for this week's inquest into the death of singer Ian Curtis, are fighting record dealers who are selling the band's new free flexidisc.

The inquest opens on Friday this week to try and clarify the background to the singer's death. The other three-quarters of the band - Steve Morris, Bernard Albrecht and Peter Hook - will continue as a musical unit, and have already considered other names such as The Hit and The Eternal. The question of a replacement for Curtis has been left open, but they are not actively seeking a new singer.

Their chief concern is to stop record shops making a distasteful profit by selling copies of "Komakino", the band's new flexidisc which is available free. Factory Records have pressed 25,000 copies, and will press another batch when the funds are available.

Factory and Joy Division urge fans not to pay for the single - some have changed hands for up to £5 - but to look for the proper free copies. Any shop selling the single should be reported to Factory in Manchester. The tracks on the single were left over from the session for the new Joy Division album *Closer*, due out in about three weeks.

Another single, "Love Will Tear Us Apart", should be out next week, and tracks from the "Sordide Sentimental" Euro-EP will be available in Britain later in the year.

was interesting, but interviews as such I don't find interesting."

But doesn't a refusal to do interviews put up an unnecessary barrier around the band?

"The way we look at it is that any interview is a bit forced. The only reason a journalist wants to do

an interview is that it makes it easier for him to write his piece. But to me it is obvious that if you spend a bit of time with people and get to know them in a very informal way, you'll get a lot more out of them."

Ian almost begs to differ.

"I can see the point of interviews. People want to know why things are the way they are. If they buy a new car, they want to know how it works. Why does it do this? Why can this car go faster than that one? Why does it look better than that one?"

Rob Gretton interjects to make wider, perhaps not so valid, points about the media in general.

"I can understand that journalists are just doing a job. What I don't agree with is the job they are sent out to do. I think it's a very stylised, outmoded way of doing things.

"The average guy in the street tends to read his paper and takes what he reads as the truth. I think that they don't analyse it enough. The average guy in the street just takes it in.

"I think the fault lies in the press, 'cos they don't make it clear that any article is just a purely personal opinion."

THE IMPACT OF Joy Division can only grow stronger, more importantly so than any myth. Joy Division cannot clean away the trivia and delusion of mass-based rock music, but they throw a shadow over it all.

They emphasise the vulgarity and vanity of the rock musics so recklessly publicised and glorified by industry and media, the mundanity of the majority of pop, and their own complete lack of conceit or ego indicates the uselessness of pretending rock is some sort of weapon of change. The very best rock is part of a fight, part of a larger decision, a widespread perception, something that actively removes prejudice and restriction.

Rock's greatness is its emotional effect on the individual. Joy Division's worth is immense to every individual who does not resent their strange awareness, who does not mock the lack of explanation of artistic emotions.

The struggle and the conflict never ceases. There is no real safety, no consolation, and often the evil, futile boundaries of existence become too claustrophobic.

Ian Curtis decided to leave us, and yet he leaves behind words of such strength, they urge us to fight, seek and reconcile. Joy Division will not change The World. But there is value; there has to be.

The effect of Joy Division, the unknown pleasures that each individual fully tuned into Joy Division discovers, can only be guessed at. But the moods and the insight must inspire us.

The value of Joy Division is the value of love.

Adrian Thrills

Don't Walk Away In Silence

IAN CURTIS, lead singer of Joy Division and one of the most talented performers and writers of contemporary rock music, committed suicide on May 18th.

PAUL MORLEY & ADRIAN THRILLS pay tribute to the man and the group.

SO WHY do we get so animated and enthralled

pushed its possibilities to the limits. The very best rock music is art, and that is nothing to be ashamed of. Good rock music is

Dickensian warehouse converted into a rehearsal studio - seemed the ideal place for a Joy Division video. But the band's attitude to proceedings was withdrawn and

to warm to the dark dance music as the swirling, shifting guitar and drum patterns of the hypnotic '24 Hours' give way to the pulsebeat of the throbbing bass introduction to 'Transmission'. The band's third single

1980

APRIL – JUNE

Iron Maiden in 1980: (l-r) Clive Burr, Dave Murray, Steve Harris, Dennis Stratton and Paul Di'Anno

“You get the adrenalin flowing”

NME APR 19 Introducing... Iron Maiden, heavy metallers with a punk attitude.

IN THE DRAB, outlying London suburb of East Ham, there is a pub like many others giving escape from the workaday world. Upstairs, in the private gym, you can box your way out. Downstairs in the back bar, you can rock your way out.

Paul Di'Anno, Iron Maiden's singer, used to work out in the gym of the Ruskin Arms, and even boxed a few semi-pro rounds. Steve Harris, who founded the group, writing songs and playing bass, once trained at the nearby West Ham football ground as a member of the junior team.

All of Iron Maiden live in the area, and are tonight repaying a debt to the landlord of one of the few venues that would give them work during the years of their music's abeyance. Thirty quid every Friday night went a long way towards paying off the HP on gear, while those Friday nights went an even longer way towards staving off the frustration.

In the back bar, posters for groups with names like Pagan Altar and Salem's Curse litter the walls. Fans, friends, parents and local press have turned out to celebrate Iron Maiden's ascension to the new metal pantheon. Headbangers wearing Hell's Angels' colours, and even one or two with a legitimate claim to those colours, jostle good-naturedly for the best positions from which to precipitate blood from the ears.

Steve Harris and his band are only distinguishable by the extra grooming that

has gone into their appearance – a uniform of jeans, sneakers, leather jackets and (excepting Paul Di'Anno) long, flowing manes, the latter worn with a pride that denotes its survival through the recent dark ages of heavy metal, when the music was ignored by the musical media like an embarrassing idiot cousin locked in a forgotten cellar of the house; beleaguered but unbeaten.

“The thing that really got me,” complains Steve Harris without any marked bitterness, “was not so much that – it was the fact that you couldn't get work. Because we were a heavy metal band, nobody wanted to know. But a band like ourselves... You got to work.”

Harris started Iron Maiden in '76, after ensuring he had a trade – as a draughtsman – to fall back on. This blunt, pragmatic attitude is typical of his outlook. His convictions are straightforward and firmly held. He always knew a band with a name like Iron Maiden would have an audience.

“Never mind all the new wave bands; there were always people that liked heavy metal. A lot of the punk stuff has got heavy metal riffs anyways, it's

just that they play with Telecasters that've got a lot more ring and don't have that really beefy sound. It was good that punk encouraged people to pick up guitars and play, but after a while it got a bit out of order because just anybody who picked up a guitar and had been playing a very short while got up there and it wasn't good any more, know what I mean?”

Yeah. Heavy metal with a spiky haircut. But at least the guitars they picked up weren't made of cardboard...

“The people that do that really would love to be up on stage. I used to do that. Not with a cardboard guitar, but all the rest of it. Now that I'm up there playing it feels really weird. Maybe in three or four years' time some of

the people down there will be on stage. But some of them fantasise with their guitars and never bother because they think they're never going to get to a certain standard.”

...And thus all the craven idolatry goes round in sluggish circles.

Harris had his heroes too. He began with a desire to play “Paranoid” and “Smoke On The Water”; now his band have refined those elements, after a fashion. They do it well, with plenty of polish

“It becomes false if you sit down and think, ‘We've gotta be original’”



and punch and pose. And such is the insatiable thirst for what they do that their first album is set to chart in the upper reaches almost instantly.

Meeting Steve Harris gave me pause to reflect. At 24, he's a year older than me. Ten years ago I too owned a copy of "Paranoid". Nowadays my idea of good heavy metal lies somewhere between The Stooges, Joy Division and Blue Öyster Cult. Harris cites the Scorpions, UFO and Judas Priest.

When I was 14 I spent a summer in the thrall of a local Road Rats MC chapter – a typical adolescent smitten with a fatuous rebel image, one that Iron Maiden still espouse in songs like their new single "Running Free". The subject of the song is 16 and – you guessed it – "running free". Harris is 24, a qualified draughtsman, and a rather cautious, timid fellow.

No attempt is made to reconcile fantasy with reality. No attempt is required. No need even to tamper with the metal mythology. Does Harris ever feel the urge to add something new to the genre; to change or reinvent it somehow? No.

"You should do things that just come naturally to you. It becomes false if you sit down and think, 'We've gotta be original.' It might be original, in the sense that other people haven't done something like it before, but it's better to do things that come naturally. Like, we were looking the way we do long before our record company came along. So I suppose in their eyes it was great, 'cos they didn't have to model us in any way."

Wasn't that just dandy for the record company! But wait... Harris has his pride. He's honest, modest and can justify himself to himself. He satisfies his own criteria.

"We play music a lot faster. There's a lot more aggression on stage."

(Aggression is the wrong word. But it's a buzzword synonymous with energy, gusto, excitement...)

"Being on stage makes you feel really... you get the adrenalin flowing. You feel really excited. When the kids are shouting for you and they've got your name on their back... it brings a lump to your throat, it really does. This is no joke: there was a guy at the Bandwagon on Sunday, he was so happy that we were getting on he was almost crying. I couldn't believe it. The guy felt that much about us!"

The Iron Maiden logo takes its place on the denim scroll of honour. You know you've arrived when you see your logo rub hunched, greasy, dandruff-ridden shoulders with the logos of your own idols. The allegiance of the heavy metal fan is fierce and unbreakable once pledged.

"It's because all the time it gets put down – that's why. Punk is given all this street credibility because it's

working-class music. Any of the big industrial towns – that's where you get all the heavy metal fans. And a lot of it's the escapism thing... they go to a gig to enjoy themselves. You very rarely see any trouble at heavy metal gigs. They're there to have a good time, and that's all it is to me."

Harris goes on to ascribe Maiden fans' raving devotion to the fact that they are on something called the same level. He hasn't given much thought to the time when they won't be – when the projected two tours apiece in the three major markets (UK, Europe and America) have fulfilled EMI's belief that by the second or third Maiden album they'll have the next Deep Purple on their books; an endless money-spinner.

Iron Maiden aren't bothered by the prospect of blanket touring, nor are they unsettled by the thought of EMI rubbing their hands in anticipation of its inevitable rewards. Iron Maiden, above and beyond all other considerations, simply live to play.

"The only thing that worries me is... the feeling for gigs. I just hope we don't lose it."

And if there comes a time when they do, it's a long way off.

"Let's face it; we're not going to be playing this sort of music when we're 50. I'd like to be, but I could just as well be down here playing in the Joe Bloggs Band or something, playing country & western... well, hardly that."

"It's funny, though. You know those bands playing standards in the pubs with all the old boys sitting around? Imagine bands playing heavy metal in 50 years' time when there's some far-out music happening: they're thinking, 'Aaaaah gawd, can't put up with this', but there's still the 'headbanging going on in the corner!'"

Fifty years is a conservative estimate. Many feel this scenario is already too real. Steve Harris, however, is happy in his devotion. It's awesome in a way. You can't help but admire the unselfconscious fervour the heavy metal fan has for heavy metal, and you certainly can't fight it. I wanted to hear Harris vigorously defend it, justify it, and even persuade me of it. I was going to try and draw him out by telling him Ritchie Blackmore was really gay or something, but couldn't take such a low swipe at someone's genuine enthusiasm and patient, contented convictions.

NME photographer Mike Laye says talking to headbangers was like talking to Christians. There's some truth in that, but talking about heavy metal just makes me feel like the hammer banging against an anvil. The anvil always breaks the hammer. *Paul Rambali*



Pink Floyd banned

NME JUN 21 Reaction to Pink Floyd's education-bashing track is not all positive.

PINK FLOYD'S "ANOTHER Brick In The Wall", plus the album whence it came, has been declared "prejudicial to the State Of South Africa" and banned. Since the single's February release, it has become something of a marching song in the apartheid state, particularly for black children, who have chanted the lyrics during recent school boycotts.

Until its withdrawal, the single has sold some 30,000 copies and was shaping up to be the all-time SA blockbuster.

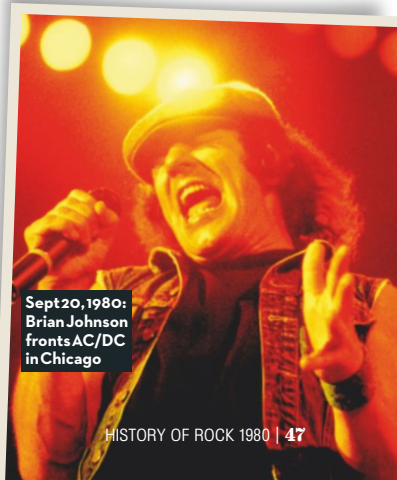
Also banned recently are Frank Zappa's *New York* and Marianne Faithfull's *Broken English* LPs.

Meanwhile, moving westward, the following adaptation of the Floyd song was heard chanted during a commemorative march at Kent State University campus on the 10th anniversary of the killings: "We don't want no registration! We don't want no draft or war! No cruise missiles over Europe! Carter! Brezhnev! Leave those kids alone! Carter! Brezhnev! Leave us kids alone! All in all, it's just another step toward the war." *Andrew Tyler*

Experience rather than enthusiasm

NME APR 19 AC/DC settle on a new singer.

AC/DC HAVE NOW apparently settled on a new lead vocalist to replace the late Bon Scott, who died in February. They have finally decided against Allan Frier, who was so confident of being selected that he gave up his job in a local band. Instead, they've selected Brian Johnson, formerly of the now-defunct group Geordie – whose short career was highlighted by a couple of Top 20 hits in 1973. The decision was prompted because – said a spokesman – they felt it better to opt for experience rather than enthusiasm.



Sept 20, 1980: Brian Johnson fronts AC/DC in Chicago

1980

APRIL – JUNE

“People have such closed minds”

From an emerging new Liverpool scene come **THE TEARDROP EXPLODES**, “trying to balance triteness and greatness”. As the year goes on, disputes arise with former friends, and even within the band. “I don’t like Dave,” admits Julian Cope. “He’s a pretty dubious character.”

— NME APRIL 5 —

NEVERMIND THE second coming of heavy metal. The most damaging of rock trends over the past 12 months has been the seemingly insatiable need to put things in boxes, to neatly label the unknown. We love to stick tabs on whatever we don’t understand: if something is conveniently classified, it can then be tidily tucked away to one side, its threat diffused, its cracks and irregularities sandpapered over by an arbitrary earmark.

These are the days of broad generalisations and the destructive narrow-mindedness those generalisations breed. The united front produced three years ago by the cleansing confusion of punk has been all but obliterated by divisive polarisation.

On one hand there are the happy-go-lucky “fun” bands—ska, mod, rockabilly, new punk—with few aspirations other than an unpretentious good time for one and all. At the other extreme come the “weirdos”, all grey and inaccessible, intellectual and arty. Or so we are led to believe. The two camps are usually portrayed as opposing factions, each with its own respective champions and heroes. Both are supposedly mutually exclusive, totally incompatible with each other.

It is an unhealthy state of affairs, one which leads to a host of corrosive preconceptions and assumptions: if you dig, say, Madness, »

ADRIAN BOOT

The Teardrop Explodes' label head/producer/keys player/manager David Balfe (left), drummer Gary Dwyer (centre) and bassist/songwriter/frontman/bassist Julian Cope



THE TEARDROP EXPLODES

KILIMANJARO



1980

APRIL – JUNE

then no way are you gonna get anything worthwhile from a Joy Division gig, bub!

What a waste. What a needless, pathetic loss.

Which is where The Teardrop Explodes come in. Branded by most of the casual critics as being a wee bit weird, a wee bit inaccessible, The Teardrop Explodes expose the redundancy of all the stereotyped labelling for what it is. In terms of such limited, retrogressive indexing, they stand with one foot in each of the so-called camps. Shot by both sides. And, like the square peg pushed towards the round hole, they just won't go.

The Teardrop Explodes' blond, cordial vocalist Julian Cope was incensed recently at one of the reviews of the band's gorgeously persuasive pop single "Treason" in another rock paper. It was a good review, deservedly praising the disc to high heaven, but doing so at the expense of 2-Tone, playing along with the factions game again and implying that you simply cannot groove to both The Teardrop Explodes and something from behind those corrupt "enemy" lines. How stupid! (Teardrop and Madness, incidentally, share the same production team, Clive Langer and Allan Winstanley).

Perched on a stool by the window in a large Liverpool cafe two floors above ground level with the Merseyside rush-hour madness gathering its early evening momentum below, Julian Cope reflects on the ludicrous musical dichotomy.

"It's getting to be like the early '70s again where you had the hippies into all their weird music and the soul types into all their stuff. Things seem to have come full circle and got back to the same old stage again. I don't want us to be in a position where people can take one look at us and immediately put us into one camp or the other. We lose out in a lot of ways 'cos we don't fit into one camp. But there again, I'd rather have it that way."

Mick Finkler, Teardrop's prosaic guitarist, nods in agreement over his untouched cup of tea.

"That's the way things work. People can't get to see every band around, so they just go on what they read; and if that tells them a certain band is a certain way, then they'll just file them away and forget about it. There's nothing you can do in the end except go out and play and hope for the best. But you're never going to appeal to everyone and there's nothing you can really do about it.

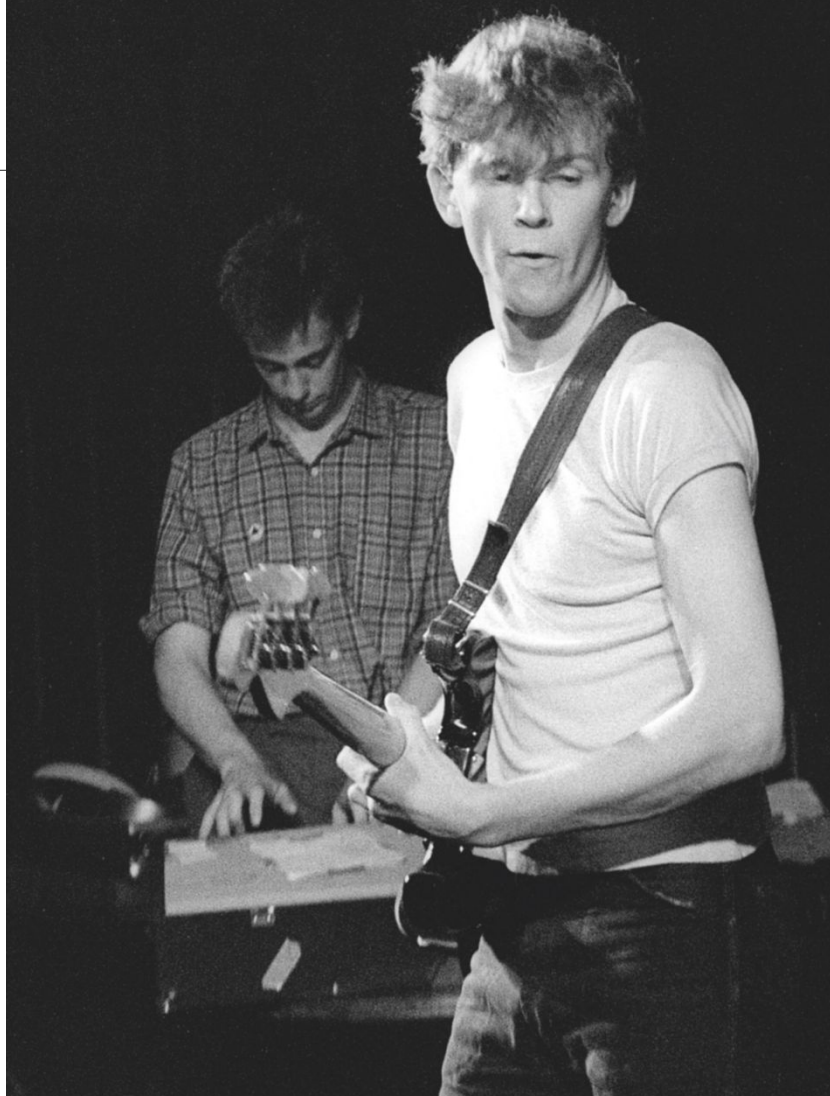
"You get people who are heavily into bands like Joy Division coming along to our gigs, probably expecting something similar, and then finding us too commercial. Then you have all the pop people who don't even bother to come to see us 'cos we're bracketed away as a weird band."

"I think a lot of people just hate the idea of us rather than the actual band," resumes Julian. "A lot of people are anti-us 'cos they associate us with too much artiness. But none of us have ever been near an art school! None of us are like that. We're as against that sort of thing as anyone else.

"I'm sure a lot of people would change their opinions of us if they met us. But most of them are never going to, so they just go along with the general view. People like that have such closed minds."

And so it goes. Where it's heading hardly bears thinking about.

Being bracketed so arbitrarily with the leftfield "arty" bands has not been the only simplistic categorising that Teardrop have had to contend with since their genesis in November '78. The "This Week's Akron!" province plunderers have seen fit to bag them simply as A Liverpool Band, as if that explains all. You know the sort of thing – a bunch of zany weirdos with a lumpy, multi-syllabled name and a nice Disneyland grin. In fact, drummer Gary Dwyer is the only born-and-bred Scouser in the trio. So much for that convenient little handle.



The fact that Teardrop, their buddies Echo And The Bunnymen, Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark and Pink Military all started making waves on Merseyside around the same time – the same week, to be precise – is almost incidental. I say almost, because Julian is convinced there were a few outside forces helping to bring things together.

"We were really lucky when we formed, 'cos there were a lot of people desperately hoping that there would be a new Liverpool scene. When people like us and the Bunnymen came along, it was the answer to all their dreams. The vibes were just right at the time. We started the new Liverpool scene, but it started us in the same way."

Despite the advantage of having had, until its recent closure, one of the country's most ambitious rock clubs on its doorstep – Eric's – Liverpool had been left remarkably untainted by the initial punk furore as far as local talent was concerned. There were bands, of course, but with the exception of The Yachts and Big In Japan, few of them got past the garage stage.

One such combo were The Crucial Three, formed in '77 by Julian with Ian "Mac" McCulloch, now the leading quiff with Echo And The Bunnymen, and Pete Wylie, who more recently formed Wah! Heat. Julian had moved to Merseyside a year earlier from the Midlands to study teacher training and drama at college, academic aspirations which were rapidly ditched as soon as the band – the embryonic Teardrop – began rehearsing.

"Most of the stuff I was doing at college seemed so reactionary. There were a few of us who started going down Eric's every night, getting into the punk thing, and suddenly the college just seemed so pointless. So I left and started trying to get a band together. It was really good at that time, 'cos for ages I'd been trying to decide what I really wanted to do. As soon as punk came along, I knew I had to form a band."

A series of name and line-up changes ensued, with Mac and Wylie both eventually leaving to be replaced by organist Paul Simpson and guitarist Finkler, who, faced with a choice between a university course and a career in rock'n'roll, plumped for Teardrop – or A Shallow Madness as they were calling themselves that week.

Unhappy with their original drummer Dave – and with their first gigs imminent – they were put in touch with Gary Dwyer by local percussionist extraordinaire Budgie. Though he had been playing

RAY STEVENSON / REX FEATURES

DEC HICKEY PRESENTS

the teardrop explodes

22.10.80

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Onstage in 1979: Balfe and Cope with Mick Finkler, the guitarist who would be sacked the following summer because he'd got "really complacent"

properly for no more than a fortnight, Dwyer fitted the bill perfectly and was slotted into the band for their debut gig with the Bunnymen at Eric's, by which time the Teardrop moniker had been heisted from a DC comic.

THE TEARDROP EXPLODES' progress since then has been a tale of three singles, all on the local Zoo label: "Sleeping Gas", "Bouncing Babies" and the current "Treason".

The singles chart the group's development from the intense Pere Ubu and Fall-influenced outfit of the early days to the eloquent, funky pop of the present; from the disturbing, psychotic shades of "Sleeping Gas" to the economic slickness and majestic hooks of "Treason".

Over the past year Teardrop have willingly sacrificed some of their early and sinister eeriness in favour of a more basic rock approach. They have grown simultaneously more direct and more soulful in their musical attack. The distinct change in emphasis can be traced partly to the departure last summer of organist Simpson, as Julian admits.

"Paul couldn't really play that well, but he was a real white-noise merchant and a lot of the early songs were definitely his type of stuff. But once he left, we went in a different direction with a lot more form to the music.

"It was only after 'Bouncing Babies' [the second single, released last July shortly after Simpson left] that we really began to find ourselves. Until then, we never really knew how a song worked. But after that we started to get a lot more structured. We started to realise that things like middle-eights and choruses were vital!

"I hate the idea that some people think of us as a band without any real human element. I want to have loads of passion in our stuff. That's the reason that I really like people like Scott Walker. There's a lot of soul in his stuff.

"It's the same with someone like Robert Wyatt. Everybody thinks of him as a really cold person 'cos he used to write very heavy songs, but they were also very touching. You'd end up in tears listening to them."

"The songs are all more or less written by the time Dave comes in"

was at the control for "Treason".

In addition to producing the song, Langer completely rearranged the insidious "Until you realise... it's just a story" chorus, making drastic improvements—originally the chorus came in only at the end of the song. The move paid handsome dividends: the single has been the most successful Zoo release to date, shifting an impressive 16,000 copies in the first week of release, almost all of them, regrettably, well away from the chart return shops.

But "Treason", a song about unease, does stand out as genuine proof of the group's lyrical strengths and sensitivity. Julian Cope, as the principal vocalist, is responsible for all the song words and he writes from an intensely personal viewpoint, eschewing political or social comment at the expense of vivid thumbnail sketches of the vagaries of human relationships—love songs, basically.

Surprisingly, both Mick and Gary seem happy enough to allow their singer to be the sole songwriting mouthpiece.

"Julian sings the songs, so he writes them all," shrugs Mick. "What he is singing is personal to him, so there's no way I'm going to go up to him and say he shouldn't sing this or that. That would be stupid. It's a personal thing to him. But that's OK, 'cos he's only speaking for himself. If he were making general statements, then he would be speaking on behalf of the group as a whole, which I wouldn't want. As long as he keeps the songs personal, it's fair enough. »

Nowhere is The Teardrop Explodes' warmth and directness more apparent than on stage. There are no attempts at any grand image-making or any moves to distance or alienate the audience, with Julian directing the set with a chumminess that borders on the bland.

"My favourite album of all time is *Live At Max's Kansas City* by The Velvet Underground. I just love the way that Lou Reed speaks to the audience, saying things like, 'Hello, how are you?' That's me really. I'm basically quite a pleasant person, so why should I try to be something that I'm not?

"Even when we were doing some of our weirder stuff like 'Camera Camera' and 'Kirkby Workers Dream Fades' [both on the B-side of the first single, "Sleeping Gas"], I used to say things like, 'This is the next song and it's called so-and-so and it's really fab.' I suppose I've always been a friendly person."

PAUL SIMPSON'S EXIT indirectly helped Teardrop find their feet musically, but it also left them with a problem. Without his billowing keyboards, their sound was reduced to a sparse skeleton of its former grandeur with no real flesh on the framework of Julian's loping bass and Mick's scratchy guitar. It was obvious that the three-piece lineup needed augmenting and Zoo co-director Dave Balfe, formerly the Big In Japan organist, was called in on keyboards at short notice as the band landed a useful support position on a Patrick Fitzgerald tour run by independent promoters Final Solution.

A year on, he is still playing stand-in keyboards in the group. They did find another organist a couple of months back but he only lasted five gigs before an SOS was relayed to Balfe, who immediately returned. Though still not a full-time Teardrop, Balfe is beginning to look more and more of a permanent fixture and his hands will be behind the keyboard when the group go into Rockfield studios later this month to begin work on their debut album.

Mick attempts to outline exactly what Balfe's role entails.

"The way it works is that we write the songs in rehearsals and he comes in later and puts a keyboard line over them. The songs are all more or less written by the time he comes in, which is why he doesn't get songwriting credits. He just helps us to arrange them really. But it is good to have someone outside the band arranging the stuff, 'cos he can be more objective."

Outside help, adds Mick, was partly behind the success of "Treason". Whereas the first two singles were produced by the Zoo team of Balfe and Bill Drummond—AKA The Chameleons of Lori And The Chameleons fame—Clive Langer

"It's like if you were to ask us about our political beliefs. We could tell you our political beliefs, but it would be irrelevant to the band. Julian doesn't sing about politics, 'cos he's got his own personal political beliefs and I'm not having him represent my political beliefs on stage. They could be completely different.

"Julian has got a completely free hand to say whatever he likes, as long as he doesn't make statements on behalf of the band."

Sounds suspiciously like one almighty cop-out to me. But the group's vocalist justifies his strictly personal lyrics from another, more likely angle. Over to you, Ju.

"I don't think it's a cop-out. I don't agree with the David Byrne way of writing songs where you can write an anti-love song and then defend it by saying that you're just writing from an anti-love point of view. I think that whatever a person sings is taken to be what they believe. You could be advocating violence, singing, *'I'm a Nazi/I'm gonna jackboot on your head'*, and then argue that you've only been writing from a violent point of view. That would be the cop-out!"

But surely you can simply express an honest viewpoint, regardless of a persona.

"I suppose so," concedes the singer. "But I don't think of the lyrics as being a real cop-out simply 'cos I'm not sure what I actually do believe in a lot of the time. I'm still forming my ideas on a lot of things. Like whether we should send athletes to the Olympics. At one point I really thought we should stop them from going, but then I saw someone on TV who put the opposite argument and I changed my mind just because of that!"

"If I could change my opinion 'cos of something like that, then I don't want to put myself in any sort of God position in any of the songs."

LIKE PENETRATION AND Buzzcocks in '78 and Joy Division last year, Teardrop have benefitted immensely from being allowed to develop at their own pace, well away from the cramping commercial pressures of the London music-biz vortex. The same has applied to their compatriots the Bunnymen and the entire Zoo operation, whose colourful, impressive progress has gone hand in hand with the sturdy growth of Teardrop.

Mick puts it down to the fact that everyone involved took the band seriously right from the off, taking time to rope in the right people and generally make the right moves at the right time. Julian begs to differ, inferring that their steady, un-hyped growth was less conscious. It just happened that way.

"It was just a natural process where you took time to get your ideas sorted out. It's the same with someone like Joy Division. If they'd become

well known earlier, they would have probably disappeared by now. Ian Curtis needed those two years to sort things out. If we'd done an album at the same time as *'Sleeping Gas'* came out, I'd be cringing over it now. There's only a couple of songs that we were doing then that still stand up now. We're much more powerful now. There's a lot more spark to it."

Of course, they have still had to contend with the periodic bouts of blind prejudice along the way. Recently a lot of people have written them off as Talking Heads imitators, a comparison, incidentally, which Mick happens to find quite flattering. If parallels have to be drawn, though, the closest thing to Teardrop is probably the Subway Sect of the "Ambition" single, although Teardrop are rapidly maturing into the lithe, elegant pop group the Subways never quite became. Julian Cope, interestingly enough, admits to a strong Vic Goddard influence in his songwriting.

Still, the preconceptions of a large percentage of their audience does give Teardrop something to fight against, something to prove.

As Mick reflects, "It's great to see the reaction of someone who is seeing us for the first time. There's so many people who simply don't expect us to be the way we are."

As far as I'm concerned there are only two types of music when it comes down to it – good and bad. As to which camp Teardrop belong in, well, that's up to you. Just ensure that it is your own open mind that makes the decision for you. *Adrian Thrills*

— MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 25 —

SOONER OR LATER it had to happen. The painfully predictable way in which rock scenarios repeat themselves certainly belies the once optimistic image of a dangerous, freewheeling medium constantly expanding like some parallel universe journeying to dimensions never seen or heard before.

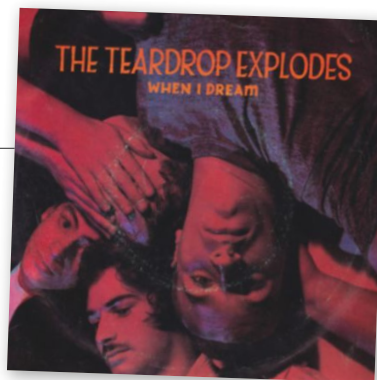
A thriving primal musical milieu began to flower on Mathew Street, Liverpool, circa 1977. From the ego-shattered breakdown of the portentously named Crucial Three – a band that never made it out of the sitting room, let alone the garage – crawled Ian "Mac" McCulloch (Echo And The Bunnymen), Pete Dinklage (Wah! Heat) and Julian Cope (Teardrop Explodes).

The bands' early singles on Zoo and Inevitable were acclaimed and it dawned that here was another much-needed opportunity to write on and help manufacture a phenomenon – The Liverpool Scene, The New Merseybeat, and so the labels linger on. Once the buzz had filtered onto the discreet pages of the Sunday glossies, there came a need for the final ingredient: a ritual sacrifice.

With Mick Finkler's short-lived replacement on guitar Alan Gill (left), who introduced Julian Cope to acid and co-wrote the band's biggest hit, "Reward"

ADRIAN BOOT





The Teardrops released their debut album *Kilimanjaro*, which embraced pop in preference to their formative experimentation. It also included their past singles and, although excellent in parts, veered towards the bland by virtue of its uniformity. It was a golden opportunity for the big put-down. The knives were drawn and suddenly it's *et tu*, buddy.

Couple this with Julian Cope's propensity to unashamedly air the band's internal and external rivalries like the dirty washing from the north-west's other soapbox fantasy, *Coronation Street*, and you find an incestuously inward-looking ménage à trois that looks like imploding under the weight of its own negativities.

While the critical backlash aimed at the Teardrops' debut album, flawed as it is, seems more than a little unfair, the way the Teardrops have become the eye of a bitchy whirlwind of jealousies, slander and cynical asides is hardly surprising when you realise that the band is fuelled on in-fighting and hatred.

"Yes, I must say I don't like Dave. He gets a pretty dubious character sometimes."

This is Julian Cope talking about his keyboard player and producer Dave Balfe, a man who frequently works with great effect with the other great Zoo controller Bill Drummond under the collective title of The Chameleons.

"He just plays a good role in the band that's all," he continues, "but we often fight, and I mean physically. I usually win because he's a bit of a wimp. Not that I'm a fighting person, though."

Speaking as if he'd just snorted an entire week's supply of speed, the Teardrops' mainman continued his explanation on polemics as a means to creativity in the romantic setting of the Ali Kebab House somewhere near their North London rehearsal studios.

"Dave is just one of the most extreme characters I've ever met. Sometimes he gets me so knotted up inside... but then again that's good, because it keeps me pushing; you know, right there."

Hardly the kind of thing you expect from a man who writes predominantly love songs, and very good ones too, and confesses to a long-running affair with the metaphysical poets like Donne and Marvell.

Turning momentarily from aggression to what he calls the "alternative society" of Liverpool, he had this to say: "It's become the hip thing to deny that there's a Liverpool scene, but there is. It hasn't been exaggerated by the press, in fact. It is a very cliquey place, very insular. We all meet in the same places and despise each other jokingly. One thing, though – there's certainly not a Liverpool sound."

As if to amplify this point he goes on to point out that he considers the Bunnymen to have become too dirge-like – "They've lost their original fragility" – and Wah! Heat are accused of being "too heavy and ponderous".

How, then, does he see the Teardrops' music?

"I think we're very poppy. To me pop is something you hum. What I'm trying to do is strike a balance between triteness and greatness. People nowadays seem too embarrassed to show emotion, which is what I want."

Much of the emotion on the album revolves, not unnaturally, around girls, apart from occasional tracks like "Went Crazy" and "Books". The latter is the only song without the lyric printed on the inner sleeve, and it's not without significance that it was written with former partner Mac McCulloch.

"Mac and I just don't talk any more," he says with the same gung-ho enthusiasm and intensity he applies to every utterance. "It's basically because Mac and I have such bad, bad vibes between us at the moment. I really thought I would have to ask him if I was going to write it down, because really it's a half-and-half lyric, and I just didn't want to ask him."

"He's got this thing about there being a sanctity of songs, but I don't see why you can't do songs any way. I'm sure he probably thinks it's the worst arrangement he's ever heard, but the number-one thing is the humour, that's what's important."

"The thing about Mac and I is that there's something totally much heavier behind it all that's not to do with the band."

Sounds very mysterious. Could this something be connected with a girl, I tentatively enquire?

"I don't like bitching, but Mick had really got complacent"

"Yeah, that's it," he replies with a sagely nod. Just to add to the mounting "family" intrigue, I ask Mac, who I coincidentally see later that night, what his explanation for the Mersey cold war is. Who is this latter-day version of Yoko Ono?

"I can't imagine why he told you that," is his perplexed response. "I fell out with Julian over the sacking of Mick... He actually told you that, did he?"

Whatever the reason for the wall of silence, one thing is definitely fact – at the end of the Teardrops' spring tour this year, Julian sacked his friend, guitarist Mick Finkler, from the band.

Alan Gill was brought in as a replacement and Julian was quickly condemned to the role of unmerciful tyrant.

Listening to him enthuse over music and bearing in mind his monomaniac's sense of purpose and perfection – he plans to have singing lessons for a voice that's already one of the most accomplished in rock – it's not hard to buy his account of this remarkably loaded episode.

"This whole thing just freaks me out because... what happened was we sacked Mick and everybody seems to think that because I was the instigator that I'm this big, evil dictator from Liverpool, which is just stupid."

"Obviously, if you've got a guitarist you're not happy with, you get rid of him. You're not running the band to make everyone happy; you're running it to make it as good as possible."

"I mean, this isn't meant to be a bitch, because I don't like bitching like that, but Mick to me had got really complacent. There was no fire in what he wanted to do. Mick just wasn't bothered about pushing at all. I thought, 'What's more important, the friendship or the band?' And when it came down to it I realised the band was the most important."

Whatever the reasons, it was an event that left bitter feelings on many sides, though it would seem that acrimony is something the band is becoming well versed in.

Like their friends/enemies (you choose) the Bunnymen, they received more than their share of flak for signing with a big label rather than an independent. Julian's answer to those "rootsier than thou" critics is typically uncompromising and pragmatic.

"Oh, that's all shit... I don't think there's anything called selling out these days. We recorded the album first and then took it to Phonogram. There was never any doubt I always wanted us to go with a big label."

BY THROWING IN their lot with Phonogram they will also have the financial backing to make their current *Daktari* tour more than just a slog round the halls promoting the album.

Eschewing camo chic – "We're heavily into army gear; I've got 17 pairs of army pants all hanging up and we've even got a jeep" – in favour of nouveau naturalism – "Our backdrop is like a huge zebra skin" – the band will also be using the unusually talented road crew that helped make the Bunnymen tour so visually powerful.

As the consciously Love-inspired horn section is central to the album's ambience, there will be two trumpet players on stage with the band.

"We've only just started rehearsing with them, but things are going very well. It should be a great tour, I'm really looking forward to it... I just hope we all get better, 'cos we've all got colds and things at the moment."

It seems a crucial tour in many ways. The white light seems to be shining on them harder than at any other time in their history.

After raising so many hopes, they've committed the fatal sin of disappointing the self-righteous upholders of street credibility, not to mention one particular rock journalist currently conducting a personal campaign of character assassination in their hometown.

You might like to have known what the other members of the band thought about this tale of back-stabbing and tribal warfare, but according to the garrulous Julian there was no point asking them.

"I usually do the interviews because I'm the only one with anything to say really. Like Alan just spends most of his time thinking, and Gary [the band's drummer] never says anything. I can usually speak for them better. Dave would just start pissing you off. It sounds like a really horrible band, doesn't it?" Ian Pye •

1980

APRIL - JUNE



June 26, 1980:
the Stones launch
Emotional Rescue
at Danceteria in
New York City

ALBUMS

The Rolling Stones *Emotional Rescue* ROLLING STONES

Ever since he turned 30, Mick Jagger (aged 37) has been regularly asked when the Rolling Stones are going to knock it on the head. It's a question seldom asked of, say, Paul McCartney (38), Roger Waters (35) or even Chuck Berry (48).

The public's *idée fixe* of the Stones as ageing enfants terribles is a problem Jagger seems slyly to acknowledge on "Dance", the first track of *Emotional Rescue*, when he sings: "I think the time's come to get up, get out - out into something new." The joke, of course - which is implicit in the sheer bounce of the music - is that the Stones patently have no intention of doing any such thing.

Emotional Rescue is largely a familiar mixture of affectionate disrespect - for the music of country, blues, reggae and other rock ingredients - and the personal affectations of Jagger, who at one moment is assuming a cod Spanish accent ("Indian Girl") and at another a Barry Gibb falsetto (the title track).

Like, I suspect, many other long-time Stones' fans, I no longer have great expectations of their records. There were several good things on *Black And Blue* ("Hand Of Fate", "Memory Motel") and a half dozen on *Some Girls*, their best album since *Exile On Main Street*

in 1972. But having become hostages to their own celebrity, lacking genuine rapport (and, therefore, social context) with a young audience that mistrusts showbiz-type stars, the Stones now make music whose overall mood is playful and ironic where once its effect was urgent and cutting; it's an awful long way from "Gimme Shelter" to "Indian Girl" and Jagger, backed by Tijuana Brass horns arranged by Jack Nitzsche (or should it be Kitsche?), singing in his fake peon voice of revolution in Nicaragua ("Mr Gringo, my father, he ain't no Che Guevara...").

Along this way lies parody, not merely pastiche; just as "Where The Boys Go", an admittedly droll tale of a cockney roustabout - sung by Jagger as though he were Jimmy Pursey - shows them trying to take off punk (actually, it's not fast enough).

In fact, the emphasis of the Stones' current music is to be found in Jagger's stance: his nous for what is fashionable (surely the impulse behind *Some Girls*' disco-style classic "Miss You", his throwaway humour and a dumbness that comes across virtually as camp.

ALBUMS REVIEW 1980

On "Send It To Me" he importunes for love or for money over a spoof reggae track; with the title song - the dumbest Stones number since "Fool To Cry" - he switches falsetto to spoken voice so as deathlessly to mug the phrase "I will be your knight in shining armour coming to your emotional rescue" (hilarious); and on "She's So Cold", which has a great Rockin' Rebels ("Wild Weekend") intro and other rhythmic excitement, he sings and acts as if he were hugging himself while locked inside a refrigerating room.

It must be said that, arresting though all this may be, it doesn't add up to the Stones' highest endeavour.

Usually it's claimed that the rootsiness in the playing of Keith Richards and the rhythm section gives the Stones their tension;

it's peculiar, then, that Richards' one, by now obligatory, solo vehicle, "All About You", should be the wispy, quavery thing that it is, in the recognisable mould of "You Got The Silver" - his broken voice makes him appear much more vulnerable than Jagger, despite a snarling line like "I'm sick and tired of hangin' around with dogs like you". But this general belief about the Stones gains credence from four of the five best tracks on *Emotional Rescue* (the fifth is "She's So Cold").

"Dance", with its suggestion of Zeppelin's riff on "Trampled Underfoot", its Bobby Keys horns

and Latin echoes (percussion by Mike Shrieve), swaggers from start to finish and is completed by Jagger's declamatory vocal: "Hey, what am I doin' standin' here on the corner of West 8th Street and 6th Avenue?"

"Let Me Go" is almost rockabilly, propelled by a modern country rhythm, while "Summer Romance", a likeably banal tale of callow teen love perhaps inspired by Cochran's "Summertime Blues", has the lick-spittle pace of "When The Whip Comes Down".

Finally, "Down In The Hole" is a slow, hard-luck blues, gilded by Sugar Blue's harp, that the Stones might have done at the outset of their career; its illicit air is neatly summed up by Jagger singing of girls "bumming for nylons in the American Zone".

On tracks such as these the Stones allay doubts about their good health, and, to use an idiom from Jagger's favourite sport, five out of 10 tracks is a

reasonable batting average. Yet it's inescapable that they rarely approach the drive or brio of the best newer bands, like Graham Parker's or Costello's.

Like Chuck Berry, their early mentor, they've become an institution which one may either rail against or draw comfort from. Keeping the ghosts and the critics at bay may yet occupy them for years to come.

Michael Watts, MM Jun 28





Peter Gabriel Peter Gabriel

CHARISMA

It's a case of new skin or old ceremonies. Peter Gabriel left Genesis way back when because he felt dangerously stifled. He needed to undergo all sorts of personality changes in order to regenerate himself. The "Solsbury Hill" single kept him solvent while the first two solo albums not only gave him the room to breathe and experiment again but also build up the kind of cult following that does wonders for the morale.

The tactic worked perfectly. He has now become one of those rejuvenated, cultural yardsticks who sidestep Sanatogen through an individually astute use of "modern" strategies. Like Bowie, Eno and Fripp, he has cropped his hair, incorporated hi-tech into live performances and developed an image that is both discreetly subversive and constantly self-questioning. This third outing can only consolidate the process of rebirth: it's the most confident distillation of his technique to date.

All the familiar trademarks are here but now expressed with a mature, full-blooded conviction. Lyrically, there is that fierce concern with emotional disorder and political injustice.

Virtually every cut explores a distorted, emotional state in either a shorn narrative (like "Biko", which rightfully rails against a regime that advocates apartheid, and "Family Snapshot", which details President Kennedy's assassination) or in oblique symbolism (like the mega-hit "Games Without Frontiers") where the images make sense intuitively rather than rationally.

Musically, every cut is sharply orchestrated, underlining the fulsome drama of the words. They shift from a sparse, strident pulse (where the

militaristic drums are frequently offset by eerily delicate marimba tracery) to no-holds-barred, filmic panorama. Much of the credit here must go to producer Steve Lillywhite who has created

a magnificently textured, diamond-sharp sound.

An album that will grow and resonate with every spin.

Ian Birch, MM Jun 14

Skids Days In Europa VIRGIN

This Skids' reissue is all about classy repackaging, using a supposedly better mix (for Canada release) as a pretext for a new, tamer sleeve. Critics, who originally abused the album's neo-Nazi infatuation with war-like supermen, wouldn't have paid as much attention to Jobson's garbled recycling of political sloganeering and Victor boys' comic heroics if the 1936 Berlin Olympic-styled cover hadn't made his sentiments so clear in the first place.

The remix itself, by Bruce Fairbairn, makes little noticeable difference, the major change being the inclusion of the single "Masquerade" at the expense of "Pros And Cons". Otherwise, still the same offensive wolf, but now in sheep's clothing.

Chris Bohn, MM Apr 12

The Slits The Slits

V/ROUGH TRADE

Collector's Corner: by making public a selection of private doodlings and prototype demos, The Slits presupposed an interest in themselves that once would have been satisfied by bootleggers.

A plain white cover houses a record with no discernible title or proper track listing, containing pre-reggae, dawn-of-enlightenment Slits. Their early sloppy charm is represented here by raging metallic outbursts, acoustic rants ("No! Enemy"), potty instrumentals and the primal "Bongos On The Lawn". Crudely recorded, it makes diverse if incoherent listening, for close friends and eavesdroppers only.

Chris Bohn, MM Apr 12



May 11, 1980:
The Cure's
Robert Smith
at the Rainbow,
North London



SINGLES

Cabaret Voltaire Three Mantras

ROUGH TRADE

Unusually direct, CV have this time pared down their hypnotic drone music to emphasise the mantric qualities of an insistently repetitive beat, heard best on the great, compulsive "Western Mantra" – tautly disciplined and sensibly embellished – while "Eastern Mantra" is bleaker, though it colourfully blends taped Jerusalem market noises with monotone mutterings to mesmerising effect, achieved mainly by its extraordinary length. MMApr5

Blondie Call Me

CHRYSLIS

Excellent Moroder-produced single praised here a few weeks back as an import. It's now on general release. MMApr5

Judas Priest Living After Midnight

CBS

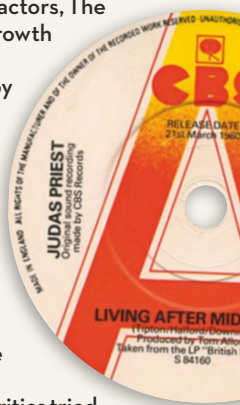
Surprisingly harmless HM nightlife celebration – not to say toothless. A less obnoxious sample of the Priest repertoire. MMApr5



The Cure A Forest

FICTION

Unfortunately tagged as naively witty suburbanites by admirers, and precocious darlings by detractors, The Cure's severe growth problems were largely caused by unwarranted heavy attention early on. Consequently, writer Robert Smith's ability to construct fleetingly mysterious and highly evocative scenarios went uncredited, as critics tried instead to pinpoint the band sociologically. "A Forest" is a good example, which gets better with age: Smith's dry, lost vocal tells of an unsettled individual listening out for a strange guiding voice, while the band play an attractively doomy tune, enhance by reticent drums and carefully folded-in keyboards lines. Nice, vaguely psychedelic production, too. MMApr5



GABOR SCOTT / GETTY

“We should antagonise people”

A possible psychedelic revival is on, but **ECHO & THE BUNNYMEN** want to offer something more substantial, outside of fashion. “We want to do things that are valid,” says Ian McCulloch, “good songs, that mean something sincere. But ego’s always at the back of it.”

— NME JUNE 28 —

HERE WE GO round again. There’s a word in the back of some people’s minds these days. Now and then events bring it to the tip of their tongues, where the sour taste causes it to be swallowed back down or else spat out whole like a lump of phlegm from the subconscious.

Once out, it assumes its own horrendous proportions, hanging in the air, sliding down the wall, slithering across the floor... causing feelings of embarrassment, confusion, trepidation and helpless resignation. But this nausea soon passes, and then the worst thing of all happens: the word begins to make sense. It fits. It’s time to get psychedelic.

This isn’t the cue to start another stupid tribe, though someone’s bound to try. And it doesn’t mean another dead teen sub-cult has risen again to join the zombies already traipsing around Limboland, though again it could happen. Beyond the obvious, beyond the sheer historical imperative of a long-feared hippy revival, there is an odd glimmer. Behind the enormous uncoolness of it all is a little imp of the perverse. It’s been prodding away at various cerebella of my acquaintance.

There’s all this weirdness and insanity going on around you, the imp is saying. All this fear and conservatism, everybody clutching at the past with one hand and groping for the future with the other! The only way to fight this insanity is with more insanity. Rub the bastards’ noses in it! Show them how weird things can really get!

Go ahead and laugh if you want. My face isn’t exactly straight either. The hippies have been utterly discredited, right? Of course they have. All that cosmic hogwash... Acid in the water supply... Peace and love, etc. It’s hard to believe people ever took Donovan seriously in the first place. But this is something new we’re dealing with. It arises out of a small problem of descriptive language.

Time and again of late, one of the new crop of English bands presents itself to a reviewer. Time and again the reviewer begins to feel that lump of phlegm forming. It applies too well to so much of the music these bands are making to be kept down for long, but the pejorative connotations force the effort. It’s such an unhip word, and these bands are, by and large, pretty hip. So are the reviewers. But eventually it comes out. Psychedelic. »

LISA HAUN / GETTY





January 17, 1981, Pavilion Gardens, Buxton, Derbyshire: clouds of dry ice and upwards-pointing stage lights render the band “insilhouette, like the aliens in *Close Encounters*”

Suddenly all sorts of hoary old concepts attach themselves as if someone had switched on an electromagnet. These bands are underground, for instance, because they don't have hits; they mean nothing to the kind of person who buys Costello and Pretenders albums, and very little to buyers of Specials and Vapors singles. They are progressive in that they try to bend the old musical forms or invent new ones. Perhaps they even like to jam on the quiet.

Oh Gawd! Suddenly I dread the consequences of this. Extending the boundaries of music, exploring the frontiers of the mind, and other such nonsense... It's not all Martin Hannett's fault either, because not all of these bands have had records produced by him, although it helps.

Look, pretend you never read this. It wasn't real, it was just a momentary nightmare flashback, it'll pass. Pretend that names like The Teardrop Explodes and Echo And The Bunnymen don't recall the time when groups had names like The Grateful Dead or Lothar And The Hand People. It's such a pat, easy, obvious comparison to draw.

Pretend that Echo And The Bunnymen don't make the sort of sound you'd expect to find on a 13th Floor Elevators album. They've never even heard of them. They like the Velvets, sure, but the what Floor Elevators? Echo And The Bunnymen are just a promising new group from the north of England, that's all. It's not their fault that people try to squeeze them into absurd theoretical clothes.

And look what they have to put up with because of it... Driving through Liverpool in the obligatory run-down Transit on their way to Southport, they pass some friends at a set of traffic lights. One of them flashes a peace sign at the occupants of the van. It's a joke.

The Bunnymen squirm in their seats.

“I told you the psychedelic revival is on,” says Ian McCulloch, who must be used to these annoying little jibes. He scratches his head wearily, making his hair look even more dishevelled than it did a moment ago.

“It certainly is in our area. But I haven't got any strong memories of that period at all. We never got into it; we were all too young anyway. The only records I can remember from that time were the cliched ones like Scott

“A lot of people say it's postmodernist. What is that? It doesn't exist”



McKenzie rather than the heavy psychedelic things, which I still haven't heard.”

What about drugs; done a lot of them?

“Er... I get drunk occasionally.”

THE BUNNYMEN CAME into being about two years ago; part of the welter of groups who had heard events in London calling. Echo was the name of their tape recorder, recently replaced by a real drum kit. Real drummers are in short supply in Liverpool, but the Bunnymen found Pete De Freitas, who was about to go to university but was glad to have a good reason not to.

His recruitment wrought a change from the thin, haunting, resonant semi-acoustic sound of their first Zoo single, “The Pictures On My Wall”, to fluid electric-rock overdrive with plenty of vitality and few inhibitions.

Will Sergeant and Les Pattinson, guitar and bass respectively, allow Ian McCulloch the prominent role on stage and off. It was he who first pulled the group together; it is he who gives it its most marked characteristics. On the evidence of a gig at London's Lyceum some months past, I expected to find him full of pompous conceits, such was the contempt he sullenly displayed when the Bunnymen were offered to the culturati as a little morsel of things to come, alongside Teardrop, Manicured Noise,

A Certain Ratio and the often ludicrous Psychedelic Furs.

Apart from beating the Furs at their own billing, the Bunnymen turned in such an arrogant, moody, disdainful and almost fearsome performance that I had to find out if they really thought they were as good as they actually were that night. So, here we are in a prefabricated poly-vinyl seafront cafeteria at Southport that The Bunnymen have inexplicably chosen as the venue for the afternoon, about to find out.

Ian, wearing an angst-ridden old overcoat with his shirt buttoned to the top against the chill existential winds – attesting to the fact that he's seen *The Man Who Fell To Earth* six times – scratches his head for a moment or two before explaining what was going through it on the Lyceum stage...

“I was fed up with all these... um... *hard* groups knocking around like The Psychedelic Furs and even Joy Division, that I just felt were shallow.

I even quoted lines from other people's songs. It was just frustration, I suppose. People are told what to like a lot of the time, and I quoted from Joy Division, a band whom people are told to like. That audience was really... what's the word? They weren't really reacting at all. Perhaps it was our fault, but I think it was something in the audience there, a cool aspect. I quoted Joy Division because if they'd been up there, playing a bad set, they'd have got the reaction that nobody else got.

"It was supposed to be some sort of hip bill of bands, and I hate that kind of thing. We tried to shock them out of that in a way, by going on and playing pretty straight-ahead rock without the airs. The Psychedelic Furs are quite straight-ahead, but they try and cover it up with certain poses. I mean if that's psychedelic..."

"People who like us normally didn't like us that night, but I thought we were miles better. We could've played safe but we didn't. I did see something then... that perhaps we should be doing something like antagonising people."

Will has been looking increasingly bemused. "I dunno," he says. "I wasn't into it at all. Mind you, I didn't even know what was happening with the audience. I had sunglasses on."

"Yeah, but you didn't like it on a playing level. There's more to playing live than just getting the notes right and everything. What annoyed me about the Lyceum thing was that there were a lot of real idiots there who were trying to feel like they weren't idiots, they were in on something. They're not in on it. There's nothing to be in on."

"A lot of people say it's postmodernist. What is that? It doesn't exist. It's just a tag, and that's what the whole night was about. Categories."

Les decides to interrupt this diatribe: "Categories are inevitable, but you can fight back. Wait till our new ska single comes out!"

"If people come along expecting something," continues Ian, "it's perfectly OK to use things like arrogance to tell them you're not that thing... the Liverpool thing, for instance. All these wacky bands. There's nobody wacky in Liverpool. It's no more wacky than anywhere else."

The word is actually quirky, but the point is the same. I bet there are times when Echo And The Bunnymen wish they'd called themselves something else. Incidentally, since Ian mentioned Joy Division, it ought to be pointed out that the two groups do have a lot in common. And this time it isn't Martin Hannett. It's Iggy Pop.

THE MUZAK in the cafeteria is slowly sending everyone to sleep. At least I hope it was the muzak. It might have been the drowsy off-season resort town instilling itself into its visitors, or the dutiful recollection of past exploits, such as the fact that Les used to be a boat-builder, while Will was a cook and Ian was on the dole. And the fact that they're all about 20 and this is their first group. These and other faint incidental details add to the mounting torpor.

Time to get serious. What's your motivation, what does it all mean?

"I don't know," replies Ian. "It gets harder as we go along to be motivated." Oh. Where is the fun in it, then?

"There is no fun in it," says Will. "Anyway, we'll all be in the army soon."

Ian misses this joke because he's been gazing thoughtfully at nothing at all. Suddenly he mutters a single word...

"Ego. Yeah... ego. It's all kinda gratifying your ego. We want to do things that are valid; good songs, that mean something sincere. But ego's always at the back of it."

There you have it! This question has been asked in a lot of different ways of a lot of different people and Ian McCulloch has just given it the straightest answer it's ever had. He wasn't being particularly ironic, nor was he apologising. Just giving an honest answer. There's no message, no crusade, no need to tell you what's wrong with your life, no burning purpose... Being in a group is a good way to travel and experience things, thinks Ian. And Will?

"This tour we're doing now; I'm hoping that by the end of it I'll like playing live, and I'll feel less tense on stage. That's about the only thing I'm hoping for."

"Sometimes," says Ian, "you go on stage and you feel that you have got something to say, and you want them to listen and understand, but other times you just want to be great at what you do, whatever it is, but that doesn't mean you have to have a mission or a message of some sort. Although we do analyse what we do, and we think, a lot of the time, that it's not that

good. Our egos aren't big enough to disregard self-criticism... I've got to go for a piss."

Ian gets up from the table; I turn to Will and ask if he agrees with all that's been said.

"I think all this arrogance business that you two were talking about earlier is a load of crap!"

The silence that follows this declaration is so pregnant that someone should really get up and offer it a seat.

"I like quirky groups, basically."

So do I. *Paul Rambali*

— MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 18 —

IT'S NOT JUST the first chill winds of winter that make Essex seem so cold. The Echo And The Bunnymen show – "I hate the word gig, but there's really not many substitutes," says unassuming guitarist Will Sergeant – is inside the bowels of the nightmare conglomeration of steel, glass and concrete that is the county's university.

With glowing high-rise blocks and supermarkets, it's a complete living complex in itself, like Godard's *Alphaville*, which means the journey there could be through the outer limits of hyperspace and on into the eerie labyrinths.

Space travel is something very close to Will Sergeant's inculpable heart. When a travelling businessman watching another channel prevents him from seeing Kate Bush on the tube, he rushes off to get his collection of *Star Trek* novels and, the most treasured possession next to his Telecaster, an Enterprise manual.

"I think it was just great, you know, the programme. Look at this," he murmurs with customary reserve, "it even tells you how to play three-dimensional chess."

Thick-layered drapes of camouflaged (camo) netting cover the stage and the fierce angles of the uni's main hall, to form a long, ragged tunnel within which the band play. Camo is the mythic clothing adopted by the entire entourage for this tour. It's a concept that's evolved rather than contrived and serves as an outward expression for the inspiration, dedication and sense of common destiny that binds this loveable legion of charlies together. Certainly there seems to be something in the air on this tour – a flickering magic that grows from the knowledge that you're involved in something frighteningly exciting.

As well as camo, an exclusive terminology has emerged in keeping with the spirit of discovery: Weird = good, dude = stiff, scummy = bad, and game of tennis = sex.

Any new town is judged by the quality of its camo shop, the availability of good charcoal-cooked burgers and the state of play on the tennis court. Isn't it dangerous, though, to flirt with military images in such times of studied fear and conservatism?

"Well, I think it's just good fun really," Will counters with a half smile. "Les and I wanted to wear our cowboy gear, but the others laughed at us, you know."

In reality, everyone concerned seems to have thought about all the implications.

"This isn't militaristic in the strict sense of the term," explains artist and roadie Kit Edwards. "It functions on so many different levels. On one it's »



November 1980: Ian McCulloch on air at a Dutch radio station between gigs in Apeldoorn, Amsterdam and Rotterdam

undermining a heavy institution like the *Kelly's Heroes* line; it also contributes to a feel of being underground or separate, and it gives the whole tour an aesthetic continuity."

Well, yes. In other words, coupled with the lights and other stage devices, it looks dazzlingly impressive.

Somehow Bill Butt, an extraordinarily gifted lightsman with a background in the theatre and a partnership with manager/producer Bill Drummond, has wed the gothic doom and epic splendour of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* with Spielberg's "white light as a metaphor

for rebirth" technique, to produce the most sympathetic setting for a rock band I have ever seen.

Using a huge commercial fan at the end of the camo tunnel, the crew led by Harry DeMac can suddenly push out blankets of white smoke that, coupled with heavenly-pointing lights, leave the band in silhouette like the aliens in *Close Encounters*, crossed with a matrix of light shafts.

It's stunning. Everything comes off with a professional artistry, always in perfect synch with the music, which has at last come near to reaching its live potential. Despite a cold, Ian "Mac" McCulloch's voice still

reached the ethereal peaks of the album, while Will's understanding of electronic sound (this is his first band) can be sublime on either attack or reflection.

Les Pattinson's basslines are becoming thunderous in places, always original and cleverly at variance with the twin guitars that look for anchorage in Pete De Freitas' rushing drums. Never have they played so well as a single unit, and at their best are capable of awe-inspiring, shimmering, magical, warp-factor-10 rock.

At Essex the sort of gang that like the UK Subs repeatedly spit and hurl cans at the band. If anything it spurs them on to greater heights, and afterwards Mac considers the version of their unusually incisive "Pride" was one of the best yet.

When they sing on "Monkeys": "*Boys are the same/Brains in their pockets/Girls are the same/Knock it and rock it*", the glaring irony is inevitably lost in a sea of human oscillation.

"I wish more people would listen to the lyrics," Mac complains later. "I mean, I don't want them to all stand round analysing things, but I don't see why you can't move around a bit and listen as well."

Overt intellectualism is something Mac most definitely does not approve of. If you're pursuing mystery and adventure or looking back with a splintered vision, why should you want to categorise your art, especially if you're working in a field whose ethos frequently demands the sacrifice of those who break cover and reveal themselves.

"I'd say I'm more interested in atmosphere and the spaces between the obvious, you know. I can't understand why people want to go to university; there must be better things to do."

Contrary to his past press persona, Ian McCulloch is not aloof and difficult, just a little dreamy and sometimes introverted. As long as you don't try and cram him into a restrictive category for the sake of easy consumerism – ie, Echo are the new whatever – he can be warm, funny and intelligent. He could also be rock's Howard Hughes.

"Scummy" really comes onto its own in Mac's vocabulary, because for him there's a lot of scum about. Understandably, he goes to great lengths to wash the gob out of his hair following the night's

performance. "I had to use nearly, a bottle of shampoo, you know."

But while we're all sitting in the hotel lobby waiting for him to appear (it has become his prerogative to be late and the others accept this with a shrugging resignation) it emerges that Mac

No imitation skin

Echo And The Bunnymen *Crocodiles* KOROVA

The transformation of Echo And The Bunnymen from appealing but erratic beatniks of a year ago to the dynamic modern rock group of today has been little short of remarkable. It has been a painless change of style but one in which the effects could hardly be more marked. The haunting semi-acoustic strains of their original Zoo 45 "Pictures On My Wall" are a far cry indeed from the hard, vigorous funk of the recent "Rescue" single.

If "Rescue" hinted broadly at the shift that had taken place, then *Crocodiles*, the debut album, confirms it in the most gratifying manner. There truly is a different kind of tension at work now. So what is it all down to?

Well, on the most basic level, the recruitment of drummer Pete De Freitas in place of the drum machine "Echo" that formerly provided the rhythmic backdrop has toughened up the sound considerably, giving things a solid and imaginative root.

But there is more to it than that. Singer Ian McCulloch's gruff voice has matured magnificently, so that every song is now infested with a rare soul and intensity. In common with all great rock'n'roll from Springsteen to the Sex Pistols, the Bunnymen now sound hungry, and a lot of that hunger can be traced back to the sense of desperation and urgency in McCulloch's vocals.

If McCulloch and De Freitas give the Bunnymen the essence of their new-found strength, then the embellishments and embroidery are left to guitarist Will Sergeant and bassist Les Pattinson. Sergeant is the star of the show musically, his gothic, jangling guitar motifs often stretching miles into the distance behind Pattinson's elastic bass.

Together they have a great sense of rock dynamics, though a lot of the credit

for that could also go to the production team of Chameleons Bill Drummond and Dave Balfe and Original Mirrors guitarist Ian Broudie.

The three men at the controls create a sound full of body and depth without the aid of convoluted studio trickery, the odd splash of resonant echo aside: there is very little on *Crocodiles* that couldn't – or indeed hasn't – been reproduced live.

The Bunnymen betray a host of influences throughout the album. There are shades of both Jim

NME JUL 12 The debut *Bunnymen* LP rated.

Morrison and Iggy Pop in McCulloch's voice, shreds of Wilko Johnson in the crosscut riffing of Sergeant on the title track and aspects of Talking Heads in "Rescue", while the chilling organ melody on the revamped "Pictures On My Wall" certainly owes something to Pere Ubu's "30 Seconds Over Tokyo".

But this crocodile is no imitation skin, and the whole is far greater than the sum of the various inputs. McCulloch's lyrical landscape is scattered with themes of sorrow, horror and despair, themes that are reinforced by animal/sexual imagery. There are resemblances to Joy Division in places, although McCulloch's words are never as intensely personal.

"Crocodiles" and "Rescue" deal with fear and eventual breakdown, desperation which takes the victim even closer to the edge on "Going Up", where ambient mood music drifts into a semi-acoustic rocker with a haunting "Let's get the hell outta here" refrain. But the message filtering through the darkness is primarily one of hope on "Pictures On My Wall" and "All That Jazz", which employs to devastating effect the same relentless rhythmic thrash that drove PiL's "Annalisa" and Magazine's "The Light Pours Out Of Me".

"Villiers Terrace", meantime, is an awestruck and amusing account of people rolling round on carpets, mixed-up medicines and drugged debauchery, lifted by very Bowie-ish staccato electric piano.

Not every track is as successful. "Pride" is a disposable recollection of parental hopes and fears, "Stars Are Stars" an obscure dirge salvaged only by a few crisp minor chords, and "Happy Death Men", a rambling closer that goes nowhere.

One last thing. Forget all that jazz about the creeping return of hippydom, despite the cryptic "flowers and their hair" message scratched over the run-off grooves. *Crocodiles* is destined to be one of the contemporary rock albums of the year. And, yes, you can dance to it. *Adrian Thrills*

Sergeant's gothic, jangling guitar motifs stretch into the distance



inspects every bed before sleep for bugs, taking hours through deliberation and poor eyesight. He must wash his hands at regular intervals and seems almost terrified of flies and dirt. "I mean, you should have seen the last hotel we stopped in, it was really scummy."

In their own way, Will and Les are just as concerned with the odd, the weird and the wonderful. Aside from wanting to ride in a UFO, Will once told his careers adviser that he hoped to be a zoo keeper, while Les wanted to be a racing driver and settled with driving the band from town to town. Only on the grounds of excessive heat accumulation can Les be persuaded not to buy a rubber immersion suit in Norwich's five-star camo shop. Both wear headbands on stage, with Will adding conkers to keep everything down to earth.

Perhaps because he was the last to join, Pete—who replaced Echo the drum machine—is often on the periphery of the band's conversations about spontaneous combustion, sci-fi and music. But when it comes to the "formal interview" he seems assertive and clear about what the band should be doing.

The others are less reluctant to sit down and talk, but they do and it's all over quickly. What about the Liverpool scene?

Mac: "To a certain extent it's been manufactured by the press. We don't like being associated with it. I don't think people would say there was any similarities between us and Wah! Heat or the Teardrops if one was from Doncaster and the other from Scunthorpe, except that Wah! Heat desperately want to be Echo And The Bunnymen."

Mac once played, albeit very briefly, with Pete Wylie, now of Wah! Heat, in the garage band The Crucial Three, and interestingly it is Wylie who is accused of doing Jim Morrison impersonations by Mac. Anyway, Wylie "is just a dude, a superstud in Liverpool", according to Will.

As for the spectre of Morrison, Will thinks he's still alive in Greece and Mac says: "I saw him as a leather-clad dude and a bad poet."

THE PRODUCTION ON their debut album, *Crocodiles*, by David Balfe and Bill Drummond, seemed to be to be as magnificent as the songs and music, though surprisingly the partnership looks like ending. Mac: "I don't think we'll work with them again. It worked on some of the songs but on others there wasn't enough power. Also I think they played it safe on 'The Puppet' [their current single with the far superior B-side "Do It Clean"] and I think they spoilt it a bit."

Pete interjects: "I think they realised they played it safe. I don't think they really knew what to do with it. That's why they're also pushing for us to get another producer, because I think they've run out of ideas for us."

So who will take up the envious task of producing the most exciting band to come out of Liverpool since The Beatles?

Will: "Well, we've got people in mind but they don't know we've got them in mind, so we can't really say... There's one that really sticks out, though, that would suit us."

Says Mac: "I still think a lot more could have been made on some of those songs on the first album, but it was partly our fault."

Pete: "I don't think you're ever going to come out of the studio being totally happy. At the time it seemed like the right production."

Crocodiles only took around three weeks to record but the next will take longer, primarily because those earlier songs had a decent period



November 29, 1980: McCulloch fronts the Bunnymen at Amsterdam's Paradiso

"I'm interested in atmosphere and the spaces between the obvious"

over which to mature, whereas touring has eroded their time to develop new material.

Even with these restrictions, they present few problems in view of their approach to writing. Usually Mac comes up with the lyrics, though Will wrote those to "Happy Death Men", and the rest literally materialises from the catalytic musical communications that develop in the studio.

The Bunnies got their name from a friend. They were almost Mona Lisa & The Grease Guns, Glycerol & The Fan Extractors, and The Daz Men, "because it stood up and was funny", according to Mac.

It was also a reaction against postmodernist names "that have to be serious and have no sense of humour". Strangely, it's a name that has attracted other meaningless labels usually associated with American West Coast bands like Love and The Doors. The connection is purely random. Mac likes the Velvets and Leonard Cohen and Will likes Syd Barrett and even "D.I.S.C.O." by Ottawan.

Grinning under his overgrown fringe, Will suggests: "You've gotta laugh about these labels sometimes. We've been called wacky, postmodernist, Neil Young, electric folk, bleak industrial. We're just fish-and-chip holders really."

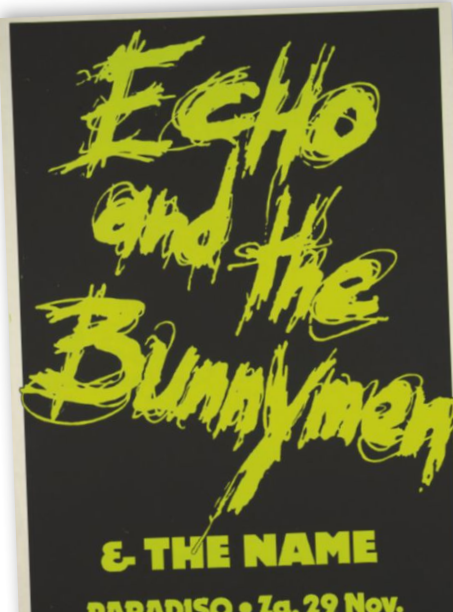
"Most bands pigeonhole themselves because they're so obvious. We won't do that, but other people seem to want to do it for us... I don't know, what can you do?" Mac pleads.

After leaving the independent Zoo for the WEA subsidiary Korova, some hardcore fanzines criticised them for selling out, but on this Mac and the rest lose no sleep.

"For a start, Zoo wanted us to do it. If we hadn't signed we wouldn't be doing this tour and have all these lights and things. It's just a job, right? Would you criticise a bloke who works for Ford for not making his own car?"

Judging by the Norwich set, it's hard to see the band going anywhere but forward. Hampered by an especially high ceiling, the crew, despite a Herculean effort, fail to construct the *Heart Of Darkness* camo tunnel, and settle instead for an ornithology theme with added foliage in the netting.

Once the exotic strains of Eno and Jon Hassell's *Fourth World: Possible Musics* die away, the band take over, leaving a capacity audience dumbstruck by their power and imagination. Ian Pye •



1980

APRIL – JUNE

CRYSTAL PALACE
GARDEN PARTY
LONDON

LIVE!

JUNE 7

Smoother but more ruthless

NME JUN 14 Irie vibes prevail as Bob Marley & The Wailers top the bill at an open-air event in South London.

"...the poets of negroism oppose the idea of an old Europe to a young Africa, tiresome reasoning to lyricism, oppressive logic to a high stepping nature..." Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched Of The Earth*

SO LET'S DANCE! OK. Even Marley, potentially the most important political entertainer alive, seemed content to follow the Wailers' imperative beat along with most everybody else on Saturday. It was that kind of day.

The dippy logic that held sway had scores of otherwise sensible fully clothed adults wallowing like hippos in the muddy lake separating the stage and crowd. Others more irresponsibly perched in the charming willow trees surrounding the site. One eventually snapped under the strain, its unnecessary destruction greeted in some quarters by heavy cheers.

As already noted, it was that kind of day.

The audience's one rational moment was their mud-slinging reply to Joe Jackson's

bad-mouthing. If the stupid prat thought he could consolidate the current critical swing in his favour through ill-tempered harangues, then he's dumber than his manner suggested.

Some new songs indicated that he's too bright to plumb such levels. The black "The Evil Eye", touching on voodooism and butchery in Peckham, sounded fun, highlighted as it was by the tasteful line "I got The Cramps on the stereo". But mostly he resorted to Stranglers-styled belligerent boogying, which intimidated some into applause, but turned off as many others; me included.

Maybe Jackson thought it his duty to disrupt the soporific atmosphere of the event until his spot. Lord knows The Average White Band gave him good cause. Their languid riffing lapsed into plain laziness, with odd moments of tension quickly

dissipating once the pattern of false endings was established. All sweetness and light and no shade. They wouldn't have noticed if we left and vice versa.

Q-Tips' singer Paul Young's fixed grin implied a like rigidity, but he still looked vulnerable enough to be affected by an

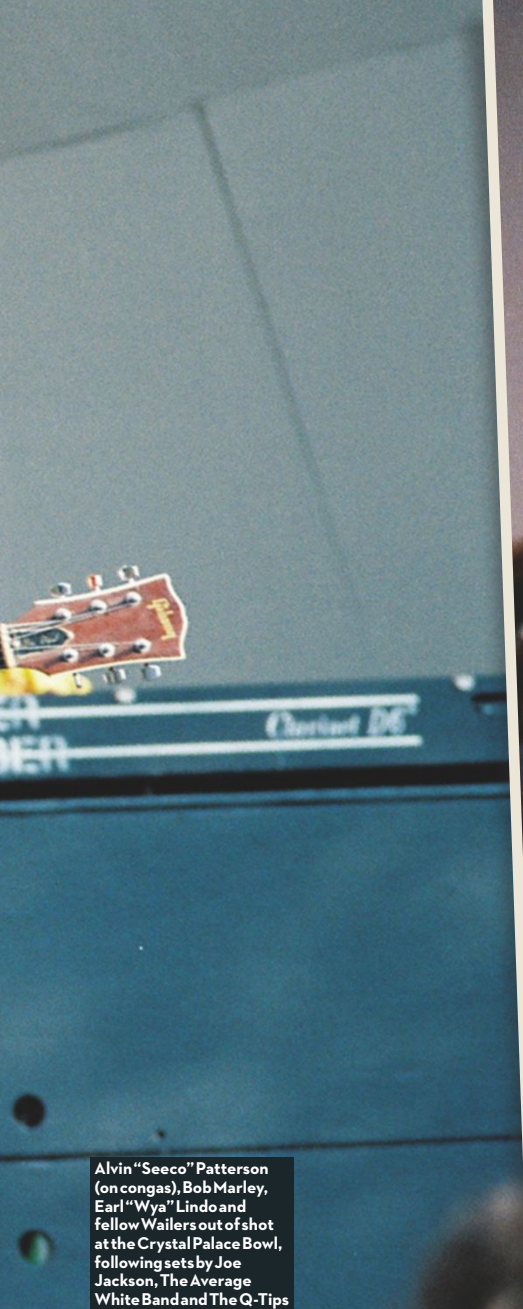
audience. His obsessive love for old soul is genuine enough, but why he should want to mimic the masters' styles so faithfully is unnatural.

His mannerisms and the band's relentless efficiency make them a good show band and not much else, although their cabaret presentation worked

surprisingly well on 20,000 people, too.

That's down to their strong ensemble playing and a clever non-stop programming of standards, like "Tracks Of My Years", "S.Y.S.L.J.F.M.", "How Sweet It Is To Be

The post-revolutionary awareness of "Exodus" seems especially fitting



Alvin "Seeco" Patterson (on congas), Bob Marley, Earl "Wya" Lindo and fellow Wailers out of shot at the Crystal Palace Bowl, following sets by Joe Jackson, The Average White Band and The Q-Tips



Loved By You" and "Sweet Soul Music". They were more popular than DJ Andy Dunkley - he must've left his copy of *This Is Soul* at home.

Marley's importance as a crossover artist shouldn't be either overlooked or denied. Whatever people's attractions to him - his beautifully taut singing, the increasing disco sophistication of the Wailers, or what he has to say - they've placed him in the enviable position of a militant with a potentially large audience. Going by his last album, *Survival*, he hasn't yet shirked his responsibilities.

Obviously many people at Crystal Palace came for the Event or the hits, but I doubt that they were disappointed. Having recently returned from Zimbabwe's independence celebrations, Marley and the Wailers are currently expressing their elation with the birth of a new black state through a set of renewed ardour, in which their belief in Rastafarianism combines with a more embracing spiritual love.

The post-revolutionary awareness of "Exodus" seems especially fitting now, and consequently "Jamming" and "Exodus" played out the set. The Wailers' superbly confident yet gentle rhythms supported Marley's ailing voice. Earlier they radically

improved "Rastaman Vibration" by fleshing out the dull purity of the original album track, and throughout they played with cool poise.

They reinforced their hardness with the warning shot "War", the victory song "Zimbabwe" and the resilient "I Shot The Sheriff", revitalised by the I Threes' assertive back-up. Of the new songs, one boldly identified them with their roots: "We don't have no friends inna high society."

But the most revealing was Marley's acoustic "Redemption Song", which had him singing, ironically judging from the song's tone: "Won't you help me sing/Another song of freedom/ Because all I hear/Redemption songs." He sang it with a sly hint of mockery that belied the seriousness of the subject of slave trading. Very strange, but I'll wait to hear it properly before making up my mind.

Marley and the Wailers still cut it. With the passing of time they're getting smoother, but at the same time more ruthless, and Marley The Warrior

hasn't lain down his sword yet. Someday he'll possibly face similar problems to other political entertainers, of keeping the momentum and spirit alive, but as his political beliefs are deeper rooted in his Rasta faith and the more concrete struggle of the Third World, they're a lot harder to lose sight of. He's made diversions before (*Kaya*) and then come back.

And with Zimbabwe's victory still fresh he's hardly likely to stop now. *Chris Bohn*

Majority rules

BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS / JOE JACKSON BAND / AVERAGE WHITE BAND
The Crystal Palace Garden Party

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**NEED ANY BACK ISSUES?
SEE PAGE 144**

Readers' letters

MM JAN–JUN Floyd comfortably dumb, Chrissie not so precious and more...

Gone but not forgotten

Farewell to Ian Curtis, the late singer of Joy Division. He will be sadly missed.

JOHN SANDYS, Maidenhead, Berkshire (MM Jun 14)

Kicking against the bricks

Thank you, the Floyd, for your contribution to what was the Year Of The Child.

"Another Brick In The Wall" is an anthem that DAME Margaret Thatcher, housewife superstar, would have been proud to write. Who else but Floyd or the Iron Lady could get children to stand up and sing "*We don't need no education*" at a time when so many of the world's children would be desperately glad of any education at all, however sarcastically delivered?

Just how far rock has lost its radical edge of protest, in a world still full of hardships and deprivations, is evidenced when musicians like these can rail at the crusty old teachers of their childhood. Giles of the *Daily Express* discovered how to do that years ago, with more ridicule, humour, and therefore more effect.

Perhaps Pink Floyd would have liked to have added a few more words about increased school meal prices: "*We don't need no mashed potato! We don't need not treacle roll! We'll eat our sarnies in the classroom! Teacher throw those kids a bone!*"

Another brick in the wall? Another kick in the balls to those who ever hoped for, or needed, the radical force rock used to wield.

TIM SHELTON-JONES, Milestone Road, Upper Norwood, London SE19 (MM Jan 26)

True to form, Pink Floyd release a new album, and a single too, only to find know-alls writing to *MM*'s Mailbag, snapping at their heels. Floyd are attacking education! Attacking teachers! Or are they?

Anyone who listened to Roger Waters (the writer) on the radio recently will realise that this is anything but the case.

The Floyd didn't feature in the *MMPoll* this year. They had done nothing to deserve this praise. Neither had others, but they got in easily. Floyd's supporters only praised work, not past efforts. Floyd are not followed by "worms".

DERRICK FOX, Chalford Hill, Nr Stroud, Glos (MM Jan 12)

You do that

With regard to the review of the new Clash double, I would have appreciated a little more depth in the final paragraph. An observation that the lettering of the title is set out exactly the same way as Elvis Presley's first HMV album, including the colouring, would have been appropriate.

Is this another plot by the record company to instigate litigation, a withdrawal of the album design and the creation of yet another costly collectors' item? Well, The Beatles did it with the "Butcher's" cover for the *Yesterday And Today* LP – price \$400 – and recently Virgin did it with the American Express pic-sleeve of the last Sex Pistols single. I shall keep my copy and see what happens.

ANTHONY RAYNER, Hampton, Middlesex (MM Jan 19)



Hynde your language

I was shocked to read in your review of the Pretenders LP (Jan 12) the amazing statement that Chrissie Hynde possessed "what may well be the finest female voice in the history of rock'n'roll." Is Chris Brazier, the author of this highly questionable remark, completely out of his mind?

First of all, for the sake of formal argument, can what Ms Hynde sings be called "rock'n'roll", anyway? And if it can, could she in all objectivity be considered to have a better voice than Brenda Lee or Wanda Jackson, for example? And if we call it "rock" singing, what about the non-trendy dinosaurs Grace Slick and Janis Joplin, not to mention Maggie Bell and that chick who used to sing with Meatloaf (I forget her name) in the realm of heavy singing. And continuing on into more disparate styles of "rock", what about Kiki Dee, Joni Mitchell, Christine McVie, Stevie Nicks, Siouxsie Sioux, et al?

I mean, really! Is Brazier Chrissie Hynde's father or something? That's the only thing that could justify such an outburst of fanzine lunacy.

JOANNE SMITH, Break Egg Hill, Billericay, Essex (MM Feb 2)



Bootlegs vs police time

So the country is now safe again following a six-month investigation which led to the "swooping" (ugh) of the police on a disused airfield to discover a bootleg factory.

This house of sin manufactured illegal live recordings of some of our "greatest artists", who were after these evil criminals. The leader of these knights in shining armour was David Bowie. I have every album of his, and it wasn't until I had them all that I began getting interested in finding bootlegs. But that argument has already been thrashed to death, and no one listened.

Surely if the artists themselves, or the agents or labels, were prepared to produce more live recordings where they're obviously wanted, bootlegging of the kind under attack would be beaten off the market.

In the papers, of course, the critics would hate the production of lots of live albums from one group. But surely limited editions for the fanatical fans must be worth it. If it isn't, why employ the police for six months to bust the people who think it is?

Of course, the artists should get royalties from these records (that's probably the one thing that upsets them), but until they are legal, how can they? Either combat the bootleggers with better quality, more easily obtainable live records, or leave them alone.

Six months of police activity like this won't catch the Ripper – will it? **EDWARD CRUTCHLEY, St Pancras, Chichester, West Sussex (MM Feb 2)**

Pseud writer writes

Concerning my review of Elvis Costello's *Get Happy!* album (*MM* February 23): In case anyone's interested, the word should have been "atavistically", not "statistically", until the printers got at it. Serves me right for being pseud.

CHRIS BRAZIER, London E3 (MM Mar 1)





1980

JULY – SEPTEMBER

PINK FLOYD, STRAY CATS, FLEETWOOD MAC, JOY DIVISION AND MORE



Takes the lead role

NME JUL 19 David Bowie returns with a stage role, a new album and a single, "Ashes To Ashes".

DAVID BOWIE'S AVOWED intention of not playing any concerts in 1980 is confirmed with the news, announced this week, that he is to make his stage acting debut – a move likely to keep him occupied until the end of the year. But he keeps his music interests ticking over, with a new album and single scheduled for release.

He takes the lead role in the Bernard Pomerance play *The Elephant Man*, which opens on July 29 in Denver for a week, then moves to Chicago until the end of August. This is due to be followed by an indefinite run on Broadway in New York. As yet there are no definite plans for the play to come to London – but Bowie said recently that he'd rather act in the West End than perform in concert at the Wembley Arena.

The play is set in England in the last century, and it's about John Merrick – a hideously deformed man who's taken into the care of a London surgeon, and subsequently becomes a celebrated figure in society.

Paradoxically, Bowie's new album is titled *Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)* – it was recorded in New York during March, and is set for release by RCA on September 12. It contains nine new songs – eight self-penned, and one written by ex-Television leader Tom Verlaine – plus one reprise. A single from the LP, "Ashes To Ashes", comes out on August 1, coupled with a track from his last studio album, *Lodger*, titled "Move On".

Bowie's regular backing musicians – Carlos Alomar (guitar), Dennis Davis (drums) and George Murray (bass) – are featured on the set, along with such guests as Pete Townshend, Robert Fripp and Bruce Springsteen's pianist Roy Bittan. Bowie himself plays keyboards, while his co-producer Tony Visconti plays guitar and sings.

STAGE PLAY — BUT NEW LP, TOO
Bowie goes legit

DVID BOWIE's avowed intention of not playing any concerts in 1980 is confirmed

David Bowie as he appears on the cover of *Scary Monsters* and in the video for lead single "Ashes To Ashes". The outfit was created by Natasha Korniloff, who'd had a fling with Bowie in early 1968 when they were both involved with Lindsay Kemp's mime presentation *Pierrot In Turquoise*.



1980

JULY - SEPTEMBER

Trepidation

NME JUL 12 The lowdown on the home-taping craze. Glue and scissors are cheap, reporter hints.

HOMETAPING, ACCORDING to the beleaguered British record industry, is depriving its coffers of untold millions of pounds. With sales of LPs decreasing rapidly as a result of the tight financial climate that affects sales of all sorts of consumer goods, the record industry is anxious to plug all leaks of its revenue. The most serious of these leaks are bootlegging and home taping - both, it's claimed, amount to theft of copyright. An often hysterical picture is painted of legions of small- and even big-time pirates blasting great holes in a rapidly sinking ship.

It's worth remembering that, despite all the grumbles last year, the industry as a whole actually made more money in the gloomy year of '79 than it did in the boom year of '78. Fewer records were sold in '79, but they cost more and generated bigger returns. Now, with far fewer records being sold, the gloom has turned to trepidation.

When it comes to home taping, there's not much the industry can do. The idea of some sort of jamming device on records to prevent taping seems to have been shelved, and would anyway take a long time to introduce and require the complicity of the hardware manufacturers, who remain conspicuously silent on the whole matter. The British Phonographic Institute, who represent the trade interests of the record industry, did succeed in preventing one manufacturer from advertising the easy home taping facilities of its models, on the grounds that home taping is unlawful - but then so is kissing in public parks and on highways.

The BPI is pressing for a levy on blank tapes; say 10p on every cassette sold, which will be divided up between the record companies that are members of the BPI. In the short term this would bring in more money for the companies, but in the long term it won't actually help the people who ultimately lose out because of the slump in record sales - the musicians who make the records and the shop owners who sell them.

At a recent Music Trades Association lunch at the Café Royal, retiring BPI chairman Len Wood tried to make

the case for a tape levy to guest speaker Lord George Brown. His Lordship, however, was not impressed.

"If my wife and daughter wish to utilise modern technology to recapture the beautiful music made by, say, Dame Nellie Melba, then they should be able to do so, and I am not the bloke to talk about a levy to compensate Dame Nellie and EMI."

Nonetheless, the government is pledged to introduce changes in the law regarding home taping as part of wider changes in the existing copyright laws, according to a spokesperson from the Department Of Trade And Industry. The Whitford Committee report on Copyright Design Law, published in 1977, has recommended that a levy similar to that which already exists in Germany should be introduced on "all equipment of a type suitable for private recording... as in Germany, it should be the manufacturer or importer who should be liable for the levy". Although the cost will no doubt be passed on to the consumer.

A Green Paper (which is a sort of preliminary discussion document) on the subject of copyright and design law is due to be published at the end of the year. Whatever size and shape its recommendations about a levy, these would have to pass through Parliament to become law, and this is unlikely to happen before the parliamentary session beginning October 1981.

In the meantime, the cause of the increase in home taping holds the key to the remedy: records are simply too expensive. Then again, tapes are too much fun. With the advent of the Japanese stereo portable cassette radio with self-contained but relatively impressive

speakers, cassettes have become the cheapest optimum means of listening to music. It's possible that the briefcase-sized objects that now clutter every high street electrical store are creating the biggest change in the way people listen to music since the component stereo system replaced the humble Dansette.

Built-in "search" devices are almost standard, enabling individual tracks to be found quickly, thus negating one of the two main arguments against tapes. The other is irrelevant, because if you want to pay four pounds for a record sleeve then go ahead, but part of the fun of cassettes is making your own. Glue and scissors are also cheap.

The sources of music are plentiful. There is the radio, of course. There are local libraries, which can usually supply a fair selection of blues and jazz. Two record shops in Blackburn and Burnley have started record hire schemes, to the dismay of everybody except their customers. Friends with large record collections are definitely an advantage (and making up compilations from them a winning pastime). Even if all your friends have the same idea, whatever records you do buy can be circulated. And however much the companies may bleat about shrinking profits, people won't stop buying records.

If one day a levy on blank tapes makes them cost almost as much as LPs, tapes retain the advantage of not being created for posterity. They are not artefacts like records. They are transient, like music. When you tire of listening to one thing you can simply erase and record something else.

But there's hardly any need to press home what your pocket makes abundantly clear. You already know it makes sense. *Paul Rambali*

IF MUSIC BE THE FOOD OF LOVE, PLAY ON.



The British Phonographic Institute is pressing for a levy on blank tapes



HOME TAPING:

A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO THE WIDE WORLD OF INFRINGEMENTS

"Could only do some good"

NME JUL 12 McLaren's Bow Wow Wow enter the home-taping war.

WITH HIS USUAL flair for scandal, and with the record industry in a state of anxiety on the subject, media guerrilla Malcolm McLaren has chosen this moment to put his spoke in with a record that takes a look at the home-taping "problem", "C30 C60 C90 Go" by Bow Wow Wow.

Last Friday, EMI, Bow Wow Wow's label, held a top-level meeting to decide whether to risk withdrawing the record at the last minute and, once again, being made risible in the public eye at the hands of McLaren. The meeting came about, apparently, as a result of discreet protests by the BPI, who feel that "C30 C60 C90 Go" could actually encourage home taping.

The point hasn't exactly escaped EMI. It appears that releasing McLaren's Bow Wow Wow record is something of a calculated gamble for them, and they hope to use his capacity for instant publicity to their advantage this time.

"We believe," said Brian Southall, head of EMI's publicity, "that if the record focuses some attention on the problem, then that could only do some good."

As of Monday, "C30 C60 C90 Go" is still set for release this weekend. "We're trying to get it played on the radio at this very moment."

Get those recorders ready!

"I've seen worse"

MM AUG 30 Only Whitesnake are spared the flying cans at the Reading Festival.

READING BECAME THE 1980 Can Festival when several warm-up bands and the audience itself faced a dense and dangerous barrage of jagged-edged cans and other missiles. Experienced Reading watchers were surprised at the extent and ferocity of the bored fans' assault, as can battles built up from one side of the audience to another, injuring people in the middle ground as well as some of those in the target area.

First band to feel the real brunt of the can hurlers were The Hellions, the group formed by ex-Damned guitarist Brian James and the only outfit in the three-day festival to show any real new wave roots. They lasted for only a handful of songs before their version of The Damned's "New Rose" provoked such a deluge of cans that the band retired hurt.

On Sunday, Girl were canned but carried on playing to the end of their set. *MM* reporter Ian Pye described the can-throwing as "incessant through the afternoon – there were always some cans in the air and it built up to a real frenzy at times. It only died out when their attention was held by the main bands, Slade, Def Leppard and Whitesnake."

One aspect that particularly worried peaceable fans was that many of the cans had been stomped flat so that the sides were split open and jagged, and were then thrown like Frisbees across the crowd.

Festival organiser Jack Barrie said suggestions that the festival was marred

by can-throwing were "balderdash," adding that only one band, The Hellions, were canned off, "and we knew we were taking a chance with them".

He admitted there was some inter-audience can-throwing: "They seemed to have found

a new gimmick – not canning the stage by throwing them at each other. I wouldn't call it vicious – I have seen worse at previous Reading Festivals."

He described audience injuries from can-throwing as "in the tens to twenties, certainly not in the hundreds".

Barrie said the festival in general was "bloody marvellous", with audience figures at around the 30,000 mark for each day – less on Friday, more on Saturday and Sunday – and said the 1980 Reading Festival was the most successful since 1975, when Yes topped the bill and the audience figures went over the top, leading to the recent restrictions on capacity.

Aug 24, 1980: Whitesnake's David Coverdale distracts the can chuckers at Reading



Cans had been stomped flat and thrown like Frisbees

PETER STILL / GETTY; GABOR SCOTT / GETTY

"Astonished and disappointed"

NME JUN 14 There's trouble at *Melody Maker* following industrial action and a proposed "scab issue".

VEXED THOUGH WE were by the dispute that kept *NME* off the streets for six weeks, we couldn't help but sympathise with our fellow scribblers on *Melody Maker*, who saw not only six issues of their paper vanish, but their editor, several of their staff and the paper's long-awaited redesign and relaunch. *MM*'s editor Richard Williams resigned after attempts by IPC Business Press to publish a "scab" issue during the dispute between IPC and the NUJ.

Following Williams' departure, editor-in-chief Ray Coleman has taken over the reins of the ailing "musician's bible". At least three staff members and one freelance writer have already quit in protest, and others may follow. With all the company's journalists temporarily "sacked" during the dispute, Ray Coleman suggested to Williams that they bring out a *Melody Maker* without the aid of the staff – in other words, by using whatever material was already lying around, plus anything that freelance writers were prepared to contribute.

Williams refused to co-operate, and when Coleman informed him he intended to go ahead and publish anyway, Williams resigned. As Coleman himself admits, the *MM* journalists were "astonished and

disappointed" at the prospect of a "scab" issue – though ironically the dispute ended before the issue went to press.

One senior writer, in a somewhat tired and emotional state, threw three typewriters through the office windows. (Fortunately the *MM* offices are more street level than the paper.) Others simply resigned; two of them – Chris Bohn and Viv Goldman – have now joined *NME*.

As a result of the upheavals the paper's redesign and relaunch – which was due to have taken place last month – has been postponed. Williams declined to comment on the circumstances of his departure, saying only that there is no chance of him returning to *Melody Maker*, and that he now proposes "to start listening to records for fun again".

Since being promoted out of the editorial firing line two years ago, Coleman has been contributing a column to Sir James Goldsmith's appalling *NOW!* magazine, so it comes as no surprise that he's promised a "traditional *Melody Maker*" this week. What else? Phil McNeill

Melody Maker?

1980

JULY – SEPTEMBER



“The ideas!”

MM AUG 30 Adam & The Ants are in the charts! Malcolm McLaren, again, is at the bottom of it. “He’s a genius,” says Adam. “The only one I’ve met...”

“A NEW ROYAL FAMILY! A wild nobility! WE ARE THE FAMILY!” A clatter of drums, a scream from below, a relentless bass melody and Adam Ant has done the impossible. A chart record.

“Kings Of The Wild Frontier” is great rock music. Startling, passionate, unsettling and dramatic. Its rise up the conservative, stupefied charts (the Rolling Stones indeed!) has pleased everybody. Obviously CBS, obviously Chris Hughes, its producer... but above all Adam himself for taking the first step not only to a better bank balance, but to a wider audience. For this he credits Malcolm McLaren.

McLaren, he believes, has shown him a far better direction to pursue, giving him fresh ideas and angles to replace those of the last three years, when Adam was consigned to an independent label and a fanatical following that had grown quietly and unnoticed throughout the land.

They represented all elements of fashion, from skinheads to mohicans to mods, and above all punks, giving Adam the position of

number-one dog in an underworld unknown to Peter Powell, Anne Nightingale and *The Guardian*. Now it’s coming out into the open – for better or worse, and, like the boy tells me, McLaren was an important factor.

“I was at a party and Malcolm came in and said, ‘Hello Adam. How’s the Ants?’ And I nearly freaked out! The guy’s my hero. I’ve always admired him and he started to talk to me about what I’d been doing. He seemed a great bloke and what he was saying was amazing.”

For the occasion of this interview Adam is dressed in all black. Black leather jacket and trousers, black kilt over his strides, black leather boots that clink as he walks round the carpeted offices, and a black T-shirt.

Beside him his new guitarist Marco Pirroni looks almost conservative in green raincoat.



The odd couple. They came together after the McLaren intervention of last year, which effectively saw McLaren begin to manage the Ants and the birth of Bow Wow Wow.

“I didn’t see him for a while and I thought, ‘Well, fuck it.’ I didn’t think there was a

hope in hell of even getting in a working situation with him. But I’d done a couple of videos and I got him down to look at them and that interested him enough. Then I introduced him to the band.”

Suitably impressed by McLaren’s interest, Adam immediately realised the value of letting the supposedly Great Rock’n’Roll Swindler into the Ants camp.

“The man in my opinion is a genius, and he’s the only genius I’ve ever talked to. Well, he’s a hero, and heroes should be left on the wall,” he says pointing suddenly to the drab office walls that surround us.

“You should never work with them, ‘cos it destroys your whole fantasy of them [bang goes my date with *The Supremes* then], and in a way it’s too good to be true, but you still go along with it because you have to. I thought to myself I’ve got a

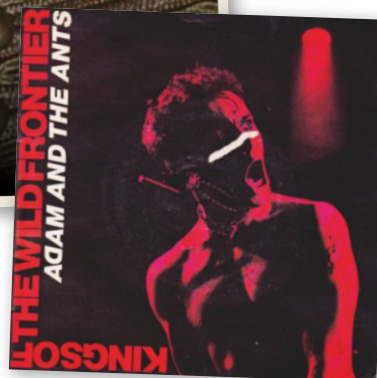
chance to work with Malcolm McLaren and I don’t care if it’s only for one day. I made a video for him. I didn’t care. I’d rather make it with him than Bob Geldof or somebody like that, because that doesn’t mean anything. But I mean the ideas!

“He puts out hundreds of ideas to you and 80 per cent of them will be ridiculous, but some of them are genius...”

Adam even left Do-It Records on Malcolm’s advice to hunt for a better deal with a larger company. Do-It have just replied by sneakily issuing a new B-side, “Physical”, on the Ants’ last single for them, without Adam’s permission.

“It’s a terrible version,” intones Adam vehemently. “They put it out to try and make an instant collector’s item worth £25 each. I felt very bad about it, because they were nice guys to me. They did a lot of good work for the Ants. I can’t understand the bitterness. They know what I’m like with my work; they know that song is a particular favourite. It’s a very old song and the problem now is that we’ve got to bring out a version to compete with it.”

The version, if it does appear, will be on the album that the Ants are currently recording, featuring the new lineup of two drummers, Merrick and Terry Lee Miall, Kevin Mooney on bass and Marco on guitar.



“If the kids think we’ve sold out, they’ve got a simple option – don’t buy our records”

PETER NOBLE / GETTY

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Adam takes the Ants overground

It was to Marco that Adam turned after the initial split and it's Marco who originally played guitar at the legendary first Siouxsie And The Banshees gig at the 100 Club.

"Billy Idol was originally going to play the guitar, then he changed his mind because Sid Vicious [drums at the time] was in the band and he didn't get on with Sid," Marco reveals.

"Also he wanted to play songs but we couldn't be bothered to learn them, so I think it was Sid who said, (adopts moronic voice) 'Uh, let's just make a noise.' So we did. We done a rehearsal at The Clash's studio. And we just went and did it."

Marco, however, had no intention of staying with the Banshees, because "they didn't like me and I didn't like them at the time." He went on to form The Models, who released a single just before the infamous Bill Grundy run-in with the Pistols. Marco became disillusioned with it all and kicked it in the head.

He later reappeared with Rema Rema, who also released a single, not a bad one as it goes, before he ended up hating the group for being too hippy. But he was always aware of Adam.

Adam and Marco are both well on the way to re-establishing themselves, though this time, with a major record contract under their sleeves, a lot of the punk purists who've stuck with Adam from the start may well be disappointed at this flagrant breach of punk ethics. Do not compromise to a major is the golden rule, and a large part of Adam's original appeal hinged on his adherence to exactly that. Not so, says Adam.

"That ain't a compromise, that's a smart move," he says. "That's something we deserved. We should have signed up when we came out, we were good enough."

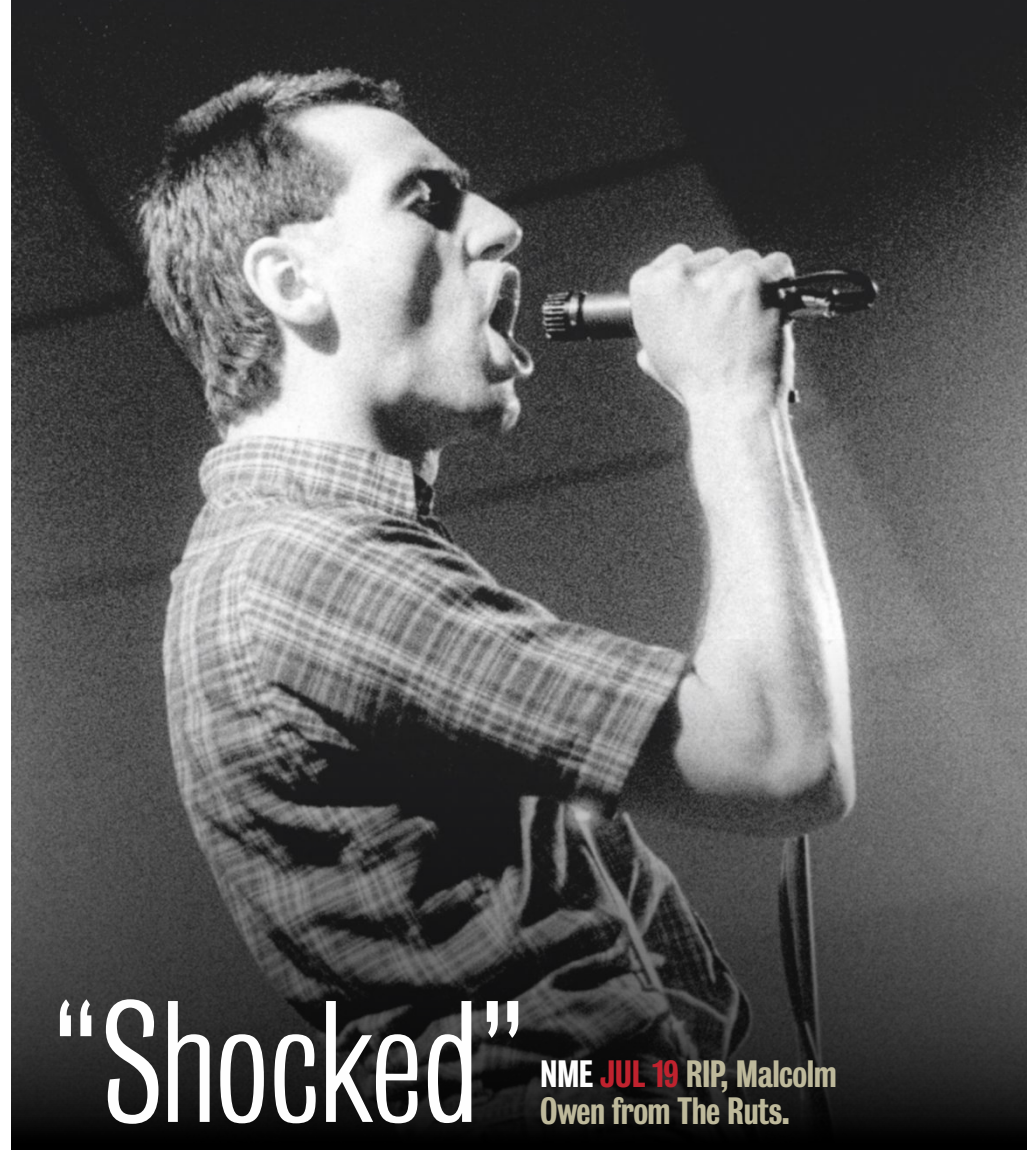
"I never ever said that I wouldn't sign for a big company. CBS liked Adam And The Ants. Two other companies liked Adam And The Ants. They were all offering money, and we went to CBS because they said the right things to us. They gave us better reasons for wanting the band, and what they could do for us."

"If the kids think we've sold out," Adam continues, "then they've got a very simple option. Don't buy our records and don't come to Adam Ant gigs any more, because I'm willing to invest everything I've got into the new thing. I think it's better. They may not. You can't make them think that. I just know that I feel as sincere now as when I started out."

Whether you believe him or not is up to you, but the one thing that Adam is really keen to get across is that anyone is welcome to come and see for themselves. He's desperate to break away from cult-land.

"When you go and see the Ants, you don't have to be a punk. You don't have to dress like us."

"I think our recent gig at the Empire Ballroom proved that. Skinheads come to our gigs, Mohicans and mods come, even folkies come. They're all welcome, as long as they come as if they were going to see a movie. If you go and see a movie and a blockhead is in front shouting, the whole audience says, 'Out!' That's got to happen in music. There has to be a feeling that all the people are there out of interest and are not just passing through." Paolo Hewitt



"Shocked"

NME JUL 19 RIP, Malcolm Owen from The Ruts.

MALCOLM OWEN IS dead. The body of The Ruts' 24-year-old singer was discovered in the bath at his parents' Middlesex home on Monday afternoon. Although no official cause of death has yet been announced, the news follows reports of his leaving the group owing to the continuing problem of his drug addiction. The split was to have been officially announced at the end of this week.

On Monday morning Owen phoned a friend, arranged to go for a lunchtime drink, then decided to take a bath. When the friend arrived at about 1.15pm, Owen's parents said he was still in the bath. He failed to respond to their calls, so they forced the door, and found him in "an un-rousable state."

An ambulance was summoned and Owen was taken to Hillingdon Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

A post-mortem inquest on Tuesday morning could establish no cause of death. A drug scan is to be performed for laboratory analysis, and the inquest was adjourned to a date to be fixed after police enquiries and the lab analysis have been completed.

The months preceding the

tragedy had seen Owen make determined efforts to overcome his addiction—the initial reason for his returning to live with his parents while the rest of the band continued working, notably with reggae artist Laurel Aitken.

Despite the optimism he'd expressed when talking to NME at the end of April, in the past two weeks his efforts proved ultimately unsuccessful. It was decided that he should leave the group. A solo career was planned.

The Ruts will presumably continue as intended, although at the moment the band members are said to be "too shocked" to consider their future.

A single, recorded with Owen a month ago and entitled "West One", was scheduled for release by Virgin in early August; it's yet to be decided whether the record will appear as planned.

Always renowned for the vitality of their stage show, Owen and The Ruts were amongst the

foremost punkacts to emerge in the '77/8 era. Their album *The Crack* appeared in 1979 and featured the band's best-selling single "Babylon Burning".



1980

JULY – SEPTEMBER



Fleetwood Mac in 1980: "No one particularly feels that they need to cling to the institution the whole time," says Lindsey Buckingham (far right)

"There's a lot of ego"

MM JUL 5 With sales of just five million copies, Fleetwood Mac's *Tusk* is seen as a commercial failure. Lindsey Buckingham explains what ails the band.

LINDSEY BUCKINGHAM DRUMS his fingers constantly on the glass-topped table. It's not so much interview irritation as the kind of jerky excitement that's generated when general confusion meets personal creativity head on.

Let me explain. Lindsey currently finds himself in a curiously fraught corner. Fleetwood Mac have effectively come to

another major turning point in their multi-chequered career, and he knows that the group will shortly have to undergo a full-scale sensitivity session in order to sort out what happens next. There's a host of private and professional predicaments to resolve. For a start, everyone is knackered, and bleary eyes can only hamper the decision-making process. Their mammoth stint in Wembley

last week concluded an epic, nine-month world tour which was arranged in the wake of their last album, *Tusk*.

Because of the gigantic scale of such an operation – they have karate black-belt bodyguards, masseurs, makeup artists and, apart from Lindsey, personal secretaries in twos – the actual bandmembers rarely see each other off stage. Indeed, Lindsey had two days off in London and instead of checking out the local beat culture or doing a (ouch!) Buckingham Palace job, preferred to stay in his hotel room with his girlfriend Carol and his beloved Teac recorder. That might be a sensible means of survival, but it doesn't exactly help band solidarity.

And then there's the aftermath of *Tusk* itself. The album didn't halt Burbank's financial recession as the toupéed execs had hoped. To date it's shifted around five

SAM EMERSON

Buckingham's malaise

million copies, which is but a drop in the ocean compared to the 21 million sales for *Rumours*. Although he denies any pressure from the boardroom, Buckingham isn't totally immune to the lack of public response. The album was a brave stab at doing something different from the New Hollywood AOR of *Rumours*, and the Buckingham contributions, in particular, created a harder, more incisive and contemporary feel than Fleetwood Mac had achieved before.

Still, Lindsey is stoical: "I don't think we were aware of how much of a chance we were taking in terms of business. I felt that having established a large audience, we were in a position to introduce a certain number of songs that people would want to like. But I didn't realise how stubborn people are."

"There are many other things involved, too. One is that it's a double album and there's a lot to wade through. Another is that we overcharged for it, which wasn't a conscious thing on our part - Warners suggested a price which was the price it went out at. It was certainly not an intentionally greedy move."

"It's been a strain personally for me in that I can't believe in myself as much as when I put the album out. I was just busting out to do something that I felt had a little more depth to it, something that didn't have a lead guitar solo in it like every other song you ever hear. But then over a period of time you realise that people aren't really getting the message. You wonder whether you've been deluding yourself or what, especially when the rest of the band start telling you that it's maybe time to get back to the standard format."

So the moguls did leave their mark - the kind that implies two steps inevitably leads to one step back. But Lindsey's affection primarily for the other group members and secondly for the group-as-institution won't induce him to divulge the finer footnotes here. He does, however, offer a sketchy overview.

"Basically, there's a lot of ego involved between five people and no one particularly feels that they need to cling to the institution all the time. Because of that, you'll have, say, three different ways of looking at things in the studio and it won't be resolved for a week - something that maybe Peter Asher would go (*clicks fingers*) and that would be it. Confusion is always good for art, because eventually the best thing gets hewn out of what's there and the formula goes out the window."

As the special thanks credit on *Tusk* reinforces, Buckingham was largely responsible for the new direction that the album took and so is in the most vulnerable position when the flak flies. But before you either sneer or reach for the Kleenex, remember that the move has had its more discomforting effects.

None of his songs ever get radio airplay, because the dozy AM and FM programmers believe that they aren't representative of the Fleetwood Mac sound. In other words, they're scared to stick their necks out (and it's hardly that irreverent a move!) for fear of losing those crucial listeners.

The situation becomes even more ironic when you realise that Lindsey wrote them with radio play very much in mind.

"I'm one of those people who, if you turn on the radio, hears what's on the track in about three seconds, and that was the sort of effect I wanted to achieve with my songs on *Tusk*. If you heard a part of it on radio it would catch you, but it hasn't caught a lot of people yet."

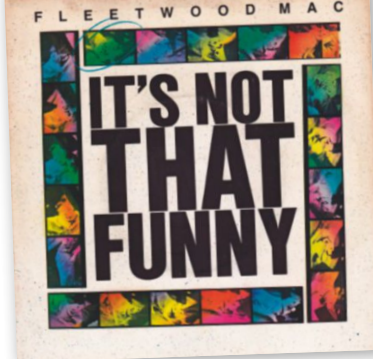
Matters aren't helped either by Lindsey's new image as the Rodeo Drive Punk. On stage he looks completely at odds, in his '80s-doused cropped hair and European black, to the others who cling to '70s chiffon, battered Levi's and greying ponytails. Paradoxically, it's mainly the British contingent (Christine, Mick Fleetwood and John McVie), who've adopted the casual

West Coast apparel, while American-born Lindsey's taken up the Stateside version of Europe's Modern Look. Stevie Nicks is just, uh, mystical.

The public also haven't liked that much. Lindsey recounts: "We were playing in Madison Square Garden and these guys in the front row said to me, 'You sold out.' They thought I'd sold out to what they believed was the Fleetwood Mac style, which should remain the same all the time. You know, Bob Dylan should still be playing acoustic guitar. So what can you do about that?"

"I knew there was certainly a lot of controversy surrounding the album and me, and maybe it can be said that it was hurting the coherency of the band - whatever that means. But it's an honest thing. I just care about what I'm trying to do and that's trying to improve. Maybe it's easy for me to say that because we have made a good chunk of money, but I look forward to being creative in the next decade, whether that's within Fleetwood Mac or in a different format."

He's already started to translate this plan into action. Everywhere he goes, he takes his trusty Teac (and Carol, natch) and experiments not only on new material but also the methods of presenting that material. He admires the working methods of



"There's nothing wrong with chomping at the bit if that's what you've got to do"

new luminaries like Graham Parker, Elvis Costello, Nick Lowe, Brian Eno (though he'd never heard of that gent's *Oblique Strategies*) and, in particular, Talking Head David Byrne. So why doesn't he suggest a collaboration with the ostrich-voiced marvel?

The reply's a little bizarre. "If I was outgoing enough to go up to him and introduce myself, I might, but I just keep to myself a lot and maybe a lot of that's because I'm really locked into the microcosm of the band right now."

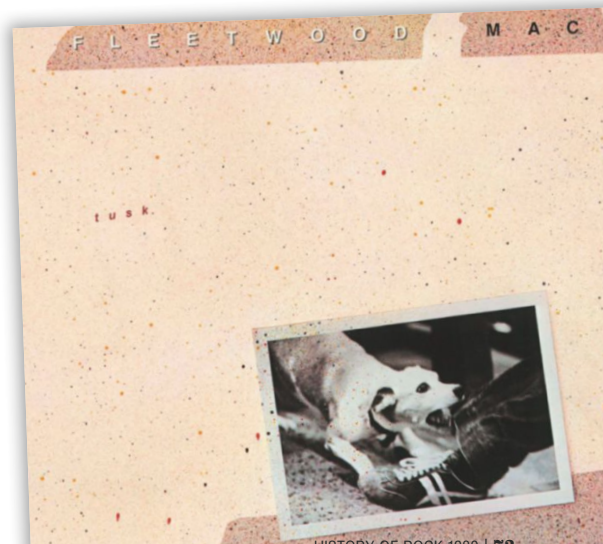
So he stays indoors, with Carol and the Teac, and works. "I've just had so many hours of ecstasy seeing something come out and work, and realising the connections that are possible, and finding out what instinct really means as opposed to working through fear, or through other people who are in the studio mainly to keep themselves covered."

"Studio musicians don't give a shit what they play as long as they play something good enough. That keeps everything down to a certain level of mediocrity, because they're thinking of the football game they're going to watch after the session. And in many senses, producers are the same way. For most of them, it's a matter of not embarrassing yourself, not extending yourself too far but keeping it all safe. Certainly that's true in L.A."

All these sentiments are very laudable, but if he really is that keen to develop, isn't staying with the Big Mac at the moment akin to treading water?

"Sure, that's probably exactly right. But there's nothing wrong with chomping at the bit if that's what you've got to do for a while. I'm not one for the random upholding of an institution, but Fleetwood Mac has been one for a long time and there's a lot of love and care between people, even if it's understated a lot of the time. It's a question of balancing confidence, ambition and humanity."

As Micky Fleetwood said some time ago, the band functions on a "chemistry based on compromise". Ian Birch



“Roger hates everything”

— MELODY MAKER AUGUST 2—

ON ANY OF five nights in the last week of February, the audience inside Long Island’s Nassau Coliseum could witness the following sights: a Spitfire plane screamed and dive-bombed the entire length of the auditorium. Monstrous inflatables – wicked perversions of a woman, a school teacher and pig – hovered in the stage lights, trailing the tatters of delicious nightmare. An innocent animation of a flower turned, with terrible swiftness, into a greedy vagina, which then devoured like a succubus its hapless stamen. Musicians in black frock-coats paraded in fascist armbands as an army of hammers marched threateningly across the film screen behind them. A hotel room, bearing the real sign of the Tropicana in Los Angeles, and containing furniture and a flickering TV set, was recreated on stage – a brief, miraculous prison. Worms shrivelled before one’s eyes. A judge’s gavel pounded. And throughout the two hours’ performance, there rose, brick by inexorable brick, a massive white wall right across the proscenium. At the end this was reduced, in one great, echoing stroke, to a cardboard rubble; and then the un-merry band of musicians walked away through the dust, piping both their farewell and (one supposes) their symbolic rebirth “After The Fall”.

All these diverse theatrical effects were intended for a single, grand purpose, but their deepest significance may have been lost upon Pink Floyd’s New York fans. Sheer amplitude seems to intoxicate Americans like no one else, to fill their capacity for mad but good-natured exuberance. So this audience whooped and stamped, hooted “Rock’n’roll!” and “All right!”, stood on their seats and flung up their arms in triumph, and finally made that most touchingly banal of all rock gestures: they lit matches in ceremonial homage.

There was a considerable irony in the audience’s reaction. The concept of *The Wall* sprang, autobiographically, from an actual incident during the Floyd’s 1977 “In The Flesh” tour of North America on July 6, playing the last date of the tour at the Olympic Stadium in Montreal. Roger Waters was suddenly seized by the unpleasant conviction that most of his audience was, as he put it, “only there for the beer” and the chance to flex its own vocal cords; he was so upset that he spat into the front row.

Subsequently, however, he found himself gripped by another idea that was to consume him for the next two-and-a-half »

PINK FLOYD’s *The Wall* is the multimedia fulfilment of ROGER WATERS’ personal vision. Album. Film. Show... MM gets the lowdown on a project that has led to Waters’ unseemly domination of the group. “He’s an extremely, uh, complicated man,” confides producer Bob Ezrin.

February 27, 1980: after
a seven-date residency
in L.A., Roger Waters and
Pink Floyd stage *The Wall*
show over five nights at
Nassau Coliseum on
Long Island, New York



PINK
FLOYD
THE
WALL

years: he would express his sense of alienation by physically building a wall between the audience and the band. It was this wall that eventually confronted those who attended Nassau Coliseum, where it's arguable whether the appreciation of the fans was any more subtle than in Montreal.

It's true, however, that no such criticism appears to affect the commercial status of Pink Floyd. Bathed in the adoration of their vast audience, they are unique among super-groups in that for 15 years they have steadily continued to get bigger, while (almost) totally ignoring the (almost) total hostility of the press – that their music is limited, and that Pink Floyd are in effect big bread and circuses; the comparison is with their own airborne inflatables – objects to be gazed upon admiringly by the crowd below, yet not to be reached.

PINK FLOYD'S AMBITION and success invite the glorification of statistics and logistics. One way of measuring their stature is to show that since the release of *Ummagumma* in November 1969 they've earned in Britain three gold albums (gold is the sale of 100,000 copies), one double gold, three platinum (300,000 copies each) and one triple platinum (for *Dark Side Of The Moon*, which has sold almost seven million copies in seven years, has never left *Billboard*'s Top 200 chart, and is consequently fourth in all-time album chart longevity).

The Wall album, bolstered by the unexpected release of a single, "Another Brick In The Wall Part Two" – their first in 11 years since "Careful With That Axe, Eugene" – seems likely to do even better: in Britain it "went double platinum" within two months and in America during the first months of this year was selling at the rate of 300,000 copies a week, which has stunned even the band's record company, Columbia.

Their own preoccupation with details is infectious. It becomes incumbent upon newspapers to describe the dimensions of the stage Wall (340 bricks, extending all together 210 feet by 35 feet high) and the cost of the whole performance (\$1.8 million, hazarded the *New York Times*; in fact, according to Floyd's stage producer Graeme Fleming, only half a million dollars. (Note: "only".) Fans may wish to know that it took the whole of last year to prepare Gerald Scarfe's animations and insect-like caricatures; that the stage show was six months in construction; that 44 people were required to produce it; and that, before the initial seven performances at Los Angeles' Sports Arena early in February, they rehearsed 10 times on the movie soundstages of Culver City. In rock music the lavish accumulation of such details creates an aura of power that enslaves rather than liberates its audience. The group or artist is saying: "Look at me, how powerful I am." At a time when the rest of the rock industry is under pressure to feel guilty about expenditure, *The Wall* makes Pink Floyd seem wholly invincible

and remote, even though it is legitimately the most eye-popping theatrical event in rock history.

And so, fabulously rich but scrupulously private, Pink Floyd move from one blockbuster to another. *The Wall* concert is only the logical product of their experiments since the '60s with multimedia shows, and is an exact dramatisation of *The Wall* album (Phase One); but both will be completed by a film (Phase Three) incorporating narration as well as animation and live footage (to be shot during next week's London performance at Earl's Court). Thus Pink Floyd are the first ever rock group to conceive of the eventual outcome of their music as film, and to control its progress in this direction – a notion, in which albums virtually become soundtracks, that will surely be a characteristic of '80s music, particularly as the richer artists get more accustomed to handling video. (Hypothesis: Would not concert albums like *Tommy* and *Quadrophenia* be recorded today with the movie in mind?)

The second great irony of *The Wall*, however, is that for all the stupendous fireworks of the stage show, for all the Floyd's elephantine obsessions, the work itself should be so personally revealing – and that its nature should be so bitterly, hopelessly miserable.

SOME BACKGROUND: *The Wall* is the first Floyd record in a decade, since the participation of Norman "Hurricane" Smith, to have been co-produced with an "outsider" – Bob Ezrin, known for his albums with Alice Cooper, Lou Reed and Kiss, a likeable, outgoing Canadian to whom Waters' wife, the former Caroline Christie, had once been secretary. Ezrin was present at a turning point in Pink Floyd's career: Roger's spitting at Montreal's Olympic Stadium.

As he recalls: "I went to Hamilton [location of the venue] in the car – Roger and Caroline, my friend and myself; in fact, Roger had a slight accident and had to go to Hamilton General Hospital – luckily, the friend I brought was a doctor. But on the way home, while my doctor friend and Caroline went to sleep in the back seat, Roger and I began to discuss this crazy idea he had about putting up a wall between him and the audience

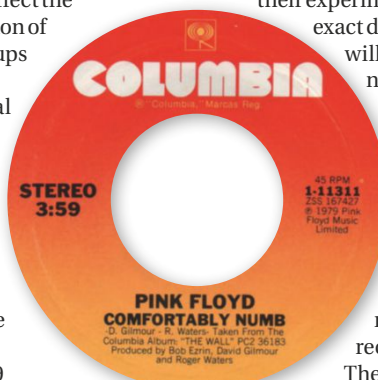
because he felt this sense of separation. That was the first mention of it; it was just a very casual conversation – we were talking even about Broadway and things like that then. And then we spoke about it at his house in London a year and a half later.

"Having written the first draft he realised the extent of it all. He decided it was too much work to do it all by himself, and he didn't want to go back to the old lifestyle of living in the studio for eight months; he had little kids and he wanted to be able to get home in the evening. So he decided on a collaborator. I believe he'd made a list of people and my name was first on the list because we'd actually met and spoken a few times about this; we weren't really friends, but we were acquaintances."

The initial recording they started in November 1978, and finished mixing almost exactly a year later, at the Producers' Workshop in Los Angeles. The bulk of the work was done at Superbear Studios in France, and then Ezrin and Floyd moved to New York. Typically, it was a major operation: in each country families had to be relocated, and there was time off for returning home to see children.

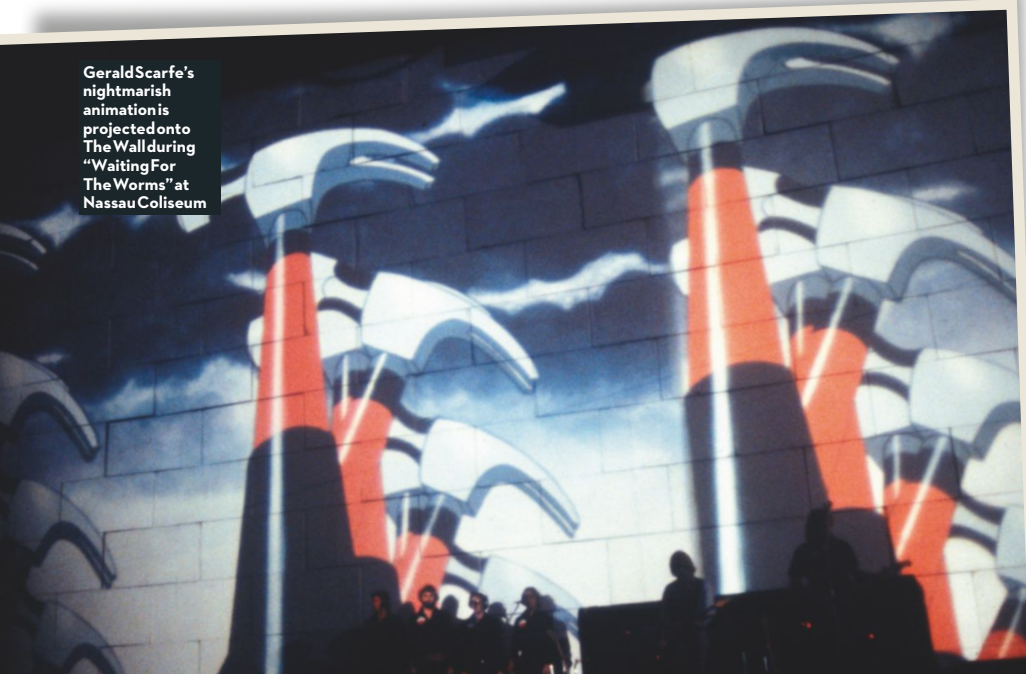
"Roger really began the whole thing by himself," continues Ezrin, "at his little studio in the country, and he wrote an entire record called *The Wall* which was almost one song. It was a demo for the purpose of seeing if it would play and for the purpose of sending it round to all the other members of the group to see if they'd be interested.

"But there was never any distinction between the actual three elements: the album, the stage show and the film – they were all



"The album,
stage show
and film were
all devised at
the same time"

Gerald Scarfe's nightmarish animation is projected onto *The Wall* during "Waiting For The Worms" at Nassau Coliseum



devised at the same time. On an average day we'd roll up to Gerry Scarfe's house at nine in the morning to look at rough animation done around a song that we hadn't even finished recording yet. After checking that out, we'd go in the studio, and at one o'clock in the afternoon we'd have a meeting with the director of the film. It was crazy, but a very good way to do it."

Ezrin was an unlikely helpmate for Waters. His method of making records is spontaneous and visceral; and he thought he would not have patience with Floyd's "intellectual" approach, the weeks of thinking, talking and experimentation. Also, he had never co-produced before, and was exhausted after a four-year cycle of working. "I was slightly fearful of finding myself in an unbearable situation," he says.

And then there was the difference of lifestyles. Whereas Ezrin enjoys the speed of rock'n'roll and its sense of community, Pink Floyd exhibit the conservatism of the rich and reclusive – behaviour that mystified the outsider: "They live their own very peculiar life. I've never met a group of people that lives the way this group does. Never." He gropes for a comparison. "They're very, very British. Their lifestyle is interchangeable with the president of just about any bank in England; it's anything but rock'n'roll madness. If you bumped into Roger on a Sunday afternoon with the kids in the park – Roger and Caroline on "the nanny's day off", as they call it – they wouldn't know that this guy wasn't a wonderfully successful young executive marching his family into the park. Very reserved; in fact, there's such a lack of rock'n'roll energy throughout that getting to Los Angeles was a good idea. It's very hard to inject that sort of consciousness at 10 o'clock every morning and you're working regularly from 10 till six."

Ezrin discusses his contributions to the album: "Musically, Roger really doesn't have the vocabulary – or the facility, if you will – to zero in on the problem with the construction of a song; he needed someone who could do that for him. Usually it has been really trial and error."

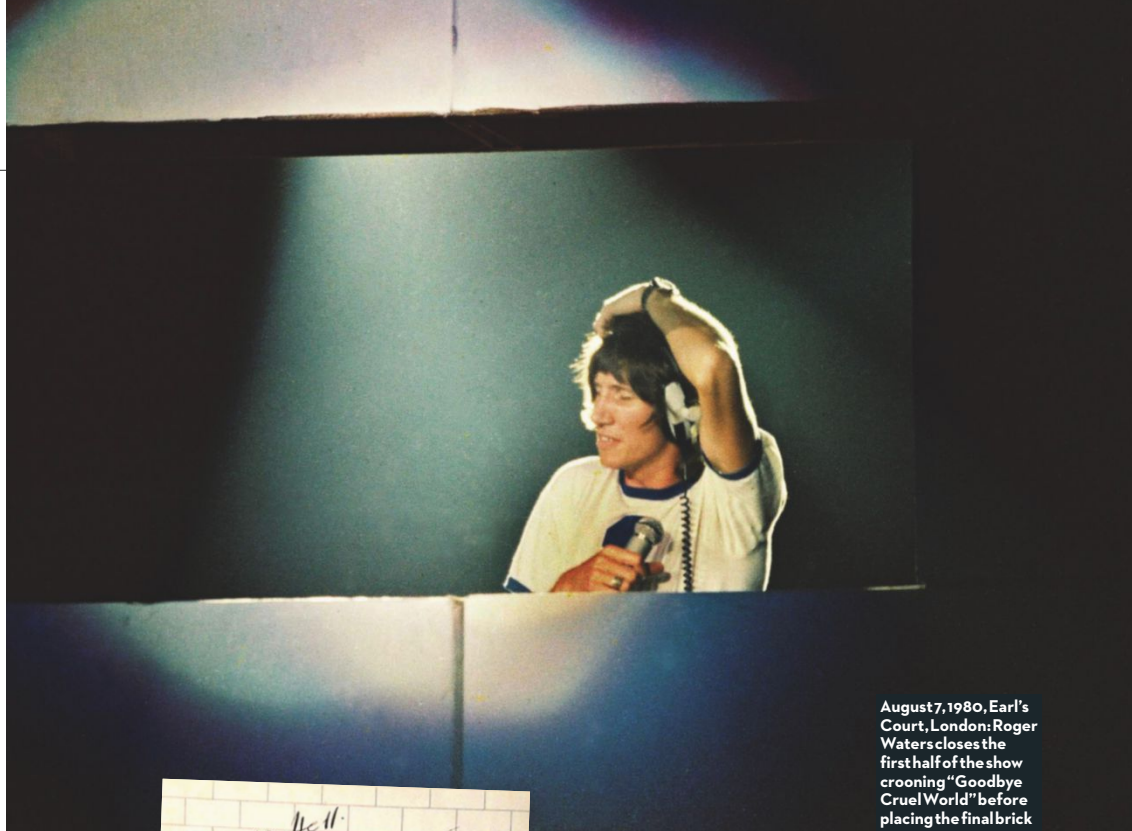
When *The Wall* was being sequenced, Ezrin abruptly realised that Side Three did not make sense. To prove it, he wrote a book of the routine of the album. Waters accordingly rejigged it.

Ezrin also strongly urged them to release a single – "Run Like Hell" and "Young Lust" are two more tracks he had earmarked. To his mild surprise, they were remarkably agreeable: "In the past, I don't think it was because they had any phobia about being typed as a commercial group: they simply didn't know how singles worked, and they didn't really give a shit. They didn't really have to, did they? They were amazingly successful for guys who didn't concentrate on radio."

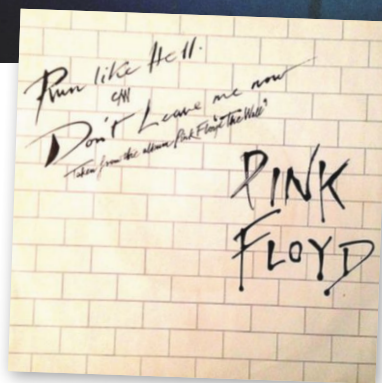
"It may seem like it, but there was no war going on amongst Pink Floyd members against radio; they just weren't really conscious of radio programming needs and formulas. So they did what they do best, and it put them in a very special class of their own. But in things like what a good tempo would be for a single, and how to get an intro and an outro – I know all those things; and they were quite open to trying them."

For Ezrin, producing *The Wall* was a "wonderful experience". He readily enthuses about Roger Waters' abilities: "He's the finest wordsmith in music right now; there's no one to touch him. You may not like the subject matter that he finally decides to go with, but I've seen other things he's written and he does have a capacity to write anything, right down to simple rock'n'roll. He has a facility with language like no one else."

But what Ezrin won't publicly acknowledge is the atmosphere of strain and suspicion between the four members of Pink Floyd when they began recording together. All have been living as tax exiles: Nick Mason in the South of France, Rick Wright and Dave Gilmour in the Greek islands, and Waters in Switzerland. Socially, like many long-serving group members,



August 7, 1980, Earl's Court, London: Roger Waters closes the first half of the show crooning "Goodbye Cruel World" before placing the final brick



they have grown apart, but they're divided particularly by Waters' increasing domination of the band – Wright and Mason aren't even credited on *The Wall* album. Ezrin was required most vitally to persuade them to enter the studio together, and there he had to act as ombudsman, to observe fair play when Waters began flinging his weight around. This internal dissension partly explains the secrecy that the band cultivate.

Says Ezrin of Waters: "He's an extremely, uh, complicated man."

THROUGH THE '70S Pink Floyd's theme was the "quiet desperation" that Waters wrote of in *Dark Side Of The Moon*. *Animals*, though crude, was an extraordinarily bitter broadside against capitalism. But no other album feels as wounded and personal to Waters as *The Wall*, which painfully delineates the destructive lifestyle of the successful rock star, a theme that's as old as rock itself but is invariably one of celebration rather than rage.

This Dantesque figure describes only self-disgust and, eventually, despair; he breaks up with his wife, attempts suicide and, in a climax of raging schizophrenia, puts his past life on trial. *The Wall*, Waters seems to say, is the prison each of us erects throughout his or her life; its bricks are the relationships that condition us, and he presents a criminals' gallery of suffocating, protective mothers, vicious school teachers, cold, faithless wives and stupid groupies. This man believes himself betrayed by the demands of his audience, for whom he has rancorous contempt: "So ya thought ya might like to go to the show," he sneers. In his mounting paranoia the National Front march to a Nazi band, and Jews, blacks and gays face persecution. Hammers symbolise forces of oppression, worms are the agents of decay. The world has gone blind and drips with evil.

The doubt and self-hate of this record is astonishing. It's a psychodrama of the bleakest pessimism, in which its miserable rock star flails savagely at every person who has ever got close enough to affect him, notwithstanding its "message" at the end when *The Wall* collapses, like Jericho, as "the bleeding hearts and the artists make their stand". Success, bludgeons Waters, is sheer bloody hell.

While denying the *The Wall* is autobiographical, he's admitted that it's "rooted in my experience". Like his chief character, Waters' own father was killed in the last war (in the stage show the crashing plane and the song "Vera", about Vera Lynn, are meant to evoke a generation of fatherless war babies). He was brought up, with some strictness, by his mother, a school teacher. And he loathed his own (grammar) schooldays. For the record, Waters is also divorced from his first wife, Judy.

In his music and infrequent interviews he strikes one as a gloomy, self-obsessed man such as one finds in a Bergman film. In 1975 he told the French monthly *Rock & Folk*: "I haven't discovered... anything that helps me along. Every new thing I accomplish, or everything I get, doesn't »

satisfy me as I imagined it would do when I was young.” And as far back as 1970 his comments in an interview with me foreshadowed “Another Brick In The Wall”: “In my schooling there was never any inkling of why, no philosophical discussion about man’s condition, of what human beings are or why they are... The system is such that you as an individual don’t stand a chance when they wheel you in at five years old.”

It’s small wonder that *The Wall* seems less a work of art than an act of therapy: it’s rightful context is, as *Time* magazine has suggested, that of “libretto for Me-decade narcissism”. Of a piece with the culture of narcissism, the stage show offers spectacle rather than the involvement of theatre.

Still, *The Wall* provides a brilliantly apt metaphor for Floyd’s career. At one point in the show each musician is completely isolated behind the high, white barrier; claiming that they have never wanted to sell themselves as personalities, Floyd have constructed a psychological guard designed to avert the rude gaze of the media and the public. There is the Berlin Wall, the Great Wall of China... and Pink Floyd’s Wall.

JOTTINGS FROM NEW YORK: An atmosphere of paranoia and collusion? Jill Furmanovsky, a photographer, has just returned from tonight’s concert and had all her film confiscated from her bag by Steve O’Rourke, Pink Floyd’s manager. Then I call Gerry Scarfe for some information on the animation; very polite, but he says he’s got to speak to O’Rourke.

Waters is staying at a very posh hotel on Park Avenue. I get through and he sounds very icy. “I just thought I’d do you the courtesy of personally telling you no so that you knew that was the case from the horse’s mouth rather than from some minion.” Still, there has been a party following Floyd’s penultimate performance. It is, of course, Big Bread & Circuses, held at the club Privates on 85th and Lex. Andy Warhol and Carly Simon show up.

And I have spoken to Bob Ezrin. He says that Nick Mason loves to dance, and that at a Christmas party at Britannia Row, the Floyd’s rehearsal and studio complex in Islington, he was “dancing his buns off” all night. One of the problems is that Roger doesn’t dance; maybe that explains why Pink Floyd don’t produce that kind of music. Gilmour would like to, but perhaps he’s a little self-conscious. When they were recording *The Wall*, Gilmour was constantly bringing in singles he liked that he’d heard on the radio. “The taste of some of the boys runs to the eclectic,” Ezrin announces. “Now Roger’s very difficult – he hates everything.”

Ezrin is on his way back to Toronto after some tiff with Waters – “some tiny little thing” quoting Ezrin on Pink Floyd in Canadian *Billboard* six weeks ago: “Roger went off in a compete huff and hasn’t spoken to me since. Honest to God, he’s that sensitive, and we had a very good relationship, too, after working cheek to cheek like that for a year. To have something small like that throw him off...” He sounds hurt. Now the producer Chris Thomas, also managed by O’Rourke, has flown in from England to advise on the sound at Nassau.

Ezrin has been speculating where Pink Floyd go from here. He doesn’t know. “They can’t get any more spectacular,” he muses. “There’s so much distance that has yet to be put between them and this project. But I don’t know that it’s the death of Floyd. A lot of people have been talking about it being the death of Floyd, the last rattle before they lie down and die. I don’t think so.” *Michael Watts* •

Neurotic obsessions

MM AUG 9 Floyd’s teetering spectacle comes home.

PINK FLOYD WERE always the most nervous superstars: success brought them anxiety, wealth worried them.

Written as an expression of doubt and apprehension, *Dark Side Of The Moon* became one of the most popular boutique soundtracks of all time. Lacerated by the dubious irony of its success, the Pink Floyd wrote *Wish You Were Here*, a bitter postcard from impending tax-exile and followed it with *Animals*, a disgusted cry from the heart of the beast that savaged capitalist society.

Two years in preparation, last year’s tortured epic *The Wall* was the

most extreme statement in this parade of psychomelodramas, most notable, perhaps, for the sheer persistence with which Roger Waters – increasingly using the Floyd as a vehicle for his own morbid

preoccupations – slugged home his pessimistic visions. Dragged out over four sides of the original double album, Waters’ autobiographical opera of misery and coruscating self-doubt was finally more tiresome than moving.

But we should remember that it was stated firmly from the beginning that the album was eventually to be judged in the context of *The Wall* as a complete theatrical experience, the soundtrack of a multimedia extravaganza. Only then would its true worth become apparent.

The Floyd premiered the complete work earlier this year in America. Last Monday, it moved into Earl’s Court

for a summer season. Its reputation as the most elaborate theatrical presentation in rock history preceded its domestic production with such force that the event was probably bound to be seen as something of an anticlimax.

The show is an exact dramatisation of the album. The first half traces the genesis of Waters’ anxieties, scatters the blame for the author’s neurotic obsessions and despair. This despair isn’t at all cosmetic: Waters’ concern was tangible in the physical and vocal exaggeration of his performance.

Unfortunately, the songs through which he chooses to express his concerns are rarely capable of bearing the emotional weight with which he attempts to invest them. Waters might wear his heart bravely on his sleeve, but he often ends up with his feet in his mouth, choking on

his own platitudes. Simultaneously, and equally destructively, the Floyd’s characteristic, pedantic musical stroll only suffocates his basic themes, trumpets the vacuity of his less

penetrating insights.

The Floyd have usually written songs in two distinct and predictable styles: one embraces an acoustic, pastoral whimsy, the other, more ornate, is usually more celestial. Both styles were given a damned good thrashing at Earl’s Court.

The impact was further diluted by instrumental passages of inordinate length, the dullness of which is almost impossible to convey here. David Gilmour was probably the principal culprit; forever winging off on guitar solos that smacked of clenched teeth and furrowed brows. Soporific wasn’t the word: the Floyd would’ve put Lemmy to sleep.

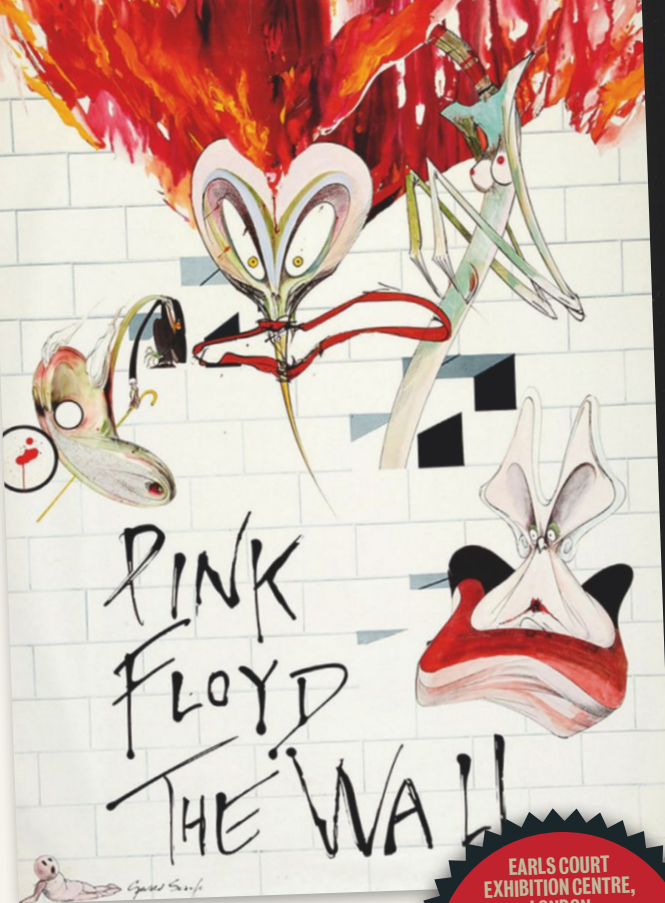
Waters’ “One Of My Turns” provided the only real jag in the ribs. Delivered with passionate sincerity, it recalled specifically the bleak landscapes charted by Lou Reed’s *Berlin* (a work that was evoked frequently during the evening).

The much-vaunted staging was impressive only in its dimensions. As the Floyd – augmented by a duplicate quartet – lumbered through the opening segment, a massive wall was erected before them. Mobiles, designed by Gerald Scarfe, were hoisted above the audience, who gawped and gasped with all the candour of children at a pantomime. There was nothing overwhelmingly imaginative about this: certainly, the production failed to match the brilliant ingenuity of,

The audience gasped with all the candour of children at a pantomime



“Leave those kids alone!”: a giant teacher puppet looms over the Nassau Coliseum stage



say, Alice Cooper's *Welcome To My Nightmare* show.

The climax to the first half did provide us with the production's most emphatically chilling image, though. The wall by now complete, save for one final space, Waters crooned the desolate lyric of "Goodbye Cruel World". As the music faded, he placed the final brick in the wall. The rest was silence: ominous and cold.

By this time, though, they'd lost me. If he'd hung around much longer, I'd have been down the front with a trowel and a bowl of cement, helping the bugger brick himself up.

The second half of the show failed to build on the desolate mood with which the first half ended; the lyrical introspection of the earlier songs was briefly pursued, as Waters evoked memories of his childhood and his father's death, but his attempts to locate his private turmoil in a wider social and political context floundered badly. The insular unreality of a rock star's life was brilliantly illustrated when a trap door in the wall fell open revealing Waters isolated in a neon-lit motel interior, but subsequent references to totalitarian repression and fascist violence were clumsily mounted, dangerously ambiguous.

The climax was predictable and inevitable. As the music aspired to a momentous crescendo, and the visual images flickered in accelerating confusion, the wall collapsed amid volcanic explosions.

Led by Waters, the musicians reappeared like a New Orleans funeral band, playing a lament among the debris. "Outside The Wall", the final piece, seemed to imply that the preceding destruction had been evidence of some kind of metaphorical martyrdom. It was a final sentimental gesture

EARLS COURT
EXHIBITION CENTRE,
LONDON
LIVE!
AUGUST 4



August 7, 1980:
David Gilmour reels
off another solo
that "would've put
Lemmy to sleep"
at Earl's Court

missing only John Wayne intoning gravely, as he did in *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. "Truly this group was the son of God..." *Allan Jones*

MM AUG 16

PINK FLOYD'S MASSIVE run of six nights at London's Earl's Court last week ended with disaster for cartoonist/designer Gerald Scarfe when 10 of his original pieces of artwork for *The Wall* show were stolen.

Insurance valuers put a price tag of more than £30,000 on the drawings and paintings, which were taken from

their glass frames in the foyer of the Earl's Court arena in the early hours of Sunday.

They were part of an exhibition that ran during the show, and were seen by most of 90,000 people who went to the concerts. One of the paintings was the original artwork for the cover of *The Wall* album. A reward is being offered for information leading to the recovery of the artwork, and information should go to Kensington Police Station.

PETER STILL / GETTY

Troubled Waters

1980

JULY – SEPTEMBER



December 18, 1979:
Joy Division outside
the Forum Des Halles,
Paris—(l-r) Bernard
Albrecht, Ian Curtis,
Peter Hook and
Stephen Morris

Head-on emotions

MM JUL 26 Arriving in the wake of Ian Curtis' death, Joy Division's second LP is direct yet transcendent.

Joy Division *Closer* FACTORY

FROM THE BEGINNING, we were always dealing with something special. Joy Division, by the very nature of their set-up, could never have been just another band caught up in the insanity of musical manoeuvres. Stubbornly isolated away from the machinery, coming and going as they pleased, they never bowed to any demand except that of their own choosing. Everything was controlled and balanced, allowing them flexibility in all areas, from the choice of venue to the giving away of free singles without a murmur of fuss.

They were too sensitive, too private, too Joy Division to be dragged down into an unwelcome destructive limelight. With their music, as evidenced on their debut album *Unknown Pleasures* and consequent singles, they began to fuse together a body of sound and vision that was unique.

Naturally, the events surrounding Ian Curtis' strange and violent action of three months ago cling unavoidably around *Closer*, but it's interesting to note the matters Curtis was raising at the time, with two recurring themes emerging: religion and an almost fervent admission of defeat of whatever Curtis was hoping to achieve.

"This is a crisis I knew had to come/*Disturbing and purging my mind... I knew that I'd lose every time*," he cries out in "Colony", while, later on, in "Twenty Four Hours", he admits: "*Just for one moment I thought I'd found my way... I watched it slip away*", before a great rush of music enters to sweep the song away.

Elsewhere, confessional admissions of hopelessness and despair abound ("*I never realised the lengths I'd have to go*"), alongside scattered references to matters religious via

phrases and words such as "inner communion", "God in his wisdom took you by the hand", and so on.

Of course, the cover painting of Mary Magdalene mourning Jesus' dead body gives us fair warning of this, but what exactly is being communicated is, as always, left to the listener.

Paradoxically, given the intense personal revelations of Curtis that run like fire throughout, the actual music is probably some of the most irresistible dance music we'll hear this year. When you're listening to something like "Means To An End" you realise that Joy Division have in Peter Hook and Stephen Morris one of the best rhythm sections going. Always precise, always tight and hard, they're the foundation on which Bernard Albrecht either lays over great savage wedges of disorientating noise or allows himself interplay with the bass, bouncing off it frequently with sweet, offsetting guitar lines that somehow always move on their own.

With *Closer*, too, the band enhance their atmospherics even further with the introduction of keyboards; like the music, they're always at a simple level, never imposing or outstaying their welcome and laying to waste the notion that Joy Division create difficult, inaccessible music.

"The Eternal" enters with a swish of rattles, a solid bass and a magnificent, haunting melody that complements perfectly Curtis' evocation of mood and atmosphere. In "Isolation", the melody is carried by the almost disarmingly simple synthesizer line that is pushed forward by some relentless drumming and brittle bass work.

It's a far cry for sure from the almost suffocatingly claustrophobic world of the debut album, but the concerns are still the same. The best (and most subversive?) rock music has always dealt head-on with emotions and thought rather than clichéd, standardised stances; that's what makes *Closer* and Joy Division so important.

In this age of grand illusion, fear and apprehension, Joy Division mirrored perfectly our lives and times. This is the way. Step inside. *Paolo Hewitt*



·CLOSER·



1980

JULY – SEPTEMBER

Kevin Rowland:
“empty comments
about soul power
and revolutions”

KILBURN NATIONAL CLUB
LONDON

LIVE!

AUGUST 7

Incredible arrogance

MM AUG 16 Dexys Midnight Runners open with a cheap shot. And the gig goes downhill from there.

ON A MILD August night in 1980, at an obscure venue in Kilburn, Dexys Midnight Runners presented a show which must rank as one of the most arrogant, self-important, ego-inflated and, above all, cheap affairs I've ever witnessed.

The build-up began just prior to the support band's slot, when the PA, which had been pumping out soul records all night, supposedly “broke down”. What followed was pure farce, with the arrival of the compere for the night (hired especially by the band) miking up a cracked copy of “Anarchy In The UK” from a small Dansette, and then proceeding to call it “a joke”, and “worthless”, as it stuttered and jumped out of the speakers. Fact: if it hadn't been for that very record's existence, and the musical climate it created, Kevin

Rowland would never have been in The Killjoys and releasing singles like “Johnny Won't Go To Heaven”, let alone experiencing the current runaway success of the Dexys.

After that worthless slice of cheap symbolism, the compere then reappeared to deliver a confused monologue about the lack of an approaching revolution (you really surprise me), before leaving us with the group's three favourite records, “Love Unlimited”, “Taste Of Honey” and one I failed to recognise. Only then the band finally

appeared and stood silently in a gang at the front of the stage, most of them dressed in berets and heavy overcoats, like some pseudo revolutionary army guerrillas.

From then on it was cheap dramatics. Kevin Rowland cornily sitting on an organ strumming his way through “Keep It” in a “heartfelt” manner. Kevin Rowland informing us that “Geno” was not going to be played, and then the band breaking into it halfway through the set. Kevin Rowland

dismissing some kid by shouting, “You're not a soul rebel – he is!” pointing to sax player JB. And so on.

The arrogance was incredible and the pretentiousness overbearing as the Dexys took us through a set that contained the whole of the album – plus a few covers, which never once displayed anything approaching human warmth or sheer joy, two vital ingredients of their music's roots.

I'd gone expecting to see one of the best of the newer bands deliver a show that was their own, and not

one that made easy jibes and preached empty comments about soul power and revolutions; topics that the audience, which was largely a disco crowd, weren't bothered about anyway.

The day Kevin Rowland stops trying to be Johnny Rotten is the day I'll become interested again. Leaving aside the fact that half of their album contains material already issued in singles bags; and forgetting for a minute that no one has yet explained what it is to be “a young soul rebel”, I'm not surprised there's no one to welcome the new soul vision. Ever got the feeling you've been cheated?

Paolo Hewitt

The set never once displayed anything approaching human warmth or sheer joy

JON BLACKMORE & NICK PAWLAK

NATIONAL CLUB
234 KILBURN HIGH RD LONDON NW6

Derek Block presents
THE MIDNIGHT RUNNERS
INTENSE EMOTION REVUE

starring **DEXYS**
MIDNIGHT RUNNERS

+ THE FORCE + NERVOUS KIND

RECORDS BY BROTHER MARTIN
COMPERE KEITH ALLEN

THURSDAY 7th AUGUST 8pm

Flying through hit after hit

NME AUG 23 Squeeze revisit an old haunt to bid farewell to their keyboard wiz Jools Holland. A terse Elvis Costello plays in support.

FOR THOSE – AND there are some – who've never been to the Albany Empire and are ignorant to the venue's overwhelming size, maybe the following local joke will illuminate: a fella goes to the Albany and opens the door. "Can I come in?" he asks, and the bloke behind the desk says, "Only if I come out."

So given that, it's understandable that the bill which played there Tuesday through Thursday last week took place amidst such discretion that in comparison Operation Overlord looked fly-posted. The dates – arranged to mark Jools Holland's departure from Squeeze – brought them back to where they started and have played on and off ever since; and on and off stage, old friends and faces hugged each other and sobbed like a battalion reunion of romantic desert rats.

Tuesday opened with Alexei Sayle, a comic who looked like one of The Blues Brothers and rattled through a cruel hatchet job on what it's like when rock 'n' rollers attempt to go articulate. Watch out for him.

And so to Otis Westinghouse And The Lifts, who (by courtesy of several paper cups and a length of string) by nine o'clock were revealed to be Costello And The Attractions. Elvis' reception was as rousing as the ensemble could muster and a terse "one two" led into "Beaten To The Punch". If he was doing this for fun and a favour you'd never have guessed: no room for smiles, no breaks between songs, no musical gags, nothing was relaxed.

Costello performed and lives (I suppose) as if at any moment Sirhan Sirhan is going to yell "bastard" and come lunging from the stalls waving a loaded 45; or as if being friendly would result in a nationwide boycott of his work on the grounds that he ain't so tough after all.

Perhaps his stance has gone too far now and what was once a wacky and endearing oddball image has now accelerated to a point where those glasses and that austere veneer are dangerously stretching Declan McManus like a piano wire and to relax it could result in an almighty SNAP.

With "Chelsea", "Oliver's Army", "Lipstick Vogue", the slow blues of "Help Me" and "Don't Look Back", the set was random and rich, lasting about 40 minutes with no encore. (Tuesday was the only night he didn't later return with Squeeze.)

Thursday turned out to be the best gig. John Cooper Clarke dodged in and out and between sets nipped on to bawl just-remembered jokes at a good-natured but baffled gathering.

For the books, I'd say that JCC looked as though he enjoyed the do more than anyone, Squeeze included – who flew through hit after hit, and I never realised how much I liked them and how well I knew their records until last week.

Where Elvis had gritted teeth, they grinned, and you got the feeling that they perform the songs for the audience and the hell of it, whereas Elvis – who actually knows all the words to their songs! – knocks them out for duty and appreciation.

The only black mark against Squeeze was that on such an informal night they might have been less workmanlike and performed their excellent cheesy nightclub version of "Up The Junction" which they did last time here, on Chris Difford's birthday.

The combined Squeeze/Attractions encores, though, were magic, curiously sans Holland. Elvis and Glenn Tilbrook took over the roles of William Bell and Judy Clay for a faithful rendition of "Private Number" which was certainly the highlight of the three days. A great three days!

And finally, what may be a telling anecdote: as the after-concert drink-up wound its way into Friday morning, we were all issued daft paper hats. Elvis took his, put it on, but as soon

as the person who gave it to him went off, crumpled it up and threw it away. Being seen in a party hat would tighten that piano wire another notch, and whilst not wanting to hurt his hosts' feelings – once they were gone – he didn't want to betray his own.

Then it hit me: I was standing there creating a conspiracy around a paper hat. God help me! Putting the pen away, I found some dear old pals and got quite, quite relaxed... *Danny Baker*

Old faces hugged each other and sobbed like a battalion reunion of desert rats



Jools Holland favours the bowtie-and-cabasa look, while Glenn Tilbrook opts for "Arthur Daley on air drums"



“The hair grease just isn’t the same”

Cresting a rockabilly wave, THE STRAY CATS land in the UK. No mere revivalists, they have the same relationship to rock’n’roll as The Specials do to ska. “The songs are more modern, the lyrics are more contemporary, and it’s all much louder and electric than the earlier stuff.”

— NME AUGUST 30 —

A HUMID LATE AUGUST afternoon in the centre of Soho. Three young Americans bemoan the lack of hot sauce on their takeaway lunch from the kebab store across the road and gather in an apprehensive semi-circle for an interview.

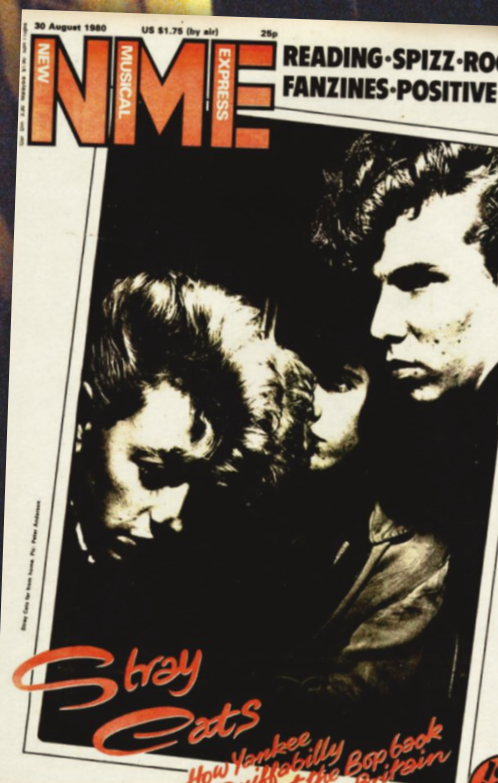
The trio are 19-year-old Brian Setzer and his two 18-year-old partners, Slim Jim and Lee Rocker. Collectively they are The Stray Cats, pioneers of postmodern rockabilly and arguably the hottest band currently doing the rounds on an otherwise uninspiring London gig circuit.

We are sitting in the first-floor office of a London music business publicist. Nothing unusual about that, of course, except that these hardly salubrious confines are also the only place the three native New Yorkers have been able to look on as home for the past six weeks.

For, at the start of July, The Stray Cats, bored with the suburban backcloth of their small-town origins on New York’s Long Island, felt the uncontrollable urge to get moving. The initial feeling was that anywhere would do, until a little thought and consultation with their English manager Tony Bidgood resulted in the Cats homing in on the UK to start searching for the young rockabilly rebels in London.

Gigs and contacts were hastily arranged back on the other side of the Atlantic, a flight booked and instruments packed, including Lee’s sizeable double bass, which required a seat and air ticket to itself on the TWA Jumbo into Heathrow. But that was where their problems started. The arrangements that had been made for gigs and accommodation fell unceremoniously through, leaving the band – in their own words – “in Shit City”. »

The Stray Cats:
(l-r) Brian Setzer,
Lee Rocker and
Slim Jim Phantom



Brian chews on a chunk of kebab, adjusts an out-of-place hair on his elaborate blond quiff and takes up the story. “We supposedly had all these gigs set up, but none of them materialised. We weren’t actually too bothered about it at first, until we found out that it was really hard to get gigs over here. I mean, compared to New York, it’s almost impossible. Over here they want tapes and all that shit. I don’t really want to start blaming anyone, but it was a big mess-up and we were stuck right in the middle of it!”

Their fortunes took a turn for the better, however, after a chance meeting with the original Police and Electric Chairs guitarist Henri Padovani. He introduced the band to Claudine Riley, a publicist working for press agent Keith Altham (Who, Rolling Stones, etc), and the group were allowed to sleep on the sofa and floors of their London office until more permanent accommodation was found. Claudine herself then went about the task of persuading club promoters to book a band who, though a cult name back in New York, were total unknowns to the UK rock audience.

For their part, the band were keen to play any dates they could get, from rootsy pub venues like the Thomas A Becket on the Old Kent Road and The Kensington in Shepherd’s Bush, to more traditional music-biz watering holes such as Dingwalls and The Venue.

With digs and gigs no longer a problem, the sheer vitality of their stage performances did the rest, welding the spirit of the original rockabilly of the ’50s with a musical toughness and visual punch that is strictly 1980.

And once the word was out, their reputation started to blossom to the extent that they are now being courted in earnest by half a dozen major labels as well as attracting such luminaries as Jerry Dammers, Pretenders, Clashers, Banshees and even old hands like Jagger, Richards and Ronnie Lane to their gigs.

It’s not quite the hoary old rags-to-riches tale – there’s a long way to go yet – but their near-overnight success in the London clubs does reek of the sort of storybook rock’n’roller coaster ride to fame that just isn’t supposed to happen these days. But, bunking the train to stardom aside, The Stray Cats had no grand plans when they took the shot in the dark of moving to England.

“We just kinda got sick of Long Island, ’cos we’d been living there all our lives,” drawls Jim. “We didn’t really think about it much. We just got tired and had the independent urge to split.”

Despite their initial difficulties, the move has left few regrets.

“The only thing I’d go back for right now is grease!” says Brian. “The hair grease over here just isn’t the same. But apart from that I want to stay here. We want to be able to do a proper tour of England and Europe.

“We’re starting to get a steady following now. I’m starting to notice the same faces at the gigs and we’re really happy with the way the crowds are reacting and the way the songs are going down.”

THE ROOTS OF The Stray Cats lie not only in the music of Cochran, Presley, Vincent and Burnett but also in the now defunct New York cult band The Bloodless Pharaohs, in which Brian played guitar from mid-1977 right up until the end of last year.

Though they made it onto record – cutting two tracks for the NY compilation LP *2 By 5*, produced by Blondie’s Jimmy Destri – the Pharaohs never realised the potential of their initial vision as a band carrying on from where the first Roxy Music album left off.

By the time the split came last year, a disillusioned Brian had already

started gigging on a part-time basis with his old schoolmates Lee and Jim, sometimes playing as many as three sets a night around the bars of Long Island as The Tomcats.

With the final demise of the Pharaohs, The Tomcats began in earnest, dropping most of their Cochran and Vincent covers in favour of original stuff. The also changed their name to The Stray Cats and moved in on the trendier Manhattan club scene.

Now for the caper. Despite being stylistically at odds with the dominant NY trends as they saw them – middle-of-the-road punk and camp ’60s pastiche – The Stray Cats had little trouble in securing regular gigs on the Max’s/Hurrah circuit, and began establishing a strong reputation as a live band in much the same way as they are now doing over here.

“At first it was pretty hard for us,” recalls Jim. “At first everyone thought we were gay or something ’cos of the way we dressed. But when they actually heard us play, they all knew we were playing rock’n’roll and slowly but surely we built up a pretty large following of kids aged from 17 to 21. By the time we left, we were getting about 300 people along to most of the gigs.

We don’t want to limit ourselves to a straight rockabilly audience. We don’t want to have just teds and rockabillies coming along to see us, ’cos we’re not a straight rockabilly band. The songs are more modern, the lyrics are more contemporary, and it’s all much louder and electric than the earlier stuff.

“But it’s still got the spirit and the basic look, which we kind of exaggerate a bit,” he adds, indicating the pin-drop of a quiff as greasy as the kebab he’s just demolished.

“I mean, no one actually wore hair like this in the ’50s! We just take it one step on. We sort of mix up clothes a bit. This might be a rockabilly haircut, but we don’t just wear rock’n’roll stuff.”

Brian goes further and cites The Specials, Beat and Selecter as bands working in a similar way to The Stray Cats, taking an established musical form and using it to create something more contemporary, without destroying the all-important spirit of the original.

“I saw The Specials once and they were great. They’ve got their roots but they haven’t got stuck in one place. They’re really taking things on and developing them.”

The petty revivalism charge is also shown the red card before being properly raised.

“If people were to accuse us of being part of a revival I wouldn’t see it, ’cos we don’t play pure rockabilly. If you’re talking about someone like Showaddywaddy, then it is just revival shit, ’cos they don’t play with any feeling.

“But if you really feel something then it isn’t a revival. Look at some jazz musicians who have been playing swing for the past 40 years. That’s not a revival. It’s just something that they really feel.”

The band view their most obvious British contemporaries – Whirlwind – with a curious mixture of admiration and suspicion, Brian rating them unequivocally as a band with a real feel for the music, but both Jim and Lee have their doubts.

“I don’t think they really have anything to do with rockabilly,” muses Jim. “They seem to do things straight out of the book, but the whole thing about rockabilly is that it’s supposed to have spirit, and they didn’t have that when I saw them.

“We’ve had skins, mods, teds – anyone that likes rockabilly”



"They were very lackadaisical, very rehearsed and the whole thing about rockabilly is supposed to be just going out and doing it."

"I'd like bands like them more if they didn't set themselves up as rockabilly bands," adds Lee. "I mean, they don't look rockabilly. If they just saw themselves as a band, I think I would like them more."

THE STRAY CATS' genuine affection for the style and flash of '50s rockola and the emphasis they place on trying to recapture the wild and raw spirit of the original rock'n'rollers has hardly clouded the sharpness of their lyrics. As Jim – a forthright and articulate drummer – points out, there's more to sing about these days than just high-school dances.

The band's live set still includes a few well-chosen covers, from the obligatory Eddie Cochran number – usually "Somethin' Else" or "Jeannie, Jeannie, Jeannie" – to a relative obscurity like Warren Smith's "Ubangi Stomp", and The Supremes' "You Can't Hurry Love" – both radical transformations of the original, the former a pounding ska-based thrash and the latter a rambling countrified rocker.

But it's the original stuff that stands out, particularly the sketch on youth-cult violence "Rumble In Brighton" and the nearest thing to a directly political song, "Storm The Embassy".

Both Brian and Jim, who co-write most of the songs, refute suggestions – hinted at in last week's Live! review of the band – that "Rumble In Brighton" is merely a glorification of mindless gang thuggery.

Brian: "It's not a glorification of the violence, 'cos I think that the whole fighting thing is totally ridiculous; people just beating someone up for the way that they dress..."

Jim: "I really hope that it doesn't glorify anything. It's supposed to be more like an article, someone standing back and writing about the fighting, 'cos there's nothing like that in America. The last line of the song also says that no one is the winner 'cos no one does come out on top in the end, 'cos the whole thing is so ridiculous."

Brian: "There are no gang fights like that in America. There are certain areas, like parts of Brooklyn, that you don't go to 'cos of the muggings, but there are no big fights just 'cos someone dresses differently or wears their hair in a certain way.

"When we first came here we were overly afraid 'cos of what we'd heard, but there hasn't been any trouble at our gigs and we've had skins, mods and teds all along, anyone that likes rockabilly. That's the one thing they've all had in common. We want to play for everybody, not just the rockabilly kids.

"We even went to see the Cockney Rejects at the Electric Ballroom and we were scared shitless 'cos it was a really wild night with a riot and everything. We'd walked in not knowing what to expect, but none of the skinheads in there even looked at us differently... probably thought we must have already been nuts going in there on our own anyway!"

The other stand-out original, "Storm The Embassy", is not, as reported in another paper, an odious ode to the SAS, but a song about the plight of the US hostages in Iran. The patriotic tone seems almost reactionary on the surface, although Brian sees it as more of a general comment on the apathy in the face of the crisis.

"What really inspired that was coming over here and finding that no one was really bothered about it. What am I actually saying in the song? Get those people back, basically!"

"It's just a song written out of anger on the spur of the moment. It's not really that realistic. I don't know if we should actually storm the embassy, but that's just how you feel when you hear about it every night on the news in America and you get so pissed off. It's just aggravating, although I don't hold it against anyone personally."

"Storm The Embassy" is one of a batch of songs that Brian and Jim have written and integrated into the set in the six weeks since their arrival in Britain. (Another is the as-yet-unrehearsed "Teenage Army", about the ominous call for the reintroduction of draft registration in the States.)



"I've been inspired over here, basically": Brian Setzer on stage at the Cedar Club in Birmingham, December 1980

Although he claims not to be a prolific writer, Brian's productivity has certainly increased since the band's arrival in Britain – something the composer puts down to the change of scene.

"I've been inspired over here, basically," he says. "If I was still sitting at home in my apartment in New York, I might get bored and not write anything for a month. But if I've got a lot of things happening to me, like now, I just get a lot of ideas. It's not as if I write a song every week, just that if I get inspired, I'll write a lot. Most of it is a pretty spontaneous thing."

AND THOSE LAST words echo quite simply just what the appeal of The Stray Cats is: their freshness and immediacy – that fleeing zap and sparkle that is probably destined never to be caught in the studio with the intensity that exists on stage with Setzer going through his Cochran routines while extracting a wall of feedback from his 1956 Gretsch, Lee Rocker wrestling with the violin bass and Slim Jim unleashing a barrage of shrieks as he brings the drumsticks down on his solitary snare drum with the crash of a sledgehammer on corrugated tin.

Back in the Soho office-cum-hotel, a more restrained Jim quietly concludes the interview with the sort of anecdote he probably knew would close this piece.

"I saw this great lady on the train today who came up and asked me why I had a sword in my ear," he recounts, indicating the dagger earring that dangles from his left lobe.

"She told me that it was dangerous and how her husband once stabbed someone with a kitchen knife and ended up in a special hospital.

"Then she says, 'What's your Christian name, child?' So I said James and she says, 'You take care of yourself, James, and I hope you get what you want out of life!'"

So far, the lad's right on course. *Adrian Thrills* •



1980

OCTOBER – DECEMBER

UB40, TALKING HEADS,
CAPTAIN BEEFHEART,
KATE BUSH AND MORE

"Deeply stunned and saddened"

NME DEC 13 John Lennon is murdered in New York. The former Beatles respond...

THE IMMEDIATE REACTION to John Lennon's death from those who were formerly associated with him was one of complete disbelief. Of the other former Beatles, George Harrison would only say that he was "deeply shocked", while Ringo Starr, who was on holiday at the time, flew back to the United States on hearing the news. Paul McCartney, who had been staying at his farmhouse home in Rye, Sussex, said that he was "deeply stunned and saddened".

McCartney later told reporters as he left for London: "John was a great guy who is going to be missed by the whole world." Yoko Ono issued a comment through David Geffen, friend and producer, before leaving the Dakota for an unknown destination: "John loved and prayed for the human race – please do the same for him."



December 14, 1980:
six days after John
Lennon is shot dead
by Mark Chapman at
the entrance to The
Dakota on 72nd Street,
an estimated 225,000
mourners observe 10
minutes' silence in New
York's Central Park



1980

OCTOBER – DECEMBER



Annabella Lwin, the 14-year-old Bow Wow Wow singer, says she was asked to pose nude for *Chicken* magazine



Malcolm McLaren snapped on May 22, 1980: "I never put pressure on people," says the Bow Wow Wow manager and *Chicken* magazine mastermind

"A sort of junior *Playboy*"

NME NOV 8 Malcolm McLaren gets it badly wrong with a new venture.

THIS WEEK, EMI release an as yet untitled new single/cassette with the launch of *Chicken*, a magazine funded by EMI and administered for them by former Gang Of Four manager Rob Warr.

Chicken was yet another invention of Bow Wow Wow mastermind Malcolm McLaren, and – according to its prospectus – was intended to be "about pop and fashion, focusing around pleasure tech: roller-skating, cassette-swinging microchip kids, and on the swashbuckling and romantic 'new look' which is just coming in". The magazine was set up to promote Bow Wow Wow, and the ideas which the group was designed to symbolise.

Last week, *Chicken*'s editor Fred Vermorel resigned, alleging – among other things – that Anabella, Bow Wow Wow's 14-year-old lead singer, had been pressured by McLaren to be photographed nude for the magazine, that an eight-year-old child had been reduced to tears when shouted at to "show a bit of arse" during

a photo session which had been filmed by a BBC2 *Arena* crew, and that McLaren was introducing a pornographic element into the proceeding, effectively turning what was supposed to be a sort of cross between *Smash Hits* and Schoolkids OZ into "a magazine for adults that features kids as objects".

Vermorel was worried that – if the magazine had come out in the form allegedly intended by McLaren – he might be "subject to a child porn rap".

Vermorel's original list of editorial contents included a tongue-in-cheek piece – subsequently withdrawn – by John McVicar on crime as a career for the unemployed school-leaver, a guide to constructive projects for kids who choose to opt out of school, Bow Wow Wow-inspired articles about piracy – and

a general emphasis on pleasure and fun. To these items, according to Vermorel, McLaren intended to add a risqué letter in which a boy describes what he'd like to have happen on a dream date with Blondie drummer Clem Burke. Furthermore, he told Thrills, McLaren was concerning himself so little with the magazine that he began to wonder whether McLaren actually wanted a magazine at all, as opposed to some outrageous footage for the *Arena* programme.

Vermorel went on to describe a furious McLaren coming round to his house and attempting first to coax, then to bully him into going back.

"You're up to your neck in this," Vermorel claims McLaren told him, "whether you like it or not."

Meanwhile at EMI, Rob Warr admitted that "EMI have pulled out of financing the project in the form in which it was originally envisaged". EMI had apparently given McLaren and the Vermorels (Fred and his wife Judy, co-authors of biographies of Kate Bush and the Sex Pistols) "carte blanche to produce the magazine. The problem was that Fred and Judy thought it was exploitative, and I felt that they over-reacted; Malcolm did not intend any such thing.

"McLaren had come to me with this great idea for marketing Bow Wow Wow. We thought that the magazine represented an ideal

opportunity to get something done, and we made it very clear what we considered permissible. It's all a bit of a storm in a teacup, really."

The man at the centre of the brouhaha was considerably more forthcoming. "Fred's freaked out a bit, hasn't he?" McLaren said. "Jesus!

I can't believe all this paranoia. The magazine was simply a sort of junior *Playboy* for kids getting used to the idea that they needn't

"It was no longer a magazine for kids, but one for adults that treats kids as sexual objects"

have careers, something to shake up this lethargic industry, a magazine about pleasure technology for the primitive boy and girl. I've been very frank: my job is to upset people, but there's no way that this magazine could be deemed pornographic."

McLaren denies that the young girl was subject to intimidation. "That is a gross lie, man. She got upset because of the pressure and presence of the *Arena* crew, and that's all. Her father was there and he didn't seem upset by anything that was going on."

He also denies having put pressure on Anabella ("I never put pressure on people. They do just what they want to do") or having attempted to place pornographic copy in the magazine. "I wasn't allowed to write for it. Fred was the editor; copy was entirely up to him."

"It's really important that we get this magazine out. Everyone in this country's so paranoid that you can't get anything done. Fred is a paranoid and a puritan. He's very hung up and he just freaked out."

Vermorel firmly repudiates the latter charge. "I'm not puritanical. The sight of a naked child doesn't upset me. What does upset me is the idea of that letter he wanted me to run. The way it was going, it was no longer a magazine for kids, but a magazine for adults that treats kids as sexual objects."

It was this alleged shift in *Chicken's* editorial attitude that led John McVicar to withdraw his article.

"I knocked the piece off a bit tongue-in-cheek because of the irony of the government putting all these kids on the dole and then boosting penalties for young offenders. I wanted to write something a bit political for the school-leavers," McVicar told Thrills. "I thought McLaren was just an anarchistic pop promoter and I thought it was a good idea to have a teenage magazine that had a bit of political edge."

"I normally like people like that, but... I'm a criminal, but I don't want or need to be associated with people like that."

Bow Wow Wow vocalist Anabella corroborates Vermorel's assertion that McLaren wanted her to pose nude for the magazine. "Yes, that's true. He wanted me to appear like that to promote our cassette. I said no, because it's a kids' paper and I'm a young person too, and I didn't think it was quite right, you know? He asked me through Vivienne [Westwood] and when I said no, he accepted it."

"He didn't try to pressure me. It wasn't child porn... Malcolm said it wasn't. That's not my kind of thing. Posing in a bikini's OK with the group around a swimming pool."

Anabella claims that "they don't tell you very much". She had not been informed that Fred Vermorel had resigned, or that the magazine was called *Chicken* (she'd been told it was called *Playkid*) or that the group's debut gig at Hammersmith Starlight Roller disco this Saturday was billed as a "chicken" night. She also had not been told that "chicken" is—in paedophile slang—a term meaning "an attractive child". *Charles Shaar Murray*

John Bonham
(1948–1980) with
Led Zeppelin at
Madison Square
Garden, New
York, June 1977

Leaves a wife and two children

NME OCT 4 RIP, Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham.

THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING the death of Led Zeppelin drummer John Bonham took a bizarre twist at the weekend, with suggestion that the tragedy – the latest in a series of disasters suffered by the band – is linked with black magic. Singer Robert Plant is reportedly convinced that the apparent jinx on Zeppelin is retribution for guitarist Jimmy Page's obsession with the occult.

However outlandish the theory, it gained some credence when a post-mortem on 32-year-old Bonham failed to reveal the cause of death. He had been drinking heavily the previous night, and it was at first thought that (like Jimi Hendrix) he had choked on his own vomit – but that wasn't substantiated by the post-mortem, which ruled out either drink or drugs as the cause. The coroner has now ordered further tests.

Bonham's body was found in bed on Thursday afternoon at Page's Windsor mansion, where the band had gathered to rehearse for a new album. They had recently returned from a series of concerts in Germany, their first since their two Knebworth shows in 1979 – which, in turn, were their first live appearances for five years. Their lengthy stage absence was due in no small measure to the string of mishaps which had befallen them.

Zep were due to start a major American tour on October 16 – though obviously this has now been cancelled – and there were also tentative plans for British dates in the New Year.

Unconfirmed reports indicate that the three remaining members have already decided to disband Zeppelin, believing that it could never be the same again. Bonham had been with them since their formation in 1968, initially as The New Yardbirds.

But official sources, at their record company and management office, remained tight-lipped on the subject – saying only that all three Zep men were far too distraught to consider the future at the moment. Bonham leaves a wife, Pat, and two children.

MICHAEL PUTLAND / GETTY

Antmania

NME NOV 29 Hit singles, sold-out shows. Adam & The Ants ride to glory...

AS ADAM & The Ants continue their nationwide tour – with both the single "Dog Eat Dog" and the album *Kings Of The Wild Frontier* riding high in their respective charts – all the signs are that there's Antmania in the air.

The numbers turning up have been so far in excess of original estimates that some gigs have had to be transferred to bigger venues, or even cancelled altogether. The show at Manchester Polytechnic – capacity 800 – was pulled out, as were appearances at Tiffany's Shrewsbury and the Drill Hall in Lincoln.

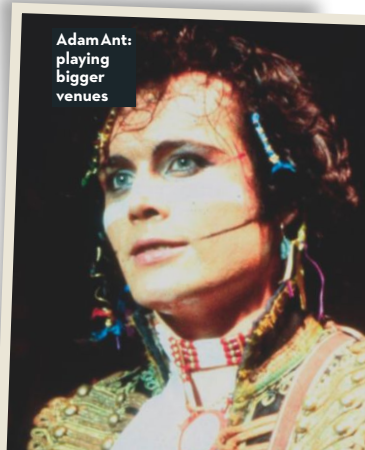
While a new date has now been fixed for Manchester, at the Apollo on December 15, alternatives have not yet been found for Lincoln or Shrewsbury. A further London date has been finalised, however, at the Hammersmith Palais on December 24.

Some impression of the sort of scenes it's hoped to avoid was given outside the Sheffield gig – where, it's said, disgruntled punters were attacking parked cars in protest – and at Hull, where a fire was reported.

When the Ants arrived at the HMV shop in Leeds, for an autograph-signing session, the store manager was taking no chances: he decreed that no more than one Antling would be allowed in at a time, resulting in a 1,000-strong queue forming outside on the street.

REX FEATURES

Adam Ant:
playing
bigger
venues



1980

OCTOBER–DECEMBER



UB40 in 1980: (l-r) Astro, Jim Brown, Brian Travers, Ali Campbell, Earl Falconer, Norman Hassan, Robin Campbell and Mickey Virtue

“Everyone’s going mad!”

Who better to talk sense in a dangerous world than UB40? A multiracial band from Birmingham, they make melodic reggae that is both independent and hugely popular. “A dance band is a package to sell your politics,” they admit.

— NME DECEMBER 6 —

1. Dreadlocks And Baldheads

LIKE ANY BAND with a sense of pride in their roots, UB40 usually try to wind up their British tours with a date in their home town. Their most recent 20-date city-to-city trek was no exception. The homecoming tradition was maintained and the tour culminated in a couple of nights at the Birmingham Odeon.

The group has insisted that I come up to one of these gigs for the sake of this feature, even though I’d already seen them four times on the tour – in Edinburgh, Sheffield, London and Hemel Hempstead – twice in an on-the-road capacity. But seeing them play Brum, reckoned UB40, would be the best way of confirming the range of their growing following, the diversity of the sort of people drawn into their reggae-wise web of subtle skank.

And to be sure, the audience inside the cavernous Odeon – a mammoth inner-city cinema about the size of its namesakes in Hammersmith and Edinburgh – could hardly be more »

UB40 UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT ATTENDANCE CARD

Surname (block capitals)	Initials	NI Number	CODOT No.
M			
Post Office			

1 IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT CLAIMING BENEFIT

You should make your claims for unemployment benefit at the Benefit Office each week on the days and at the times shown in the box on the right. Produce this card on each occasion.

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If you do miss claiming benefit on the day specified go to the Benefit Office on the very next day you can (but not on Saturday or Sunday). Do not wait until the specified day in the following week.

This notice ceases to apply when you start work or claim another benefit. If you again become unemployed you should claim benefit on the first day of unemployment.

MON	
TUES	
WEDS	
THU	
FRI	

Signing box

Surname	Initials	NI Number	chkd by & date

2 CLAIM FOR OUTSTANDING BENEFIT

and number which you have already claimed.

varied. “Sold Out” banners had been taped across gig posters weeks ago, and the house is packed with every mode of modern music fan, from skins and rudies to trendy middle-aged couples, prepubescent schoolgirls and dreads.

With a certain ratio of roughly three whites to every black, the multiracial nature of the crowd is also pretty striking for what is ostensibly a pop/rock gig.

It might be worth pointing out too that the racial mix of the UB40 audience was roughly parallel at a Kool And The Gang show I was to see the following night in London: despite what you might have read to the contrary, it's not only in the disco in-crowd that a harmonious mix of black and white can exist.

As percussionist Norman Hassan puts it, UB40 get “everyone from dreadlock to baldhead!”.

Grinning bass-man Earl Falconer, his own dreadlocks tucked up in a drooping navy tea-cosy hat, sees nothing particularly remarkable in the motley nature of the band's following. To him, the audiences are simply a natural reflection of the mix which exists within the band itself.

“The thing about this band is that everyone is different. Nobody tells anybody what to do, musically or otherwise. If there are any big decisions, we take a vote on them. It's like a kind of workshop atmosphere. Basically, we don't have an image.”

Too true. The initial view most people have of UB40 is that of a band bereft of a real public image beyond being “a nice reggae band”, an honest enough bunch who take their bows every now and then with a foray into the Top 10 singles before hopping on the first train back to Dullsville.

The impression they give on stage is one of eight musicians in near complete empathy with one another. With no single individual any more prominent than the others, they come across as a collective in which the band is all-important. UB40 are a group minus an identifiable frontman, although toaster Astro does fill the role of warning the crowd between songs with a series of routine stage gestures. They are a group without any stars, without a single potential household name... and are in some ways all the better for it.

This faceless impression is borne out by the sleeves of their three singles, “Food For Thought”/“King”, “My Way Of Thinking”/“I Think It's Going To Rain Today” and the current “Dream A Lie”/“The Earth Dies Screaming”, none of which bears so much as a single picture or snippet of info on the group. As if to rub in their apparent anonymity, the cover of their Graduate Records LP *Signing Off* is simply a stark facsimile of the UB40 attendance slip that over two million British citizens take along to the local DHSS every week.

But even non-appearance can be deceptive, and UB40's low profile should not be allowed to cloud their importance, because there is plenty of substance lurking behind that mellow groove and cool approach. As things look from this corner, the two new bands to have made the most profound impact over the past 12 months have been UB40 and Dexys Midnight Runners.

Dexys, like UB40, were at first tenuously connected with the 2-Tone way of thinking, but – again like their fellow Brummies – they had the strength of character and originality to transcend the comparisons and avoid being tagged. Dexys made their mark by being brash and trying to stir things up, Pistolian style, by throwing a spanner in the works of the somnolent music biz. But in common with UB40 they have an intense desire for change, and this outweighs many of the obvious differences between the bands. UB40, however, work on a more subtle level than Dexys and they have probably achieved even more on two separate fronts.

Front one: they have slyly infiltrated both the singles and album charts with uncompromising political lyrics at a time when such sentiments could not be less fashionable. UB40 would probably be shunned as being far too soft by most of the so-called rock radicals – after all, these guys are hugely



“You've got to get your audience first of all and then, for want of a better word, educate them,” says Robin Campbell, seen here (centre) onstage in London, September 1980

successful and even appear in *Jackie* and on *Top Of The Pops*! In doing so, they are actually ploughing a more subversive furrow than more trendy rebels. By very dint of their commerciality they reach a far wider audience, and a predominantly teen audience at that.

Front two: more than any other band, with the possible exception of Joy Division, UB40 have shown that it can be done independently. In reaching No 1 in the *NME* chart a few months ago, *Signing Off* on the Graduate label became the first LP recorded, pressed and distributed by the new independents to reach such heady heights.

Not bad going, really, for a band who were virtually unknown outside their native city suburb of Moseley just over a year ago.

2. We Are Family!

UB40 ARE MORE than a little bemused by their remarkably rapid rise. They seem genuinely surprised, if not to the extent of their success, then because it seems to have come practically overnight.

Drummer Joe Brown, probably the most loquacious member of the ensemble, is humble about the group's successful year. “It's weird really, 'cos everything that's happened to us has happened by accident. OK, it was a conscious effort to learn how to play our instruments in the first

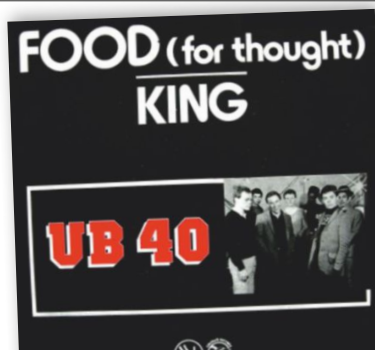
place, but it's been purely accidental that we've developed the sound we have and progressed to where we are now. What we're doing now isn't quite the sound we want anyway. We're still searching.”

Keyboard player Mickey Virtue is a bit more open, citing teenybop appeal, extensive gigging – the group have played over 150 dates this year alone – and originality as three reasons behind their current ascendancy.

“I think it's just a completely different type of sound. People were getting bored with the charts, that same old sound, and we were lucky that we happened to be around at the right time. Plus, with the 2-Tone thing, people were ready to listen to us. There are a lot of things really.”

One factor that can easily overlooked is that from the very outset UB40 refused to think small. Their attitude, though trenchantly independent, has always been geared towards success. Before playing their debut gig, the group – then all novices musically – rehearsed solidly for six months in the cellar of Earl

“It's like
a kind of
workshop
atmosphere”





Falconer's Moseley flat. They cut their teeth covering reggae standards of the time, numbers like Gregory Isaacs' classic "Mr Know It All", Bim Sherman's "Lover's Leap" and Augustus Clarke's "Big And Small", before graduating to some instrumentals of their own.

Matters were also helped at the start by the relaxed "family" atmosphere of the rehearsals, all the group having known one another for some time before they began playing together seriously. Vocalist Ali Campbell, saxophonist Brian Travers, Jim Brown and Earl Falconer had all been together at Moseley School Of Art. When these four began looking for potential musicians to form UB40, Ali quickly unearthed a guitarist in his elder brother Robin and keyboard player in his girlfriend's brother, Mickey. Norman and Astro, both mutual friends of the gang, signed on shortly afterwards.

A settled lineup was established with ease, comprising the eight current members plus an additional percussionist in the Nigerian Yami, whose subsequent departure from the band was sealed by the immigration authorities who deported him to Africa after only two gigs. That was the only personnel change UB40 have ever suffered.

The first gig materialised in February 1979 in the Horse And Hounds, a pub in King's Heath, Birmingham; it was an event which also marked the live debut of yet another Moseley band who have since gone on to greater things, The Au Pairs.

From then on, progress was steady if unspectacular, until the advent of 2-Tone last autumn immediately focused automatic attention onto any multiracial band working in the Midlands.

Though they acknowledge the indirect boost their career received from skamania, UB40, at the time, seemed to go out of their way to dissociate themselves from what was happening only a few miles down the A45 in Coventry, as Robin Campbell explains: "We did try to separate ourselves to a certain extent. There was no malice intended. It was just that we didn't play ska and we had been playing reggae since before the ska explosion happened. It just sort of happened around us.

"Of course, it helped us, but we tended to get dumped into the same category, which annoyed us. It wasn't that we had anything against the 2-Tone people, but we'd be playing reggae and we'd be coming up against things like posters saying that we were a sensational ska band, straight off the 2-Tone tour!"

UB40 claim they even passed up the chance of recording their first single on 2-Tone – which at the time would have meant an almost guaranteed instant Top 10 hit – in favour of striking out independently.

"Right from the start, it was always going to be a case of doing it ourselves if we could," says sax-man Brian. "When we were getting the

group together, the punk thing was still pretty strong and the independent label scene was really sprouting with labels like Rough Trade and Beggars Banquet, so we were never really thinking of going for a major deal, even though we got some amazing advance offers before we'd even recorded "Food For Thought".

So it was the unfancied Dudley-based Graduate label that secured the signatures of UB40 on a recording contract in a straight 50-50 profit-splitting deal, the sort of arrangement Rough Trade make with all their bands. The set-up gives UB40 control over what and when they record, gives Graduate impresario David Vorr one of the healthiest bank balances on the independent scene, and gives the likes of CBS, WEA and EMI bugger all other than some food for thought and a few headaches when they contemplate just what might have been.

The only drawback of remaining independent, according to Robin, is a temporary cash-flow problem as they wait for the royalty cheques to start coming in.

"It's held us back financially, but that's the only way. At the moment we haven't got that much money, 'cos everything we've earned so far has had to be ploughed straight back into the band.

If we'd been with a major company, that money would have been ploughed into us by them in the first place. But the difference is that we're in a very healthy position now and we don't owe a bean to anybody! A band in a comparable position to us signed to a major would be up to their eyes in debt!"

Many bands of the stature of UB40 – whether independent or not – have somehow managed to fall foul of the absurdities of rock'n'roll circus games.

But, rather like The Jam, who have maintained their vision and clarity in spite of their four years in a

parasitic business, UB40 just seem content to get on with the job in hand with a minimum of polemic and pretension.

One aspect of this level-headedness manifests itself in the attitude UB40 take to press interviews, which they feel should ideally be spread equally among the eight members, thus preventing the elevation of, say, Ali, Robin or Astro to star status.

As Jim says: "We don't really like the idea of pushing ourselves as solo personalities. If you're going to do that you need to have the individual musical prowess to go with it, which we haven't. We're confident in the appeal of our overall sound, but none of us are stars as musicians."

In keeping with this band democracy, it seemed a good idea to interview all eight members, in manageable groups of two or three, in order to sample as many viewpoints as possible; the most contentious comments probably came from two of the less likely sources – drummer Jim and toaster Astro.

So the rest of this piece comprises three interviews done during the last week of the UB40 tour – the first with Ali and Brian, the second with Earl, Mickey and Jim and the last with Robin, Norman and Astro.

3. Moseley, Home Of The Hits!

MOST OF UB40 have lived all their lives in Moseley, a smallish but well-defined area to the south of Birmingham's sprawling city centre, noted for its wholefood shops, its student population, its racial mix and – according to a recent UB40 news bulletin – its tendency to breed bands by the dozen.

Brian Travers' second-floor flat overlooks a row of shops which more or less mark the centre of "the village". Just down the road is the small front-room studio in which UB40 recorded their debut album with producer Bob Lamb earlier this year. In doing so, they resisted the temptation to move to plusher recording confines, preferring the rootsy feel they reckoned Lamb's "Home Of The Hits" gave their sound.

As Prince Jammy's latest dub-wise creation sifts from a set of speakers in the background, the two youngest members of the band, Ali Campbell and Brian, both 21, explain how a No 1 album came to be recorded in a humble eight-track studio.

"Most of the tracks had already been done at Bob's place before we even knew we were making the album," says Ali. "It would have been mad to go somewhere else. We did have a few drastic sessions in major studios. I mean, they were amazing studios with all the facilities and everything »

and we ended up getting the worst sound we've ever had! In Bob's studio we didn't even have the facility for doing dubs, and we couldn't even all get into the place at the same time. We'd have to put bass, drums and keyboards on the same track sometimes, so dubs were out of the question."

Brian: "For the next album, we've got to change studios really, otherwise we won't be able to do dub. This might sound a bit self-important, but the basic thing we want to do is try to educate people into reggae and dub, introduce them slightly by doing it in a mild form and then building it up from there."

Educate people into reggae? That sounds a bit pompous.

Ali: "But the situation is ridiculous. Mikey Dread, for example, could be No 1 in the singles chart. The market is there for him, but he's not getting over to it 'cos reggae is still not taken seriously enough by the media and the radio stations. They still look on it as a minority music 'cos it's a black music."

In addition to the singles, UB40's live set revolves around two crucial songs, "Burden Of Shame" and "Tyler". The importance of them is again emphasised on *Signing Off*, where they open and close the first side of the album. The latter is a protest on behalf of Gary Tyler, a young American black arrested at an anti-Ku Klux Klan rally in the Southern state of Louisiana six years ago and allegedly framed for murder. He's been inside ever since, despite continual appeals on his behalf.

Ali: "He was only 16 and he was done for killing a white girl and the whole thing was just a total frame, a load of bollocks! The judge was a member of the senior white citizen's league and all that. It was an all-white jury, but there was no real evidence to say that it was him that did it.

"We found out about it from this newspaper report. We just read about it and then found out a bit more about the case for ourselves. There's been a lot of protests about it in America, but there was never any real fuss made about it over here."

Once an American distribution deal has been sorted out – hopefully through independents, though the band concede the problems facing small labels are that much greater in the States – "Tyler" is to be the first official US single release. However, if Ali's pessimistic paranoia is any sort of guide, there won't be many people around on the North American continent to witness its release. Talk of the current single "The Earth Dies Screaming", a fictional account of the planet, post-apocalypse, prompts Ali into a semi-serious contemplation of just where the madness of contemporary American conservatism could lead.

"Everybody's shitting themselves, basically," he grins nervously. "Ronald Reagan's becoming president and there are 20 million people in the Evangelist Right. They're going to start blowing places up. Reagan will put one on Vietnam, just for spite! He'll probably even do it himself... fly across in a helicopter with a cowboy hat on and drop one. Get this, boys!

"Seriously, the world seems to be in the middle of a wild plunge into right-wing madness – America, Jamaica, the Islamic thing. That's one of the reasons that the CND thing is getting stronger. It's blatantly obvious that everyone's going mad!"

4. Responsibilities

UB40'S POLITICS ARE essentially a gut-level response to the injustice and repression they see around them. The "political" songs – "Tyler", "King", "Burden Of Shame", "Little By Little" and "Madam Medusa" – are simple and accessible. And unlike most so-called political bands, UB40 manage to deliver their message with a remarkable lack of pomp and conceit. They shun any convoluted party political theory in favour of plaintive assertions of basic human rights.

Of course, individuals in the group do differ on certain specifics, something that becomes apparent talking to bassist Earl Falconer, 21, keyboard-man Mickey Virtue and dapper drummer Jim Brown, both 23.

As we huddle in a dressing room annexe at the Hemel Hempstead Pavilion, percussionist Norman Hassan is practising trombone in the room next door, getting his lungs in trim for that horn section he and Astro hope to introduce in time for the next LP. As we talk, Norman is bellowing his way through the opening bars of "Food For Thought", note by painstaking note, although right now the effect is more like a weirdly mutant "Hey Jude".

Barely audible over the racket coming through the wall, Jim, Mickey and Earl explain the differences that do exist over the degree of political commitment within the band.

Jim: "Some of us are more extreme than others. We have arguments sometimes over some of the benefits that we play. Like, I would have supported the idea of us doing a benefit for anarchists, whereas other members of the band don't think that sort of thing is a good idea. We've all got different ideas on things like that, although we all agree on fundamental points.

"We don't affiliate ourselves with any particular political party. There are certain things about most parties that we don't agree with. I don't believe that any party actually takes things far enough. Personally, I believe in tearing the whole thing down and starting again, rather than use the materials we've got to swing things around. It would be nice if there could be gradual change, but I don't think there's much of a future in that."

Perhaps the most interesting UB40 song is their bitter denunciation of British imperialism "Burden Of Shame". Initially inspired by happenings in Africa, it also has much wider, more universal connotations: "*There are murders that we must account for / Bloody deeds have been done in our name / Criminal acts we must pay for / And our children will shoulder the blame / I'm a British subject not proud of it / While I carry the burden of shame.*"

The song seems to be the result of a pretty strong guilt complex, I suggest to Jim.

"It can be interpreted in a lot of ways. When we wrote it, I thought of it being about the fact that there's no such thing as an innocent person if they are living and contributing to a society that causes the sort of atrocities that do go on. I mean, you read in the press that there were 'innocent' people bombed, say, in a Guildford pub and all that. But then again, who is an innocent person when they are going around voting for people like Margaret Thatcher? They're not innocent, 'cos..."

That's hardly any justification for bombing a pub, I butt in.

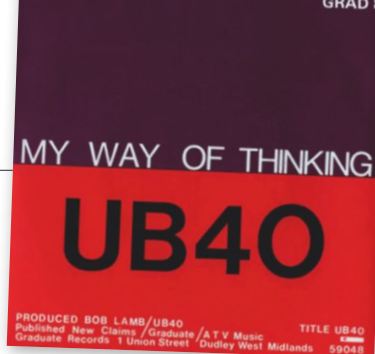
"No, but then I cannot see something like that purely as an act of terrorism when it's just one army fighting against another in a war situation. The way I see it is that something like the pub bombings in Guildford could be justified 'cos it was an army pub."

"Questions like that," says a seemingly dubious Mickey, "you'd have to ask each member of the band and find out what their views are, 'cos our views vary so much. Some people are more extreme than others."

"'Burden Of Shame' is like a guilt thing," resumes Jim. "It's from a viewpoint of someone living in a country that is causing atrocities.



On-stage dancer turned toaster and compere Terrence Wilson, AKA Astro, September 1980



If we're living in that country, we're part of that same system."

Surely though, most ordinary people living under that particular system are also viewed with as much contempt and suspicion by the men in power and therefore hardly guilty themselves of the war crimes?

"But there's also the dilemma that if we're going out and buying things from a shop, then we're advocating that same system. I think the only justification you can have for contributing to the system in that way is to say that you're part of the oppressed as well.

"That's the only justification there is, really, for trying to live comfortably in the system. I agree with you basically, 'cos there's not that much that you can really do about it."

Jim unashamedly considers the band's political songs to be far more important than some of their lighter, poppier numbers.

"Some people will say that, first and foremost, we're a dance band, but I really think we've got a responsibility which overrides being a dance band. A dance band is a package to sell your politics."

Mickey begs to differ, albeit only slightly...

"Basically, it's more important to me that we all get off on playing music. But if you're going to sell records, you've got to put songs on them, and when we do songs we tend to go to the extremes and either put really nice songs on them like 'My Way Of Thinking' [the second single], which doesn't really say a lot, or go to the opposite extreme with a really heavy song. We don't mess about between the two."

5. Public Dubs And Private Jokes

UB40 TOASTER AND compere Astro and lead guitarist Robin Campbell are two of the more senior members of the band, aged 23 and 25 respectively. Sitting on the edge of a wooden table in the dressing room of the Birmingham Odeon prior to the big tour finale, they present a more witty face of the band than some of the occasionally dour younger members.

The two wind each other up something rotten, and at one stage – when the delicate subject of Rasta is broached – their bickering threatens to overtake any attempt at a coherent interview. Percussionist Norman Hassan joins us just long enough to give his "dreadlock and baldhead" summary of tonight's audience before disappearing to pick up some friends and relatives who are coming along to this hometown show.

The position of Astro – Terrence Wilson – in the group is an odd one. Before he met them, he had been running his own sound system, Duke Alloy, in and around Birmingham. He initially joined UB40, however, as nothing more than an occasional on-stage dancer "just to get people in the audience really on the go".

Now his role comprises duties as compere and some talk-over vocals. He is also now learning trumpet, shortly to be introduced along with Norman's trombone as the UB40 brass.

According to Robin, Astro is something of a contradiction in terms. Although he claims to be a Rasta, his way of life does not always conform religiously to Rastafarian doctrines. For a start, as a member of UB40 he is advocating the sort of direct political involvement that Rastafari tend to eschew completely.

"Another thing," says Robin, beginning a thorough dressing down of Rastafarianism, "is that a true Rasta believes that the only thing that's going to be left at the end, after the judgement day, is Rasta. Rasta is a racist, elitist religion."

"Wrong, Robin!" snaps Astro. "You are wrong, believe me! Check it out, Robin; you are getting your information from imitation dreads! As far as Rasta is concerned, colour doesn't come into it. As man and man say, they want to go to Zion. Zion is a spiritual place. Show me the colour of a spirit. There's no such thing!"

Astro grins at his triumphant reasoning and continues his defence.

"Colour doesn't come into it at all. Those of them that go around calling you a porky and things like that, I don't class as Rastas. Colour doesn't come into it. It's basically down to what's inside you. It doesn't matter if you are blue with pink-shadowed stripes! It doesn't make no difference."

So how does Astro (anag: rasto?) come to terms with the contradictions between his political commitment and Rastafari?

"Politics is something you can't hide from"

"To me, politics is something you can't hide from. It's a fact of life. A lot of Rastas don't get involved in politics 'cos they don't understand it. But it's not true to say that Rastas don't have anything to do with politics. There was even a Rasta that stood as an election candidate in JA in the '60s.

Robin: "But it's true to say, on the whole, that British Rastas don't check politics."

Astro: "As I said, it's 'cos a lot of them don't understand them."

Robin: "But even a lot of them that do understand it, don't want to know. They see and understand what's going on but they cut themselves off 'cos they think that Jah will come and save them!"

Astro: "A lot of them do feel that way, but, as I see it, if I know about politics and understand it, I feel that I can sing about it."

Robin: "That's why you're not a typical Rasta."

Astro: "It depends what you call a typical Rasta."

I ask Astro for his definition.

Astro: "Basically, a Rasta is a man who keeps himself to himself and knows everything that's going on... I can only explain it in old-fashioned terms: you see things but you don't see things, you hear things but you don't hear things, you say things but you didn't say anything..."

Robin: "In other words, it makes no sense whatsoever."

Astro: "It doesn't make sense in everyday language. If you spend about three hours talking about it, it all becomes clearer."

With gig time rapidly approaching and stage gear to be ironed, we decide to leave that one for another time and move instead on to talk of UB40's current hit single. "Dream A Lie", says Robin, was the joke that evidently fell flat on everybody.

"When we wrote it, it was meant to be a real corny, schmaltzy song with all these real clichés in it. The whole song is supposed to be funny. Next time we play it, I'll have to tell everybody to put their tongues in their cheeks for one number.

"The thing is that nobody ever seems to get the joke. Nobody ever thinks it's funny; people always seem to recoil in terror when they see that the lyrics are so banal. But they're intended to be like that, basically 'cos we got stomped on for doing 'My Way Of Thinking', which was another totally throwaway lyric.

"We got attacked for doing that, so we've gone out and done another one. Basically, what we're saying is, 'Bollocks!' If we want to write a shitty song, we can. No one can accuse us of being bad songwriters, though, 'cos we've done a few shit-hot songs as well; very important songs, very strong political songs. But there's nothing wrong with a few throwaway lyrics as well."

As for the future, UB40 have plans to invest in some dub-wise experimentation. There are already plans for a dub LP to accompany their next album. The group are going simply to hand the tapes over to an agreeable JA producer of the calibre of Scientist, Crucial Bunny or Prince Jammy and see what he comes up with. Beyond that, virtually all the band express a desire to get into production themselves and eventually own their own studio.

"When we first started, a couple of members of the band wanted to go straight into being a dub band," explains Astro. "But if we'd done that, we'd have killed off half of our audience straightaway. We'd never be in the position we are now. If we can wean them slightly and give them a little taste of dub now and then, by the time we're bringing out heavy dub albums they'll be really wanting to hear it."

"You've got to get your audience first of all and then, for want of a better word, educate them," adds Robin. "Dub isn't a big thing yet, but hopefully it will be by the time we've weaned our audience onto it. The next album will certainly be heavier than the last one in that respect."

The conversation reaches a lull and Astro bounds off to iron his trousers before going on stage as the dreadlocked master of ceremonies to introduce the band once again to their home audience.

"Have you got all you want there?" enquires Robin as I click off the tape recorder.

Yeah. That's fine thanks. One more thing though. My 16-year-old sister wouldn't forgive me if I returned without a full set of autographs. A piece of paper is passed around the crowded dressing room and UB40, not for the last time, sign off. *Adrian Thrills* •

1980

OCTOBER–DECEMBER

“We’re aiming at something different”

Brian Eno, the music of Africa and an expanded lineup have wrought change on **TALKING HEADS**. And, good as it is, *Remain In Light* has brought with it some bad feeling. “Brian wanted to say it was his record, David that it was his record,” says Tina Weymouth.

— NME NOVEMBER 8 —

LOS ANGELES IS the entertainment capital of America. In little more than 50 years, the business of entertainment has built a vast, moneyed urban sprawl around the billboards that line Sunset Strip announcing the latest records and films. Most of the people who live here either work in the entertainment business, or else they clean up after it.

A city like this, which is not really a city at all but just 72 suburbs in search of a city, is bound to have character problems. America views Los Angeles and the rest of southern California with apprehension. Southern California, for its part, seems to have renounced the rest of America.

Even for a country that regards politicians as being almost by definition corrupt and self-serving, the level of interest in the imminent elections is absurdly low. The one solitary note of political support I’ve seen in the streets was a customised van with a bumper sticker advocating something called the Libertarian Party... »

LYNN GOLDSMITH/GETTY





"When this group really works, the underlying sensibility is very different from what it was before": David Byrne in 1980

"Beer drinkers," according to David Byrne, a New Yorker whose job has taken him all over the world. "They want to make everything legal, abolish taxes, and just have a good time."

Byrne recently rented a house in Venice, an "artists community" by the beach, while he and Brian Eno worked on an as yet unreleased album called *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*. Venice is a centre of what *Wet* magazine calls "responsible hedonism", which is a sort of intellectual version of the roller-skating fad.

Roller-skating is just one of the fads that originated in this vanguard city. And Los Angeles is a vanguard city. The LA art/punk crowd like to think that there's something vital going on here, and there is, but it's everything they despise. LA is the centre of contemporary American culture, broadcasting through films and music the blueprints for contemporary ways of life; little parcels of clothing and attitude for consumers starved of real sustenance.

David Byrne had to move out of Venice after just two weeks. It didn't suit him. "Everybody was just relaxing in the sun all day, tossing frisbees around..." And in the land of the laid-back, naturally, the automobile is king. Cars outnumber people in the City of Lights, and the parking lots outnumber the buildings. California is the last outpost of the West in more than just geography. Even the youth culture runs on gasoline.

Every Saturday night, Hollywood and Sunset Boulevards are bumper to bumper with youngsters cruising in their personal automotive sculpture—some of them Low Riders, the custom suspension job favoured by Spanish gangs of the Barrio. As simple a proposition as going to see Talking Heads play at the Greek, an open-air theatre in the middle of a large park in the Hollywood Hills, would be out of the question with only a pair of heels.

There being virtually no public transport and few taxis, you would have to miss the first engagement on the first tour by the new Talking Heads Funk Orchestra. But don't be too disappointed. By the second and third performances they had improved a great deal.

The new Talking Heads Funk Orchestra is the same as the old Talking Heads with the addition of Adrian Belew from David Bowie's band on feedback guitar, Busta Jones, once of Sharks, on fatback bass, Steve Scales on percussion, Dolette McKay on vocals and Bernie Worrell from Funkadelic, whom you might say has swapped P-funk for F-punk, on keyboards. The result is a nine-piece Talking Heads, lush instead of brittle. It's probably the single most radical step so far in the progress of America's so-called premier new-wave band. Even a new-wave band has to move with the times. Talking Heads have finally gone 2-Tone!

ELEVEN MONTHS AGO, when they played the last date of their last tour in London, the group was on the verge of apoplexy.

They had been touring eight months out of the year for the previous four, and were almost wrung out with the routine.

The working methods and approaches they had learned with Brian Eno had kept them fresh and stimulated in the studio and produced a consistent evolution on record, but on stage they had ground to a halt. They needed a new edge. Animated drum podiums and laser lights were not the answer. Anyway, David Byrne would probably just get arrested for vagrancy if he tried to take his shirt off on stage.

And so, for the first half of this year, Talking Heads went on hold; Byrne went to Los Angeles, Jerry Harrison went to Philadelphia, Chris Frantz went to Jamaica, and so did Tina Weymouth.

While the Frantz-Weymouths were visiting Lee Perry and hanging out with Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, debating who was the greatest rhythm section in the world, Jerry Harrison began working with other bands... The Escalators in New York, Double in Canada

and a French band who had supported Talking Heads in Lyon. "They're actually quite good. They write songs about fucking in elevators," he says, nonchalantly. "Really, that band we have now is the result of the work I did with other people. I had met Busta Jones and he called me up to play with The Escalators. Then we went down to Philadelphia and I produced some

demos for Nona Hendryx... I started moving around that scene in New York.

"I met Bernie Worrell through Busta—he played on Busta's album on Spring Records. Dolette had sung on the Escalators album. Steve Scales, I didn't know. We found him through Bernie. And Adrian Belew we met when he was recording in New York with David Bowie."

Meanwhile David Byrne, being somewhat impressionable, became absorbed in Brian Eno's discovery of Africa. The two of them set off like explorers into the California desert to try to capture the feeling of the bush in the

sagebrush. They failed, and had to resort to recording *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts* in a more prosaic setting, using "found vocals" from the radio as their bush of ghosts.

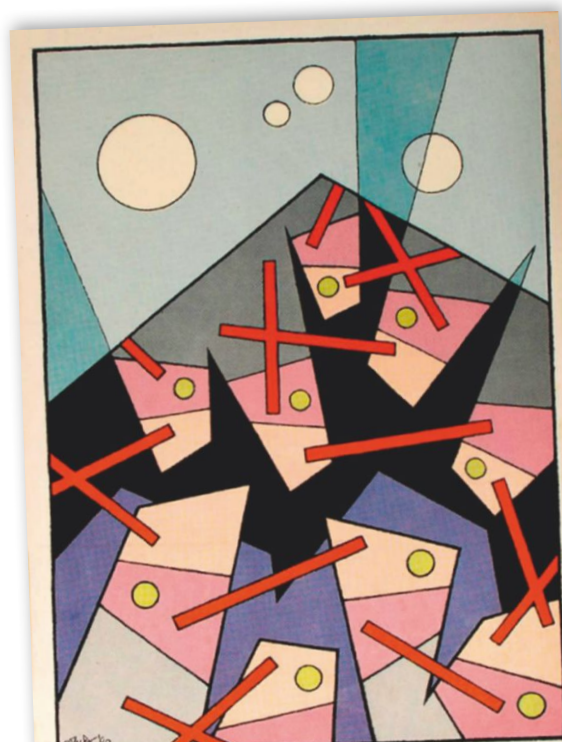
I don't want to suggest that Byrne is a vacillating lump of jelly without a mind of his own, but it's obvious that the even more impressionable Brian Eno made the running here. Byrne's interest in musical anthropology surfaced in a short piece he wrote for *High Times* soon after... *Buildings And Food*, and several songs on *Fear Of Music*—most notably "I Zimbra"—bore an ethnic trace that pointed to the hypnotic swirl of words and rhythms that characterises *Remain In Light*. However, Eno, being the more systematic of the two, probably helped put the idea into practice.

The main spur for the idea was a book published in America last year called *African Rhythm And African Sensibility* by John Miller Chernoff. Byrne spends a lot of his time in books. When we met, he was reading a book called *The Role Of The Artist In Primitive Society*, which I suppose ours qualifies as... Anyhow, the idea is that music of the Third World provides a spiritual nourishment lacking from the popular music of the West; witness for instance the importance of reggae in our black community. Byrne wants Talking Heads to do what tribal drums do, but whether or not he sees himself as the shaman of the global village he didn't say.

I would recoil from the dryness of this exercise were it not for the fact that each of the members of the group bring something different to the picture, so it won't be so academic, and also the very idea of trying to do for white America what George Clinton and many other funk and soul artists have long been doing (often unconsciously) for black America seems almost unthinkable.

Then again, as the French magazine *Actuel* put it in a headline for an article about Eno: *Les blancs pense trop...* The whites think too much.

"When it works, you get the feeling: forget yourself"



When this band came together, were you aware that it would probably be the only popular integrated band in America?

Byrne: "I thought that, then I thought there must be others, but they don't get recognised for it as much. There's a group called Wild Cherry, I think. Chaka Khan has some white musicians in her group..."

The white rock audience and the black soul audience rarely overlap in this country. "That's true. I think for our audience, considering the kinds of groups they might go to see, we're a real exception. When we put the group together we didn't think of that, but it was obvious when it happened. We just chose the kinds of musicians that happened to be the most appropriate to what we were doing. Actually it's more than happened to be; a lot of it's in the nature of the sensibility implied in that music."

Well, Talking Heads have always been a funky band. "Yeah, there's precedents for it in our previous stuff. But in the

moments when this group really works, the underlying sensibility is very different from what it was before, a real radical shift. This music, when it really comes together right, has a transcendent feeling, like a trance of some sort.

"That's exactly what happens in traditional African music and other Third World music. It's something that isn't sought after in most pop music. We're aiming at something different, although some of the elements may be the same. When it works, you get the feeling: forget yourself and become part of the community. It's wonderful, and it doesn't happen every night."

Does the rest of the group feel the same thing? "I haven't talked about it with the others, although I know for instance that Bernie knows exactly what I'm talking about, though he might express it differently. It's a sort of funny thing to discuss... without coming on like a convert."

Do you feel any twinge of colonialism? "As far as that goes... I realise that's a little bit of what we're doing, but I can't help it. That's some of the music we're most excited about. If it didn't originate out of a western tradition, I don't feel I can be blamed for that."

Do you think it's possible to perform this function for your audiences? "Yeah. Sure I do. It's possible. There's other people that do that kind of thing, but we've added other elements, the kind of lyrics I write and the kind of textures we use. But people like James Brown and George Clinton's P-funk... it's all based around that idea; they just use street language to talk about it."

"For something to have the effect that it's supposed to have, it's not necessary to understand all of it. I read in a book on voodoo that the structure of the rituals, the drumming, the singing, the chanting... the symbolism of the rituals isn't understood by half of the people that are participating."

You mean like a church service or a heavy-metal gig? "Er, yeah. It isn't necessary for them to understand. I'm inclined myself to think about it, to try and understand it, but that's not necessary. And what's even more amazing, I think, is that it's not even necessary to believe in it."

"For instance, if I were to get involved in one of those things, I wouldn't have to believe in Jesus or whatever, I would probably just get carried away along with the rest of the people, which is really a testament to the power of those things. The feeling one gets from it isn't cathartic or purging, it's not that you let off steam or whatever; it's more like a mystical communion... And it's not some sort of psychological thing, it's more social in a way. The nature of that kind of music implies different parts and different rhythms, that all mesh... Not some sort of personal explosion, which tends to be what a lot of rock music is about."

BYRNE HAS CHANGED a lot in just the two years since I first met him. He's almost normal nowadays. Either he has come around to society or more likely society has come around to him.

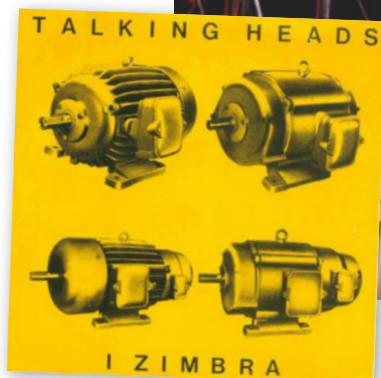
Being photographed and interviewed is part of his routine, yet he still finds it hard to express himself in his own words. He answers questions slowly and painstakingly, quoting indirectly from books a lot of the time. It's his particular misfortune to have become a popular introvert.

He accepts the role of the head Head without too much complaint. Yet if Talking Heads is still the democracy it was, it's not without duress. I was taken aback to hear Byrne blithely admit that he hadn't talked about his feelings towards their new music with the rest of the group. Maybe he's just like that, and their internal balance is stronger than it seems, but someone who saw the new band on stage in LA was moved to remark that it looked as though Byrne had got himself a new band and forgotten to get rid of the old one—a suggestion all four of them shrug off.

"I think Jerry puts it best," says Tina Weymouth. "When we were discussing this record... Brian wanted to say it was his record, David wanted to say it was his record. They both thought it was the greatest venture of their lives. We were saying no, we all had the same idea, but



Talking Heads bassist Tina Weymouth on stage in Los Angeles, 1980: "Everybody played [on *Remain in Light*] and everybody produced"



Jerry said no, we didn't all have the same idea. We all came in with different ideas of what we were going to do. It was the collective influences that created the result.

No one could put an individual claim to it.

"Certainly we were listening to African records long before David and Eno were, because Chris and I are into rhythm, and it's great rhythm, primarily. We turned them on to it. We'd already done that song 'I Zimbra' and I felt sure when we did that—we actually did two like that, but 'Dub' didn't get onto the record—I felt sure that would be the direction of the next record."

"Plus, Eno had always said that he wanted to go into the studio cold with us, without any material, so that we could learn the way he makes albums, simple things layer upon layer. It's really not novel at all; it's just the old idea of jamming, one key, no chord changes... and everybody played and everybody produced. The songs were written by the five of us."

"Yeah," agrees Chris Frantz, "but there's a mistake in the text on the first pressing of the record. On the next pressing the credits will read: 'Lyrics Byrne with the exception of Byrne/Eno two songs, music by Byrne, Harrison, Frantz, Weymouth and Eno.' We just had to put our foot down and say, 'Look, we don't just want to get paid a percentage or whatever because money is... let's face it, I'm not worried about money. That's one of the luckier aspects of my life. It wasn't that; it was for the record. I wanted somebody to know that even if I didn't write a whole song I did make a contribution..."

"It wasn't an administrative error, it was an error by a member of the band who is used to taking credit for everything that happens. And when it was put to him that this was not the right way to do things he had to admit that it wasn't." »

GETTY

"David does not come to the band with a full-blown song," says Tina, as always at pains to explain things fully. "He comes with a riff, maybe, if that, maybe nothing. The whole band puts it together and then David writes really terrific words. I really love his writing. He's so good at it and it's something he won't give up as long as he's singing the songs, because he feels he can sing them with more conviction if he knows what they mean.

"After the first two albums, which with a couple of exceptions were essentially written before the group ever went on the road, before even Jerry joined the group... Jerry wanted a little more credit even though all he was contributing was a part or an arrangement. But it could be like, say, in the case of 'Life During Wartime' where it started out with just bass and drums, which seemed to fit with something Jerry and David had been working on before.

"That was one song where it was quite clear to at least three of us in the group that we had all written the music, and David had written the words, and we were getting royalties on the parts that we'd written! So we said with this album it has obviously been written by everyone, including Brian, and we should break with the tradition of singer-songwriter in the credits because that's not the way it happened.

"But I think that it's not... a big problem. I feel weird talking about it, because it's like a family's dirty laundry, but it's not a huge conflict. David needs to have a lot of credit; that motivates him. And it's not a bitter thing. What you wrote in that review of *Fear Of Music* made it sound bitter, but it's not."

LET'S LEAVE IT at that. The future is flexible. Logistics are such that the extended band will have to dismantle at the end of this tour. Eno probably won't be working with them on their next album, which I humbly suggest they should do on their own...

"Eno taught us to relax in the studio," says Tina, "which I think was his intention all along. He found that we were very willing to be experimental, as he was, and he was delighted with that... to find a band that would allow him to race everybody's track and not get artistically sensitive and precious about it.

"And I think we've done it, now. I told him that I always envisioned doing a trilogy with him, and once we'd done this studio album, that would be the end of our collaboration. He said I think that's quite right, and probably we won't be working with him again, although hell if I know who we would work with..."

Remain In Light is, as others have pointed out, a transitional album. Talking Heads keep making transitional albums. But they follow a certain path. It's hard to believe that four years ago they willingly let producer Matthew King Kaufman try to turn them into the perfect bubblegum band on a set of demos that have since been lost. "And they were really good, too," says Tina...



"I feel weird talking about it... David needs to have a lot of credit"

If the rock'n'roll cult of personality they once claimed to want to disgrace has come to surround and frustrate them, they've at least learned how to live with it. They have their triumphs – this new band is one – and they have had their effect.

It's almost commonplace now, but can you recall how extraordinary it was even in '77 for a band to have a female member who actually played an instrument? But like a lot of people I know, Talking Heads have simply found out that the old rock routines they wanted to break could break them first.

"Lee Perry says he's not doing screwface music any more," says Tina. "In other words, political messages. He says music comes from love. And I think that's really true because one thing you find when you're working with a lot of different musicians is that they have a particular attitude, no matter where they come from or what colour or religion they are. It's very different from that of new wave people, who usually aren't especially musicians; except that people like us who

started out being called new wave have since become musicians.

"Nowadays it seems very funny when you read interviews and there's a new group who are afraid of success or afraid of learning to play their instruments, or afraid of becoming heroes and all of those things. It's very hard to relate to, because at this point I relate better to people who just appreciate music and who just love to play, and that's their only motivation. It's not a rebellion against something any more and it is kind of a closed world, but I think it's honest.

"When I was in art school, somebody once said to me that the problem with you young artists is that all you want is to be famous. When you get older you realise that what's important to you – and Ralph Steadman, the cartoonist said this – what becomes important to you is the charm of the activity. You live for the work, not for the money or for the fame. The success that is perhaps obvious to someone else is much less obvious to you."

Does it annoy you to be regarded as the head Head?

Byrne: "I enjoy it. I don't want it to get in the way of everybody being able to work together. But I certainly like getting recognition for what I've done."

Have you fulfilled all your ambitions as they were, say, five years ago?

"Yeah, I guess so. Five years ago I thought it would take us a lot longer to be as popular as we are now."

Do people still see you as an outpatient? "Yeah, probably, but less than they used to."

Do you still feel like one? "No. Much, much less than I used to."

Paul Rambali •

EBET ROBERTS / GETTY

The Talking Heads "Afro-funk Orchestra" with, among others, Busta Jones (second left) and Adrian Belew (second right)



Brave intentions and haunting textures

NME OCT 25 Byrne and Eno enlist extra hands for a rewarding trip into ambient African funk.

Talking Heads

Remain In Light SIRE

The desire to (re)discover the African continent has been burning deep in the bowels of curious imagination ever since the *New York Herald* packed Mr Stanley off in search of Livingstone with nothing more to sustain him than a packet of cheese sandwiches and a compass.

The white man's burden? Could be, but even those Caucasian settlers who missed Rorke's Drift have remained fascinated by the spell of the place. Colonisers, politicians, anthropologists, missionaries and now musicians flock to Africa in an effort to test its pulse, many of them ending up defeated by the process; one doesn't like to sound churlish, but most of these cultural attachés were about as good for Africa as Cecil Rhodes.

In recent times the Back To Africa movement has raised its head from a gamut of different positions, in Rasta's spiritual journey to roots and now in the lighter-tinted efforts of folk like Brian Eno, David Byrne and their collaborations for *My Life in The Bush Of Ghosts*, as well as this new Talking Heads album - *Remain In Light*.

A memorandum from Byrne intended for the reviewing fraternity (I think) makes it clear that: "This record is the product of the studio and interest in African rhythms and sensibilities." Byrne goes on to explain that the album was prepared according to an improvisational framework, eschewing the practice of jamming and soloing in order to develop "skills and attitudes... an understanding of African musical concepts, of interlocking and interdependent parts and rhythms." The memorandum finishes by recommending a select bibliography of African-related texts, themselves concomitant with the gist of *NME's* recent interview with Brian Eno. I was unable to secure these volumes over the weekend.

Initial familiarity with the record has disappointed those people who locked onto *Fear Of Music* so readily; the new attitude seems to deliberately play down Talking Heads' evolving tension in favour of a broader, enigmatic and ambient funk - its hard core extracted over a selection of chants and barely modulated moods that have been par for Eno's course at least since the days of *Here Come The Warm Jets* - and can readily be pinpointed by anyone familiar with the work of Miles Davis, Ornette Coleman and George Clinton on the one hand or Can, Berlioz and Wendy Carlos on the other.

The implied *raison d'être* of the record - to strike a blow for highlife timbres - falters on the grounds that more than ever Byrne and Eno are cracking the whips while our old pals, the Talking Heads, blend into the background along with an invited cast of technical experts, Adrian Belew, José Rossy, Jon

Hassell. The subjugation of this personality is further proved by the band's recent live appearances where Bernie Worrell and Busta "Cherry" Jones (a long-time Eno associate) have been drafted in to supplement rations. Whither Jerry Harrison and Tina Weymouth in the current regime?

In fact a steadier appraisal of *Remain In Light* does uncover a host of hypnotic ideas, tentatively linked to Byrne's concept of guerilla freedom fighters and government men overcome by their environment. The old monosyllabic textures of *Fear Of Music* have been transplanted into a smoother setting, but even so the sounds of the former band are recognisable eventually, bubbling against the primary colours of percussion and electronic treatment.

The opening "Born Under Punches (The Heat Goes On)" takes the fade of "Life During Wartime" and "I Zimbra" as a beginning, with Byrne exiled from some Graham Greene entertainment, intoning in his customary intelligent insane way, "Take a look at these hands!" Meanwhile foreign bodies bleep and jump to the fore, approaching a strong funk that you last heard at length on *One Nation Under A Groove*.

Staying in the disco (with brains) is "Cross Eyed And Painless", a sublime synthesis of frothing rhythms (Fenders and drums), a cloying harmony from Eno and one of Byrne's engagingly tetchy monologues on the unwieldy nature of facts.

"The Great Curve", which closes Side One, grapples with a potentially lethal exposition of African sensuality, finding the world in a woman's hips, anthropomorphic motions, listening to the earth beat. It's heady stuff that induces a pleasant surrender until Adrian Belew chips in with the record's only two traditional solos, both of them having more in common with rock'n'roll than is good for the track - though there can be no argument about the effect of the side as a whole. Talking Heads' psychedelic hovering musicians kick up a hedonistic dust storm that enthralls and excites just as surely as it doesn't go far enough to induce the intended sense of abandonment.

Side Two is made up of five related episodes, all of them linked to the power of the elements. Byrne's western terrorist persona is found questioning his domestic and financial values in the light of the African experience. "Once In A Lifetime" puts him in deep water, rather like Eliot's peaceful but very dead Phoenician, while Eno and the cast

set up a Greek chorus of call and response, simulating the ocean blues and echoing snatches of "Take Me To The River".

"Houses In Motion" contrasts this simple permanence with the man on the move bereft of "style or grace... digging his own grave". Byrne chants/talks this lyric over a building tempo of clavinet, formula funk guitars and John Hassel's aethereal horn arrangement. Your own body will tell you how good that feels.

The spoken technique doesn't suit "Seen And Not Seen" so immediately; the subject matter, concerning the ability to transform physical attributes by will power in order to take on another ideal appearance, may have some resonance for other cultures but its overtones of self-obsession and pride are too cumbersome here to convince.

The album's closing songs, "Listening Wind" and "The Overload", both of which make a substantial nod at Can's "Soon Over Babaluma", are perhaps the most intriguing moments on a side of music which strips off its early dance rhythms and re-places them into a beautifully visual and cinematic context.

"Listening Wind" may be the most complex song that Byrne has yet written. It certainly stands as the pivotal point on what is

"Listening Wind" is the pivotal point on what is undoubtedly a transitional record

undoubtedly a transitional record. The protagonist, a noble savage type who communes with the breeze, is fired with an instinctive desire to rid his locale (could be anywhere from Kinshasa to Phnom Penh) of the Yankee imperialists. The tone is strangely optimistic and sad at the same time,

implying the death of those qualities which will eventually persuade the Third World nations to overthrow their oppressors (the strange rumblings in "The Overload" are not just an uprising in spirit).

Without wishing to burden *Remain In Light* with any further critical lumber, it is obvious that the Talking Heads, whatever they are now, have attempted something enterprising and fresh - the signposts are clear enough to direct them into new spaces. Given time to lower preconceptions and heighten senses, I found myself overtaken by an album of brave intentions and haunting textures.

Safari, so good. *Max Bell*



1980

OCTOBER–DECEMBER

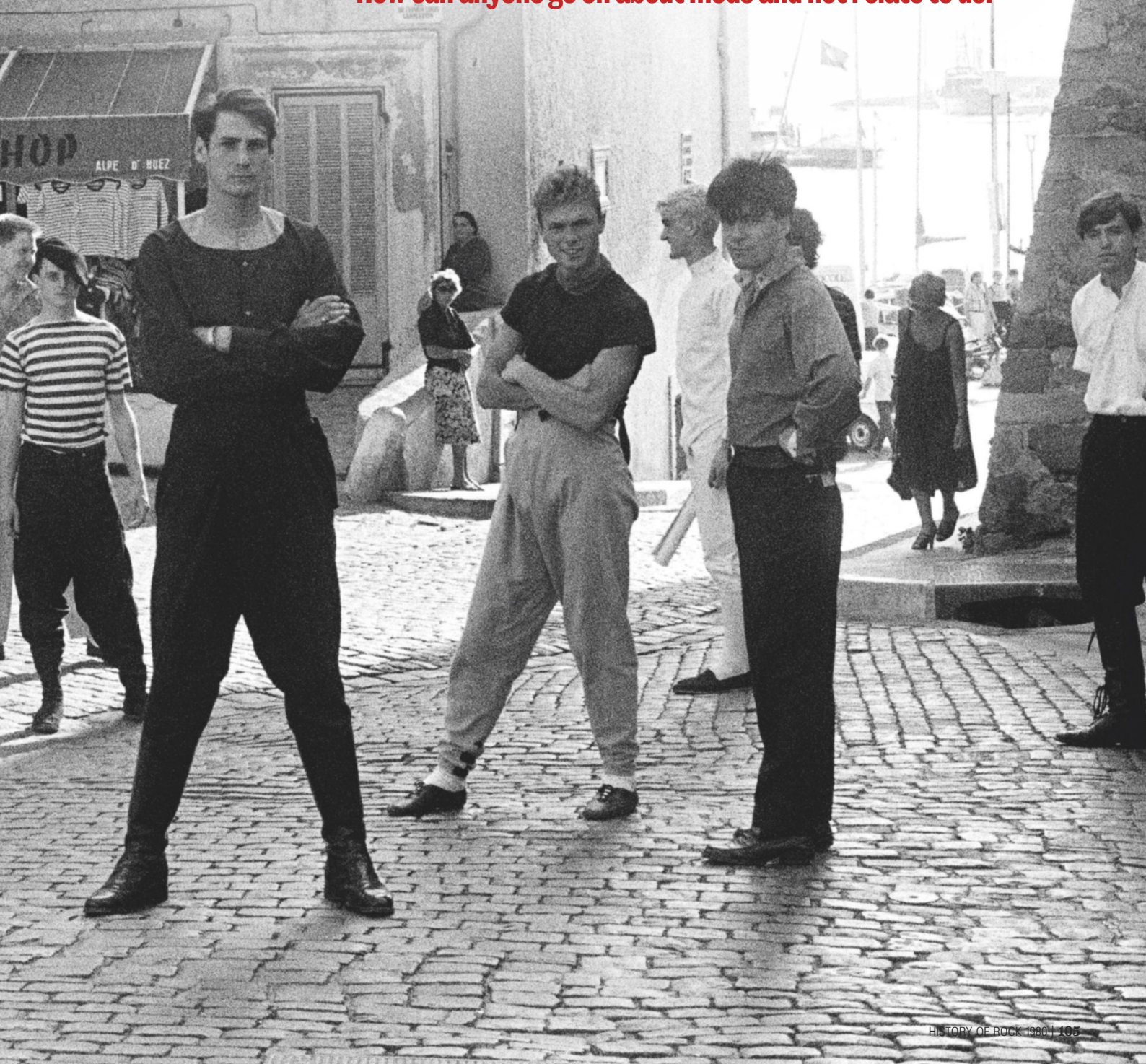


July 1980: Spandau Ballet and entourage in St Tropez for a two-week residency at the Papagayo club—(l-r) Steve Norman, Martin Kemp, Tony Hadley, Gary Kemp and John Keeble

GETTY

“You wake up with style”

From a vibrant London club scene come **SPANDAU BALLET**. The last element in a confluence of nightlife, soul music and tartan, the group are loathed for privileging style over substance. Songwriter **GARY KEMP** is foxed. “How can anyone go on about mods and not relate to us?”



— NME NOVEMBER 29 —

TOM WOLFE WOULD know what to make of it. The renowned contemporary historian who is also something of a dandy in his own right would know exactly where to place Spandau Ballet and all their friends, followers and fanciers.

What would he call it when a gang of workaday teenagers reject the uniforms of their class and gather at night in London clubs in all their outrageous finery to celebrate fashion without limit and style without manifesto? The Nocturnal Underground? Irreverent Chic? The Multi-Coloured Diamanté-Flecked Supercharged Dandies?

There are no more than a few hundred of them, if that. They recover by day and live by night. Splintered off from the London soul scene in the mid-'70s, propelled by the artificial energy behind almost every British youth cult since the early '60s, they have discarded and moved on from as many clubs as they have guises: Chaguarama's (which later became the Roxy), Billy's, Blitz, Hell, the St Moritz...

Throughout it all, style was the password, the premise and the promise. If you had it, you were everywhere; if you didn't, you were nowhere. By the time magazines like *Harper's* & *Queen* had discovered the Blitz Kids, the real kids were already somewhere else, ever more extravagant, decadent, surreal, bizarre and fantastic in their pursuit of style. If the clothes are too loud, they declared, then you're too old.

STEVE DAGGER IS 23. His father works in Soho's Berwick Street market, and Steve can bark and barter with the best of them; it's a facility that he claims came in handy when it came to negotiating a deal as manager of his friends Spandau Ballet, the figureheads of the new dandyism.

Steve wears a mid-length leather coat, white ruffled shirt, black velvet breeches tucked into white knee-length socks and black pumps. His hair is immaculately cut and swept elegantly across his forehead. He waves the latest of several cans of Pils around him in amazement at the supremely kitsch decor of the Kilt club. The moose-heads and muskets that line the walls of the imitation hunting lodge discotheque entirely suit the look he is sporting of an Edwardian fop.

His accent is unexpected: working-class London broader than the Holloway Road. "I can't believe this place!" he exclaims. "Normally it's full of Arabs on their way to Regine's, but Sullivan has done it again! All this tartan you see here tonight has been brewing for the past few weeks, and he's pulled it all together. It fits this place perfectly! It's a knack, a gift, he has. Look at it... great!"

Chris Sullivan, a young Welshman who came to London after he left school, is on the door upstairs, greeting his friends in his ebullient Welsh manner, relieving the groups of people who steadily trickle in of their £2 a head. He has rented the Kilt club on an otherwise slack night to stage the main event on the Spandau social calendar—a party. Dress is inevitably fancy and tonight tartan is optional. Sullivan is wearing a baggy blue suit with a large, muted red check and a geometric kipper tie. Through the door comes a flow of tartan, ruffles, brooches, kilts and not a few more outlandish specimens of vanguard couture.

Sullivan knows them all. He used to run the St Moritz with Perry Haines of *i-D*, the fashion fanzine that Terry Jones, former art director of *Vogue* and *Donna* and designer of the first Public Image album sleeve, started in order to plug high fashion into street fashion. Word has it that Chris Sullivan could stand in any club doorway in London and pretty soon a couple of hundred people would be clamouring to get in.

Downstairs in the Kilt, the DJ is having trouble finding his feet. A few motley couples are shuffling theirs to records by Marlene Dietrich and Frank Sinatra. Robert Elms decides to take over the console, spinning James Brown's "Night Train", the Fatback Band's "Wicky Wacky" and records by Hamilton Bohannon and Funkadelic. Suddenly the dancefloor is packed and throbbing.

For every art or fashion student down here tonight, there are at least five more hardcore dance enthusiasts. The soul scene in London, a small offshoot of which spawned Spandau Ballet, has always been about clothes, clubs, and dancing—and that doesn't mean tonic suits at Dingwalls when the Q-tips are playing. The people who followed Chris Sullivan from Billy's to Hell to the

St Moritz are not all that different from the people who drive around in Ford Escorts with their radios tuned to Robbie Vincent's Radio London soul show of a Saturday morning.

Making the scene and staying on it, whether your scene is clothes or funk or just social, is the primary design. Rock'n'roll hardly offers a more valid alternative. Ask any girl. They know.

When Steve Dagger was fixing Spandau's record deal, he used to test a record company's suss by asking if they knew what a soulboy was. Of course they knew what a soulboy was: a soul boy was a Dexys fan with a woolly hat and an overnight bag, wasn't it? Sure, Steve would reply, ordering another free drink as he recalled the 48-hour funking expeditions he and Spandau and their friends used to make to clubs in Bournemouth where there wasn't a woolly hat in sight...

The Fatback Band's "Wicky Wacky" has pulled everyone on to the floor: Rusty Egan is there; so is Kristos. Egan's hi-tech disco at the so-called "Bowie Nights" at Billy's first drew media attention to the scene, a media that immediately dubbed it a glam-rock revival and went away laughing.

Kristos is a 17-year-old veteran of the nocturnal underground who wears a beret and goatee, the image of Tony Hancock in *The Artist*, and has a band with the improbable and unforgettable name of Blue Rondo À La Turk! Robert Elms, having warmed things up, is out on the floor too, putting a five-degree spin on the theme of the night with a tartan-less kilt, the coolest item of dress on show.

Elms, a 22-year-old graduate of the London School Of Economics, has been writing about Spandau Ballet, the clubs, the scene and the scenemakers, for *The Face*, the magazine that looks set to capitalise on the success of Spandau Ballet with its emphasis on the thrill and flash of youth and style. It was Elms who thought up the name Spandau Ballet, long before anyone had even conceived of the group, during one of the gang's yearly excursions.

"We were in Berlin that year. We always go away somewhere or other. The year after that it was New York, then we went to St Tropez. Next year we're going to Ibiza; there's supposed to be this amazing club there, and the group are going to play it. Anyway, we were in Berlin, and we saw the prison and I just thought, 'What do they do for entertainment? Ballet? Spandau Ballet!'"

Spandau Ballet sprung themselves on their friends one Saturday morning at a rehearsal studio near where they all live in Islington about this time last year. They told everybody it was a party, drinks were free, and everybody came. To date they have played fewer than a dozen gigs, or rather parties, one at Blitz, two at the Scala cinema, one on the HMS Belfast, a few at a club in St Tropez, and recently one at the Botanical Gardens in Birmingham.

That these scattered appearances, combined with a few reports in the *Evening Standard*, a few more in the fashion glossies, and a half-hour London Weekend Television documentary about the scene, have won Spandau a lucrative record deal is one of the biggest snubs the long-suffering rock fan with his cherished notions of musical validity and paying one's dues has had since the Sex Pistols sent the whole thing spinning some three years back.

Somehow, Spandau Ballet have managed to antagonise people who have only ever heard their name or seen a photograph. These people imagine that a group who have gone as far as they have apparently just on the strength of their clothes and their photos, a group who look so downright pretentious, can't possibly have any musical worth—as if musical worth counted for anything other than a pension.

Spandau Ballet didn't go begging at the door of the rock press; they didn't play the Marquee week in, week out; and because of that, the jealous, conservative rock establishment is deeply suspicious. It hasn't won our endorsement, they say, so it must be a hype. But if Malcolm McLaren was pulling the strings, they'd all be applauding!

BUT THERE IS no one pulling the strings behind Spandau Ballet, although there are a few hairdressers trying to jerk them off, as a colleague quaintly put it. Plenty of clothes designers are going to ride in on their coat-tails.

But Spandau Ballet themselves never even applied to go to art school! Aged between 18 and 20, most of them left school at 16 and went into the print trade. Gary Kemp, who writes their songs and plays guitar and synthesizer, stayed on but failed



his A-levels. None of them particularly likes rock music, which is why they didn't do any of the things a rock band is supposed to do. They're into dance music, parties and clothes, not especially in that order, and rock'n'roll in all its grey, earnest, high-handed importance hates them for it.

"People say clothes are superficial and decadent," explains Steve Dagger. "But what's more decadent than music? All you can do with music is consume it. You can make a statement with the clothes you wear. You can't express anything with the records you might buy, but you can express yourself with the clothes you choose... turn yourself into a piece of art, if you want to see it in those terms. In a way I suppose we challenge the Jimmy Pursey working-class stereotype – and the rock press love that working-class image."

"It fits with the badges they wear on their lapels," interrupts Gary Kemp. "It upsets them when they see someone coming along like us who just turns the tables on their ideas of what's valid and what isn't."

"Yeah," agrees Steve. "There are channels which one must go through, and if one doesn't... then watch out, But I'll tell you what really amazes me... good luck to Bow Wow Wow, but people don't consider that a hype at all, or they do, but they go along with it because Malcolm McLaren does hypes. He's OK. He's one of the establishment, but when someone comes along from completely outside, it challenges the way the world is set up for the rock press and the agents and the record companies and the publicists, and they go, 'Hang on, you can't do that...'

"I don't know how successful Vivienne Westwood's going to be now. She'll probably do alright because she's a 35-year-old fashion designer with press agents and shops in Kensington. But her approximation of the clothes is well out of date. That's Billy's. All that diamanté and gold that Bow Wow Wow wear was in at Billy's. She's taken that, copied it, and got it wrong. I know she came out with the tartan a few years ago, although more in a bondage style, and I'm not slaggin' what she did in the past, but what makes me laugh is how seriously people are prepared to take them."

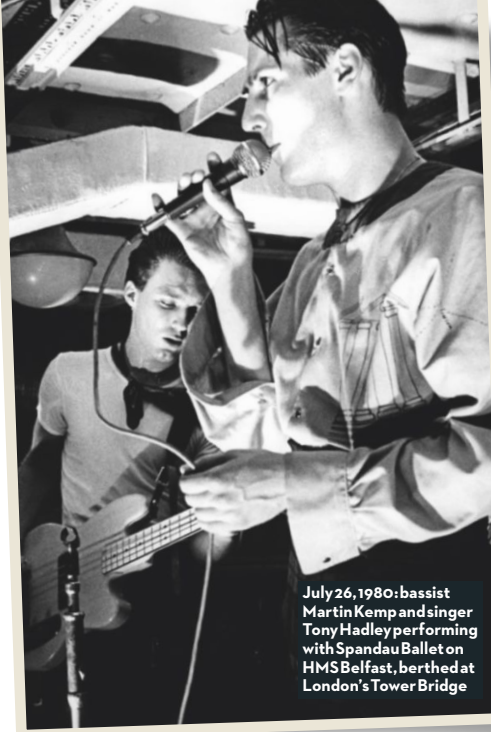
"Bow Wow Wow is completely conceived and contrived by an old shark," asserts Gary. "With what we're doing, there's no one over the age of 23 involved. Everybody doing it – running the clubs, playing the records, dressing up, making the music, making the clothes – none of them are over 23. The rock press don't mind some old sharklike McLaren manufacturing something to make some money out of the kids, and yet they slag us off, us, the actual 'kids'. I just don't understand it."

"The group was the last thing to come along – all the clubs and all that was already there. The group was simply what brought it to the fore. If it wasn't for the group, the whole scene would have gone exactly as it had done in the '70s and something else would have happened next year and the media would have ignored it because they would have had no reason to look at it. I know we're going to be what breaks it all open, and some people are going to get rich. But that happens a lot. In all the clubs there's been fashion photographers taking pictures ever since it started – six months later you see the clothes in the Paris fashion shows."

"Loads of looks... the diamanté look with the pill box hat, the toy soldier look at Billy's and all the padded shoulders. Loads of them. Everything we've ever started in those clubs has been in the fashion magazines six months later. I didn't think the Edwardian look would go into the shops, and yet I walked into Stanley Adams in Regent Street the other day and there it was, after we'd all finished wearing the little wing collars..."

"I think it's very flattering really, and it's what London's always been about. How anyone can go on nostalgically about mods and yet can't relate to what we're about..."

Gary shakes his head slowly in disbelief. Martin Kemp, his younger brother, who plays



July 26, 1980: bassist Martin Kemp and singer Tony Hadley performing with Spandau Ballet on HMS Belfast, berthed at London's Tower Bridge

"You take the best things from the past and you got it sussed"

allowed to look good, or you're supposed to look like a certain thing. Why be depressed? Being young is about having a good time, looking good, going out at night, getting drunk, dancing, sex, everything!"

Martin has the last word: "They always write about it and say poseurs, right? The people that dress well are the poseurs, but they're having a brilliant time, they're having a party time, they don't mind getting down to it. They don't stand up at the bar, passing comment, they're too busy passing out! Those people who say poseurs are just voyeurs!"

OBVIOUSLY NO ONE here feels obliged to be the spark that starts the revolution, but then music has already reassured us that it won't change the world, and the least it could do at this point is not make it any greyer.

Spandau Ballet's music is white disco. Gary Kemp's favourite records are things like "One Love" by Celi Bee and "Pressure Sensitive" by Ronnie Laws. Their first album was produced by Richard Burgess, the drummer with the English jazz-funk group Landscape. If much of their music sounds at this point like the sort of thing Giorgio Moroder leaves on the shelf, it's actually better than you'd expect of a group with so much outright front.

At the moment, I can only echo Lenny Bruce: I like the clothes and the attitude. Spandau Ballet are a great soundtrack for the clothes. They won't be the first group to sell as many clothes as records. And when I asked a girl who'd been to all their parties how the one in Birmingham compared, her reply put the scene in focus: "It's very different tonight," she said. "People are actually watching them. Usually they're too busy watching each other!"

Like Roxy Music before them, Spandau Ballet have come out of nowhere, fast. Right now, they're going somewhere even faster. What's more, they could seize the imagination of a lot of young kids who aren't all that interested in what the *NME* puts on its cover each week, because they're brash, loud, young and fun.

Clothes alone are very important. Without them we'd have nothing to take off. *Paul Rambali* •

TALKING THREADS
If the clothes are too loud, then you're too old

“The only honest person from the older bands”

— MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 11 —

That's PAUL WELLER's evaluation of PETE TOWNSHEND, who meets the Jam frontman for an awkward summit. Later Weller explains his ethos for difficult times. “What is there for young people to get into? There's only music.”

BRINGING TOGETHER PAUL Weller and Peter Townshend doesn't really need that much explaining. When The Jam smashed their way into the charts and hearts of England, with their mohair suits and Rickenbackers, Weller always acknowledged, however unfashionable it might have been at the time, Townshend's early influences on both his guitar playing and his lifestyle, a fact borne out by the scooter and clothes the young Paul Weller proudly ran about in in his hometown of Working.

Simultaneously, Townshend noted that the 18-year-old Weller bore the same characteristics as he did when he was 18. In fact, Paul twice made the trip to Townshend's Twickenham home in the hope of meeting Pete, but was both times frustrated, though the two of them did start up a correspondence.

Finally, they met through the *MM* on Monday, September 29, at Townshend's Trinifold office in Wardour Street, just a few yards from the Marquee. Both seemed nervous, and after about an hour it became apparent that the similarities between the two ended at Rickenbackers and sharp pop singles. They began talking about the new Who album Townshend has just begun recording, but quickly digressed. Townshend had already told me that he had never seen The Jam live. The chat proper starts there.

Pete Townshend: The thing that always put me off seeing The Jam live is that, if I showed up in the audience, it would look a bit patronising.

Paul Weller: I don't know, I went to see you lot at the Rainbow, last year or so.

PT: That must have been our first gig.

PW: Was it last year? You done a two-gigger...

Melody Maker: Did you like it?

PW: I don't know really. Like I was saying to someone else, it was the first time I'd seen you live, so I had nothing to really judge it by. I don't know.

PT: We haven't changed a hell of a lot. So many of the things we do on stage have just stuck as they've been for years. You got three albums now, haven't you?

PW: Four.

PT: Four, yeah. You see, the more albums you get under your belt, the more you have to play from those albums.

PW: (*quickly*) Well, you don't have to. There's no rules.

PT: You don't have to... I don't know.

PW: That's the only thing, 'cos you haven't really changed your set much, have you? Like start off with “Can't Explain”. »



September 29, 1980:
Paul Weller and Pete
Townshend outside the
Marquee on London's
Wardour Street, near
the latter's office

MM: (to Paul) Because you change yours around quite a bit, don't you?

PW: Yeah, well, after you've played a song 250 times, it tends to lose its power. You tend to lose the conviction you originally had.

PT: I think that's true to some extent, but it goes to another level in a way. It depends what you're on the stage for.

PW: Put it this way, do you really still enjoy playing "My Generation"?

PT: Yeah, I still enjoy that.

PW: (shrugging shoulders) Well, that's fair enough then, isn't it? That's what it comes down to really. I think that after you play a song so much you can tell when you start losing it. You're just going through the motions, so that's when you should drop it. It's kind of cheating the audience really.

PT: I don't know. You've written it.

PW: Yeah I know, but if you haven't played it with the same spirit, if you can't play it with the same spirit as three years ago, then I don't see the point in doing it. Otherwise it is just going through the motions.

PT: Well, there's a hell of a lot of going through the motions sometimes. Even when you've made a record or something, you don't always get it out on the road till maybe three or four months later. It takes three months to get an album anyway.

MM: I remember in an article you once said that it was imperative for The Clash to go to the States. The Jam haven't cracked it yet, though.

PT: Well, it took us a long time, didn't it?

MM: But is it important?

PW: But the thing is, when people say it's important to go to the States, there's only one reason and that's purely for the money, for financial reasons. I mean, otherwise, what separates America from France or Italy or anywhere else? It's only money.

PT: No, I don't think that's true. It is a big part of it because it means you can spend that more on recording if you want to.

PW: Yeah, but you're talking financial.

PT: I think I'd go over there and play for nothing. I think I'd go almost anywhere and play for nothing, just as long as we sold records and we got some loot out of selling records. I think one of the reasons I like playing in the States is because it's a completely different audience than that you get at home. But they speak your language. It really helps them to keep their feet on the ground, if

you like, by listening to what we do. I think without British rock, American rock music would be ridiculous and you'd be surprised...

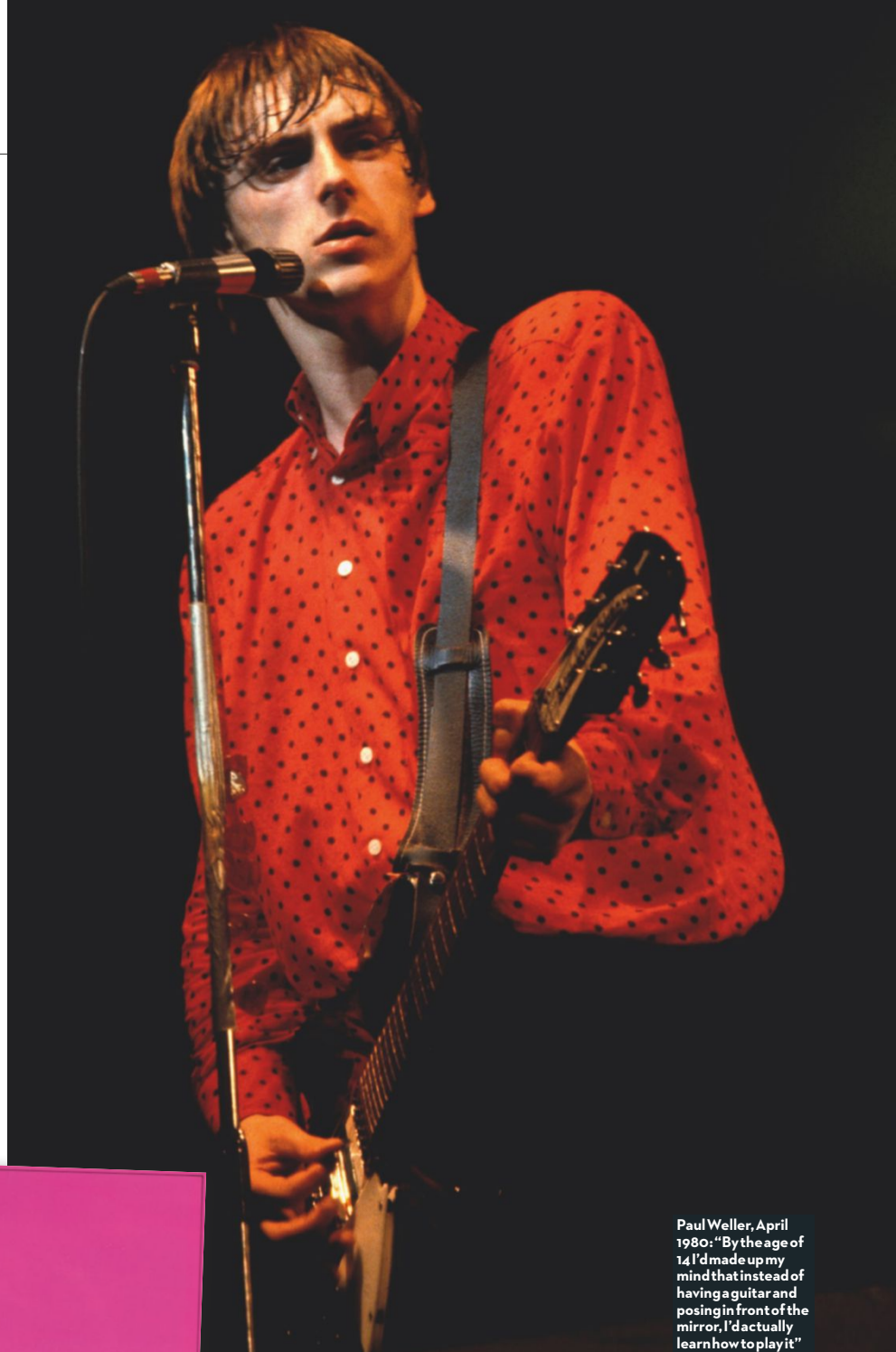
PW: (interrupting) I think it is already. I don't think their feet are on the ground. I think the American dream is still running rife through the country. There are only sort of small pockets of people who really want to hear something different. I mean, all the crap on the radio.

PT: Well, that's one of the problems. They've still got very heavily formatted radio.

PW: You see my point is that the standard thing is, once you've cracked Britain you naturally go and crack the States. But why is that? The only reason behind that is just finance. Because why don't you, after you've cracked Britain, go and crack Red China? Or anywhere. You only go there because it's the biggest market and after that you go to Japan because that's the second biggest, and so on.

PT: We went to France first because it was the nearest (laughs).

PW: No, but you do see my point, though? Why, out of all the countries in the world...



Paul Weller, April 1980: "By the age of 14 I'd made up my mind that instead of having a guitar and posing in front of the mirror, I'd actually learn how to play it"

PT: Because they speak English.

PW: No, I don't agree with that.

PT: No. I think The Jam are really, really important in the role they're playing and I really think that it's so good that Paul's so solid about it. I think the thing is that, if you've got something you passionately believe in, then you've got to stick to it. Like the image that your band has got and the image of The Who in the early days are very similar. Obviously, after psychedelia, but even to that extent it's dangerous because it represents different things to different people.

PW: That's debatable really, whether they do speak English. But I just think it's down to finance. Once you've broken the States, you're financially OK.

PT: To a better extent, yeah. I think the thing is that a band like The Who, there's no question about it, we make it even on my solo album, which is probably the closest I've got to doing something straight from the gut. But even then I've got to admit that at the back of my head all the time, it's the American record company paying for this album.

MM: I know Paul sees The Jam as an alternative to the American big bands, but do you see The Who as that?

PT: No. I think The Jam are really, really important in the role they're playing and I really think that it's so good that Paul's so solid about it. I think the thing is that, if you've got something you passionately believe in, then you've got to stick to it. Like the image that your band has got and the image of The Who in the early days are very similar. Obviously, after psychedelia, but even to that extent it's dangerous because it represents different things to different people.

Do you reckon when you write... I mean, the song that always gives me the willies when I listen to your stuff is "Mr Clean" because it's like, "Don't

come near me or contaminate me.” There’s something about that thinking about people that are in a position, like politicians, as though they’re another kind of human being.

PW: They’ve only got one aim and that is for total power, and they don’t really give a shit. You’d probably say that’s very naive...

PT: No, I’m not saying that it’s naive.

PW: Thatcher, she ain’t patriotic. She’s for power and power alone. It’s like the overall message in *1984* is the only reason why we do it is for power.

MM: When you said *The Who* and *The Jam* were similar, what kind of things were you talking about?

PT: I think we stood for similar things. Apart from the fact that superficially the band looks similar, that’s more to do with the particular look you go for. They seem more part of what British youth is about. They seem much closer to the normal... without being condescending, but I think that if you went out and looked about Britain you’d find a hell of a lot of people like Paul. And that’s amazing to me, that you’ve managed to hang on to just being you and sticking to that, and not being affected by the fact that there is probably a great urge by your fans to make you a little bit different, to put you over there and say, “Paul’s our figurehead and he can stand there”, and that’s what often happens to people who sell records. They treat you like a lavatory chain.

PW: I think that some of the things you say in interviews, because it’s really honest, they really get near the bone, and I don’t think a lot of people can handle it. I’m not saying that’s a bad thing; I think it’s good, because you’re the only person from the older bands who is still that honest. Why didn’t you play any of our stuff on your star special, then?

PT: I don’t know. I don’t play a lot of your albums. They’re not albums I sit and listen to. I would say that *The Jam*’s music is incredibly serious music.

PW: I wouldn’t say it’s po-faced, though. It’s not necessarily grim.

MM: Do you ever play any *Who* albums, Paul?

PW: Well, someone described me as a *Who* purist. I only play a lot of the early stuff.

PT: Yeah, but you do change.

MM: Did you have the same attitude as Paul has now, back in your early days?

PT: No, I don’t think so, because there’s always been a slightly more musical stance.

MM: Where do you see *The Jam* heading?

PT: Well, I don’t know if I dare say it, but I think that if they did a long stint in the northern cities of the States they’d be very, very important in consolidating a lot of the mixed-up audiences over there. It disappoints me to see you sneer so much at them. It’s good to keep aloof from it, but you shouldn’t let it needle you.

MM: You got any advice for Pete?

PT: (laughs)

PW: Nah, that’s a bit pointless. I would say that if you lot are planning to continue, then change your set.

PT: Well, you’re a tougher nut than I ever was.

[The interview switches exclusively to Paul Weller from this point.]

MM: It seems from the conversations I’ve been having with these people who knew you, that you were always going to make a living from playing music.

PW: Well, that’s true. At least by the time I was 14 I’d made my mind up. I’d always been into music anyway, but I made my mind up that instead of having a guitar and posing in front of the mirror, I’d actually learn how to play it. Go and do it for myself, rather than the fantasy thing.

Where did your first guitar come from?

I think my old man brought it for Christmas or something. It was when I was 13 or so.

Did you pick it up easy?

I did after a while. Once I’d made my mind up that I was definitely going to learn it, I really stuck to that. It was obviously the sort of time that you start getting cut off from your friends and...

What, at 13?

I’m not talking about boozers, but I’m talking about how you stop playing over the park with your friends.

Were you buying records at that time?

No. Not at all. There was nothing that appealed to me. At the time it was all glam-rock stuff, wasn’t it? Gary Glitter, Slade...

What about nightlife, discos and that sort of thing?

Not really. I used to go to local Woking Football Club places. In the suedehead days, I used to go to them. I wasn’t really into the stuff there. It was just somewhere to go.

Were you into the suedehead movement?

Yeah, I got into that.

What was the appeal?

Just the clothes really. Great clothes at the time – Brutus shirts, Ben Sherman shirts... but it was never anything on a musical level. It was only years after I started listening to Motown and reggae and rocksteady that I really got into it. At the time I detested it. I think maybe a lot of people looked down on it, didn’t they? I’m not talking about the kids actually involved in it, but a lot of people looked down on it. Like black music itself was OK for kids but it wasn’t really “serious” music. I suppose I must have had a bit of that.

Kind of prevailing snobbery, wasn’t it?

Yeah, but it wasn’t really till 1975 that I really appreciated it.

Were you aware of class distinctions?

You know yourself the sort of class polarity in Woking, but you’re mixing with kids at school and when you’re young you don’t think of people in terms of race or class. So it was probably just going round friends’ houses and seeing how they live, but like I said, at the time class doesn’t enter into it.

A lot of people said that at school, English was your only good subject.

Yeah, I was pretty useless, but I was fairly good at English, which involves poetry and that. I wrote a poem for my CSE in English rather than do an essay. But I didn’t have any interests really. Like I said, I knew I was going to do this and when people talk about luck these days, I think the luck was in knowing at the time what I wanted to do. If there’s any luck involved at all.

“I don’t play a lot of *Jam* albums... It’s incredibly serious music”



Leaving aside school for a minute, how were you shaping up on the guitar?

It got frustrating at that time, ‘cos you never seemed to notice any improvements, but at the same time I still knew that was all I could do. It was what I wanted to do, but apart from that, that was all I thought I could do anyway. Not in a pessimistic sense, but in an optimistic way.

You first gig was with Steve Brookes. Whose idea was it for the uniforms?

I can’t remember now. Talking about »

1980

OCTOBER–DECEMBER



April 7/8, 1980:
following a fourth
US tour in March,
The Jam play two
shows at the
Rainbow Theatre,
North London

a long time ago, really. That was the first time we played in public and it was after that we started getting the band together.

Yeah, the details are well enough known, but what material were you playing and why?

Sort of blues and rock'n'roll, the obvious stuff that most people start out to play. It's only got three chords and it's so simple you can endlessly improvise on it and you don't have to be that technically good. But then Steve and I started writing together.

Was writing songs difficult?

Not really. It was something that came about. It happened quite naturally really.

Any good ones?

Not really, no. I suppose they were good from the point of a 14-year-old writing them.

What were you singing about?

Mostly sort of lovey-dovey lyrics. We never concentrated on the lyrics at all.

You must have felt proud of them, though...

What, of writing? (*Shrug of shoulders*) I suppose so, but it still felt quite natural to do it, and me and [school friend Dave] Waller used to write stuff 'cos even at that time he was writing poetry and about more political issues. That was when we were about 15 or so. I've got an exercise book at home somewhere with all his lyrics in it. They were sort of blues lyrics like "*We've got to work all day and break our backs*". Stuff like that. I suppose considering how old we were then, they were quite sort of adventurous.

Did you go through a rebellious period?

Quite a bit.

What was it directed against? School?

Mostly, because that was the obvious enemy. Young kids will rebel against anything, but yeah, we went out of our way to do it.

Were you doing drugs then?

Yeah, at the time we did – dope, speed and acid and whatever. But by the time I was 16 I'd given them up anyway. I don't see there's any answers in drugs at all, actually. I think I'm lucky in the sense that I discovered that at an early age and I don't regret going through all the stuff, because I think

“We did dope,
speed, acid...
but by the age
of 16 I'd given
them up”

lots of kids do. But I'm glad I went through it and came out on the positive side, seeing that there aren't any answers in drugs at all.

What kind of answers were you looking for at 14?

I don't know what you're looking for. You're looking for something, but you're not sure what it is really. It's just that maybe you think you're going to see the light by taking something. But any answers that do come from drugs are artificial anyway, and when you see people really fucked up it just confirms that.

Your family seems to have been incredibly helpful in your musical ambitions.

Well, that's another aspect of the sort of luck we've had. Most parents would maybe discourage their kids from that or try and instil into them to get a job or trade. But I was lucky in that I was encouraged to do what I wanted to do.

When I spoke to your dad, he mentioned that at the early stages of the band Bruce and Rick might have been a little wary of him as a manager of his own son's band.

I think there were some reservations in some quarters. Bruce had a fairly good job, being a printer with an apprenticeship, so I suppose to give that up, to his mum and dad it must have been quite something. So naturally, they were a bit wary of it. I was lucky in a sense that I didn't come from that sort of background. It was never like “get a trade”, because my old man's not like that. I mean, he's got a carefree attitude that I think rubbed off on me a bit. I wouldn't say he's totally irresponsible, but he's always been “If you've got it now use it, because tomorrow you might not”. I still hold that attitude a quite a bit. I don't think there's any other way, not for me anyway.

Looking back on those working men's club days, did you enjoy them?

I don't know really. Looking back I did, but at the time I was still waiting for the time we could go out to our own gig and play our own environment. Mainly, it built a real strong bond between all of us, the fact that we played quite a few gigs, and although they were shitty places, it was still an experience. I think that sort of bond has come in handy over the last few years in keeping us together, whereas if we'd sprung up from nowhere I think there were plenty of times when we could have split up through different pressures. So I'm glad of it in that way.

You did split for a week though, didn't you?

In the early days, yeah. We were always having arguments, but maybe that was just through age, being so young and that.

How much of an inspiration was hearing "My Generation" for the first time?

I'm not sure. It was just different to me, a different sound, and also by that time we were getting really bored with playing "Roll Over Beethoven" and all that for three years. I mean the originals are great, but you can't really expand on them.

How long was it before you reached your mod stage?

By '75. I quite enjoyed it really, because it made me feel separate and kind of individual. And it also gave me a direction, something to base myself on. I think at that time, more than ever since then, there was just nothing at all. There was nothing to be a part of. There's not much these days, but there was even less then. It gave you a sense of purpose, and that was the main thing for me. I think that fact that I was totally isolated and just the only person into it was even more encouraging. It was something I could base my life around totally.

Did you go back and buy '60s records?

Yeah, and started listening to them with a much more open mind than I ever had before, without that elitist thing we were talking about earlier.

What did you find in them that time round?

Just the feeling of the records, the actual soul in the music. The proper soul music, which is banded about these days and is just bullshit, because it's got nothing to do with it.

Soon after that you came across the Pistols. I know you were impressed, but how about Bruce and Rick?

I'm not sure really. We were all affected, but I didn't know to what extent on Bruce and Rick's behalf. I was totally affected and didn't want to know about anything else.

Being clothes-conscious, how did the fashion element strike you?

I thought it was great. The feeling transcended the actual fashion element for me anyway. It was just good to go into a club and see a band that you could actually enjoy and were the same age as you and not 10 years older. Groups were singing about something a lot more important than the junk in the charts. And after seeing the Pistols and The Clash at the 100 Club and places like that, it was obviously the only future that music had for young people. Apart from the discos, which will always be there.

Writing punk songs at that time, did it come naturally?

I don't really think I can turn around and say it really came naturally, because obviously I was influenced by them. I remember Joe Strummer saying things like bands should be writing about things more important than 'I walked down the shops today' or something, which did have quite an effect on me and the way I thought, because obviously he was right.

Were you obsessed with London before punk?

Not really, not to the same extent. It was just that Saturday mornings you'd meet people in Soho markets, punks and that, and you'd talk to them about anything. So it was just the whole unity feel of it. I was just very isolated being out in Woking, which as you know is a real sleepy town. It just seemed things were moving really fast and I wanted to be a part of it.

How about the suits and ties The Jam were sporting at the time. Where did that come from?

That just came from my mod obsessions.

How obsessed were you then?

Totally. I still am really. But what I'm always trying to say, which is why we really tried to play down the mod thing a year ago or so, is that you've got to be open-minded, and I listen to any

kind of music. I regard myself as a modernist or a stylist and I think I always will do. It's what I base my identity on.

Has success watered down your ideals?

I don't feel it has, but that's easy for me to say, isn't it? Put it this way: I don't feel that my ideals have been watered down.

We're talking more about your own personal ideals here, rather than the accepted set from '76.

Probably, yeah. I've still got the same sensibility that I had four years ago as far as I'm concerned, but maybe other people who know me can answer better than I can. But that's just the way I feel. If you ask me that question, I've got to say I don't feel any different. But whether that's true or not, I don't know. I can't tell you that.

Well, all the people I spoke to about you said that you hadn't changed.

Maybe that's a bad thing; maybe I'm underdeveloped! If it is true I'm glad; all I mean is that I wouldn't want to be unchanged in the reactionary sense.

You've always been quite cynical anyway. Is that a good thing?

I think it's good when you're starting off. Maybe it's a good thing to maintain, but I think too much cynicism can destroy a person, because you become so cynical you won't listen to anything. Your mind becomes totally closed to everything. I'm glad that I've lost a bit of cynicism really, but I also think you need some of it to make you do something—get off your arse and do it.

Did you feel guilty about signing to Polydor at a time when it was unfashionable for bands to sign to a major label?

Not really, because I thought it was the only way we could be ever heard everywhere. At the time we were offered a deal with Chiswick, who were an independent at the time. They obviously offered a lot smaller financial deal, but we just felt it wasn't even the finance actually, because we only signed to Polydor for a fairly small sum of money anyway. We signed to

Polydor for six grand, which ain't much. It's even less now, but we just wanted everyone to hear our records.

I thought it a real letdown you playing the Hammersmith Odeon at the time. It seemed to me to be the complete antithesis of the movement you yourself believed in so strongly.

It's hard for me to answer things like that, 'cos I don't remember well what my feelings were. I suppose it was, but then again I think the first time The Clash played the Rainbow set the standards for everything. I mean the feelings were in '76 to keep it in the clubs, which is stupid, obviously if it was going to get any bigger, it had to go further than clubs.

But when it goes further, it inevitably gets ruined.

It gets watered down. I don't necessarily think it's got to be ruined, but it did get watered down. »



VICTORIA HALL, HANLEY

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OK, cliché question: after the first album you became really well known. Was it hard to come to terms with?

I don't think there was that much to come to terms with, actually. I've never really thought of us being that successful or unsuccessful.

But even at those Hammersmith shows, the atmosphere was one of incredible warmth. The start of a Jam/audience relationship...

Yeah, it was. I think it still exists, actually. I think it was a cult thing at the time, probably a lot more than it is now, but I still think you get that warmth from that cult feeling, when you're all there for a purpose and I still get that at our gigs. I dread the day it disappears, because that's when you start worrying or thinking about jacking it in, because that makes it really worthwhile.

Your second album, ...*Modern World*, always seemed to me to be the perfect platform away from the punk thing.

From that original punk era? Yeah, that could be true. Well, that was quite a disillusioning time for me. Like "News Of The World" and stuff like that, just totally on the wrong track.

There's a lot of difference between *Modern World* and *All Mod Cons*.

That's because I isolated myself so much from everything completely.

Why?

I think by coming out of a real insular environment like Woking, and all my friends and family and living in the same house, and then moving out and living more or less on my own in London. And I never went back to Woking till about maybe a year, and I never mixed, I never spoke to other people at all—even within the band—and I think it really makes you lose the open-mindedness that maybe you had before.

Does writing still come easy to you?

Put it this way: I've always got loads of ideas about what I want to write about. Whether or not I can actually put them down in an articulate way, good enough for a song, or whether I can get a certain chord sequence to fit it, that's difficult. But as for ideas it's not, because there's so much going on and thankfully I still feel involved, just in living.

Let's talk about your lyrics...

I find it hard talking about lyrics. It's what it is and it's hard for me to explain lyrics sometimes, unless I can gauge someone's reaction on what they feel the lyrics are about. Sometimes people come up with their own explanations on what the lyric is about, which is better than I started out to do.

Well, the lyrics on the new stuff I've heard sound just as "serious" as before, but musically you seem to be trying to get away from the "Jam" sound of old.

Maybe that's just through ego or something, I'm not sure. But we don't want people to feel that we feel safe and we're just carrying on with the same formula. You can get a bit paranoid about that and spoil it or something. But it's true. "Going Underground", we all knew at the time it was our sound and that's why we all preferred the B-side, "Dreams Of Children", because for us it was totally different.

You didn't like *Setting Sons* too much either

No, the actual sound was just... it felt a bit slick. And the playing, just us as a band... I don't think we had the chance to really play those songs in properly. A song, after you've played it a few times live, just totally transforms it.

A lot of your writing concerns itself with class and divisions.

It can get overplayed till it becomes a cliché. Like living up to your role. But you still see so many signs of class, even today. On television especially.

Do you think money can change class, because you must have a fair amount yourself?

Nah! I don't think so. Yes, I've got money, but it hasn't changed me. I don't think it changes your sensibilities.

When we were talking earlier, you were saying about the need to recognise one's class, but then taking it a step further.

Personally, I'm aspiring to be classless, but there's no point in me, just one person, being classless, because one person on his own is just setting up another class, which brings more and more confusion into the whole thing. But I don't see why anyone should be tied down to just one thing.

Still, you said that you're a lot happier these days. Any reason for that?

No, none that I can give you. I just think you've got to remain a little optimistic. On *Setting Sons*, for instance, I think a lot of the lyrics are trying to face up to things, and I didn't see any kind of solutions at all. But this year I'm thinking you've got to be a bit optimistic, otherwise you go under and join the numbers.

That was one of the first things that struck me about the album, the bleak scenarios you were dealing with.

It is pretty bleak, really... but I think it's all true.

Was that how you were leading your life at the time?

It's hard to say because I change so quickly. I get in different frames of minds, but I still think a lot of the things written, especially on that LP, are in a real general sense and pretty realistic. But what I'm saying is that now I feel different. I still feel pretty hopeful, pretty optimistic. But next year I don't know. I just think about now.



Weller in Canada:
"I've got money,
but it hasn't
changed me"



In what sense do you feel optimistic?

I'm trying not to get too cynical. I'm trying not to give up and accept it, because what's the point? If you're all agreed that you've got nothing anyway, you might as well be hopeful about it, because something might turn up. But I mean, it's impossible in these days to think of anything in any long-term way. It's so unstable that you just don't know.

Do you think any of your songs go beyond that, though? Like "Tube Station" will probably stand forever – the sentiments behind it, I mean.

I'm not sure. It might be true of songs that I haven't written for the new album yet. I've got one new song, "Scrape Away", and that's looking at that real, bitter, twisted social consciousness that everyone seems to have these days. I'm trying to look beyond that, 'cos you've got to. It's either that or you give up.

Is that what's happening at present to Britain? We're all giving up?

I just think it's a general feeling. I mean, what is there for young people to get into? There's nothing. There's only music and there's nothing else. And there's no way you can think to yourself, "I'll hold out for two months, it's gonna get better."

A lot of people would say music is escapist anyway.

It is to a certain extent, but I also think music can transcend as well.

Is that what your songs try and do?

I'm not sure what I try and do when I write a song. Mainly I write because I think a lot about things quite deeply, so therefore it's a means for me to express it; without trying to sound too clichéd, that's what it is. But at the same time I try and write in a general sense so that other people... maybe it'll make them think as well, and to me it's as simple as that really. If I wasn't writing songs, then I'd try and write something else, like books or poetry or anything.

Do you think you underplay yourself?

No, because that goes back to people becoming too self-important. Them thinking what they're doing is *s-o-o* right, so important to other people, and I don't see that at all. I think that we've got a certain responsibility, so if you're going to acknowledge that responsibility at all, you might as well use it for the good. If you're influencing people, you might as well influence them for the better.

That's really getting away from the star trip...

Hopefully, yeah, 'cos I never asked for anyone to grab hold of my hair and scream and rip my buttons off. I'm not interested in any of that.

How far do you think The Jam evaluate things?

When I sit down and try to evaluate what I'm doing and what we're doing, it seems pretty futile. At times like that I can understand why some bands say they're just out for a good time, get people dancing and enjoying themselves. I like to think people enjoy us, but at the same time I still see it as something more important than that... because it's the most tangible thing, the most tangible movement to young people than anything else existing at the present time. So therefore it's got to transcend just having a good time. Certain records to me mean more than just dancing or enjoying it, 'cos it really does touch you, and music is more important than that sense. But only because it has got no competition.

Is that why you started "Riot Stories", to offer an alternative?

Yeah, but only because music needs more competition. Because there it is, (*throws arms open*) isolated, and there's nothing else remotely near it.



But if there was, if there were more diverse things happening, everything would be greatly improved. How many young novelists are there? How many young playwrights?

How much does your audience determine what you write?

Well, I think that's quite a great influence really, because I wouldn't want to get to the stage where you were chasing after different directions and getting esoteric like some bands, which is easily done. And leaving people behind – well, not leaving them behind, 'cos that's condescending – but getting caught up in yourself and losing sight of what you originally set out to do... Put it this way, if you're going to progress, it doesn't matter what direction you progress in, as long as you keep in sight what you originally set out to do.

When you set out, did you know what you wanted?

Not when I was 14 I didn't, no.

So what keeps your sanity together, Paul?

I'm not sure. I don't even think sanity enters into it, because who's sane any more? Are these sane times we're living in? So therefore you've got nothing to measure sanity by.

Well, if you ran around smashing guitars on brick walls and never wrote another song and...

Yeah maybe, but then again that's only your definition. It's really hard to say. There's nothing to measure it by, because we don't live in a real, straight, responsible, moral society – with not too much emphasis on the word moral. I'm not trying to get into that, but I'm just saying that there's nothing to measure it by. There's so much craziness, there's nothing to gauge yourself by. I don't think of myself as being sane or being insane; I just think of myself as... *being*. And I don't think that's just me.

I think that's the general state of most people. We've all got our own ideas of what's right and what's wrong, our own moral values, but because of the crap society we live in it's really hard to say what's right or what's wrong. But I guess really you've got to focus on something, haven't you? So to answer your original question, I think maybe you keep your sanity just by talking to other people, though that gets difficult at times. One more friend you can make is one less enemy, and that's also behind "Start!" as well. One more person who you're in tune with can only be better really.

Any thoughts on solo albums, films etc?

Thoughts that way, but not the two things you happened to mention. Definitely not a solo album, but I'd like to get a label. I wouldn't want to own a club, but I'd like to be involved in a club. I'd like to do a TV play, be able to write it. I don't think I could act. I think I'd be too self-conscious, but I'd like to be able to write it and maybe help direct it. I don't know past that. I don't think about where I would like to be or

see myself in 10 years' time or something.

Final question. You said to me once you were getting bored with the guitar. Does that still hold?

I've got loads of instruments. I collect instruments. I've got a bouzouki, numerous flutes. I'd like to be able to play loads of instruments, just for the simple fact that it's good to be versatile. You're not trapped by one instrument. Like I'm using a melodica on some of the tracks on the new stuff and it's a good exercise for me. It's like you saying to yourself that I'm only going to write things for the *MM*, it's pointless. You've got to expand. Even if you only write for yourself at home, it's expanding. It gives you a different outlook on things... *Paolo Hewitt* •

“On Setting
Sons, a lot of
the lyrics are
trying to face
up to things”

1980

OCTOBER–DECEMBER



John and Yoko: dealing "purely and simply with their own highly finite universe"

ALBUMS

John Lennon & Yoko Ono *Double Fantasy* GEFHEN

In the cocoon, something stirs. John Lennon – one of the people who used to be in The Beatles, a group reckoned to be hot socks when I was a kid – and Yoko Ono break a five-year recording silence to announce that everything in their garden is wonderful, but wonderful. For people imprinted with the passions and preoccupations of the Beatle Years, the release of *Double Fantasy* is of necessity An Event, though maybe not a happy one. Everybody else: straight to the next review, please.

Lennon and Ono appear on the cover clamped in a

passionate embrace, resembling nothing so much as the Streisand/Kristofferson *Star Is Born* clinch. The album celebrates their mutual devotion to each other and their son Sean to the almost complete exclusion of all other concerns. Everything's peachy for the Lennons and nothing else matters, so everything's peachy QED. How wonderful, man. One is thrilled to hear of so much happiness.

Criticism along orthodox social-realist lines may seem boorish

and pompous: after all, anyone can make a record about anything they wish, and if the Ono-Lennons find their own domestic and parental bliss to be the only worthwhile subject for their music, then they are quite within their rights to finance their next decade with an album that deals purely and simply with their own highly finite universe. The trouble with music that is self-centred to the point of utter solipsism is that one cannot criticise the art without also criticising the life on which the art is based.

So the Lennons choose their roles and play them to the hilt.

John croons his love for his son on "Beautiful Boy", apologises to Yoko for ever having been horrid to her, expresses his devotion as debasement. He is besotted and abject (the old bugger still has a wonderful voice, by the way).

On "Watching The Wheels", he explains that he's perfectly happy not giving a shit about either the rock business or the world events that inspired him to produce *Some Time In New York City* and that astounding series of late-and post-Beatle solo singles of the early '70s, but by coming out of retirement and releasing an album, he's "playing the game" whether he admits it or not.

Anyway, let's waste no more time on John Lennon. On this showing he can get back to the kitchen and mind the kid and the cows, because all the most interesting material on *Double Fantasy* is Yoko's.

She answers hubby's "Beautiful Boy" with her own "Beautiful Boys", a tripartite essay that devotes its first verse to young Sean, its second to Big John and its third to all the male egos that run the world at the expense of their own and everybody

DAVID MCGOUGH / GETTY

— ALBUMS —
REVIEW
— 1980 —

Fantasies for the over-40s

JOHN LENNON & YOKO
ONO

self-centred to the point
utter solipsism is that a



else's humanity. Her verse about Lennon demonstrates that her love and admiration for her husband are considerably more clear-eyed than his for her: he writes about her as an omnipotent, benevolent life-giving Natural Force; she writes about him as a gifted human who is still a child (he says the same thing of himself in another song).

Yoko is Mom to both of them: she jestingly depicts herself in just this all-powerful Supermom role in the jokey, Nilsson-esque "I'm Your Angel".

Yoko Ono's entry into rock in the early '70s was heavily attacked by most mainstream rockcrits of the time because even by the eclectic standards of post-hippy art rock her music sounded totally unrocky. In the '80s - post-Slits, etc - her music sounds vastly more modern and considerably more interesting than Lennon's. In particular, "Kiss Kiss Kiss", "Give Me Something" and the freezingly eerie "Every Man Has A Woman Who Loves Him" - an ode to Romantic Destiny, would you believe? - are easily the album's best moments.

Still, Yoko's vision is by no means unflawed. To say the least, anyone who can seriously serve up a song entitled "Hard Times Are Over" is being a trifle subjective. For those of us still to make our first million, hard times are only just beginning.

Double Fantasy is right: a fantasy made for two (with a little cot at the foot of the bed). It sounds like a great life, but unfortunately it makes a lousy record. Still, who said that rock stars - and Lennon is one of those for life whether he wants it or not - were under any obligation to provide record buyers with anything "useful"! Of course they're not, but people like Paul Weller do so whether there's an obligation or not.

That's why I look forward to Yoko Ono's solo album, why I wish that Lennon had kept his big happy trap shut until he has something to say that was even vaguely relevant to those of us not married to Yoko Ono, and why I'm pissed off because I haven't heard the Jam album yet.

Now bliss off. *Charles Shaar Murray, NME Nov 22*

SINGLES

Joy Division *She's Lost Control / Atmosphere*

FACTORY IS IMPORT

What more is there to say? Were he still alive today, I'm sure Ian Curtis would find the current Joy Division *Did No Wrong* syndrome as nauseating as the next man. Even the band's most committed devotees seem embarrassed by it. Nevertheless, the myth that surrounds the band just grows on and up.

This track you will already know, but not in its new, radically altered format. This readily available US import is rougher and far less rounded than the original *Unknown Pleasures* take of the same song, recently covered, of course, by Grace Jones. The new version is one of the loosest things the group ever recorded, springing and recoiling along Peter Hook's monstrous descending bass run and snare-drum sequence that shames Motown at their own game for the ferocity of its thump. The feel is almost live, with Curtis lapsing into a scat vocal over the fade.

On the flip, too, "Atmosphere" is finally given the wider availability it so richly deserves. Serene and haunting, it is JD at the most moving, with nods in the direction of both Phil Spector and Scott Walker. Essential stuff, previously only available in France on the very limited edition *Sordide Sentimental* single.

But what more is there to say? Love will....? This is



OMD: picking singles not a strong suit

SINGLES
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a magnificent record. *NME Oct 4*

Kate Bush *Army Dreamers* EMI

In which Kate turns her attention from the post-apocalypse blues to the more conventional warfare of yesteryear, although her sickening, cutesy-cute whining is hardly suited to the sombre subject matter. Not so amazing after all. *NME Oct 4*

Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark *Enola Gay* DINDISC

Orchestral Manoeuvres are emphatically not the single band they could be in as much as they never pick the right tracks for 45 release. "Enola Gay" possesses a glorious melody and the title conjures up visions of one of those Jam B-side rewrites of "Eleanor Rigby". Despite these considerable plusses, it seems destined to follow "Red Frame White Light" and "Messages" into chartless oblivion. *NME Oct 4*

Dead Kennedys *Kill The Poor*

CHERRY RED

Nice middle-class American kids form stereotype punk band, desecrate patriarchal family name to garner cheap but very extensive publicity and attack their own sheltered lifestyle in

anticipation of becoming rich enough to enjoy an even cosier existence. (*NME Nov 11*)



David Bowie *Fashion* RCA

David's gotta New Dance and, with Robert Fripperonic growling menacingly on steel-tooth guitar, it proves to be a continuation of the paranoiac diamond-hard funk explorations of "Fame". As with its predecessor, Bowie may well adopt an anti-disco attitude while at the same time acknowledging that he'll fill the disco dance floors rather than empty them. Similarly, the ambiguity of Bowie's lyric allows the listener to decide whether it's concerned with the manipulative world of sartorial elegance or the ever-increasing left-versus-right power struggle. Whichever way one conceives it, the song's overtly political. *NME Nov 11*



JOY DIVISION

1980

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ADRIAN BOOT / URBANIMAGE.TV

Mail fantasy: Kate Bush in a photo session for the cover of *Melody Maker*'s October 4, 1980 edition

"I worry about giving too much away"

The KATE BUSH phenomenon continues, as we join her on a promotional tour. The artist herself is humble: influenced by Pink Floyd, Roy Harper and British folk, and aware of her relationship with her audience. "I think the public understand how personal it is," she says.

— MM OCTOBER 4 —

CORRIDORS. BLAND ANTISEPTIC corridors leading nowhere and lasting forever. An occasional flight of stairs to negotiate; the odd babble of German chatter that passes without interest or acknowledgement. A dressing room bearing the name of Loudon Wainwright momentarily raises spirits.

A multicoloured sign in bizarre lettering that stinks of the '60s' psychedelia smacks you between the eyes, the legend just decipherable as *RockPop*, accompanied by a little arrow that suggests that you're getting warm.

More corridors, steps, signs and then the final triumphant indication of imminent victory. The Voice.

It shrieks high above the cacophony of silence, like a crazed cockerel on a berserk roller-coaster. Initially wild and formless, it quickly begins to bear shape and recognition as we approach it with increasing urgency.

"Whenshewuz... biew-tee-foool... shesy-yned the lett-tah... Mmmaaww-yooors Babooshkababooshkababooshkayaya-ah..."diddle-dee-dum bang crash... "Babooshka, Babooshka, Babooshka."

Suppressing lust, cameramen zoom in and out, caught up in the mania of the music. Official-looking geezers grip clip-boards that threaten to snap in two under the ferocity of the clasp, and assorted clusters of people hover in the background solicitously pretending not to be impressed or to notice, but still helpless to prevent jaws dropping open with neither dignity nor discretion. »



Kate looks stunning. She wears scarlet trousers that flair absurdly from the thighs down, but sink their teeth into her buttocks with obscene determination. The matching T-shirt is breathtakingly skimpy and looks like it's been painted on her.

She clutches a double bass, her body contorting around it in a transfixing demonstration of mime as "Babooshka"'s drama of love, suspicion, trial and ultimate faithlessness unfolds. The double bass is alternately the object of her lust and her fury; she wraps herself around it, she grinds against it, she beats the hell out of it, she wrings its neck, she claws it, she slithers down its neck, she blows in its ear.

Her face pouts and spits and leers and jeers and dreams and schemes and ravishes; and all the while her bottom jerks and thrusts from one end of the studio to the other. It's the most erotic thing I ever saw.

A weird month for Kate... a crucial one for EMI. The new album, *Never For Ever*, took six months to record. It was completed three months ago, but EMI decided to hold back on its issue because of other major issues around the same time. The one genuine new superstar in the team, it was essential this one made a huge splash. A series of personal appearances, various interviews, radio station spots, and thorough advertising have been arranged; and flying to Munich to mime two numbers for *RockPop* on German television is merely one more stone in a wide-reaching wall.

Kate embraces it all with a smile and a giggle. I refuse to believe that anyone enjoys being the object of mass marketing, but she at least acknowledges its necessity, maintains firm control over its operation, and accepts its demands with professionalism and good grace.

Various German EMI representatives are in Munich to welcome her and she greets them all with a big hug like they're favourite cousins, a brief flurry of reminiscences over the last time Kate was in Munich during her concert tour.

"Oh hello, nice to see you," she hails the *Melody Maker* expansively, as the first rehearsal concludes in a welter of satisfied nods from technicians. A bit of chit-chat, a lot of nervous giggling from all parties, and then: "Oh God, I've got to go and have a shower. I feel all sort of... you know." Somehow its hard not to be captivated.

And yet there are extraordinary paradoxes about her. There can be no greater dichotomy between a public image and the art inside it. She's forever portrayed as a nice middle-class kid who can't believe her own luck. A renegade from St Trinian's, likeably naive, tolerably favoured and just a shade flippant, gushing "amazin'" and "incredible" from poll award to poll award.

Glamorous but not intimidating, the media instantly moulding her into a wrapping of sweetness, purity and light. Earmarked for a path of pop records and TV spots into the elite of artists who appear on each other's series; and ultimately becoming the family entertainer destined to end up in pantomimes and seaside cabaret.

I could never equate the image with the music. The most indifferent glimpse beyond the image of "Wuthering Heights" reveals a rampantly independent spirit. I mean, no sweet, flippant family entertainer ever wrote a song as sexually explicit as "Feel It". No surrogate Olivia Newton-John ever tackled a subject like incest ("The Kick Inside"). No cosseted girl-next-door would ever dare conduct a fantasy around a saxophone ("Saxophone Song").

The lights suddenly pick out Kate on the other side of the studio, standing perfectly still, the bass standing phallically before her, her eyes wide and manic, staring at the camera.

The intro to "Babooshka", the bottom protrudes, and she's away, jumping and thrusting, and utterly living the part. A bunch of photographers have been allowed in to the studio, and push and jostle each other for the best views. As the song ends, several kids chase her for an autograph, but she's already gone, flitting away on her broomstick, or does she merely turn into a pumpkin?

Kate re-emerges, totally unrecognised, sitting alone at the

side, observing, waiting for her next party-piece. She's dressed as a haggard washer-woman in dowdy clothes and headscarf.

It's a routine she's never tried before and she's been nervous about it all day. The song is "Army Dreamers", a track from *Never For Ever* and the next single, a simple but melancholy little song in which Kate appears as a weary mother reflecting on the death of her son, a soldier killed on duty.

"Should have been a rock star... But he didn't have the money for a guitar..." Three soldiers dressed in British army camouflage uniforms appear, one carrying a mandolin, one a Tommy gun, another in the role of a sergeant barking orders.

"Should have been a politician... But he never had a proper education..." Kate shrivels and cringes behind the soldiers, her face crumpled and distraught. The soldiers march and prowl and stand at attention.

"Should have been a father... But he didn't even make it to his twenties..." The song is all the more striking for the pretty tune, and the genteel structure, the innocence of the lyric. It ends with the three soldiers cowering in a heap, Kate spreadeagled protectively above them. Purely as a piece of theatre it's brilliant. *RockPop* has never seen anything like it.

Kate has many relatives in Ireland, and she's fearful of the Irish reaction to "Army Dreamers". Ireland isn't mentioned in the song, and she inserted a reference to BFPO to divert attention; but let's face it, the song's a contemporary one with its mention of rock'n'roll and there ain't too many other places a young soldier is gonna get killed in action right now.

I ask her about it. "It's the first song I've ever written in the studio," she says. "It's not specifically about Ireland, it's just putting the case of a mother in these circumstances, how incredibly sad it is for her. How she feels she should have been able to prevent it. If she'd bought him a guitar when he asked for one.

"Have you heard Roy's new album?" she says suddenly. Er, Roy? Oh, Harper, of course. They appear on each other's albums. He gets a dedication on the sleeve of *Never For Ever*: "Special thanks to Roy Harper for holding on to the poet in his music".

No, Kate, I haven't heard the album. "You should." Adrian Boot took it, took the sleeve photograph. "Actually," says Kate sweetly, "I didn't like the sleeve." Adrian looks hurt. "The photograph was great, I just didn't like the sleeve," she reassures him.

A flood of chatter follows. Did I know Dave & Toni Arthur/What are the Dransfields doing now/Do I like the Bothy Band? "I've a very strong folk-music influence," she says. "First songs I ever sang were dirty sea shanties. I'm very proud of it, I can't think of a nicer influence.

Traditional music says a great deal about the country. English folk music is a lot different from Irish folk music, not only musically, but lyrically. I mean, that song "She Moves Thro' the Fair": it sums up the Irish spirit. It's incredible, so moving."

Certainly her fascination for traditional ballads is the key to her more lurid storylines. "The Kick Inside" was inspired by the richly colourful ballad "Lucy Wan", in which a brother murders his sister when she becomes pregnant by him (though there are numerous variations). Kate's version has the sister committing suicide.

"Babooshka" is similarly based on a song called "Sovay Sovay". I tell her I'll listen to Roy Harper's album if she'll listen to an album called *Carolanne* by Carol Pegg, which includes a similar embellishment on "Lucy Wan".

My favourite track on the album is "The Wedding List". "Oh, really?" she says bubbling, the little kid who's been given a puppy for Christmas.

"That was based on a film, a Jeanne Moreau film I once saw on the telly, when the bride's husband was killed and she sought revenge for those responsible." She spends the next 15 minutes relating the plot of the film, ending in a breathless flourish. "It was an amazing film. Can't remember what it was called, though."

Films and fiction, in fact, count for a prominent chunk of her inspiration.

"First songs I ever sang were dirty sea shanties"





Bush performing her sixth single, "Babooshka", on German TV's *RockPop*; (inset) follow-up single "Army Dreamers"

to have a certain amount of knowledge and conviction. It's a strange mixture, I know, but I rarely write purely personal songs from experience."

Exactly. "I have done it. On the other albums more than this one. But I often wonder how valid it is to write a song purely about oneself. I worry about being too indulgent, and there is the thing about giving too much away."

"It doesn't worry me giving it to the public, because I think the public understand how personal it is, but when you write a song for an album it's up for everyone to pull apart. 'Fullhouse' was probably quite autobiographical – talking about how hard I find it to cope with all the feelings I get, from paranoia, pressure, anger, that sort of thing."

"My feelings are in there, but they're probably disguised. I've really enjoyed artists who indulge in personal writing. People like Leonard Cohen. I admire him, but I just can't stand listening to him. At the end of the album you feel so depressed."

I tell her about Jackson Browne, whose wife committed suicide while he was recording *The Pretender*. She's agog.

"Well, I guess when you have something so extreme happen in your life you have to write about it. That's probably another reason why I tend to put my personal feelings into another situation: because you can come up with so much variance. I've never actually shot anyone, but in a song I can do it, and in some ways it's much more exciting, more symbolic."

But you really live out your roles and fantasies. Playing the mother in "Army Dreamers"... "Yeah, I seem to link on to mothers rather well. As I've grown up a bit I've become very aware of observing my own mother trying to observe me. It's fascinating. When I was a kid I never really thought about her, about how she ticks."

"But I can be more objective now and I find it fascinating about mothers, that there's something in there, a kind of maternal passion which is there all the time, even when they're talking about cheese sandwiches. Sometimes it can be very possessive, sometimes it's very real."

Kate doesn't know when she'll be touring again. She enjoyed her one tour, and it gave her a thrill to choke the critics who'd suggested she'd be a disaster on stage, that she couldn't sing live. But it takes six months out of a year to rehearse and prepare for a tour the way she wants to do it, and will also cost her enormous amounts of money to stage.

"Not that I mind losing money on a tour – there are so many benefits from it – as long as we don't go bankrupt. We do want to tour again, we will tour again, because there are so many things we still want to do on stage, but we'll have to think about it very carefully because it will stop me doing a lot of other things."

ON THE PLANE back to London the next day I ask her about Peter Gabriel. They did, after all, record together on "Games Without Frontiers", and I thought I'd detected a Gabriel influence on "Never For Ever". I ask about Peter Gabriel and she talks about Pink Floyd.

"That last album of his was fantastic, but I don't know if it was a direct influence on me. He may have opened up bits in me I hadn't thought of, but a more direct influence was *The Wall*. It got to the point when I heard it, I thought there's no point in writing songs any more because they'd said it all. You know, when something really gets you, it hits your creative centre and stops you creating... and after a couple of weeks I realised that he hadn't done everything, there was lots he hadn't done."

"And after that it became an inspiration. 'Breathing' was definitely inspired by the whole vibe I got from hearing that whole album, especially the third side. There's something about Floyd that's pretty atomic anyway."

We part at Heathrow, she to the next leg of the *Never For Ever* promotion. There's a day of interviews ahead; personal appearances at record shops in Glasgow, Manchester and London; various radio-station interviews and a visit to a dealers' party in Birmingham, where she will personally meet the EMI employees who'll be flogging her new album. They in turn cream themselves stupid and get their photographs taken with the great lady.

It's only rock'n'roll but you have to know how to sell it. *Colin Irwin* •

And whatever you feel about the histrionics and the wayward vocalising, you've got to concede that in a chart overflowing with grey music and tepid lyrics, the success of a colourful number like "Babooshka", for example, has to be healthy. She's reticent to agree...

"Well, it does always amaze me how songs get in the charts that are – I won't say rubbish, because they're not – but the sort of songs that so many people could write. I often find myself inspired by unusual, distorted, weird subjects, as opposed to things that are straightforward. It's a reflection of me, my liking for weirdness."

They don't come any weirder than "The Infant Kiss". This, she explains patiently, was based on a film, *The Innocents*, which had itself come out of the Henry James book, *The Turn Of The Screw*. A governess goes to stay with a man to look after his two children, who are possessed by the spirits of people who lived there before.

"Some people might think it's a song about... what's the word when older women fancy little boys?" Paedophilia? "Well, it's not actually that, and it would worry me if people mixed it up with that because that's exactly what worries her so much. I find that distortion very fascinating and quite sad. And frightening. The thought of someone old and evil being inside a young and pure shell, it's freaky."

Playing at the amateur psychiatrist, I contemplate whether she writes songs from fiction out of fear about exposing too much of herself.

"Whenever I base something on a book or a film I don't take a direct copy. I don't steal it. I'll put it through my personal experiences, and in some cases it becomes a very strange mixture of complete fiction and very, very personal fears within me."

"The Infant Kiss" had to be done on a very intimate basis, it had to be a woman singing about her own fear, because it makes her so much more vulnerable. If it had just been an observation, saying 'She's really frightened; she's worried', you could never really tell what she was feeling. So I put it as coming through myself."

"I'm not actually thinking of myself falling in love with the little boy, I was putting myself in her place. Feeling what I do for children – I love children – and then suddenly seeing something in their eyes you don't want to see."

"It's like when a tiny kid turns round and says to you, 'You're a bastard,' or 'Fuck off': it's instinctive to feel repulsed by it, turn that experience into a different situation. Otherwise I'd be writing and singing about situations I've never experienced, and in order to be convincing you have

“Not just the funny-ha-ha bit”

It's a less zany **MADNESS** to be found on tour in Europe. High jinks are to be had, but their new album reveals their “actual feelings”. Meanwhile the band muse on drugs (“you become a semi-addict...”), skinheads and fame. “It’s depressing to be funny when you don’t feel funny,” says Suggsy.

— MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 25 —

OUR TAXI DRIVER picks up Tom Sheehan and myself from Rome airport, courteously packs our bags, and then guns off like a homicidal maniac on a half-hour drive that would’ve left the most sturdy constitution retching with nausea and fear by the end of it.

The first inkling of this man’s sheer craziness came on the motorway into Rome. He recklessly stomped his foot on the accelerator and literally tried to pass through the car in front at 90 miles an hour, rather than going round the damn thing. I laughed out loud (always do when I’m scared witless).

Next thing I knew, we’d shot into the city, were heading full-on for a stationary car that had pulled across the road and was waiting to turn. He must stop for this, I thought.

He didn’t. As the car edged forward, he yanked the car to the right, rammed through the tiniest of spaces, straightening out again, bombing viciously for the traffic lights. We circled a roundabout at breakneck speed and finally screeched to a halt outside the Le Claridge Hotel.

This hot-blooded, passionate, recklessly crazed man turned off his engine, and in a daze Tom and I clambered out clutching ourselves, not really understanding fully what had happened. The journey had gone by so fast, so wildly, that after paying the man a wallet-busting 30,000 lire (15 quid), I wandered out across the street towards the hotel, dazed and confused.

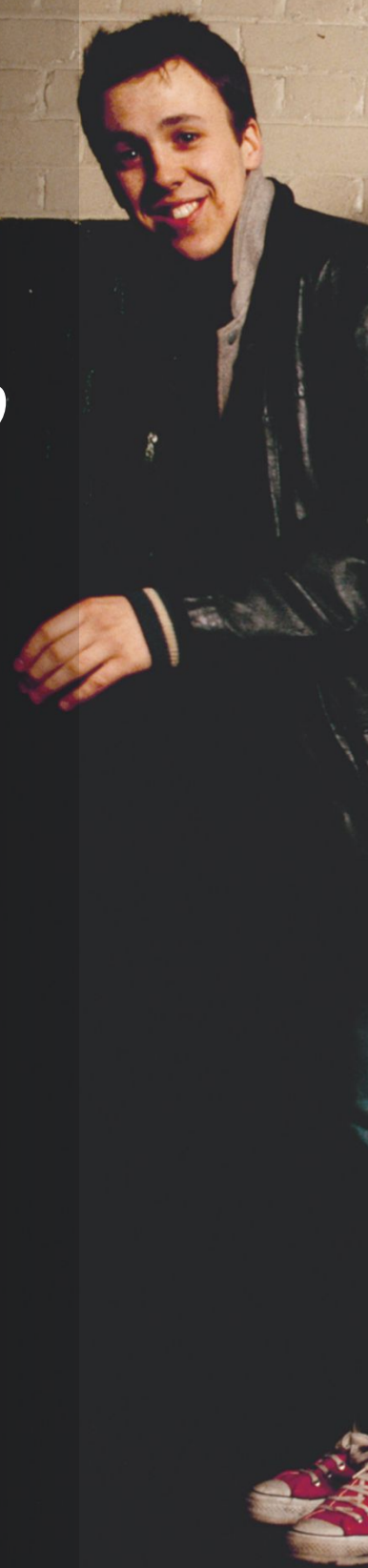
Suddenly Tom was shouting, there was a screech of brakes, a burst of car horn loud enough to wake the dead, and another taxi had missed me by about two millimetres.

We dumbly checked in to our hotel room, located the spirits, and four drinks later our shattered nerves were returning to normal. “I was seriously going to ask that taxi driver to stop,” mused Tom, “but he was going too fast.”

We lounged back on our hotel beds, not even caring that we were in Rome, and waited for Madness to return from the Italian television show they were recording. Two hours in Rome, I thought to myself and I’ve nearly been killed five times.

Three hours later, we met Madness. They were in the dining room seated around a table waiting for food to arrive. Woody, the drummer, was the first to recognise us. We had first met when I went to interview his wife’s band, the Mo-dettes (his wife is Jane the bassist). »

FIN COSTELLO / GETTY



Madness (l-r): Mark Bedford, Mike Barson, Chris Foreman, Chas Smash, Suggs, Dan Woodgate and Lee Thompson



"Have you still got those awful shoes on?" Woody teased, leaning across the table. "You were wearing real scruffy boots the last time."

I flash him a new, clean pair of heels, and he laughs: "Is that where your tape recorder is then?"

The rest of the band lounge about, are just as cordial in their greetings. Lee, the saxophonist, and Mark, the bass player, wander off briefly; Suggsy and Chas ensure that Tom and myself get a meal, against the waiter's wishes. What's Italy like then, I asked?

Woody groaned. "Everything is either 300 metres away, or 20 minutes away," he told us to a background of laughter.

The waiter returned, confused by the orders he'd just received. He scowled at Tom and myself for the extra work.

Suggsy meanwhile seemed restless. He got up, walked out of the room, returned five minutes later, sipped at some cold soup, got up again, took another walk. He wasn't uptight, just kind of fidgety and maybe even anxious, waiting for something to happen.

Eventually the meal was finished. Tom, still shattered by his recent harrowing experiences, decided to retire. I elected for a night out with the band. As we gathered in the hallway, Chris Foreman, the guitarist, started chatting to Woody. "I keep on having this dream," he told Madness' small, slim drummer. "I'm running away from the cops, they're chasing me like hell and just as I reach the door of my home..."

"They grab you!" Woody shouted excitedly, recognising immediately, the whole surreal scenario.

"That's it!" Chris shouted back. "So you've had them too."

Outside, Chas and Suggsy were already revving up the tiny scooters they'd hired for the day, and as Woody and I hit the warm, balmy air of Rome in search of the club ("300 metres away") they roar off. Two minutes later they flash past us. The club's closed.

"Ah, but I thought it would be open tonight," says Alfredo, the overweight record company man. We decide to go to a club called Much More. Alfredo drives Woody and myself, while the rest of the band take taxis to one of the most overpriced, garish clubs I've ever been in.

It's divided into two floors, with the upstairs crammed full of Space Invader machines, while downstairs, in a blaze of lasers and flashing lights, an expensively dressed Wednesday-night Italian crowd dances slowly to a stubborn disco beat.

From the upstairs, thanks to the huge mirror planted on the back wall, you can watch it all, and as the band move gleefully from machine to machine, I stand trying to take it all in.

Suggsy wasn't impressed. "Every nightclub we've been to in Europe is like this," he explains in his North London accent, before turning away to another pinball game. He should know.

In England, Madness may have a No 2 album straight in and a delightful single knocking on No 1's door, but that hasn't stopped the rest of Europe trying to muscle in. In Italy alone they'd already played to an estimated 40,000 screaming Italians and their album had chalked up a healthy 60,000 sales.

Fine stuff indeed, but already one could detect a sour note in the proceedings. "You see, I can't tell whether people like it for the music," Lee, their sax player, tells me, "or the nutty image we've got." It clearly worries him.

Ah! But what the hell? This is the band's last night in Italy, and, well, we might as well make the most of it. OK, lads? We descend to the flashing lights and lasers of the disco. Drinks, of course, are expensive, so we sip ours slowly by the bar watching and laughing as the Italians move robotically on a round platform without any sense of real rhythm to the mindless music. After 20 minutes of taking in this absurdity, I float back upstairs, leaving Suggsy and Chas by themselves.

Two minutes later, the unmistakable sound of "One Step Beyond" fills the air. The manager has recognised the band, and subsequently "The Prince" and "Baggy Trousers" are also played.

I hurry downstairs again and Suggsy greets me with a grin. "That soon cleared the floor," he smiles. "The manager's asked us to play here," he continues, starting to jerk his body into the last,

fading rhythms of "Trousers". "You come here and play for us," he mimics in a perfect Italian accent. And then he grins widely.

Woody and I decided that enough was enough, located Alfredo and blagged a lift back to the hotel. As we passed out of the entrance an old Italian woman, acting as a cloakroom attendant, gazed mournfully at us.

"You know, my big struggle at present," Woody said as we climbed into Alfredo's expensive car, "is just trying to stay normal."

Tomorrow we would be catching a train that would take us through half of Italy, Germany and into Holland. A 20-hour epic, and Woody didn't even

know we were catching it. "I never know about these things," he laughed, "I don't want to."

Tom was already in bed when we got back. After bidding Woody goodnight, I crawled into bed for some much-needed sleep. Four hours later, in a sleepy, almost unconscious state, I was aware of an urgent rattling on the door. Tom, half-naked, groped his way towards it.

He opened it slightly, shouted, "No you don't," and then slammed it quickly, locking it before rushing back to his bed. I didn't know what was happening and furthermore I didn't particularly care. The next day I found out that Suggsy and Chas had stayed up all night, and that round about five, with the help of a fire extinguisher, they decided we should join their

nocturnal party. Thanks a lot, chaps.

WHEN MADNESS TORE us apart with their joyful rendition of "The Prince", they'd already enjoyed what Chas Smash will later describe as the "best days of the band". By this he meant that then the band hadn't been picked up fully by the re-emerging skinhead cult sweeping London, but were playing to a mixture of everyone from punks to students, to skins. All together. No bother. Gigs were cheap and chaotic, but above all good fun. It wasn't till the band contacted 2-Tone that events moved swiftly and almost disastrously.

They'd already established an individual image with their suits and nuttiness, and with the release of their first single they immediately came to the attention of the mods and skinheads, who latched on to their ska sources (even if the band did insist against that label), which they recognised as "their" music.

Ugly scenes followed as their new fascist following insisted on "siege healing", preventing bands like Red Beans And Rice, who are led by a black singer, taking the stage as support at one London gig. "Most of them are just led by fashion," Chas explains over a pizza. "So we felt it best not to draw attention to it. It's the ones at the top who need sorting out."

An infamous interview the band gave compounded the problem further, even if they felt they were completely misrepresented. "What we'd do," explains Mark, or Bedders as he's better known, "is to actually go into the crowd and just ask them what the fuck they were playing at. It seemed a much better way, because instead of running away from the problem, we were actually trying to confront it."

Thankfully the band's tactics seem to have worked. Their audience is branching out incredibly as everyone begins to see and hear their magic, and the band themselves welcome anyone who's got two brain cells to rub together. If it hadn't been for the band's strength to get through such harrowing days unscathed, then I doubt if we'd be eating pizzas and pasta outside this Italian cafe, let alone preparing for a train journey through most of Europe.

Rome's train station is a massive, impressive symbol of Italian architecture. It rises to the sky in a colour of appealing vermilion, and its atmosphere is one of cleanliness and efficiency. Madness bounce happily along its clean floors, all except Suggsy and Chas, who are beginning to feel the effects of the night before. (Serves the buggers right.)

They'd decided to go driving on their scooters after the disco and eventually ground to a halt. ("I think there were two people left when we went," says Suggsy). They spent about four hours trying to get out of Rome. "I kept on wanting to go to the hills," Suggsy says.

"But it was all one way," finishes Chas, the second half of the duo now known as the Coco Brothers. After about an hour on the train, both retire to

"You know, my big struggle at present is just trying to stay normal"



their cabins and aren't seen till the next day. As Woody would have it, "they're sparko", or Solid Gone.

The cabins themselves are a wonder to behold. As small as a bird's cage, they fold up and around into three-tier bunk beds, with even a little sink in the corner, replete with, uh, potty.

After about five minutes of checking them out, I stand with Chris Foreman, the guitarist, with our heads out of window, watching the incredibly beautiful Italian countryside, spotted with ancient villas and misty hills in the background, slowly drift past us. I comment on its beauty.

"Yeah, when I retire, I'll buy a house here," he remarks dreamily, his eyes still gazing out at the passing colours.

"Or Switzerland. Have you ever been there? The air is so fresh and clean and the water in the river so clear you almost want to drink it."

Chris has got a house in Camden Town.

Lee has got about 40 tapes with him, which he's now inserting into his cassette player and blasting out, before settling back on the seat in the cabin he will share with Chris.

The music is Supertramp. Intrigued, I go next door to see if I can borrow some tapes for myself. He has everything from The Supremes to Roxy, to Linton Kwesi Johnson and Elvis Costello. I borrow some Motown (Italian as well!) and rejoin Tom.

Soon it's time to meet Salvatore. Rotund, with glasses and a uniform, Salvatore will prove to be the most important man alive on this trip. He sells the beer, the wine, the coffee and the food.

An hour out of Rome and we're all standing in the carriageway, sipping beer, wondering what to do when five American girls pass in the corridor, talking loudly.

At last! A source of amusement! When they return for drinks contact is made and we find out that they're from wealthy backgrounds, studying in Italy and heading for Amsterdam.

Eventually the questions are reversed. Now what do you do for a living, one of them asks.

We're in a band called Madness, the chaps Woody, Lee, Mark and Chris reply.

"Oh," says one of the girls. They've never heard of them.

The chaps understand. They've been to America twice, and know what it's like. Without record company backing you're lost there, Woody and Mark explain to me later.

"We did eight dates in the end," says Mark enthusiastically. "And basically Sire [their US record company] didn't put anything into it. We had to do our own publicity and turn up at radio stations and generally get the vibe going ourselves, because Sire, they were so sparked out..."

"They got posters from Stiff and cut out the bottoms!"

"Kellogs, our manager," continued Woody, "actually discovered one of the girls from Sire records on her knees with a great pile of Madness posters from Stiff, cutting out the bottoms."

Be that as it may, it's our friend Salvatore who's on his knees right now searching in the fridge for another beer, and imploring us to keep quiet for the thousandth time, as we stand outside his bar gently poking fun at the Americans.

"What did you do at college then?" Mark asks a tall red-headed girl.

"Well, I just did English government," she giggles. "So I can tell you all about it."

"Good," retorts Mark. "Because we don't know anything about it."

"What's that music playing?" asks another with glasses and standard student dress of jeans and checked shirt. "Have you got a cassette player?"

"We sure have," says Mark, and a bargain is quickly reached.



Madness in the small, smoky basement of the Hope & Anchor pub in Islington, North London, where the video for "One Step Beyond" was filmed

We take the cassette player to the girls' compartment and Woody takes one of them on at backgammon. Two minutes later we're in the girls' carriage with Bruce Springsteen on the player, an Italian sun setting, the train slightly rocking, a couple of beers and Woody getting a comprehensive thrashing from his American opponent. "This girl is so lucky," he wails as he concedes the first game.

I turn to the girl sitting opposite me and ask what English new-wave bands she might have heard or seen. Or come to that, liked.

"Oh well, I really like Elvis Costello," she says. "I think he's great but... he's American, isn't he?" Behind Woody's back, Mark and I curl up with laughter.

Over in the corner of the carriage there's another source of amusement. He's male, about 35, with jeans and glasses, holds a degree, and is rabbiting on to one of the other girls, who's staring at him with mouth open, taking in every word, about his "profession and well-deserved degree". He's the teacher. The girls are his students.

Two hours later they lock the carriage door and climb into bed. Takes all sorts.

As Mark, Woody and myself make our way back to the cabin after Woody has lost for a second time ("she kept throwing doubles. What could I do?") Mark tells me what the teacher graduated in. Physical psychology.

It makes sense, and after stopping briefly at Salvatore's Saloon (he tells us once more to sssshhh!) for some food and drink, we retire to my cabin for a formal interview.

It turns out to be probably one of the most informal conversations I've ever had with a band. Completely relaxed, and glad of something to break up the journey, the instant appeal of the girls having worn off, Woody and Mark began talking as the train rolled into night-time. I reminded Woody of his "fight to be normal". »

"Yeah, it is," he concedes. "In other people's eyes. Just to be accepted as a normal human being."

"It's like record companies over here," interjects Mark. "And television shows. They go, 'Ahhh! You act nutty, yes?' Like yesterday we did 'One Step Beyond' sitting down, didn't we?"

"For one take, and it didn't work," Woody says, grinning.

"We just sat there," continues Mark, "just to sort of say, 'Look! We can do it sitting down if we want.'"

The fact is, of course, that while we've been watching and anticipating nothing from Madness except Chas Smash's funny dances and the rest of the band's zaniness backed up by some irresistible dance music that has fun spelt all over it, we've forgotten conveniently that we're dealing with seven human beings with emotions, completely individual from each other, with different intentions, too.

Absolutely divides itself into two distinct sides. The first side is prime-time Madness, best exemplified by the closing track, "Solid Gone", a Chas Smash rockabilly-inspired romp, with meaningless words and lots of smiles.

The second side is more personal, more serious, and shows Madness capable now of wearing their influences – Kilburns, Motown as well as ska – with pride and honour, but not letting them dominate.

But how do Madness wish to be represented in their new-found mood?

"I'd like it to be that we're changing. Moving on," says Mark firmly.

Woody, as articulate as ever: "It's much more aware. I think we've become much more aware of our surroundings and our actual feelings inside of ourselves. I think Side Two does show it more. Much more. We don't mean to be deep and meaningful, it is us," he gesticulates. "And it's much more realistic than the common image that we have. It's the closest to us now." He stops. "I think that's all I can say."

This new-found honesty, and ability to think clearly about what exactly Madness and its members are about, was forced upon them by the gruelling nine-month tour they completed last year, which took them here, there and everywhere. Night after night they found inspiration from somewhere to play the Nutty Boys, and not once did they fake it for the audiences. This tour, though, will be different.

"Last year," explains Lee, "we could go on stage time and time again and you wouldn't see anyone with the hump. But now, I don't know if people still expect it, but if I'm in a real bad mood and I go out there, I won't try and put a smile on."

Even if your audience expect fun and games?

"That's what I mean," he exclaims. "If the British audiences are expecting fun and games, poppers and balloons, they've got another thing coming."

A train suddenly rushes past the window, filling the cabin with noise and flashing light. In the cabin behind us, Chas and Suggsy are sleeping peacefully, recuperating slowly, as indeed the whole band had to last November, at the end of that exhausting tour.

They all took holidays.

"And lots of drugs," says Woody, laughing with the rest of us. Until Lee turns serious.

"And that's another thing, the drugs bit. Everyone's got over that, because a couple of us went through it and thought we'd never pull through." There's a silence until Woody reveals the cause and effect.

"It gets so bad that you're doing solid work more and more, and each member of the band has his own way of pulling through. They either drink, or they smoke a million cigarettes, or they smoke dope, take coke or speed or whatever. But the thing is, is that in the music industry it's very easy to get hold of and you turn to those things and it's great for a week or so. Then you have to take more and more and more," he says, slowly emphasising his words.

"Until it goes in a complete circle, where you're taking them because you're depressed about taking them and it gets to the point where you become a semi-addict. It affects the music and it affects the whole band. But I'll tell you this now, this is the point now that the band have got over the hurdle and we've got fresh eyes to see through it."

He pauses. "It was bordering on the fact that we were beginning to make a bit too many fluffs," he states candidly, "than we normally did. Then it got to the stage where I thought, 'I'm going to bugger my whole career up.'"

"I think it frightened everyone," states Mark simply, and indeed Lee is the living proof of that statement.

"One time, this girl in the States," he remembers, "chopped out about six lines and had this handful of Tuinal. Said, 'Here you are.' I said, 'What are those?' She goes, 'Downers.' I said, 'Leave it out', and she said, 'It's alright, I've got some coke, you can come back up again when you want.'"

The compartment dissolves into laughter at his story, but it's more the laughter of relief. Especially Woody, who, not being the largest of chaps to put it kindly, scaled down to a terrifying seven-and-a-half stone, before grabbing hold of his senses.

He agrees totally with Mark's statement, collared from Chas, that the band are now their own best friends. They have to be.

An hour after Mark and Lee leave to rejoin Chris, Woody, Tom and myself buy our second bottle of Salvatore's awesome wine and settle back to stories and memories. We finally fall asleep in Italy. And wake up in cold, desolate, uninspiring Germany.

SALVATORE HAD DECIDED to talk in German today, at least for the morning. He tells me, 'Ja! Cappuccino will soon be ready,' and then prices the earth for a tray of synthetic biscuits, small portions of cheese and pate and pineapple juice. This passes for breakfast.

I take a tray back to Woody, who's a vegetarian, and then bump into Chas and Mark in another cabin where they're listening to rockabilly tapes. Chas looks well after his long sleep and sings along enthusiastically to his tapes, observing the desolate German scenery outside, which alternates between industrial wreckage and plain scenery.

Suggsy is still in bed sleeping, but the rest of the band are slowly emerging as Salvatore turfs everyone out, demanding their sheets.

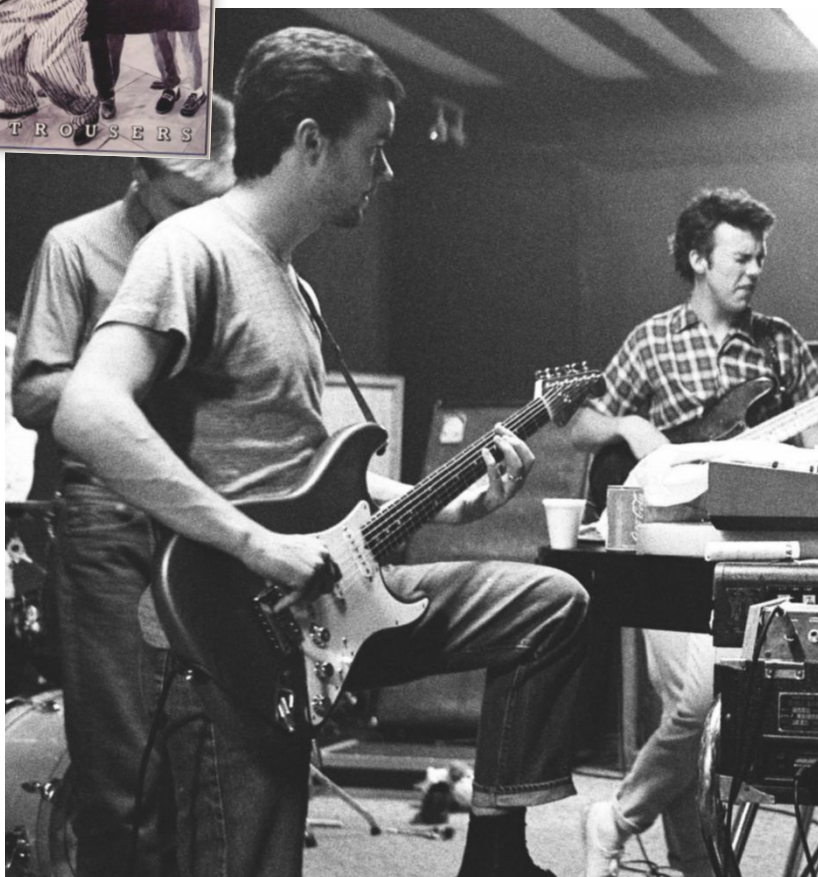
Chas, in the meantime, has got bored of the obscure rockabilly songs he's playing, and hunts in his bag for something new. Everything from Diana Ross to The Undertones is discarded, before he finally decides on, what else? Madness.

The punchy rhythms of *Absolutely* beat out, and I ask Chas whether he's read the article I'd brought over on the band, that had hinted cryptically, if not one-dimensionally, at a dark side to his character.

He laughs a little and says it's rubbish. He's got woman trouble at present and is consequently on a downer because of that. There's no deep side, only natural feelings coming through.

Suddenly there's a shout from Tom gazing out of the window. He's just seen an old lady with her skirt down crapping in the middle of the road.

Lee grabs his camera and decides to take a photo of the sleeping Suggsy. He enters the cabin stealthily, lines up the shot and is just about to click when Suggsy moans and turns over.



Lee makes a noise and Suggsy wakes up. He sees me, winks good morning, and I tell him I'll get him a breakfast and an interview to go with it. He smiles wryly and agrees.

Five minutes later, we're back in my cabin, with Chas and Woody.

As frontmen, and in Suggsy's case, chief lyric writer, a lot of the Madness direction comes from the Coco Brothers, in the form of visuals and stance. Were they, like their mates, beginning to have doubts?

"It's always been the same," answers Suggsy. "It's fun when you're doing it, but it's not fun when people want you to do it."

"It's not put-on," continues Chas, in his deep, distinctive accent. "It's what we've been doing and what we were like before the band, most of us, so when you get these arseholes going out in your ska suits..."

His voice trails off in disgust.

"Whereas if they hadn't asked you," interjects Suggsy, "you'd probably put on your suit, that kind of thing. It's either going to be spontaneous or not at all. It's more depressing to be funny when you don't feel funny."

He grins a little. Like Chas, he's well built and smokes a lot. He explains that his lyrics have become a bit more self-indulgent, even though he's trying hard not to be, and then he reveals the reasoning behind "Baggy Trousers".

"It was a pissstake of us, baggy trousers and all that shit, but also it was about kids and how hard it is, but it was about teachers as well. How boring it is for them. It was after reading something about how hard schools were, but there's nothing you can do about it."

How did he get on at school?

"Not very well, really. It was alright – I just couldn't be bothered, really. It wasn't that it was hard; it was boring, but I didn't come out of it with much."

So you feel lucky to be doing this, I suggest, to which a shout of "You're not kidding!" comes from all three band members.

"Especially me," continues Suggsy, after the noise has died down "and I suppose him a bit really (*pointing at Chas*), because we probably wouldn't have done anything really. I would have never thought of singing."

"Then," he continues, referring to his schooldays as the train speeds towards Amsterdam, "I had all these images of art college with no academic things at all – 'Yeah, I'm going to be a commercial artist, I'll worry about it next week.' And then just doing nothing. Then in the end I'd left school and I was poncing about gardening and other things.

"But yeah," he looks round at the carriage. "Very lucky, very fortunate." Madness, however, do feel strongly, especially Chas and Suggsy, that other people can attain their positions just as easily as they did. They talk strongly about previous members of the band, who could have stayed but chose not to, preferring either work or crime to "two-bob rehearsals", as Suggsy puts it.

But then, is it an enviable position to be in when all's said and done? Being the Coco Brothers, and all it entails. Chas accepts it all.

"The image has been pushed into too much of a commercial-type image," he concedes, "which we don't really want to be in. But it has

helped us a lot. Put it this way, if you ain't very popular you can't really go your own way first. You've got to accept it, before you can start going the way you want to go.

"It is a bit bad when you're not taken seriously at times. Like some of the stuff is serious, some of it is amusing, and we want people to take it both ways. Not just as the funny-ha-ha bit."

THE DOOR SLIDES open and Salvatore tells us Amsterdam is near just as Chas explains the single Madness "ideal".

"Entertainment," he states unequivocally.

"The nearest thing you can say is that all we want to do is have a good time, get better at what we're doing, people enjoy it, make some

money and be successful. We're not trying to read anything into it," he wearily explains.

"It's all observations mainly. Like this friend come up to me and what's that song, eh, 'Overdone', the words to that, and he was saying that was so true. He wrote to his mum and dad and found out they'd been divorced and died. And that's what people identify with. People say there's no social statements. There is, but we're not trying to give any answers or solutions."

"Like we had this problem," interrupts Suggsy, "with all this 'You don't have any sociological meanings'. But half the bands you talk to," he reports, "like The Specials and The Clash, half the time they're taking the piss."

He pauses. "I've got no affiliation with anybody politically or anything, so any social sayings we have are in our songs, and there are some if you listen to them. It's just that we don't go waffling on about them."

I tell them I think it's also good that young bands don't go waffling off on the star trip too much these days. Suggsy and Chas nod their heads in agreement.

"It is a load of bollocks," says Suggsy, "because I've had... well, I'm being candid now," he states, turning fully to the tape recorder. "I've had £33,000, which is the royalty cheque that I've got, and I've always wanted to have a house or somewhere to live. I've lived with my mum all my life, or my girlfriend, so there was this house up the road for £33,000, so how am I going to afford a Roller or a mink?"

He tuts in amazement.

"Half the time," he adds, "I think, 'Bollocks I'm going to be myself now. Give all my money away.' I do think it seriously. I can't stand it any more – I'm going to make a big announcement and quit. Then other times, you think, 'Right, Pete Townshend's got this. Right, I'll go and buy that!'"

Chas Smash's only ambition at present is to tour America with The Specials in January. Suggsy didn't mention his.

But just as this train will eventually reach Amsterdam ("Twenty minutes," says Salvatore), so it's inevitable that all Madness are composed of seven natural individuals, each one as complex and as simple as you. In two days I saw ambitions behind the painted-smile frustrations, laughter and boredom, all bandied about, but I could never attempt to sum it, or them up, in just two days.

"I just know it's better than gardening," said Suggsy. And everyone within earshot agreed.

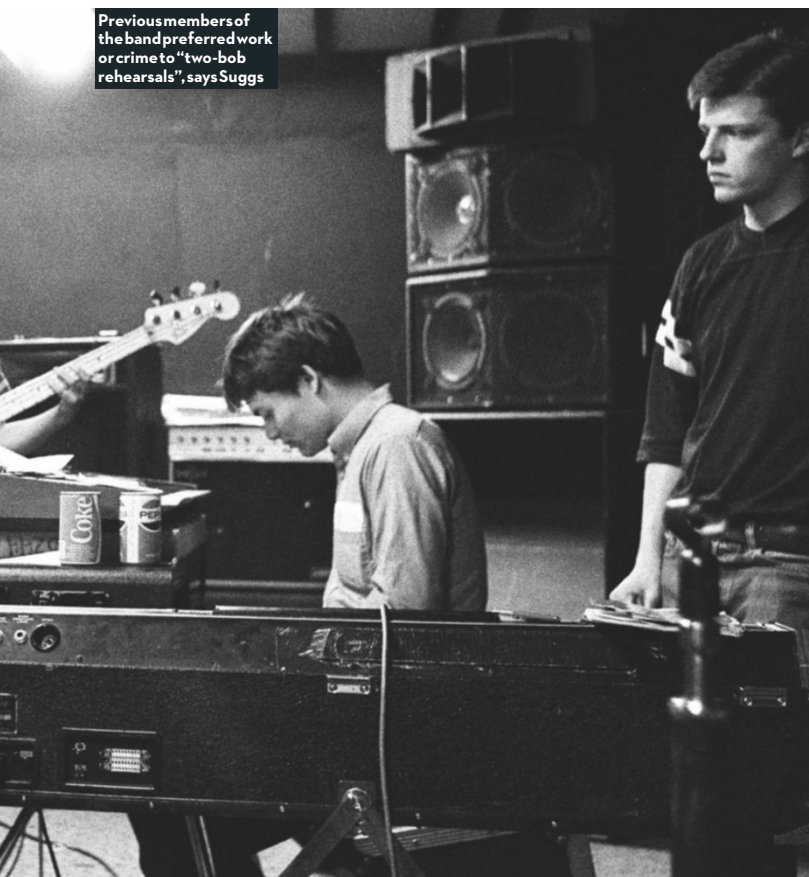
Meet Craig, a 12-year-old Madness fan, whose brother I share a flat with. I knew damn well that I could never have returned without the band's autographs for him. So dutifully I asked, and cheerily they all signed. All except for Chas Smash, who later added in block letters: "MADNESS ARE ABSOLUTELY SANE."

After these two days, that's more than a possibility.

Paolo Hewitt •

"A couple of us
thought we'd
never pull
through the
drugs bit"

Previous members of the band preferred work or crime to "two-bob rehearsals", says Suggs



“I sold
Aldous
Huxley a
vacuum
cleaner...”

This and other tall stories from a desert audience with **CAPTAIN BEEFHEART**. With a new album and rejuvenated Magic Band, he's more out there, and relevant, than ever. “Hey! If you want to be a different fish, you’ve got to jump out of the school...”

— NME NOVEMBER 1 —

“**G**OD-DAMN THAT BEAT!” Don Van Vliet slams out a four-square tattoo on the dashboard of his blue Volvo estate. “That mama heartbeat. That bom... bom... bom! Why do they do that? Don’t they know it’s bad for the heart? I would never treat my heart that way. I don’t want my heart to attack me!”

Don Van Vliet is railing against the evil monotonous mama heartbeat of what passes for music in a world of limited sensibility where he lives with his unlimited sensibilities. And he isn’t kidding. Where he hears a myriad symphony I hear only the wind whistling through the window. Where he sees a terrifying menace I see only a large, gleaming truck.

But if his grip on reality is slack, his grip on the wheel is sure. For a moment, it’s hard to tell which is enjoying the greater acceleration, his mind or his car.

“I have four wheels beneath me, one in my hand, and I’m trying to do this interview. You have a lot of nerve, sir,” he exclaims as we slide past the gleaming menace. “You’re not even worried!”

Why should I be? I’m safe. Safe as milk.

I’m in the hands of someone who knows how to plug in, to connect, to strip away the surface and feel the sensation. His nerve ends are alive to sensory input most of us have learned to tune out for sanity’s sake. Don Van Vliet may be a lot of things, but he will never be bored. »

LEX VAN ROSSEN / GETTY



November 11, 1980:
Captain Beefheart
& The Magic Band
playing a show at
the Paradiso in
Amsterdam that
was recorded for
radio broadcast
and subsequently
widely bootlegged

"I breathe with every pore," he says, and I have no reason to doubt him. Besides, before he became Captain Beefheart, the legendary Captain Beefheart, when he was just Don Van Vliet, a teenage beatnik prodigy, he used to race Porsche 904s, a sleek little '50s fastback that could turn on a dime. He used to race them out in the desert, to which we are heading, out of Los Angeles on the freeway via Antelope Valley at far less than racing tilt.

When at a very early age he won a scholarship to study sculpture in Europe, his parents tried to curb the young artist by moving to the most culturally barren environment imaginable, the Mojave Desert. Their son still lives there, with his wife Jan, in a rented trailer located somewhere between Los Angeles and Death Valley. It affords plenty of solitude, some unusual wildlife, and ample room to race cars...

Not that Don Van Vliet does that any more, although in his youth he wanted nothing more than to be a great racing driver, or a great sculptor. One of his desert haunts was Pancho Barnes' Fly Inn, where X-series rocket test pilots from Edwards Air Force Base would go to unwind after burning up a mixture of alcohol and liquid oxygen in the atmosphere and before doing the same to the empty desert highways in imported Ferraris and three-litre Austin Healeys.

And if he wasn't at the Fly Inn, then he'd be at clubs like the Insomniac in LA, digging blues, jazz, folk and poetry and hanging out with Lenny Bruce. It was at the Insomniac that he saw AJ Lloyd and Ewan McColl perform English folk songs from a collection called *Blow Boys Blow*, still his favourite record.

But Don Van Vliet is much more than just a product of the salubrious intellectual climate of California during the '50s beat uprising...

"When I was three, I said to my mother, 'You be Sue, I'll be Don, and he (my father) will be Glen. Don't step over the line and we'll be friends.' I said that to her when I was three. I sent my mother home my navel! What else could I do? She appreciated it, she went along."

...And much more than just educated in hip. He came to know the world in ways you don't learn at school, to which he never went, and where he never learnt to think in a straight line.

"Hey! If you want to be a different fish, you've got to jump out of the school..."

CAPTAIN BEEFHEART HAS just released a new album. A lot of people didn't even notice. *Doc At The Radar Station* was written in 35 minutes and recorded in just over a week. Like almost everything he has done over the past 13 years, it is powerful, complex, raw and uncompromised. It has nothing to do with fashion or tradition or any art doctrine or movement; it's purely and simply a howling affirmation of life.

"An artist is one who kids himself the most gracefully"

Life is precious and too easily squandered. Captain Beefheart doesn't like to waste a moment. "I once stayed up for a year and a half. Between the ages of 25 and 26 I didn't go to sleep at all... Lost all my friends though!"

When so much of what is considered pertinent in art these days is produced out of fear and alienation, Beefheart's music is more than just bracing, it's impertinent. Breathe in its breadth if you can. But be warned that you can't dance to it and you can't wear it like a badge. If it means anything to you it will mean more than that.

Doc At The Radar Station is his most urgent work since *Lick My Decals Off, Baby*, the album that a decade ago followed hard on the heels of *Trout Mask Replica*—easily the most unique and

overwhelming creation ever to languish in the general category of rock. It demands a momentous and equal critique. Portentous statements merely sell it short. And I'd be saying at the moon before I came close.

But back in the Frownland that Beefheart invited everybody to leave behind in the opening moments of *Trout Mask* there are still some to whom his music is just noise and accidents, a shapeless, head-on tumult of sound. Not so. Every note, every discord is preordained. His are some of the most meticulous compositions ever. In what can seem like cacophony there is a splendid sonority, with all the resounding excitement of chaos.

And like the music, his verse is also irreducible. If you could boil down the music you might get naked free jazz and swamp-root blues, but the words would just evaporate. Beefheart's lyrical terrain ranges from the salty to the surreal. He plays with words like a child with toys, and they seem to have a vividness for him that they lose in the minds of most people.

He takes delight in metaphors, puns and similes, which are so abused and under-used by lazy and dull minds that we forget they have the greatest illuminative power of all language. Beefheart finds in such wordplay the only adequate vessel for his delirious perceptions, and it can be a heady cup to drink from.

For instance, he doesn't like to smoke dope... "It makes me feel like a fly with a wing caught in honey!"

The B-52's share his fondness for the wild metaphor (as well as his strong ecological concern), and numerous other new-rock figures pay tribute to him as a source of musical inspiration (in the case of Devo and The Pop Group) and sheer inspiration.

Because Captain Beefheart has done what all art should aspire to, and that is to touch people's lives; not just decorate their lifestyle or adorn their clothes but actually strike deep down on a dormant nerve, awaken and flex sleeping senses.

Beefheart doesn't just entertain with dirty king hex mojo navigation (as he proved he could with *Clear Spot*, the unsung soul album of the decade), or provide any of the other things we look for in our leisure hours. He provides a key to limitless possibilities and he sounds the alarm on

everything that is shallow, bogus or mercenary. Take my word for it, or ask Jerry Dammers, or Johnny Rotten...

The latter recently did himself a disservice by passing up the chance to meet Beefheart. The two of them were invited by a woman who works for the *LA Times*, but Rotten never arrived, a show of apparent bad manners that appals the gentleman in Mr Van Vliet.

"A lady invites a man to dinner and he doesn't even show up? Shit. I thought he was alright before that, but who does things like that to a lady? That's too casual for me. And I would have liked to have met him because I've seen him in many audiences of mine, many! Hell yes, I recognise people in audiences! I've seen you before..."

At the age of 39, Don Van Vliet cuts a strange and hidden figure. He shuffles along like a janitor, but a second glance reveals some minor dischords: a sketch

"I've just started... I have the right ingredients now": Captain Beefheart poses in an apartment, New York City, September 30, 1980



book clutched under arm; an old, expensive felt hat; in one pocket a pair of sunglasses bought so long ago they're almost fashionable; a clothes-peg clipped to the other. Unlike the healthy, tanned Californian animal, he wears the look of a man for whom the nighttime is the right time. In fact, he says he came out of the Van Gogh museum in Holland and was disappointed with the sun. Has been ever since.

He shakes hands meekly but fixes you with eyes like pins. His presence is slight but uncanny. People barely notice this creature in their midst, and he himself is far more relaxed when surrounded by the eerie Joshua trees of the desert. "They can't even see us," he will later remark of the plastic patrons of a plastic desert motel bar. "They don't even know we're here..." An automat waitress chooses that moment to look right through me.

"I HAVE A LOTTA fun doing what I do, because I get to meet artistic people; people that care about raising the art culture, which I naturally care about because I'm an artist.

"I always say an artist is one who kids himself the most gracefully. But I really am. I've tried other things and they don't work. I've been an uplock installator for an aviation company. The uplock is the landing gears. Hydraulic technician is what I was, they said, but I'm an imposter. I went in there and I didn't know anything.

"I did it with a lot of care, though, and it gave me extremely bad headaches. Then I've sold shoes... I think that's a very important thing, a shoe. What else? I've sold vacuum cleaners, I sold Aldous Huxley a vacuum cleaner in Lano-Lano, California. He used to do the cleaning and have his wife sit down and watch. Isn't that nice?"

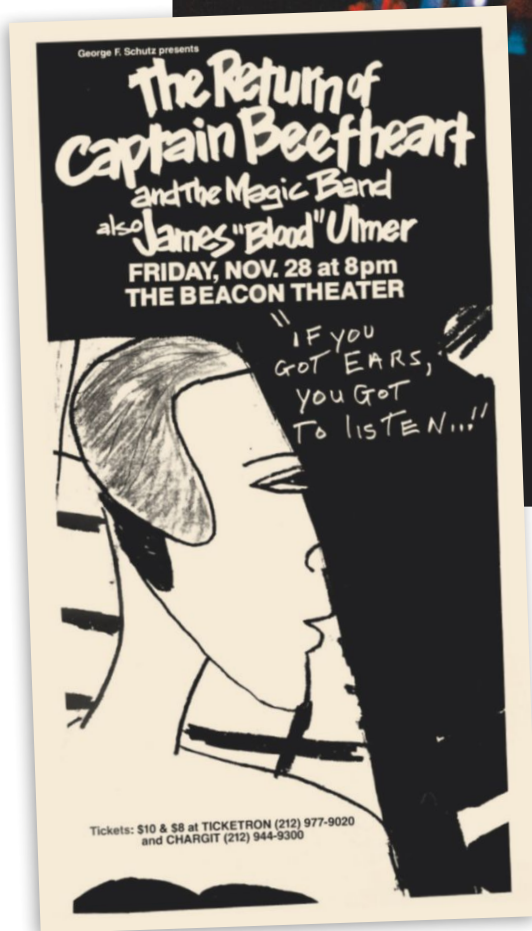
It's not easy to hold Don Van Vliet's attention on prosaic details. I had just asked him about the fabled *Bat Chain Puller* tape, a set of demos featuring the genesis of the new Magic Band and versions of several songs that appear on *Doc...* and '78's *Shiny Beast*, a return to virtue after a long spell of little or misguided activity.

"That's a beautiful album, isn't it? They don't even know that in England. They do? Well, they didn't buy it. They couldn't afford to, could they? I wish I had a lot of money; I'd give everybody one!"

It wasn't deliberate, but Virgin Records allowed what would eventually become *Shiny Beast* to circulate in its demo state—a bad move about which the Captain is angry but forgiving. "Friends don't mind just how you grow," he says, quoting himself. "I've got a lot of them. I've got a lot of albums in me. I've just started. I mean, I have the right ingredients now."

Meaning the new Magic Band: Robert Williamson drums, Eric Feldman on bass and keyboards, Jeff Tepper on slide guitar, and new recruit Richard Snyder also on slide guitar. Rick Redus, who played on

November 12, 1980: Beefheart and the Magic Band appear at The Venue in London's Victoria, owned by his label, Virgin Records



Shiny Beast, has since departed, and Drumbo (John French), who has played with Beefheart since *Safe As Milk* in '67, and who played almost unrepeatable drums and guitar on parts of *Doc...*, doesn't want to play live.

The new Magic Band give the impression of having grown up alongside Zoot Horn Rollo, Rockette Morton, Art Tripp III and Winged Eel Fingerling, so adept are they at making the fluid polyrhythmic moves of the music. It's as if they already knew it by heart...

"No. I wish it was. You can say that if you want, but I know you don't have a very good time with lies—I can tell by your eyes. But there is one guy that came to me like that, the Winnebago Sioux, German and Scottish fellow, whom I call Brave Midnight Hat-Size Snyder. He likes it, and he told me I've got a Brave Midnight Hat-Size Snyder for life. 'I won't ever leave this band,' he said.

"I had just a few days to find a guitarist and he called me on the phone and said, 'Let's do it.' I said you gotta learn 29 songs in three weeks, and he did it! I can't believe it. He's the best there is with Jeff Tepper. Incredible! I've got it now. I've been looking for 15 years for this. It's that good..."

LATER, IN THE plastic motel bar at the edge of the desert, he finally opens the sketch book he has been carrying around with him all day long... "Fifty years from now, you'll wish you'd gone 'wow!'..."

Whether he was right or not, the odd thing was, he didn't sound the least bit bitter about it.

The Magic Band rehearse in a low-rent LA studio behind a bike shop, accessible via a yard scattered with dead iron ponies. The group have »

been there for three weeks, rehearsing the material, old and new, that Beefheart wants to perform on his current European tour.

They rehearse mostly from records, and he comes in only to fine tune them. On this particular day, they're working on "Sugar And Spikes", grinding it to perfection; swapping searing time signatures as though it were second nature, burning a hole in the original version.

Beefheart sits on the sofa, his eyes glistening with excitement. He declines to sing, saying wait until we get on stage, and instead he cajoles, encourages, teases, tries to throw them off, fails, and just laughs at how good they are.

"I've got my play cut out for me. Did you hear that? I used to work with those other guys, but I play with these fellows!"

I ask Robert Williams what it's like playing with Captain Beefheart.

"A hell of a lot easier than working with Hugh Cornwell..."

The conversation turns, innocently enough, to the subject of whether women like Beefheart's music. He claims they do. The Magic Band

disagree. "Some do," says Jeff Tepper, "but not as many as he thinks!"

"Women like my music," says Beefheart. "Sure they do. I do it mainly for women. Obviously. What other reason is there? I'm going to be doing 'Nowadays A Woman's Gotta Hit A Man' on his tour. I've done a lot of things about women. I care about them. I like them. They have never scared me, never. I think they're superior, actually. And I've never had a thought of any fear or animosity about them!"

A lot of men see women as predators...

"You mean like Black Widow spiders, right? They're gorgeous too.

They're not black though, they're kind of a maroon colour..."

(On the subject of men and women and Captain Beefheart, I want to tell a story about a couple I know that goes a lot further than any weighty metaphysical analysis towards explaining the effects of his music. It goes like this...)

He was going through one of those bleak, morose spells that everybody goes through now and again. She wasn't exactly having the time of her life either. *Shiny Beast* had just been released.

He stayed up long into the night playing one track over and over and over again. "*Bat chain... puller! Bat chain... puller! BAT CHAAIAN... puller... puller, puller...*"

Beefheart's unearthly low moan seeped through the house and out the chimney.

The next morning there was a note on the table... "Sod you, mate. And sod your Bat Chain Puller, Puller, Puller! Your dinner's in the garden!")

Cock-eyed verve

Captain Beefheart And The Magic Band
Doc At The Radar Station VIRGIN

In the Beefheart Universe, you see everything that you see in other places, but it always seems different. The basic building blocks of Beefheart's sound remain the same – country blues-derived slide guitar, bass and drum parts where the beat gets turned around in the first four bars and then stays turned around, odd touches of marimba, assertive outbursts of harmonica and sax – but the sense of surprise and delight never wanes, since nobody else makes that sound, and since Beefheart's '70s career has been so patchy – due principally to protracted Devo-style contractual disagreements between Virgin and Warners – that there has been a limited supply of the Captain's nonconformist noise.

Between 1971's epic *Clear Spot* and last year's *Shiny Beast*, things were bleak Beef-wise, but *Doc At The Radar Station* would suggest that the cranky old buzzard is certainly none the worse for wear. The opening "Hot Head" begins with an insistent two-note guitar motif determined to play things straight, which is rapidly joined by a slide guitar equally determined not to do anything of the sort before drummer Robert Arthur Williams (unscathed by his encounter with Hugh Cornwell) demonstrates that the beat is not quite where either of them thought it was and the Captain wails, declaims and makes noises with his harmonica.

"Another day, another way/Someone's had too much to think!" Where did that artificial orchestra come from? Beefheart has context completely mastered: when there isn't one, he creates it to order. Something like the intro to "Dirty Blue Gene" literally could not be the work of anybody else, just as no other artist would announce, "We don't have to suffer, we're the best batch yet."

The current Magic Band perform Beefheart's music with the appropriate cock-eyed verve: John (Drumbo) French is back on the team, reincarnated as a guitarist, though he returns to drums on "Ashtray Heart" and "Sheriff Of Hong

NME SEPT 20 The "cranky old buzzard" cements his return.

Kong" (playing bass on the latter as well – what a lad). In the grand Antennae Jimmy Semens tradition, Jeff Moris Tepper keeps the slide parts bumping into everything in exactly the wrong (right) places. There are even two short instrumental links ("Flavour Bud Living" and "A Carrot Is As Close As A Rabbit Gets To A Diamond") left over from the original *Bat Chain Puller* before it mutated into *Shiny Beast*.

While *Clear Spot* represents the peak of Beefheart's "accessible" period, *Doc...* is as much evidence as could possibly be desired that the Van Vliet muse is still as intractably stimulating as ever. Over the past 13 or 14 years, Beefheart has often been patronised as some sort of amusing eccentric, and been touted as having "finally arrived", or some such. Both contentions are slightly wide of the mark: Beefheart's music is only "eccentric"

"The Van Vliet muse is still intractably stimulating"

because it conforms to its own internal logic and to not much else, while his "arrival" in good old blinkered rockbiz terms is, as ever, highly unlikely, since his reference points are as unique in these post-Pere Ubu times as they were when Peel first began bludgeoning *Top Gear* listeners with *Safe As Milk* back in '67.

"Making love to a vampire with a monkey on my knee/Please God, fuck my mind for good... death be damned!" This noise is like no other.

Charles Shaar Murray



CAPTAIN BEEFHEART'S MIND alights where it will. He's a hard man to stay on the track of. He flits from one subject to another like a bee in a garden. But if he is occasionally vague, he's never distant. Frankly, he's one of the sharpest people I've ever met. He reads people very closely, too closely to get along with them in any conventional manner.

"I always feel as if I'm babysitting," he says of his relationship to the human race. "I think there's 40 people in the world and five of them are hamburgers. You must have read that. There are a few people that I like, but most of them are dead. Isn't that awful? Van Gogh, Shakespeare, most of the people that I really like..."

Beefheart used to own a late-'50s Jaguar. One day he was driving along when he saw a billboard advertising a brand of house paint with the extravagant and highly debatable claim that Vincent Van Gogh

would have used this brand were he still in a position to paint his house. The Captain was so incensed that he drove straight off the highway.

"I'll tell you who I miss right now very much... his wife came to see me recently... Roland Kirk, Rahsaan Roland Kirk. He was a very good friend of mine. He was one of the best people I ever met; he was brilliant, a brilliant man. Very underestimated. He was one of the best horn players that ever lived. Some people know that, but not many.



December 9, 1980, the day after John Lennon's death: the Captain and Morris Tepper on stage at Irving Plaza, NYC, where he opens the set with an improvised sax solo, then says, "That was from John, through Don, for Sean"

"I remember that last thing I said to him. It was at a club called the Lighthouse, a famous jazz club. He had just finished playing and he came over and said to me, 'How am I going to get something to eat, Don?' I said, 'Roland, the only place you can find ribs at this time of night in Los Angeles is in the Bible!' He laughed, boy, he laughed. I was so happy that I had said something that pleased him.

"That was the last time I saw him alive. Man, that guy played so beautifully. Have you ever heard 'You Did It' by him? Phew!

"I also like Thelonious Monk very much. I once saw him at a place in the Valley, some new theatre that had come up with some sort of extravaganza. He got there half an hour late and there was a tribute waiting for him: a glass bowl full of red roses. You know what he did? There was a grand piano, a beautiful Steinway. He still had on his overcoat; he picked up the bowl of roses, dumped the whole thing into the piano, slammed the top closed, sat down, hit one note and split! Hey, I clapped for half an hour! I mean, what else? That was beautiful, and it sounded beautiful too. He hit the right note.

"Mind you, some people thought he didn't play for long enough... Some people have had too much to think. 'Open up another case of the punks.' I'm not talking about the punk people, that is not what I meant. I have no animosity. Too smart for that.

"But I have to say that punk all sounds to me like a rehashing of old rock 'n' roll. I don't like that. Didn't like old rock 'n' roll in the first place. I was a sculptor, I didn't pay any attention to that. You want me to tell you the truth? I don't care that much for music..."

Captain Beefheart doesn't care that much for music... Of course he doesn't! He's a visionary. A witch doctor! In another age he would have been just a poet.

He has too much dignity to become a guru in this. So he does music. Why?

"As an irritant. What would somebody this smart be doing it for other than that? I like poetry, and I put music with poetry and things like that. Maybe I'm

a cook. Or an alchemist, maybe. Who knows? I'm just getting started with the spells I do.

"But I have a beef in my heart about the things they've done in this world. Since I was born I've been aghast, stunned... Why didn't they put Band-Aids on the flaw? Why didn't human beings study and fix these things? I don't know.

"I'm trying to do all I can and I have been all of my life. And I thought there would have been more happening by now—I thought that *Trout Mask* might do something to break up that catatonic state. That's why I did it, to take the labels off... get rid of the labels and let's see what's going on. But they do more bom... bom... bom. I'm so sick of that mama heartbeat! Hey, listen... I don't want my heart to attack me! I would never treat my heart that way. Never."

The score at this point is about even. The world hasn't woken up and Don Van Vliet hasn't gone to sleep. Come to think of it, that puts him ahead. And if you have ears, you have to listen to him. He can make you want to rattle your cage, and rattle everybody else's cage too; sellotape their eyes open and remove all the labels, grab them by the neck and rub their faces in the heat of existence.

Captain Beefheart is a primal current, almost a folk artist. He trusts his instincts...

"All the time."

Do they ever let you down?

"Many times."

But you still trust them?

"Sure I do. Friends don't mind just how you grow. I made friends with me a long time ago." *Paul Rambali* •

TALES OF TRANSMUTATION FROM THE MOJAVE MAGIC MAN

1980

OCTOBER–DECEMBER

The Selector at Dingwalls in Camden, North London, with straight man Arthur "Gaps" Hendrickson (right) a useful foil for Pauline Black's "impish vibrancy"

Harder and stronger

NME NOV 22 Toting new members and new tunes, The Selector have something to prove.

"THIS IS FOR all the people who thought that we were finished two months ago. It's called 'Washed Up And Left For Dead'... and we ain't!"

Pauline Black seems to be scanning the front row of the Hope And Anchor basement with some intent, in search of an unimpressed face or two. She fails to find one and it is probably just as well, for she looks primed to jump down any throat which might utter so much as a murmur of disapproval.

The Selector are back with a chip on their shoulder and something to prove.

For a band who entered 1980 with everything going for them, the last few months have been miserable: the inevitable backlash, a split from the 2-Tone mothership and internal upheavals have left them popular favourites to be the first new ska band to go under.

Their reply has been to come back harder and stronger, a resurgence as remarkable in its own right as the one The Jam experienced two years ago between *The Modern World* and *All Mod Cons*. The Selector, of course, have always swung with a little more soul and subtle sensuality than The Specials or any of the other 2-Tone bands. Now they seem to

be veering in the direction of a more straightforward reggae groove while keeping sight of their original drive.

The two new members fitted in well. While Adam Williams is not as funky a bassist as Charley Anderson, and James Mackie will never be as fluent an organist as Desmond Brown, the two newcomers combined neatly with the rest of the band to produce a tenser, more spatial sound.

A pile of new songs were also previewed, the lyrics perhaps more thoughtful and

anxious than in the past, a chilling reflection of the dangerous times but delivered with a defiance which suggests that The Selector stand for more than a meek acceptance of the status quo. The new song titles give the fairest indication of the subject matter – "Cool Blue Lady", "Red Reflections", "Bristol And Miami" and "Bomb scare".

When she avoids lapsing into histrionics – she does from time to time – Pauline Black is a performer with real style and guts and, as

such, one of the most compelling around. And in her vocal partner Gaps she has a bluff straight man to provide the ideal foil for her impish vibrancy, in much the same way that Terry Hall's sardonic cool gives a good balance to The Specials full-blooded rabble-rousing stage antics.

Whatever, Pauline's initial paranoia and suspicion was belied by the warmth of the reception the group were given. Indeed, so

impressive was the set that the basement was still humming with appreciation a full 15 minutes after the band had completed the second of their encores.

The nine new songs included in the set also gave good advance warning that their *Celebrating The Bullet*

album – due in January – should be well worth investigating.

Take a listen. It's not quite the same old song on next year's radio. *Adrian Thrills*



They seem to be veering in the direction of a more straightforward reggae groove

A funnier singer than Rotten

NME NOV 22 Bow Wow Wow promote their cassette at a booze-free disco.

MALCOLM MCLAREN HAS probably never been more on the nail – post-punk and present Thatcher Britain is a grey and dismal hole.

The trouble with McLaren's alternatives, though, has always been their impracticality: too much of what he says and does smack of ingenious dilettante. Of course his ability to irritate the media, just by giving it the slightest tickle, well, that is hilarious. The English, self-conscious, phlegmatic, clinging to their outdated sense of national pride (Specials, Jam, Upstarts all propagate that treadmill), believing in the spirit of the orthodox; they're natural conservatives.

So, just as an antidote to that depressant, McLaren's wheezes are momentarily distracting. If only they lasted; everyone knows there'll never be any social revolution imposed from below, but even to pretend it was around the corner? McLaren's answer is to dress up in fun clothes, be glamorous. "Pretend it's the tropics." Go native? A bit difficult in November.

Perhaps by a law of increasing returns, Malcolm McLaren may succeed with Bow Wow Wow where he failed with the New York Dolls and the Sex Pistols. Communism and anarchy don't go down too well with the Watney's and the JPS; besides, the Dolls were a really dreadful group and the Pistols seem to have spawned a million hangers-on – the new hippies. Bondage for tourists.

Now McLaren is making the mistake of selling underage sex with Bow Wow Wow, instead of just letting them get on with it. The media (including *NME*) swallow his bait; some of the hacks are outraged but they're the same blokes who leer at young girls in the street.

Chicken will sell and sell, *au naturel*, and the fact that McLaren can make sex controversial in 1980 is only further proof of the gutter mentality of a spiritually and culturally dead nation.

Bow Wow Wow are very good and exciting, they're much better musicians than the Sex Pistols. Annabella Lwin is a funnier singer than Rotten; David Barbarossa, Leigh Ray Gorman and Matthew Ashman don't deserve to be compared with the other washouts. They play exactly like their tapes, too – intriguing, sophisticated, bouncy songs celebrating fun. They aren't offensive.

I thought the audience at the Starlight was sparse for the group but good for the disco. For

They play exactly like their tapes – sophisticated, bouncy songs celebrating fun

Most of them are nearer to Annabella's age than the gaggle around the stage.

Bow Wow Wow look nervous and the audience is quiet. McLaren hovers at the back like a brooding mother hen. Annabella loses her temper; the lack of response is confusing.

Perhaps McLaren's stunts and ironies have backfired and no one trusts him any more.

£2.50, the regulars come here to skate, drink coke (no booze licence) and listen to loud, loud music. It's black and white, but they aren't into 2-Tone and violence.

Little kids float around with the glamour pussies.

Nothing untoward happened. After their second set, Bow Wow Wow slip off to skate. They've played, promoted their cassette and that's it. If they were really smart they'd jettison McLaren now and rely on their own talent to get rid of the nagging feeling that this is only another stunt, a clever joke, a publicity scam for a manufactured group. The new Monkees or the new Beatles?

Actually, it would be alright if they were. Maybe when McLaren drops his cynicism a couple of notches he'll have something to get serious about. Dress up and drop out. It's as good an answer as any. *Max Bell*



November 11, 1980: Bow Wow Wow's Annabella Lwin and Seditionaries-sporting palon stage at the Starlight Rooms, Hammersmith, West London

1980

OCTOBER—DECEMBER



Simple Minds frontman and co-founder Jim Kerr: "We began to grasp what was going on"

“Arrogance got me places”

And such places! Jim Kerr and SIMPLE MINDS have escaped humdrum Glasgow for European cityscapes, and embraced cold war paranoia to make “marching songs for desperate times”. “Every day we just open our eyes and minds,” says Kerr.

— NME OCTOBER 4 —

ONCE YOU GET onto the European mainland, it's hard not to be infected by the virulent strain of fatalism sweeping the Continent. En route to Charles De Gaulle Airport on the first stage of a journey back to the deceptive security of this island home, I'm injected with a final dose by a brazenly cheerful, walrus-moustached taxi driver.

The Russians are still far away, but Communists hold suburbs in the foothills of Paris, he moans. He sees conspiracies on every street corner, resentment in the face of youth reticent to defend the Tricolore. They're probably in on it too! This isn't speculation, his grey whiskers quiver, this is fact. Or so his paranoia will have it...

Simple Minds have been infected by the disease, but their singer Jim Kerr sensibly refers to it as an education. And while he's learning, he's not taking any sides. We're careering across Belgium and France in the back of a minibus, through lush farmland too uniform to hold our attention, so conversation turns to the uglier aspects of modern living.

At the moment Jim's recalling an eventful ride through East German customs after SM's Berlin gig.

“We were going through customs, playing a tape of the soundtrack from *Apocalypse Now*, and just as ‘The End’ started, a whole convoy of American tanks rolled past on their way to Berlin.”

Quite a coincidence of song and real life.

“Now how can you ignore things like that? I mean, people might say we're pretentious for using words like, er, guns, in our songs, but it would be more pretentious to ignore what's going on around us.”

He lapses into silence. We pick up the trail the following afternoon in a Parisian hotel room.

“It's so easy in Britain when you don't see a soldier or a gun, just to say, (*adopting a derisive tone*) ‘Oh, what is all this?’ But when you're here – and we've been in Europe four times this year, we've been here more than anywhere else – how can you not be affected by it?”

He extends his line of thought into his songs and those of his peers.

“The whole thing with this new European stuff... I mean, singing songs about Europe can be so crass unless you do it right. I remember a band in '77 called The Automatics, who did a sang called ‘When The Tanks are Rolling Over Poland’. I mean, whoo,” he sighs resignedly. “What's that all about?”

During a brief pause, the strains of Simple Minds' “I Travel” echo in my mind. The first track of this year's most subversive dance album, *Empires* »

SIMPLE MINDS EMPIRES AND DANCE



VIRGINIA TURBETT / GETTY

1980

OCTOBER–DECEMBER



Simple Minds: (l-r) Charlie Burchill, Derek Forbes, Jim Kerr, Michael MacNeil and Brian McGee

And Dance, it's a marching song for these desperate times. Above it all, Kerr's grandly exaggerated vocal taps tragic depths, when he sings: "Europe has a language problem/Talk, talk, talk, talking on/In Central Europe men are marching/Marching on and marching on/Love songs playing in restaurants..."

Kerr comments: "I think if we can do a song that's appealing, but with an edge so that it doesn't get too comfortable, people might listen to what's being said. And the language problem in the song is politics – the last line goes, 'Babble on.'"

Scheduled for single release, the message should hit home. The chorus has already formed a loop running through my mind: "Travel round, I travel round/Decadence and pleasure towns/Tragedies, luxuries, statues, parks and galleries."

Travel has obviously broadened Simple Minds.

Simple Minds broadened mine and now I'm travelling to Paris and Brussels to find out how they did it. Up until their Hammersmith Palais gig a few weeks back, I'd always damned them with very faint praise, saying basically that they covered well in the absence of gods out-of-town like Bowie and Roxy.

Their first album, *Life In A Day*, was a bulging holdall of influences regurgitated practically unchewed; cosy images of alienation and other modish themes nestled alongside jarring noises always a touch too familiar and comfortable to really cut it.

They revealed a more electronic bent on the second, *Real To Real Cacophony*, but things like the title track scanning almost identically Kraftwerk's "Radioactivity" didn't improve their critical status any. Coming in the wake of Numan, it was mostly dismissed as just another hopeful cash-in, but Simple Minds' rhythms have always packed too solid a punch for them to be bracketed under light-frame electronic pop, no matter how ethereal the topping. And though they're not doing anything that radically different now, they're certainly doing it a lot better.

Somehow they've made the great leap from being raw young impressionables unsure what to make of their vast input of information and influences, into a confident, adventurous band suddenly aware of their potential. The resulting album, *Empires And Dance*, is distinctly Simple Minds. They know it and are justifiably proud of it. It is everything Bowie's *Lodger* could have been if he were younger and more open to life going on around him. Like *Lodger*, *Empires And Dance* rapidly switches locations, but sensibly stays in Europe, whose problems are also ours. And unlike Bowie, Simple Minds are inexperienced enough to involve themselves with what they feel around them, using their songs as a field of operations for coming to terms with their own "confusion" – a word that crops up a lot in Kerr's conversation.

The album consists of gloriously depicted, desolate cityscapes, but however gloomy the music gets, a strong sense of discomfort prevents the listener cocooning himself in self-pitying melancholy. Simple Minds' struggle is not easily admired from a distance, but it has to be felt. That is the crucial thing.

SIMPLE MINDS' PRESENT visit to Europe comes courtesy of Peter Gabriel, who liked them enough to invite them along free of the massive fees usually associated with the support spots on prestigious tours. Not only that, he makes sure they get enough time

for a good soundcheck, too. This sort of behaviour ought to be common decency, but it's rare in the cut-throat world of rock'n'roll.

Personally, I never thought I'd be grateful to Gabriel for anything, but the sound in Brussels is great – you can even hear the words. Simple Minds open with "Capital City", a pulsing suspense story, then "Thirty Frames A Second" is even better, an autobiographical slice of Kerr's life viewed in flashback: "I lost my job/Security/Self-confidence/Bank account/Identity". The effect is overwhelming as the memory slips back another notch to the point where protagonist attempts to break free from the chains of his past – his family, religion, childhood. "Go back to father/Father where's my food?/Your food is on the table/But that can't be food/It is dirt."

"It used to be a lot heavier than that when I first wrote it," Kerr tells me now. "It was about

a man, who becomes a father, but he no longer recognises his children, because they don't take up his mistakes, so they turn around and say, 'I'm sorry, Dad, I don't recognise you any more.' They reject his food and everything. But it turns out to be the song of a man looking back, trying to grasp what purpose there is in existing, what is required, what you are meant to do. You too often get to the state of looking back, saying, 'I should have done this and I should have done that...'"

He pauses before starting up again angrily. "Sometimes it pisses me off; sometimes I wish I went the full way with songs. I always feel that I've left out the best and put in just the beginning.

"Well, that's the trappings of being 'contemporary', I think. Maybe if I get 'contemporary' enough to get in a safe position with finance, I'll be able to go out of control, to do just what the hell I want."

Throughout this conversation Kerr confuses the word "contemporary" with commercial. I ask him what stops him taking the songs as far as they'll go.

"It frightens me, because at the last minute I always think I don't know enough... Each day you get the kick when you think you see differently now, and one day you stop and think, 'Yes, finally, this is the answer.' But when does it stop being ambiguous? And when does it really start to get in there, to be direct?"

"My songs are just an attempt to educate myself, to get to grips with what's going on outside – start reading, start listening..."

Though we're in Paris, thoughts return to Glasgow. Family ties appear to be stronger north of the border, the processes of channelling that much harder to break away from. Kerr talks with slight discomfort at first about his past, but quickly opens to the subject.

"Sometimes I like to talk about it, and other times I don't. That whole Jimmy Boyle side of it gets glorified too much. Once a journalist asked me where I came from, and I said Gorbals, and the first lines of his article sort of said 'Gorbal Boy...' and things like that. It really came across the opposite of what I wanted to do. All that Alex Harvey street fighting man crap... There is beginning to be awareness in Glasgow, but there's still ignorance."

The life-dulling cycle of school-job-unemployment can't help increase it – especially in a town so culturally arid as Glasgow.

"Exactly, that's what it is. People get caught up in drink. There's not much to do, their jobs are boring, so at the weekend all they're concerned with is getting out and forgetting it. They meet a girl, want a car, then they're too busy working to pay for all these things. Before they know it, they're married – and once you're married, you're just the same as your father.

"I think there's an awareness there now – a lot of good new bands coming up. There always has been – we're by no means unusual. We weren't gifted with this awareness; a lot of people had it at school, but it just comes to the point where they think, 'Ah well, what's the use?'"

"When you go home, people come up to you and say that you can't be doing all that good, because you haven't been on *Top Of The Pops* yet. Well, I'm stumped by that response! I'm travelling, it's really great, I'm having a good time. But I find myself getting a bit sad [not to mention patronising – Ed], because I think other people should get the chance to see the world. I mean, I don't think of myself as having more talent than anyone else. If anything, I've had more cheek, or perhaps arrogance, and that's what got me these places."

IF “30 FRAMES A Second” exorcised Kerr’s private past, Simple Minds are still stuck with their public one. Especially here in Europe, where “contemporary” pressures dictate that they devote the remaining three fifths of their 35-minute set to older, less substantial numbers. “Premonition”, “Factory” and “Pleasantly Disturbed” are all sweet enough to consolidate their considerable following on the Continent, but they lack the power of anything on *Empires And Dance*.

Sometimes, SM’s willingness to conform to commercial needs works against them, but then without an ear for strong, disco beats and persuasive tunes, *Empires And Dance* wouldn’t have been half so potent.

“It was great the last time we were in Europe,” recalls Kerr. “In the nightclubs, ‘Premonition’ was played alongside Ohio Players, Donna Summer and the Talking Heads. It was really appealing for us to hear DJs liked it as much as Donna Summer; ‘Premonition’ has far more direct substance.

“That was why it was important to have a really good drum and bass sound, which you couldn’t get by doing an album for £200 and releasing it on your own small label. That’s taking a ‘contemporary’ route and hopefully putting a kick into it. There’s an awareness in the song that you’ll not normally get at this ‘contemporary’ level.”

Guitarist Charlie Burchill chips in: “‘Premonition’ is dance music, but it’s also discomfoting – people listen to it and that discomfort spreads.”

But doesn’t it get to the point where one cushions the discomfort to satisfy commercial needs?

Kerr replies: “Well, if you want as much control as possible you need money. If you’ve got it, you’re no longer in the company’s debt. Even if you don’t hate them, there’s this mental barrier which says if you don’t please them they’ll treat you tit for tat and say you’ll not get this or that. It is a struggle, because we do want to remain ‘contemporary’ and use the channels already provided. And because it’s ‘contemporary’ we do make concessions. We are ambitious. Our music might appear transparent, but if you’ve got an open mind it says a lot.”

True now, but cynics might say that Simple Minds’ career suffered due to early guidance by similar principles. Maybe a bit of background will expand Kerr’s own interpretation of their past. Formed around a nucleus of himself, Burchill and drummer Brian McGee, who all attended the same Glaswegian Catholic school, early incarnations of the band used to play the music they enjoyed listening to at home: The Doctors Of Madness, Velvet Underground, even Genesis – “*Foxtrot* was the first album I bought,” admits Kerr.

Later joined by bassist Derek Forbes, who’d been playing in dance band in Spain and solo 12-string in pubs and clubs, and keyboards player Michael MacNeil, their sole motivation was fun when they came to record the demos that led to their Arista contract and first album *Life In A Day*. “We were a very marketable proposition,” recalls Kerr candidly. “There was no real venom or fight. At the time there was no real competition in Scotland. Life was nice and safe, no real heart.”

They blithely went in to record their first album, possessing all the right noises but no positive direction, content and pleased with themselves for getting this far. The reviews quickly bracketed them with the likes of Ultravox and Magazine, and being Simple Minds (’78 version) they were quite happy about that too, flattered even.

But disillusionment set in shortly after its release.

“We didn’t see much of ourselves in it,” remarks Kerr. “It was hard to see what went wrong. After a few months it was a matter of taking the whole thing and smashing it up”

Instead of carefully dismantling their career and reconstructing it, they persuaded Arista to let them back into the studio before they’d completed any new songs. It shows in the subsequent *Real To Real Cacophony*, which was recorded so fast they didn’t have time to sift out the influences properly. Much of it sounds like straight theft.

“Yes,” laughs Kerr. “It seemed to me as though there was an act distinguishing good thieves and bad thieves – a good bank job and not so successful. But it became more us.

“Listening to the first album now,” he continues, “I can see that we didn’t really have the ability to

pinpoint then what we were getting out of these bands, to break it down to the appealing elements in their music, to which we would add our own.”

Their music struck him as so empty, he continues, their lack of motivation frightening.

“We were in the studio recording *Real To Real*, when news of things like Pol Pot were filtering through to us and I was thinking at first, what is the point of sitting here and pretending that nothing’s happening outside? And the confusion carried through to the recording level. We began to grasp what was going on. We still admit that we hadn’t kicked out every single influence, but at least *Real To Real* proved we were aware of the fact, that the battle was definitely going on.”

How did he respond to all the negative reviews that greeted it, which suggested that Simple Minds would hop any worthwhile bandwagon passing by?

“It was a little unfair to suggest we were coming behind these other [electronic] bands, because at the time Numan was just on his way up and we could’ve jumped in and said, ‘Yes, this is us.’ We could have made *Real To Real* a lot more direct. Look, with the electronic thing you can switch the synthesizer on and get really appealing tunes, to which you could sing typical science-fiction lyrics and things like that. The record company would have loved it if we chose something so direct...”

“The reviews seemed to disregard the fact how easy it is to manipulate the public,” interrupts Burchill. “We could have all worn the same futuristic clothes, splashed wires and capacitors across the album cover and all that...”

“But we were trying to suggest that we’d sussed something out, that there was something going on outside us getting a debut album into the charts at 28. The whole thing with us has been an education. Every day we just open our eyes and minds, opening up more and more, slowly forming a backbone of our own,” concludes Kerr.

Simple Minds’ stunning contrast of naivety and suss works. Still in awe of their heroes – “Big” Kid Strange, Lou Reed, Peter Gabriel – they’re inspired by them now, as opposed to being shackled to them.

In Brussels, part-time SM sax player and full-time Endgame Paul Wishart and chatty Derek urge me to catch Gabriel’s show. I’ve seen it before, I say, and can’t share their enthusiasm. However, temporarily caught up by it, I try again. I find myself standing next to Kerr, who notices my growing discomfort.

Gabriel’s well-chosen images sanitise the dirt and pain of his real-life subjects, whereas the youthful probing of his chosen supports hit all the sensitive spots. Compare his “Biko” to their more oblique, brilliant “This Fear Of Gods” and check which one reaches the heart of the matter.

It’s not all Gabriel’s fault. This Belgian audience, like the London one I saw in spring and the Parisian fans of a few days later, gives

him far too easy a time. Their indiscriminate, enthusiastic applause gets embarrassing. I rant my disapproval in Kerr’s ear. He partly concurs, but adds later: “When I see Gabriel now I can’t see it from the outside. There’s still this little boy in me that remains from the time I saw Genesis when I was 13, and I’m still in awe of him. He still has integrity [I agree]. Take, for instance, something like Throbbing Gristle. They give the impression that they’d rather take pictures of a man getting beat up in the street than help him. ‘Biko’ might drown in its art but it still draws attention to its subject.”

Did he want the sort of uncritical adulation Gabriel’s audience heaped on their hero?

“That’s difficult. At times on stage you feel like a mad dog barking. You don’t know whether you’re here to entertain them, to provoke or make contact with them. There’s a lot of confusion going on. We do have arguments within the band about things like encores – whether

this or that one would have made a better encore. But I’m not interested in that – that’s pure show-business talk.

“I mean, what’s the point? You’ve got the audience right up there already, you must have impressed them enough, and then you come back on stage on your knees?”

These days, Simple Minds are confident enough to stand on their own 12 feet. Their own feats provide all the support they need. *Chris Bohn* •

“Numan was just on his way up and we could have jumped in”



1980

OCTOBER–DECEMBER

One of the great men of his age

JOHN LENNON is murdered in New York. *NME's* editor writes an obituary meditating on the man and his career. He ponders what Lennon stood for, and how one might view his death as an opportunity to learn about life. As Lennon said, "You have to do it yourself."

— **NME** DECEMBER 20 —

"The world revolves, not around the creators of new noises, but the creators of new values" Friedrich Nietzsche

"And so, dear friends, you'll just have to carry on" John Lennon

PEACE AND LOVE. If we are to take anything from the tragic death of John Lennon – and God knows, the senselessness of his murder defies meaning – then it must, paradoxically, be these values we take away from the slaughter on New York's 72nd Street last week.

It would be comforting to say that John Lennon died for peace and love, but his death was not that of the martyr, even though this was a role he seemed to relish at some points of his life. No, he died without reason at the hands of a madman in a city and country where psychosis, violence and assassination are virtually a way of life. Another celebrity in his position would have had a bodyguard, but that was not John Lennon's way. His trust, his willingness to stand naked before the world – sometimes literally – probably cost him his life.

But if John Lennon did not die for peace and love, then those were certainly the values for which he lived, which underpinned his work and which, by the close of his 40 years, he seemed to have finally realised in his personal life. He did not die a vexed and tortured genius, as the myth of the modern artist often seems to demand – it was a myth to which Lennon himself was totally opposed; "Worship the survivors," he said – but as a fulfilled and humble family man approaching middle age.

Many rock stars have striven to grow old gracefully, but John Lennon managed it better than any, and in the last in-depth interview he granted before his death – to *Playboy* magazine – he spoke with contempt of those of his peers like the Rolling Stones, who were still "surrounded by a gang... That means you're still 16 in your head." Never mind that his last record, *Double Fantasy*, lacked the creative »



November 26, 1980:
John Lennon in the
SoHo gallery where
he and Yoko Ono
shot a lovemaking
scene for the "(Just
Like) Starting Over"
video, New York City

urgency and inspiration that characterised his best work – though it shared its scrupulous and sometimes embarrassing honesty – his life was in better shape than ever, and the impression given by the man's last flurry of public statements and appearances was that of a mind not out of touch, feeding on former glories and addled by bad living, but alert, hungry, ready to confront and embrace the world from which he had, for several years, consciously retreated in order to be with his son Sean and develop what he saw as the weaker side of his character. He was cut down in his prime.

IN TODAY'S GROWING climate of pessimism, disillusion and a newly exalted brutality – be it economic, physical or emotional and spiritual brutality – it is difficult to understand, or even to recall accurately, the optimism of the '60s and its massed calls for peace and love. Most of it was, in any case, wilful escapism, or what now seems an almost painful naivety.

None of that negates the time's underlying idealism, the belief in a saner, more just, dignified and rewarding order of things – and the struggle for the realisation of these values was something Lennon maintained until the end of his life. Over the last five years he had come to see the struggle in a more domestic setting, in the need to create a more equable and balanced relationship between the sexes, a relationship more suitable to the modern age. Ono and Lennon felt they were still, albeit in a more subtle and understated way, trailblazing a new set of values. Lennon became a "house-husband", while Yoko assumed the traditional male role of dealing with and manipulating the world of commerce and money.

It was this very fusion of the personal and the political, the religious and the artistic, that gave Lennon's work much of its resonance, and that set him aside from the many fellow travellers who turned out to be merely gifted artisans or self-destructive visionary obsessives. It was not merely that his songs provided the soundtrack for our lives that made Lennon the "voice of his generation" of current media cliché, but that they so often seemed to crystallise the mood of the times, and to do so with an honesty that was apparent in the way the man lived out his life.

That is one reason why his loss has hit the world so hard. Like most of us he was often selfish and unpleasant, but he was never miserly with himself or his soul, at least not in the latter part of his life. He gave. He shared. And now he's gone, we too seem diminished. The part of us that responded to the man's essential goodness, his dignity, his openness and his optimism will be that much more difficult to locate without him around.

To say he is destined to be judged as one of the great men of his age is not mere emotionalism or fan adulation. Greater tributes have and will be heaped on the heads of "great statesmen" who in reality are bitter and unrequited humans believing in little beyond their own power lust and the expediency of single or mass murder. But John Lennon was more loved than any politician and was feared only by the hypocrites and the false demagogues who frequently tried to belittle his life, his beliefs and his work and to whom he remained utterly opposed from first until last. There was never any real reconciliation between him and the establishment, no matter how rich or famous he may have become.

For though it would be unwise to be too cynical about the multitude of tributes that are now being tossed after him, few of John Lennon's fans will not taste the smack of hypocrisy in the media's gushing reaction to his passing. Alive, he was all too often mercilessly ridiculed, sneered at and, worst of all, smugly patronised. The world liked him most when he was buttoned up in the comparative safety of a Beatle suit, where his nonconformism, vitriol and disdain for straight society could be



A few days after their wedding, John and Yoko stage their first "bed-in for peace" at the Amsterdam Hilton, March 25–31, 1969

He was never miserly with himself or his soul

conveniently overlooked or passed off as a contemporary twist on the hallowed traditions of showbusiness. Once the initial outrage at the four rather effeminate, long-haired young men with raucous music, provincial accents and a disrespectful Scouse wit had passed, it was welcome to the fab world of our loveable mop-tops, and no cause for concern. At least until acid.

But John Lennon often hated his Beatle suit, though he doubtless relished the fame and fortune that it brought him. Later he would

say that he never wanted the group to wear suits, to be groomed: "It was all Paul and Brian's [Epstein's] idea." In any case, the image of The Beatles that was projected was largely phoney. "They never talked about the orgies," he told Jann Wenner, editor of *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1970. "The Beatles tours were like Fellini's *Satyricon*."

The conflict between Lennon and society that had been a major feature of his life up until Beatlemania was, however, temporarily muted, channelled into oblique lyrical statements in his songs, or more obviously, given free reign in the collections of satirical cartoons, stories and sick jokes that he released as two books, *In His Own Write* and *A Spaniard In The Works*. Elsewhere his acid tongue and irreverent wit still made his leaders and supposed wisers uneasy and occasionally landed him in trouble, as with his infamous claim that the group were "bigger than Jesus Christ". But basically, he was tamed.

"All that business was fucking awful," he said later. "It was fuckin' humiliation. One has to completely humiliate oneself to be what The Beatles were and that's what I resent; I didn't know, I didn't foresee. It happened bit by bit, gradually, until you're doing exactly what you don't want to do with the sort of people you can't stand – the sort of people you hate when you're 10."

BEFORE LENNON HAD donned Beatle garb, he had been Lennon the art school tearaway, Lennon the gang leader, Lennon the rock'n'roll lout, Lennon the man who pissed on nuns from the balcony of his Hamburg digs. He was variously admired, feared, loved, loathed and tolerated. He never bothered

about acceptance beyond his peer group and his standing as a musician.

He met Yoko during his acid-gobbling period, in 1966, and two years later the couple finally came together. His decision to abandon his marriage to his first wife Cynthia for Yoko seemed to signal the resumption of hostilities with society – or rather society's hostilities with Lennon.

Yoko was certainly attacked and lampooned both among Lennon's inner circle and among fans and followers of the band. She was, after all, a "foreigner", an avant-garde artist of the sort Britain has always been unable to accept, and what was more, she was a fiercely independent woman. Later she would be tarred as the "woman who broke up The Beatles" – this was probably true, but then, so what? Can the institution of a rock group really be so sacrosanct that it becomes more important than the welfare of its individuals?

When Lennon began to take the offensive, returning his MBE "in protest against Britain's involvement in the Nigeria Biafra war, against our support of America in Vietnam, and against 'Cold Turkey' slipping down the charts" and generally speaking out against the moral corruption and hypocrisy that surrounded him, the full force of British moral indignation was turned against the pair.

They were busted for cannabis. ("I said to Yoko, 'Quick, call the police, someone's trying to get in.' Then I realised it *was* the police.") The full-frontal shot of the pair on the cover of their *Two Virgins* cover was held up for scorn and forced into brown paper bags for marketing. As for crawling around together in bags on stage, staging "events", spending their honeymoon in bed to launch a campaign for world peace... it was worse even than The Beatles' dalliance with psychedelics and the woolly eastern mysticism of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (alias "Sexy Sadie").

Lennon seemed able to soak up the pressure being brought on him from inside and outside The Beatles without trouble – he was, though extremely sensitive, also an extremely tough nut. "You have to be a bastard to make it," he said in 1970. "And The Beatles were the biggest bastards of all."

In fact, the drugs, the constant insatiable expectations of the fans, the need to preserve a unified Beatles front when the quartet were privately bickering, the demands of the newly emerged hippy movement for an impossible Peace And Love Apocalypse Now – perfectly expressed in the immature demands of Jim Morrison's "The End" – the grisly spectacle of the Vietnam war and the collapse of a projected Peace Festival in Toronto, the whole psychic confusion of the times as our optimism foundered on the inhospitable reefs of reality; these amounted to a load that not even John and Yoko with their newly discovered love shield of invincibility could carry.

The result was a withdrawal from drugs and a course in Dr Arthur Janov's Primal Therapy that regrounded the duo in the here and now and possible. On *Plastic Ono Band* Lennon owned up; he confronted and exorcised his personal past, quit kidding himself and others about the possibilities of the public present for the "alternative"/"underground"/"hippy" movement. The album – possibly the finest, most harrowing, most compulsive work of his career – ended with a mantra of defiance to the world: "*Don't believe in Krishna, don't believe in Jesus, don't believe in Beatles, I just believe in me. Yoko and me. That's reality. The dream is over.*"

It was not a popular record – most people didn't want to wake up. But it was the watershed of John Lennon's career, as an artist, just as meeting Yoko had been the watershed of his life. In either case, nothing would be the same again.

The hostility was not ill-judged. Lennon had an acute understanding of British society and its processes, and in particular the class system. He'd seen it from top to bottom. Though not particularly working class himself, unlike Ringo Starkey and George Harrison, he had always assumed the mantle of the underdog and the outsider. He came from a broken home, he had never known his father and had been handed by his mother Julia to an aunt for his upbringing, and had lost his mother while still a teenager. No wonder that, even at age 40, he would still say "there's part of me that thinks I'm a loser".

But there was another, equally strong and perhaps more indelible mark on the young Lennon than familial status, the mark of the artist, and if he didn't match that other great English visionary, William Blake, in seeing visions of angels in trees as a child, then by his own admission, "There was something wrong with me, I thought, because I saw things

other people didn't see. I would find myself seeing hallucinatory images of my face." Or: "It caused me to always be a rebel, but on the other hand I wanted to be loved and accepted."

If the dislocation of sensibility in the young John Lennon became one of the driving forces in his rebellion and search for identity, then childhood itself always occupied a special place for him. His work is full of references to childhood, its magic and innocence. "*When I was younger, so much younger than today/I never needed anybody's help in any way,*" he sang in "Help", and the sentiment was to recur in many different forms. "*When I was a boy, everything was right.*" He wrote songs to his own children, even getting the 11-year-old Julian to play drums with him on a version of Lee Dorsey's "Ya Ya", and always seemed to have a natural correspondence with children – one of the most memorable photographs of him was, for me, with a kid on his knee in the *Magical Mystery Tour* film. Two innocents abroad.

Lennon never lost that innocence, never lost the vision of the child who saw right through the Emperor's new clothes, even if at times he seemed to be the emperor himself, leading his troops into cul-de-sacs, or merely marching up the hill and back down again.

At the height of his bed and peace antics he was dubbed a "fool" and he seized upon the term with a fierce glee. "*Everybody had a good year, everybody put the fool down,*" he sang on "Let It Be" with tongue firmly in cheek, and again, more pertinently, on "Instant Karma": "*How on earth you gonna see/ Laughing at fools like me?/ Who on earth do you think you are?/ A superstar?/ Well, right you are.*"

His fondness for looking back, for remembering, for re-evaluating the past on his songs, his interviews, was part of his constant search for self-discovery, self-awareness, self-control. He came to understand his own complex nature intimately, to recognise the fiercely competitive sides of his nature. "It is the most violent people who go for love and peace," he said in his *Playboy* interview. "I sincerely believe in love and peace. I am a violent man who has learned not to be violent and who regrets his violence."

The conflict between Lennon the fighter and Lennon the peacemaker was always apparent. Even his peace campaign gave way to a period of agitprop militancy when the Lennons appeared in Japanese riot gear to promote "Power To The People" and walked the streets of New York with loudhailer and Red Mole posters on a demonstration in opposition to British policy in Northern Ireland. He engaged in a lengthy dialogue with Tariq Ali's left-wing magazine *Black Dwarf* about the words to his song "Revolution". "The lyrics stand today," he said before his death. "Don't expect me to be on the barricades unless it is with flowers."

HE'S GONE NOW, anyway, that John Lennon. Gone, gone, gone. People will say his spirit and works live on, as indeed they do; somebody will start a "Lennon Lives" campaign, but the brutal truth is that he's gone. Nothing could have emphasised it more than the sudden cremation of his body without ceremony or the grand-slam funeral usually reserved for mortals as popular as he was.

In the last interview he gave before his death – to RKO Radio in New York City – Lennon confronted those who were angry at his having spent the last five years in seclusion:

"Why were people angry at me? For not working? You know, if I were dead they wouldn't be angry at me. If I'd conveniently died after *Walls And Bridges* they'd be writing this worshipful stuff about what a great guy I was and all. But I didn't die and it just infuriated people that I would live and just do what I wanted to do."

So let's not allow our grief to turn into a misplaced despair. That was not what John Lennon's life was for; just the opposite. He said that if The Beatles had any message it was to learn to swim... "Don't expect John Lennon or Yoko Ono or Bob Dylan or Jesus Christ to come and do it for you. You have to do it yourself."

If you really loved and believed in John Lennon, that's exactly what you'll do. He made something good and valuable and enduring for his life. We should all try and do the same. Goodbye Hello. *Neil Spencer* •

LENNON

Elegy for Winston O' Boogie

...the Beatles' suit, though he doubtless

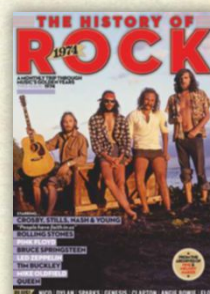
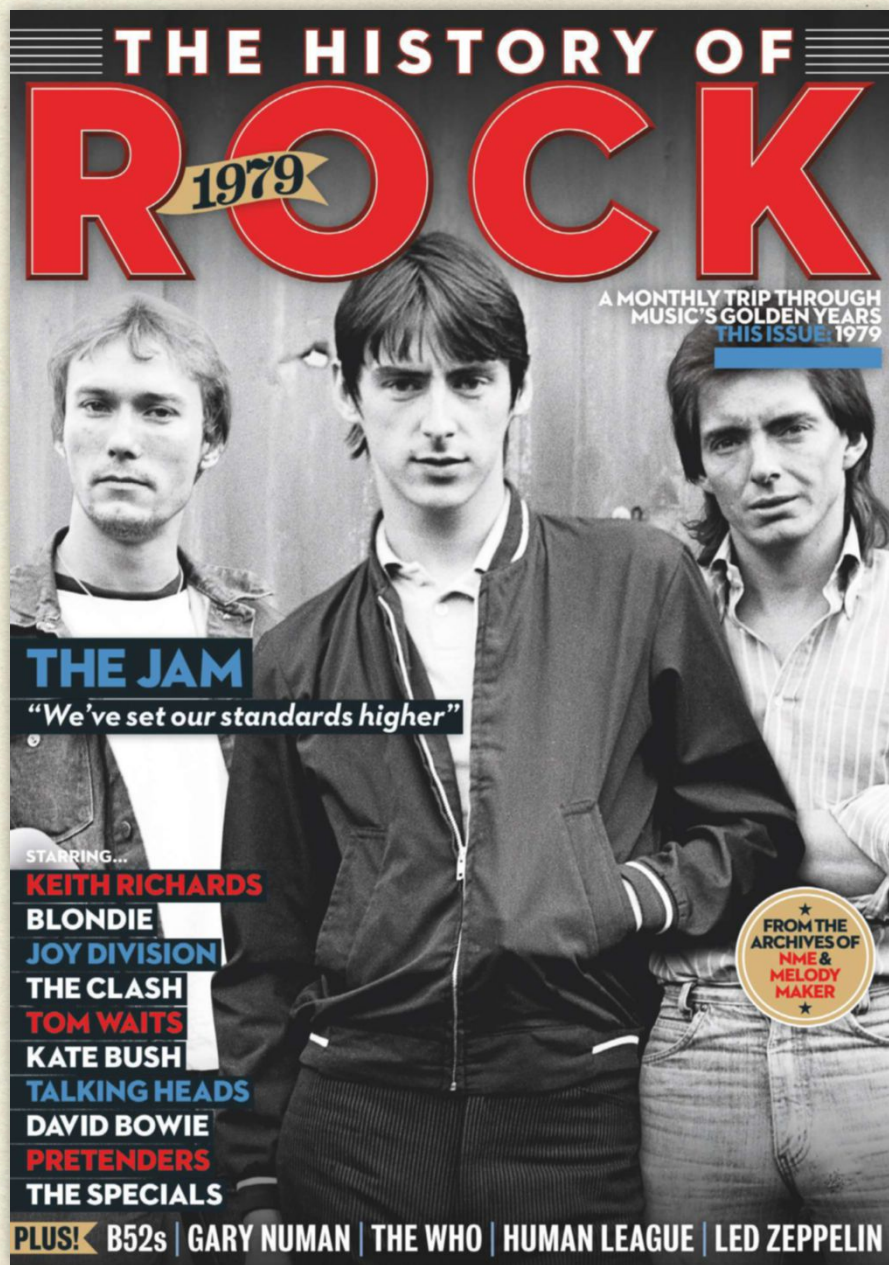
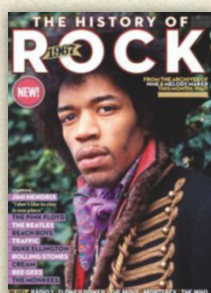
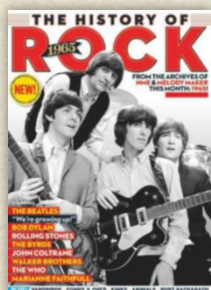
Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (alias 'Sexy

children, even getting the el-

old Julian to play drums with

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

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Readers' letters

MM JUL-DEC Lennon mourned, a critic criticised, gimmicks deprecated and more...

RIP John Lennon

There is no hope for the world now. First today's music dies with Ian Curtis, and now the father of rock music dies....

And at my school they won't even play Beatles records because, well, to cut a long story short, they prefer Spandau Ballet. Aren't they trendy? What's it all mean? Is this the beginning of the end? Who would become a rock star anyway? So many questions. It seems to me that U2 are the only answer.

THE OPTIMIST, E Yorks

I personally was pretty cut up on hearing of John Lennon's death. I too shed tears for John and his family, as I suppose did many. But his death did project further his ideas, and hopefully impressed them indelibly in people's minds. It seems a horribly blunt and somehow ridiculous way of getting the point across.

ANNY, South Shields



If you dare print an article by Burchill or Parsons saying they don't give a shit about John Lennon, and that in their day people like him were made to have their hair cut or sent to Northampton, I will kill you.

That is all.

Love, A SENSIBLE PERSON

John Lennon wrote songs often about lov'n' peace, but I'd still like to rip the heart out of the bastard that killed him. How can it be that such a guy with such vision and with so much truth to give can just be blown away like that? How can I advertise my sorrow? How can you sleep?

AN ANGRY PERSON.

There's money to be made out of his death. Don't make it you or yours.

JIMBO, Devon
(All from NME, Dec 20)



Get happy!

With happy sing-along pop music seemingly "played out", it is no wonder record sales recently have hit a slump. Indeed the modern music world is in a sad depression, with the latest so-called "No 1" songs mostly no more than miserable-sounding dirges.

Killing and rape was the theme of Kenny Rogers' "Coward Of The County".

M*A*S*H came up with the commendable lyric "Suicide Is Painless", and now Don McLean (and everyone else) is "Crying". Even the usually lively Eurovision Song Contest was topped by the distinctly plaintive "What's Another Year". Who knows—perhaps the next craze will be the "Black Ram Band"!

I wish the entire music scene would stop taking itself so seriously and change its tune to cheerful music. Record listeners, I'm sure, would buy that.

WJ THOMAS, Cathcart, Glasgow
(MM Aug 9)

World politics newsflash

Instead of spending millions on atomic weapons, increase our dole money and we'll fight them with our bare hands.

DAVE UNKNOWN, Poole, Dorset
(NME Sep 6)

If Ronald Reagan becomes American President, then who's going to be around to hand out the Oscars?

SHTAINBECK, North Allerton, Yorkshire (NME July 19)



In defence of Floyd

Having read Allan Jones' review of Pink Floyd's gig (MM, August 9), I must write in defence of Floyd.

Floyd produced an expressive and technically accurate reproduction of *The Wall*. Admittedly the music is introspective and sobering. However, Floyd have never claimed that it is anything else. Those who expected a jolly show full of laughs and fun should have gone to see *Monty Python & The Holy Grail* or Des O'Connor.

The only fault with the event lay not with the band but with the Earls Court management.

I arrived at 7.15, but thanks to the appalling way in which people were herded through a hopelessly inadequate turnstile system, did not reach my seat until 8.15 – 15 minutes after the band had started. Many people were delayed even further. Having paid something in the region of £30 for the privilege of being there at all, this seemed ridiculous.

This aside, Floyd gave a superb performance, and if I had attended every performance of *The Wall* in the UK I should still want to go again.

ALISON DEMPSTER, Redland, Bristol (MM Aug 23)

Al: in all, just another brick...

Allan Jones was always the most nervous critic. Success brought him anxiety; wealth worried him.

Written as an expression of doubt, "Troubled Waters" became one of the most tedious reports of all time. Two hours in preparation, most notable perhaps was the sheer persistence with which Allan Jones – increasingly using the MM as a vehicle for his own morbid preoccupations – slugged home his pessimistic visions.

Dragged out over a half a page, Jones' opera of misery and coruscating self-doubt was finally more tiresome than moving. Soporific wasn't the word – Jones would've put Lemmy to sleep. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, tear down the wall, Allan.

MIKE SPARKES, Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury, Bucks (MM Aug 23)



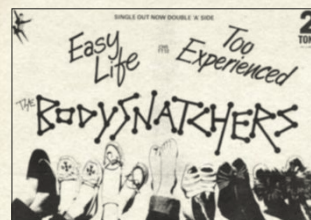
C30, C60... gone?

Everybody is writing about the state of the British music scene. Low sales are preventing record companies from signing new bands, and home taping is the cheap answer to the sales problem.

To prevent this, record companies should look into ways of reducing prices. Singles as they used to be (in 7in, a plain white cover, and black vinyl) would be cheaper than the 12in, multicoloured versions in glossy picture sleeves.

These silly gimmicks are putting buyers off. People buy music, not pretty colours.

ADRIAN CHANDLER, Swindon, Wilts (MM, Sep 6)



1980

MONTH BY MONTH



Coming next... in 1981!

SO THAT WAS 1980. Respect!

Certainly, 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, 1981!...

KRAFTWERK

"I SEE US as the musical Bauhaus," says Ralf Hütter, cornered on tour in Europe. "In their time they could work in theatre, architecture, photography and short films, but they did not really have the technology to apply their ideas to music; we now have it."

TOM WAITS

THE BALLADEER WRYLY arrives in London, to discourse on fish, Bruce Springsteen and his current work. "I'm thinking of putting out an album called 'My Favourites'," he says. "I'm just gonna take 12 songs by other artists, with a picture of me on the cover listening to them."

DEAD KENNEDYS

THE CALIFORNIAN PUNK phenomenon hit the UK and discover new stage-invasion protocols. "In the States there's a lot more of what is called slam, dance and crash from stage invaders," says frontman Jello Biafra. "They get up on stage and quickly dive off, rather than just sitting there like a bunch of bozos."

PLUS...

MARVIN GAYE!

BOB DYLAN!

THE CURE!

| FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT** |

THE HISTORY OF **ROCK**

Every month, we revisit long-lost *NME* and *Melody Maker* interviews and piece together *The History Of Rock*. This month: 1980.

"Don't walk away in silence..."



Relive the year...

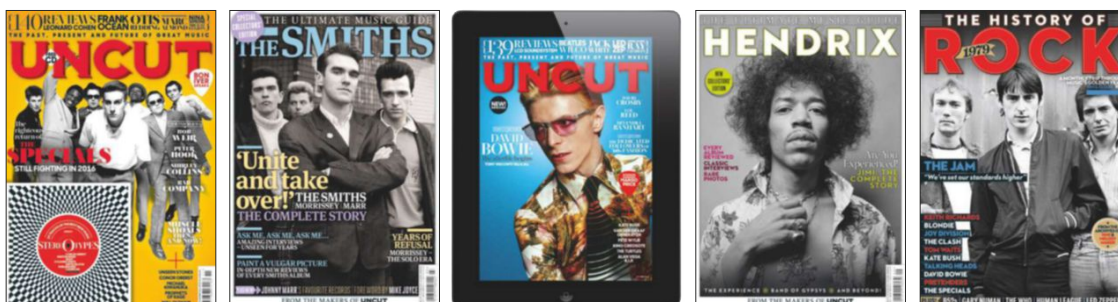
PINK FLOYD BUILT A WALL AROUND THE WORLD

**THE SPECIALS AND MADNESS
TOOK 2-TONE GLOBAL**

**MUSIC LOST IAN CURTIS
AND JOHN LENNON**

...and TOM PETTY, IRON MAIDEN,
CAPTAIN BEEFHEART, PAUL WELLER and many more shared
everything with *NME* and *MELODY MAKER*

More from **UNCUT**...



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