

OnDit

# On Disc

The On Dit Rock Supplement



LIME SPIDERS

## THE LIME SPIDERS COME ALIVE!

by Alexander Grous

They approach the stage with heads hanging low and loose; On stage they could be just another Western suburb garage band about to play a gig.

This group of seething individuals constitute the Lime Spiders, who weave a web of furious, demented music analogous to a rush of adrenalin overpowering your senses.

Drawing on an early grunge influence, Lime Spiders began in early 1981 and have had at least three break ups, but now have released their debut album, *The Cave Comes Alive*.

Drawing a wide cross section of people, the band likes to be noticed, and has had a remarkable climb from obscurity winning a battle of the bands contest earlier on, and plowing headstrong ever since.

Mick Blood is the band's singer and chief lyricist, magnetising and blasting the crowds with his gravelly, powerful voice. On the last legs of a national tour, I caught the band as they were busily preparing to deliver the first of two Adelaide gigs.

In the kitchen of their hotel, Mick and the bands guitarist Gerard Corben talked between cups of tea and coffee. Gerard staggered around as any normal individual who is woken early and had been on the road incessantly, while Mick was ready to leave and tape a segment for *Simulrock*.

Mick spent a good deal of time talking about his recent holiday in Greece, which he was quite pleased about. "It's a fantastic place! Not only are the people hospitable, but the food is good and cheap, and the country runs rife with history and places to see."

I asked him about the song *Theory of Thira* on the new album, which contains *Bouzouki*.

"Yeah well, that one is definitely influenced by the holiday. It's my favourite track on the album, and I believe it just adds a little stamp of class. People are often quick to categorize you as a hard rock band, or grunge or whatever. This song just leaps out and confounds those kind of people. Besides that, it's a nice contrast to some of the other tracks." Gerard adds, "We needed a bouzouki on the track, so since none of us play it we looked up our little musicians union handbook and brought in someone. They came in at about three in the morning and we had it done by six."

Asking the band about their early origins, they are quick to point out that they are a group of guys who like so many bands began playing for fun, and before they knew it were becoming successful in their endeavours.

"You know, when we first started we would just jam out in our sheds or whatever. But don't get me wrong, we played our dues gaining a credible reputation, we played and played and played!"

Mick looks at Gerard who is busy scratching his three day growth. Gerard adds, "Yeah, we sort of every once in a while would break up and then get back together. We had formed a band previously called *The Most*, and we were basically all school friends who just wanted to do the same thing in playing. Across the other side of Sydney there was this band called the Lime Spiders forming, with Mick, and after the band won the battle of the bands, they broke up. A pretty good start I'd say!"

The early sounds of the Lime Spiders is something I asked Gerard about, since the band was spawned in the wake of much of the grunge era of the early 80's.

"I guess we did, and still do have something of a grunge sound about us. We are primarily guitar orientated, and we love the loud reverberating sound of thousands of watts of output. (Power hungry maybe?). I don't think we can be classified as heavy grunge, you know, I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die type of thing repeated hundreds of times. A lot of grunge nowadays tends to be pretty ratshit stuff, turning you into a moron. We are, I guess, a bit more towards the other end of the grunge spectrum."

The band has gone from being a garage band just eight months ago, to a major record deal with Virgin, and a hugely successful debut LP. Gerard thought the success formula

that, do this." I don't think that you can still be at your best when that begins to happen."

"The Lime Spiders are very much a down to earth band. We get out there before and after gigs and mix with people, we're not just some guys playing on stage. I like it when a crowd is screaming or yelling. This is where the real rush comes from! Hopefully we will be able to show that you can still sign on with the big labels, and still be 'independent'."

Referring back to the band developing its sound, Gerard reflected on the prospect of stagnating their sound.

"We will certainly be changing and evolving, you very often just shrivel up and become pretty boring or lifeless unless

women. I mean, this was a song that was tongue in cheek and had no meaning behind it! But they went crazy! We even were supposed to do a gig at one of their venues, which was pretty big, but they told us no way. We ended up going elsewhere and packing the place to capacity, whereby they were turning people away. Next thing you know they tell us to play for them anytime, and they start to play our music again! That's what I call hypocrisy! Really standing by your principles.

"Don't get me wrong on this, some of my friends are feminists, and I'm not knocking that. Everyone does what they believe in. But these women didn't even really listen to the song, and worse, they did such



was one of perseverance.

"I can't really account for the fact that we have become successful pretty quick, except for the fact that we have just been at it for long enough. Maybe that's the secret of success? You just keep going at it, and at it, and if you do it for long enough something is bound to happen! Shit I hope so! I mean you always dream of doing OK, and when it does finally happen you can guarantee that it has come about through a lot of hard work. We don't sit on our arses all day!"

Perhaps one pitfall of many bands is that they are a good independent outfit at first, and then turn into a mushy, soft product of commercialisation. Did the Lime Spiders find this as an inevitable problem with a big recording label?

"I don't think you will ever find us compromising our sound, we like the following we have a lot, and we don't ever want to be one of the 'unapproachables'. To us the crowd is everything, and we appreciate their feedback. I believe we can become more successful than we are now, and still maintain our individuality. The sound we get now is dictated by ourselves, and maybe the time to quit will be when some producer is saying, 'No, don't do

you do. Just look at the number of groups who you might find yourself thinking that these guys are the same as they were ten years ago or whatever. You develop both musically and professionally with the times; you've got to survive!"

Does the crowd then, become an important part of that success?

"The day we stop being interested in what the crowd thinks we are in trouble! I like them to give back some kind of response; I hate the silent, don't respond to two shifts type crowd. I'd rather have them come up to me and say 'fuck off you wanker', rather than just sitting there and staring!"

The band's previous success with *Twentyfifth Hour* and *Weirdo Libido* are not as infamous as *Slave Girl*. There emerged some interesting insiders about the song.

"*Slave Girl* was written by Mick one day, who wanted to write a senseless, sick song. Well the hype and bullshit it generated was unreal! Some feminists on 4ZZZ in Brisbane went overboard, banning it from the station and refusing to play anything else by the Lime Spiders. They said it was sexually disgusting and derogatory towards

a quick turn around when money flashed in their eyes that it's sickening! We still get a kick from that adventure."

Some people don't realise that the song was to be included in the New Australian movie *Young Einstein*, which is the story of a young Australian kid discovering rock n'roll. The song however did not make it to the movie as it was supposed to. This is quite a rich soundtrack movie, with Lou Reed, The Models and other artists contributing.

"It's a shame about the song not being included, but we wrote another one along the same lines. It's for a scene where the nurse in this mental asylum pounces on the patients. The movie is *Tasmanian*, and was due to be released about two years ago. I still haven't seen it."

On the subject of the new album, there doesn't seem to be any complaints from the band concerning the production of the album.

"David Price produced the album, and he was great to work with. He let us have a lot of control, and we had a ball in the studio. I actually enjoyed the whole show so much that I

didn't want to leave in the end. I know that sounds strange when compared to some of the horror stories we hear of bands spending weeks or months in the studio, and getting to hate the whole affair. We did the album in a couple of weeks, and we came to love the place, fuckin' great! That's how the name for the album came about."

"I used to spend my time playing guitar in this little cubicle, and I would emerge for the bare necessities. One day I was about to start playing and all these people were coming through and looking in on me. Well, I'd sort of had a little over indulgence earlier, if you know what I mean, and they all seemed really spun out to me. When I walked out, our producer says, 'Hey look, the cave's come alive! Bingo! That was it!'"

For those of you who may not know David Price, he has also been responsible for producing *Midnight Oil* amongst many artists. One good thing about this band is that they still adopt the philosophy of 'if you like it, do it', and don't worry too much about the idiosyncracies.

"When we did *Theory of Thira*, our little Greek track, we all thought that there was something missing in the studio, and so we all stripped of our shirts, brought in a heat lamp and splashing on oil. Once the studio heated up and our bouzouki man arrived, we really got stuck into it and just had a ball! As Mick said, it's his favourite track, and it would have to be one of my favourite too."

The band has had its fair share of strange run ins with crowds, and the instance with the 4ZZZ venue was one. Gerard suddenly remembered the stranger places they had played at, as the word disco was mentioned by a passing person.

"That reminds me of the time we arrived at this one venue, and we knew we were onto trouble when the 'DJ' was sitting up in this chariot of gold, surrounded by stages of flashing lights and mirrors. Oh shit, we thought. Nice one Mr. Manager! In Brisbane again, great! It was a case of 'this is a disco, they're the band'. Really great because there were a couple of hundred people there to see us, and a couple of hundred in a corner waiting for the disco music to come on."

The DJ being a real fuckwit wouldn't even wait for us to say thanks to the crowd and to say goodnight. No sooner than our last note was struck, I mean we didn't even have time to follow through or anything, this disco music comes on as our PA gets cut off! Bloody incredible!"

Perhaps one of the band's biggest breaks was signing with Virgin, and this came about due to good luck, as much as it did for the band getting to sign so quickly in their career.

"When we were in the recording studios doing *Slave Girl*, and the mini EP, *Laurie Dunn*, who ran Hybrid records in London dropped by. He turned out to be a fan of the Spiders, and told Mick that he should look him up when he gets to London on his Greek exploration holiday. The Spiders then signed with him and Hybrid records, which as it turned out took over Virgin in Australia. We just transferred with him, and next thing we knew we were with Virgin records. That was fantastic for us, as Laurie is a great guy, and made us feel better when in such a large company you can

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# On Disc Australian Releases



**DIESEL AND DUST**  
Midnight Oil  
CBS/

by Andrew Marshall

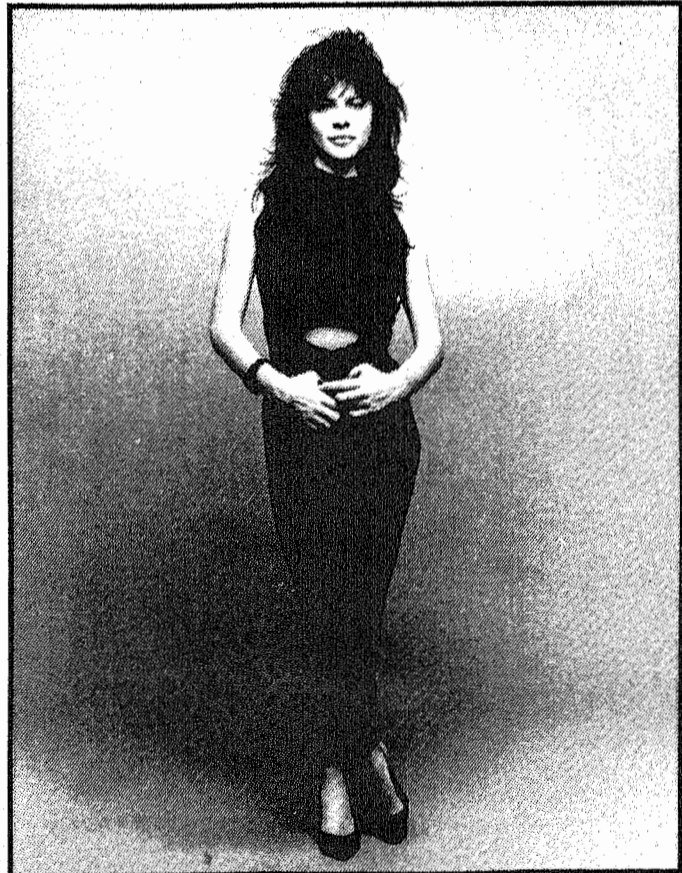
Travelling in four wheel drive vehicles and light planes, the *Oils*, stripped back to the bare essentials, took their unique brand of Australiana to some of the country's remotest Aboriginal communities.

Playing to people who had been brought up in almost complete silence taught the *Oils* a valuable lesson about the use of dynamics and atmosphere, a lesson that is faithfully documented on "Diesel And Dust".

Drummer Rob Hirst is wielding more power than ever, playing less - creating tension, giving the other instruments more room to move. Peter Garrett sings with compassion, tempered by cynicism, while guitarists Moginie and Rotsey pick up their acoustics more than ever before. Peter Gifford's

brooding completes the atmosphere, never overt but occasionally reaching above the mix, just enough to make its presence felt.

The simple brilliance of "Dead Heart" and their latest single "Beds Are Burning" provide a standard for "Diesel And Dust" that is consistently matched. Every track on this impressively packaged album is superbly crafted and delivered with conviction, from the haunting "Arctic World" to the powerful refrain of "Dreamworld". Finding a highlight track from ten which each meant more attention than the average album deserves is difficult (my favourite changes each time I listen). The sparing guitars on "Sometimes" will endear it to the older *Oils* fans and "Wara Kurru" will appeal to those who like the "Dead Heart", but my pick is the slower "Whoah", drawing the best features from "Red Sails" and mixing them with a unique chorus, reduced to vocals and organ in a potent mix. Australia's best band is even better.



**BODY AND SOUL**  
Jenny Morris  
WEA

by Mat Gibson

The two stirring and successful singles from Jenny Morris would forbade her newly released album.

*Body And Soul* naturally contains both the title track and "You're Gonna Get Hurt" and whilst I have a natural tendency to listen more favourably to Australian music, I am able to say quite honestly that none of the material will be disliked by people interested in the pop/rock sound of her songs.

Much of it, indeed, will be thoroughly enjoyed, particularly "Rising Sun",

"You I Know" and "Lighthearted", which fill up side one with the singles.

Side Two gets a little bogged down because the overall sound changes little and the style of songs are somewhat lost between ballad and the more up-tempo material of side one.

It appears from the credits that Jenny Morris lacks no friends in the music scene and some of the most successful have contributed their songwriting and performing skills. Irregardless of this, there is obvious talent in Morris herself and while she should be well pleased with *Body And Soul*, she has the potential to produce a really special album, one that will be remembered for a long time.

## BLUE

The Garden Path  
Greasy Pop Records

by Andrew Marshall

It's always a pleasure to review local independent acts, especially when they are as classy as *The Garden Path*. Recorded between September 1986 and February 1987, the band's new album captures the masterful, melancholic songwriting talents of Rohan Belton and Victor Conrad "cross pollinating the sounds of the sixties". With that independent sound characteristic of *Died Pretty* and *The Pony*, *The Gar-*

*den Path* delivers a powerful ten track album of melodic, moody pop.

With inclusions on two major compilations, two songs on the JJJ "Cooking With Geroge Mark Too" sampler and the 1986 album "5 Reasons", the band has both the credibility and experience needed to make *Blue* as successful as it should be.

Drummer Terry Aldridge told *On Dit* that there has been a marked progression in the band's work. The current platter has "stronger songs, superior playing and superior production...something that comes with experience."

All the songs on the album have been thoroughly road tested, a testament to which is the "live" feel of the album. A notable exception is the aptly named *Change*, an atmospheric, acoustic song that lightens the feeling of the album.

Contrasting well with the rest of the material, Terry explained that the acoustic version of "Change" was included in pretense to the band version as both "the mood and the feel are superior".

Of course *Blue* is not without its faults but these are overshadowed by the quality and consistency of the songwriting, atmospheric production and a strong performance by the band.



## ONE IN EVERY COLOUR

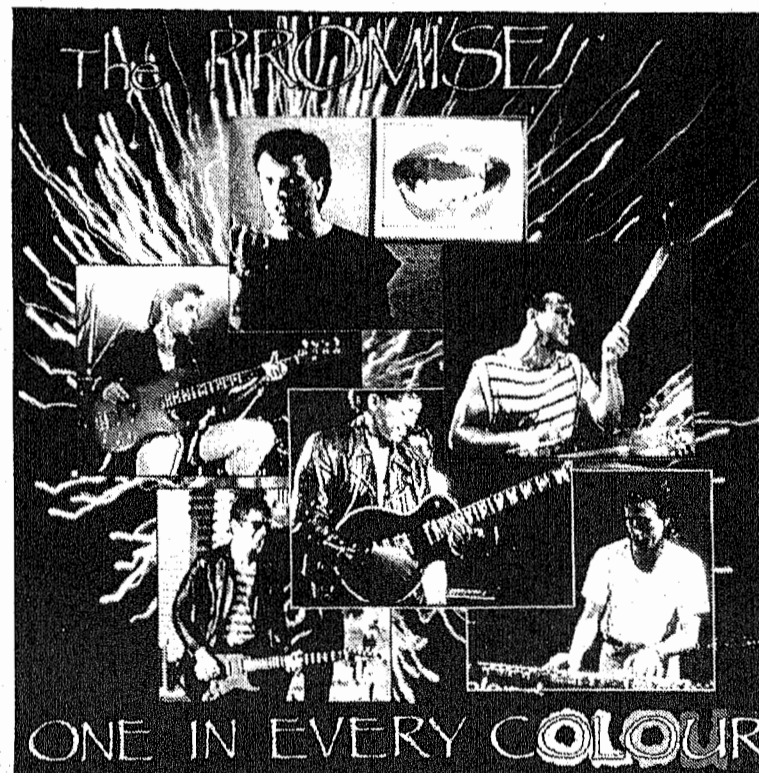
The Promise  
Parole/Festival

by Andrew Marshall

"Under-rated" is a word used liberally on the press release accompanying this album, and it may just be the right word for this band.

Since their inception, *The Promise* have released five singles, each with an unmistakable and appealing style of it's own. Surprisingly, every one has flopped. "Heart To Sell" (classic synth-rock), "Walking With A Weight", "Will You Come Back Again?", "Something In The Air" (the album's only cover version), and the latest, "Lessons In Love", are all featured on the band's strong debut album. The very fact that the record company decided to release each track as a single is a testimony to the appeal of the band. But then commercial success is an elusive creature that often tends to steer clear of true talent.

"Lessons In Love" has attracted remarkably little airplay considering its strength as a pop song with one of the catchiest hooks I've heard in years. It provides a fair indication of the rest of the album - consistent, solid pop. Suffice to say that with their first album release, *The Promise* have delivered...give it a chance.



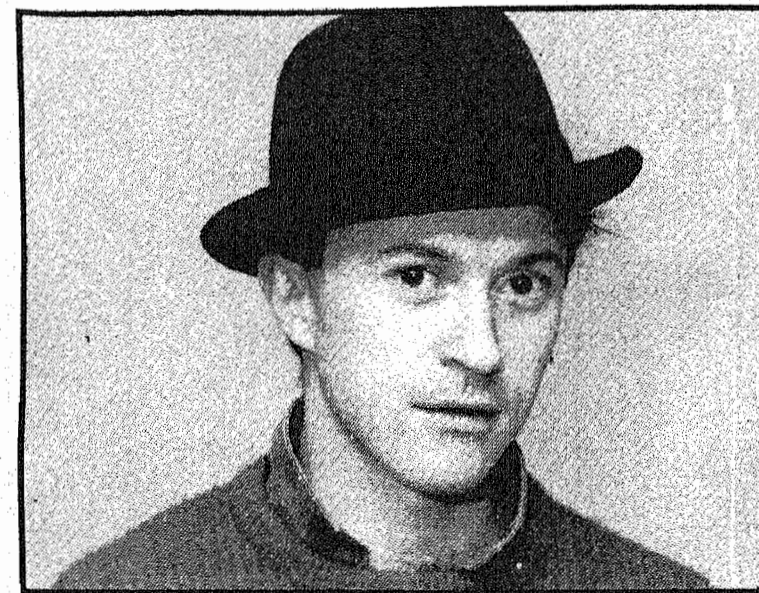
## THE SKY WILL STILL BE BLUE

Gerard Teleman  
EMI

by Mat Gibson

Gerard Teleman is a Sydney artist who has released an LP which is ostensibly a first solo effort, but which contains significant contributions from associates. His past releases, venturing little beyond the south east corner of Australia, were all relatively successful, even his first LP "Europe" a collaboration with DJ, Ian Hartly.

The stated emphasis of the album is on atmosphere and feeling rather than production perfection. An extremely admirable goal to say the least, but one which is sought primarily with unadventurous synthesizers. Viewed individually and stripped bare, the songs have great potential. While some



interesting moments occur, particularly on the Byrnesque "Break Up", the perpetually echoed vocals conjure memories of the papiest moments of

British synth pop history, notably a resemblance to the new romanticism period. Still, however, several cuts above the average.

## Have Guitar Will Travel

**The billigerent Bard from Barking, Billy Bragg, was recently in Australia bearing tales of powers and passions. Here's a bit of British labour, Red Wedge, political agitation and a touch of romance as STEVEN CAD-BURY reports.**

All the phone calls were a little late, all we pen pushers ran a little over time. Such was the garrulity on the line from England, that one answer could swamp a page of foolscap and many questions were left unasked. So who's the talkative troubadour?

Billy Bragg, AKA the big nosed bard from Barking (an East London suburb). And who is he? Gather 'round.

Billy Bragg is a minstrel of love, life and political agitation. An integral member of Britain's Red Wedge organisation, performer of a billion benefit concerts for a dictionary of causes, owner of a few battered electric guitars and a bulging songbook. In late '83, Bragg released the mini album *Life's A Riot With Spy Vs Spy* and since then there's been the LPs *Brewing Up With Billy Bragg* and the recently released *Talking With The Taxman About Poetry* which is subtitled 'The Difficult Third Album'. In the UK, he manages to keep his vinyl prices down to a generous minimum because they don't cost much to make and he doesn't see why the public shouldn't share the saving on lengthy production, record company marketing and slick packaging costs. But this doesn't apply to the rest of the world. "I've got muscle in the UK, I can demand those things," he states. But it flexes ineffectively elsewhere.

Billy had just completed a Red Wedge tour of Wales and the West Country, in company with an acoustic group called *Attacko Di Chente* (or so it sounded when he said it) and lots of local bands. They played village and Civic hall in the suburbs of old mining towns and it's been one of many smaller

itineraries since the star-studded gala that started it all; including a comedy tour of the cabaret circuit. "The big rock tour was unfortunate in that it made people think that Red Wedge was just a big rock 'n' roll thing," says Bill, but "the big tour, most importantly, was to get maximum publicity in a minimum amount of time for what we wanted to do and to kick the ball off in the debate about whether the British Labour Party are fit to govern this country."

Life, the universe and the abolished Greater London Council (GLC). All this, Red Wedge and the world according to Bragg are explained. Firstly the Wedge.

"Well, we have to kind of whiz back a bit in history. When the Miners' Strike happened (83) a lot of people had already been writing political songs and getting involved with people like the GLC and putting on free gigs to promote their policies. When the strike happened, those of us writing political songs suddenly found we had the opportunity to go out there and see if they had any relevance in a political context. Some did, some didn't, but anyway, when the strike ended and the GLC was abolished it seemed to be the end of the road for using popular culture to work in close with Socialist politics.

"So we decided to set up Red Wedge because it didn't look like anybody in the Labour Party was gonna take that initiative and it looked like all the good work that the GLC had done, plus other metropolitan counties, was going down the tubes. So I did a tour for the Labour Party, promoting their Jobs & Industry Campaign and out of that, the idea for Red Wedge more or less grew.

"A lot of artists who'd kept meeting each other at Miners' gigs, Nicaraguan benefits, Anti Racism concerts, etc, got to sitting around a table. Paul Weller, the Communards, Ben and Tracey from *Everything But The Girl*, myself and others decided it seemed logical that so many of the things we were working on could be helped by the election of a Labour Government and we could try and work it out together. That's how it was formed.

"What it is, is a collection of artists and politicians who are mostly under 30 and held together by the aim of electing Labour. To this end, we're using popular culture to create common ground between young people and the Labour Party; rock gigs and stuff like that."

**How's Thatcher's standing with the public now?**

"Unpopular, very unpopular I think. But the press, who are mostly in the control of that ex-Australian, Mr Murdoch, are still favouring her."

**How effective is Red Wedge?**

"We've sold a lot of T-shirts. It's hard to tell innit? There's still an incredible amount of apathy, despite the fact that I would boast to you that British youth are the most politicized in Western Europe right now, due to seven years of Thatcherism. But there's still a lot more people apathetic towards politics than there are interested. We're not all running around arming ourselves for the revolution."

**Does Neil Kinnock (Labour's leader) ever show up at the gigs?**

"No, he don't. We try and keep him as far away as possible, because it's not about pop stars really, despite those of us involved, it's about people. I think all that Neil Kinnock would do, is make it all a bit too rock 'n' roll circus like. Where we go, it's Local MPs and councillors that are important, because the people that come to the gigs can have a word to, or a go at them. That's what's important to us, we're working on that level rather than a national political one."

**Some people think Red Wedge is just a Kinnock tool for the youth vote. What's your answer to people who think you're simply a puppet in the general elective scheme of things?**



"Well, I'd say that Rupert Murdoch is simply a front for the Conservative party vote and as long as one man holds such a massive part of our media in this country, then I think the Left have a duty to use any tool that they can to put across the other view. Because the alternative, quite frankly, is sitting on your arse and doing nothing. There's plenty of people in this country, even in the Labour Party, who'd like to dismiss us as pop stars for Socialism. The mixture of pop and politics in this form is always going to be difficult, it's not gonna come up with any clear answers, but what we're aiming at and struggling towards is much more interesting than sitting around talking about guitars and cocaine, or whatever it is that pop stars talk about. It makes what I do much more satisfying than ever going on *Top Of The Pops* (a British Countdown equivalent) or making videos could."

**With a history of playing political and humanitarian benefits, not to mention Red Wedge, your reputation is more inclined to that of a political activist. Yet your recordings show a far greater percentage of works inclined more towards sexual politics and the stuff of romance. *Christ Bill*, you've written some of the best love songs I've heard. Does this dichotomy bother you?**

"No...ummm...Well firstly, I don't think of myself as a political songwriter, but I think the job of any songwriter is to hold a mirror up and reflect the society he or she comes from. At the moment in the UK, it's very political. Quite possibly, if I lived somewhere else, I wouldn't be writing so much about politics. As far as writing about relationships goes, I am a bit of a romantic. Having grown up listening to Smokey Robinson...I mean, I ached. Smokey was my idealist in love, until Elvis Costello came along and I realised there was a reality to relationships, he somehow touched on and I wanted to touch on that too.

"It's where politics and relationships cross that I find very interesting, either in the politics of the relationships or governmental influences on them. It forces them into economic restraints; you know, the poverty trap. But I think audiences enjoy the love songs more than the political ones, if you divided these factions up, I would be able to understand, relate to, talk and have a drink with the love song fans rather than the political ones. I feel much more in common with them. I mean, I'm not really a political person, strangely enough (laughs), I think I'm a bit too pragmatic to be a politician."

**Jeez Bill, are you going to end up in a band with all this expansion?**

"I don't think so, no. If I ended up in one, I wouldn't be able to come and play for you in Australia unless there was a big hit single there. More importantly, it would restrict me being in one."

Kirsty McColl had a hit in the UK with a version of Bragg's *A New England*, for which he wrote an extra verse. It caused a spate of letter writing from dyed-in-the-wool Bragg fans, all saying 'how could you! she's completely ruined the song'. This opinion's utter crap and Bragg agrees, but says that when people really like something it's not fair to "shit on their opinions".

"I thought she improved on it actually, gave it a whole new dimension. I wish she'd cover more of my songs."

The connection with Johnny Marr goes back to early gigs with the Smiths.

"I don't really know Morrissey very well, only to speak to, but Johnny and I are guitar bores, we talk about them a lot. He's done stuff for Red Wedge, we duetted on two of my songs and a cover of *The Last Time*, the old Rolling Stones song. From that, he said to ring next time I was in the recording studio. I also used John Porter, the Smiths' producer (first LP) on *Taxman*...It was great."

"While he agrees there's nothing worse than living jukeboxes, Bragg is all for interpretations. He often does covers in his live set and on the flipside to the 12 inch of current single *Levi Stubb's Tears* there's a wonderful reading of *Walk Away Renee* (a vintage Motown song by the Four Tops, with whom Stubb is still singing), it's a touching and amusing Braggologue over the original melody.

**What do you like in music, Bill?**

"Hmmm, that's a wide question. There's a great 4AD LP out about Bulgarian music. I'm big on Gram Parsons at the moment, the last *Everything But The Girl* LP, all sorts of things. I've been playing Elvis Costello's *Blood And*

*Chocolate* every day."

**The best thing he's done in years.**

"Yeah it is, isn't it? I've been wading through his back catalogue and if you get the chance to see him, he's really burning live at the moment. He should be as big as Springsteen, he's the King."

**Well, last up then Bill. Do you think music really has any powers towards political change?**

"To be quite honest with you, I don't. I don't think, in isolation anyway, pop music can change the world, but I do think it has a role to play in conjunction with other forms of popular culture. I think popular music is now the mass medium for talking to youth, a good political song in England is a good one anywhere and vice versa. Those of us involved would be stupid if we didn't try and utilise that. But as far as changing the world's concerned, I don't think anyone who appears on *Top Of The Pops* can do anything for you. It's up to you yourself."

Cheers Bill.

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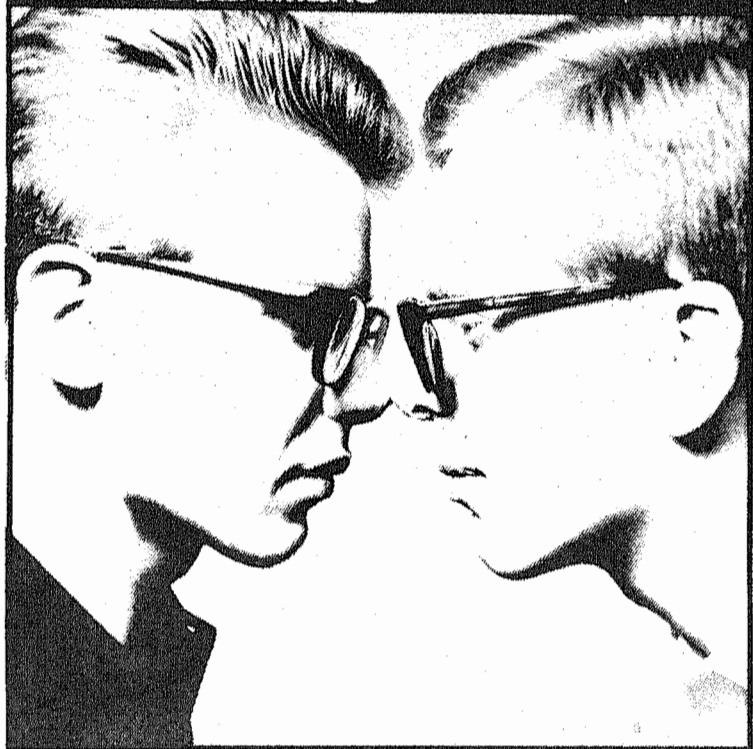
**BILLY BRAGG**

A PUCKISH  
SATIRE  
ON  
CONTEMPORARY  
MORES



# On Disc European Releases

## THE PROCLAIMERS :



**THIS IS THE STORY**  
The Proclaimers  
Festival

by Alexander Grous

Once in a while you hear an artist that mesmerizes and rises above the ranks of obscurity. The Proclaimers are 25 year old twin brothers from the UK who are in my mind the most incredible force to emerge from Britain this year. They supported the Housemartins on the 86 British Tour, and have come to prominence since.

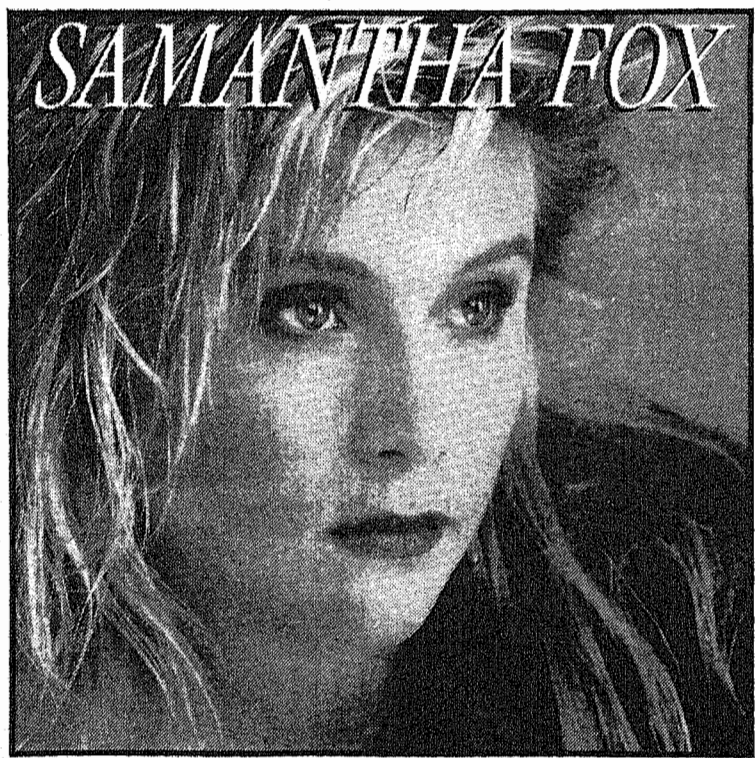
An acoustic guitar duo, they are reminiscent of earlier XTC, and were discovered by the Housemartins when a demo found its way into the band's hands. Thus began the career of The Proclaimers. Utilising acoustic six and twelve string, as well as bongos and marraccas, their sound is vibrant, and very cutting.

Craig Reid is responsible for the vocals, whilst his brother plays guitar and harmonises on many of the tracks. This is extremely effective, particularly on

the track "Over and Done With", which begins gingerly and develops into a harsh, cutting piece of work. "The Part That Really Matters" has bongos and marraccas, which balance the guitar work masterfully. Lyrically the duo concentrates on many issues indicative of Britain's social and political climate.

"The Joyful Kilmarnock Blues" is an upbeat blues number, portraying the English countryside and the sight and sounds emanating from it. Slightly faster is "Sky Takes the Soul", which is both poetic and links masterful harmony with crisp twelve string guitar work; soothing to listen to and yet it is by no means music that doesn't captivate you. "It Broke my Heart" is classically melodic, and passionate vocals by Craig Reid soar above Charlie Reid's accompaniment.

The Proclaimers are my pick as the freshest and most original musical talent to emerge from Britain this year, and I believe that upon hearing the duo, many others will think the same; I cannot recommend it enough.



**SAMANTHA FOX**  
Samantha Fox  
Liberation/CBS

by Alexander Grous

Samantha Fox certainly likes doing things in a 'big' way; yesterdays page three girl is today's 'pop' artist with a second album already in the bag. So, is this "Touch me, touch me, I want to feel your arms around me" artist on par with Madonna, Whitney Houston, and Marcia Hynes in 'celebrity' status?

"My word yes, why you just, my word we do, don't want that here, my word no, eh, yes..." This album is slick, 'groovy', danceable, glossy, and guarantees to do well for Sam (to her friends). She covers "(I can't get no) Satisfaction" by you know who, but this is an appalling failure! Voice-overs pre-

dominate the track, with little instrumental backing; a disaster! The track "Naughty Girls" is more like it, with 'get down Sammy' really getting it on!

Most of the tracks are very similar in sound, albeit to synthesization, electronic drums, and a little guitar. Up tempo tracks mix with numbers just short of ballads, and you may or may not hate the 'little' lady, but she has got some potential as a singer. I am still coming to terms with this, but I believe that she will continue to become more successful with each album.

Production is handled by as numerous people as the ten songs, but this does not ensure variety. For the middle of the road addicts who liked the first album, then buy the second. It's even got a real 'cutsie' close up of Sammy on the cover.

## BACK TO BASICS

Billy Bragg  
Liberation/CBS

by Mat Gibson

Rock historians looking back to the eighties will probably make the same generalised indictments of its musical directions as are commonly thrown at the seventies. Yet they would be overlooking one of music's most potent artists, Billy Bragg.

"Back To Basics" is a two record collection of Bragg's post punk urban folk. Comprising his first two releases "Life's A Riot With Spy Vs Spy" and "Brewing Up With Billy Bragg", it represents twenty one bursts of social observation, personal politics, fiery polemics and romance.

For anyone not yet aware of this bard from Barking, be prepared to be brought down to earth by his unaccompanied guitar and vocals. Bragg sings exquisite vocal melodies charged by his thick and hearty southeast London accent and scratch and scrape electric rhythms.

Beyond the music is Bragg the urban poet. Whether dealing with issues political, social or romantic, he waxes words from scathing to sweet.

*If this does not reflect your view  
You should understand  
That those who run the papers  
Also run this land  
And they'd rather you believed in  
"Coronation Street" capers  
In the war of circulation  
It sells newspapers*

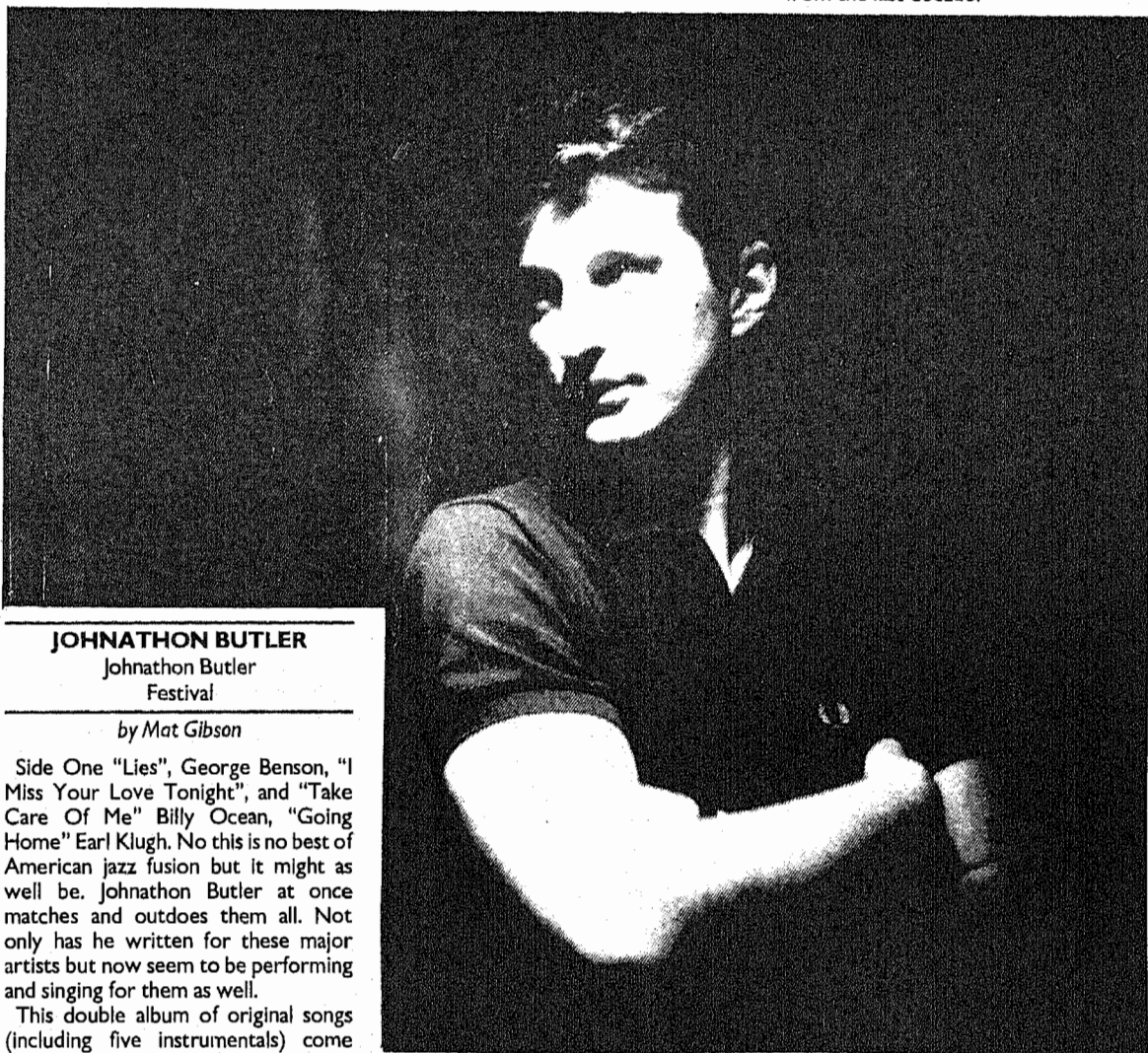
*Could it be an infringement  
Of the freedom of the press  
To print pictures of women  
In states of undress*

While his feelings on the popular press are made abundantly clear, he describes himself as more of a romantic. Take for example the remorseful "Myth of Trust"

*And when you found out what happened  
yesterday  
When you were outside in this land of  
Cain*

*We were upstairs in the bedroom, dancing  
disgusting  
And flushing our babies down the drain*

Clearly, Bragg is a poet of our times, a rare product of British inner city life and the best artist to have emerged from the last decade.



## JOHNATHON BUTLER

Johnathon Butler  
Festival

by Mat Gibson

Side One "Lies", George Benson, "I Miss Your Love Tonight", and "Take Care Of Me" Billy Ocean, "Going Home" Earl Klugh. No this is no best of American jazz fusion but it might as well be. Johnathon Butler at once matches and outdoes them all. Not only has he written for these major artists but now seem to be performing and singing for them as well.

This double album of original songs (including five instrumentals) come from a South African expatriate whose life long love for R & B and Jazz has produced over 70 minutes of music that is atmospheric, passionate, gentle and eminently forceful, made descriptive rather than slick by his emotive vocals and virtuoso acoustic guitar.

He is living evidence that jazz guitarists don't need to fly around the neck, butchering melodies to make themselves heard. Simplicity is strength and Butler must have a monopoly on it.

## DUMB POET

Immaculate Fools  
A & M thru Festival

by Richard Wilson

Does anyone remember the Little Heroes (of 'One Perfect Day' fame)? It seems they've cropped up in Britain after a four years absence, and are now calling themselves The Immaculate Fools.

Jokes aside, the fact remains that this group is making the same music Australian bands were making three or four

years ago. Producer Andy Ross has fed all the tracks into his multi-million dollar 'gee-I-still-don't-know-what-half-the-buttons-here-do' multi-track and came up with an album full of pasteurised and homogenised tracks.

Side one is the better side, with the title track, 'Never Give Less Than Everything', and the simple 'So Much Here' all capturing the listener's attention.

On the whole though, a bit too squeaky clean for me. Rating: Harmless Enough.

## WETTON AND MANZANERA

Wetton and Manzanera  
WEA

by Mat Gibson

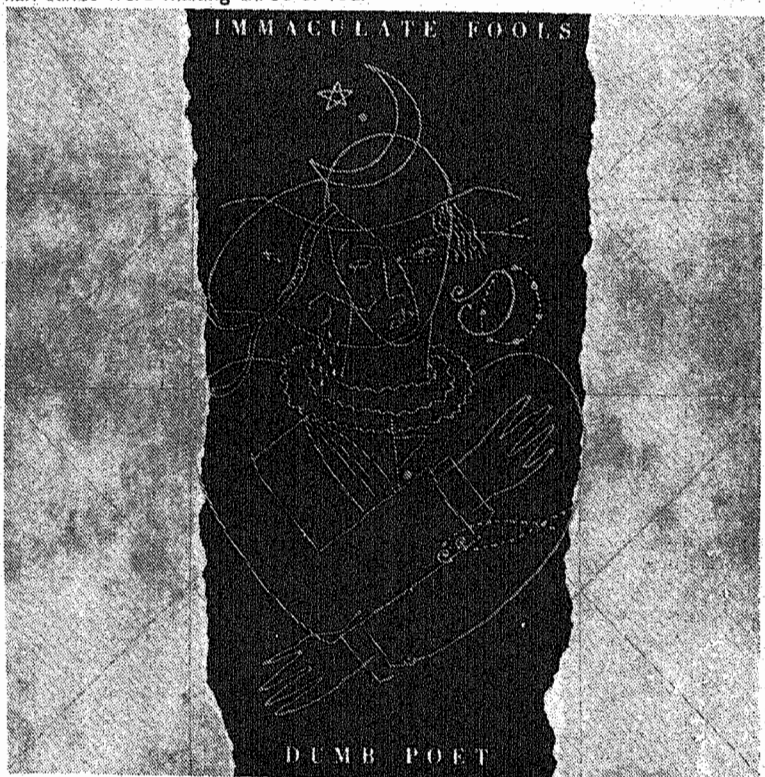
Phil Manzanera has had a fairly successful career and worked with a great number of other artists.

But a world of experience and exposure to other 'talents' has done little to help him, it seems, on his latest collaboration, with John Wetton.

Between them they play everything but percussion and perhaps this lack of additional input from other musicians has contributed to the monotonous sound of echoed, whining lead guitars, hooting keyboards and vocals that sound tampered with by an overzealous production team. Certainly it has not helped them.

As heart felt as the sentiments expressed in the lyrics may be, they are unadventurous and largely tepid love songs.

"It's Just Love" and "Round In Circles" are a cut above the rest but manage to fall into pop music's immense chasm of 'mediocre'.



## TOY SOLDIERS STILL ECSTATIC

**JOE PENHALL and GAVIN WILLIAMS dragged Dave Gregory away from his skylarking to discuss XTC's album and single, "Dear God".**

Not since the reign of Ray Davies in the mid sixties or Paul Wellar in his Jam days has there been as concerned an anglophile as XTC's Andy Partridge.

One thread never lacking from XTC's music is its inherent 'Englishness'. Keyboard player and guitarist, Dave Gregory agrees.

"There's definitely an Englishness to all our music, it's probably one of our strongest points - the fact that we exploit our Englishness."

"But," he points out, "variety is the spice of life after all - we like to put as many different things on the record as possible and make it like a juke-box... each of our albums has always been a pot pourri of musical styles. We think it's a most interesting way to make records - just throw all the junk in the pot and enjoy the stew that comes out..."

In the pot of the XTC album "Skylarking" is a notable return to the sixties for musical inspiration. Far from it being just the work of producer Todd Rundgren, Gregory points out that the influence is the product of the band members' own past.

"Certainly our biggest inspiration musically is mid to late sixties English pop, because that is when we were at our most musically receptive - we were teenagers at the time and that's when you're at your most impressionable. It's our favourite sort of music - most of the music we play at home is sixties stuff. We listen to very little new stuff, basically because we don't find it very interesting."

So close is the affiliation that in the past the band have been referred to as "The New Fab Four". Gregory explains,

"The Beatles are certainly our strongest influence... maybe we're just getting more and more nostalgic for the sixties. We're not a sixties nostalgic group by any means - don't get me wrong - I think it's just that today's sound is so dull and boring. It just seems to have its priorities in the wrong place, it seems to just ignore the song and go for the sound."

It's a pertinent point. If the sound of the mid seventies when XTC started out was punk, then the sound of the mid eighties is its antithesis with limp drum machines and simplistic synthesizers dominating.

Gregory agrees. "Yeah, machines making music. It's because everyone is using the same technology, the same drum machines, the same sequencers and the same digital keyboards. And, of course, machines cannot perform, this is the thing. They can do some wonderful things but they cannot perform. Performance has to be a human thing."

"Basically the test of a good song is if you can sit down with a guitar or a piano and play it, and people will like it. It doesn't need a lot of embellishment or a lot of treatment."

"But," he points out, "it's not going to sell a lot of records, it's not a commercial sound - it's not 1987." Something of which Virgin Records, the band's record company, are all too aware. Gregory explains, "We're always pessimistic about our future because everytime we make another album for them, they have the option as to whether we make another one for them..."

Hopefully this shouldn't be a problem anymore, as Skylarking sold more copies in America than any other XTC record and "Dear God", the current single, received extensive airplay around the country. He quips that the next one will be a heavy metal album with "a lot more drums and nasty guitars". This is good news for fans of early XTC classics such as "Life begins at the Hop" and "Making plans for Nigel". I await with bated breath...

Another reason for pessimism is that after nearly a decade in the business, XTC no longer tour.

"There's no chance of us ever touring again," Gregory states with alarming finality. "Andy doesn't want to do it... it's that simple. It's not a nice way to live, it's OK for the first two weeks, but after that it's the same thing night after night. It looks glamorous from the outside, but it's really hard work."



He also points out that XTC are all "family men" now and besides, Andy misses his toy soldiers. "That seems to be his principal interest in life, his toy soldiers. I think it's this dictator in him... the way it can manifest itself in a benign way, when he's not making records, you know, when he's not bossing us around in the studio, he's manipulating his little toy soldiers at home."

That's when he's not designing record covers. XTC have a reputation for producing unusual and highly inventive album jackets. "The Big Express", XTC's last album was completely Andy's brain children. "He does all of them. The basic ideas are all his, even the singles bags."

### GREAT DIRTY WORLD

Gowan  
CBS

by Alexander Grous

This wicked creature has purposely come to haunt those of us that break out in Chris Deburgh rashes: The voice is morbidly identical. A horrible and upsetting thing to have happen to anyone!

When the track 'Awake the Giant' first 'hit' me, I thought, it's got to be 'Don't Pay the Ferryman'. The same flimsy melody, washed out vocals, and accompaniment would make Kids In The Kitchen appear talented by comparison. "Why are you being so cruel?" you ask me. Well, it would appear once

round, resembling an iron steam engine wheel.

"English Settlement" was completely green with a white mythical chalk horse stamped in relief, adorning it. The "Skylarking" jacket is also presented in relief, with a gold platter of two lovers skylarking in the centre.

Gregory explains that the covers are His expertise at this is clearly illustrated by the stunning cover for "Dear God" which features a fountain pen driven through the hand of the person on the cover. The Biblical reference cannot be missed. "Everytime he writes a song he designs a bag just in case it's a single...it's the full artistic experience."

more that like so many artists, vanity seems to have couched ability, if there was any to begin with!

"One Brief Shining Moment" and "60 Second Nightmare" are two attempted 'speed' numbers, the last of which sums the song up quite well! If this artist would concentrate more on producing rather than procuring self indulgence, he might come up with some positive work. *Dedication* is a track that shows there exists some appeal, but I feel that stronger mixing with respect to the backing music would be a better move.

This artists falsetto, coupled with a high pitched whine do not appeal to me in the least, but then again taste is as varied as the music industry itself. Perhaps vanity-stud Gowan is your 'cup of tea'? He certainly thinks so.



JOY  
Paul King  
CBS

by Richard Wilson

Paul King is definitely aiming to crack the U.S. market with his latest big-budget release, Joy.

Recorded at two New York studios, and produced by Dan Hartman, this 11-song album sounds bright and polished, but lacks the catchy hook lines and chord progressions that marked his earlier work. As a result, the music goes in the ears, bounces around inside the skull a bit, and escapes again, leaving the listener none the wiser about what they have just heard, and with no lasting memories one way or the other.

As for the lyrics, well, for the most part 'mindless' would be a kind choice of adjective.

The one exception to all this is 'So Brutal', with thought-provoking lyrics on the current sick state of the world. But why let this one good song spoil the overall blandness of the whole album...



### David Knopfler



### CUT THE WIRE

David Knopfler  
Festival

by Mat Gibson

Sales and recognition. That's what popular success is all about. David Knopfler has received well enough recognition from critics and his relatively small following. With the exception of Europe, sales have, however, been quite unremarkable. "Cut The Wire" will not remedy this unfortunate situation. It is, quite categorically, a good album but lacks a song to grab public attention.

"Release", his first and strongest effort, broke a little ground in Australia

to be followed by the ignored yet market suitable "Behind The Lines". Save the resonant and passionate Knopfler voice, there are no real similarities between "Cut The Wire" and his last work. The title and sleeve suggest a concept album. The variety of subject tackled partially refutes and partially supports this initial feeling. However, even with only two straight 'love songs' featured it is probably stretching the issue to see a particular musical or lyrical theme.

Knopfler has taken a more orchestrated approach, utilizing also traditional melodies for an intricate sound well suited to listeners who appreciate an artists ability to turn a musical phrase.



Mick Hucknall's presence on the music scene is unsettling to a lot of people. A former punk from the back streets of Manchester who spent four years on the dole, he has led a band called Simply Red to a remarkable level of international success without having to temper his passion for creative control over the band's music. Nor at any stage has he apologised for his wealth, hidden his suspicion of the music industry or his disdain for the notoriously acerbic British music press.

Two and a half years after forming the band, Hucknall is still very self-opinionated, and maybe even a touch arrogant. But now his heavily accented Mancunian voice is more controlled. Rather than being a sign of Hucknall mellowing, this is more likely an indication that popular success has vindicated his approach to music and the music industry, which he proudly acknowledges bears the mark of a punk attitude.

"In a way Simply Red is a result of my involvement with punk because it actually gets back to music with no crap in it, no self-indulgence to the extent that we have like a 25 minute guitar solo. We try and get straight to the point with simple melodies, simple choruses, and meaningful words that don't go 'Baby baby baby, I love you baby'. And that's really what it's about. It's that simple."

And when Simply Red blasts and bares out its repertoire of hits and old soul covers to thousands of cheering fans, it is clear that Mick Hucknall, the band's lead singer and figure-head of hair, knows a thing or two about style.

It is Hucknall's dangling springs of thick red hair which, more than anything, form the band's visual pivot. This stylistic tact perfectly reflects that a Simply Red performance is a neat sketch of an ego surrounded by its satellites.

The musical form of Simply Red is quite a paradox and is what makes them such a peculiar pop success: they have created a distinctive sound by breaking down the traditional funk and reinventing a fresh, original sound which has won the sustained attention of mainstream radio programmers here, in Britain and the United States. This is the result of Hucknall's philosophy, learnt after years at art school, that musical tradition is the basis for progress, that "one style leads to another". There's no sense of calculation to their musical style; it is simply Simply Red.

"I'm naturally eclectic regarding musical tastes," Hucknall says, looking thinner than he does in some of his clips. "I don't sit down in a cold way and say 'this is reggae, I'm influenced by this bit of reggae'; I'm just influenced by the music that I listen to. It's not a textbook approach where you pluck a melody here and a melody there. That isn't the way to write in fact."

This is naturally frustrating for music journalists and, consequently, Simply Red have been tagged almost beyond meaning. They have been called everything from "blue eyed soul boys" to being part of a British wave of white soul that also includes the likes of Paul Young, The Kane Gang, The Style Council and Allison Moyet. Hucknall loves tags.

"We don't call it white soul. If you wanna call it white soul, then fine." He hesitates for a second. "How people can be so clear and concise about things is completely beyond me. We don't see it like that at all. We're just working-class Mancunians who are just playing the stuff that we like."

When Hucknall formed Simply Red in 1985 under the influence of Motown artists such as Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Sly Stone, Cole Porter and, especially, James Brown, there was an agreement that he would naturally be the focal point.

But few lead singers are so focal. The band is named after him (well his hair), he does most of the writing, and most of the press interviews. But, he says, none of this affects the creative freedom of the band's five other members and therefore causes no ego tussles.

album syndrome'. Whereas their first was a brash, stylish index of their musical influences, the pressure to produce a successful follow-up resulted in a lack of balance on 'Men and Women'. The faster numbers like 'The Right Thing', were great but ballads like 'Suffer' and 'Every Time We Say Goodbye' (A Cole Porter cover) came across as mawkish, maudlin sentimental sap.

"I don't think we paid as much attention to the ballads on the second one as we did the up tempo stuff. When we made

George Michael's 'I Want Your Sex', which received a partial ban in the UK. It is an anthem about the importance of good sex in a relationship, which, with lines like 'Feel I'm getting harder now' and 'Get on top more' is about as sexually explicit as you can get without being rude.

"The Right Thing' just seems to be interpreted by a lot of people as being like carnal, bragging of my sexual conquests which it is not at all."

'Infidelity', the second single which Hucknall cowrote with Motown giant Lamont Dozier, however, harps on about a

album and have placed warning stickers on it.

"I find that absolutely ludicrous. It doesn't worry me, I think the truth of the matter is that there's a lot of kids between about the age of 14 and 16, maybe even younger, who seem to know more about sex these days than the parents do and seem to be more open to accept lots of different aspects of sex than their parents do."

Although Hucknall is not that keen on talking about the British music press ("They're so insignificant, they're not worth the trouble") it's hard for him not to refer to them constantly. It's hard for any British music artist to ignore them.

The musical and entertainment press in Britain is a strange beast. No other youth-oriented press in the world makes such a concerted and collective effort to arrogantly dictate, rather than responsibly reflect, style, fashion, mood and politics.

Magazines such as 'The Face', 'Melody Maker', 'New Musical Express' (NME) and 'Time Out' set themselves up as the arbiters of style and political trendiness. They also consciously exert pressure on artists and bands to change in accordance with their view of politics and social moods. And when artists refuse to yield, they turn it into an issue. Simply Red are a major case in point. Renegade.

Hucknall's antipathy towards them is well documented, but just for the record: "I think they've got serious mental problems because they don't listen to very much music. They spend most of their time in wine bars getting drunk in the evenings. Their basic fundamental problem is that they have no interest in music. They have no love for music," Hucknall says.

As a working-class person, Hucknall has apparently committed the cardinal sin: he has become wealthy through success and, in the words of the February edition of 'Time Out', was 'betraying his class' (their italics) and "has a lot of explaining to do." Hucknall's sharp response says more about his working-class ethos than Jimmy Barnes ever has about his.

"A lot of them have tried to say that I'm middle class because I've become wealthy which is just stupid. Class isn't determined by money, I don't think. It's very easy for me to say that because I've got money, but I just don't think it can be, I think where you're from is where you're from and that's the end of it. It's exactly the same scene if you're black you're never going to be white, and if you're working class you're never going to be middle class.

He's even answered his critics in song.

"That's what I try to say in 'I Won't Feel Bad'. The middle-class journalists in England say 'why don't you give away all your money? Why don't you do something about the welfare state?' I say 'Ask the people with the real cash/institutions who are taking yours and mine', which are like big businesses, massive conglomerations who are making a bloody fortune and not giving it back to their workers. There is no reason why they can't pay their workers more money, and give everybody a better standard of living."

cont. on pg15.

## SIMPLY MICK



"The beauty of the system that we have within the group is that there is no system, no rigid structure, apart from the fact that I have the ability to maintain control of it because I'm not playing an instrument. I have the ability to stand up and listen, which they don't. And they're my songs."

Unlike the Eurythmics and Sting's world-wide sojourn last year with his all-black band, the black element in Simply Red is not intended as a blatant political statement about racial harmony. Black or white, music is music, according to Hucknall. "I just don't feel it necessary to make such a big deal about whether or not it's black, as if I'm some kind of massive liberal 'everybody's the same' kind of jargon. I don't like Aretha Franklin because she's black, I like her because she sings in a way that moves me, and that's the end of it."

The rapid international success of the band has had its artistic costs. Following the success of their first album, 'Picture Book' - which spawned the singles 'Come to My Aid' and 'Money's Too Tight to Mention', - Simply Red fell into the 'second

the second album we had a bee in our bonnet about writing up tempo material.

"I thought the first album was too mellow but that album had a great feel to it, whereas the second one, although tight and crisp, in some ways lacks the feel of the first." Hucknall says the band's third album won't be a reaction to anything, but a synthesis of the styles on the first two.

Sex is a touchy issue in pop music today, thanks to the AIDS paranoia now sweeping the world. It is also a favourite topic for Hucknall who has two strong songs about sex on 'Men and Women' - 'The Right Thing' and 'Infidelity'. He doesn't see any need to readjust to anything.

"I'm a musician, I'm the same as any other Joe regarding the AIDS paranoia, I'm as paranoid as anybody else, but I refuse to let it dominate my life's worries. You just have to be careful. I meant I'm a single man, I've not got a regular girlfriend and I'm not a saint."

He avidly defends 'The Right Thing', the first single off the album, against claims that it is more worthy of concern than

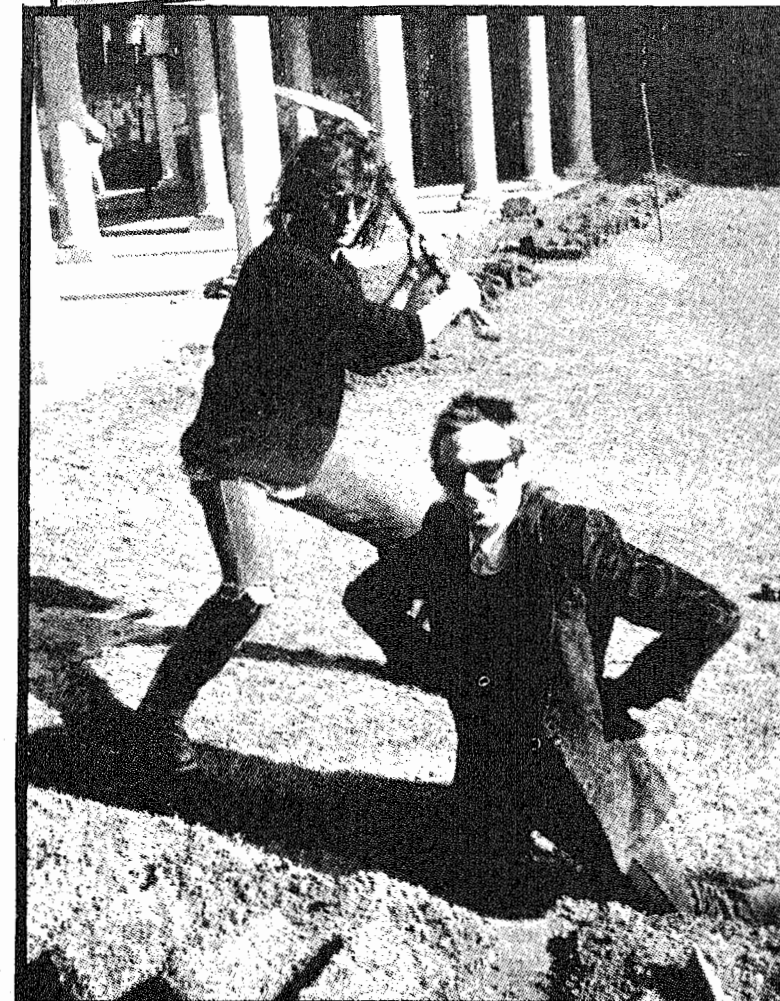
man's promiscuous habits. Surely in the AIDS age that's a bit more contentious and morally questionable, yes?

"The point with 'Infidelity' is that people always seem to miss the last line of the chorus which is 'When a man just can't be trusted/And again he's gone and lost it.' 'And again he's gone and lost it' is crucial to the song. If you don't clock that last line then you're missing the whole point of the song altogether, because really what it's saying is that for all the sleeping around that somebody is doing, why do you still feel like shit when you get up in the morning? That's really what this song's about which actually makes the album in a way a moral album."

He breaks out in a smile. "And the music press in England don't even listen to that. Basically they just see that and think that I'm shagging my way around the world."

Nonetheless, the album's morality has been missed by the notorious Washington Wives, the self-appointed musical morals committee composed by the wives of US politicians, who have blacklisted the

# TEN YEARS OF MUSICAL MADNESS



Ten years on, the collection of ex-Sydney art school students that remain *Mental As Anything* are still flogging their wares to an appreciative audience.

On the promotions trail, Martin Plaza looks back with fondness at the band's formative years, "it was a really vibrant time when we started out." It was a time, Martin recounts, when the humble suburban pub could be used as a launching pad for a career as spectacular and successful as the *Mentals*. "In those days it was pretty easy to just waltz into a pub and say, 'do you mind if we set our gear up?'"

Nowadays the story is vastly different, with new noise pollution laws, the transformation of Darlinghurst pubs (the *Mentals* original tramping ground) into "designer gay bars", and the rise of the ubiquitous video clip, there is little to be gained from playing pubs three nights a week.

Taking off his beanie for the photographer, Reg Mombassa states blithely, "I'm a lot more handsome without the hat on" as he prepares to be interrogated, with fellow guitarist/vocalist Martin Plaza, yet again, about the new album "Mouth to Mouth". Their busy schedule has paid off, the *Mental* mugs are beaming from the covers of most major rock magazines in this country.

Ten years, countless fads, numerous trends and six albums down the track, *Mental As Anything* are still going strong. Experience may have brought wisdom but it hasn't made writing songs any easier. "It's not like it becomes a habit" says Reg. "The fact that we play a bit better and know a few more things about the process of recording makes it easier to get an idea sounding like a song," continues Martin. "but getting that initial spark is not something that comes with experience."

Whether or not experience accumulated over the years has helped the *Mentals* kick start their songs, they have racked up an impressive fifteen hit singles. So, which was the most satisfying?

**MP:** That's a hard one...  
**RM:** ...too hard, I mean, every song is a new one and you're keen for it to do well, and while it's out you're doting on it [but] after a while you just forget about it and play it in the live set.

**OD:** The commercial success of "Live It Up" (which reached No. 3 in the UK) wasn't satisfying?

**MP:** It's satisfying, but then it's disappointing when the next one doesn't do better.

**RM:** With every new record it's like your career is starting again, there's never any guarantee that they're going to do well...it's touch and go all the way.

**OD:** That's a symptom of not sticking to a formula?

**RM:** Yeh, that also explains our longevity in a way.

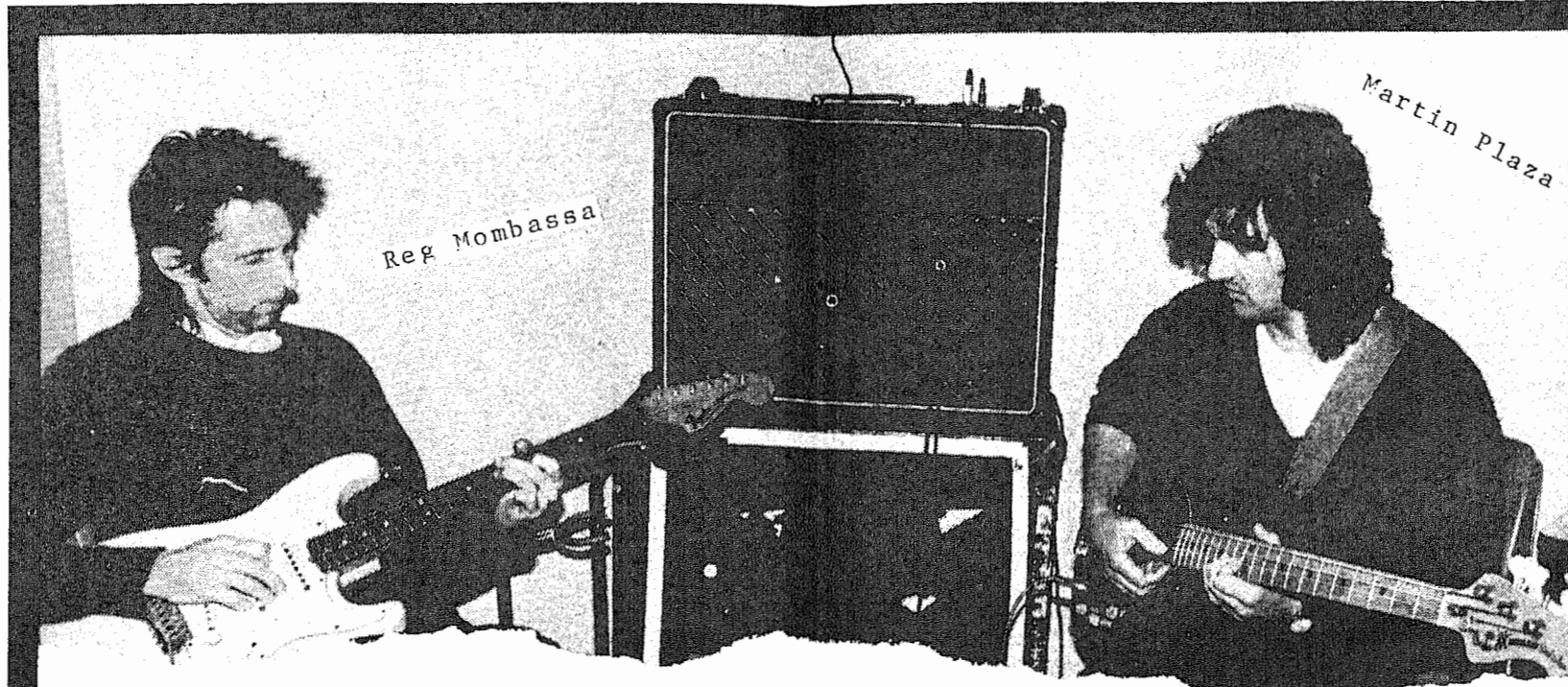
Trying to list all of the musical styles that influence the *Mentals* music is an impossible task. Much of the diversity is attributable to solo ventures that allow each member to experiment with ideas outside the framework of the group. Reg can be seen in tiny Sydney dives where he occasionally plays with the Country and Western band *The Happening Thang*. Brother Peter O'Doherty also plays with another band, *The Bejesus Burgers*. Martin Plaza tends to potter around in the studio without the other *Mentals*, managing to come up with the odd number one hit.

**MP:** We've got a few other outlets now too [like] the *Stetson* record which Reg is working on at the moment. Pete's submitted a song and I've got one. *Buzz Bidstrup* from *Gangajang* is producer. It's a country sort of record so we can use our less commercial, well...less *Mental* songs, which is good.

**RM:** It's certainly valuable to do something else, it's refreshing and you do pick up a few other ideas.

**OD:** Like the Country and Western influence?

**RM:** We've always had that, all of us like Country and Western music. It's



Ten years on, the collection of ex-Sydney art school student who remain *Mental As Anything*, are still flogging their wares to an appreciative audience. **ANDREW MARSHALL** committed himself to a conversation with two of the bands inmates.

good fun.

**MP:** Our manager doesn't like it...

**RM:** ...doesn't like reggae or Country and Western funnily enough.

**MP:** He kinda likes it, but doesn't like us doing it...

**RM:** ...but they're quite strong influences in a lot of our music...reggae, country and soul.

**OD:** Does having four songwriters in the band make it easier or harder to stay together?

**MP:** For one thing, there isn't a lot of pressure on one individual to write songs. It also means there is a bit of financial separation as well - other bands have a singer/songwriter who makes all the money.

**OD:** I notice that individual songwriters don't collaborate?

**RM:** We have done on the odd song, but yeh, we do tend to write separately.

**MP:** The B side of "Paradise" was a

collaboration...

**RM:**...and "Looking For Bird" on "Cats and Dogs"...

**MP:**...usually we end up collaborating once we start recording anyway...everyone has their two bob's worth.

**OD:** Since "Concrete and Clay" Greedy has written and sung all the singles?

**MP:** I'll probably get a couple of singles off ["Mouth to Mouth"]. It hasn't been by design that this has occurred, it's just that Greedy was producing the most commercial, radio songs. So I've made a bit more of an effort [to write commercial music].

*Mental As Anything* design all their own album and single covers, T-shirts and contribute ideas to the band's award winning videos ("Let's Cook" was exhibited in the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art and the New York Museum of Modern Art). Reg laments

that the band doesn't get to spend the time they would like to on their artistic endeavours, but they do manage to 'keep their hands in'. The inside sleeve of the new album is covered with entries in the band's own 'album cover competition', from Martin Plaza's constructivist influenced brush work to Greedy Smith's Leunig like line drawing, the sort of display that encouraged *Elton John* to fork out seven of the *Mental* canvasses.

**MP:** I think that art and music are similar in a lot of ways.

**RM:** They are, except for the performance thing.

**MP:** It's all to do with things that you leave out being as important as things you put in, creating space and colouring...

**RM:** [demonstrating how painting and playing the guitar involve the same actions] holding things in your hand and going like that [laughs]...a similar exer-

cise of shoulder muscles and eyeballs.

**OD:** Videos are obviously important to the band. Do you find that they provide a means to incorporate artistic interests with musical interests?

**MP:** It's a bit of a pain in the neck though, 'cause once you've got the record done you have to start panicking about a new idea for the video, which you shouldn't really have to do.

**RM:** Plus you've got to think about new ways to play the song and how to promote it.

**MP:** It's hard work doing a video too...

**RM:** ...'cause you've got to stand around in the freezing cold with a fish on your head and stuff like that.

**MP:** I really sympathize with actors after having done so many clips, especially feature length films on locations, it'd be such a drag...

**MP:** Oh yeh, fuck that [laughs].

In preference to the elaborate clips included on the band's excellent video compilation, "Monumental As Anything", they now concentrate on producing "simple but 'deep', straight performance videos" such as the current clip, "He's Just No Good For You".

The *Mentals* have been "chipping away" at overseas success for quite some time without the "massive world domination of pop charts" anticipated by Reg; they did however notch up healthy sales when "Live It Up" was included on the soundtrack for the most successful non-American film in history, "Crocodile Dundee". So, are the *Mentals* likely to become 'flavour of the month'?

**RM:** That's been going on for years, whether it's a natural thing or not. I mean, like *Men At Work*, it was happening then and [the press] were saying that all of these Australian bands [were doing well, but in reality] they were the only ones that really had any popularity at that stage. Now that there's a few more bands in there cracking the American top ten...

**MP:** I just hope that there's no backlash, or we can get on the bandwagon before there is a backlash.

**RM:** You're more likely to get a backlash from the English than the Americans. It takes a long time to make them like something, but once it sinks in it kind of stays there for a couple of hundred years.

Apparently the *Mentals* have a strong following in Warsaw, Wisconsin.

**MP:** We did a show there a few years ago and there were about nine people there.

**RM:** They'd just lost the baseball series that day so they were all pretty miserable, but we cheered them up with some music. They came out to the bus afterwards and the one legged club owner's mother cooked all this delicious fried chicken. We gobbled it down, had a few beers and a chat to the Americans.

At this point in the interview the subject of conversation is straying precariously close to one of the *Mentals* favourite topics...food. Throwing caution to the wind I ask if there is an inkling of a preoccupation with edible goods in light of the single "Let's Cook" and numerous (well, several) appearances on cooking shows. Looking deadly serious Reg informs that "we're all quite keen gourmands".

**MP:** It's a pretty serious business I reckon. It always astounds me when you go to supermarkets and see the prepared meals...

**RM:** ...it's quite frightening...

**MP:** ...that are available now, 'cause it's so easy to just knock up some pasta, chop in a bit of garlic and you've got a really nice, cheap, delicious thing to eat. Add just a bit of green salad, which is probably quicker than one of those 'things' that you drop in water.

**RM:** It's really distressing the way processed food is taking over...even meat they take away and freeze, then they grind it up and turn it into 'spammy' type stuff.

**MP:** I really feel like scolding people when I see them in the supermarket with that kind of stuff.

Taking no heed of Reg's protests, I directed his attention towards the new album, and in particular the rather impressive list of those sitting behind the mixing desk (Richard Gottehrer [producer], Jeffrey Lesser [associate producer], Mark Opitz [re-mixing] and Julian Mendelsohn [re-mixing]). So how did the band avoid an overproduced sound?

**MP:** The record was a bit overproduced to start with [the first mix by Gottehrer] and we kind of re-produced it in a way.

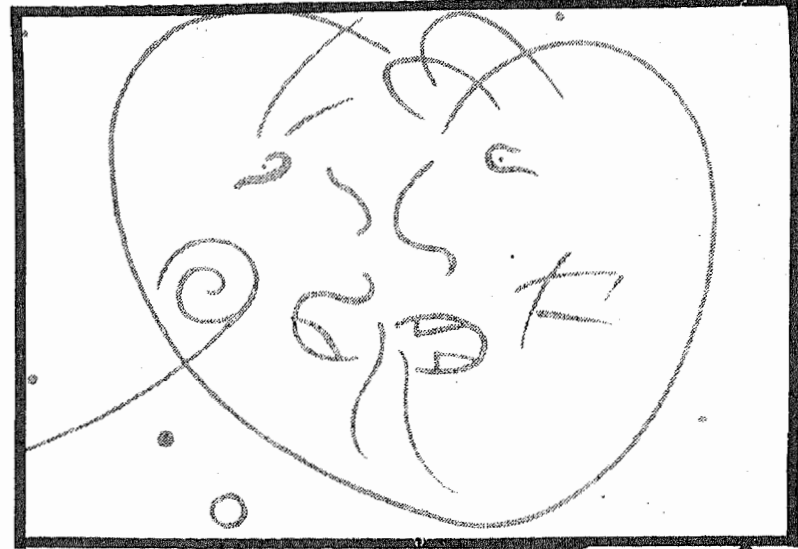
**RM:** It was, it was a bit too...a bit too...

**MP:** Bland, really.

**RM:** ...a bit too careful.

**MP:** We kind of de-produced it in a way, with the re-mixes.

**RM:** That's a good word, de-produced. We changed it from a bland sound to a more raucous sound

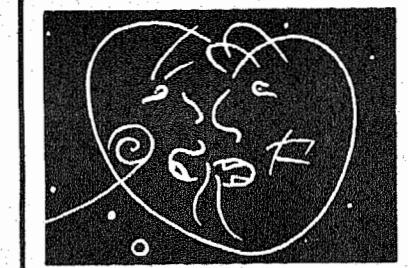


## Heavy Mental

With the release of "Fundamental" well over two years ago, the *Mentals* sixth album "Mouth to Mouth" has been eagerly awaited by fans. If what the critics have said so far is true, they won't be disappointed. "Mouth to Mouth", is, as pointed out by Reg, the most diverse album the *Mentals* have done. It is also the most consistent. Four from Greedy, three from Martin, two from Reg and two from Pete (including "The Mad King" which has been described as the best and the worst song on the album) range in style from the unashamedly commercial ("Let's Go To Paradise" and "Don't Tell Me Now") to the quirky ("Mouth to Mouth") and sophisticated ("Put Me Back"). Reg and Martin gave us a few insights into the album.

**Don't Tell Me Now:** Martin recounts, "I did make a conscious effort to write a couple of good pop songs and with "Don't Tell Me Now" in particular I drew a lot from that Motown, early sixties feel, straight 4/4 with the claps, and I just stuck my chord progression to the beat". "I'm writing on piano a bit now...it's good to switch because you tend to fall into an habitual way of doing things on the guitar, but when you start to play another instrument it really opens a lot of doors, you don't use the same chord progressions because you don't even know what the chords are".

**Mouth To Mouth:** Reg agrees that "that's probably the most different song on the album." "Greedy wrote it a couple of years ago when he was keen on *Prince*, he thought he'd have a go at that style of song. The demo was more *Princey* than the album track but it turned out interesting anyway."



**Stay At Home Girl:** Reg's song contains classic melodic lines played with a Country and Western feel. It was originally written for "melody with some keyboard lines [but] it just seemed to evolve and develop".

**My Door Is Always Open:** Already getting a lot of airplay (though the *Mentals* insist that it won't be the next single), this track was written and sung by Greedy and features the "sound of a double bass [sampled and] played on a sequencer".

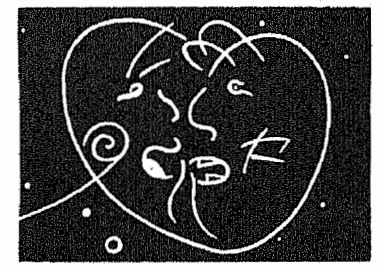
**Let's Go To Paradise:** The first single off "Mouth to Mouth" is fairly elaborate so were there any problems playing it live?

**RM:** It was a bit tricky at first 'cause there are a lot of intricate keyboard parts in it.

**MP:** A lot of sequenced stuff...

**RM:** ...but we got that under control after a few months.

**MP:** After a few jars of lemonade you start to sound a bit like a sequencer anyway.



**Thinking Out Loud:** Written by Martin, "in a way it's vaguely alluding to agoraphobics. People who spend a lot of time in front of the TV and order things in, fill up their freezers - it's vaguely about that sort of syndrome".

**Wandering Through Heaven:** Light calypso feel (like "Apocalypse" without the power chords), the lyrics are set "after a nuclear war has killed everyone, this bloke's in heaven and he can't find his girlfriend...sort of a deep, serious song".



**He's Just No Good For You:** The second single sees the welcome return of the *Mombassa* power chord, and sounds much closer to the more organic, vintage *Mentals* material. Martin points out that Reg's power chords were completely absent from the original mix. Reg adds, "we only put that in so you could go like that [demonstrates the well known motion] in the film clip".



## No 'Pots and Pans' In The Boom Crash Opera

Keyboardist with the highly acclaimed Boom Crash Opera, Greg O'Conner spoke to *On Dit* about their current tour and soon to be released album. **ANDREW MARSHALL reports.**



With the release of a new single, and an album scheduled for release in the last week of August (art work is being finalised now), *Boom Crash Opera* have once again hit the road after an extended break.

*On Dit* spoke to keyboardist Greg O'Conner about the new album, the current tour and overseas success.

**OD:** The new single ["City Flat"] has that characteristic 'full on' sound, especially towards the fade out. Is the album going to be sparser than that?

**GOC:** Sparser than that! I suppose it does build a bit. Some of the songs are fairly sparse but when this chorus arrives it does well and truly arrive. But [as far as the verses are concerned] you could drive a truck through the spaces! It's very gritty hard edged pop, not unlike our first two singles [with] a streamlined, aggressive band feel. I know everybody's saying it these days but it's definitely not overproduced - no drum machines or sequencers - in fact we didn't use any.

**OD:** What sort of overseas success are you predicting?

**GOC:** We're hoping to establish ourselves worldwide but it's really hard to predict how well we'll be received. We've been away for a while and have to re-establish ourselves but we're totally happy with two album and there's 260 million pairs of ears in America that haven't heard anything from us yet....that will be interesting.

**OD:** Any changes to the live set?

**GOC:** The light show is really spectacular and I designed a backdrop in line with the poster we've got, a city-scape design. The music is just as aggressive but these days we're tending to start off a little quieter rather than coming on and delivering a lead pipe over the head of the audience....we're just hanging off a bit, but it still ends up pretty

wild and out of control. The band are playing better than we ever have before.

**OD:** Have you had any sleepless nights over industry expectations?

**GOC:** We never really set out to please ourselves into each project as it's come along. It's always been fairly spontaneous. We never expected "Great Wall" to do as well as it did [and] because of our management structure and how things have fallen into place it probably seems a little calculated - that couldn't be further from the truth.

**OD:** There's already a characteristic Boom Crash Opera sound, is the push of the rhythm section something that you've nurtured?

**GOC:** Yeah, it's the real backbone of the band - our drummer Peter Masmon is still hitting harder than ever and that's translated onto the album....relentless almost - it's now a characteristic of our music.

Even though, the songs developed now are becoming more "songy" rather than more rhythmic orientated. Who knows, we might be Country and Western next album [laughs]. [We've always avoided] the 'pots and pans' sort of music that *Dead or Alive* play...there's no wild keyboard solos or anything.

**OD:** Has the experience of the other band members made success easier?

**GOC:** Peter's background [ex-Serious Young Insects] helped a lot, he was seasoned musician [even] before the band formed. His experience in dealing with contractual obligations and recording really helped the band make the right decisions in the majority of cases. Some bands rush into recording contracts without reading the fine print.

### RHYTHM KILLERS

Sly and Robbie  
Festival

by Mat Gibson

The rhythm section of Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespear would be well known to reggae enthusiasts and a good percentage of people who bother to read record sleeves. Recognized both for their own work and their numerous sessions with major rock, pop and reggae artists their almost exclusive partnership began in earnest in 78 and with Island Records in 1980. Work on Grace Jones' albums and notably Dylan's "Infidels" preceded their own first release "A Dub Experience".

Followed fast by "Language Barrier", the Taxi Gang tour and now "Rhythm Killers", Sly and Robbie make it clear that rhythm is what they're on about. Playing only drums and bass, they leave the embellishments and vocals to guest artists. For them, and their music is declaratory of this fact, this rhythm is the body and soul of the music and they commit themselves to driving dance grooves, a sound quite beyond, and yet connected to, the confines of their reggae roots.

The album is a fat fusion of rap, toasting hi-tech production and a funk backbeat destined for the dance floor. Including a three part version of the Ohio Players' "Fire" the mix of city sound and hip-hop lend an atmosphere which seethes urbanity.

### SOUNDS OF SOWETO

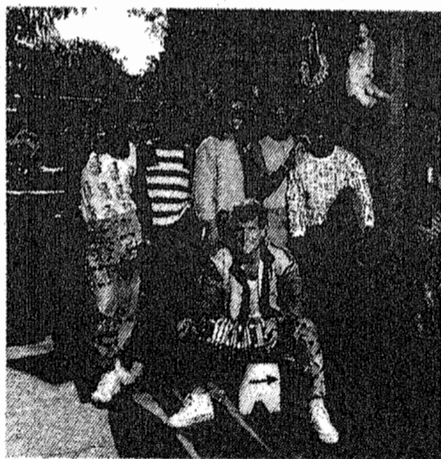
Various  
EMI

by Mat Gibson

This album should have been titled "Pop Sound of Soweto", or perhaps "An Hour And A Half Of Musical Tripe But Magnificent Vocals". The music presented here, claiming to be some definitive collection of songs, is about as far removed from the music played in the streets of Soweto as Australian garage thrash. Perhaps it's heard in Soweto on commercial radio. Yes, that's probably the excuse for the title.

As far as synth-pop goes, it beats most western attempts but falls far short of even Paul Simon's imitation. What the album really credits are the eight or so vocalists featured. If only they were given some good material.

### JOHNNY CLEGG & SAVUKA



### THIRD WORLD CHILD



### THIRD WORLD CHILD

Johnny Clegg And Savuka  
EMI

by Mat Gibson

When the single from a new album is simply a remake from an earlier work, it becomes instead a sad portent. To be sure "Skatterlings Of Africa" is an excellent song, but why Johnny Clegg would feel the compunction to produce a lesser version to head his first album with Savuka is lost on me.

The album itself provides the answer. This is a poor man's *Juluka*. The unfortunate end of that unit (with Clegg contributing 90% of the material) did not foreshadow, "Third World Child". Clegg has chosen to reject his finely negotiated peace between western pop and native rhythms which had formed the distinctive and powerful *Juluka* sound, bowing instead to pop and synthesizers.

Lyrical, Clegg has moved away from the intense, in-depth approach to South African society, politics and, of course, love, becoming mostly didactic slogans, ideologically sound yet bland.

With the exception of "Skatterlings" and "Asimbonanga", there is little of the anthemic spirituality which pervaded *Juluka*, eroded away by some poor vocal lines and electronic pertie-weep.

### FREHLEY'S COMET

Ace Frehley  
WEA

by Mat Gibson

I'm sure anyone who was aware of popular culture in the seventies could not have forgotten the name Ace Frehley, lead singer and guitarist of Kiss. He has reemerged with an album that will reaffirm his dominance in that medium. Frehley unashamedly states this on song, side one:

"Rock Soldiers! How do we know?  
Ace is back and he told you so."

I've never been much interested in Heavy Metal but I'll confess to having listened to this more than twice out of choice. There are enough catchy songs to take off even on commercial stations if the programmers have time to listen. If you're in to Metal Music, this should prove an exciting event.

### AMONG THE LIVING

Anthrax  
Festival

by Mat Gibson

Riff repetition is rife in the Anthrax camp despite the relatively restrained leadwork. At least this is the case with the 'heavier' songs of side one. Charlie Benale's drumming bursts through louder and with the force of imagination better than Dan Spitz lead. This album is unashamed strait Metal with only one major diversion. That of the acoustic guitar opened "A.D.I./Horror Of It All".

Lyrical, the album has an unusual flavour with two songs "Among The Living" and "Skeleton In The Cupboard" taking their inspiration from works by Stephen King and another "I Am The Law" describing the popular character *Judge Dredd* from the British comic *2000 A.D.* Probably under the auspices of lead singer Joe Belladonna, an American Indian, the "Indian" deals with the history of maltreatment of his race at Europeans and the extreme necessity for change, albeit in a very didactic fusion. Congratulations at least on braving the subject.

### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ronnie Spector  
CBS

by Mat Gibson

Ronnie Spector (member of sixties group "The Ronettes") like many from her immortal era is attempting a comeback.

Unfortunately I doubt this effort contains enough punch. There is no "instant appeal" single which, far from being a fault, will not give it the push it needs on the market.

None of the material is her own but she has chosen some which is innocuous at its worst and a stylish blend of soul and pop at its best.

Side One begins well enough with "Who Can Sleep" and the happily nostalgic "Love On A Rooftop", but she loses her grip with the rest of the songs.

Side Two is more worth while. Particularly "When We Danced". The worst that could be said for *Unfinished Business* is that with her voice we can hope for a far better album.



## American Releases



# BAD MICHAEL JACKSON

**BAD**  
Michael Jackson  
CBS

by Mat Gibson

The extreme success of "Thriller" obviates the need for critical analysis of "Bad" in the print media. Airplay of even the title track will assure controversial recognition and sales of this, Jackson's third solo album.

For those still unsure whether "Bad" will really please them, rest assured that both the standard and variety of material set by "Thriller" are largely maintained.

While company advertising barrages us with claims of his virtuoso talent, "Bad" is the declaratory expression of this. Jackson is the master of the slick soul and dance track genres and that is the bottom line. Beyond the fashion, the virile dancing and the tasteless tales of his idiosyncracies (which are none of our business) "Bad" is what Jackson is all about. Music as personal expression.

If "Off The Wall" was the product of an exuberant entertainer and "Thriller" the mark of a man dealing with intense professional pressures and justifiable paranoias, then "Bad" is the statement of someone acclimatized to

fame.

Whilst lyrically Jackson has never been particularly clear or perceptive, "Man In the Mirror" is a notable exception: *I Wanna Make The World A Better Place*, Jackson writes, but recognizes that change, like charity, begins at home and, ultimately, with oneself.

Musically, variety in pace and sound, the agile and often ("Dirty Diana") passionate vocals and the perfection production of Jackson and Quincy Jones leave us with a work remarkable at least for its completeness. Perhaps we will not need to wait a further five years for his next album.

### I TOO HAVE SEEN THE WOODS

Kid Creole and The Coconuts  
WEA

by Gavin Williams

After a lengthy absence from the music scene, Kid Creole and The Coconuts have released "I Too Have Seen The Woods". Having never heard any of their previous records I approached this LP with an open mind, only to be terribly disappointed by all aspects of it.

The music is a synthesised combination of several musical styles including disco, reggae and above all a pseudo Jamaican Calypso feel. Having hit on this peculiar style, Mr Creole is not going to let you forget it and the entire album is in a similar vein.

One of the people credited on the sleeve notes is the person who gave their lessons in operating the computers used in making the LP. He has every right to feel annoyed that his name was not placed in very big letters on the front cover instead of Kid Creole's as it's obvious that the compute programmer played just as big a part in making the record as The Kid.

I think Kid Creole must have realised that the musical side of the LP was a total washout and tried to gain some belated critical respect with some deep and meaningful lyrics. A classic example of this desire to be taken seriously is in "Agony...Ecstasy" where his co-writer in no less a personage than William Shakespeare who provides the opaque verses about love.

Basically this album leaves me cold, but if you are the sort of person who enjoys over produced, synthesiser-based songs sung by a weak vocalist who writes banal lyrics, then this is for you.

### BEDROCK VICE

Thrashing Doves  
Festival

by Alexander Grous

From the USA, Thrashing Doves integrate introspective lyrics and a sombre sound, which has resulted in this album being a credible achievement for the band. Combining Jesus, psychedelic imagery, and some fantasia, this a simple and yet complicated album.

The band is a four piece, with the line-up consisting of bass, guitar, keyboards and drums. The keyboard is used well, adding to bridges in the songs rather than detracting from them, as on the track "Killer for You". Likewise, there is never an overfeeding of guitar or drums, making for an even, smoothed out sound. Ken Foreman's vocals have an almost haunting quality at times, and his writing is reminiscent of the

Church's questioning style.

"Jesus on the Payroll" is an interesting track, commenting on the automated impersonal world we live in. Nice light guitar work elevates the song into a higher gear, but the sinister undertone of the lyrics is quite evident. Likewise, on "Biba's Basement", an antichrist theme is the central issue, with relevance to world politics and materialism. Once more, competent and well accompanying music makes these songs rewarding listening.

The fact that all of the band aid in backing vocals adds to the feeling of completeness, and Ian Button's bass palying is at least audible, and prominent - unlike many recordings where bass is pushed into the 'Dead Zone'. An interesting record on the whole, which may grow on you if you 'miss' much of it the first time round. Worth really 'listening to', if you can muster the energy to hear what is being said-sung.



### DIFFERENT DRUMMER

Isley Jasper Isley  
CBS

by Alexander Grous

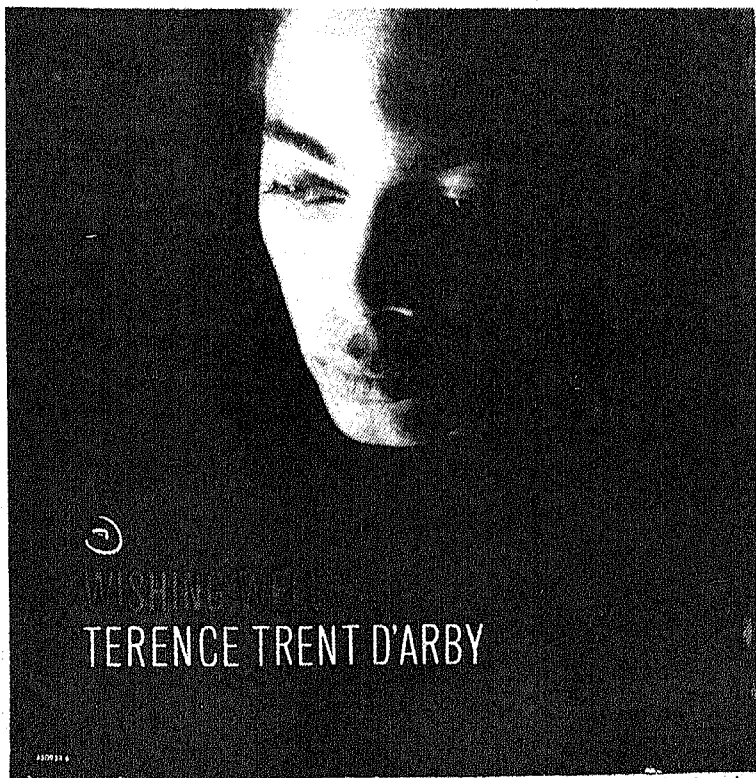
Predominantly soul material, Different Drummer is not as different as it is indifferent: Very mainstream Miami Vice type music, and nothing more or less. Studio work at its most obvious level, most of the musical accompaniment to Ernie Isley and Chris Jasper's singing is digital and synthetic.

Side one is the more 'up tempo' of the two sides, with "Do It Right" (Discoish title?) having all of the trickery available to modern computertronic whiz kids, and in general all of the tracks on this side follow suit. The exception is "Black Rose", which is a ballad in the tradition of Billy Ocean etc. This sets the path clear for side two, which is slower, and entirely ballad type material.

This is not a 'dust bin job' however, for Different Drummer has enough of a balance between silky, melodic ballads, and Peter Gabriel sounding numbers to ensure success. I don't think that the band sounds like an individual entity, but rather it falls into the category of "Sounds like...." This is not to say that it detracts from the record, and as TV shows have proven, there is life after vinyl.

The tracks do have some impressive qualities inherent in their lyrics, and "Brother to Brother" is a vehemently anti apartheid song as ever there was one, "You may possess half the worlds gold, But you don't have the power to control Another man's soul."

If you belong to the majority of music listeners in Australia who like mainstream music, then you might be attracted to this album. Think of it as many of your favourite artists rolled into one!



### TERENCE TRENT D'ARBY

**WISHING WELL**  
Terence Trent D'Arby  
CBS

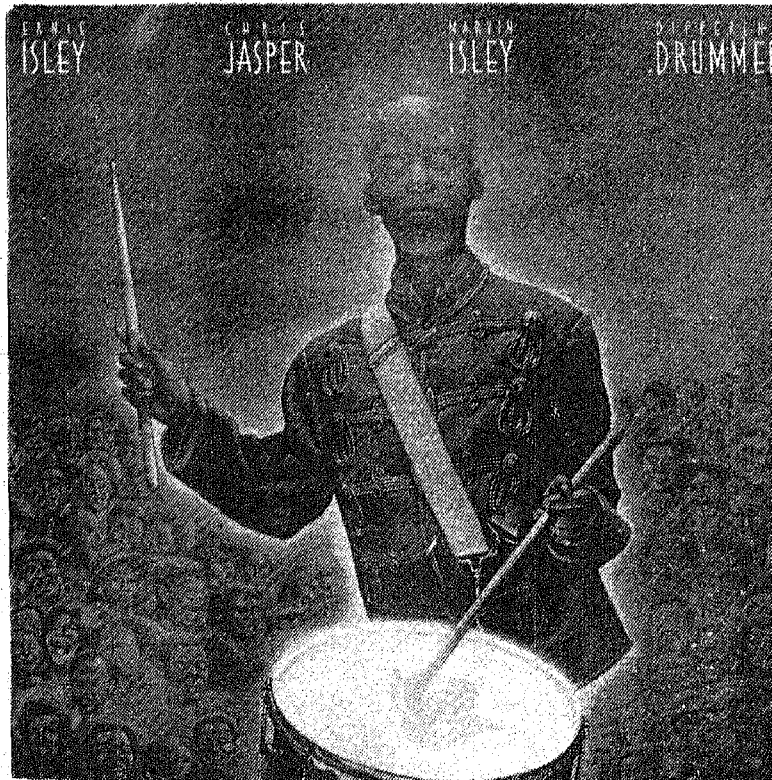
by Alexander Grous

This is a three track EP, which features the crystal clear and mellow voice of black artist Terence D'Arby. An English performer, he is more in the category of 'alternate' artist, whose songs move at a slow, extremely relaxed pace.

The song "Wishing Well" has been recorded twice on the EP, in two distinctly different forms. What is common to both however, is the excep-

tional use of the human voice by D'Arby. With little accompaniment and exquisite harmony, he weaves a euphoric and lingering patter of sound. The other track is "Elevators and Hearts", which although more commercial in style and approach than "Wishing Well" loses very little in the way of appeal.

Terence D'Arby has quietly arrived on the music scene, and has in an almost clandestine fashion made an impression. His music however, has no problems standing high above that of many, many others.....



## Blonde On Blonde

**Do blondes have more fun? AL GROUS found the answer to this and much more when he talked with Concrete Blonde after their recent gig at Le Rox.**



On August 6, a little piece of Hollywood invaded Le Rox at about 11.30 pm. This marked the debut Adelaide gig for Concrete Blonde, a tight three piece American band. Playing energetically and passionately on the night, they won over the "rad" crowds which often frequent Le Rox and other venues, and are just "too cool" to clap-Wall of Voodoo gig. Ring any bells you black clad wankers?

The smallish but appreciative crowd were treated to over an hours worth of sweating, grinding music, which encompassed material from the band's first album 'True'. New material from a forthcoming album was also performed, one of the tracks being a song against guns, "This one's about guns, I fuckin' hate them..." said Johnette Napolitano, the band's singer.

The guitarist, Jim Mankey, prefers to let Johnette do most of the moving on stage, choosing instead to almost inconspicuously play guitar in the corner. The remaining member of the band, Harry Rushakoff, was quite a clever little drummer, placing one cymbal behind him, which he occasionally pelted from over his shoulder. His inconspicuousness was adorned on him by the fact that his drum kit kept him from view most of the night.

What this combination of artists resulted in was not the crap we have come to expect from 'effervescent' and "Yeah, we love you baby" performers that most venues have no problems attracting. Instead, we lapped up some original, down to earth music which was written and performed by some very approachable people.

The tracks that they performed from the album were not 'cloned' tracks, but rather, some variation was injected for the live gig. Johnette said afterwards,

"When a crowd doesn't know you, as was the case with Adelaide, we like to try and get closer with them, and sometimes you just can't do that with a track that's been done in the studio. You have to try something different with it, and yet still retain the original song; this is what we tried to do with some of our numbers tonight."

The songs that they performed on the

night made full use of the band's tight sound, and ranged from "Still in Hollywood", which was grundgier on stage than it is on the album, to "(You're the only one) Can Make Me Cry"; a ballad with only acoustic accompaniment. This illustrated Johnette's powerful and yet graceful voice, which showed its true versatility on the night. This lady has got one hell of a voice! For most of the night it powered well above the decibels of the instruments, and 'the boys' even helped out on "croaking"

(as they called it) on "Still in Hollywood".

Perhaps a reason why the gig worked well was that the band seemed like a part of the crowd, and that they had just 'hopped' the front row of people to play on stage: you didn't feel isolated from them.

Johnette writes most, if not all of the material, and much of the band's history and personal experience are intertwined and reflected in their songs.

"I try to write from personal experience, and not for anyone else. My lyrics are basically everyday thoughts that you have when you're on the bus, at home alone, or wherever. Hollywood is such a shithole that there is never any shortage of something to write about! If there is something ridiculous happening somewhere in the world, you can bet that it is occurring a thousand times as ridiculous in Hollywood!"

"We basically live our lives, and the inspiration for much of what I write

about comes from what I come across. Other songs like *Songs for Kym* are about friends, and how badly life can mess you up. I personally think that it is much more fulfilling to write songs that come from experience, as opposed to platitude, meaningless numbers."

And what of Australian audiences? "Australian's have been fantastic! We couldn't have asked for better crowds. When people come to your gigs and appreciate what you put into them, it makes them all the more enjoyable. The people down here seem to be more easy going, and they generally show their appreciation if they enjoyed the show."

"To tell you the truth, I don't really give a shit whether I go back to LA or not, it tends to get to you at times. You know, your hair is a bit different, or your dress code is not the same as someone else's, so they won't sell you something like a stupid stamp. That kind of crap! Real meaningful and conscientious members of society! I'm sure however that you get the same type of morons over here."

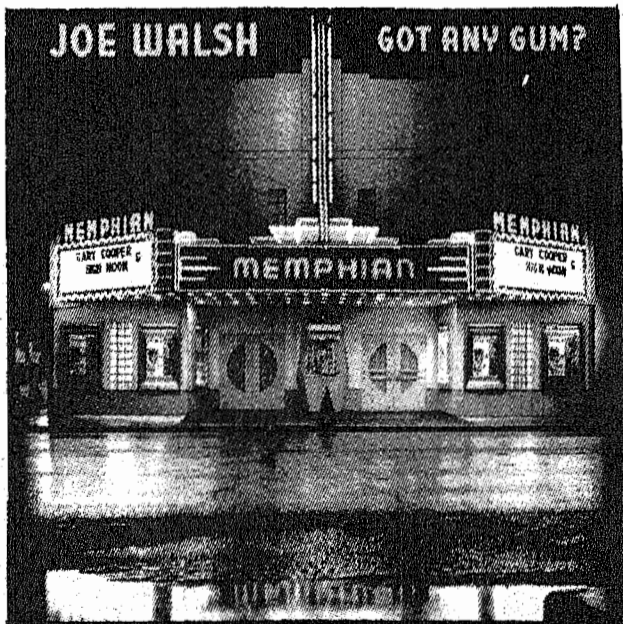
I assured her that Adelaide is not bereft of the same kind of intelligence, which shows that some things are universal. Did Harry agree with Johnette's appraisal?

"Ughh..." replied Harry, when not dashing around to the bar, amongst people or wherever. Harry was somewhat 'hot' during the show, discarding his shirt and making the crowd whip itself into an absolute 'frenzy'. Afterwards, he paraded around in a more modest blue singlet, "Oh, that's just Harry, you get used to it after a while," Johnette said laughingly.

I asked Jim if they are planning on coming back to Australia in the near future.

ments back home finalised, like the new album, touring and so on, we'd love to come back. Maybe next time we could see more of the country as well."

Johnette added jokingly, "Yeah, maybe we can see some of the fantastic things that we always get shown about Australia back home. You know; roos, outback, etc., etc. Hopefully it shouldn't be too long before we find ourselves back here again...now, where the hell did Harry get to?"



**GOT ANY GUM?**  
Joe Walsh  
WEA

by Alexander Grous

The clown Prince of rock, Joe Walsh has unleashed on an unsuspecting public "Got Any Gum?" Somewhat more 'overproduced' than some of his earlier work, it should still be enjoyed by Walsh fans. Terry Manning was responsible for the production and engineering of the album being no stranger to Walsh's work.

"The Radio Song" begins the album off, and is a lamentful keyboard based track. It is a peaceful introduction to what is generally a 'softer' album - thanks to the use of a keyboard. Following this is a markedly divergent track entitled "Fun", which utilises a distorted, Beastie Boys sound, with a single guitar predominating. It is really the only one of its kind on the album, with other songs like "Up To Me" using the guitar in a staccatto effect, but with no overdrive.

Walsh's writing is predominately involved with having a good time and just enjoying anything that one wants to do. "Malibu" is a track that says,

"Three piece suits  
Cowboy Boots  
Dress designer jeans  
Gucci-goo  
High style  
Everybody else looks just like you..."

As I said, the central theme to the songs is not the lyrics. On "No Peace In The Jungle", strong bass work make it a successful track, and it seems that Walsh has rotated the focus on his musicians from song to song, thus allowing all of the instruments to be featured.

Joe Walsh enjoys making music for as he has said in the past, "You get fed up of doing what everyone else thinks sounds right. I just do what I think sounds good to me and the rest of them can do whatever it is they do..." That pretty well sums up the album.

### LOOK WHAT THE CAT DRAGGED IN

Poison  
Liberation/CBS

by Alexander Grous

Obsessed with their own sexuality disorders, the cover features the four 'boys' being anything but that. Aesthetically, better than musically, which is not too flattering to the sensationalist seeking joyboys.

The voice of Bret Michaels is as feminine as his image, and at least 'he' is consistent there. From track one, Cry Tough, you can pretty well fathom what you are in store for: One guitar, one drum kit, one bass and one singer. Throw in distortion and a tremolo bar, and there you have it.

There seems to be something lacking in the sound of the band, who sound like Journey in parts: The addition of another guitar, or keyboard might fill in the gap. "Talk Dirty To Me" is indicative of the band's infatuation, as are the tracks "Play Dirty" and "Want Some, Need Some". Pretty average material really, and although the Tou Can should play these tracks, Adelaide should remain fairly sleepy to Poison. The world juvenile came to mind when I first saw and heard them, but with the comeback of numerous "Kiss" type groups, this band should find a place in the market for their particular brand of Poison.

Be warned however, an antidote is non-existent...believe it, or not....

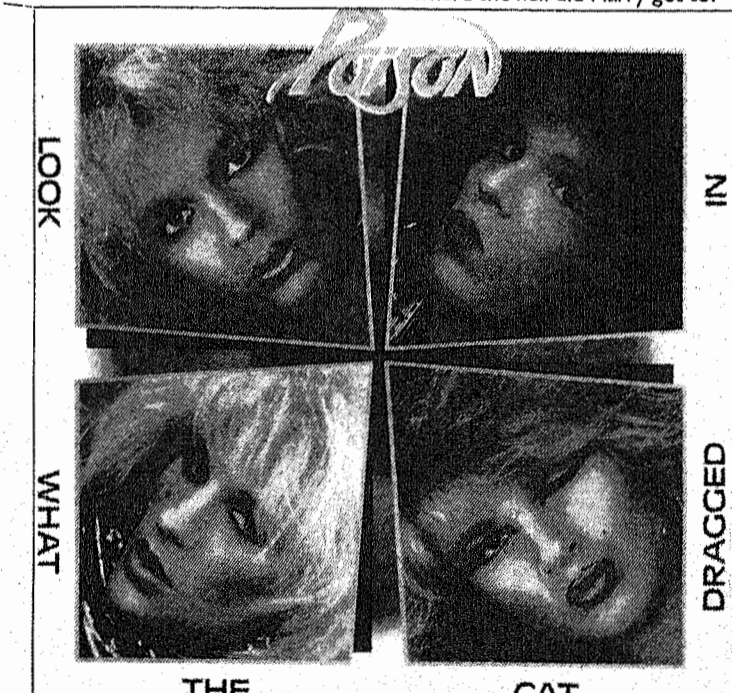
### YO! BUM RUSH THE SHOW

Public Enemy  
CBS

by Richard Wilson

"You got no rap - but you want to battle. It's like having a boat - but you got no paddle. 'Cause I never pause - I say it because I don't break in stores - but I break all laws..."

They forgot to put the 'C' in front of 'rap'.



**THE SAILS**  
Chet Atkins  
CBS

by Richard Wilson

Listening to this album, the one word that springs to mind instantly is "nice". Nothing more, nothing less, just "nice". The sort of music that you hear piped over the speakers while shopping in Myers.

The album features the talents of hundreds of performers, the most notable being Mark Knopfler on guitar. Knopfler incidentally writes one of the songs, a six-minute piece called 'Why Worry'.

The unusual thing about the whole album is - why is it credited to Chet? He co-produces it, co-writes four of the 10 tracks and plays one or two splashes of banjo. About 20 other musicians make equal or greater contributions to the final product. I wonder how the royalties were divided?

**INTO THE WOODS**  
The Call  
WEA

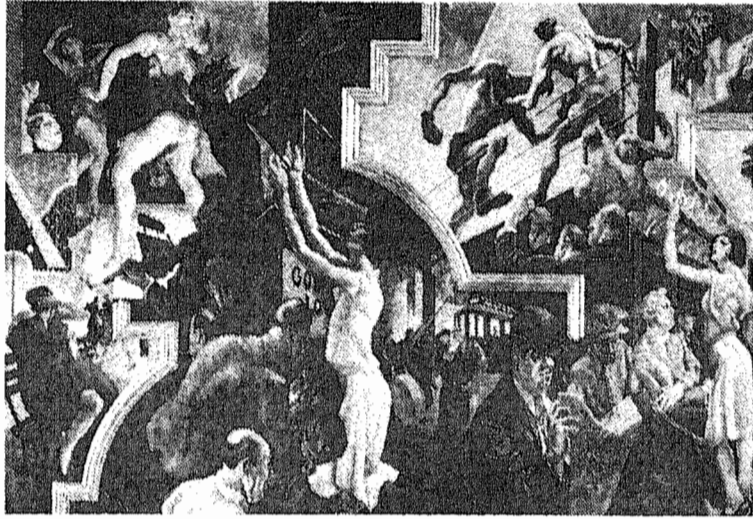
by Mat Gibson

US Band The Call have produced an album of music which is so chumpy you could carve it. To utilise some of music's buzz terms, the sound has comprehensive top and bottom ends and thundering dynamics interwoven with an energetic and frustrated vocal line but still possesses the intricacies to sidestep any 'heavy metal' label one might be inclined to attach.

The power of performance from this four member group does not require the twist of the volume control of the more restricted 'metal' medium, and still manages to avoid sounding cluttered. Anyone attracted by power without aural violence should welcome "Into The Woods".

## American Releases

### RAINMAKERS



**THE RAINMAKERS**  
The Rainmakers  
Polygram

by Alexander Grous

At last! Someone is getting it right! This Mid Western USA group, (Kansas City), has released their debut album, which has both something to say, and makes great listening.

A five piece, solid guitar and rhythm machine, The Rainmakers revel in their gritty "Urban Cowboy" sound, but with poignant and socially prevalent lyrics: Something of an enigmatic act nowadays. Produced by Terry Manning, this is another credible notch for the man who has guided George Thorogood, ZZ Top, Joe Cocker and Jason and the Scorchers. This group sounds like an amalgamation of all of the

forementioned artists.

The track "Downstream" has been getting some airplay recently, and along with "Let My People Go", they make formidable single material. Both have a sort of Evangelical overtone, but are by no means 'religious': realistic would be more appropriate.

Singer Bob Walkenhorst has a heavy South-Western drawl in his voice, and this becomes obvious in most of the songs. Machismo and male pride are the focus of the track "Big Fat Blonde", and on "Government Cheese" the centre of attention shifts to bureaucratic waste. Good mixing ensures an even sound in all of the tracks, and The Rainmakers will undoubtedly be featuring heavily on radio and T.V. as their album gathers momentum. The Rainmakers are sure to dance up a storm!

**PRECIOUS WILSON**  
Nancy Wilson  
EMI

by Alexander Grous

This 'hot' lady is out to prove that disco is alive and well! Owwww! Only now that the white, flared outfits are gone, artists hide behind really 'radical' black leather. Throw in a couple of ballads, a soundtrack theme, and you have a neat little package for the retailers.

SA-FM should like this lady, and it wouldn't surprise me if certain venues in Hindley Land also blared her out to those stupid enough to be walking by. "I'll Be Your Friend" is reminiscent of the reasoning as to why "Death to Disco" t-shirts came out, and this song contains the poignant Chaka Khan semi rap type 'effects' you've grown to love. Surpassing this is a duet with Richard John Smith, on "Don't Take It Away", who said Kenny Rogers was the only one doing duets?

"The Jewel Of The Nile" is a track from the movie, and yet it still grossed well for Douglas Junior. "She Don't Really Wanna Know" should be track about elocution (Warrick Cappa ring a bell?), and exemplifies the fact that you do not need a great voice, or natural ability to sing; it's all in the flick of a studio switch.

No doubt some will like this record, and the discos will love it. Where you fit in is up to your conscience.



**LIFE**  
Neil Young And Crazy Horse  
WEA

by Mat Gibson

Like any other musician, Neil Young has had a varied career. Varied in its success and style. His halcyon days were perhaps the folk rock of "Harvest" and "After The Goldrush" but his predominant talent lay with straight rock 'n roll (if you'll excuse the parochialism). The late 70's/early 80's left sloppy, dishevelled albums like "Re-actor". Last year's "Landing On Water" was an ignored but well crafted, if overpowering, album.

With Crazy Horse he has now delivered his best work in years. "Life" plays like a musical travelogue. Solo piano and harmonica on the hymnaic "Long Walk Home", rollicking rock and Saturday night lyrics of "Prisoners of Rock And Roll", the modernness and sarcasm of "Midwest Vacation" and the varied pace and acoustic mix of "Inca Queen" combine for a thoroughly imaginative album, and a tribute to Young's versatility.

**BAD INFLUENCE**  
Robert Cray Band  
High Tone/Polygram

by Mat Gibson

One astute commentator on Robert Cray pointed out that the man sounded like a pioneer of blues - not a throw back.

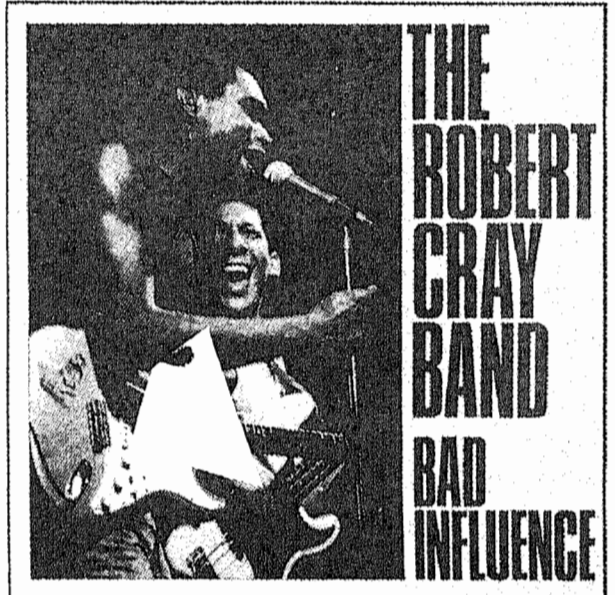
The essential qualities of Cray's music are his smooth, melancholy voice that breaks into a soulful slightly raspy falsetto and his taut delineated guitar style. The classic blues sound he weeps from his guitar contains the perfect balance of blues renderings; hoots, twangs, bent notes and the all important pause.

The lyrical theme of blues is encapsulated in its name; Cray chooses only the purest of material. He's the emotional

criminal and the victim; the lovesick youngman and the heartache veteran; the passion and the blues. At times, however, he descends to abject sexism, as in "So Many Women, So Little Time", as though they are all just experiences one ought to wade through.

A keynote of Cray's music is its economy. There's never a cluttered moment on any of his songs, but "Bad Influence" has the odd repetitive one. With the backing so sparse the guitar so clean and Cray's voice so smooth, all it needed was four or so strait three chords in a row.

A precursor to "Strong Persuader", "Bad Influence" and the other previously unavailable High Tone record "False Accusations" are now locally available through Polygram.



**SAMMY HAGAR**  
Sammy Hagar  
WEA

by Mat Gibson

Perhaps this should have been titled "Contractual Obligation". After joining Van Halen, Hagar still owed Griffin Records two LP's. One became a best of and this is the other. This is not to infer that this self titled album is some kind of scratch job, nor has he taken the easy way out and done a 'Labor of Love' covers record. It might even be called the Van Halen album you make when you're not making a Van Halen album, as it features and is produced by Edward Van Halen.

The overall sound is quite comparable. It's mostly heavy, a tad 'popple', in various songs and even contains some fine slide guitar work on a Robert Johnson inspired "Standing At The Same Old Crossroads". By and large it sidesteps the monotony implicit in much of heavy metal but Hagar insists on wasting his voice to raunchy, impassioned screams which lose impact by their frequency. Assured of finding favour with his own legions it should also appeal to adherents of Van Halen.

**GYPSY BLOOD**  
Mason Ruffner  
CBS

by Mat Gibson

It's hard to put a finger on what's missing on this, what it is that leaves only a numbe taste in your mouth when your critical sense tells you it should be a good album. He plays guitar with a lot of verve and some variation, reminiscent of Nils Lofgren, whilst his voice is a marginally more Americanized version of Jo Camelleri. The vocal melodies are, at best, Dylan-esque but largely lack real colour, as he tries very hard to project a textured, streetwise tone.

The only problem seems his rhythm section which on all but the odd movement are to bland to support the adroit guitar. The urban language and style of the lyrics become a little tedious to read and are more or less innocuous to listen to.

This man has more potential for growth than any artist I have heard in some time but it would seem he needs a collaborative effort or at least the accentuation of more than just his guitar.

**ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN**  
Self Titled

by David Penberthy

Gone are the days of thrashy inaccessible brilliance from Echo and the Bunnymen. The self titled album, their first since the singles collection released in 1985, sounds like a continuation down the musical path they followed then with "Bring on the Dancing Horses".

Greater emphasis is placed on guitar sounds and similar melodic pleasantries making the album approachable and palatable to the uninitiated but unfortunately a bit thin compared to their gutsier early work.

The single "The Game" is a mundane piece of music that fails to accurately represent the quality of other tracks. If by some miracle you acutally hear it played on Adelaide radio, do not be misled. The album demonstrates a new smoothness and musical clarity but "The Game" is so smooth and clear it is insignificant.

Thankfully the album contains some aggressive tracks marked with an air of confusion and desperation that is central to their lyrical and musical performance. Outstanding tracks like "Bed-

bugs and Ballyhoo" and "Lips Like Sugar" are evocative of early Bunnymen pieces, but there is nothing to match the bizarre vocals and wailing drone chords of "The Killing Moon" from their 1983 release, Ocean Rain.

Their new album lacks this musical power and energy as the guitarists seem more concerned with caressing the listener with gentle melodies than dragging out there low eerie chords that gave Echo and the Bunnymen such a mysterious sound.

Vocalist Ian McCulloch (not called "Echo" contrary to popular belief) compensates for the lack of guitar power with a strong performance sounding vaguely like a moe optimistic version of Robert Smith, distressed but without the whining. His lyrics are as cryptic as ever but are often destroyed by their chanting in choruses, making songs like "New Direction" sound more like a protest march than music.

The new Echo and the Bunnymen LP deserves success and should manage to interest some new listeners with their mellower sound. Whilst a listenable album it does suffer from an uncharacteristic lack of power.



# On Disc

## THE PARTY'S JUST BEGUN

**No longer a human juke box The Party Boys are turning their attention to serious hitmaking. ANDREW MARSHALL spoke with founder Paul Christie and drummer Rick Harvey.**

There are no hairdressers from Melbourne playing synthesiser in this band. (Party Boys T-Shirt, 1985)

To anyone genuinely interested in Aussie rock, the Party Boys need no introduction. Their unconventional approach to forming a rock band has created a great deal of interest, curiosity and anticipation (to see just who would be recruited next). The recent addition of (ex-Status Quo) bass player Alan Lancaster has witnessed some important changes to the band.

Paul Christie, the band's instigator, and Richard Harvey spoke to *On Disc* about the remarkable success of the new single and the band's fresh new outlook.

**OD:** Why two drummers, were you looking for a more powerful sound or was that something for the image?

**PC:** I had access to Alan Lancaster the bass player and [as] the longstanding bass player of *Mondo Rock* and the *Party Boys* I decided to take to the drum kit to facilitate his coming into the band. I'd always wanted to have two drum kits specifically for the point you raised, that it is a powerful concept... and seeing as we don't bite the heads off live chickens I thought that two drum kits would be a good way [to] create a bit of interest.

I got a touch jaded playing the bass [and] I'd always wanted to play drums [but] I'm a novice. Actually it's lead and rhythm drums.... I follow him [Richard].

**RH:** Luckily I'm not a frippita frappita drummer....

**PC:** Richard didn't audition for *Kiss*.  
**RH:** ....so it's quite easy to follow me 'cause I just keep it very simple. That to me is how rock 'n' roll is anyway.

**OD:** Previously the band worked without an agent and you only did covers, why change now?

**PC:** The band has been a fairly non-conformist entity for some years and I actually became tired of that. I thought, 'well we'll become non-conformist within ourselves and conform...'

**RH:** ...and it's worked.  
**OD:** Did the decision to do originals rather than covers prompt you to record a studio album?

**PC:** We've got 5 albums on the market but they're all live recordings that I've mixed in a studio. We've never actually sat down in a studio and recorded what they label a studio recorded single.... I just felt that this was about the right time to go about doing that....consequently, we've been very fortunate with the results. That needed a fairly stable line-up [to get] record company commitment....they don't want to invest their time and energies in a group of bodgies that are going to be boning each other up the arse and then disappearing off to join other bands two weeks after they've signed the deal.

I miss the studio because....it's just good fun. I don't think that there's any other band in the history of rock that has had five live albums and then released a studio single that has just bolted straight to the top ten which was a bit of a surprise for all of us.

**OD:** You were shocked?

**RH & PC:** Definitely.

**PC:** I was hoping that this record would simmer around the thirties and that it would give us exposure and make people aware that we are in the studio and [we do] want to release film clips and be judged on our performances on a broader base as against just being this renegade live act.

**OD:** But it'll bring more people to the shows.

**PC:** Which is great, I'm a showoff, so is he [Richard], we all are at heart. [I believe] the essence of standing up on stage is simply to entertain people...not to preach political dogma. Music really is a cure, no, not a cure, that's too idealistic...a partial remedy for the maladies of the world, without having to be reminded of [those] maladies by an act on stage. Richard could possibly fill you in on that....without naming names...

**RH:** Yeah, we've had a couple of people in the band that did that but I've done it actually a couple of times...

**PC:** ...did his Bob Hawke impersonation.

**RH:** ...when Joe Walsh was in the band in the middle of "Summertime Blues", told everyone 'to go an' get fucked an' it's a load of shit an' all that' and got back and played. That was fun...went over like a fart in a lift. Angry [Anderson] used to get up there and was quite serious about all that he did, but he gave that away when the whole band was lying behind him....all asleep. If I went to a gig and heard a band I don't want somebody telling me how to do it or how to live....I just want to go there and stamp my foot and have a good time.

**PC:** Actually, Angry of all people summed it up well. He said, "we're here to put a song in your heart and a smile on your face". The roots of rock 'n' roll are all about that.

**OD:** Does the choice of studio album mean we can expect a lot of overdubs and effects.

**PC:** Even the *Beatles* in their early days when they weren't going straight to two trade we're doing overdubs....so [that's] not a mystery. They'll be carefully crafted to be as good as we can possibly make them...because you've got to live with it. It's there, and it's history...you don't want to let people down.

**OD:** The press release says you'll be going for the UK and European markets. What about America?

**RH:** It's there, year.

**PC:** I want to try and get the band away in the UK and Europe first because we have a trump card in the presence of Allan Lancaster...who's really 25% of a British superstar act in *Status Quo*. The sold 80 million albums and singles...

**RH:** ...a lot of lambourghinis and stuff in that lot.

**PC:** ...and I think [that] his involvement will lend a certain credibility to what we're doing, but we're not going to trade specifically on that. Basically, [it's] when the person in the street turns on his tranny, likes the song or dislikes it - that's the bottom line of it all.

I've toured the States and Richard's toured the States with *Joe Walsh* in Madison Square Garden so we've all

been through America. It's really just looking for a new horizon.

**RH:** ...everybody seems to go straight to the States.

**PC:** ...again, it's a fairly non-conformist move but we'll definitely be releasing in the States, there's no question about that. I've sent some tapes over and had comments that have come back nothing but positive...but I learnt a great saying when I was an insurance clerk when I was 19...my old supervisor said, "the sale's never made until the commission's spent". Until... that happens...we'll just wait it out.

**RH:** I would have been very pleased just to hear this song once on the radio in my car driving somewhere...the next thing you know we're on *Countdown* and I thought "hold on, I thought we are too old for this".

**OD:** With all of these well established performers in the band, is there any trouble running a democratic system?

**PC:** No, it's always been fairly despotic actually. Not that I'm proclaiming publicly to be a megalomaniac or the rock world's Idi Amin, but I found it was easier for one person to be 'calling the tune' and then all those guys have to do is turn up and sing and play...that to them is the attraction. James Reyne could get up and sing "Superfreak" and Richard Clapton could get up and sing *Rolling Stones* songs.

**OD:** Will there be any covers on the new album, besides the single?

**PC:** Yeah, there'll be four classics.

**OD:** How do you choose them?

**PC:** Because we play in a certain way it narrows the field...

**RH:** It's getting harder but there are still a lot of songs that are untapped from the sixties and seventies, great songs...

**PC:** ...like this one we've got out now.  
**OD:** What do you think of the *Chan-oozies'* version?

**PC:** I think [it's] very typical of their style but they made a mistake when they picked a song that's got quite a message - the underlying theme of the lyric being political oppression in South Africa. I don't think you can do a light hearted version of that song. It's like recording "Smoke On The Water" [with] ukalele and castanets...it just wouldn't work. I think they've done a credible recording but perhaps it should have been another tune - the first single they did was quite good.

**OD:** You've scored a sponsorship deal with *West End*, that obviously goint to help promotion but will it allow you to do any US gigs?

**PC:** There's been a limited promotional sponsorship...they financed our recording and they wanted to be involved then with the subsequent success of that record, it's like a product affiliation. As we play...in what are basically distribution outlets for their product...

**OD:** Did you find that at the earlier shows there were a lot of people coming to see individual members play, or did you attract a whole new audience?

**PC:** The first line-up was such a media circus event and got so much publicity nationally, that everyone across the board came to see the combination, not so much to see individual members, like James Reyne.

**OD:** What can we expect from the book you're working on, Paul?

**PC:** Just lots of slanderous accusations and libellous story telling...there's just been an incredible array of funny things happened. I'm going to word-process the whole thing on my computer and give it to an editor to see what they think...it'd also make an excellent TV series, it's a great script.

**OD:** Who's doing most of the writing in the band?

**PC:** Well, everyone can write. John and Allan work as a team, Kevin's got a large backlog of tracks, I've got a few ideas that I've been fooling with since last year and John [Swan] writes his own stuff.

**RH:** I've put in a few ideas...

**PC:** Richard re-wrote "Running Bear".

**RH:** I want to release it as a new single [laughing].

**PC:** By the *Richard Harvey Sex Explosion*.

**RH:** That could be good. If people in Australia can buy "Shaddup You Face", I reckon I can do a great fucking heavy metal version of "Running Bear".

**PC:** He's an optimist [laughs].

**RH:** Sort of *Bon Jovi*.

**PC:** [sings to the tune of "Living On A Prayer"] Ooh, Ooh, Running Bear.

**RH:** The new chant!

**OD:** How much of the album have you got down?

**PC:** There's some really wild stuff, an incredible ballad...

**RH:** We're lucky 'cause Alan's got his own studio...so there's no big pressure on us to bring out the album.

**OD:** Video reaction has obviously been good, what has radio reaction been like?

**PC:** Radio reaction has been incredible. We've had Doug Mulray, Uncle Doug in Sydney [a real DJ], every morning he makes a comment about the single...everyone on radio has been making complimentary remarks about the band and the song.

I think it's like we've had this hotbed of fans for five years waiting for us to do something like this, to latch onto, to identify with - which is what happens in the pop music marketing world - I think for those reasons it's across the board...like we're doing big business in Tasmania and Darwin and we haven't even been there.

**OD:** What do you think was the attraction for Alan Lancaster to join the Party Boys?

**PC:** He's spent his whole life playing the bass guitar and to all of a sudden stop it is like really severe punishment... I mean it's something he's been doing for twenty-four years, on a hugely successful basis. I'm sure he lies in bed asleep going [plays the bass guitar]. Twenty-four years is a long career, like to the point where public servants would retire.

**RH:** Gold watch stuff...

**PC:** His whole life is being a rock bass player...what do you do?

**RH:** Fade in to oblivion or keep going. And going, in fact, the party's just begun.

• The Party Boys will be playing in Adelaide on September 17th (Tivoli), 18th (Bridgeway), 19th (Colonnades) and 20th) Findon. Be early - venues fill quickly.



## Awash On A Sea Of Frustration

**Lead singer of Flotsam Jetsam, Stephen Ferris spoke to GAVIN WILLIAMS about the trials and tribulations of being on the fringes of mainstream music success in Australia.**

Since their inception in 1982, *Flotsam Jetsam* have had to travel a rocky road to gain the success and recognition they feel they deserve. But it hasn't all been bad as there have been several highlights, including participating in the 'Cooking with George' project and supporting *Queen* on the national tour. After an intermittent release schedule of just four singles over a period of two and a half years, the release of a new single, 'Power' and the accompanying five track EP 'Horrorbox' signifies a new attempt to gain a much needed higher public profile. Lead singer

Stephen Ferris explains why they haven't done what most new Australian groups do, tour constantly.

"We had mixed feelings early [about playing live] because we love playing but it's expensive for us to play. But we need some sort of profile or acceptance [because] it's great if you can play places and people want to see you and like you. So we want to play as often as we can considering that it cost money to go places. If we got Timbuctoo and people don't know who we are, it is difficult, for you can only do it so many times before you think, why am I doing this?"

This is a familiar tale of woe for many Australian groups and explain why *Flotsam Jetsam* have taken on numerous supports for international acts such as *New Order* and *Queen*. However this also can be difficult, especially for a group struggling to establish itself, Ferris agrees.

"The Queen support was really early on in our career. It just feels like you're the doormat, you go on in front of a crowd who is still buying their popcorn and cokes. It's not that the crowd is difficult, it's just that they're not interested. It's so different doing a support because you just

get no reaction. You can't see the faces, you can't see the people around you. Normally at a smaller venue the people virtually flood the stage and to look out and see the people just sitting there doing nothing is depressing. They may be enjoying it but you don't know it until the end of the song when they go clap, clap, clap and you know they're having a good time. I would much rather do small shows, as most bands would. I can tell that *Simply Red* are more of a club band, but that's just the way the promoters work it."

The new EP is something of a departure from their previous releases. While the same dance funk feel is prevalent, the lyrics have a more distinct political bias. All the songs link together to form some sort of 'concept' or theme about power and its

perverse manifestations. Does this mean the group members all have similar political views?

"Yeh, but we've tended to ignore them in the past [because] we tend to scoff at groups like *Midnight Oil* and *Do Re Mi* who really flog an angle. I find groups who push their message too strongly very tedious. We're not too politically motivated, we believe in entertainment or in the music first and pushing the message second. Even though there is an angle in the lyrics it's not pushed hard like a lot of people tend to do. This is really the first time any strong ideas have been used in songs as we normally go for the pop stuff. All the tracks on the EP were chosen with no regard for airplay, we just sat down and said, these are the songs we are recording and because we used 'Power', we decided to tie things up so they all made sense. People can [now] listen and hear that it was a project rather than just any collection of songs. It was definitely deliberate to link them up as best as we could"

The new single 'Power' is the highlight of the EP with its high powered funk sound and some very savage lyrics like -

"One thing I must make perfectly clear  
Nuclear weapons all mean fear  
Their hands sweet, their fingers itch  
And I'm the only one you trust with the switch"

Also of interest is that the song was co-sung with actor Terry Serio, best known for his portrayal of Johnny O'Keefe in the T.V. series "Shout". Ferris explains how this came about:

"He was just an old friend of ours who used to get up on stage with us occasionally to do 'Power'. We asked him if he wanted to record it and he said yes. But it presents problems because we can't get him away from his stage show so if we do T.V. shows we need someone to mime his part."

It is unfortunate for the group that they have been unable to capitalise on the current dance/disco boom happening in Australia. It must be frustrating seeing other groups of a similar nature, like *I'm Talking, Wa Wa Nee* enjoying massive chart success while they languish in supporting roles. Hopefully for them "Horrorbox" and the forthcoming album will change all that because they are no longer content to just bob along in the wake of more successful artists.

Wedge keeps approaching him and he keeps saying no.

"I was deeply suspicious of the whole movement, and in fact it's done more damage to their musical careers than it's done good. I think it's virtually destroyed the Style Council. They've lost a great deal of popularity because I don't think kids like to be preached to. They get preached to enough by their parents without being preached to about listening to some old sod like Neil Kinnock, who they will perceive as just being an old sod, even though his intentions may be very good."

Hucknall doesn't dismiss the movement as naive ("I can't knock their beliefs because a lot of the political ideals they have I agree with"), but sees their chief problem being a political left wing that has alienated the people it is supposed to represent because it has been infiltrated by "middle-class do-gooders who know nothing about what it is to be working class."

So why do the press use Hucknall as a whipping boy? "You see, I won't lie down, I won't let them pin me down. Every time they try and pin me down I'll contradict it."

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LIME

SPIDERS

cont. from pg2.

know the top man on a personal basis. We were understandably wrapped."

The band has recently had an astronomical rise to success in the USA, and in true scoop fashion of newspapers, as I was talking to Gerard the phone rang and his manager was on the line. He came back exuberant, and it didn't take any prodding to work out why.

"That was management on the line, how's this grab you? We have just been confirmed to tour the US in a month or two, and even more astounding, we are supporting Public Image Limited! That just blows me away!"

It's times like this that you realise the good thing about bands that are in the same league as the Spiders. They are very much home bred stuff, who are not as yet bedazzled by the industry they are in. Some Sydney Western suburbs boys who revel in their music,

and are about to break into an incredibly huge market. They are already making strong headway in the USA, with the college charts placing their album at No. 1 in many States.

If Gerard could personally change anything in the music industry that he was able to, he comes up with some pretty startling revelations that could just as easily launch him on the road to political success.

"When it comes to live shows, I would like to change some of the bouncers, who tend to be absolute arseholes, and secondly, beer prices at the gigs. Some people are criminal, ripping you off at the door and the bar. The crowd is not pissed, but rather, pissed off, even before they see you, all due to the exorbitant prices of some places, and therefore they take it out on you, or are very critical."

"On the industry side of things, I think that more bands should be able to sign with record companies, or be given better access to someone to listen to them from a company. And AM stations should try to add some variety to their stale, wishy rotation of plastic songs. FM is only marginally better, excluding the Independent stations like 5MMM. They are excellent!

Good on you for the independents! At least they cater for everyone."

Once the Lime Spiders begin their US tour, you can bet that they will be beginning the ascent into a hectic and quickly developing career. Right now they are a band in transition, and are on the verge of very big success. Whether they maintain their 'grass roots' influence and home values remains to be seen. Many bands have traversed the same paths and have become 'unapproachable' and 'out of touch' with their loyal devotees.

These guys are at the moment very popular with almost everyone who sees or hears them, and the best of luck is extended to some Australians who deserve very much to knock over the US market. The psychedelic cover of their album distinguishes it clearly from that of others, and if you haven't heard it, you will surely remember it when you do. Catch these guys live when you can!

Well worth the exposure to some 'heavy duty' sound, and to the uninitiated, it should prove a powerful experience from the outside, and from within!

SIMPLY  
RED

cont from pg7.

Unlike Paul Weller of the Style Council, Hucknall refuses to suffer press-induced pangs of conscience for having the audacity to move up out of the working-class tax bracket.

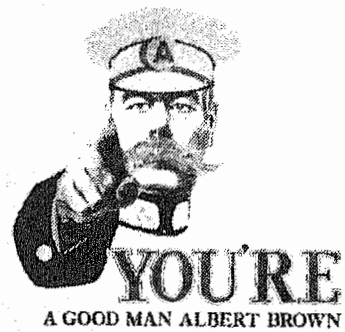
"(Weller) seems to be guilty about it. Again that's what 'I Won't Feel Bad' is about. In fact, 'I Won't Feel Bad' is probably more accurately political about our opinions than any other song we've ever written. I just will not feel guilty, 'cause there's nothing to be guilty about."

Despite his well-publicised dislike of Margaret Thatcher, the political flavor of many of his songs and the express wishes of the music press, Hucknall steadfastly refuses to align Simply Red with the Red Wedge Movement (a collective of musicians including Billy Bragg, Paul Weller, the Communards, Sade and Gary Kemp of Spandau Ballet who want to drum up youth support for the Labor Party). Hucknall's firm political philosophy is that you sing about what you feel is important and let people make up their own minds. But Red

## The Latest Songs Eaten Here For You In.....



The DUKES of STRATOSPHEAR



**The Dukes of Stratosphear - "You're a good man, Albert Brown/Vanishing Girl" (7") VIR/EMI**

It seems that XTC are tired of releasing great singles and albums under their own moniker and have released this double A sided single in the guise of a sixties pseudo psychedelic group, The Dukes of Stratosphear. 'You're a good man...' is a wonderful pastiche of the music of 60's and sounds like it could be an outtake from the Beatles 'White Album'. Ten out of ten. **GW**

**"Not A Soul Around" Ed Kuepper (Polygram)**

For anyone so unlucky as to have heard nothing of this brilliant Australian artist's work, "Not A Soul Around" provides an excellent introduction. Making full use of acoustic guitar and saxophone with normal rock instruments he produces a driving sound which is both voluminous and uncluttered. Something you can listen, sing and dance to.

Included on the E.P. are three tracks taken from his first album "Electrical Storm" and recent "Rooms Of The Magnificent". Not traditional B-side material either, (I doubt he produces such a thing) rather songs that are equally as creative as "Not A Soul Around", there to tempt you to his other works. Be tempted. **MG**

**Poison - "Talk Dirty To Me" (7") LIB/CBS**

Mmmm, such pretty boys.... 'Talk Dirty To Me' sounds like a Ramone's song, chainsaw guitars going full bore and a great neanderthal chorus. It manages to avoid most of the excesses of the Bon Jovi's, etc., with the obligatory guitar solo only lasting for five seconds rather than twenty. Rather surprisingly this isn't half bad. **GW**

**Noiseworks - "Love Somebody" (7") CBS**

Another good single from one of the fastest rising groups in Australia at the moment. It features some excellent individual performances especially from guitarist, Stuart Fraser. The B side has an excellent live version of the the song. **GW**

**Laura Brannigan - "Shattered Glass" (7") WEA**

Pedestrian, Mundane. These are two of the nicer words which immediately spring to mind upon hearing 'Shattered Glass'. The only reason this will be a hit is the slick production of the current 'Kings of Pop', Stock/Aitken/Waterman (Mel & Kim, Dead or Alive, etc., etc.) Next.... **GW**

**"Sweetest Smile" Black (Festival)**

This band sounds like an American version of the Colourfield. Musically rather sparse, with just bass synthesizer, drum machine and a keyboard. Catchy, haunting chorus and petite horn line give it a nice feel, though.

It scored a seven on the Wilsonometer. **RW**

**"Kiss Him Goodbye" Nylons (A & M thru Festival)**

This record is all class. The Canadian harmony machine, The Nylons, turn their attention to the inane 60's Steam song 'Kiss Him Goodbye', with devastating results.

Interesting that they have (legitimately) a drum accompaniment to their a capella. **RW**

**"Forbidden Lover" Nancy Wilson (with Carl Anderson)**

Sharing the same surname is the only thing that saves this woman from a pasting by yours truly. The most adventurous thing about this song is the title. I've heard it all before. Sadly, I'm sure I'll hear it all again before too long. (Sigh loudly, blow then inhale). **RW**

**"The Grinding Stone", Thrashing Doves (A & M):**

While "The Grinding Stone" doesn't warrant more than a passing listen, "The Receiver" wins my award for the best B side this year. Both rich and ambitious, "The Receiver" really deserves to be released as a single in its own right. If this is an indication of what is to come for the Doves, it looks as though Herb Alpert (the A in A & M records) has latched onto a winner. **AM**

MEL & KIM



**"F.L.M.", Mel and Kim (Liberation):**

Title track to the "two hat's" debut album. You have to doubt the integrity of an artist who gives their "stylist" a credit on the cover, but then what did selling records ever have to do with integrity?

The re-mixed single version is marginally better than the album cut and the intro to the dub mix is pretty 'spunky' (ugh), but all the ideas begin to sound hauntingly familiar when you're listening to the tenth dance song in a row. Buy it, throw away the record and keep the cover. Mediocrity rules. **AM**

**Chris Rea - "Let's Dance" (7") Poly**

In 'Let's Dance', gravel voiced Chris Rea wraps his chops around a nice, if rather non descript, song. While the song is pleasant to listen to for the first minute and a half, it soon becomes monotonous as he fails to establish anything new in the last half of the song. **AM**

**Swing Out Sister - "Surrender" (7" and 12") Poly**

This was a bit of a surprise after the boppy 'Breakout', as 'Surrender' is a lot more laid back with the jazz flavour of their current album 'It's Better To Travel' showing clearly. This could almost be Sade as it's very smooth and easy to listen to. **GW**

**Kane Gang - "Motortown" (7" and 12") Poly**

This is pure British pop at its very best. While unlikely to attract as much attention to 'Respect Yourself', 'Motortown' in my opinion is far better. Very, very slick but very, very good - give it a listen. **GW**



**"Catch", The Cure (Fiction):**

A disastrous choice for second single. Whatever whimsical qualities "Catch" lays claim to are sure to be overlooked when the record buying public discovers just how boring this song is. The flip, "Breathe" is another disappointment, especially in light of the band's previous interesting and imaginative "B sides". Dreadful. **AM**

**"Stand Back", The Fabulous Thunderbirds (Epic):**

These guys should be renamed *The Fabulous Somnambulists*. "Stand Back" is disappointing as a pale imitation of their previous two foot-tappers, "Wrap It Up" and "Tuff Enough". The sound is clean and the sax soulful but a lack of drive leaves this effort snorefully mechanical. Dave Edmunds' production is evident in the uncluttered mix but even he can't save this all too conventional track. **JM**

**"The Game", Echo and the Bunnymen (WEA):**

Classic *Bunnymen* - "The Game" is a soft meandering song with understated, mystical lyrics supported by a strong pop undercurrent. But then I'm biased - possibly not everyone's cup of psychedelia but definitely worth a listen (the *Bunnymen* and *Teardrop Explodes* were reviving psychedelia yonks before Prince made it cliché). **JM**

**"Moo!", Matterhorn Project (Interfusion):**

To state the obvious, this song is all clip - buy it if you want to gross your friends out at parties. "Moo!" is basically "Staying Alive" with cows, the flipside "Moophonia" is marginally better (the cows are given a rest). A great gift for that obnoxious eight year old cousin. **JM**

**"Microkid" Level 42 (Poly Gram)**

Slap funk bass, high pitched sax and dual edged harmony on a live recording which should cause some excitement amongst Level 42 fans. The B-side "To Be With You Again" is a smorgasboard of instruments producing a frenzy of noise. Ought to be an A-side itself. **AG**

**"Boat To Bolivia" Martin Stephen and the Daintees (Poly Gram)**

A gem! Slow, gentle reggae beat. Uplifting and carrying vocals. Euphoric afterthoughts. The B-side "Slaughterman" is equally consumable. Lyrics are pertinent and cleverly written. Passive music sets off another side of bliss. **AG**

**Westworld - "Ba-Na-Na-Bam-Boo" (7", 12") RCA**

Unashamedly a 'bubblegum' pop group, Westworld follow up 'Sonic Boom Boy' with a song even catchier than that little gem. It is much in the same mould, with crashing guitars dominating the sound. They have their feet firmly planted in the tradition of such 70's artists as Gary Glitter, Alvin Stardust, etc. - good, disposable pop. **AG**

**"Shikisha" Siph Mbuse 12" Virgin**

South African Mbuse, a success in his own country should find many admirers in Australia. Based on the traditional and township rhythms of his childhood his music is nonetheless westernized pop. "Shikisha" is a dance groove as good as any with a jaunty brass accompaniment unusual in dance music. Side two contains the traditional extended mix and the less rhythmic but equally enjoyable "Afrodizzia". **MG**

**Pointer Sisters - "Be There" (7") WEA**

From the inevitable Beverley Hills Cop soundtrack comes the also inevitable Pointer Sisters song. At least 'Neutron Dance' was catchy. 'Be There' doesn't even have that redeeming feature. **GW**

**Midnight Oil - "Beds are Burning" (7") CBS**

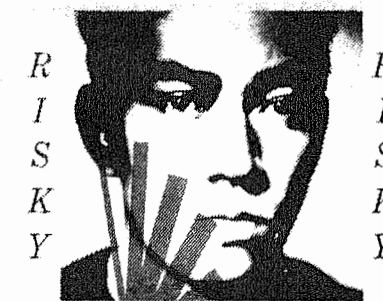
While the release of an Oil's single doesn't send me into rapturous frenzies like it does to 99% of the population, 'Beds are Burning' is quite decent. Like 'Dead Heart' the acoustic guitars are pushed well to the front signifying a new subtlety to their music - but will the fans like it? **GW**

**"Johnny B" The Hooters (CBS)**

Roby Hyman and Eric Braxillian never fail to surprise. Their latest offering, Johnny B, starts off like a 13th Century Chinese court ceremony before launching into raunchy guitar and rhythms. When this sort of thing is done properly, as it is here, the result is a song of subdued power and energy.

The B side is a live, acoustic version of the Beatles 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds'. A very interesting package indeed.

It sounds like the new LP 'One Way Home' might be well worth getting. I might have to revise my opinions. Not all current American music is Crap after all - just most of it. **RW**



**"Risky" Ryuichi Sakamoto (With Iggy Pop) (CBS)**

You know how you can put together two big film stars in the one movie and still have it flop? Well, you do the same thing with pop stars.

Ryuichi Sakamoto (ex-Yellow Majic Orchestra) and Iggy Pop (ex-drug addict) have combined talents to produce an uninspiring, tuneless mess. Those who fondly remember Sakamoto's teaming with David Sylvian for 'Forbidden Colours' should not be tricked into thinking this worth getting. It's not. **RW**

**"8th Wonder of the World" Isley Jasper Isley (CBS)**

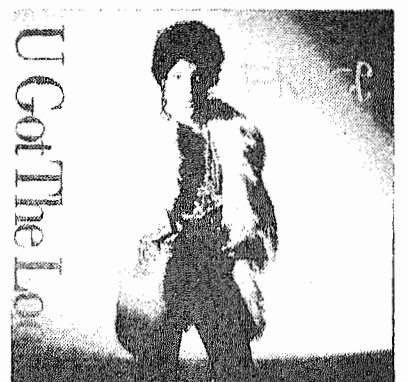
Please oh please can we send someone across to America to explain to them the meaning of the words 'creativity' and 'imagination' as opposed to 'crass' and 'idiotic'. Yes, it's bright. Yes, it's well produced. Yes, it's instantly forgettable. **RW**

**"True Faith" (7" & 12"), New Order (Factory):**

One of the only synth-dance bands around that hasn't forgotten the meaning of the word originality, New Order's collaboration with Stephen Hague has resulted in a more 'organic' sound that ultimately suits their brilliantly crafted pop statements better than the harsher, percussion orientated, "Bizarre Love Triangle" style of production. Save up for the 'best of' double LP "Substance", coming soon.... **AM**

**"Trouble In My Life" Trouble 12" Virgin**

Fervently danceable and featuring some interesting rhythmic guitar work, "Trouble..." is the first release from this very stylish team of Shroeder, Walker and Heard. The B-side contains a rather unfortunate extended mix and an equally creditable dance/ballad number "Last Time". **MG**



**"U Got The Look", Prince (Paisley Park):**

As a follow up to what is arguably Prince's best single ever ("Sign O The Times") "U Got The Look" is, without doubt, his worst. I like it, but then again I like having my fingers slammed in car doors.

You've got the look, you've got the look U sho 'nuf do be cookin' in my book Your face is jammin', your body's heck-a-slammin'

If love is good, let's get to rammin' I mean really! **AM**

**"Mr. Right", Eleanore Mills (CBS):**

Soulful vocals and a real sax (shock, horror!). Spoiled by a moronic drum machine programmer. Otherwise entertaining. **AM**

**"Run For Cover", Basia (Portrait):**

Laid back jazz-pop with a juicy middle eight. Could look good sitting next to the Sade albums. **AM**

**"Jump To It", Heartbeat UK (Virgin):**

Oh dear, I seem to have broken it! **AM**

**"Doin' It" (Extended dance mix), Lisa (CBS):**

There comes a time in the life of a record reviewer when he must cast aside all though of personal safety and subject himself to the most hideous experiences imaginable merely in order to prevent poor misguided fools from following the same path. To suffer terrifying amounts, unbelievable dosages of savage tortures, risk sanity and listen...to...a Lisa...record...Aaaaargh.

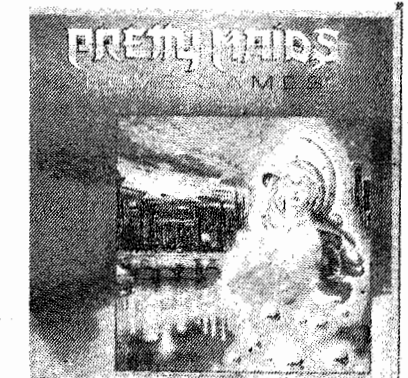
But seriously folks, did you know that if there was no "i" in the alphabet, the title of this record would be "DON'T". **AM**

**"Success" (7" and 12"), Picnic At The Whitehouse (Portrait):**

A record dedicated to Ian Curtis (lead singer of Joy Division) just can't be bad. Stylish and powerful. **AM**

**"I'm Bad", L.L. Cool J (CBS):**

Fantastic bassline, but he's not that bad, I mean, he did let the record company bleep out "motherfucker" with a bit of creative editing. **AM**



**"Love Games", Pretty Maids (Epic):**

Danish Bon Jove clones. What a concept.... **AM**

**"Tears Of A Clown" (7" and 12"), Bassix (Epic):**

Bassix pushed the button on their Funkomatic machine and it spat out this cheeky little buggler. Sounds remarkably like an epileptic food processor, nice vocals but a bad case of the drum machine s-s-s-st-st-stutters. **AM**