

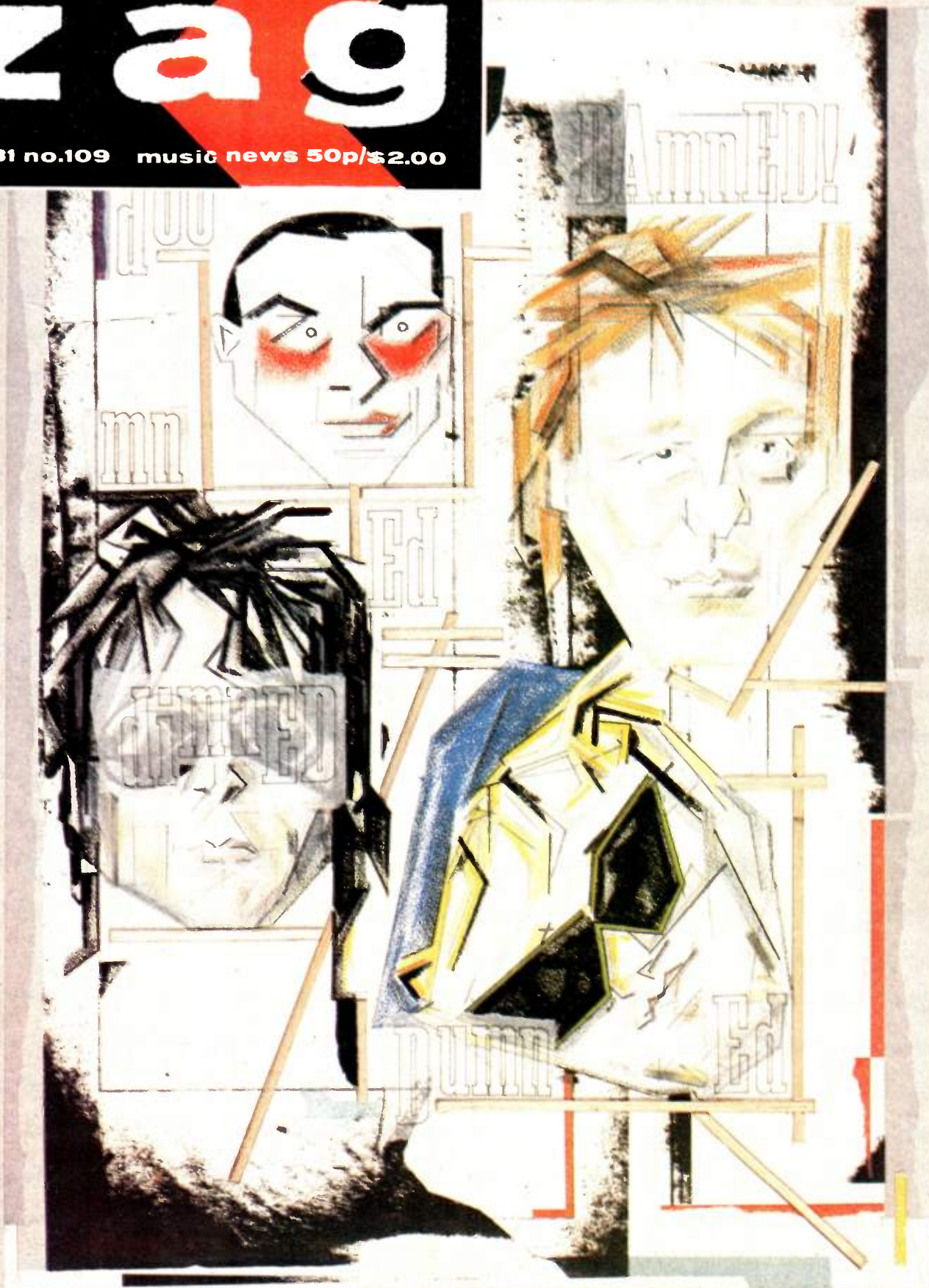
# zig zag

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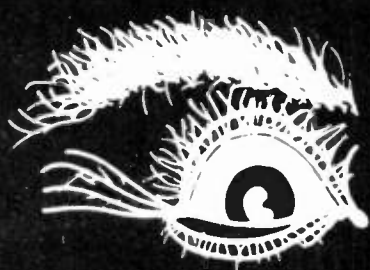
*Au Pairs*

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ZIGZAG MAGAZINE  
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FRONT COVER: IAN WRIGHT

Open Letter to John Lennon

Dear John,

ALL MEN WITH GUNS ARE  
MAD MEN, SHINE ON

Love Forever  
John Milton

Dear Chris,

I read with great interest the letter from Time Out's John Collis in the December issue. It's revelations about readers who use false names when they write to Zigzag were utterly shocking. It is hard to imagine, in this day and age, that people would stoop so low.

By the way, I can assure you I did NOT write the letters attributed to me - indeed, I have been far too busy promoting the Battle of the Bands concert tour and now camping holidays in the South of France. Nor, of course, do I suspect the Wild Wax Show lads would stoop to such foul trickery. They are far too busy gigging up and down the country and running Nervous Records.

Nevertheless, I applaud Collis and his courageous attempt to unmask the "Phantom Letter Writer". It certainly isn't me.

Waxie Maxie  
CCM/Riviera Swingers  
London House,  
Fulham Road,  
London SW10

Dear Maxie,

I also applaud Mr. Collis's astute observations in ZZ108 - even though he did miss out "Debbie's" contribution in ZZ106 (having had years of experience in the Maxie style of content and delivery, this is archetypal - and would like to add that we at I-Spy Junior Communications Centre have also noted that each apparently 'unrelated' letter also seems to have emanated from the same typewriter.

Seasons Greetings,  
Raymond Chandler

Dear Kris,

Why don't you get rid of that stupid prick Pete Erskine. In his review of the new Cabaret Voltaire single, "Seconds Too Late", he wrote more about their name than the excellent musical qualities of the Cabs. In future, try to get someone with someone decent to say about them. Cabarte Voltaire do not deserve a review like that.

Yours  
James

PS. What about getting an interview with Cabaret Voltaire, Crass, The Poison Girls, or (another, I can't get enough of them) Killing Joke. Great issue this month. Thanks.

"You are far too partisan. I have nothing else to say. Except that Cabaret Voltaire is an exceedingly pretentious moniker. So is the word 'moniker' P.E.

"Yeah, why not?" .. Kris

Dear Kris,

Publish or be damned?

Rock 'n' roll has never been about glib sentimentality, but rock journalism shouldn't assume immunity from certain ground rules of truth and accountability that govern publishing in general, just 'cause it's about rock'n'roll ... ask NME's lawyers!

And so it comes to pass that I must correct certain factoids concocted by Joan Komlosy in her cosy peice on the demise of NEW MUSIC NEWS.

Ms. Komlosy is hardly qualified to adopt the Royal 'We' in her yarn; she was never on the staff of NMN. What she heard in pubs on whilst indulging in late night Bacchanalia with certain tired and emotional NMN staff hardly passes for accurate history.

In championing talented sonambulist Giovanni Dadamo, Ms. K wrongly implies that I failed to confide in him during the period immediately preceding my resignation. This is an important point because Gio was appraised in some detail as to the situation. I thought it politic to keep it from an exhausted and already uncertain staff at the time, apart from him that is, but after the even Ms. K could've discovered from any one of her close chums on NMN that I resigned as a director of NMN's publishers, Bunch Books Ltd., over a matter having little to do with the paper. I was thus obliged to leave NMN, too.

It may've seemed that I was betraying all and sundry, and it certainly suited Time Out's Young Businessman of the Year, Felix Dennis (Bunch's M.D.) to foster that impression. In fact Myself and Bunch's advertising director, Richard Howell, were unwittingly implicated in a potential scandal concerning a motorcycle magazine I'd started for the company. This was due entirely to a fundamental deceit on Dennis' part which forced me into a position where my resignation or his admission of guilt were the only solutions. I resigned, followed later by Howell and only some fast foot-work by Dennis save the mag's reputation and commerciality. Jolly interesting, eh?

During the period in question, I was the only director available to deal with this, a printing industry work-to-rule which left many of Bunch's titles without printers (including NMN) and the curiously demanding task of editing NMN. This may just have had something to do with the grim spectre of snarling intolerance so picarresquely illustrated by dear Joanie.

I make no apologies for my demeanour, however. Those were weird, and at times heady days and perhaps it would've been best to throw in the towel when NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS and MELODY MAKER staff returned to their ivory towers. But at no time did I say I "had no faith in NMN".

My lack of faith was in the ability of a company like Bunch, already suffering from a cash flow crises and the problems outlined above, to continue producing it. In the end my fears were justified and the efforts I'd made to right the situation and limit other people's risk were forgotten in a welter of acrimony.

Nevertheless Ms. Komlosy failed to mention that I was "allowed" to raise £40,000 of the £80,000 required to resurrect NMN after we'd both been dumped on by Felix Denis. And despite her cheery epilogue, most of the NMN editorial staff are now working with me on a new glossy, first issue of which appears in January. So maybe I'm not the black hearted, irresponsible maniac Joan implies ... just a scapegoat.

Onwards and sideways  
Mark Williams

PS. Tom Hibbert, probably the world's greatest rock journalist is amongst my current colleagues and perhaps he will avenge her cruel neglect of his talents with a searing attack on Ms. Komlosy's other claim to fame in the whacky world of rock (apart from being the Enid Blyton of pop reportage, that is), namely her management of street-credible crooner, Mike Berry.

Dear Kris,

Re: Mark Williams letter 4.12.80

I never claimed to be on the staff of NMN but as a regular contributor my obituary was quite valid. Mark Williams spent several evenings (or should I say early mornings) at my flat, discussing the financial and editorial matters of NMN.

Giovanni maintains that Mark did NOT confide in him during the period immediately preceding his resignation, therefore endorsing what I wrote. The quote that Mark left because he 'had no faith in NME' was passed onto me by several members of staff including Gio. To have verified that would have been an impossibility as Mark was unapproachable at the time.

Mark, I see, is employing most of the NMN editorial staff (hopefully NOT the 'tired and emotional' ones) on a new glossy. What a load of hypocrites. Not only did they say they would never work with Williams again (particularly Brian Harrigan if he is one of them), but MW himself said he would not work with either Eve Dadamo or Hibbert. Tom, he is now championing as the world's

I stand by what I wrote, It is not only how I saw it, but how it was.

Yours  
Joan Komlosy

Dear Zigzag,

We, the undersigned, were full time employees of the New Music News - unlike Joan Komlosy who was an occasional freelance and therefore not aware of all the internal workings of the paper. We would like to express our

disgust over Ms. Komlosy's recent obituary of the NMN. The article was not only consistently factually inaccurate (which for a journalist is both unprofessional and grounds for a possible source of legal action) but also omitted crucial information.

In addition, the tone of the piece was redolent of a third rate St Trinian's script.

For those with no prior knowledge of the paper, the article gives a false and potentially damaging impression of the entire venture and all those involved.

Giovanni Dadamo  
Mark Williams  
Brian Harrigan  
Tom Hibbert  
Mark Ellen  
Eve Dadamo Sally Payne  
Ian Birch Jonathan Wall

Dear Zigzag,

Re. letter signed by various employees of New Music News condemning my feature in your December issue on NMN.

The said letter states that I was consistently factually inaccurate. Perhaps I was. Maybe I was the downfall of NMN. Any paper who can print week after week, features, reviews etc., by someone reminiscent of a third script writer deserves to fold.

Owing to Tom Hibbert's accusation that Felix Dennis 'killed NMN and was an unscrupulous publisher' you asked me to write the obituary. My specification was two thousand words. If I'd written more the shit would have really hit the fan! I was on intimate terms with the editor and therefore was privy to everything that was going on.

Egos are obviously bruised, surprisingly really when one considers that the piece has a St. Trinians ring. Anyway I acknowledge the compliment, inadvertent though it may be, St. Trinians came to mind often at the editorial meetings.

It's a drag having to write this letter, photostat the reams of copy, and circulate it, as I am incredibly busy at Capital Radio and managing a successful artiste, but I suppose I care about their false denouncements - written I may say by people who are not all working as much as they would like to. Sour Grapes springs to mind somewhat.

Finally, Gio assured me if he signed the letter he would add 'this letter has nothing to do with me'. He insists he did add a postscript but that it was omitted from the photocopy. (I hope so, because a dishonest editor is more dangerous than a tired one). He also said he wished he hadn't signed the letter at all now, but everyone was pressurising him to and 'you know me Joan, I'm weak, I don't want to be hated.' Mmm obviously majority rules! I don't hate you Gio, I just think you and rest of that 'bunch' are pathetic.

Joan Komlosy

(A much edited letter (on the grounds of common decency)).

To ZigZag Darlings,

Would you please start the new year in the right vein by finding room in your incredibly good publication to print a devastatingly SEXY photograph of Beautiful Peter and Devastating Daniel the Delicious Dish of Bauhaus?! (No.. ED) I mean the music scene is CRYING OUT for some REAL glamour.

The only really attractive person I've seen on television for too long to remember is the unbelievably GLAMOROUS person; deadly desirable Dave of the dynamic Damned. How about a suitably atmospheric close up of the ravishing Vanian visage in ZigZag? (Certainly not. ED) If you can't manage that I shall be more than content with a seductive, lurid, provocative photographic portrayal of those aforementioned ravishing creatures; darling Peter and that stunning delectable delight, Daniel of Bauhaus.

Maybe you could dig out a photograph revealing curly Murphy's beautiful alluring bard body? (Him standing with his arms up behind his head.) Such BEAUTIFUL bone-structure! The thought of the Murphy's sexy delicious robs are making me go quite peculiar here in this cold crypt. How I'd like to get my hands round those mesmeric ravishing ribs!

(We move on one thousand words into the letter.. ED)

How about a colour photograph of Nina Hagen?

Anyway please unearth for me a photograph (such as I've described) of the fascinating, enigmatic couple of devone delights; D. and P. Even if its only a tiny one. (I've got a powerful magnifying glass). I mean I know Adam Ant is a glamorous creature, but no way does he possess the kind of riveting glamour and oozing sex appeal such as that possessed by Pete and Daniel. (And I think I once seriously considered becoming a nun!)

The Vampire

PS. If you have any fresh young boys going spare let me know WHERE! Especially if they wear sooty eye-liner and blood-red lipstick! and have black, glittery eyes and small, sleek and slender bodies, and long, scratchy, painted fingernails! Just thought I'd ASK! (How about sending us a photo of yourself first? .. Mick)

24 Cliff Court  
Cliff Road  
London NW1 9AP

Dear Kris,

New Music News needs no epitaphs. It needs even less the gushing cafe-societal drivellings of ex-NMN freelancer Komlosy.

Those whose full-time occupation was to ensure the viability of the title during a difficult gestation period can only find these tawdry, self-serving "recollections" as risible as they are inaccurate.

John Wall,  
ex-Copy Editor  
NMN

Dear Kris,

Jon Wall obviously scanned my feature on NMN, failed to see his name mentioned and therefore did not bother to read my APPRAISAL of the paper. There really was not enough space to say how popular/unpopular Jon Wall as a a) a Copy Editor b) a human being.

Yours  
Joan

## charts



### ROUGH TRADE TOP TEN

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Au Pairs Diet (Human)                               | 1. The Fall, Grotesque (After The Gramme)   |
| 2. Straps Just Can't Take It Any More (Donut)          | 2. Robert Rental & The Normal, Live At West Runtom (Rough Trade)                                    |
| 3. Fire Engines Get Up + Use Me (Codek Communications) | 3. James Blood Ulmer, Live At The Apollo (Solid Smoke Import)                                       |
| 4. Orange Juice Simply Thrilled Honey (Postcard)       | 5. Passage, Pindrop, (Object)   |
| 5. Bush Tetras, Too Many Creeps (99 Import)            | 6. Michael Prophet, Righteous Are The Conqueror (Greensleeves)                                      |
| 6. Delta Five, Try (Rough Trade)                       | 7. James White & The Blacks, Live Aux Bain Douch (Invisible Records)                                |
| 7. Silent Types E.P. (Double Dose) Blegium Import      | 8. Nigger Kojak and Liza, Showcase (Nigger Kojak)   |
| 8. Cabarte Voltaire, Seconds Too Late (Rough Trade)    | 9. Various Artists, Wanna Buy A Bridge (U.S. Import Rough Trade Inc.)                               |
| 9. Robert Wyatt, At Last I Am Free (Rough Trade)       | 10. Blur, Durutti Column, The Royal Family & The Poor, Kevin Hewick, Etc. Factory Quartet (Factory) |
| 10. Satellites, Windscale Boy (Secret Records)         |   |

202 B.C. Battle of Zama

1958: Bid (later to be the singer of the M.Set) is born.

1976: John D Haney graduates from Royal Holloway College, University of London, in Classics, specialising in Greek Philosophy and Religion.

June 1977 - 16th January 1978: Tony Potts helps the Art Attacks.

1978: Lester Square directs and designs productions at Sadlers Wells and the Paris Opera.

1979 Andy Warren leaves Adam and the Ants and joins the M. Set.

I was surprised when I found that the Monochrome Set were back in the studio again to record another album so soon after *STRANGE BOUTIQUE* was released.

Are they trying to catch up? I wondered.

Once I talked to the band it was clear that it had been quite a rush for them which they want to avoid in future. "We were trying to push ourselves to see how much dirge we could produce in such a short time." (Bid) Dirge? Well, it's typical of his cynical outlook (or perhaps satire against their record label who are not very willing to spend much money on this band.) He says he and others love irritating other people. Actually it was a wrong time to talk to them. They were temporarily back in London during their English tour, which they had to start right after coming back from America. Some of them still had jet-lag, Bid wasn't feeling well due to an illness he caught on tour. Everyone, except John D. Haney who's always relatively quiet, was far less talkative than usual. It was incredible. Then Bid tells me they're always like that when they're on tour or in between tours. I see. So I ignore all the negative answers and carry on.

The band co-produced the album with the aid of their engineer, Alvin Clark. The end product turned out to be *tres jolie*. Since the band had more control over the sound, this album is closer to what you'd expect from the Monochrome Set (especially from their Rough Trade days, when they used to produce singles themselves) whereas "the first went through a filter of Bob Sargeant having his things on it" (Bid) which was nice and tidy but a bit flat. The vocals are clearer on this album, which I think is very important as Bid's singing holds as large a proportion in the fascination of the Monochrome Set as anything else in this band. But what else makes this album sound so different from the other one? First thing you could name is the influence of the new bass player, Andy Warren, perhaps? I'd never thought Andy's bass would suit the Monochrome Set. I thought it would collide with Lester Square's colourful guitar sound. But it didn't. It's actually made the Monochrome Set sound even more colourful. It's grown a bit, we can change our moods with ease more like a well-oiled machine." (Bid)

The sleeve suits their music better than the first one did, too. The first one was an excellent piece

of graphics itself but not very descriptive of the content (music). The new one is a 60's type of sleeve, almost anti high-tech, which, along with the music, creates an atmosphere that is now very unique and fresh. They are not a bunch of pseudo intellectual artists which many other people are. Truly intelligent people don't need to pretend. Instead, they make you relax.

And, to your surprise, this nice drawing of a naked woman made Woolworths and other shops refuse to store the record as they thought the cover was obscene! What surprised me even more was that the music pres, who always love sensationalising things, didn't bother to report this ridiculous story. They don't seem to care about the Monochrome Set at all, nor do the Monochrome Set seem to care about them.

"There's no use crying over spilt milk" is their reaction to the fact *LOVE ZOMBIES* got really bad reviews. They admit they are not commercially successful in this country, the main reason for which is, probably, that the band's music is almost against all the trends in the music scene today. "People have lived with volume throughout the 70's and they've forgotten what music really is. When they hear it they don't think it's music." (Tony) They don't find recent groups like, say, Joy Division very exciting at all. Some of the songs they don't mind, Bid is broad-minded enough to like even one Sham 69 song! But

being bored with the whole scene of the 70's, Lester says, he decided to make something that pleased him himself. "I like tunes and when I started making music, there weren't enough tunes around. And I like putting things together that even I, as the writer, will go around humming." (Lester) "That's what happens," adds Tony Potts, "we go around humming and no one else does."

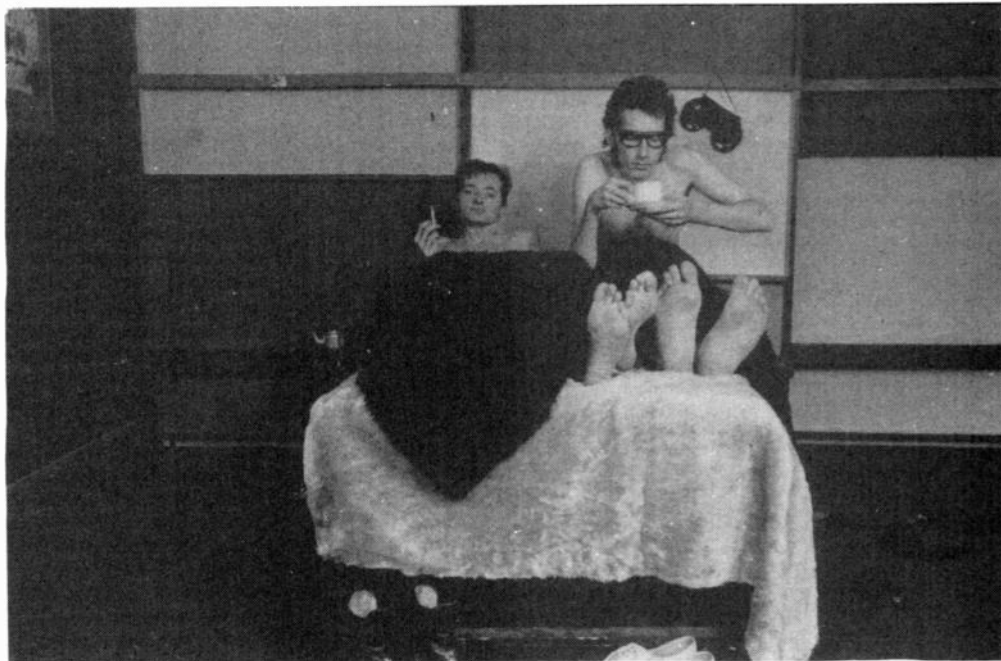
So, if Joy Division and their ilk don't make these Monochrome people go around humming (though I've heard Tony humming "Love Will Tear Us Apart" backstage in Amsterdam -- incidentally, Bid didn't know what it was called and that it was high up in the charts), then surely they are not happy with the bleak, industrial scene like Throbbing Gristle, are they? "Throbbing Gristle are actually artists who use sound to sculpt, rather than musicians." (Lester) Bid, to whom music is music, is apparently unwilling to approve TG, though. He says he would turn the radio off if he heard a TG song on it. Lester argues back, "TG are not supposed to be heard on radio, radio isn't their medium. It's not supposed to be music, it's an entirely different field and shouldn't be criticised within the context of music. (It should be within the context of Studio International where it's quite valid. And certainly I would turn it off if I was driving along to it."

As everyone should know by

now, the Monochrome Set use films made by Tony Potts to show during their set, and that's helped them establish their amusing, entertaining live act. But the band are starting to feel dissatisfied with showing the films in the same way all the time. Although they don't play live very often — because they are so fussy about venues — it's been almost two years since they first used film, during which period many other bands started to use films as well. I say to them it's true what a member of an American avant garde group, Chrome, said to me: using film is becoming a standard in avant garde music. They agree that it's time for a change.

In their latest London show in November, the Monochrome Set used films but in a quite different way from before. Whereas they always used to place three screens behind the band on stage, this time they used one big screen about them and two smaller ones hung from the ceiling above the audience at the front. And the great difference was the fact film wasn't the only visual element in the show. Films were mixed with lights on the screen, also operated by Tony, and they went further from 2D, which films are, into 3D, i.e. "actual humans on top of filmed humans." (Bid) Three girls dancing (and a boy playing percussion) to two of the numbers the band played really caught everyone's surprised and amused eyes. One of the girl's was Max (of

## *beyond the valley of* **THE MONOCHROME SET**



PHOTOS: JOHN KERSEY



ex-Rema Rema) and who also happens to be a professional Go-Go dancer.

It was a good idea to make people realise that the Monochrome Set aren't another group of gloomy, pretentiously serious people that the name might suggest. They are dead funny, actually, as you could probably tell from these pix here. So you shouldn't always expect serious ideas behind their songs either. "Fiasco Bongo", flip side of the single "Apocalypso" is a good example. It's a dub version of the A-side number (with John D. Haney's voice "I'll just practice and you can

drop me in when I get there, OK?" repeated over and over.) When I first heard it I was amused but, then, I started to think it was a bit too late to do something like this, as everyone else had done dub for the past year. Would they still call this experimental? "I'd say it's a joke." (Andy) Oh, yes, I had forgotten the most important thing, their sense of humour. With the Monochrome Set, "jokes become serious concepts." (Bid) and this made me realise another great difference between the two albums. LOVE ZOMBIES contains a lot more jokes — in songs, in

song titles, etc. — so it's more representative of this band, I suppose. Again it seems to be due to Andy's contribution. Although usually quiet and never acts crazy, Andy is a great joker. "And when somebody makes a stupid comment like 'let's play a red indian song' Andy would actually do it." (Bid)

Well, this band of happy people are preparing more stuff, hopefully as amusing as Lester's favourite hats, for the coming London gig in January. Once again, back into the Valley of the Monochrome Set .....

**Akiko Hada**



## The Motels

I'm always wary of managers as they invariably present a totally different picture to the one you have of their artists; e.g. 'Bobby Crut's the greatest guy, he loves kids and whenever he can fit it into his heavy schedule he'll donate one of his guitars or even money to a kid's charity. And animals. He loves animals.' Half an hour with the artiste and he usually owns up to the girl friend having had an abortion, hocking his guitars to pacify bailiffs and knowing various RSPCA inspectors intimately. So when I was told that Martha Davis had been rushed to the dentist earlier that morning and would be a little late, I reluctantly settled down opposite the Motels manager mentally defying him to tell me what a wonderful group 'suite'/block they were. We talked about Neil Diamond.

"I managed him for three years" he said. "I went to see the Jazz Singer yesterday. If anyone wants to know what the REAL Neil Diamond is like, go and see it because that's him. He's playing himself." At that moment Tim McGovern and Martin Jourard wandered in. "This is obviously the fun room" they drawled and wandered out again.

When Martha Davis arrived she was indeed a little late. But I had been quite prepared for anything from an hours wait up to not at all as can happen. "Will you tell me if I start to dribble because my jaw's still numb from the anaesthetic?" I wondered if she would rather postpone the whole thing until a later date? "No I'm O.K. really. Anyway I like interviews, people sometimes ask such interesting things." I suggested perhaps I should postpone the interview. "I had my children specially flown over yesterday from the States and I was going to cook dinner for them, the band, and people from our record label, but I was sick - the tooth I guess." She laughed, "So I had to cook it mentally." Several Capitol staff with phantom hangovers walked by.

Martha Davis, pregnant at fourteen, married at fifteen, divorced at eighteen, is now twenty nine with the wisdom of a mature woman and the appearance of a teenager. "I think rock n' roll keeps you young" she decided. Pretty, without a trace of make up and only the hint of a dribble, she looked like someone's daughter, not someone's mother. Her conversation vacillated between her two teenage girls and music. Her guitar was a present from her father on her twelfth birthday. It was over eighty years old then, and now that it has qualified for a telegram from the queen I wondered if it was due for retirement. "Oh no way. I love it so much that I never take it on tour for fear something will happen. I write my best songs on it."

Most of the Motels songs are written by Martha, although she is far from prolific. "I can't just crank them out. There isn't a lot of time to do that. I do a lot of writing on napkins etc., just little bits and pieces, and then go home. 'Cos

usually for me to write I like to be alone, locked in my bedroom, with a bottle of red wine. It's funny because red wine works better than white. I've never been able to figure it out. But you know how red wine has a sort of dark edge to it, like you can see more into your subconscious? I don't know what it is about it but it's really funny. I react completely differently than I do to white wine." I knew what she meant. My doors of perception never fail to open to a decent Chablis but Spanish white and it's back to the drawing board. "I've only written half the songs on this album, because I came back from tour and our producer said have you finished the second album. I went, 'I didn't know'. I just didn't know we were going to come right back and start another album..... oh I'm biting my tongue ..... so we all started writing. The others write a lot more up tempo kind of stuff, more major. It was really funny, I never thought about it before, but they write these songs like Bonjour Baby, Cry Baby, I'd never used the word baby once in a song. And baby's like the standard rock n' roll word and I'd NEVER used it."

The Motels are by definition all equal, but Martha is singled out usually as the spokesperson a) because she is female, and b) because she IS the singer. I can't really believe anyone for example would want to talk to Mick Jagger if he only played mouth organ - mind you with those lips he probably did and no-one knows about it, which would corroborate my theory. Do the fellas mind being ignored by the media?

"Not at all, they just let me get on with it. But in fact Brian Glascock and I are doing an interview together at Capitol Radio this afternoon - the Sunday Supplement I believe."

Me: Oh yeah - I'm doing it actually. I work at Capital as well, I forgot to tell you. This, in fact is really silly. Why couldn't I interview you for ZigZag up at Capital? (In fact it got even sillier because Nicky Horne ended up interviewing Martha and Brian whilst I sat in the canteen interviewing Tom Robinson).

Motels are usually pretty drab affairs, but this lot are an exception to the rule. Brian the drummer, is a chirpy cockney with come to bed the kitchen table anywhere eyes. Keyboard man Martin and bassist Michael Goodroe are obviously wildly attractive and Martha's boyfriend Tim McGovern reminded me of Michael Cain which is about as non sequitur as saying Margaret Thatcher reminds me of Blondie. Nevertheless he did. How did the band feel about Tim replacing Jeff, particularly as he was Martha's boy friend?

"At first the others WERE sceptical - you don't have your old man working with you. But now everyone's happy and in fact we get on better than if we were just seeing each other spasmodically."

But what happens if you have an argument? Isn't that embarrassing in front of the others?

"Yeah it can be. Especially in



PHOTOS: SIMON REEVES



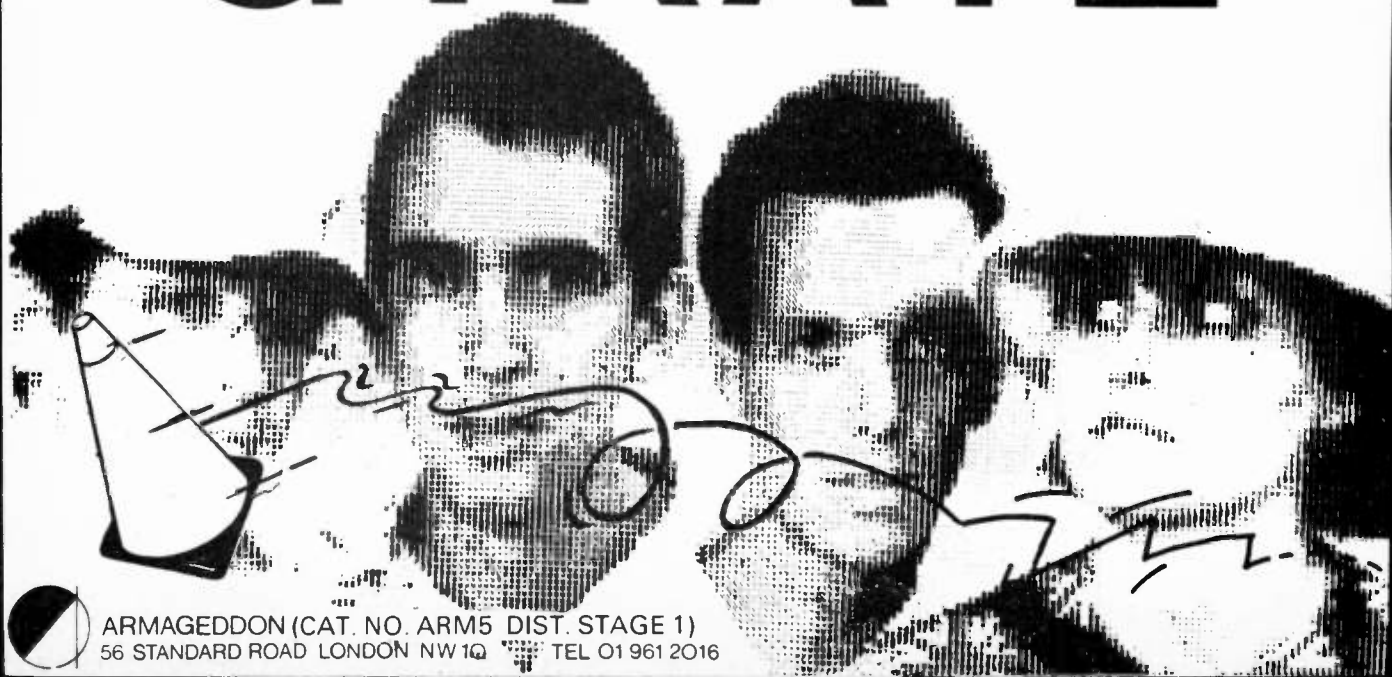
some hotels" (hotels? come on now you guys, where's your sense of loyalty?). "where the walls are paper thin. Then we have to row in whispers."

I can imagine. 'I hate you you cunt'. 'What?' 'I said I hate ..... Oh forget it. Have a cup of tea.' Marriage on the rocks anyone? Join a band, that'll sort you out. Mind you, you'll be lucky to find one like the Motels. They are charismatic. That Martin Jourard is sensational and can be forgiven for liking Sterling Hayden movies (earlier at Capital he had said he preferred them to Doris Day ones). And Martha. Well she is something else. Maybe it has something to do with her tough background (her mother committed suicide and her teenage husband turned violent to add to her burdens), the strength in her performance and songs is undeniable. There's no doubt she has been through it, but don't get me wrong, there's no maudlin self pity there, on the contrary, she is powerful, confident, triumphant.

Motels are here to stay, check them out one night, the service is impeccable.

Joan Komlosy

# PYLON GYRATE



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# DAMNED!

musician's involved. Senso's guitar and keyboards are on a par with anyone else you could care to mention and quite rightly he is too to sever his arms whilst screaming "Credibility" to the heavens. In fact on this vinyl glob the ramshackle nature of some Damned sings actually seem to debase their real talent.

The Captain cavorted wearily on his s-s-single bed as the inquisition began. Due to pressing time barriers and other Damned members couldn't be found or raised from their slumbers so you'll just have to make do with the Captain which should be more than enough for anyone.

Read on, young kestrels, read on..... and bear in mind that I covered many areas in an attempt to

be lying if you do stuff just for the punters. We didn't change for a conscious reason, it was natural, it just happened.

ZZ. Were you pleased by the reviews?

CS. You get certain ambitions in life, right, and one of mine is to play the Fairfield Hall cost I used to work there as a cleaner. One is to get a silver disc, that's all I want, one fucking thing to show my grandchildren and what's the other thing ... oh yeah, I just want one person in one review to say I'm not that bad a guitarist.

ZZ. Everyone slags your ability?

CS. Yeah, well no-one ever said I'm a reasonable guitarist. It'd be pleasant once in a while. They say "Then he slipped flat on his arsehole" and never talked about



The musical shock of the year, outweighing all others, has been the release of 'The Damned's 'Black Album'. So stunned was I that I immediately suggested an interview with the scabrous buggers, and we set about tracking them down. Eventually all we could come up with was a somewhat soiled Captain Vestibule mouldering in a distinctly Kensington Hotel on the night of their Hammersmith Odeon gig.

Alan Anger had informed me that Senso was beside himself with grief when bemoaning the lack of recognition he received for his songwriting talents. To be honest this seems quite fair when you consider the startling quality of this album and the prowess of the

hold his attention.

ZZ. Alan Anger tells me you're disappointed at not being hailed as a great songwriter.

CS. Yeah, well I was probably tired and emotional then, I was really giving him an earful.

ZZ. Well is it a conscious thing, that you wanted to be accepted musically, cos the album is quite a change.

CS. It's not a change for any specific reason. We just went out to make the best album we could.

Why should we do the kind of stuff we've done in the past again? We've made three of those albums, we've made three punk albums. If we did another 'punk' album we'd be lying to the punters, saying we're still a punk band. I know there's a market for what we were doing but you'd

the music.

(Well, if you've read the intro captain, that's one ambition fulfilled).

ZZ. Did the album take so long cos you wanted it to be so good?

CS. We didn't strive for any perfection or anything like that. We just made the best record we could. It's the first album we've produced ourselves. We went in with this producer who we sacked after half an hour on the first day. He said something like "I want to go for a nice poppy drum sound". So we walked out of the studio, had a little conference, went back in and sacked him. "You'd better get out of here as quickly as possible" .. and he'd just flown in from the States..

ZZ. I've seen a review which said

you were a good guitarist!

CS. I'm sure there's a conspiracy against me never to show me a good review. I'm sure if the rest of the group see anything that praises me they tear it up before I see it to stop me getting ideas above my station.

ZZ. How many instruments can you play?

CS. Dunno... a few. I like to think I could play any stringed instrument so I bought myself a sitar, and I couldn't even change a string let alone play it... I really failed abysmally. I was sitting in Rockfield saying "Yeah, try a sitar on this one"... twang twang... "Sounds awful, try it on the next track"... twang twang... I couldn't play a note on it! Then the roadie smashed it up in the van on the way back anyway.

ZZ. What's the third side all about?

CS. I always wanted to do a track that lasted a whole side. Don't see why you shouldn't. There's a lot of things you can't do in a three minute song... lots of moody effects and things. Three minute songs are the most constricting things; verse, chorus, verse, chorus, guitar solo, verse, chorus, fade...

ZZ. Ever thought of doing a solo album?

CS. Yeah I'm going to.

ZZ. What's the title then?

CS. Their Satanic Majesties Request.

ZZ. Ever had an offer for a film part?

CS. Nnnnaaaahh!

ZZ. Don't you think you'd be good on the wide screen?

CS. It'd be hideous wouldn't it?

ZZ. What about Scabies' guitar playing?

CS. I taught him all he knows.

ZZ. He's had a good guitarist review, does this wrinkle you?

CS. Er... he does insist on playing guitar onstage as often as possible without the aid of any talent whatsoever.

ZZ. Have you ever done any production work?

CS. Yeah but not that I want to talk about.

ZZ. Go on then, who?

CS. Ohh... Max and the Sunset Boys, now called Maximum Mania. I always wanted to be a producer and wield all that power. Giving musicians a lot of stick is good fun.

ZZ. What was the first gig you ever saw?

CS. It was Dusty Springfield,



Dave Dee Dozy, Beaky Mick and Tich, the Bee Gees and the Ronettes, a package gig in Brixton. Fucking genius it was, Dave Dee had the whip! I really liked the Bee Gees, their first album was superb. What happened to them?

Before I can ask another question he leans forward, for emphasis we presume, and in true Ancient Mariner style begins to open his heart....

CS. I really don't take this for granted, this thing I'm doing. There's always people ready to buy records or see us, keeps me off the dole. I'm really lucky, I didn't have any other way out.

ZZ. What about your fans...

CS. They come up with sets of lyrics and things... got a great one at the moment called "Road-jammers", this geezer sent us a tape; completely over the top. He's obviously sitting in his room at about four in the morning, whispering into the tape recorder but trying to make it sound as exciting as possible... "Road-jammers, out of control!", Really, really weird.

ZZ. Do you ever pick your own support bands?

CS. No, it's usually the band who pays the most buncie. Like, we paid Marc Bolan £2,000 when we didn't have it you know.

ZZ. Shouldn't you have had a silver disc for your first album?

CS. I would have thought so but we never got one. All I know is, my old man at home left a wall blank deliberately, it's really embarrassing when I go round there.

"Where's my silver disc?", "Sorry Dad".

ZZ. What's the most burning issue on your mind then?

CS. Usual old shit.

ZZ. Frustrated songman?

CS. Nah, Bollocks to that. It's only a job you know what I mean? Why should I get upset because people don't run round me saying "you're the best" and all that stuff. Worst thing in the world that... When we did the Bolan tour he was surrounded by people saying "Marc, this is the one, the best album you've ever made, Great tour Marc", cos they were doing a great live version, completely different, and all these people saying "No, don't listen to him" and they were keeping things back from him, like how many tickets were sold, saying

"Yeah, you're still there Marc", which I think is really disgraceful.

ZZ. What about the roadcrews?

CS. I really like roadcrews. I really identify with them I think they are great people, even the ones with cowboy boots. I think they're marvellous - They've really got their priorities right. They do their job down there, then back to the hotel... they get drunk. Up next morning, they're drinking in the bar. It's brilliant the way they go about things. Really good people. I'd be a roadie if I wasn't doing this. It's a great life, you Travel.... (trails off).

ZZ. Long as you treat em right.

CS. Yeah, "they're rocks worker bees", I read somewhere. I hate people who treat em like shit. I think that's despicable... y'know, "Do you know who I am? I pay your wages".

ZZ. Do your roadies come to you?

CS. No I think they avoid us. But I think they get to like us, and the tour and that, cos they never get to see it again. Most of em have worked with Barbara Dickson and Charles Aznavour.

ZZ. Do you break even on your tours?

CS. Never, Yeah always say "This is the one, we're quids in"... but after a tour we're always about two thousand quid in debt, and the punters when they see us in the pubs before the gig they say "It's £2.50 to get in. How much you making out of it?". I say I'm making fifteen quid and they don't believe me. "Buy us a drink, you're RIGHT!", and I ask em how much they earn and they're getting more than I am. I was earning more five years ago at the Fairfield Hall than I am now.

ZZ. Have you ever tried to organise your own gigs?

CS. No, they really turn you over these promoters. Like, after the show when I go to collect the buncie they say "... and there's so and so damages", I say "But you're insured" and its "Nope, comes out of the buncie", and its 'drinks over the top of what we're allowed and so on and so one...

ZZ. Do you try and play places where they don't get too many bands?

CS. I dunno, all I know is we seem to be playing the same old places. I'd like to play some of these far out places like Penzance and



Aberystwyth, there's gigs in all these places because we've done em before. When I write out a list of the places I wanna play it's totally ignored by these agencies. I was rowing with the promoter on the phone, "Try and get some of these places", and he says "They're not viable". They just don't want to take the risk on us.

We'll never play a college, I think there's one on this tour, but that was unavoidable. In the early days of punk when they used to book us I think they had a couple of plants in the crowd who'd throw bottles at us, and give everybody a show, "see what the punk band does", cos it happened at every college we played at. Like animals, taunting an animal with a stick to see what it'll do, I fucking hate students.

They think they've got a monopoly on intelligence these students. They don't let punks in the gigs, we have to let em in through the dressing room window, then they knock that money off us... bastards! Bastards! There was one place we played in Scotland, Queen Margarets Union, or somewhere, and they wouldn't let my family in! Wouldn't let my uncle in or my cousins cos they were underage. I said "Well I'll look after them, they won't be in the bar"... So I threw a complete wobbler. It's the only way to get anything done is throw a mental... Unfortunately it's the only way that works with these people. You say "I'm not going on, you BASTARDS".

And there we unfortunately had to leave it as Senso was spirited gloomily into the Hammersmith nightlife for another festive gig. As he was slowly gathering his wits about him he also began to discuss their current bad deal with the record company. "We're mugs aren't we?" he mumbled sounding genuinely miserable. The Damned have come alive all of a sudden and you'd be doing yourself a real disservice if you don't lend an ear to the new album. Quel corquer, what beauty, smouldering pulchritude and all that. The Buggers are back in Town again (The buggers are back, the buggers are back... repeat and fade).



Mick Mercer (6 years old)





PHOTO: SIMON REEVES

## Basement 5

A cheap and cheerless hotel on the Brighton sea-front, the Brunel suspension bridge in Bristol, and TV football Sunday PM in Southampton. All float like flotsam on the very surface of my memory, each serving as some remote reference point, the *memorabilia* of three extremely enjoyable days on the road with Basement 5.

A support role on the Dury/Blockheads UK tour means a lot of things. It means exposure, it means hard graft, it means cold hotels and cramped travel. Above all, it means Basement 5 are being heard.

This is no ordinary band. Their music is a completely unprecedented fusion of rock and reggae

whilst at the same time fusing the two genres.

Dennis Morris does not write to sing about Jah. He is a British black who grew up in the East End. At school his friends were both black and white, (he has a Cockney accent as strong as mine) and of course he holds a British passport. A dilemma? Yeah, he finds it so, but through the music he and the band create is coming to terms in a very positive way. Leo and J.R. both grew up in Britain, and I've known them for a long time. In fact they both roadied for the Slits on the white Riot tour in '77, and shared a flat with the Basements' one time vocalist Don Letts. Both are intuitive musicians. J.R. like some manic 6-string hypnotist, Leo a pounding relentless plynth for all

sing with this band. Why?

"Uh ... I still intend to carry on taking pictures, just the odd one here and there when something interesting comes up! But I'd always wanted to sing in a band, and Leo and J.R. were just the right people at the right time. I'm glad it's happening.

So how was this - their first - tour going?

"It's been really good in a lot of ways .... like we get this kind of core of fans who come to gig after gig .... al over. I mean, for a band that's on it's first time out, we've been getting a pretty warm reception at a lot of places. But despite that, I think most of the audiences get pretty confused, which is exactly what I want! Know what I mean? (laughs)



PHOTOS: DENNIS MORRIS with overtones of psychedelic funk, and that description belies the truly innovative nature of what they do. They can't be categorized. Nor should they be. Dennis Morris (vocals), Leo (bass), J.R. (guitar), and Richard Dudanski (drum kit) are the four components in this lethal unit, and I have not seen anything so genuinely exciting since... I'm not an elephant.

This is three black guys and one white drummer. It could be three white guys and one black bass guitarist. It could be any permutation of instrument and colour. That does not matter. What is important is the utter absence of any ethnic predominance whatsoever: this is *new* music, not black reggae or white rock but something that transcends both

to build upon. Dudanski (I hope he stays) drums with high energy and complete *simpatico* with the uniqueness of the sound.

Lyrically, there is a compassionate over-view of the world situation. There is also genuine anger and frustration. Dennis sings of what he knows; not Ethiopia or I and I, but of the threat of new (missused) technology, of the absurdity of the work/no work situation, of the continual games that are played, and of the universal paranoia so prevalent right now.

I spoke to him in a dingy hotel room in Bristol, and found him a patient, caring man who is passionately concerned about many things. He threw up a lucrative career in rock photography (check his Faithfull and PII sleeve pics) to

How was it touring with someone of Dury's stature.

"Well, it's great! He's a really friendly guy, and most of his band too. But now we know what touring on the breadline is all about! You've seen our hotels! We don't care though, we're learning all the time and that's how it should be".

We'll pick up on the rest of the conversation later. Meanwhile, I was thinking! Watching Basement 5 live on stage is an abrasive threatening and ultimately exhilarating experience. At Brighton they meander casually onto the stage. Dennis wears an Admirals jacket and peaked cap. A towel hangs pirate-like from his waist and down over his right knee. Leo dresses down and introduces



anonymity chic. J.R. is barely visible, but his guitar cuts hard. Behind them all, Richard smashes out at his kit with a combination of pure anger and subtle craftsmanship. The audience is at first perplexed. They don't know how to react ... Let alone how to dance! Should they move to the reggae riddims, or gyrate to the maelstrom of all the other elements present? It matters not. Halfway through the set, and the crowd are really into it!

The band thunder through an ecstatic musical collage that, combined with their awesome visual presentation and presence, becomes an exercise in stimulating surrealism. "Dirty Town", "Hard Work", "No Ball Games", "Immigration" and "Heavy Traffic", (all on their new album "1965-1980", released on January 12 if Island get it right for once), follow one another in a dazzling succession of musical adrenalin. Next up is the current single, "Last White Christmas". As Dennis intones his vitriolic lyrics over a shattering kamikaze megga-riff that could blow you away, everything falls into place. Yes, this is the band for '81. It's as simple as that, and you couldn't stop them with napalm. Fuck restraint, fuck politesse and journalise, what we have here is gelagnite. As the set concludes with "Too Soon" my heart is in my throat and then it's over. I felt like ... putty.

In Brighton, as we leave the hotel to climb into the severely overloaded van, what do we find but The Old Bill. "Your tax disc appears to be somewhat out of date, sir", is just for starters. Half an hour of interrogation follows, simply because as Leo later points out, "That guy is doing one hell of a boring job". Basement 5 are tolerant people. And while we're on their subject, maybe I should tell you about what happened to Denis. Driving through Brixton with a friend, the car was suddenly surrounded by our guardians in blue. A quick search and "Drive on". Not two minutes down the road and they're surrounded by Pandas. "Hey guy, this is the two ounces of grass you've been chucking out of the window". Dennis was subsequently acquitted. For a change, the jury was right.

Back to Bristol, and the morning light sees Needs and I tired and hungover, but nevertheless perusing the town that was his birthplace. Kris is the band's manager. (I defy any slag to say this is a puff piece, it was done because I chose to do it - I even payed by own rail fare - cheers Island), and his empathy with the group is totally unshakeable. Give him ten for acumen. We get lost twice and make the hotel just in time to leave for St. Austel. It is here that I depart for Crouch Hill, swearing vehemently that I will join them in beautiful down town Brighton.

That I do, and here the audience show no restraint. It's like a pill you take, and I've told you about it.

But back to Bristol and the tete a tete I had with Dennis. "Were they going to be big? He pauses, frowns, and sucks on the joint. "Yeah we're gonna be big! Simply because we're so different! And because we have something real to say, something that nobody else is saying and something that really probes into areas that, as yet, remain undiscovered".

What kind of people did he feel the band were attracting?

"Um, it's like the people who come to see us are, I suppose, basically there to see Ian Dury, though we have to live with that it ain't hard. What comes across is a bunch of people who, when we walk on-stage, and they clock us, expect some kind of straight forward reggae riffs! As you know, that ain't what they get!"

They seem to like it all the same?

"They get to like it. I feel they get to like it because of the ingredients they can't swallow! It's disturbing and it's scary, but I'm singing about things I understand and know. I'm British right? Yet the only way I get to know my relatives - my family - is through the photos I get at Christmas "Immigration" was written about that, and it's not just a song to me, it's a harsh reality of life."

With which contemporaries did he feel any empathy?

"Yeah ... Linton (Kwesi Johnson) is just amazing, so is Marley. I also think that Misty are covering new ground. Apart from them I don't particularly respect anyone. We've been compared to PIL, but I don't see any real justification in that. All I can say is that they're gonna regret losing Wobble - he was a mainstay (laughs).

Why did they choose Needs as a manager?

"Just because we didn't see him as a manager! He was the perfect alternative to 'a managership' etc. And what is most important is that he is genuinely behind what we are doing. Plus the fact that in real life he is a llama!"

Eventually I returned to London, under my arm a copy of "Basement 5 In Dub", and the second single (following "Silicone Chip") "Last White Christmas". Was I pleased or what?

Let me re-iterate. Basement 5 are a complex band. They don't compromise, they do exactly what they want to do. Their songs throw a unique light on the world we inhabit today, and they aren't afraid to scrutinise those neglected corners we seldom get around to. I first saw them on what was their third gig; that happened to be at the ZigZag party to celebrate the hundredth edition of this magazine. I was accosted, raped and beaten. I became a fan.

Robin Banks

# Is this the end of music as we know it?



**SPLODGENESSABOUNDS**  
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SPLODGENESSABOUNDS



# CHELSEA



PHOTO: SIMON REEVES

"There has always been a conspiracy to get rid of punk in the record business but four years on and we're still here!"

Gene October talking in the offices of Step Forward Records, current home of his band, Chelsea. Chelsea have practically been ignored by all the press (apart from a few fanzines) even though they began alongside the likes of The Jam/Clash/Banshees/etc. It would be easy to write Gene and the band off as failures, but as Gene says, "I hear all this gossip about Chelsea being failures and it pisses me off because we're only failures in as far as we haven't had the chance to get our records distributed properly and we've stuck with a small label whereas all the others have signed big contracts with the majors. We've never even had enough money to do a proper UK tour - ever!"

Gene is understandably bitter as he scowls around the offices looking as if he wants to bite Miles Copeland's head off. Copeland is the supremo behind Step Forward and the entire Faulty Records Company as well as being the manager of The Police. "It's fucking disgusting", says Gene. "Step Forward could never afford to put us in a studio to do an album when the company first formed and now they still don't give us fuck-all even though Miles manages the f..... Police. Miles Copeland ruined everyone on this label like The Fall, The Cortinas, ATV and us."

"The C..... don't even pay us any money now, either", adds Chelsea drummer Chris Bashford. "I went in for my weekly wages the other day and was told by Miles that I wasn't getting any."

Bashford is one of a long line of musicians to have worked with Gene since the name of Chelsea was first used by Gene October (vocals) Billy Idol (guitar), John Towe (drums) and Tony James (bass). Since the band split into two with

the other three forming Generation X, Chelsea have had more line up changes in three years than most bands have in a lifetime. Bashford has been with the band for over a year now and is the only survivor, apart from October, from the line-up that recorded Chelsea's first album. Guitarist, Dave Martin and bassist, Geoff Myles went on to form 'The Smart' - an impressive new band who should be in the news a lot more in the future, whilst the other guitarist, James Stevenson is to be (ironically) joining Generation X in the near future.

The current line up includes October (vocals), Bashford (drums), Steve Lewins (bass), Mick (Shirley) Howard and Barry Smith on guitars. This was the line-up that toured the States earlier this year and were filmed for the 'Uurgh' film when playing alongside The Cramps, Dead Kennedys and Members in Los Angeles. Gene was also asked to act in a forthcoming film about skinheads and hells-angels with Sting (of Police fame), but turned it down, preferring to concentrate on the band for now. His only other film experience came when he had a small part in Derek Jarman's 'Jubilee' and was killed off and dumped in the river Thames by Toyah Wilcox and her nasty little gang.

Gene still has a lot of affection for the early days of punk and gets highly emotional when mentioning the fact that it was he who found the Roxy Club in the first place and not Andy Czesowski who shot to fame for managing that temple of punk in 1977. In those days, October was hailed as having one of the finest voices in punk by the music press, but nowadays he and Chelsea are pushed under the carpet without a care. It seems as if the media deliberately want to get rid of Chelsea for good. At a recent gig back at the 100 Club, Gene

yelled at the audience, "They tried to stop us playing down here before and they'll never want us back here again after tonight. This is what punk rock is all about."

Needless to say, the stage was invaded by the crowd of punks who still follow Chelsea as much as they do The Damned or the newer bands such as The U.K Subs. October's obsession of being 'For the kids' reminds me of Jimmy Pursey and it's the reason that he says Chelsea still play 'Right to work' whenever they play. I argued the fact that this was a stumbling block for the band to fall back on, seeing as their more recent material such as 'No escape', 'Fools and soldiers' and 'I'm on fire' is far superior.

Some may say that this more recent material is a lot similar to the sound of The Clash, but when confronted with this view October just shrugs it off and says, "So what! The Clash are a fucking great group to be compared with."

When discussing Chelsea's most immediate plans, Chris and Gene said that their main concern was to get themselves a new record company as they were sick of Miles Copeland and his mini empire. Gene: We're on an independent label with no wages to live on. It's like The Fall once said in a copy of Zigzag and I quote: When you want Step Forward to act like a record company they act like an independant and when you want them to act like an independant they act like a record company. Summing that up, you just can't fucking win with them!

Chris: Step Forward really are just a bunch of wankers who only care about The Police. They (The Police) are in a great position to help bands like us and The Fall, but they'd sooner put their money towards helping American shit like Skafish, who nobody's really interested in over here. They just don't care about the British

bands at all.

"So are you both saying that Chelsea made a mistake by signing with a small label in the first place?"

Gene: Yes, I made a mistake by not going to a major company at the beginning. When everyone was signing to the majors I held out and put my belief and trust into the independant label idea.

Chris: I think the original idea of Step Forward was great but it's turned sour now that it's turned into a business for The Police. It's bands like us that have to suffer in the end.

Gene: I just wish that they'd make up their minds whether they want to be a record label or just concentrate on The Police. Whatever happens, our next step must be to get another record deal. Step Forward are being distributed by Pye Records and yet, we sold more records when we did all the distribution ourselves.

Chris: When we played up in Scotland recently we had to take all our own posters and records up and distribute them to the kids and the shops ourselves. The kids couldn't buy our record anywhere in Scotland and I find that really disgusting!

Chelsea recent released a new album on Step Forward called 'Alternative Hits' which featured the best of Chelsea's past and ironically it's doing a lot better in the States where Chelsea continue to visit due to the fact that they're respected and enjoyed by a larger crowd than they get over here. This is a ludicrous situation which should stop now! Chelsea deserve a lot more attention in the U.K. and they deserve to be idols of the boys in bondage far more than the likes of The Upstarts or 4Be2. Lets hope that ZigZag is only the first magazine to realise that Chelsea deserve a lot more.

Alan Anger

# **ADMIT NOTHING**

**1965-1980**



## **THE ALBUM**

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## THE WOW FEDERATION

The Wow Federation. These cats swing. I'm listening to the Wow Federation - I'm soft-shoe-shuffling through their jungle at 10 o'clock in the morning, shafts of sunlight coming through the foliage, the air is fresh, the whole experience is rich - colour shapes, sounds, smells, changing and mingling; sometimes the path widens out into a clearing, sometimes it's narrow and I'm rushing. The music isn't chaotic, though - there's a loose structure, which the instruments sometimes adhere to, sometimes deviate from, as they follow that all-important Swing.

To be specific, the Wow Federation are:  
 Nick Horton: drums (accountant)  
 Mark Mozart Hughes: guitar (works at a burger place)  
 Vicky Richardson: sax (student doing book publishing course)  
 James Rogers: organ (student doing English)  
 Andy Sizer: bass (student doing Russian and Philosophy)  
 Brian Warner: guitar (supervisor, unit sales)  
 Ian Royce Warner: crooner (barman)

All except Nick live in Oxford, although they come from various parts of the country originally. They have released no records, and plan to release a cassette (hip hooray). Now they are seven, but at first there were three - Mark, James and Andy; this was over two years ago. "I remember a conversation we had, when we said what bands have you been to see? - we'd been to see quite a lot of bands and Third World and the Cure were about the only bands in 12 months that I thought were any good at all, so we thought we'd make a group, the

right mixture, of all our favourite pop influences, and add something else as well. We used to write songs that sounded like the Batman theme tune." A good sign. "We wanted this mix between mangled distorted music and really nice melodic music, but it didn't come out like that."

"Then we got a singer with spiky hair, if you did a song and he thought it sounded like Elvis Costello then he'd sing exactly like Elvis Costello, or if he thought it sounded like Public Image he'd sing just like Johnny Roten" and for their first gig got a drummer, Paul, who had been playing drums for a week. The set was mostly originals with a few covers such as Flying Saucers Rock'n'Roll and Let's Dance. The singer was soon dispensed with, they gained Andy Mason, and Oxford cult hero, on drums, and Paul started singing. Andy Mason is an *interesting* character, preferring to call his drum-kit a percussion desk, decorating it with scarves, lights and a sheepskin rug. He had an aversion to playing in white light, and when he'd plugged all his lights in there was often no sockets left for the rest of the group. At about the same time, Brian joined on guitar. "I didn't like Brian when I first saw him, he was like a marsupial, sort of cuddly and really boring."

Just over a year ago, Andy Mason was replaced by a drummer called Bill, and then a synth player called Carl was brought in. Over the summer, Bill and Paul began to get involved with a group called Dum Dum Dum (see March issue for more details), one of the reasons for their being replaced by Nick and

Ian. And Vicky and her sax replace Carl and his synthesiser. I feel a bit left out, never having been a member of the Wow Federation.

Ian, Brian and Nick used to play in a group called the Dag Dag Bombers, and so the present Wow Federation and the Dag Dag Bombers, and their material is also a mixture from these two sources. "We used to work forwards - we'd start with me (Mark) and Andy on guitar and bass, then we'd work something round it, and the vocals would be put on last - there'd never really be a tune for the vocals to sing to", but now the melodies are written first. "The sound used to be too thick - we'd see how a song was built up; someone plays this part and someone else plays this part, and we could imagine it all together but it didn't really dawn on us for quite a long time that someone just seeing us for the first time, they couldn't possibly assimilate all the different parts, and we'd be like cancelling each other out. It must sound simple, although it may be complicated really, and it must sound immediate - good rhythms that people can actually dance to."

Wow Federation music is good to dance to. Modern rock music, whatever it may be, is not dance music, but the Wow Federation, although they fit within this category, are good to dance to in the way most black music is good to dance to. It must be that swing.

"Jazz has got lots of swing, a good speed, big band swing. The idea of a group is you've got to think of the thing as a whole, you've got to think 'well does it swing?' The most important thing is to get a rhythm with a lot of space in it, whereas before we were trying to do lots of things but there was no space in it, but if you get something with a swing to it ... " There are still lots of things going on, creating a sound that is rich, fecund, yet not stodgy. The arrangements are gorgeous, light and breezy - and swinging.

Mark and Andy used to write most of the words, but now Ian does as well. "He writes about fantasy things, fantasy worlds, like Rocky Moon is about astronauts being really bored on the moon, I Remember A western Saloon, it's just about cowboys."

"I've written one about monks."

"You just like writing about men's institutions, don't you?"

"There just doesn't seem any point in trying to put across a direct meaning, but if it's about nothing and everything, you can read anything into to."

Isn't ambiguity dangerous? Do people listen to words anyway?

The Wow Federation are also interested in image, a good visual presentation - if people can't get anything out of the music, then they can just look at what's going on.

"Minimalism - that's just taking rock down to its bare essentials, and rock's so boring anyway." The Wow Federation aren't minimalist. They reflect the fecundity of experience. With a swing.

Worried, Preston

## BATTLE OF THE BANDS

Talent competitions of any real value are pretty thin on the ground, so when Waxie Maxie (see last ish's letters page) assured me that 'Battle Of The Bands' was rather more than a way to earn a cheap buck, I went to the twelfth heat of the tournament at the Rainbow. And it was very interesting ...

Seven bands, who all came from around London (the previous eleven heats had been in places like Birmingham, Manchester, Ipswich, Glasgow and Belfast), and my hopes were high - in some of the places ('where the A & R men haven't been much' as someone said) the standard was reportedly very encouraging. One group, the Ak Band, were so good that the organisers immediately offered them a record deal, and a single called 'Pink Slippers' is out at the moment, and has some chances, I'd say.

At the Rainbow, I'm afraid, things weren't quite so promising. Only one saxophone and one keyboard player all night, and far too many of the bands were either Knack or Police clones. Why the Knack? I expect they'd say 'Because we want to get laid a lot'. Yeah, don't we all? The contest was won by Time Flies, a bizarre cross between Spandau Ballet, Crosby, Stills & Nash and the Records, which certainly covers most possibilities. I don't think I'll ever forget one of the other groups though - I won't name them, but the overriding impression was of a tart backed by three trainee solicitors. The former had a chest of alarming magnitude (does that suit our sexist friends?) only just enclosed in a fragile looking garment around naval level. One of the more exciting things was conjecturing about the result of the contest if she'd unleashed the monsters at the end of the group's set. Certainly, the audience (all 400 or so) would have all been able to warm their hands simultaneously - you see, the people who run the Rainbow had neglected to switch on any heating at all anywhere in the place. Ever seen barmen wearing gloves before?

To be serious for a mo, I'm reliably informed that the final (February 1st, again at the Rainbow, and the heating will be on) should be quite an interesting occasion. Rarely do you get the opportunity to see twelve bands without deals who've won through to a final (the big prize is a record deal, of course) playing on the same night. At least one of them I'll bet, is going to be pretty damn good.

John Tobler

## FLICKKNIFE RECORDS

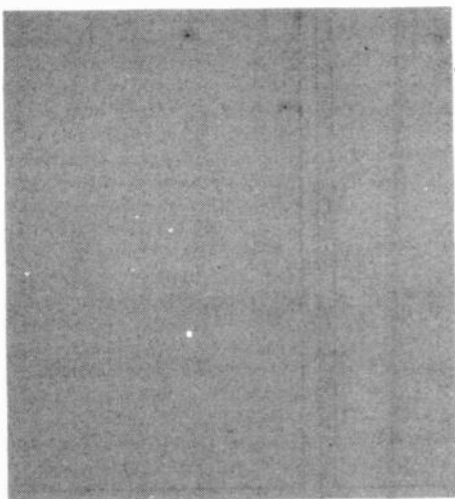
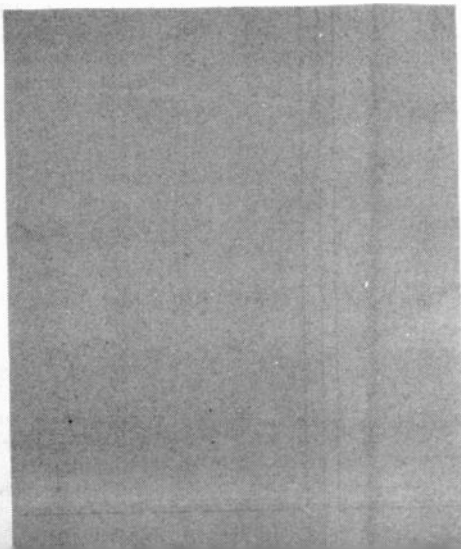


PHOTO: GRAHAM COOPER



### Flickknife Records

Stomping merrily upon the testicles of the major record company superstructures comes the latest in a long line of integrity-riddled Independent set-ups, hell bent on freeing bands with sense from the restrictive policies of non-co-operation and dirty deeds. They are FLICKKNIFE Records.

Although they are only now blossoming into a full tilt creative project F-knife have been in operation for eighteen months, launched by Marc 'Frenchy' Gloder and his wife Gina Nares on a meagre £600. Frenchy comes from a series of band/fanzine/photography/record store exploits to this current haven of activity. Starting with 'The Mystere Five' he's bunged out discs from them, Michael Moorcock, RedRage etc. with many more to come, but more importantly has been organising a co-operation, named I.K.F.

After a letter was printed in ZigZag Frenchy got a great response from Illuminated Record and ex-members of Desperate Bicycles to name but two of many. Things got underway. Naturally I asked just how it was gonna work.

"If you're an independent label, you have to go to Rough Trade, and Bonaparte and blah, blah right? You spend 'X' hours a day 'X' gallons of petrol, expenses you know, whereas one person could do all that for you, one person could take all the records on the same run. Inside the co-op each independent label would be his own master. We'll handle promotion as well, whatever independent labels spend on advertisement we put into one; we buy bigger space and get noticed more."

"What happens to the money when it comes back?"

For every independent label we say, give us thirty days so we can prove we can do the job, and each month we send invoices to each label saying, we sold x number of these records, we owe you two hundred pounds or whatever, what do you want us to do with it, spend the money on repressing the record, spend it on advertising, or do you want the money... that's basically it."

"If you are an independent label and you join the co-op it means you have a bit of suss anyway, it'd be better to go into a studio and say we'd like to book it for a year which we could do. When all the registration is done we will have a meeting with all the independent labels who are with us and we'll discuss everything like putting up posters, organising gigs, anything that co-incides with releasing a record. All the promoting of it." Is it just geared to singles or could you do an album too?

"Oh yes. The catalogue of the co-op so far, we've got about six albums, four twelve inch, and about ten singles. This list is big, getting bigger and bigger. We may be doing stuff with Bob Calvert, Delroy Washington, Dayshift."

"Like Michael Moorcock is a big name, with the heavy metal scene or the Hawkwind scene, and it'll be good for other bands like Red Rage

who are less well known but are doing the same sort of stuff."

What about if some kid has done an independent cassette, would that qualify?

"Yeah, we'll do everything. We've already got these people from Cambridge called Leisure Sound, that's a cassette. It's good because there's a lot of people from different parts of Britain, which is good because when you're not from London it's hard to get into the scene. We've got a very good distribution network set up, and we'll be able to license stuff to Europe, we've licensed Flickknife to Underdog, Marc Zermatti's new label (ex-Skydog) a part of Carerre records. It's a very good opening for Independent labels".

Mystere Five incidentally are a very unusual band, a famous crew apparently who through frustration with their own record company ceased conventional recording and slipped Frenchy some stuff and they've developed a bond ever since. I don't have the space to print the details of this, but hopefully we can do a feature on them sometime.

"I had the idea for Flickknife before the Mystere Five came along, but I decided that was really good. We're doing an album for Underdog and we shall probably put their names on it." But for the time being he's not telling.

"Independent record companies were born because big companies made the mistake of dictating to the bands. I think, record labels in general should be vehicles for the bands to express themselves. The company should be helping their artists instead of bothering them with problems."

The trust people are currently placing in the flickknife organisation is illustrated by the Michael Moorcock single. Moorcock could easily have taken it to a bigger label but a system of mutual trust has been set up. This respect will hopefully snowball. If punk did anything wrong it was those first signings to big acceptable labels. Imagine if those bands had only held out until they had a bit of money to start their own labels (Hindsight doesn't come into it) imagine what the situation would be now! A vital opportunity lost. Instead of meekly going to their creative slaughter (slight exaggeration) they could have seriously fought 'the system' (maaaann).

Things like the Flickknife operation and the I.K.F. co-operative can only be good for the musicians and therefore for us too; the listeners. It'd be naive to expect bands to give up the chance of bright lights, glamour and a chance to stand alongside Peter Powell in the television studios.. it just depends where your priorities lie. The important thing is that I.K.F. isn't another idealist dream, it's actually happening and everyone should support it.

Anyone wanting to contact them should write to: FlickKnife, 82 Adelaide Grove, London W.12. Telephone 01.743-9412

Mich Mercer

## BIG HAIR

Another in a never ending series exposing NME as a jumped up team of festering has-beens has reached our ears concerning those little known 'popsters' Big Hair.

For eight months of their year career they have toiled under this peculiar title and have just released a cover version of "Puppet On A

String", on Fresh Records. Coupled with the undeniably finer "Lies" it is a nice inoffensive record but oh, behind the calm front lies murk and mystery.

In a burst of graffitiing Big Hair decorated the likes of Sounds, Record Mirror and NME. The first two minded not a jot but NME soon revealed they knew how to take a joke; badly!

In a short space of time Big Hair have had the NME's estate agent threatening a major tete-a-tete in a British Court of Law, and the 'street level' music paper (sic) NME soon followed suit. Not only that but with the sense of fair play that has made their paper what it is today they told Big Hair that their journalistic influence would persuade all their fellow music papers to effectively blacklist the band. Needless to say reviews have appeared in all the other papers.

Big Hair remain adamant about this sadly U.X.B.-jape and couldn't believe NME could be so childish. Now they have learnt that NME have had the offensive artwork painted over and the bill will be forwarded to Big Hair. Had the chance arisen Big Hair would have righted the 'wrong' themselves.

Further more the band phoned Roy Carr to ask his opinion of their record, and in keeping with the paper's policy of unbiased reviewing the great man, his beard bristling with indignation, said "I've thrown the single in the dustbin".

Mr Carr is 93.

## FANZINES

**Toxic Graffiti** 50p plus large sae. from Rough Trade or Betta Badges. Anarchist punk fanzine and the leader in any fanzine field. A big-job. Includes 'fuck the system Now' stickers and a Crass flexi single. The layout as grubby as ever, speaking human truth; Poison Girl lyrics. Preaching to the converted all the say and over the top but incredibly honest.

**BACK ISSUE** No. 3 25p plus large sae. from Rough Trade. Includes Flux of Indians, Swell Maps, TV Personalities and Damned interviews plus totally pointless singles reviews (B.B. fanzines are so late in appearing all the singles are ages old when you come to read about them). In flexible layout but not bad.

**"Jungeland"** First Flat, 16 Cadzow Place, Abbey Hill, Edinburgh. 25p plus large sae.

Amusing, thought-provoking and artistic, this is a welcome return for "J.L." (two and a half years since last issue!) Best zine of the year.

**"Offense"** TKA, c/o 1585 N. High St., Columbus, OHIO 43201 USA. They're such peculiar boys. Great sense of humour, humility, humidity and terse biting molars. Lots of local band coverage plus surprisingly up to date English record reviews. Probably cost you a quid.

**"Step by Step"** 2, Lythwood Road, Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury. Definitely a weird one. No Music as such but packed with advice on how to produce magazines, record and organization og gigs. 30p

**"Smart Verbal"** 20p plus large sae from 33 College Road, Moseley. Devious and tres amusant, it features mixtures of messages and music including an article on/by Brian Brain. Good value.

**"Kick"** 25p plus large sea. 19 Barnard Hill, Muswell Hill, London N.10 One of the best true punk mags. Interviews with Fall, UK DeKay, Bauhaus, Occult Chemistry and Pneumania. EXCELLENT

Anyone with fanzines coming out send me to me at Zigzag and we shall endeavour to review it. Vive les fanzeens.

## FAST FORWARD

As you may have noticed, these days we eke out our existence amid an Independent Cassette Boom. There are well over 500 tapes available, most of them done within the last 12 months. Next month, Deo Volente, we'll be bringing you the ZigZag independent cassette catalogue, a megacomprehensive guide to virtually every independent tape in existence; but for the moment, here are a few reviews of recent tape releases.

**ANTHRAX FOR THE PEOPLE:** waiting for the second post (Alternative Capitalists ACC009) c. 60.

This is the second Anthrax For the People tape, and I like it much more than their first. The people responsible are Rupert von Wigston (glockenspiel, vocals, percussion), Robert Melville (electric guitar) and Dave Dixey (various acoustic instruments), who runs the Alternative Capitalists tape operation.

Now to the music: about half of it was recorded live at the snack bar, Gateway Sixth Form College, Leicester, the rest being "jam'd and improvisations". The music is made out of *rhythm* guitar, sparse glockenspiel, thumps, and vocals by someone who sounds as though he has a beard (in fact he hasn't). The first side is consistently enjoyable in a warm, friendly sort of way, electric guitar usually played offbeat, scat glockenspiel (a novel stimulus) and made-up-on-the-spot singing. The live material is much thinner, an acoustic guitar rarely playing more than 2 notes per song, effective glockenspiel and singing that carries the whole thing. The lyrics are good, especially on 'how come?', and the rhythms are rhythmic. Side w is a bit patchy, its peaks but a beautiful 5 seconds of plucked guitar and Woolies electric organ. Mmmm. And 'early morning reggae' with Julie Melville on recorder, and a glockenspiel blues.

£1.35 (or £1.50 with badge) from: Alternative Capitalists, Dave Dixey, 14 Suffolk Close, Wigston, Leicester LE8 2WN.

**DOGMA CATS/DOGMATIC DUO** (Leisure Sounds DC0002)

Side 1 of this C60 was recorded live at the Dogma Cafe, in front of an audience of one. The Dogma Cats sound like a fairly average guitary new wave rock group. I can't hear the words, and the drums say clump clump clump. A few of the song are memorable - 'the circle club' which has an interesting reggaeish beat, good singing and a good tune. 'You got to pay taxis' also has a good tune; I wish I could hear the words, as they sound interesting - amusing. I also liked 'experts' the single which John Peel likes - it's got a good tune and a hooky bassline. But generally, a very usual 30 minutes. I thought Side 2 was much more interesting - this is by the Dogmatic Duo, half of the Dogma Cats. It's softer than the other side, has a wider variety of

instrumentation and lots of interesting textures. It begins with 'when we were very very young', made of piano and chugging guitar - I like the tention between the instruments. Most of this side is instrumental, and divided into 'pieces' rather than songs. 50p from: Leisure Sounds, 9 Whitcroft Road, Meldreth, Royston, Herts SG8 6ND

**NIGHT VISITORS:** English Electric (Terminal Music TCAS2) The 8 songs on this tape (about 40 minutes) were recorded in Proper Studios (but we won't hold this against Night Visitors. What we will hold against them is their often-boring competence of playing their instruments, and their lack of imagination). They are 6 people, who between them sing, play guitars, synths, tenor sax, bass and drums. The songs I liked were 'Sunshine grenade', its changing rhythms and jazzy singing by Janice Johnston Howie make texturally and rhythmically rich rock music; and "metallic blue". This is support-band rock, vaguely original in an uninteresting sort of way. This tape makes a nice noise but it doesn't *give* me anything. £1.20 from: Terminal Music, 133 Lower Seedley Road, Salford M6 5NS

**262: FOR FUN AND PROFIT!** (Terminal Music TCAS 1)

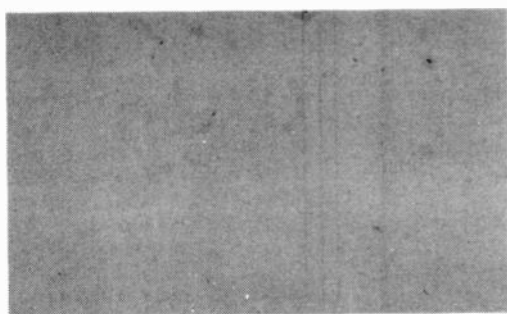
A Mysterious tape by some artistes. it begins with a brief and squeaky rendition of "Good King Wenceslas" and continues in a similarly joky mood throughout the rest of the tape. There are lots of repetitive, catchy little riffs, there's a great funeral march featuring a honking/nose-blowing noise and imaginatively ridiculous percussion - like the Residents, but not as dead-pan. All of the music is interesting, some of it is powerful as well as being fun, e.g. the one honking horns and scaly guitars (you know the one). This tape is very varied, very enjoyable and very original. It sounds like people messing about and having fun, but unlike many independent tapes, here the fun actually infects the listener. (me)

£1.35 from: Terminal Music, 133 Lower Seedley Road, Salford M6 5NS

**THE TEE-VEES:** Fatman crossing/Dr. Headlove (Pink Tapes 2)

This is a C10 "cassette single", and I like it a lot. It's very professionally recorded for an independent tape, well up to the standard of a vinyl single. 'Fatman crossing' is vaguely reggae/ska-ish with precise drumming and wide spaces between the instruments. It's a light, catchy song, with strong hooks from synthesiser and horns, and strange, unintelligible lyrics. The B-side is pretty much instrumental, more obviously ska with its smooth horns and galloping drums.

## THE LURKERS



### A Retrospective

Some people may wonder why I've bother to write a retrospective on the late Ickenham terrors known as The Lurkers. At first I was only going to review their latest collection of songs entitled, "Greatest Hits; Last Will And Testament". However, upon playing the twelve inch I realised the loss of The Lurkers was more important to a lot of people in this country than at first realised. The Lurkers have left a gap as big as that left with the decay and final split of Sham 69. The Lurkers have become important by their absence.

Formed after the initial burst of punk rockers such as The Pistols/Damned/Clash, they became regulars down the legendary water-hole in London - The Roxy Club. At that particular time it wasn't important to be able to play instruments properly, nor have the finest vocalist in the land. The Lurkers summed it all up with their Ramones influenced thrashings which appeared on their very first album. Songs like their very first single; "Shadow" as well as "Ain't got a clue" were interspersed with politically naive ramblings such as "Total War" and old New-York-Dolls songs such as "Pills".

tried desperately to bury the band alongside other Roxy Club originals that weren't interested in the art of progressing with the times such as Chelsea and The Vibrators. Sadly, the second album was lost in the rush and never lived up to it's expectation. Songs like "Babylon", "Bad Times" and "She Knows" were okay, but couldn't justifiably be placed alongside the gems such as "Go Go Go", "I on heat" or anything else off the first album. The Lurkers were dismissed as total failures and their slight change of style into a more commercially rock/pop vein was lost on their hard core punk following.

It was after this album that Honest John Plain (of The Boys) was introduced into the line-up to give the band some badly needed new blood. Pete Stride was running short of ideas and since both he and Howard Hall had always been into The Faces kind of music, Plain was ideal for the band. He brought with him a few numbers not used by The Boys such as "Pick me up" and "Schoolgirls" and a few ideas for oldies such as "You better move on" and "Little ol' wine drinker" which was used as a Lurkers b-side to "New Guitar in town". This single was the first Lurkers 45 to be taken seriously by the music press and it was, ironically, their last.

The band played a number of gigs as a five piece and desperately tried to play the way *they* wanted to play and not follow any particular fashion that may have been happening at the time, but the last Lurkers gig was on New Years Eve when supporting The Members as very special guests at The Music Machine. They split up mid-way through 1980 without having played any gigs and although an album called "New Guitars" was released by Beggars Banquet featuring Stride, Plain, Wall and a few friends, it never captured any of the original spirit that belonged to The Lurkers. The New Guitars even played a one-off gig at the Greyhound in Fulham in September, but with only a handful of Lurkers fanatics and a few Members and Boys to support them, the line-up finally called it a day.

It's only now as we approach 1981 that people should realise the importance of losing a band like the Lurkers. Bands no longer play twenty minute sets full of blistering songs played at break neck speed and invite the crowds to join in and leap onstage. The Lurkers never played any gigs at a seated hall - even as a support band. Nor did they stop playing the smaller clubs, even when appearing on Top of The Pops and such like. The Lurkers new album is exactly what it says on the cover - "The Last Will and Testament" of one of Britain's most underrated bands. The Lurkers were never musically brilliant and yet every track on the album (and it includes all the singles) is a gem to match anything The Ramones have ever had to offer (and I love the Ramones)!

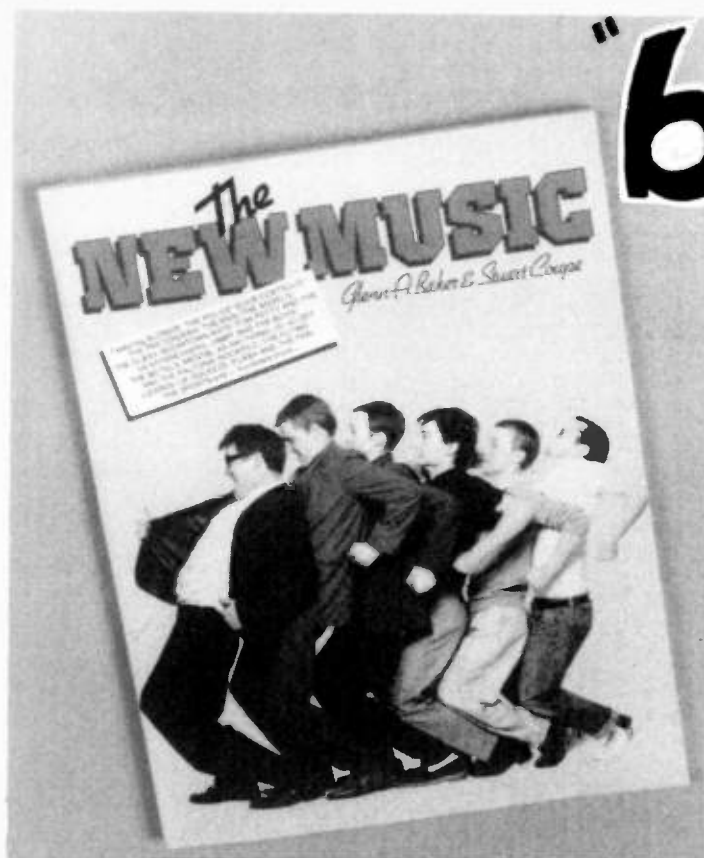
Alan Anger



PHOTO: JANNETTE BECKMAN

By the time the media had accepted punk rock and a television show called, 'Revolver' was being aired, The Lurkers were making their mark on the music scene and "I don't need to tell her" followed "Ain't got a clue" into the charts. The Lurkers had made it to the top without leaving their loyal cult following (namely The Fulham Boys and Kingston Mob) behind. The band never dressed in bondage, nor did they hold any strong political views. They just played live gigs everywhere and anywhere they could and Pete Stride (lead), Howard Wall (vocals), Esso (drums) and Nigel Moore (bass) "The Coach and Horses" and have a drink with. No More heroes anymore!

By the time the band recorded their second album which was autobiographical entitled, "Gods Lonely Men", most of the press had



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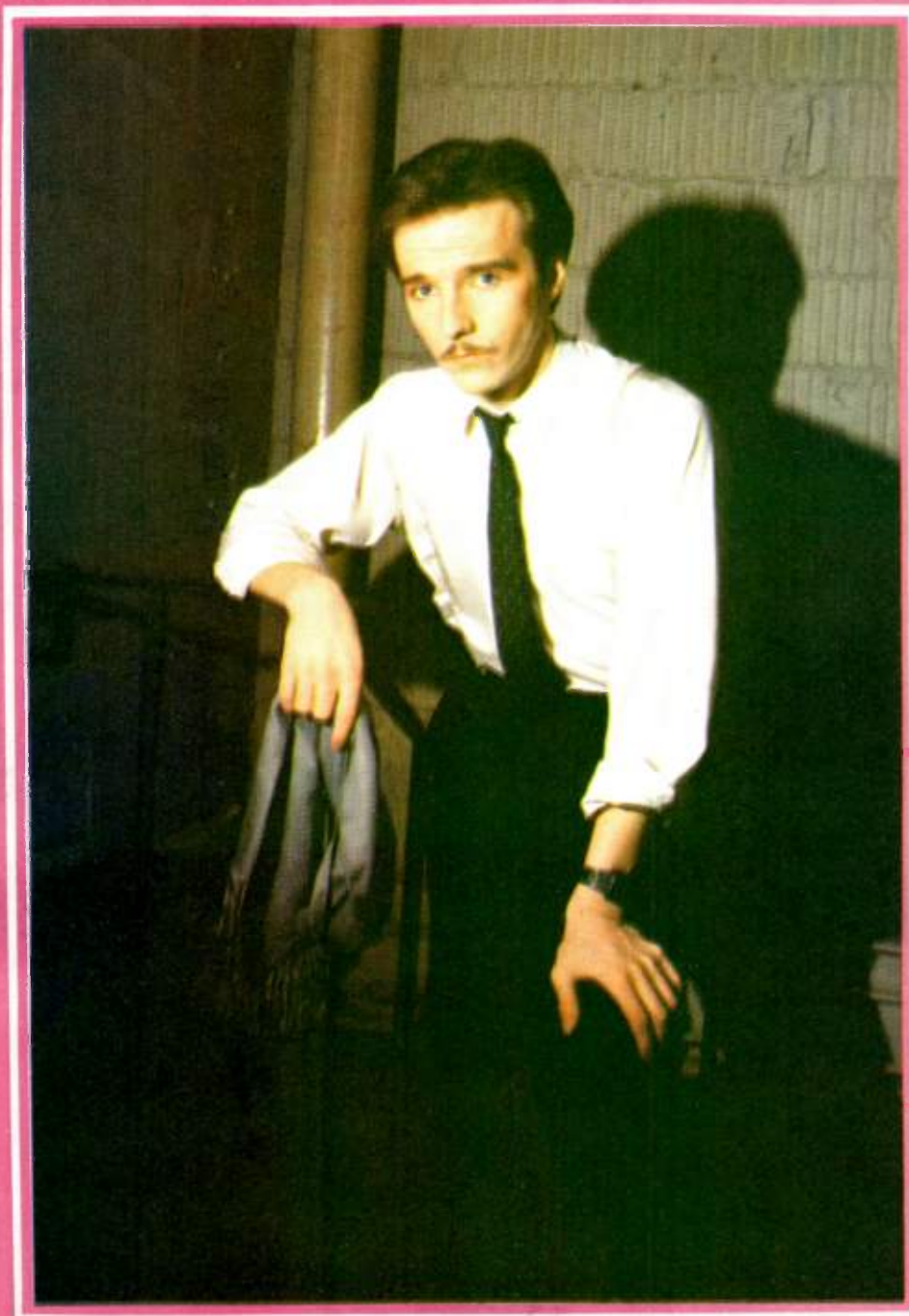
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PHOTOS: SIMON REEVES



And so to Ultravox then, a reasonably approachable morsel, in a studio deep in the wastes of Caledonia. No-one else at Zeegzarg wanted the gig so in earnest and intrepid (or in retrospect, tepid) manner I strolled along and pitted wits with Midge, Chris Cross and Billy Burger. It was a short examination and the questions went something like this...

#### *One Hour Paper*

Answer each question as fully as is possible and enlarge upon relevant matter at all time. Failure to do so will result in penalties later.

A) Did you get much stick as John Foxx's replacement?

B) Your fans. "An open-minded crew". True or false. Discuss.

C) What are your extra-terrestrial activities?

D) Visage as a sitting target for press rebukes. Elaborate.

E) Was the success of Ultravox Mark II a surprise or inevitable in today's society?

F) Did you ever see Ultravox? Comments and general notes on history.

G) Is this the most satisfying thing you have ever done. (No smut).

H) What does the future 'immediate' hold? in no more than 3 yawns.

I) Explain the new technology evident in your work.

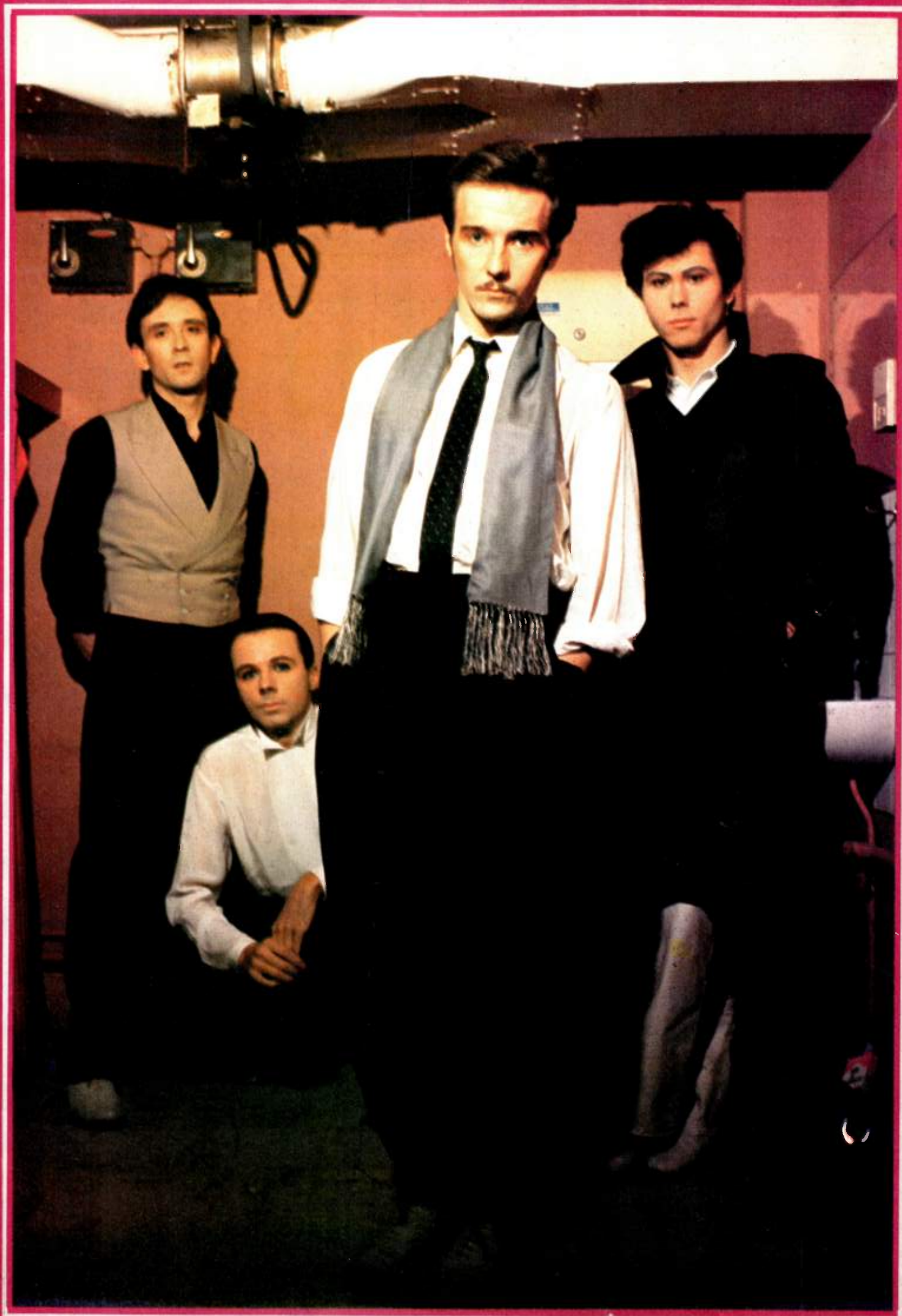
J) Will the vocals remain the same or is there a change in the air?

K) Has stagework become more interesting and personally exciting?

L) Does the band feel able to control self-indulgence. If so how?

M) There is no M.

A) (Midge Ure) When I joined the band I didn't think Foxx was the be-all and end-all, but it seemed a lot of people did. Being the frontman I was expecting a bit of stick. A lot of people thought he wrote all the songs and the band were just backing guys, more or less. That never struck me at all until we went out and did four warm up gigs. Jesus Christ! I couldn't believe it. You get the odd cry for Foxx and people calling out for old songs but it's one of those things. I don't want to be associated with that at all, they've got to accept us as a band. What's the point coming if the singer you



want to see isn't there? The reaction on the last tour was great.

B) (Midge Ure). Yeah, they are. cosa lot of the -- think. That's why. They have a bit more substance, they're a bit more mature. It's weird, like when I joined the band there was a hard core following who had been with the band since the first record or before, and they're really dedicated and have stuck with the band all the way through. You'd expect a lot to drop by the wayside when Foxx left. I can't understand it. I used to like the underdogs, liking a band no-one else liked and as soon as they started getting some measure of success, it becomes a bit like jealousy...

(Billy Currie) ... Yeah that's what we want ... open-minded ... you don't believe me do you?

(Chris Cross) ... It's weird that they don't sort of - ... there's no friction ... the spectrum ...

(Billy). Each of us individually have become more accessible as characters, they've got to know us more. When they talk of Sir John Foxx leaving and Robin Simon it's "all the band" ... I'm sure they talk it out, I'll check out Foxx's stuff and I'll check out theirs.

(C. Cross) Basically the audience seem the type who are interested in what's going on and not just fashion conscious.

(Midge Ure) The thing that pleases me is when someone who thought we'd be crap, cos they liked the old band, says it's great. That's gratifying. They say "You're a BAND now"

C) (Midge) I like doing things outside the band, it keeps the interest going. Rather than coming back from the States and having a three week break I'd rather do some production with bands. There's the visage project. We've just finished that. I've produced a band called Modern Man, I think they're one of the best bands to have come out of Scotland in a long time. Did a single with an Irish band, The Atrix. Gonna be doing some stuff with Fatal Charm...

(Billy) I do Visage, it's like a disease.

(Chris) I got it a bit, been to the doctor, think I'll get rid of it.

D) (Midge) Oh they hate it. I just don't like the idea of a self-confessed poseur and load of musos getting together to do an album for fun. You've got to do something out side a band. Can't do that all the time. Rusty and I, after the Rich Kids split we were tied up contractually, and we wanted to get together with our favourite musicians; couple of guys out of

Magazine, and Billy from Ultravox, before I JOINED THE BAND, and it took a hell of a time. We've done the impossible. 3 record companies are involved in it! But the press hate it, whether its good or not. It doesn't matter, doesn't bother me, the music press has nothing to do with it. It's outside their limitations because it's getting national coverage in the Sun and that crap through Steve. What they say really don't matter, as if it usually does.

E) (Billy) I was surprised when the album took off, but we don't take that too seriously. I mean England was bugging me like fuck. I remember thinking I'd really like to get in that chart. 'System' only getting to Number thirty two was annoying, and when we came to do "Vienna" we injected a fuck of a lot of strength, like postulate strength... "We're going to get this fucking thing in there". It's nice when your energy is taken and you're not pissing gainst the wind.

(Midge) What surprised no-one more than us. An incredible surprise! When the LP took off it was bizarre and with "Sleep-walking" getting in the chart, selling more than the previous Ultravox singles put together... I imagine Gary Numan had a lot to do with it, and we get Numan fans coming along to see us, expecting something cold and distant, and it's a surprise. They probably find us quite fresh.

F) (Midge) I went to see them at their Lyceum, the last London gig they ever did. It was full of typecast punks. I hated it. Left after ten minutes, never got to see the band. Up until "Systems of Romance" I'd never really listened to them, never really thought about them one way or other. It changed attitude totally. Half of it was woffley, half was genius!

G) (Midge) Oh, very much so. My background has been a little erratic to say the least, but every move I make seems to make sense, well it makes sense to me.

H) (Midge) We're gonna use "Vienna" as a base, a starting point. We shall be experimenting a lot.

I) (Midge) Em, well, in, There then follows a highly technical part of the examination. Roughly translated it is this. Warren Cann has devised a host of new drum-machine techniques which will make the Ultravox sound more definable than it is now. Whilst many bands use said machine in a very orthodox way he has built a devious machine that enables him to actually "play" it the way we might automatically play snooker.

Fiddling to his hearts content he can sustain rhythms, lengthen, shorten and generally create new departments hitherto unheard of. This procedure was unearthed in the Bee-Gees studio and introduced Ultravox to the immediate process of recording. Whatever was needed for particular songs was crafted and grafted there and then with castration for the unlucky loser.

(Midge) Although we do get involved with that stuff we like to control it. Like, it's ridiculous, it gets to the point where we can't actually do things. We get the idea, and all of a sudden it changes from talking about music to the technical aspects that enables us to do it. When that happens we throw it out the window and start again.

J) (Midge) Vocals! I've got an effects rack and foot switches. Got an ADT unit which doubles the voice and makes it more like a studio sound.

I've got graphic equalisers that make it sound either like a telephone voice or a megaphone sound. I use that quite a lot. And an echo unit wch I can switch in whenever I want as opposed to leaving it to the guy at the back of the hall who might be sitting talking to some tart. We did a German version of "Mr. X", and decided to put it out in Germany as a B-side, then forgot all about it.

K) (Billy) Yeah, we've evened up, that's one way of putting it. More improvisation, it matters a lot, more than anything else ... because we're not duplicating anymore, which we used to do actually.

L) Midge gives you a clout round the back of the head ... (Billy). (Chris). The arrangement of people is 'pretty good to stop it getting unwoffley, for want of a better word, like especially keyboards, dead easy to go over the top, innit Bill?

(Bill) I think in a band you're always trying to keep your level of sanity and you feel you have to say "I feel we should stretch out more" There's always a level. We can't take each others criticisms.

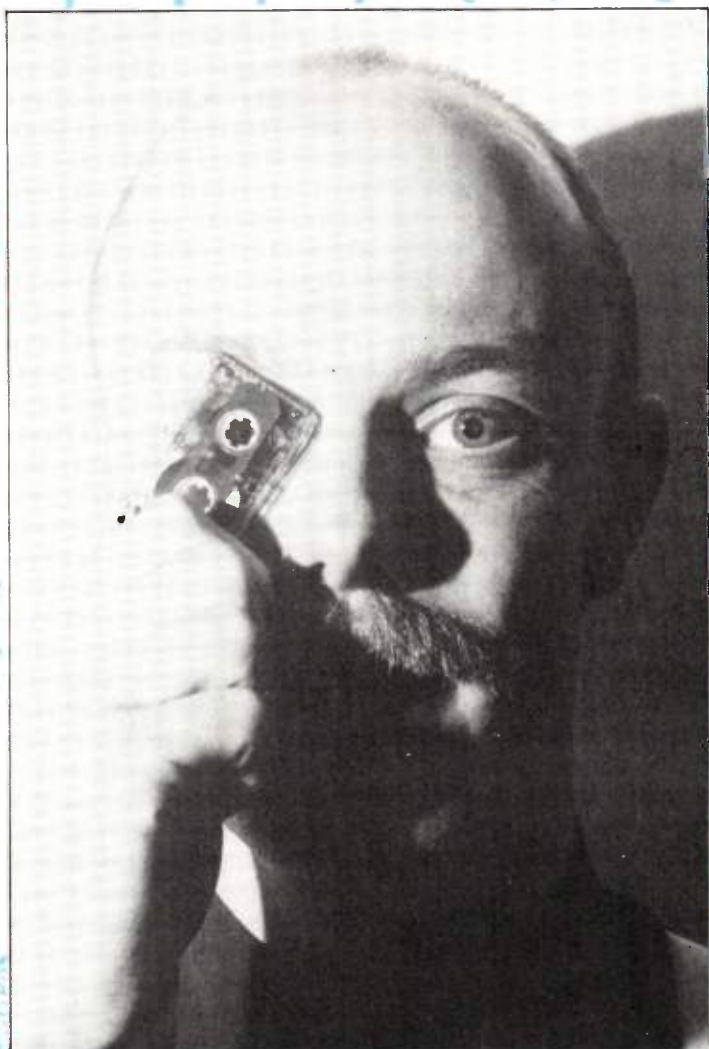
(Chris) Frummmgphhh. (explodes) God if you get like that you're really fucked.

All in all, a reasonably essay. Some of the grammar needs to be worked on and the use of wooffle is to their detriment, but with only a modicum of naughty words they seem quite nice boys really. Ultravox emanate, you may have smelt them. And at last they are shifting units. (Which is more than you can say for me. I feel somewhat constipated).

Mick Mercer

# MORGAN FISHER

PHOTOS: SIMON REEVES



Of late, it's become almost obligatory to classify Morgan Fisher as some kind of loony, due to his recent recorded works which appear to involve an acute case of advanced schizophrenia (the excellent 'Hybrid Kids' L.P.), or a desire to cram more than the human brain can possibly absorb into a single album ('Miniature', among others). The reality is very different - a very normal cup of coffee in a fairly normal fourth floor flat (a little crowded with keyboards and recording equipment and guitars hanging on the wall) overlooking Notting Hill Gate, if you can see through walls, and a stimulating chat with a man who is a lot closer to some kind of personal nirvana than most I've met.

It's all worlds away from the start of Morgan's musical career, back in 1968, when he was keyboard player for the dreaded Love Affair. "I joined the band when I was still at school, and then various people convinced me I ought to stay at school to finish my 'A' Levels. So I left them for about six months, during which time they had a number one hit ('Everlasting Love', the first of five top twenty singles in eighteen months), so I was very pleasantly surprised by that and glad to get back to them. It was no problem getting back in the band, because they had a guy in while I was away, but he didn't

work out, so although it wasn't automatically agreed that I should come back, when I contacted them, they were quite happy to have me back. It was amazing to walk out of school into that".

OK, but how did you get involved in that band in the first place? "Well, Love Affair's success was with music that never initially intended to do. We were all

Finchley mods - I knew Steve Ellis, the singer, because we used to listen to soul records together. We were really hip and into the Stax label...funny, a lot of mods used to listen to jazz in those days as well. Jimmy Smith and stuff, and that's the kind of music we played, really.

We had all these obscure records - the Sue label was another fantastic one, Billy Preston and stuff like that, and we used to do really good soul music. Then they got this hit, and they just went with that instead, and we used to only play soul music at gigs".

Wasn't there something about the band being formed around one member, whose father was the manager? "It was basically formed for Maurice Bacon, the drummer, by his father Sid Bacon, who'd been a jazz drummer, and in fact, Maurice's uncle, Max Bacon, was a very well known drummer, who played with Ambrose and his Orchestra for many years. Maurice's dad was a very traditional sort of Tin Pan Alley type manager - there was a lot of

that around in those days - and that was probably one of the reasons that the group fell apart, but he wasn't totally to blame. It was us as well. I mean, we did this dreadful thing, like a lot of other people, of deciding to go heavy at one point, which alienated our fans, and the people who really liked so called heavy music didn't want to know about us anyway, so we lost out on both counts, and ended up playing in Working Man's Clubs, which is just the kiss of death".

Are you on all the hit singles, though? "None of us were except Steve Ellis. That was another kiss of death story - we admitted that we didn't play on the records. We didn't care, we were all between fifteen and eighteen, just out of school, and it seemed expedient to get professional session men to play on the records, and just get Steve to sing over them, although we're all on the B sides of the singles, and on the albums".

Following this, Morgan tried his hand at leading a band. "Yeah, I formed a band, modestly called Morgan, and somehow we got a deal with RCA Italy after nobody in England would have us. We went out to Italy, and in the end we did two group albums under the name Morgan, and I did a solo album as well. The first group album got released straight away, but it didn't do much. They imported five hundred copies to England, but RCA in this country didn't want to know, so my solo album never came out, and the second group album

finally saw the light of the day about a year ago" which is another story we'll come to in a little while...

The next thing anyone knows about was Morgan joining Mott the Hoople, but it transpires that something came in between - "There was my only full time job, which lasted about six weeks, and that was driving a van for an off license, which is great. I was delivering to the rich of Hampstead Garden Suburb, which is quite extraordinary, seeing how these people live with their maids and their swimming pools and butlers, and there was one old guy, who was like a tiny little hunchback. I used to deliver a crate of mixed spirits to him every week, and he just got on this little ladder, opened his cupboard, and piled it in with all the other thousands of bottles he had in there. I think he must have been related to W.C. Fields - he was probably hoarding against prohibition! It was fun, that job, but while I was doing it, I kept an eye on the back pages of the 'Melody Maker', just in case. I was really a bit down at this time, having gone through the demise of a pop band, then gone experimental, and have that fall apart as well, and I thought 'What am I going to do next?'. I was even considering selling everything I had and going to Mexico or something, but I saw an ad in 'Melody Maker', following it up, and it was the Third Ear Band, which I joined for two months, during which time I think we did

two gigs and one radio show, so I didn't really have much opportunity to get into it. I just turned my synthesizer on and fiddled around a bit and they seemed to like it. Glen Sweeney was a very nice, likeable man". My friend Frame might see it a little differently - after he'd written a piece about the Third Ear Band (Peel might be embarrassed if we recall that he seemed to like them at the time), Mr. Sweeney rang up to complain about something, parting with the immortal payoff line "I'm going to put a spell on you". Frame, being a peace-loving sort of chap, simply ignored such stupidity - I'd have set my dog on the fool...but back to Morg.

"I still kept my eye on the 'Melody Maker', and spotted

loved figure in the States - he was pretty much out of control. But, let's face it, out of controlness these days seems to be looked upon as something good, while in those days it wasn't, because things were getting very American. It was pre-punk, and it was when things were heading towards pub rock and all that sort of thing, and everyone was trying to get very slick. Ian was particularly influenced by America, things like Bruce Springsteen and all that, so eventually he decided - it was basically his decision - that Bender couldn't cut it as a guitarist, we couldn't find a way to harness Bender's energy, couldn't control it. It's a shame we felt we had to control it, but that's the way it went, and Mick was brought in. Obviously, he had a great track record with Bowie and stuff, but somehow there were personality clashes. I sort of felt myself in the middle of it, between the Buffin Overend axis and the Ian Mick axis, which was more American-oriented. I felt in the middle because I hadn't been there from the beginning anyway, but there was definitely a divided band there, and it didn't take long to fall apart".

I'm afraid I never felt that a Mott without Hunter had much chance... "It didn't really work out. None of us were really great songwriters and the main problem was we were getting singers in and trying to force them into an Ian Hunter shaped hole, which is not a wise thing to do. So obviously, Nigel Benjamin never felt very comfortable in the role. We never



we knew we were wasting our time playing him these tapes..He tactfully pointed that out to us, and I think we also wasted our time talking to Zappa, because it's a bit like talking to a headmaster, didn't really feel right. Then, funnily enough, Medicine Head split up - I'd known John Fiddler for a couple of years, and he asked me to do Medicine Head's farewell tour - he just fancied having me there on keyboard, and we got on very well. It was great fun, and suddenly, I thought 'Blimy, this was meant to happen!'. We were looking for a singer, and there he was, so I put it to him, and he agreed to join quite quickly".

The band, by the way, changed their name to the British Lions (by this time, apart from Morgan on keyboards and Fiddler on vocals, the band consisted of the original Hoopling rhythm section of

Overend Watts on bass and Buffin on drums, plus Ray Major, Ronson's replacement if you like, on lead guitar), and made an album for RSO in America. Mercury here. However, it didn't go platinum (although it did make the American charts for a while), and RSO turned down the follow up LP, which they commissioned but rejected. It was recorded in the dying months of 1978, which is where the story begins to change. There will now be a short intermission of several months. Sales staff will visit all parts of the theatre.

Enter right the dashing Iain McNay, vinyl mogul extraordinaire and the man behind, in front of and on both sides of Cherry Red Records. But for the moment, he is silent. What happened, Morgan, to interest you in your current career as a patron instigator of unconventional music? "It was always there, even when I was at school. I had a lot of lucky breaks which got me into those bands from the Love Affair onwards, and I enjoyed the lifestyle and learnt a tremendous amount from it. But I must admit that I did keep my experimental things on my own personal fringe - I was doing little things like bits of music for theatre and films, and it just finally came to the crunch on the demise of the British Lions, which was full of so much rubbish that I decided that I would refuse to work that way any more, much as I enjoyed certain aspects of it. Instead, I decided to make what had originally been a hobby - and I suppose I kept it as a hobby because I felt it was purer that way - into my main activity, and it seems to be going very well.

another likely looking ad, which turned out to be Mott the Hoople, who I'd only ever seen once, many years before, probably 1969. They played Crook's Ferry Inn and just thought it was terrible, a real row...but I was going through an arty phase at the time, and didn't like that sort of thing. Anyway, I went to the audition, and they seemed a very nice bunch of chaps, so I joined and found myself on a plane to America. That was in April '73". Were you the immediate replacement for Verden Allen? "I think there'd been a short gap, maybe six months, when they'd done some gigs as a four piece. Ian Hunter played keyboards anyway, but they got me in on keyboards when Ian decided to play guitar, and really got out there as a frontman. I was on the album called 'The Hoople', and after that, it was the live album, then Ian Hunter left, and Mott started changing personnel. We'd already changed a bit, of course, when Mick Ralphs left and Ariel Bender joined, but Bender left and Mick Ronson joined and that was the kiss of death - Mick and Ian went off, we got another singer in, shortened the name to Mott, did two albums and gradually fell apart".

You mention that Ronson joining was the kiss of death. Was he that much of an influence. I'd have thought that, with great respect to him, Ariel Bender wasn't exactly the right guitarist for Mott... "Well, that depends how you look at it. Bender was amazing on stage, and became quite a well

really gave him a chance to do what he wanted - well, we gave him some chances and then flattened him when he came up with something, because we really couldn't get into what he was doing. So there again was a division in the band which never really closed - it was sort of doomed. When Mott fell apart, nothing happened for quite some time - we did try out a few singers, and went through a dreadful process of auditioning once again. We even got to the stage of almost getting in a singer who was a friend of Overend's. We made some demos together, and we even approached Frank Zappa to produce us at that point. He was over here playing, and we went to the Dorchester to have tea with him, but really, as we were sitting there talking to him,

It's been much more rewarding".

The paths which led to Morgan's current link up with Cherry Red are fascinating. Morgan: "They got in touch with me initially, because they'd heard about the second Morgan group album through a letter, I think, which had been published in 'Melody Maker'. Someone had written in who owned the first album, and had heard that a second one existed. Cherry Red contacted me, and eventually they put out that album". It's called 'The Sleeper Wakes', and you can still get it on Cherry Red, although it comes as something of a surprise that they should want to release what is, in all honesty, a remarkably obscure LP for which little public demand could be predicted. "Possibly I don't know, but I didn't question it, obviously. I was just pleased that they were getting it out, and they were very positive about it - that's one thing I get from them, a very positive enthusiasm all the time. Obviously they weren't worried about having to do something earth shattering with their first release, and I think maybe they were aware that it wouldn't sell in earth-shattering quantities, but it would be their first stepping stone, fairly modest first release so that the company could learn the ropes".

Before too long, interested parties will be able to purchase another Cherry Red from the Vaults' special, the one and only album recorded by Bodast, among whose constituents are Steve Howe, well pre-Yes, who had just emerged from the ruins of the excellent Tomorrow (of 'My White Bicycle' fame, and who made one of the best ever British LPs of psychedelia) along with another ex-Tomorrow man, Keith West (yes, the 'Teenage Opera' bloke). Back to Morgan's disinterred LP - "Cherry Red covered their costs with that, although they didn't sell a vast amount, so that when I played them my 'Hybrid Kids' ideas, they went for it straight away, partly because they knew it would cost virtually nothing to make. This is the beauty of it, you see - you can cut your budget to the bone, as I have, then you can take risks and do things most people wouldn't dare to do. They think 'I've got to sell x thousand copies'. 'Hybrid Kids' cost "25 to make, and that was the cost of the tape; so obviously Cherry Red were prepared to finance that. That's one of the reasons why working the way I am can be rewarding - in a financial sense, it's much more realistic. In the old days, we used to spend thirty or forty grand making an album, so we'd have to sell at least 100,000 to break even, and if you sold any more, most of that money went into financing tours, so I never really saw that much money, although vast amounts were bandied about on paper. If I sell a few thousand copies of 'Hybrid Kids', as I have done, then I'm quids in, and I can keep ticking over, and it's much more realistic".

Shortly after 'Hybrid Kids' was released, Morgan appeared on the

radio, claiming that the album was the work of a number of unknown acts which he had discovered. The passing of time has brought to light the fact that this was an utter lie... "Yeah, it's mostly just me. What happened was that I decided to do a solo album, and everyone I told about it said 'Oh, a keyboard album, is it?', and I felt I didn't want to fall into the Rick Wakeman trap, so I decided to do it this way, to create this imaginary sampler. It was great going on the radio telling a pack of lies and having people believe it. I suppose I'd better be truthful now - it was nearly all me, because I was throwing off the typecasting from which I'd been suffering".

But aren't you going to get typecasted as a weirdo because of

idea was to take a specific kind of song and another specific style of music, put the two together, and see what the combination produced, so it really wasn't important what the original song was, it could have been anything".

You say it's nearly all you - so who else is on the record? "Various anonymous drummers, things like that, because drums is one thing I can't play, so what I do is either steal drums from records - I find a piece of a record where there's only drums playing and make a tape loop of that - or else I talk to friendly recording engineers, and ask them if they've had good drummers in lately, and if they have, I ask for a tape of just the drum track and use that. What led up to the 'Hybrid Kids' project



your recent work? "Well, that's a much wider cast in which to be typed, isn't it? It gives you a lot more freedom. I'm interested in not being taken totally seriously all the time, and if you listen to the first Pipe album, which is me and Lol Coxhill (we'll get to that in a moment, dear readers) it's very minimal album, very unemotional. If you listen to that, and then you listen to 'Hybrid Kids', they're very different things, and there's a lot of different sides to what I want to do. I'm intending to give all this free rein now".

Was there a particular basis on which you chose the songs you were going to mutate? "It was pretty random, really - I didn't think about it much at all. Some of the songs I liked, some I hated. The

was that I'd been getting freelance work after the British Lions collapsed, and I'd enjoyed the variety of it. I did an album and a tour with John Otway" (the LP was 'Where Did I Go Right?') "as soon as the Lions split, and I did some work with Neil Innes, his TV series and a tour, various bits and pieces. I was fairly busy, and then I decided, because I'd had a four track recorder at home for some time, that I'd try to make an album. I'd been doing lots of demos and experiments and things, and people had said that the sound quality was very good, so I decided to do 'Hybrid Kids'".

But surely it would have been simpler to make a conventional keyboard album, which would have been instantly more acceptable to

Cherry Red? "I don't know - I've never really thought of myself as a keyboard player in the virtuoso sense. If there's any influence on my playing, it's the kind of attitude which rhythm guitarists have. For example, I always liked Steve Cropper and Wilko Johnson, people like that, they were the ones that really excited me. I'd gone way past that phase of being influenced by Keith Emerson - that happened back in the Morgan group days - and also Mott the Hoople had knocked that out of me anyway, for which I thank Ian Hunter. So I had no real desire to do a keyboard album, plus I was mucking about on guitar and bass, and enjoying that a lot more, which I still do now. I like playing instruments I'm not particularly good at, and people seemed to like my demos, so I thought I'd pursue that direction

It's like the anonymous drummers - you have to be aware of what your limitations are in terms of equipment, talent and money, and just work within them, rather than desperately trying to break out, and wishing for more. Also, I like working in this way, because the idea is to be like a sort of artist, who can go into his flat and close his door, and come out three weeks later with something that's all his own work. I thought 'Why can't a musician do that, without relying on any other musicians or engineers or anyone?', so I'm prepared to accept the slight technical shortcomings, because it's just a great way to work".

Did you get any reaction from the people whose better known recordings you had covered? "My idea was to send copies of this to every one of the original artists, but I couldn't trace Perry Como, unfortunately... Kate Bush never replied, even though I met her at some point, and reminded her to listen to the tape. I got a nice telegram from Glen Matlock about the Sex Pistols track - he was really knocked out with the Punky and Perky song, and he said 'Maybe this is true rock'n'roll'. The guy who wrote 'Save Your Kisses For Me' wrote back and said why didn't I cover 'Figaro', or whatever it was. I'm still working on getting replies from the other original artists".

What was the public reaction to 'Hybrid Kids'? "Very mixed - some people said it was a comedy album which is only worth listening to once, and that was disappointing, because I feel they can't have listened much. Then there were people who said 'Oh, this is Dada, this is Marcel Duchamp revisited', and they got into it in a really arty way. I thought 'Great! Why not?', but it was a very mixed reaction". If you're reading this and haven't heard the album, you'll maybe gather that it's a selection of well known tracks which are mutated sometimes beyond apparent recognition. My fave is an alarming 'Wuthering Heights' by the so called Jah Wurzel, seemingly a Somerset dub exponent. But understand - this isn't just a comedy album, and I've found new things emerging each time I've listened...

# MARTIN ATKINS

My first contact with this iridescent chappie came through a surprisingly foul banana hurled into my face (debut gig doncha know) as a mock battle was fought on the playing fields of Chiswick. He was wearing a shirt heavily featuring parrots. The second (this) time our paths cross he wore a nice conservative jumper, content to let words speak louder than action.

This is the man behind Brian Brain, and 'behind' John Lydon. He began by "poncing about in army boots and flares", became a sleeper in our proud Civil Service and is even now guzzling lager. A prime target for the 'dour humour' and 'self-effacing' remarks.

He is Martin Atkins ... and he is mumbling about auditions.

MA. I tell you, it used to be great y'know. I used to go to two auditions a week. I was seeing a girl from Caterham who had a mini-van and she used to drop the kit around, and I wasn't getting any excitement from the gigs we were doing ...

ZZ. What band was this?

MA. A group from up North called The Mynd, second in a Melody Maker contest or something, and after I joined nothing happened. So I said "I'm going down to London, I'm sick of all this bollox" ... I'd just missed, when John left the Pistols, a tiny ad in Melody Maker "drummer required for group with rather well known singer". I had to go back the next day, but ... everytime the job came up.

ZZ. How many times?

MA. About three times, I got to know Jeanette's mother. Dummo how I got all the numbers. Used to work as a clerical officer in Trafalgar Square. I used to ring all round the country. First time I got to speak to Keith he said "oh, come down the Townhouse". I didn't know what it was, bowled in ... fucking studio the size of a football field. Did 'Bad Baby'; the last track to go on Metal Box, the tapes went to Virgin the next day; that was it. That's all we did for about 3 months.

ZZ. How'd you get by?

MA. That's the whole reason I started the Brian Brain thing cos with PIL I was doing about one hours work, we did one Peel session, two gigs in Paris, Whistle Test, and rehearsed with Wobble for two days, possibly about three hours ... y'know, half an hour, then down the boozier. I'd written stuff before PIL, started the album before we went to America, finished it when we got back, and here we are. Want a lager?

ZZ. No thanks, trying to get off the stuff.

MA. I should as well really, I see lager as the step between vodka and tee-total.

ZZ. What about America, do you see them as 'viable economic places' or did you just wanna 'play'?

MA. It's the best time I ever had.

Sometimes we'd do two shows a night. I'd wake up with these great big stars and you're stuck to the sheets with congealed blood from the night before, because we get a bit rowdy. It's a helluva lot better than staying in or going down the Greyhound or whatever.

ZZ. How do Americans react to this action, do they misinterpret it as serious violence.

MA. Well sometimes it was. I unwittingly dragged a journalist on stage and made a complete arse of him, dragged him up on stage and punched him in the kidneys cos he wouldn't sing. He was shaking like a leaf when he came to interview us. Americans are open minded. It's not "It is two tone, is it punk, is it fashionable?" It's just "do I or don't I like it?" which is what should be happening here. To be honest this country makes me fucking sick. The whole bloody country, all waiting for one of the music papers to say "Here it is! Everybody's into rabbit jelly moulds" ... oh, I'll go and do it!

ZZ. Yeah, but it's a point of contention. It's difficult to say. I really appreciate it when we get a lot of people down the front, jumping around, who we can have a tussle with: that makes a gig. I don't like it when we're appreciated by the people that I consider brainless. It should be easy for you to understand. People are slavishly following a journalistic whim, if they give you a good reaction it's fucking worthless.

ZZ. What about your current drumming activities with PIL?

MA. I don't see myself as a drummer anymore so far as Brian Brain stuff goes, its percussion. I know that sounds really poxy, and with Brian Brain I do a bit of keyboard and use the studio at the start of a song instead of the end. Not writing a song, playing it for six months then going in the studio. We go in and start off with an idea and use the whole studio to shape a song, which is the way it should be, I think.

What I've been doing with the new PIL album is ... I've done three tracks, co-written with John and Keith, but it's not drums. One track I've got a Mickey Mouse watch I got from Disneyland, we put it on a floor tom-tom to get the resonance, I liked it up, harmonised it in six different ways, mixed em all together ... I played drums to the clean recording of the watch, which was in perfect time, then we lost the clean recording, mixed the drums in with the other watches, recorded some backwards trumpet ... I got a trumpet what when you blow into it, it plays a little disc; a recording of a trumpet. Backwards piano, fire extinguisher, aerosol sprays! I don't like being called a 'drummer' anymore cos I'm a vocalist with Brian Brain and in the studio I play drums, keyboard, sing and produce and with PIL I do lots of different

things so it's unfair to call me a drummer.

ZZ. What do you view as the most important, or don't you?

MA. I don't. When I went to America with Bobby and Pete that was the most important thing. Different things take precedent at different times.

ZZ. If it was just PIL, wouldn't the lack of live action piss you off?

MA. Yeah, I used to play six nights a week in the North of England, sometimes we'd do a working man's club then go on to a night club so we'd be doing nine gigs, and I was working as well, I'm used to hard work. The Brian Brain isn't hardwork, the only reason it's difficult is because there's so much alcohol flowing around and you just burn yourself out. It's only 32 minutes, but it's not hard work.

ZZ. Ever done a gig completely dry?

MA. Yeah, two or three times. I mean, I'm not totally dependent on alcohol at all ... (laughs) ... but yeah, I didn't notice any difference. You can fall from a great height when you're drunk and not hurt yourself because you're like jelly ... take you home in a bucket. When I've had a couple of drinks I don't feel the pain, and you don't feel "Hello ... you could be in for a broken leg here, this is a bit unwise". You just do it, and you wake up with the bruises the next day.

ZZ. What about when you see bands, and you're part of the audience?

MA. I'll tell you. I just hate going to see bands. I just can't stand it. There's no band that excites me any more. See, I got a lot of work to do cos I manage Brian Brain, quite frankly I'd rather sit in and watch telly than drag myself out to some poxy club. Em... it's difficult to say it without being totally pompous, conceited shit of the year but I like a lot of the clubs in America, I get a lot of excitement from being on stage and recording, and going out to see a band just doesn't compare.

ZZ. Do you analyse what you do on stage?

MA. I think about what I do on stage. Sometimes it frightens me.

ZZ. The physical stuff?

MA. Yeah, cos it's not strictly me. I'm not physical, not like crazy, mad idiotic ... it's just there. It's odd.

ZZ. Hows the intervals of Brian Brain, any criticisms?

MA. There's not a lot of criticism at the moment. We criticise things outside the studio a lot like ... Well people's mannerisms and pull people apart. It's very cruel, a group situation is extremely cruel. It's like, if there's five people in a group, at any one point it's always four into one, there's always the shit of the band, it changes but there's always a shit in the band".

**"I'd wake up with these great big scars and you're stuck to the sheets with congealed blood."**

**Shakespeares Son**

PHOTO: SIMON REEVES



## NUNEATONS' WILD BOY OF POP



They say " SANDINISTA " is 2½ hours of self indulgent sprawl, enjoyable for nobody except the musicians involved. Thats what they say..... A recent Saturday afternoon after release bending the ears to the 36 new CLASH tracks - with a depressing let down half expected - proved to be a severely uplifting experience. However - the mind boggled - 2½ hours of assorted musics all with rhythm in ccommon. All this music for six quid ! and only about ten minutes of it could be considered a bit surplus. Reggae, Calypso, Rock- a - billy, Jazz and much funk assimilated and spewed out in a new sound of the CLASH at play. The are still capable of intense drama " Somebody got murdered" but the mood is lighter more celebratory but still with biting sentiments.

You don't have to sit through it all in one go, choose a mood. I'd sooner have three albums than one or two. They are only pushing it a bit on things like the disconnected racket of " Mensforth Hill " or the novelty songs. This L.P. is the result of the CLASH's 1980. The CLASH are go!!

P.S. This review was phoned from the top of my head as I basked in a hotel in Newcastle away from home. This was a message I had to break my exile for. KRIS NEEDS.

KRIS NEEDS ZIGZAG's Editor is currently on tour with Basement 5 so MICK MERCER has been helping out on this issue but KRIS will be back for February so look out for a bumper full issue of exciting goodies next month.....

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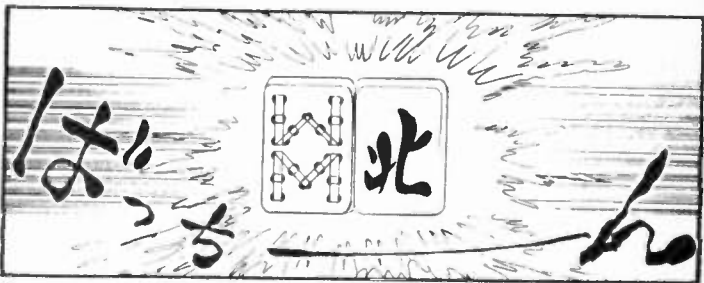
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## Review 'Play' by Magazine (Virgin V2184)

(The story so far: balding Mancunian whizz-kid Howard Devoto has joined forces with four suitably talented chums to form a 'new wave' recording group called Magazine. They've released three albums to varying degrees of critical acclaim, but now one of their number, ace guitarist John McGoolie, has walked out. Magazine have located a replacement in the person of former Ultravox 'axeman' Robin Simon, and to introduce him to their fans, they've put out a live LP called 'Play'. Now read on...)

If nothing else, 'Play' proves that Magazine are a fully integrated musical unit rather than just Howard Devoto plus backing group. With Robin Simon in the lineup, they still sound much the same as they did before: tight and functional, with a lush (but never self-indulgent) surface veneer.

'Play' features ten trax, and with the exception of '20 Years Ago', they're all pretty good. 'Gimme Everything', 'Song From Under The Floorboards' and 'Permafrost' are all great - a veritable holy trinity of musical excellence. 'Parade' and 'Definitive Gaze' are of a similarly high standard, and both 'Model Worker' and 'Because You're frightened' sound better than they did on the 'Soap' album - stronger and more coherent. I especially like the final verse of 'Worker': "I'm not too worried by the enemy/I know that Reagan will look after me". Wish I shared your confidence, Howie...

'The Light Pours Out Of Me' is basically okay, but it suffers through being partly sung in French. This adds nothing to the song and it also a little pretentious - to which Howard would probably say, "Pretentious? Moi?" (old John Cleese joke).

Finally, 'Play' is the fourth Magazine LP, and it's every bit as sophisticated and exciting as the other three. And yes, it's an album with real moral fibre. (The hype pours out of me...)

Ian Blake

**NATIONAL YOUTH JAZZ ORCHESTRA "The Sherwood Forest Suite"** NYRO Records  
Hells apoppin and the kids are turning green, I never expected this in my Christmas stocking and sure enough it come in the post (I nearly came in my pants!) All manner of delicious tunes, so smooth and odour free you can take your pick from any one of many and just drift away. Seventeen cunningly worked out tracks that tell the emotive story of Robin and all his merry men. How does "All Clad in Lincoln Green" grab you?, or "Mrs A'Dale's Diary". What ever you want it's here alright (mate). Music by the kids for the kids. What Pursey tried for but failed to attain. Musically superb and entertaining it deserves to be a hit.

Mick Mercer

## "Beyond The Groove" (101 Records)

Apparently the third in what is to be a never-ending series of ops at a generous value for money, dating from that small yet cosy hostelry, the 101 Club, Clapham's finest.

I'll admit I missed the second album, but find this one very much in keeping with the first offering. A great variety of music lays waiting for you sampling therein and despite the difference it all works extremely well. The tracks are listenable, a great production job covers all and no complaints come to mind. At the price these albums arise in the shops you could well afford to buy it just for half the sterf, wot wot?

Stars of this particular bunch are God's Toys with "I love the sound of My Own Voice", Shrink and his classic "The Doll", Flatbackers "Pumping Iron" and Modern Man's "All the little idiots, but feel not insulted lesser offerings for this is but my opinion. The other bands here are The Fix, The Mechanics, R.P.M., Endgames, Electric Eels, Thane, Naughty Culture, Thane and John Dummer & Helen April.

The sleeve notes say it all really... "Exciting new tracks from the latest bands coming up through the club scene". The 101ers (good name for a band, that) are doing us a favour. Unplug the jukebox, blah, blah, blah.

Mick Mercer

## "The Decline of Western Civilization" (Slash Records)

This, Believe it or not, is the soundtrack from an American punk movie concerning the rebellion that exists amongst the sun and surf of the beach resorts. The cover is pretty nifty and looks like a thirty's epic but the music leaves much to be desired. Just as The U.K. Subs are the living embodiment of a 'punk' stereotypes so the Americans take it one step further, get it totally wrong and fail to realise their error. To them it is nothing more than rock n'roll. The thought of rebellion or even the slightest misdemeanour is miles away. There's no threat of imminent riot. There's no real threat of anything.

I remember The Banana Splits quite well, but I didn't expect them to have such an influence over teenage life in the state. So corny and boring are the notes and lyrics it makes you laugh long and loud. (Clint ...), but hold on there boy, for could I not have entirely the wrong idea? It could be that whilst they are heard berating the crowds with 'Go piss up a rope', 'Eat My fuck asshole' (!) and 'As dumb as you are even you will remember this. If there's any A & R people in the audience, go die' they feel they endanger the very short al core of society. Could be true I suppose, but on the whole it just seems to be a load of crap. Musically its all pretty basic and forgettable with only X and Catholic Discipline sounding vaguely attractive, whilst Black Flag Germs, Fear, Circle Jerks and The Alice Bag Band (I kid you not) are uninspired and treacherous.

It comes via a 'Roxy Club' album package where there's conversation, of sorts, between the songs (of sorts) but this time it is the bands that speak. They are being asked to justify their existence and all the doped out cretins can mouth is last year's anecdotes.. 'I'm a total rebel I'm a rebel against everything'. That was Michael (X-head) speaking, and this is Kenny 'I swear to god, I hate cops to the max' Frightening stuff kids!

It's a sadly unadventurous piece of slime only vindicated by Bessy's lyrics and X's energetic rumblings. Beyond that there is nothing going on at all. AVOID.

Mick Mercer

## "3R4" G. LEWIS: B.C. GILBERT (4AD)

Art with the Capital F. Incoherent metallic musing. Drone, drone, drone. No Doubt the wire-men can defend it with the aid of great reference books. Don't call us ....

## "PAULINE MURRAY AND THE INVISIBLE GIRLS" (Illusive)

One of the year's best. Pauline's voice more discernible than before: a real bonus. The music covers many different styles ranging from the older Penetration Sound ("When Will We Learn") to newer unexplored territory ("Drummer Boy") and a selection of songs that sound a mite uncertain "Sympathy" sounds like Steely Dan and "Time Slipping" with its session band could be anyone really.

Despite the occasional inconsistency it remains a masterly achievement. Smart cover too.

Mick Mercer

## UNITS "DIGITAL STIMULATION" and "415 MUSIC" (both 415 Records)

415 stands for "a disturbance of the Peace" in American police speak. This apparently is what this band is attempting to do, in their naughty subversive way. No chance!

The American idea of 'New Wave' is no more than The Cars and Tom Petty which makes themajority of "415 Music" sound extremely dull. Exceptions to the rule are The Donuts (breezy pop), Symptons (high-pitched 999), The Offs (Vrackherjack reggae) and the Vips (not unlike Temporary Title).

The Units are in another class altogether. A drum and keyboards combination I can't imagine America claspimg them to her silicon bosom. If English electricians could only be this individualistic and inspiring the world would be a better place.

At about six quid an import ignore "415" and grab "Digital Stimulation" at the earliest opportunity.

Mick Mercer

## PINPOINT

As much as I think that Killing Joke are a good band to be reckoned with, I can't help thinking that the likes of Pinpoint were pointing in this particular direction over a year ago.

The band don't really like playing live gigs and would rather gain some sort of success with their recording first. When I spoke to the band earlier this year, bassist/vocalist, Dave told me that the band needed to clear out the deadwood - meaning their old material. This the band have done and their album has been ready to be released for some time now.

The production honours go to Martin Rushent, who seems to crop up in nearly every interview these days. His work on tracks like "Third State" and "Drowning in the wave of life" is just right for Pinpoint who comprise Dave (bass/vocals), Arturo (guitar/vocals), Hugh (drums) and Ian (keyboards) and their guest, Joe Sax (from The Decorators) playing saxophone on two tracks.

The album is very varied and a thunderous rocker like "Third State" fits in well alongside atmospheric peices such as the Psycho-Furs like "Family Life" and the excellent "Drowning in the wave of life" with its count in start which is reminiscent of Roxy Music when playing "Midnight Hour". The build up at the end of "Third State" equals some of the best of Roxy Music, themselves. "Listen to the snow" features Daves vocals at their very best and Ian's keyboard playing is equally good and "Blind Eyes" is a mad rush rocker.

It's a shame that Pinpoint seem to have retired from playing live, but this album is more than enough to keep their long waiting fans happy.

Alan Anger

## "A Trip To The Dentist" Various fishermen. (Skelton Records)

Ye gods its nought but £1.99 and that can't be bad. Well obviously it could be if all goods offered werer direbollockal. Sighs of relief, a fab album with good bad and inbetween, a wonderful introduction to the world of Skeleton Records who regularly pump out gratifying discs, most notably the

efforts of Attempted Moustache (their singer was in jail for a while, resulting in descriptions of "an arresting band as any witness will testify"... zzz)

This band crops with the excellent "No way out", but the favoured persons are Luminous Beings who scoop three tracks to their rumbustuous selves, although (moan moan) I think The Relations would have benefited more from mass coverage. Their "Don't Hurry, Don't Worry" is easily the best thing here. The Walking Boys and Afraid of Mice both get two tracks and are o.k. if slightly ordinaire, and the other trax come from Geisha Girls, The Stop Outs, Zorkie Twins (an amusing little ditty), Upsets and Windows. Its a varied bunch, a mixed bag, blah, blah, BLAH, but for the non existent price well worth investigating.

Mick Mercer

## THE MODERNAIRES "Way of Living" (Illuminated Records)

A peculiar stuff this indeed. Coincidentally one of the IKF co-op which I've been investigating the same day that two of the band came in and deposited this objet d'art. Operating under the brief listening capacity of which album reviews are done (time limitations y'know) I don't know what to make of it, in fact all I can really resort to is a rather feeble comparison. Ludus. As with that band the music rises, swirls and twists the night away in a distinctly independent manner. The musicianship is superb each track has a long life; a real bonus these days.

High pitch vocals, drumming a la splendeur and some intoxicating sax work are but some of the highlights the listener can expect.

With only a handful of crapping days afore Yuletide this is a late entry for one of the best albums of the year. Listen to it, but give it more than one hearing.

Immaculate

Mick Mercer

## M "THE OFFICIAL SECRETS" (MCA)

Hells teeth, this looks important! If the "Rocking Russians" cover with its suggestion that M's humour is of the enigmatic devious kind doesn't get you, then the press release does. Apparently it is to be regarded as a work of art, an album to open doors (and so it goes on).

M, with the suits, neatness and I.D. cards, have always had an air of intelligence about them but to suggest this equals Darwin's theories in terms of social significance (slight exaggeration) is preposterous.

It's an album of highly polished muzak bordering on pop. Everything covered has been done better in previous times. All their waffling the Official Secrets Act is feeble when compared to Spermatic Chords song of the same name ("Offical Secrets make the country tick, Official Secrets make me fucking sick") Clever ideas, clever production. Ultimately disposable.

Mick Mercer

## BAUHAUS "IN THE FLAT FIELD" (4 AD)

This is IT. THE one. The Album of 1980 without a doubt. Starkly efficient in provoking voyeuristic intrigue. Onstage Bauhaus consistently prove themselves equally macabre in the studio.

The music has its own pulse-beat, a pulse that grips you. The guitars (both) explore the many fields available to them, whilst the drummer dazzles if you view him objectively.

But, naturally, as with all great bands, a voice shines through. The music and voice equal each other in terms of mixture but Murphy and his ripped backside is ghoulish entertainment personified.

"Double Dare", "A God In an Alcove", "The Spy in the Cab", "Stigmata Martyr" and "Nerves" are overwhelming: as good as anything you could want.

No track is even remotely disappointing which these days is an unlikely as a brain cell halucinating within a Cockney Rejects' audience.

The music chills and thrills. We need it!

Mick Mercer



The BBC studios in Maida Vale (W. London) have a massive underground complex, mainly for the recoding of light and classical music: it was built to cope with 30-piece orchestras and more.

Studio 5 is less typical of the subterranean: it's smaller, humbler and visited by rock bands. The Au Pairs are in there recording a shortened version of their current single 'It's Obvious' for Radio 1's Andy Peebles show.

The band have got this little slot partly thanks to Human Records with whom they've done a one record deal. The relationship may continue depending on how 'It's Obvious' does. The Slits have also recently signed to Human: behind the label are the kind of people who've made a name for themselves running the Bonaparte chain of shops or inventing Dollar for RSO.

The session goes well for the Au Pairs. 'It's Obvious' has their customary drive, but also introduces a greater degree of warmth and irony. Vocalist and guitarist Leslie sings around the song rather than through it: it's almost sly, this manufactured purposeful 'softening', and makes the Au Pairs even more of a force.

The session nearly doesn't go well. The engineer, who's worked with the band before for a Peel show, may be sympathetic enough, but the producer has a different way of operating. In a hundred little ways he lets the Au Pairs know that they're just another band with whom he has to work - nothing else. His commitment and mind are elsewhere: he worries about the time, shoos away a photographer and gets back to his reading matter, a brochure advertising domestic hardware. He seems particularly interested in wood-burning stoves: maybe all BBC salaried staff should have one in their home.

The home: this is the place the Au Pairs like to make music about, music like 'Diet', the B side of 'It's Obvious', which spikes cosiness

"That's why we've got funkier. We're not interested in developing in devastatingly technical directions, because it's how you arrange your stuff that counts. A lot of bands just don't know how: after an intro they bring all their instruments in and that's it for the rest of the number. People just don't know when to stop; it's often a question of what you leave out. It can be good to drop the guitar and just have bass and drums: nothing can beat that sound".

The Stones' Watts and Wyman used to use this ploy to great effect and a lot of bands have now re-discovered it via reggae and dub. When the Au Pairs play 'It's Obvious' live, it has a great taut bass and drums break. It's this kind of drama which the band has yet to full capture on vinyl. Pete the drummer thinks that getting the most out of the studio is something which only comes with time.

It's a different art in there, almost the ability to make things sound bad: like an out-of-tune guitar solo can be turned into four guitars playing at once. You can get overawed by that kind of thing, but the idea is to go in there and not let the producer or engineer get in your way. There are bands who go in, play their bit and then somebody else takes over: I don't understand that, because it's your piece of music".

The Au Pairs will always be able to say: We did it our way. This quiet determination to be self-determining has scared off a lot of the bigger labels who've been interested in the band. The insistence on democracy isn't just something they parade in interview - cans of lager talking... The Au Pairs want to change the rules of the game and refuse to be impressed by the music business. Friendly as they might be, they aren't going to start smiling just because some record company VIP walks into the room, a cue for most bands - 'radical' ones, too - to slip into

# the AU PAIRS

and questions the roles which society prefers that woman (as passive wives and mothers) and men (as dominating husbands and breadwinners) should live out. "He works the car/She the sink/She's not here 'To think".

I talked to the Au Pairs individually, between snatches of recodings, in the studio or outside in the corridor or in the canteen. Leslie stressed that the uneasy way in which their music stabs at consciousness grown complacent by dint of everyday routine, cannot be separated from the danceable, even poppy, arrangement of the songs. The only way to move an audience with new ideas is by making the body move first - and last.

grins and slide into self-conscious banter (horseplay is optional).

For a band who've been together two years, two singles is a rather minimal output; but Pete sees this as an advantage. "I'm glad we haven't put four or five singles out, because things have built up and up. A lot of bands who started when we did have put that many out, and their time seems to have gone. We've built up especially in London, so that when we supported the B 52s a lot of people there had seen us at smaller gigs: it's more personal that way, not like some band you go to see because you've read about them and they're meant to be the next big thing. I'd like to think we haven't been hyped by radio and press and

time they do some January gigs in New York.

One new song which has entered the repertoire over the past four months is 'Armagh'. Leslie corrects any notion that it's some definitive statement about Northern Ireland. The Au Pairs have a dislike of generalities: their songs always start from the concrete and specific, in this case the plight of the Republican female prisoners in Armagh jail.

Leslie: "People seem oblivious of the conditions. Women have gone in there pregnant, had their babies under terrible conditions and then had them instantly taken away from them. They get one sanitary towel a month. It's depressing, degrading - a form of torture. You don't have to be sitting there having your toenails pulled out for it to count as torture."

The Au Pairs played in Belfast earlier this year and found the experience shattering as well as instructive. As Pete describes it: "I was amazed by Belfast and find it difficult to talk about. I was shicked by people buying you a drink and telling you stories of children run over by tanks. They might have got used to it and I freaked out. Being over there changed my attitude, seeing what it's like to have an army in your town and be shot at by them. I got to hate the English army. I can understand the need for the IRA; without that a lot of people would have nothing. I'm not saying I agree with things like pub bombings, but it's necessary for them to have some form of organisation".

Most of the Au Pairs songs don't deal with political situations as directly as 'Armagh' does. The band only see themselves as political in so far as all music has political implications. Leslie cites the example of Racey who, whether they intend it or not, write songs which perpetuate the stereotype of woman as mindless sex-objects. In a way the Au Pairs deal with the

PHOTOS: SIMON REEVES



fat men with cigars. I'd rather work it up through gigging".

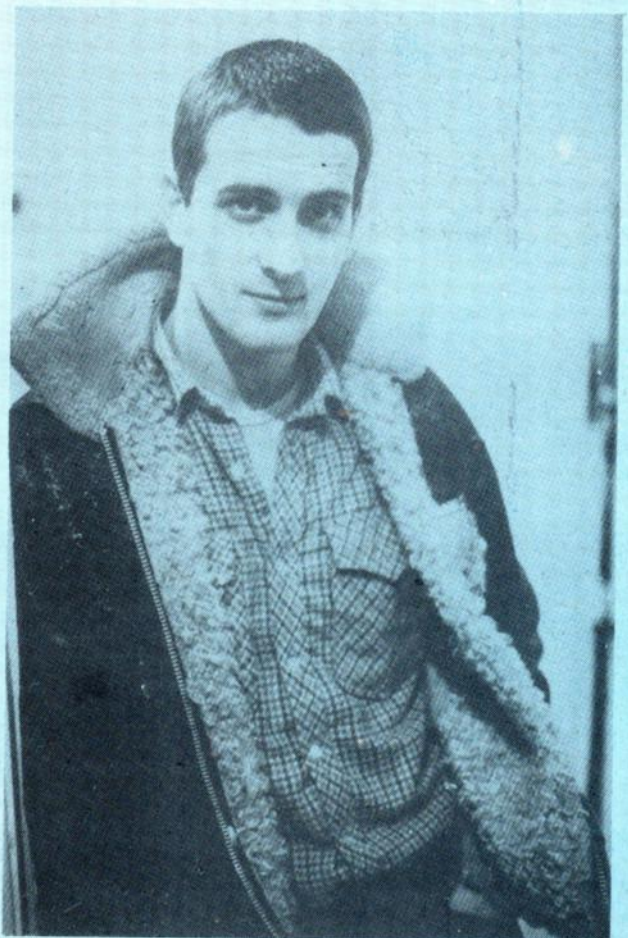
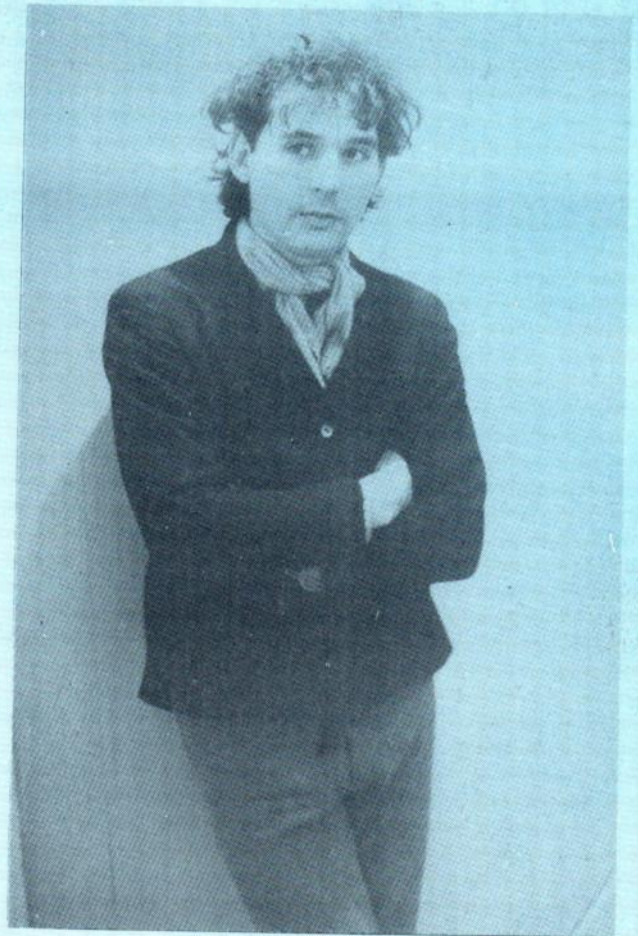
Guitarist and occasional vocalist Paul spoke along similar lines, while pointing out that the live policy has its dangers. "Sometimes it's difficult not to go through the motions. But now that we've got some new gear, we want to try some different sounds. We've started to improvise more, which brings some interest back into what you're doing. But even if our material changes, we want to stay a dance band, a good live act".

Bassist Jane told me that the Au Pairs have some definite ideas for new songs, which should be incorporated into their set by the

same boy-girl themes as Racey and other pop bands, but, as Leslie points out, the important thing isn't so much that they do so in a political or feminist way - she would reject these tags - but that they do it very differently to most chart fodder. The Au Pairs are less interested in political lines than different attitudes and angles. However, as Leslie says echoing the rest of the band, this interest is "pointless unless you can dance to it".

From their Birmingham base the Au Pairs want to make the beat go on. Because that's what they are: a modern beat group. In 1980 they turned themselves into one of THE live acts in town. And 1981?

Paul Tickell



# boring developments

## the photos

I call the Photos pop but its no insult. For me they are the best pop band around. Dollar in black leather with blood instead of syrup. To date they have only had a hit album. The singles have appeared momentarily, a few small chart placings and nothing else. Now they are prepared for another attack and are recording their new album. Out of the public eye for a while we decided to flush them out for talkies.

(Get on with it!)

The problem is there isn't a great deal to talk about. Only whats happened to them over the last few months and what the future holds. That hardly promises to grab anyone's attention but I tried god damn you I tried.

ZZ. So what have you been up to? Cos no one knows.

W.W. Cos it's a secret.

S. Hiding from the press.

W. We haven't done anything!

D. Had a holiday for three months

ZZ. In Evesham?

D. We've been doing really dull things.

S. Picking plums.

O. Toured Europe, did some songs and that's all.

D. That's it in a nutshell.

W. Europe was good. Amazing.

S. Except Belgium.

W. Belgium doesn't like anybody. My god!

ZZ. What's the average fan like out there?

W. Sort of foreign. Talk french.

ZZ. Did you do any t.v. out there? (At which the band suddenly dissolve into laughter!)

S. We did an amazing one in Belgium. Went out live and were totally ...

O. We had to rehearse to a record that jumped. Wendy knocked over half the scenery.

W. Camera went over my foot and that went out live. He was doing this really close up I was sitting down and the camera was getting closer and closer, I was leaning back and he went over me foot, and this was during a guitar solo right, so it shows how together they were, they weren't even on Steve, and I shouted "Get of me foot" and apparently it went out.

ZZ. When are you playing here again though.

O. We're doing a British tour, a European tour and an American tour straight off. We gotta get a single out first though.

S. One of the major points!

O. We're supposed to have had about ten singles released but they haven't done any which is why you haven't heard anything about us.

D. We go back to Evesham and write a load of songs, demo them and they pick out one, go

"Brilliant", and you record it and make the B-Side and they listen to it about fifty times for three months and they get bored with it, then you give me some new songs and they say "AAAh this one's better".

ZZ. So you're not happy with em then.

W. I think that's em (million year gap) .. true

S. But the album's going to be great.

ZZ. How many girls names are going to crop up this time. (Last time it was festooned with the entire guide to British females)??

W. Absolutely none.

D. There's one boys name crops up. That's Luke.

W. Oh that's right, from Fashion.

Known him for ages.

S. He pissed off to France.

ZZ. What's the personal situation between you and the record company?

S. It's alright, they're nice to us but they just can't make up their mind.

O. Too many bosses.

Oh enough of this rambling rubbish. Small talk stinks as the big B's say, let us talk of the naughty hype things took place over the last album.

ZZ. Do you have to look over your shoulders to see if detectives are following?

S. (talking about the NME scribe who filed the report of piracy on the high seas)

We're gonna kill him if we see him again.

W. Duff him.

ZZ. Oh yeah he was totally straight.

He said the editors sent me down.

He's given me two angles and one is Blondie clones and the other is album hype.

W. We thought it'd be a good chance to argue our points, and he sat there with the pause button down, so there's not much chance of you arguing is there? .. with me I don't think he had the bloody recorder working .. (and the conversation peters out)

O. (About Bob Geldorf). We left a recorded message for him in the studio.

ZZ. Wishing him well in his old age?

D. Bit more blunt than that. (First person to guess the message correctly wins a prize, o.k?)

ZZ. Yeah, well you obviously get on well with other bands.

W. We've never met him. Don't think we ever will now.

ZZ. Any thing special going out with the album this time.

O. We were thinking of giving out films this time.

ZZ. Have you thought of taking the piss out of the camera thing?

O. It was supposed to be front cover, our big come-back, but they didn't put it on really annoying.

ZZ. Any songs with deep meaning on the album?

All. (immediately) No!

ZZ. Any covers on the album?

W. Only the one on the outside of the record.

ZZ. Had this camera thing followed you abroad?

S. There was one Belgium kid said he wanted to talk to us so we said okay. "So what about these cameras

then?"

O. You just can't escape!

ZZ. Whens this album out then?

When are the next gigs.

D. February

O. That's when we start coming back.

W. Our big comeback!

D. It's good I think to keep out of the way for a bit. If you don't come back ... then you're FUCKED! (and with that he explodes into laughter).

Convinced that I was indeed dead I arranged another interview and switched the tape off at which point the swinehounds came out with a great little tale of when the three lads went out one night to do a bit of aerosol publicity and were stopped by a copper who naturally thought it was a case of urine extraction when he demanded names and had Eagles and Sparrow given to him. Turning to the smooth young drummer he gently stated "If you give me a name of a bird I'll hit you". Ollie Beak remained silent. Anyway they got done for £400 for damaging a grip bin and a grit wall. Six months suspended and I should think so too. I want a country where the walls can remain unmolested, free from the likes of these disgusting perverts Cut them down! Remove the finger joints and there'll be an end to it all. Bloody pop stars!

### Photos interview (Numero Deux)

ZZ. The albums been out a long time now, whats the 'revenge count' been like from the people you wrote about?

O. (mumbles a name we shall not print to save Steve' chance of living).

S. Shut up ... we use pseudonyms anyway, and all that childish behaviours behind us now, we're writing real songs now.

O. Yeah, forget that.

ZZ. Nothing eh, okay, you were on public transport the other day, don't you get mass adulation from "Flexipop" readers?

S. No-one recognises us.

O. Got stopped by a twelve year old busker the other night.

S. Ollie gave him some money.

O. He had a plastic cup with no money in, it was really sad.

ZZ. Right, you want to talk about the new album.

S. I think we'll come up with a better cover this time, that was one of your main gripes wasn't it? (laughing)

ZZ. Well, I'm not really bothered about the cover.

S. Yeah we'll have just the cover selling with nothing in the sleeve.

ZZ. Now come on .. what about the album?

S. Well, the last album was good for a first album but this time we're

gonna deliver the goods. The first one doesn't really stand up to the test of time but this one is going to be a monster!

ZZ. You've got this Tony Wisconsin, is he good?

O. Yeah he's just got a new toy. (A video set up with which he was filming anything that moved or was relatively uninteresting).

ZZ. Does he structure it so you don't waste time?

S. (laughing) When we get down to it we do a lot ... We've done the tedious part, all the backing tracks.

ZZ. The studio doesn't dim your energy at all?

S. Drummer gets a bit tired. Have to keep letting him have a rest. Its the second week when the magic starts.

ZZ. Do you have the ideas for all your songs set out when you come here?

S. We have our demos with our little production job on em, and Tony adds his own ideas.

ZZ. We'll have an accordion on this one?"

D. Well, yeah, its why he's the best. If he thinks an accordion would work he'd try it. Any things he tries is good.

ZZ. Has he come up with anything in particular.

D. He comes up with the ideas.

O. He's suggested strings on one number.

S. But they won't be the over the top bonanza strings.

D. When he uses strings its to double the sound of something, to give a certain sound rather than a simple string part.

... The atmosphere whilst very friendly didn't seem to be conjuring up magical tales of studio work, or anything to do with the new album whatsoever, mainly because this early on there's nothing to really discuss, they've only just started working on the thing so I move onto the supposedly penetrating question about how a 'pop' band sees its future development. Electronic bands and the like seem to have a basic system of furthering their abilities from one bleep to three as they go along. How do the bands like The Photos view their musical future.

ZZ. The serious one, how as a 'pop' band do you think you can develop, just come up with better songs?

O. No, more production. We mess around with stuff like echo boxes on stage, electronic drum gear

D. You get to the stage where you're very competent at one thing until you want to try something a little bit more difficult.

ZZ. Do you think you've got any musical limitations as such?



S. Musical limitations, no. What we're doing there is no limitation.  
O. Are you saying we're trapped.  
ZZ. No.

D. Yeah see we're not trapped. We haven't had three or four smash hit singles which have all sounded the same, like maybe T. Rex did, and the Police as well.

S. We've no set style we can do what we want

O. It doesn't matter with the album so much, its the singles. On an album you can go over the top however much you want to.

Again no-one seems to be into discussing too much and I can see their point. Here I am agreeing personally with them anyway and yet having to ask all these wanky questions to which there is no real answer, but then what do you ask a band who are basically in a take it or leave it category? Either people like the songs or they don't so I ask my most spellbinding and soul searching question thus far.

ZZ. If you could change one part of your body or your personality what would you change?

D. I'd change my legs, they're too short.

O. I'd change my nose.

S. I'd change my hair cut.

O. I wouldn't change my haircut. I'm proud of it. I had my haircut after Adam ant.

(On a different subject) What sort of bands do you get support you abroad?

D. One gig we had a band, a cross between a jazz band, an oompah band ...

O. They got together specially to support us, they had a bloke on washboard, this is true, bloke on sax, bass guitar and a drummer who couldn't drum.

S. All old and beerswilling, they're probably milking cows now.

O. We thought we were gonna get blown off again. When we arrived there was a big anti-fascist march and we're all in black leather jackets and they're asking "Are you fascists", it was really horrible.

D. It was funny, they had these steps where every now and again there seemed to be a battle and I was saying "Who's he up there?" cos there's a bloke up there and they're all saluting or whatever, there's this big crowd of people and no-one knows who he was! They're going "Dunno" hundreds of people all waving flags and they didn't know who he was!

ZZ. No public conveniences in Belgium.

D. That's a point, there isn't!

S. The bogs are horrible.

D. We did alright in Germany, cos CBS kept taking us out for meals. They put a party on for us.

O. We only did about two gigs.

S. Even gave us flowers

O. They don't know how big you are so they give you equal treatment.

And with that a studio man enters quietly and asks if the boys are ready and they are so we terminate our little chaueroo.

Wat can I say? The Photos will soon be back. Go and revel in them.

Mike Mercer

# STRAY CATS

Sitting in the knob-twiddler's room at West London's cosy Eden Studios are three highly-quiffed young men. Simon with his camera and me.

Outside, a typical November day is turning into a typical

November evening - dull, wet, windy and depressing. Inside, the atmosphere isn't much different as we lumber on, struggling to fill a C.90 with just what the world has been waiting for - yet ANOTHER Stray Cats interview....

In the six short months since the young Long Islanders with a passion for everything fifties packed themselves, their instruments and a good supply of

hairspray onto a Heathrow-bound Jumbo and found that elusive streak of gold in London's pavements, their snarling faces seem to have been splashed across every publication in the land except "The Beano" and "Stamp" magazine. To suggest we might be suffering from "Stray Cats O.D." is most definitely an understatement - we're

DROWNING in the buggers, but, it must be said, with very good reason because the Stray Cats (along with Killing Joke and The Young Marble Giants (R.I.P.)) have been the only new band worth crossing the street to see in 1980. So, with such a year of talent starvation behind them and not much to look forward to in 1981, it's no wonder the music papers have clutched at the nearest straw and are coming perilously close to thrashing newsworthiness out of the band whilst boring the Y-fronts off everyone in the process. And that is why, dear reader, my Stray Cats article has proved to be a bit of a problem - quite frankly, they've been interviewed to death, and there must be a limit to the number of times you want to read the same old junk about a band. Stuff like how the band have slogged it round the New York scene for a while, decided to change their name from the Tomcats, and took a chance by coming to Britain with their English manager, Tony Bidgood, and vague promises of gigs and a place to live, but ended up with neither, sleeping rough at first before a chance meeting with Keith Altham's assistant, Claudine Riley, led to them getting gigs a-go-go and the floor of the publicist's office to sleep on. (No doubt making very comfortable pillows out of piles of photos and press releases of Altham's clients, like The Police, Stones and The Who....) If you've heard all this as many times as me, you might already know that part two of this tale with the happy ending tells

how the major record companies almost came to fisticuffs over the band before they finally decided to sign with Arista for a sum reported to be anywhere between "100,000 and three times that amount, and left Altham rather suddenly in not the friendliest of circumstances, to go with Claudine, who also has the unenviable task of making Siouxsie and Steven Severin appear like normal human beings to the outside world.

Anyway, it was Claudine who was 100% responsible for creating and sustaining interest in "ze Stray Cats" (as she so sweetly calls them) so when the time came for her to leave Altham, it was only natural that her kittens should go too.

Then the final chapter in the band's rocket-assisted rise to fame and fortune was written when Dave Edmunds was recruited to produce the album, and the single "Runaway Boys", which ended up in the top five and put The Stray Cats on "Top of the Pops" and the national newspapers. Which is kind of where we came in because when I got to talk to them, they were halfway through recording the album, "Runaway Boys" was still a week away from escaping onto the market, and at the time, no-one knew how near the band were to making that important jump from being the darlings of the London club circuit and the music press to a genuine, bona fide chart success. But although our meeting took place before all the REAL fuss broke, they'd still had their fair share of newsprint and the problem was how to get something different out of a relatively new band whose short history had already been well documented in other mags.

Listening later to the interview which, I admit, wasn't exactly on a Robin Day level when it came to penetrating questions, the tape seemed to be divided - 75 to 25 in



PHOTOS, SIMON REEVES

favour of my voice, gabbling away 19 to the dozen, as usual, in an attempt to fill the not innumerable embarrassing silences. For the band's part, lead singer and guitarist Brian Setzer (the one who looks like his hair's been plugged directly into the mains) and double bassist Lee Rocker were polite and helpful, while the Olga Korbut of the drumkit, Slim Jim Phantom, tossed out the occasional sarcastic remark, trying to act so cool you could almost see the icicles forming on the end of his nose. And so, after much mental torture, and a great editing job, here are the highlights (!) of ZIGZAG's Stray Cats interview:

**ZZ:** What made you give up what you had in New York and come over here, because it seems to me that although the New York bands never really got to "make it" on a national level, they build up strong followings on the local scene and make quite a bit of money?

**Brian:** Well, everybody who came over from England said "You guys should go to England" We said, "Why" and they said, "I dunno - there's a void there and you would fill it." and when we asked why, they said "We don't know". So a lot of people said this and then somebody said, "OK, you guys come over, I'll give you a flat and I'll get you gigs" and he couldn't fulfil it. So we just hit the streets for a while and we were pimping off Lee to get money.

**Lee:** Yeah - I had three fishnet

stockings and these nice pumps. It was great, but things have been dull since ..

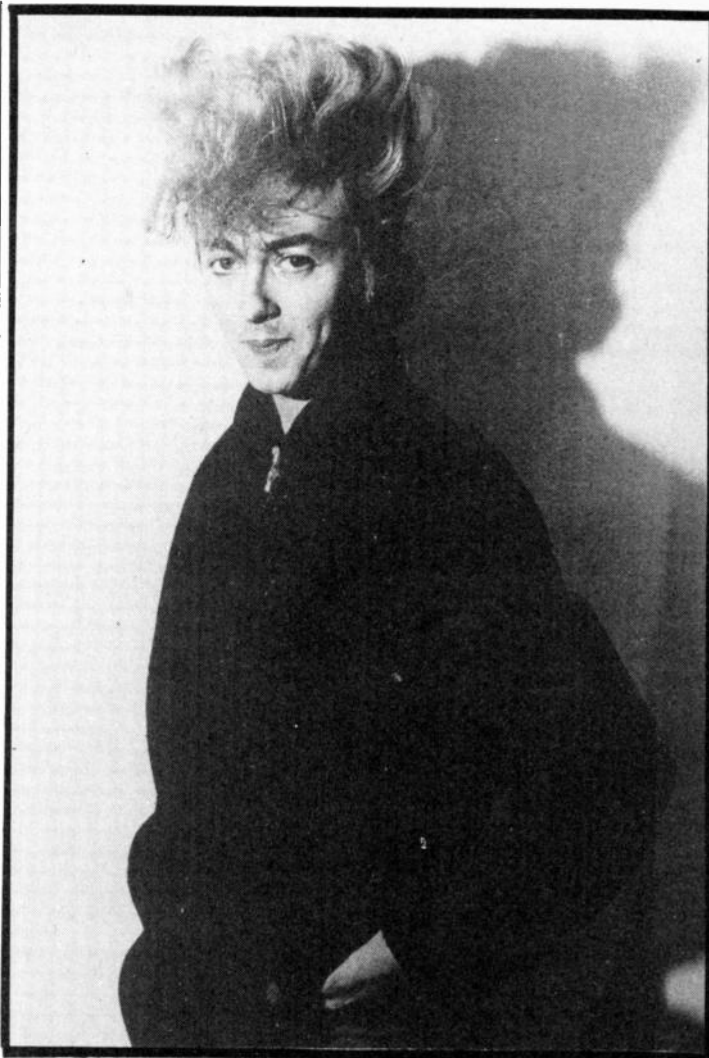
**Brian:** We didn't really do Manhattan that much anyway. We just played Manhattan a couple of times because you couldn't really make any money there to stay alive. You could make money playing the suburbs - Queens and Brooklyn and shit. They'd pay you like 300 bucks a night and you could make some dough out of it.

**ZZ:** So you came over here and we heard all these stories about the band singing for around "250,000..

**Brian:** I only heard half that amount, but I don't really think you get anything anyway. They give you an advance and you have to pay it back; and you've got to live on the advance for a year or two so I don't know exactly what they gave us but it wasn't as much as they reported on, I don't think. Basically, it isn't that much anyway because you have to live on it, you've got to make a record with it and you've got to lose money on tours.

**Lee:** The only things they gave you is against record sales anyway, so they don't really give you anything.

**Brian:** The best things we got from Arista is total artistic control. There are so many bands that have records and artwork come out that really pisses them off, so that's the main thing - I have total control over everything.



**ZZ:** Let's talk about the songs like "Storm the Embassy" (their best song, instrumentally, I think, although the lyrics implore the US govt. to act somehow - anyhow - to free the American hostages in Iran). That seems a very naive and nationalistic song to me...

**Brian:** It is, I guess, yeah. I'll change the lyrics when they get out. "Storm the Embassy" is our only political song because I don't know about politics, so I only wrote one political song.

**ZZ:** (THINKING IT'S DIFFICULT TO ARGUE WITH THAT) What about "Rumble in Brighton" (That's about the beach battles at Brighton which seem to take place annually now).

**Brian:** We wrote it in America because a couple of articles came out in the paper about skinhead and Ted battles, and we said "WHAT are Teds?" Nobody knows what they are there and we thought it was so weird, all these people fighting.

**Jim:** I still think it's weird. It's strange. I guess it would sound cooler to say "Rumble in Brooklyn" or something but we just didn't think that was strange because my old man used to rumble in Brooklyn all the time ...

**ZZ:** You seem to have had so much press, virtually since the day you got involved with Keith Altham and Claudine, not surprisingly. You've even had press about having press, if you know what I mean, and you're starting to get slagged a bit ..

What do you think when people talk about you being "hyped"?

**Brian:** I really think that they (the press) were calling up the agency about us. A hype is like when you take the Bay City Rollers and you try and put them on kiddie shows and stuff. But people were calling up and asking about us. We didn't put up posters and pictures of ourselves all over town. Anyway, they've got to fill those rags with something.

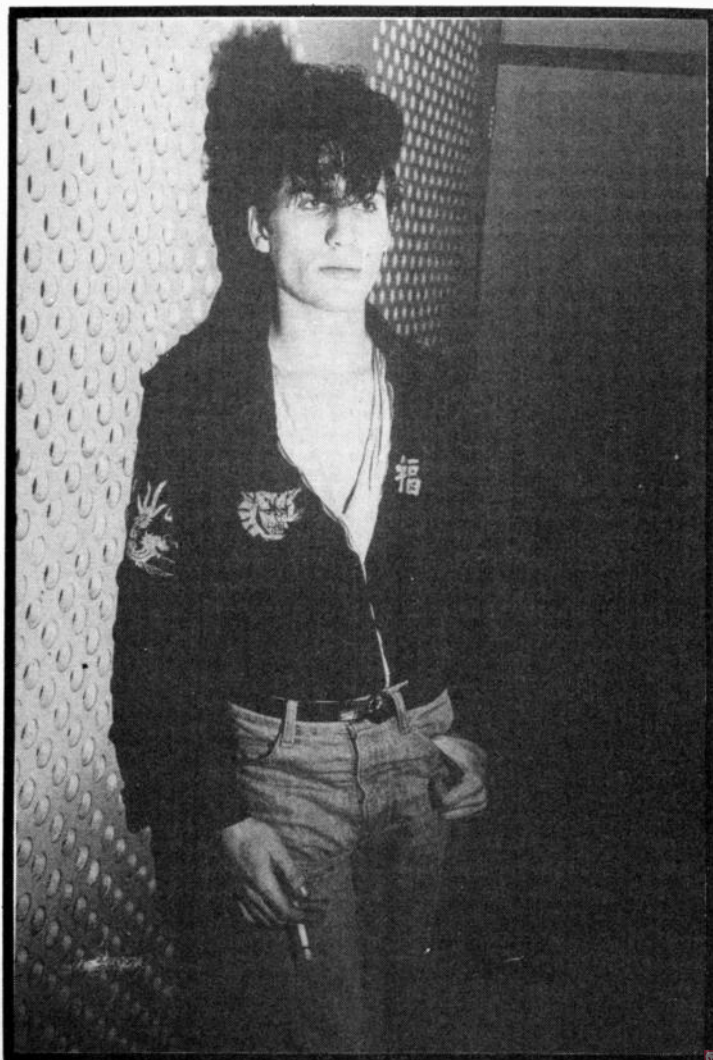
**Lee:** When you are the underdog and there's no record deal or anything, and no-one's at the gigs and all that, then they like it. But once you've signed a deal and there's a lot of press and everyone knows about you, they don't like it. But they'll like us again soon.

**Brian:** I don't know why they change - the band didn't change. If we had out a second album that was totally different and people hated it, then they've got a reason to (change their minds).

**Jim:** The whole thing is that we're not rockability orphans anymore - it's not their whole little story anymore .. As far as everything else goes we lucked out. I think we were deserving of it - why not, you know? But we definitely lucked out.

And when all is said and done, ZIGZAGGERS, if The Stray Cats appear on the cover of "The Sunday Times", "The Observer" and the "Sunday Telegraph" colour supplements all in the same week, I think they deserve it too.

Jane Garcia



## SINGLES

Someone just told me that there are now more singles released every week than ever before, and as I stare rather blankly at the array of brightly-coloured picture sleeves spread out before me I begin to wonder where they all end up. This month's column is being written in the cold wastes of Trondheim where there is not much else to do...

## URGE

**REVOLVING BOY/Revolve**  
(Consumer Disk cd 0861) 

This thoroughly excellent record has a lot of late-sixties trademarks that are used very very cleverly and with much gusto and energy. They sound like the Pink Floyd might if they were a) 20 years younger, b) alive, c) interesting and interested, and d) grooving out of their brains. Highly recommended.

## THE FILCAST

**WHAT BECOMES OF THE BROKEN HEARTED/It May Have Been** (True Friends Music TF 003)

A thoroughly dirge-like rendition of a great song which at first sounds annoyingly inept but when heard again harbours an insistent, creepy quality which is horribly fascinating. The synthesiser provides much of the tension and substance to the record, and if only the vocals didn't sound so dead-pan and moronic I might be tempted to say that it could grow on you, although I'm sure that it would be a malignant growth.

## LONESOME TONE

**Mum, Dad, Love, Hate And Elvis/Ghost Town** (Silent Records SSH5)

Rockabilly seems to have become popular with music business types recently what with all the attention being heaped on the Polecats and the Stray Cats and their like. I must be one of the few people who find rockabilly records all rather samey; onstage it's a different matter — I've been to at least two excellent rockabilly gigs this year, but on vinyl... well Ray Campi is about my favourite. This is tough, highly competent rockabilly for fans of that particular genre. Great title though.

## BLUE ORCHIDS

**THE FLOOD/Disney Boys** (Rough Trade TR 065)

Remember 'power-pop'? Well if that unfortunately-named reaction to the formless, noisy rubbish that emerged during the 70's punk era gave an excuse for a load of wimps to make extremely wimpy records, it also reaffirmed music's natural and consistent tendency towards melody and rhythm. This is as tough and abrasive a record as you'll have heard all year but it is based on a strong sense of melody and rhythm, however slight it may first appear. The melodies are complex and far from smooth and the overall sound is keyboard-based and fairly thin and sharp. Bob Last of Fast Product coined the phrase 'mutant pop', a category (yet another) into which this record fits quite nicely.

## LUDUS

**My Cherry Is In Sherry/Anatomy Is Not Destiny** (New Hormones ORG 8)

This reminds me of the sort of records I used to listen to in the late-sixties. They called it 'underground-rock' in those days, a category that encompassed anything unusual or uncommercial. I really don't think that there's such a thing as an uncommercial record these days and precious few are unusual in any interesting sort of way, but this is definitely an exception. It changes direction, pace and melody more times than I can remember and there's a riff nicked straight off The Doors' 'L.A. Woman' in there somewhere. Recommended.

## DRINKING ELECTRICITY

**Shake Some Action/Shake Some Action** (Cheap Version) (Pop: aural 005)

Another great song mercilessly mutated until it loses nearly all of its original power and appeal. The only part of it that survives in any way intact is the melody; the blistering chords of The Flamin' Groovies sound unbelievably lame here, there's an unnecessary synthesiser added to give it that 'modern' sound I suppose, and the girl(!) vocalist sounds like Nico on some sort of energising laxative.

## THE SATELLITES

**HUMAN BEING/Winscale Boy** (Rewind 7)

'Produced by Rat Scabies' it says on the front cover, although I wouldn't have thought it needed that dubious 'selling point'; it's a good enough record to merit attention in its own right. Fast, powerful, musically and, surprisingly, lyrically interesting. Production is good too. Buy one.

## FIRE ENGINES

**GET UP AND USE ME/Everything's Roses** (Codex Cdx 01)

If genius is pain then so is no-talent incompetence. No prizes for guessing which category this record falls into.

## HOLLY

**HOBO JOE/Stars Of The Bars** (Eric's 007)

Another superior record despite the vocal excesses. The song is a good one — the chorus quite memorable, and the playing is assured and hard. Hear it.

## DEUTSCH-AMERIKANISCHE

**FREUNDSCHAFT TANZ MIT MIR/Der Rauber Und Der Prinz** (Mute Oil)

This is probably a very uncool thing to say, but I think that this record is a complete load of bollocks... the sort of feeble, senseless, noisy crap that the Europeans seem to delight in unloading on us. Avoid at all costs.

## ROBERT WYATT

**AT LAST I'M FREE/Strange Fruit** (Rough Trade RT 052)

Aha! Now this is a record of real quality. Admirers of Robert Wyatt will know what to expect, but in case you're a newcomer to the man's work you will be immediately struck by the astounding ordinariness of his voice, his beautifully fine sense of melody, and the slow, haunting nature of this record. Robert Wyatt has created many beautiful records like this... you should have them all.

## THE HOAX "HOLOGRAMME MUSIC"

I presume they're punks and if not they should be. This is insane, a mad delight. Eight interesting tracks (musically and lyrically) on beautiful blue vinyl that shines regardless of a poxy cover. Available for a mere one quid plus forty pence P & P from 193 Huddersfield Road, Stalybridge, Cheshire (061-338-3172).

## THE MEMBRANES "Flexible Membrane"

(vinyl Drip) Yes, a flexi disc which will only set you back 30p plus large s.a.e. from Blackpool rox fanzine, 53 Anchorholme Lane, Blackpool FY5 3QN Lancs. Two thought provoking tastes of mingling muse. It's quite straightforward yet hypnotic in the middle AND SCRATCHY AS HELL!

## IN CAMERA "IV SONG" (4 AD Records)

Fashionable rampant bass guitar and a metronome for drums, weak spindly guitars and uninspired vocals. It lacks vitality and finds them living in the shadow of Bauhaus; speaking of whom...

## BAUHAUS "TELEGRAM SAM" (4 AD Records)

Great A-side (It's quiet a month for cover versions) and a weirdo B-side with a ghastly Elton John impersonation. Peter Murphy, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Leave the room and stop snivelling boy!

Mick Mercer

## VTKMS "100% White Girl" (415 Records)

In direct contrast to the majority of (rubbish) American offerings we have the latest single from '415' which maintains their high standard... the Postcard of San Fran perhaps? Lead singer Nyna ran off after seeing the Sex Pistols and formed her own band. What's known as a fairytale ending. Girl makes great single and hopefully becomes part of the legend. The rest of the band look a bit straight but I expect she'll whip 'em into shape.

Punky rock'n'roll with intensity upgraded it's almost too hot to handle.

Mick Mercer

#### **BASEMENT 5**

**LAST WHITE CHRISTMAS**  
Traffic Dub (Island 6654)

Surprise, surprise, a Christmas record, not that you'd ever guess. This is an extremely monotonous and irritating piece of ancient punk rhetoric bashed out with minimum musical imagination and skill, and sung in that ludicrous cretinous whine that is supposed to sound 'aggressive'. Needless to say the words are unintelligible, which is more than likely a Godsend. And I thought they didn't make records like this nowadays. I wish, I wish. (Everyone else at ZZ think it brilliant. . . Asst. Ed.)

**THE MAKERS OF THE DEAD TRAVEL EAST**  
**THE DUMB WAITERS/Tael Of A**  
**Saghors (M Squared M2004)**

This sounds very similar to some of The Residents' more accessible material which means it's weird as opposed to unlistenablely weird. After a while though even its weirdness wears off and then it just sounds plain silly.

**GIRLS AT OUR BEST**  
**POLITICS!/It's Fashion (Record**  
**Records RR2)**

I think this is the first 'angelic' sounding record I've ever had to review. Judy Evans, the vocalist, has the voice of an innocent (maybe) schoolgirl entirely suited to the ultra-melodic 'poppy' material at hand here. Miraculously enough it doesn't sound cloying or wimpish, which the rest of the band must take credit for, and is fast emerging as one of the month's better records.

**SLEEPERS**  
**MIRROR/Theory (Trans-Time**  
**Records)**

Doom, doom, doom. A resigned gloominess suffocates this record which only briefly hints at the sort of beauty that Joy Division managed to instill into their records. Some undeveloped Robert Frippisms rear their head occasionally, but sadly the whole thing peters out in an unsatisfying and ultimately depressing anticlimax.

**A POPULAR HISTORY OF SIGNS**  
**JUSTICE NOT VENGEANCE/**  
**Possession (Melodia 1)**

One of my pet hates is this horribly insipid drum-machine sounds that provides the rhythm for a lot of Orchestral Manoeuvre-type records these days. It just sounds so WET and FLACCID. This is one such record — hypnotic, melodic to a degree, but coaxed along very limply by that crummy beat. All rather boring I'm afraid.

Stacey Bridges

#### **Four of the Best**

Riff Raff. "Little Girls Know" (Geezer Records)  
One of four songs released simultaneously (a.k.a. financial suicide), this is undoubtedly the best of the bunch. A neatly understated piece of Carpetarian r'n'r with hook (memorable), line (child reaction) and sinker (sexist cover). Exuberant finish. Good One.

Ski Patrol. "Agent Orange" (Malicious Damage)  
As brooding a modern message as you could hope for. It grows and grows and burns through one's resistance. Hypnotically effective for all its subdued production. Designed for LISTENING. They have not split up! (O K. Ian??)  
Carpettes "Last Lone Ranger" (Beggars Banquet)  
Probably the worst song the Carpettes have ever done. Wimpish reggae that dribbles away into nothing. The B-side however has a great version of The Fab Fours' "Fan Club" and is worth acquiring purely for that.

Another Pretty Face. "Only Heroes Live Forever" (Chicken Jazz).  
Possibly the most underrated, underexposed band of 1980, they're back from the dead after the Virgin debacle with two classic cuts, of which B-side "Heaven gets closer everyday" is the best. One of my favourite songs of all times with its eerie guitar work and emotive vocals. In fact very few singers can even hold a candle to Mike Scott when he's in this form. A 'conventional' Ian Curtis if you like. Deserves to be NUMBER ONE.



SIOUXSIE + NEW CRAMP, KID CONGO AT THE WHISKEY - L.A. U.S.A

PHOTO: DEBORAH SCHOW



# In Camera



Think of a sound darker and more powerful than an electric storm. Something ominous and rumbling. In Camera crackle with more than enough static to shake up the dead. On stage, they use a bare minimum of lighting if any and just walk on and play. No warnings, no apologies - they just carry on in their own way and it's your own choice whether or not you listen. Unlike many, they refuse to bow and scrape to music tradition and refuse to acknowledge any influences or to mention other bands.

"It's all irrelevant" says Pete Moore, bass guitarist, a pale and intelligent character whose grim determination is matched only by that of the other three. "People either take us as we are or leave us. We simply won't conform or do what is expected of us".

All four are unanimous, they operate in complete solidarity. "I really hate the idea of reviews and having to do the ring thing as far as the music pres are concerned" adds

Andy Gray their guitarist. "Why should we have to publicise ourselves and crawl to idiots like that Peel bloke, just so's people can hear us?" Talking to them is not easy. They take an aggressive stance and constantly fire scorching tirades against music journalists at a bewildered yours truly.

"I'm sick of all these posers, dressed in black, sucking their cheeks in pretending to be somebody" Jeff Willmott is angry. It comes out in his strident drumming. He batters his kit until the stage rattles and groans under the force. He's from the East End and takes no nonsense from anyone. "I play because I want to, not because I'm on some ago trip".

Much of this resentment and anger manifests itself on stage. They turn their backs on the audience and get on with it. Pete's bass takes the lead and throbs into life. Andy, also in a corner, barely visible, tears the spidery scratch-scratch chords from his instrument. The songs are almost jams and come together slowly. Gradually building, force upon force, layer upon layer. Culminating in the vocal entry of Dave Steiner, their impressively manic vocalist. He's tall and rather ungainly. Leaning back and forth slowly like the Tower of Pisa about to tumble. His presence is threatening and he howls down the microphone like one in agony. Few dare to venture near when he's in full throes - he gives the impression that he might lash out at any second. "The Final Day", the highlight of their set is frightening in its intensity. At the end, you find your head is fair near bursting with the power of it. But they are not without subtlety. The constant flow and shifting of emphasis proves this. "Colour In The Home", for instance, leaps and darts in and out of your brain cells and sticks in your skin.

But despite all the Wagnerian doom and "angry young man" attitudes, they have a tremendous sense of humour and off stage, clown around with the best of them. Nor for them, the serious expressions and long green macs! They only become openly aggressive at the system as they see it. The fact that this was their first real chance to air their views publicly meant that I probably came in for an extremely generous portion of pent-up grouses.

"One thing I can never understand is why the papers even have singles reviews pages" says Andy. "Half the time they never even bother to listen properly, let alone go and see the band, I think people should decide for themselves, the whole system is redundant."

In Camera are certainly different but in spite of the bluster about record companies and 'the system', have recently signed a deal with 4AD, a Beggars Banquet subsidiary. So far their vinyl output has much the same feel as their live performances and being one of the few consistently good live bands around, they promise much for the future. It's urgent music from urgent people.

Gill Smith

# THOMPSON TWINS



From infancy to inhumanation, pop whistles a heartening tune. It rarely affects because it's rarely effective. It's seldom good enough. A group called the Thompson Twins are something good enough.

To give a personal perspective I should place them somewhere along the thin front pop line that stretches from the Gang of Four to Joy Division.

As part of a new emotionalism in music, seeing emotions as objects of curiosity, not a private hole to wallow in. Hearts in mind, rather than on sleeves.

To specify - the Thompson Twins play a funk tinged rock invigorating and experimental, yet comprehensible and engrossing throughout.

Their nucleus, Tom, Pete and John looking somewhat similar to the conspiratorially optimistic young men of Trotsky's history, tousled and sartorially chaotic, began as high-school pop-stars in home town Chesterfield.

John: We went our separate ways. It was almost a case of having lost contact. Then phone-calls started appearing. Not finding much inspiration in our lives, it was an obvious choice. It would have been easy to continue what we were doing, but that wasn't what we wanted."

Pet: "Just over a year ago we moved to London wholesale. Drummerless, homeless!"

After all the standard hassles they took aboard Chris on drums, and Joe on percussion, on attitudes

instead of those misleading terms 'skill and experience'.

So far two singles have surfaced. "Squares and Triangles", put out themselves, basically as a promo device to get gigs. And "She's In Love With Mystery", on the independent Latent label. Both suffer from limp production and from being amongst the more conservative of their songs, but did get into the Alternative charts.

I comment that neither really does them justice. Uncharacteristically for the rock persona, they agree.

Tom hastily moves on to the next single coming out in late January. Coupling two of their finest songs, "The Perfect Game" and "Politics", they've given this the full treatment, with Mike Howlett - of Teardrop Explodes and Orchestral Manoeuvres fame - producing. Reticent and indeed bashful boys though they are, they think it a great improvement.

(Whilst we're plugging, they asked me to mention their tour in January and February.)

To me, and the group, one of their most intriguing aspects is the attitude to the live arena. Untalkative on stage, and not extrovert people in person, they are nonetheless extraordinarily successful at overcoming the barriers between performers and audience.

And this they do by means of the strange habit of inviting people - literally just anybody - to come onstage and play



PHOTOS: SIMON REEVES

Tom: "We've always had this leaning towards improvisation. It really kicked off with a journalist, and we basically said, 'If you've got the nerve to come and criticise, have you got the nerve to get up and play (She did)."

We have a couple of songs that give a sort of rhythmic structure to let people work out their frustrations and fantasies. Actually we were going to mention this to you..."

Ahem, well er... carry on (Help!)

Pete: "When we started out our own self-consciousness was a terrific barrier, because we were frightened basically. Standing there

that politics isn't just the Guardian, but how you treat your loved ones, if you have any, or, yes, the bus conductor.

Tom: "We're very much of the collective opinion that interpersonal relationships are where it's at. And all these external ideologies don't count for much. We try to act in a way that is us, rather than any sort of flag-waving."

John: "There is also the vaguer creative element in lyric writing, so we don't put a taboo on a fairly poetic approach to imagery, rather than straight point-of-view socio-politics."



with our eyes closed wishing everyone would go away - and quite often they did!"

Tom: "Whatever your putting out, when that's what exists. And in a certain sense the music is only so important. I think the general energy of communication makes a performance."

And it works! (Though the demon alcohol will have to steal me before I take up their offer).

Furthermore this analytical approach epitomizes the groups whole stance. For example the impressive jerky hiccup "Politics" brings sensitivity to the oft ranted theme, 'the personal is political' ie.

Tom: "We've got a big place for, almost, romantic subjectivism."

Quite! But as their performance shows, this is not just an intellectual consideration, but a practical reality.

The Thompson Twins are a collection of purposeful young men, grappling with the features of life in a way that I feel all of us that are honest have to and with their discordant, reflective, frantic beats they have come up with engaging new formulae at the very heart of rock'n'roll.





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