# THE HISTORY OF ROCK

## 1981

A MONTHLY TRIP THROUGH MUSIC'S GOLDEN YEARS
THIS ISSUE: 1981

★ FROM THE ARCHIVES OF NME & MELODY MAKER ★

## SPRINGSTEEN

*"I haven't changed"*

STARRING...

THE POLICE
KRAFTWERK
THE CURE
TOM WAITS
NEW ORDER
MARVIN GAYE
BLACK SABBATH
THE JAM
U2

PLUS! IGGY | MADNESS | SOFT CELL | BOB MARLEY | BAUHAUS | DEXYS

1981
MONTH BY MONTH


# Welcome to 1981

**THESE ARE SUSPICIOUS** times, and while the world of music flourishes, it does so with a lot on its mind. In the early part of the year, New Order emerge from the ashes of Joy Division – but what sinister preoccupations, some wonder, lie behind that name? Interviewed extensively, the band Kraftwerk reveal how their obsession with computers is a rebellion against control.

Similarly, musicians are keener than ever to articulate which side they're on. When Oi! band The 4-Skins play a gig in an Asian community, the evening ends in a riot. Madness issue a statement about where they stand. Later, Paul Weller comes out against nuclear weapons. When "Ghost Town" by The Specials reaches the top of the chart in the week of the royal wedding, it seems a particularly ironic comment on the nation's priorities.

Even through adversity, though, music still triumphs. From new and vibrant electronic pop, to the lyrical new guitar bands from Scotland, the passionate rock of U2 or our cover star Bruce Springsteen, there's plenty to lift the spirits.

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

Missed one? You can find out how to rectify that on page 144.

In the pages of this 16th edition, dedicated to 1981, you will find verbatim articles from frontline staffers, filed from the thick of the action, wherever it may be. Witnesssing a taxi radio interrupt a Black Sabbath guitar solo. Talking criminal databases with Kraftwerk. Or hearing about the time Bruce Springsteen vaulted the wall into Gracelands, where he thought he saw Elvis at the window.

Bruce wonders if people are losing their ability to dream. It's his job, he thinks, to make sure they don't.

1981 MONTH BY MONTH

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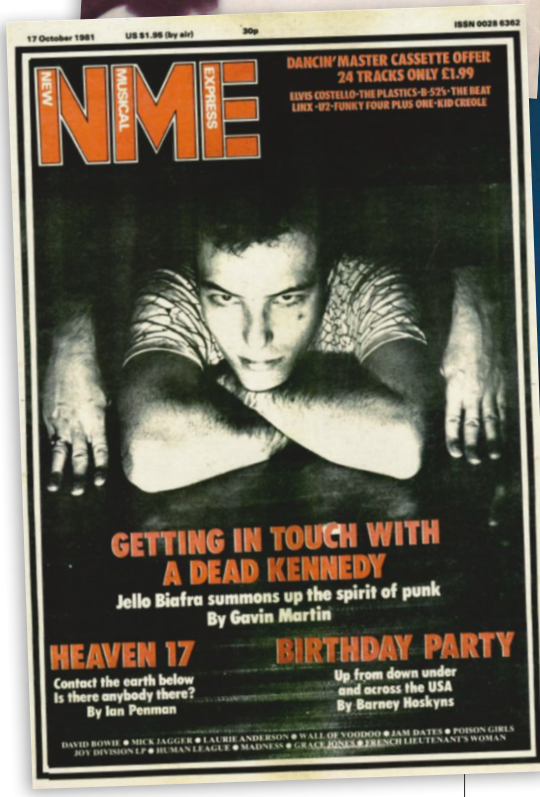



PAUL NATKIN / GETTY


Depeche Mode
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THE HISTORY OF ROCK

Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, 3rd Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark St, London SE1 0SU | **EDITOR** John Mulvey, whose favourite song from 1981 is *At Last I Am Free by Robert Wyatt* **DEPUTY EDITOR** John Robinson *Is Vic There? by Department S* **ART EDITOR** Lora Findlay *Bedsitter by Soft Cell* **PRODUCTION EDITOR** Mike Johnson *Follow The Leaders by Killing Joke* **ART DIRECTOR** Marc Jones *In The Air Tonight by Phil Collins* **DESIGNERS** Becky Redman *Tainted Love by Soft Cell,* Jonathan Sellers *Menergy by Patrick Cowley,* Marc Southey *For Your Eyes Only by Sheena Easton* **PICTURE EDITOR** George Jacobs *Labelled With Love by Squeeze* **COVER PHOTO** Ilpo Musto / Rex Features **THANKS TO** Helen Spivak **MARKETING** Charlotte Treadaway **SUBSCRIPTIONS** Letitia Barry **GENERAL MANAGER** Jo Smalley **GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR** Paul Cheal **COVERS AND TEXT PRINTED BY** Wyndeham Group | **WWW.UNCUT.CO.UK**

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REX FEATURES


# 1981

JANUARY – MARCH

**U2, DEPECHE MODE, MARVIN GAYE, ENO, TOM WAITS AND MORE**

REX FEATURES

# Startling arrows of synth

**MM FEB 14 From the ashes of Joy Division come New Order, to play a hometown gig in Manchester.**

MANCHESTER POLYTECHNIC
LIVE!
FEBRUARY 6

**FIRST, THE PROBLEM.** No excuses, no argument, however carefully constructed, is going to get round the fact that the name is ugly, dangerous and highly irresponsible. While the name Joy Division – a reference to the prostitution corps in the Nazi concentration camps – was also distasteful, it could at least be argued that it implied identification with the victims of oppression.

New Order allows no such let-out clause. To many it will imply identification with the perpetrators, the guilty. For those unaware, "New Order" is the name adapted by various Nazi movements, the French "Nouvelle Ordre" being one example, and while I feel 90 per cent certain that the band have no sympathy with fascism, that's no excuse for flirting with its imagery.

The name is ridiculous because, like their former incarnation as Joy Division, they are a deeply humanistic band, reaffirming and underlining human fears and frailties. I couldn't hear many of their lyrics (mostly sung by Bernard Albrecht, now the central figure on stage) – but could feel their commitment to the soul. Three days later, their opening piece is still floating around my head – Albrecht stating a forlorn but dignified theme on melodica while the rest of the band dug in with an intensity that was overwhelming. I'd been prepared for disappointment, but it was immediately clear that here was an experience that would be remembered as something special in months (years, even) to come.

Detailed comparisons are pointless, but suffice to say that New Order reached the same heights of almost staggering emotional power that made Joy Division such a unique band. With a new female member alternating between guitar and synthesizer, they concentrated on building familiarly dark and sombre moods, but adding and substituting new textures, Steve Morris leaving his drumkit for one song to inject startling arrows of synth while an automatic rhythm box took over his usual function.

At times the rhythmic force generated by Peter Hook's still innovative bass work and Morris' drums was awesome, and even an audience of the deaf would have sensed the commitment Albrecht applied to his guitar as he flailed the instrument in bursts of apparent anger. A little over half an hour after taking the stage, they finished. There was no need for encores or pointless repetition. They'd said it. *Lynden Barber*


New Order perform the Joy Division song "Ceremony" – which they re-recorded and released as their first single – live on ITV's *Celebration 1981* show

"I just started learning when I joined the band": Bauhaus frontman Pete Murphy

# "A struggle to get heard"

**NME FEB 21 A meeting with Bauhaus, whose music, says one critic, is "like going to chapel".**

**IF THE TRUTH** don't fit, embroider it. A basic rule of promotion is to set up the myth early on and hope the band will eventually live up to it. The game can be fun and it's one especially enjoyed by the post-Roxy Music school of former art students who acknowledge that self-created larger-than-life personae are an essential part of a lively pop package.

Bauhaus have always suggested that they were willing, if not particularly adept participants. Formed a few years back, at the beginning of the current resurgence of interest in '20s Germany, their evocatively chosen name – lifted from this century's most influential art school – irrevocably links them with the period, making it easy for commentators to draw confusedly expressionist leanings from their shadowy live shows.

Vocalist Peter Murphy's melodramatic onstage demeanour and bleached face give the impression he wants to play Max Schreck's Nosferatu to Dave Vanian's Bela Lugosi, and the band's writhing, cathartic soundtrack does little to dispel it.

Bauhaus' true face is far removed from Murphy's pained mugging, and they go to great lengths to deny the German connections when I meet them at bassist David Jay's pleasantly suburban Northampton home. The trouble is that the myth is considerably more interesting than the band in real life, likeable though they are. Jay and drummer brother Kevin Haskins timidly fend off criticisms and offer information, while Peter Murphy more spunkily reacts to my suggestions. Fourth member Danny Ash, guitarist, is absent after catching an iron filing in his eye.

Admittedly, we haven't met under the best circumstances. Haskins and Murphy are still recovering from the night before, spent at New Order's London debut. So am I. We're all somewhat drowsy, and our attentions wander, mine with the horse-riders passing by outside the window, theirs on private thoughts of their own.

Bauhaus deserve their cult following; they've worked hard to achieve one in a relatively short time, but they haven't really proved themselves capable of reaching anything higher, though their recent shift from 4AD records to parent company Beggars Banquet indicated they're now pushing for mass status.

So far they've made two very good singles in their debut "Bela Lugosi's Dead", and the terse, cogent "Terror Couple Kills Colonel", a failed commercial gambit in their covering "Telegram Sam" and one flop, "Dark Entries". A fair track record only marred by the release of their debut album *In The Flat Field*, which pointed up all the limitations of their approach.

The album talks a lot about emotional edges without ever actually convincing that the players have been there. Murphy's words get inextricably tangled in introspective journeys through the terrors of a Catholic past; but worse, his self-confessed classicist leaning means he twists them into needlessly inverted sentences and forces unnecessary rhymes.

Matched as they are to tortuous hard rock workouts grated over lurchingly uneven rhythms, it's arrived at a pomposity almost equal to that attained by early-'70s progressive bands, even if from a completely different direction.

Ex-Bauhaus student Gavin Martin says that listening to it is like going to chapel. They appear surprised, but Peter responds gamely.

"Really? Well, I was brought up a Catholic, so I obviously felt it was something to write about. One track, "Stigmata Martyr", was about total fixation with Jesus Christ to the point of bleeding from the same places as Christ bled. It seemed like a really strong subject to me."

TONY MOTTRAM / GETTY



He continues: "'...Flat Field' itself was like searching for the spring, searching for a guideline, some sort of ethic or moral... it wasn't really referring to my religious path in life, just my role..."

It's not the subject matter so much as the treatment. Its angst-filled overtones create a strong aura which doesn't really bear investigating too deeply, I suggest.

Peter looks a little hurt, but remains reasonable. They all do throughout our meeting, which isn't so much exasperating as humbling. They make me feel like a cad for suggesting anything's wrong.

"Eh, yes, when I listen to the album now I do find it heavy going," Peter responds. "Very angsty, very horrible. But we really did go through that, really, and now we have done, I can look back on it a little more objectively. It's heavy and angry, but I liked it then and I like it now. It's just an expression of how we were."

Where did all that anger come from?

"I don't know, I really don't. I think it had something to do with us being thrown into this creative whirlpool – this is personally speaking – and finding it a struggle to get going, to get heard."

Bauhaus music is better appreciated live. I've only seen them once, but it left a strong impression. Their angst lends itself to Peter Murphy's overwrought drama; they highlight it with stark white lights battened to the floor, thus throwing up heavy shadows of the band onto the wall. Again the effect is visibly gothic. No, it's not, contests Kevin Haskins: "It seemed to us like a no-nonsense thing that contradicts that whole gothic romance thing."

Unless you see it in terms of old German silent movies.

"We hadn't seen any films like that then," points out David Jay.

"Anyway the filmmakers arrived at those effects by accident as they were using black-and-white film."

Rubbish! The sets of *The Cabinet Of Dr Caligari* were deliberately designed to emphasise the eerie shadow effects. They repeat they hadn't seen the movie then.

But this statement's considerably undermined when the hand me a copy of the "Bela Lugosi" 12-inch featuring a back cover still from the *Caligari* movie. David Jay notices me glancing at it suspiciously.

"Our guitarist Danny had torn it out of a book and gave it to us without telling us where it came from," he explains timidly. It's not much of an excuse, but there's no reason to disbelieve him in light of Bauhaus' wilfully haphazard approach.

They enjoy leaving things to chance; thus their writing begins with rehearsal and jams in the hope that some idea will pop into their heads. It served them well at the beginning, not only because their meandering gave birth to the "Bela Lugosi" single, but also because it helped them break away from the restrictive codes of their mainstream-band backgrounds.

Northampton has no recognisable rock tradition, therefore most of its bands tend to follow rather than lead. Bauhaus' determination has since served to open doors – there's a couple of healthy independents settled in the town now.

However, leaving things to chance today is more a matter of sloppy indulgence than breaking down barriers. It might seem experimental to the experimenters, but to more objective outside ears it follows paths taken before by others – not to mention their mistakes.

Düsseldorf's Der Plan put it most succinctly when they stated that experiment was all very laudable, as long as it resulted in something worthwhile – experiment shouldn't just be used as an excuse for half-finished songs.

"I don't agree with that at all," contests David Jay evenly, "because experimenting supplies a spark to the performance. Anyway, I don't think it's possible to arrive at a finished state."

To me the album sounds half complete; its potential remains unfulfilled.

"That's a personal thing, though, isn't it?" argues Peter.

Yes, say I.

No use in labouring a point, but Bauhaus don't really live up to the spirit of their namesakes. Where students of the original school prided themselves on efficiency and the ultimate utility value of their product, Northampton's Bauhaus are too immersed in the processes of creation to see objectively what's coming out the other end.

Made up of former art school students and an ex-printer (Murphy) who wishes he was one, Bauhaus are laudably still open to ideas, but they've yet to show they're capable of using them. After a brief description of art-school life from Jay, Murphy rues his missed chance.

**"I was brought up a Catholic, so I obviously felt it was something to write about"**

"I applied for art college, got accepted but then I changed my mind, I was too young, my ideas weren't really formed. And I imagined you had to have a good idea of what you wanted to do before you enrolled."

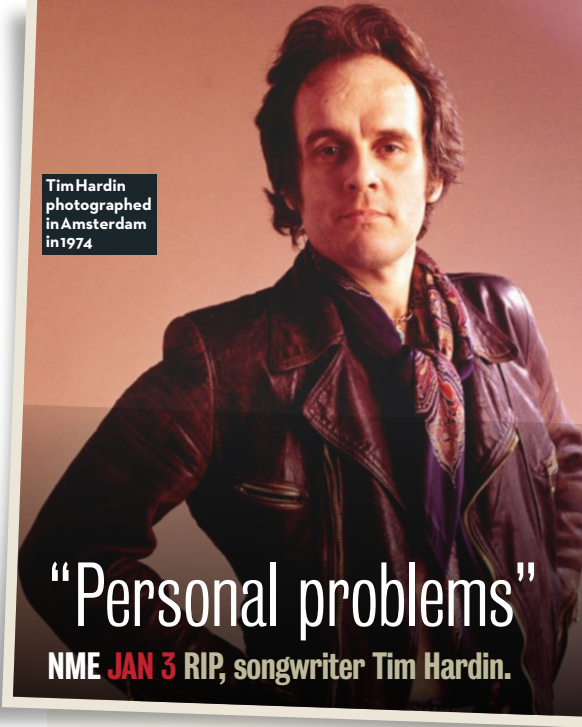
"It's the opposite," points out Jay. "It opens your ideas to different levels and ways of thinking."

Murphy: "Yeah, I just started learning when I joined the band."

Jay: "I notice you use the band as a way of development in the same way that I used art school..."

Going by their singles, Bauhaus have it in them to pull off a masterpiece, but at the moment they're still stuck at the sketchbook stage. As it is, hang onto those early sketches – look what happened to Adam And The Ants.

*Chris Bohn*


Tim Hardin photographed in Amsterdam in 1974

## "Personal problems"

**NME JAN 3 RIP, songwriter Tim Hardin.**

**FOLK SINGER-SONGWRITER** Tim Hardin was found dead in his Los Angeles apartment on Monday night. Acting on an anonymous phonecall, the Los Angeles police entered his home, where they discovered his dead body. Police said there appears to be no evidence of foul play, which leads observers to assume that Hardin, 40, finally fell victim to those "personal problems" which had plagued him throughout his career.

Though a product of the early '60s Boston folk movement, the intimacy of Hardin's intensely emotive style was decidedly both jazz and blues based. A native of Eugene, Oregon, Hardin established his credentials when, on the strength of his appearance at the 1966 Newport Folk Festival, Verve/Forecast Records released his debut *Tim Hardin I* (Sept '66) and the follow-up, *Tim Hardin II*. Although never a major concert artist, these two albums established Hardin as an introspective songwriter whose material was successfully covered by other performers.

Hardin's best-known composition, "If I Were A Carpenter", was a hit three times over. Bobby Darin was first to recognise the song's commercial quality, while Johnny Cash & June Carter and later The Four Tops afforded it chart status.

Another widely covered Hardin original was "Reason To Believe", of which the best-known interpretation is on Rod Stewart's *Every Picture Tells A Story*. Other Hardin standards include "Misty Roses", "Black Sheep Boy", "The Lady Came From Baltimore" and "Hang On To A Dream" – the latter giving the composer his only UK hit in January 1967.

1974 found Tim Hardin in Britain and signed to the GM label, which produced one album, *Nine*. At the time it was Hardin's intention to take up permanent residency here, where he was optimistic of revitalising both his health and career. It was not to be. He moved back to America where he has lived in semi-obscurity these past five years, supporting himself on his royalties and occasional gigs.

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT / GETTY

Robert Wyatt: "I find the creation of this vast monoculture alarming... It flattens and belittles everything"

JANETTE BECKMAN / GETTY

# "My voice always comes out disappointed"

**MM JAN 24** Robert Wyatt explains why he's covering Chic. Via Bulgarian poetry and the history of the waltz...

**OUTSIDE IN THE** garden, Robert and Alfie's dog Flossie and my dog Titch challenge a clump of hollyhocks. Once they get together, they become deeply unknowable, and bucket about with their ears streaming, baying at imaginary postmen and piddling on each other's possessions.

According to Robert Wyatt, Flossie is the ringleader, a poodle of infinite inventiveness, effortlessly recruiting my suggestible hound to her vision. I would not dispute this, since a few hours with her owner has much the same effect upon me, brain boiling, nose dry, and ears like pennants and all mailmen's ankles in jeopardy.

A man of ravenous intellect, Robert has theories the way rectories have mice, and many a Wyatt wig-bubble has found its way into the field. Five years ago in Holland, Cecil Taylor buttonholed me to contest Robert's Theory of Social Class & Avant-Garde Staying Power.

"You did the interview with that guy in the wheelchair? I liked what he said about breathing, but his social ideas were shit. But at least he has ideas."

Mel Tormé reacted as if I had piddled on his possessions when I laid The Theory Of The Limitations Of Scat-Singing on him, and spent half-an-hour in rebuttal, with oo-bla-dee illustrations. Most of us have opinions, few have ideas, but Robert's prolificity embarrasses him. One New Year's Eve resolution featured incogitance: fat chance.

His latest single, a version of Chic's "At Last I Am Free", was in part a broadside in a debate.

"One of the reasons I wanted to do it was because of a remark made by a pundit on telly. Someone asked him what effect discos had, and he said, 'Well, of course, the black ballad tradition's gone down the drain. They're all trying to boogie now.'

"I thought, 'THAT JUST ISN'T TRUE!' There is so much black boogie in the front line of the dance thing at the moment – but there's also as much as ever of the song and ballad stuff. This song is an example of that."

Humbug and bad ideas will not pass into the currency unchallenged, and I have an evergreen memory of Robert crouched over the radio, teapot suspended in indignation at the radical chic of a disc jockey. "Rock Against Sexism? He may as well propose Omelettes Against Eggism!

"The other reason why I wanted to do 'At Last I Am Free' is because I like the tune. There's a nice cycle of chords with a couple of nice melodic things that almost inevitably grow out of it. Just water it with a nice bassline or something.

"I'm very bad at words. I don't very often listen to words. I tend to listen to music from the bottom upwards, rhythm section upwards.

"In this case, I listened to it and thought, 'What on earth is this? The chorus goes, *'Now at last I'm free'* – yes, well, that's a great feeling, that's good – but the verse is a bitter and miserable let-down. The gist of it is a betrayal, and the chorus is, 'Hooray, made it!' I thought, 'COR! – That's right up my street!'

"My voice always comes out disappointed, to say the least. I've got that sort of sound. It's too lugubrious to be a hit. Nothing I could do would ever cheer anybody up, and I don't even sound fashionably down. So, if I sing 'At Last I Am Free' it wouldn't sound as if I meant it anyway, and that would suit the sense. I got Frank Roberts to do the piano, and I just did what I liked about it, and left the rest out."

After a long period of musical inactivity, Robert is back recording again with a series of fascinating singles for Rough Trade.

"I've had a difficult year. Maybe I'm a malcontent, but at least when I wasn't working I knew what I was doing. I could handle that. I can graft all the experiences and thoughts that I've had since I dropped the craft on to what I remember of the craft. I know lots of things I didn't use to know, but they're not specifically about how to make better records.

"If anyone told me they'd been doing something for five years and felt really disillusioned and wanted to give it a break and go off and do something else, I'd say something like DON'T. Stick to whatever it is you can do,

because you have to grow through whatever it is that you do…"

To say that he has watched the manipulations of popular culture from his wheelchair implies the loftiness of the umpire. Nothing could be further from the truth, for Robert's irreducible ideas come by way of gnawing concern, doubt and guilt to the cuticle, and are invariably presented without wishing to presume.

"The new English rock bands that took the headlines in '78 struck me as a nostalgia movement for the days when rock was dangerous music, or seen as a dangerous music. It has always had the reputation of so being, and that's always been one of the assumptions about it, that you can knock to pieces if you try.

"Nevertheless, its part of the self-image of people in rock that they're part of the rebel culture, and the industry loses its bearings when it's too obvious that this isn't the case. I used to belong to the consensus myth that if you played iconoclastic music, you were being iconoclastic. I hadn't realised the extent to which that just isn't true.

"The whole cultural set-up absolutely caters for that, and knows how to absorb it completely. It's part of it, it's no threat to anything – in fact, it's part of how the cultural business keeps churning. There was something charmingly nostalgic about the idea that these punks were REALLY gonna do it, REALLY gonna blow the gaff! The pathos of it!

"A lot of the cultural things that I have become interested in remind me of the title of Mingus' book, *Beneath The Underdog*. Very often when things reach rock culture and become famous underdog symbols, they've already come up from the underdog to become acceptable. In the history of rock'n'roll, this is racist.

"In America you had all this raging, raving black music right through the '40s, which was in fact rock'n'roll – the economy small groups that came out of the big bands with a tenor at the front, and a compere-cum-singer and two rhythm. The history of rock'n'roll is a history of Saturday-night working men's clubs in black America, and the '40s is the rock'n'roll era.

"It wasn't about famous people or eccentrics or heart-throbs until it coincided with a staggering, uncertain, ailing Hollywood industry not sure how its new star should look. It is always taken for granted as perfectly acceptable that Sam Phillips could say, 'If I could find a white man who had the Negro sound and the Negro feel, I could make a million dollars.' I'm not blaming Elvis and I'm not even saying white musicians are not equally creative – I'm just saying THAT'S the history of it, then look at the rock industry's propaganda for how it sees itself. Dangerous music!"

"I sometimes think South Africa is the only really honest Western country, because there everybody says, 'Right, the blacks' job here is to provide cheap raw material for our sophisticated industries.' America has some sort of pretence that this isn't so. I heard a popular historian on the radio this morning describing the five great stages of American popular music, and it went from Al Jolson, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley to The Beatles. Well… come ON, you know! I mean, those are the stages at which it reached the white, respectable, monied American public – when underdog characteristics became acceptable. But the real underdog is still playing janitors in the movies. It's going on unabated."

**"The idea that these punks were really gonna blow the gaff… The pathos of it!"**

This is one of our long-standing points of agreement, and we sometimes derive a bilious satisfaction from comparing the time lag between black and white cultures – "Disco! Ten years. New wave! Twenty" – before bunging on a jazz record. This time, however, Robert ventures further into the process.

"A very good example of all this – and it spreads despair because it seems so endless and historical – is the history of the waltz. You had the travelling gypsy musicians in Middle Europe getting all the racist abuse, the settler's fear of the nomad coming into that as well – this unacceptable group doing this naughty music. In fact, they were living deeply moral and cautious lives.

"Romany law is fantastically strict in terms of sexual habits and relationships, very, very formal, has to be for the culture to survive.

"Anyway, to the European outsider, they looked loose, outrageous and dangerous to civilisation. Eventually, a respectable light composer took up their waltz, and suddenly it was all right for nice people to dance to. Does this give the gypsies respectability?

"Nobody'd heard of the waltz till it was put on the map by respectable people, so that moment of triumph of the culture was about as useful to the gypsies as a lion's head is in the trophy room of the hunter. He's got there, but… THAT'S the process that we're dealing with in rock'n'roll. It's what happens. Winner takes all."

"The West happens to represent an amazingly powerful force in terms of revolutionising other people's lives. In the end, it's quite a relief to be able to say that my position isn't a moral one, its aesthetic. That is to say, I actually LIKE the idea of this great wealth and variety of ways there are for being people in the world.

"Even though we pretend the colonial period is over, we are steamrollering the whole world into thinking that the ONLY way to be is something like us. We in the West seem to know when we NEED to assimilate somebody else's culture, and we are able to do that and create our plural society, and leave people nothing.

"I find the creation of this vast monoculture alarming. Everybody in the world is trying to match up to this great impregnable fortress that Western civilisation has created with its vast technological and military back-up, and air of moral and spiritual superiority. It flattens and belittles everything.

"There's a great Bulgarian poem called 'The Shot That Wounds But Does Not Kill'. It's about a decoy duck, a duck that the hunter clips, takes to the marshes where it cries to its mates who come down and get shot. I'm not talking about the West exterminating people or cultures, but allowing them to survive with clipped wings. Like rock'n'roll." *Brian Case*

GIANNI FERRARI / GETTY

June 30, 1980: Marley on stage in Barcelona during the Uprising Tour

# Serious cancer denied

**MM JAN 24 Bob Marley said to be "recovering".**

**BOB MARLEY, WHO has had extensive medical treatment in New York and Germany over the last few months, is reported to be well on the mend and preparing for his musical comeback.**

**Continuing reports that Marley was suffering from a serious cancer were denied by his record company, Island, but it is understood that he was seriously ill with the disease, leading to his move from a New York hospital to the Issels cancer clinic in Germany, where he was attending officially as an outpatient recovering from exhaustion.**

**Island now say that Marley has recovered from his exhaustion, and will travel to America early to start recording in the second week of February. He is, according to Island, supervising plans for an American tour that will follow in May.**

# "We built U2 around a spark"

**U2 – and their voluble frontman Bono Vox – explain their mission, a tale of passion and commitment. "I don't know what I believe ultimately, but I know it's good that we're not easily digested..."**

— NME FEBRUARY 14 —

BONO VOX, AKA Paul Hewson, the frontman and driving force behind U2, is huddled in the back of a small van, wrapped in a fur coat and speaking in low, husky tones. He's complaining about the cynicism and elitism of new rock bands, which is threatening to become just as stupid and stupefying as the industry it claims to be a barrier against – the record business.

"It's the easiest thing in the world to be cynical; I can see it coming in myself sometimes and I have to stamp it out. You see it all the time."

Bono writes fluent, prosaic lyrics and sings them in a strong, resounding voice. You can hear this combination in great songs like "11 O'Clock Tick Tock" and "I Will Follow", two of the most gallant and genuinely subversive new pop singles released last year. The latter is a whirl of reverberating guitars and a tale of determination through sorrow taken from *Boy*, U2's debut album, one of the finest debuts ever released.

During the past year, Bono Vox has come out of Dublin and led U2 on an exhausting and exhaustive assault on the British concert circuit. The abandon and enthusiasm with which they thrust themselves into the attack was a logical extension of the "growing ethic" that surrounded the band with the imagery of the *Boy* album and has been fundamental to its members since they originally got together some four years ago.

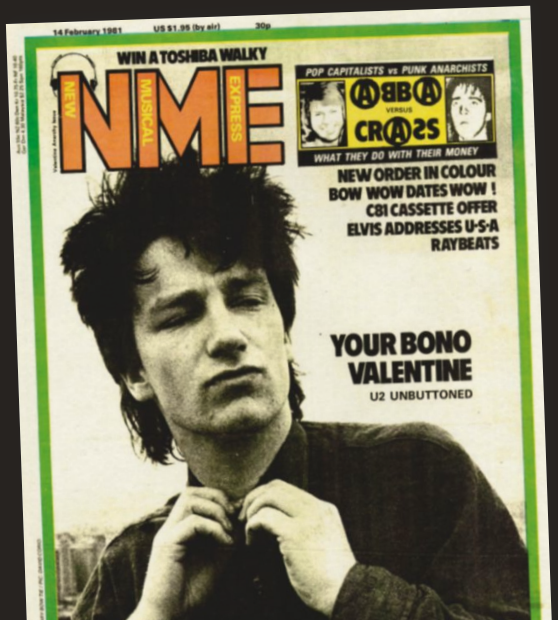
Bono cares for the band passionately, thinks about its role astutely and will talk long into the night about its beginnings, its first experiences and how all of this is going to affect their aims and plans: "I distrust anything that's obvious, like someone saying, 'Let's be original.' So they hang bananas out of their ears or start using a xylophone. There's a million bands being original and playing concerts in caves. I think that's great, but change can come from something far more subtle.

"It's hard to explain, but, well, we're all human beings and we all look different – you look different from me, but you don't have to have a nose out to here to look different. Y'know what I mean?"

He draws his hand back from a point in midair and waits for my nod before continuing. He has a habit of illustrating his sentences in this way and his conversation is animated with lively metaphors.

"So U2 play with bass, drums and guitars on stages and on records which go on radios, like anyone else involved in the music »

PAUL NATKIN / GETTY



April 12, 1981: Bono fronts U2 at Park West in Chicago during the Boy Tour

business. I see no real reason to say we're something else, so we're going to play on a chandelier tonight and that makes us different. It doesn't mean you're different; it means you're trying to be different."

**WE'RE TRAVELLING FROM** Glasgow's Strathclyde University to a small, ancient hotel in the city centre. U2 have just played one of those rare performances where the audience moves in empathy with the performer, gradually becoming infatuated with the sways and currents running through the music. The songs are like a series of emotional landslides – shifting from doubt to hope and from loss to discovery, rising to a peak with "11 O'Clock Tick Tock" – a dazzling if, by that stage, draining realisation.

Inside, the audience proves to be young and demanding, creating the sort of atmosphere that the group revel in. Enjoyment and acceptance comes as a natural rather than a ritualistic process and, somewhere near the end, Bono thanks them for coming to see U2, not the image created by the music press. As he explains later, this wasn't a jibe, but merely an acknowledgement of the honesty created between the audience and the performer.

"I don't feel we've been hyped by the music press, because I happen to agree with the good things that they say about U2. The music press relationship with U2 has meant that people have come along expecting a lot and they've got a lot, sometimes maybe too much. It *is* a pressure.

"But if people come along expecting the world from U2, then they're gonna get it. I'm not scared we won't be able to give it to them."

We're seated in a tacky lounge bar, myself, Bono and guitarist The Edge. As Bono reels off the details of his early youth I have some trouble equating the brash extrovert and charismatic performer beside me with the maverick youth who grew up alienated and confused in Dublin during the '70s.

"The Virgin Prunes and U2 both came out of a place called 'Lipton Village'. It's an imaginary place, something we developed in our imaginations to give us an alternative lifestyle as kids.

"We grew up studying people on street corners; we laughed at the way they talked and at the expressions they made. We mocked the adult world and agreed we'd never grow up, because all we saw was silliness.

"I remember watching *Top Of The Pops* and seeing this group called Middle Of The Road singing 'Chirpy Chirpy Cheep Cheep'. I must have been about 11 at the time, and I thought, 'Wow! This is what pop music is all about. You just sing like that and you get paid for it.'"


Drifting through his teenage years, Bono shunned the pubs frequented by his friends, remained largely unaffected by music and became, of all things, a keen, expert chess player.

"I found I was being pressured into organising my thoughts, and I wanted to be able to do that because I have a very competitive instinct. But I was going through a very problematic time; my mother had just died and I couldn't stand an educational system where IQ tests and value were based on being good at a very limited number of subjects.

"I couldn't put in the work because I was too erratic as a persona, and so I found a game like chess suited me because I was able to put everything from my mind and work with something abstract."

When Bono found himself back in school after being chucked out of university for not having his native Gaelic language, he became close friends with Adam Clayton, Larry and Dave (The Edge). They formed U2 and Bono discovered a way he could express his methods and thoughts.

"Our first concert was one of the greatest we ever played and it was two years before we played another one like it. I believe we built U2 around a spark; you've got to remember at that stage there was still the tradition of the musician, there was still the tradition of Ritchie Blackmore.

"We couldn't compete on that level and yet in 1978 we played this Guinness and Harp talent contest with all these professional bands and heavy rock bands. We came down and played after doing this thing called Paddy's Punk Party and I'd lost my voice. We were a shambles. But after that gig we had record contracts offered to us.

"I knew we had something. I knew the effect we had over the audience compared to the other bands, with their tight music and their pompous playing. We made use of the fact that we were slightly fragile, and when we recorded our early demos in a four-track studio we couldn't get a big sound out of it, so we had to work on the fragile sound. Now that we are in bigger studios and we've got more experience, we're plumping for the bigger sound, but the important thing is we always worked around the spark.

"Whatever we were good at we worked around, not trying to be like anyone else, just looking for what was best in ourselves.

"Adam used to pretend he could play bass. He came round and started using words like action and fret and he had us baffled. He had the only amplifier, so we never argued with him. We thought this guy must be a musician, he knows what he's talking about. And then one day we discovered he wasn't playing the right notes, that's what's wrong, y'know?

"We were stumbling in the dark, but with the spark and fanning it, finding that the emotion we were generating was affecting people. I can cry when I'm singing, literally. I can get very, very into it."

**U2 FORMED AT** the same time as the Radiators From Space and The Boomtown Rats. Unrecognised and ignored in those early days, there is something satisfactory and inevitable about them having reached a position where they can now produce music much more original, imaginative and durable than those other two. The irony is that U2 knew nothing about rock, rock culture or what was looming around the corner.

"I remember thinking the first day we went into rehearsal that a movement was going to emerge that would be a breakdown between the flower power and the boot boy. I didn't really know what I was saying, because it turned out to be punk rock."

We're joined at our rickety little table by Adam Clayton, the group's bespectacled bass player with a seemingly misplaced shock of curly blond thatch hanging down onto his forehead. He's the cigar-smoking, brandy-drinking sophisticate of the group, with a certain Englishness to his manner and voice. He articulates what is perhaps the main motivation that drives U2.

"It's very much a complete thing. It wasn't sort of, 'Lets form a band and let's write great songs.' It was more to enjoy

June 8, 1981: The Edge, Bono and (right) Adam Clayton at the Pinkpop Festival in Geleen, Netherlands

ROB VERHORST / GETTY

the whole experience of being a band of four people with the one cause; a cause you could develop and become emotionally involved in. It was much more the whole experience and it still is. Bands are very secular unto themselves. It's like an extension of a school gang."

They struggled through the cloistered Dublin scene as best they could, without becoming bogged down in the inevitable bitchiness and petty-mindedness which surfaces in closely knit, inadequate provincial scenes. U2 left Ireland after a one-off deal with CBS enabled them to release the Irish chart-topper "Out Of Control" (an alternative version was later to surface on *Boy*).

Their movement into the music industry wasn't naively hopeful. On a small scale in Dublin they'd already experienced the strain that business and financial matters can put on a band. On the evening they left Ireland, their publisher withdrew half the advance that had been promised to them. So U2 arrived in England unsure if they'd be able to last the whole tour and tempted to accept the first record contract that came their way.

But they held out and finally got the deal they wanted with Island. *Boy* – a collection of the best songs in the group's 40-song repertoire – was released seven months later. Immediately they were accused of whimsicality, and pandering to adolescent sexuality (the *Boy* sleeve is a photo of a young boy with naked shoulders!).

Such criticism undermines and misinterprets the album's value: it's a voyage from adolescence (which, after all, is the stage when Larry, Adam, Dave and Bono formed U2), into manhood, and the rich imagery presents a tussle between wonder, awareness, strength and acceptance. *Boy* is the group's personality, produced by the chemical interaction between their characters and their musical styles.

"A band should have a personality of its own," says Bono, "and if a band's personality is dominated too much by one person then it's bad for the band. On another level, a band like Spandau Ballet is totally direct and pointed. That's so boring, because you see it all in one go – clothes, fashion, hair and that's it. There's nothing to discover, no mystique, no charm and no personality."

The difference between U2's personality and that of most other rock bands is that it is natural. They reflect on and revise orthodox rock techniques and presentation but totally relinquish its hopeless, heartless mythology. Their own motives and desires always shine through, purposeful and resilient. As Bono explains, this isn't always to their advantage.

"Our biggest problem getting to a bigger audience is that we don't look a certain way, we don't fit into a little box. We're not a ska group or something easy to digest. But the fact that we're not easy to digest means we're a lump in the throat, and a lump in the throat has far more guts to it. I believe ultimately… I don't know what I believe ultimately, but I know it's good that we're not easily digested."

**I CATCH U2 AT** a very interesting stage in their development, certainly the peak of their career so far. It's a crucial period for them as they have to grow up now and present the new face of U2 as it's developed over the past 18 months. Bono describes how he sees this taking shape.

"We're a long-term project; we're only getting used to our tools, working with people and the learning we've undergone. I see the next album as being about battle, because I don't see life as being an easy road. I think it's a battle on many different levels, to express yourself, to keep your head above the waves when problems and trouble come. I think it's a battle not to conform to the music business when you're 19.

"*Boy* was a retrospective of U2 over two years – the end of our adolescence. But now we've been to the ends of the Earth, we've been throughout Europe and America, and we've seen that all cities are the same when you eventually get down to their heart and soul.

"We've seen and learned a lot – it could either leave us cynical or with a determination and spirit not to fall or go under."

The pitfall that U2 must avoid – and something that they've been guilty of in the past – is to mistake pure musical clout for substance and vigour. Bono will admit that previously they have tried too hard, trying to throw themselves right into the audience's heart but succeeding only in flying off the handle. Now they seem to have found the right balance, although one can't help but be concerned when Bono wears leather trousers and The Edge engages in guitar talk with Stuart Adamson in Edinburgh the following night.

U2's music has taken shape, coaxed though not inspired by the Pistols, mingling the sense of space and drama brought to rock structures by Joy Division, crystallising its essence – a determined sense of soul-searching – alongside Dexys Midnight Runners. Unlike the rest of those bands, U2 have lasted and remain hungry, vigilant and ebullient. They're raring to go, to tackle the idiocy and dogma that makes rock a routine more than a means of expression.

"I wouldn't say that we're bitter about rock'n'roll; we didn't enter this in a naive way. There are a lot of untruths in rock'n'roll; the word itself conjures up certain standards to conform to and certain morals. But it's all superfluous imagery, it doesn't actually exist. Girls don't run around trying to rape people; you can't get drunk every night and do loads of drugs."

> "We're a long-term project – we're only getting used to our tools"

Bono rightly believes that the flimsy situation which McLaren used to try and break open rock music with the Pistols has turned sour, but it can now be transformed into something much more real, something much more positive.

"There's a lot of Johnny Rotten's bastard children running in the streets. They've been sold into bondage and it frightens me to see them, because they've been sold an image of violence and they've turned it into the reality of violence."

The Edge, who's usually happy to let Bono do the explaining, is so exasperated, he interrupts.

"It's incredible to see the followers of a band like Discharge are mostly 13 or 14. They've obviously never questioned the idea behind what they celebrate but just look on it as an image and wear it as a badge. Like you would support Chelsea or wear a Bay City Rollers scarf.

"The basic feel I got from '76 was of loud electric guitars, of singers with a song who sung with everything they had and sweated a lot and the audience also sweated a lot. The two became very close because you got a buzz in your spine – you felt that whatever he was singing about, he meant it. I believe in what I sing and we play our hardest on stage. I think it's quite a simple thing, but I believe that in itself is an embodiment of what '76 was all about."

**IT'S ALREADY BEEN** reported that U2 are all good Catholic Irish boys who don't smoke, drink or swear. Untrue! Two of them are Protestants and all (except Larry) imbibe alcohol during my stay, and profanities are muttered. Bono is nonetheless a deeply committed Christian, although he doesn't go to church – "I think the Church is a big problem" – and feels that Christianity is grossly misinterpreted.

"It's not all of our beliefs and not everyone in the band believes in the same way. There are things I just don't want to talk about. I'll talk about them in music; the way I feel about things comes out on stage. There are things that don't go well coming indirectly from other people."

It seemed relevant to ask what effect U2 wanted to have on the audience.

"Washed, I think, is a good word. It's like you go along to a film where you go through the emotions, you're brought up, you're brought down, and you feel a sort of relief afterwards.

"If you look at what Adam And The Ants are trying to express, by using escapology rather than realism, it's dignity. He's using the imagery of a warrior to achieve it, but you might as well go to a drive-in-movie.

"I think people should have dignity in themselves. They're not numbers, but they're being bombarded by the TV and they feel very insecure in themselves and in looking in the mirror. If our music means anything on that level, it's a celebration of just being me, of just being you."

U2 have in their stride a new way of looking at the ideals of rock music and a different way of using it. They're surging forward with one of the most strong-minded and radical sounds I've ever heard.

Wherever Bono Vox has chosen to put his heart and soul, there can be no doubt that, for the time being, it couldn't be in a better place. *Gavin Martin* •

# "My mother likes what I do"

**TOM WAITS stops in London, to talk film roles, support gigs, strange fish and songwriting. "I've always bitten off more than I can chew, just so's I can see how much it takes to break my back," he says.**

— MELODY MAKER MARCH 14

THE FIRST THING you notice are the hands. Like two spiders weaving a web, as if trying to scratch his words in the air. Then there's the voice, softer than I imagined, but still the nearest thing imaginable to a sumo wrestler's jockstrap that talks.

If – as his detractors insist – Tom Waits is simply perpetrating an image, than it's a full-time job. He came into the coffee shop with what seemed like a vampire's distrust of daylight, particularly the sleazy Saturday matinee the grey sky was mounting.

Painfully thin, skeletal hands, a voice like a hangover, Waits coiled himself on the seat opposite, like he was trying to escape from the body he's been saddled with. Saturday midday in Kensington is not the best time to meet Tom Waits, courteous as he was. No, it should have been midnight in a scuzzy Soho bar, with a saxophonist only Brian Case would have heard of, spinning out notes into the cigarette smoke clustering round the dim lights. »


Tom Waits

With Till The ns Out

DOWNTOWN

Heartattack And Vine

MR. SEIGAL

On The Nickle

Jersey Girl

ARMS

DAVID CORIO / GETTY

March 20, 1981: Tom Waits on stage at the Victoria Apollo in London

Tom Waits in London: tempering his romantic streak with a gritty reality

DAVID CORIO / GETTY

The last Tom Waits album, *Heartattack And Vine*, contains a song – one of his finest – called "On The Nickel", a lingering drunkard's lullaby. "The Nickel", according to Waits, is the Los Angeles equivalent of New York's Bowery; the sort of place where the dreams ain't broken, they're just walking with a limp; where the winos and bums congregate. It's the skids, the living end. Now that's the sort of place Tom feels at home.

Waits has been rehearsing until 3am in the East End with his band. The idea of simply a stand-up bass accompanying Waits and his piano had been ditched, and he was coping with jet lag, Silk Cut and daylight when we met.

I've been a fan of the man since I saw him deliver a haunting "Tom Traubert's Blues" on an otherwise forgettable *Whistle Test* some four years ago. That song remains my favourite of his, with its stark, city imagery, and the epitome of urban desolation – "*Where everything's broken, and no one speaks English*".

Much as he baulks at the description of "poet" ("When someone says they're going to read me a poem, I can think of any number of things I'd rather be doing"), Tom Waits undoubtedly has a poet's acute eye for imagery. To balance his vivid, serious songs, he's capable of mustering an array of one-liners that would leave most comedians open-mouthed.

> "I write 20 songs and put 12 on a record. The process is excruciating"

While not claiming that every song on each of his seven albums has been indispensable, I would say that his track record has been more impressive than most. His first album in 1973, *Closing Time*, surprises people hearing it now, because of Waits' voice; he can actually sing – hold notes, change pitch, and all the other technical stuff. The album also contains one of his best-known songs, "Ol' 55", which was memorably covered by Iain Matthews, and not so memorably by the Eagles. "The only good thing I can think of saying about an Eagles album," Waits has remarked, "is that it keeps the dust off your turntable." Subsequent albums like *The Heart Of Saturday Night*, *Small Change*, and *Blue Valentine* have confirmed him as America's leading street poet, with a staunch cult following he has no real wish to expand.

After killing time with the cappuccinos, we agreed on a visit to St Catherine's Dock to give Tom an opportunity to get a glimpse of London colour and talk. Tricky, but then so is nursing a hangover you've been on nodding terms with all week, but I managed. While sitting in an Earl's Court traffic jam, Waits spoke of his suspicion about President Reagan, and the other side of "the American dream" coin.

It came as no surprise that he distrusted the whole *Time* magazine cover and "Good job/Money/Success" equation. His songs have, on the whole, concentrated on the victims of a society where "Success" is the only standard tolerated; and his sympathies obviously lay with those who have tried, and failed. He is a romantic writer, but his romantic streak is tempered with a gritty reality that not even Springsteen manages.

Waits seemed fascinated by the ritual of the forthcoming royal wedding – "She still a virgin? There gonna be a celebration of the royal screwing on their honeymoon?" Boot [Adrian Boot, photographer] and I thought a 21-gun salute on their first night of nuptial bliss may be in order. The Imperial War Museum was pointed out as the site of Bedlam, where the aristocrats used to come and pay their sixpences to see the loonies. "This part of town called Bedlam?" queried Waits. Well no, Lambeth, actually Tom. "Oh, last time I was here, on the way out to the airport I saw a sign that said 'Bedlam Steel'." Well, that would be of interest to him, as at one time Waits claimed to rent an apartment on the corner of Chaos and Bedlam.

The Tower of London caused a raised eyebrow. I told him the story of the ravens in the Tower. England would fall if they departed, it is said, which is why the ravens' wings were clipped in 1940. "Mm, superstitious people," growled Waits, who was fascinated by the proximity of Spitalfields, said to be the home of Jack The Ripper. We digressed onto mass murderers, until the subject of Bruce Springsteen came up. "Nice guy," said Waits, then remembered that his own London dates clashed with Springsteen's at Wembley. "Sure hope that mine don't detract from his ticket sales," he laughed. Well, "laughed" is stretching it; more like two strips of sandpaper rubbed together.

**WE MADE THE** Charles Dickens without further mishap, and proceeded up to the restaurant. Fish was the order of the day, all sorts of fish – the place was swimming in them. The traditional English virtues of the pub and the docks were pointed out

to Waits, only somewhat belied by the high percentage of Filipino waitresses. He scoured the menu like it was his last will and testament, inordinately suspicious of any fish with bones in. Thorny problem that – swimming fish are quite attached to their bones; but all was resolved when the waitress promised to fillet some sole. "Knew a teacher once," commented Waits. "Choked to death on a fish bone."

A dish named John Dory attracted his attention. Now, as it happens, my knowledge of fish is pretty scant, once they're outside newspaper, but I did know that John Dory fish are famous for their markings. The legend goes that when Jesus was preaching in Galilee, he took a fish and cooked it for the disciples, and that every John Dory now bears the mark of the hands of the Son Of God! "Mm," muttered Waits, "So 'John Dory' grilled in lemon sauce… you reckon it was 'grilled' by the Son Of God?" Dunno 'bout that, Tom, but He was renowned for his versatility.

The conversation moved to marriage. Waits' bride of seven months was over with him, taking time off from her job at 20th Century Fox. She originally wanted to be a nun, but abandoned this when she married Waits. "You could say I've saved her from the Lord." The wedding ceremony was not without incident. Waits found the Marriage Chapel in the Yellow Pages, right next to "Massage": "The registrar's name was Watermelon, and he kept calling me Mr Watts… My mother likes what I do, I guess she's happier now that I'm married. I think she was a little bit worried about me for a while."

> "People think you do most of your growth before you begin to record"

The project which has been occupying Waits since April 1980 is the soundtrack for the new Francis Ford Coppola film *One From The Heart*, which Waits called "the most rewarding experience I've had since I started working".

Originally intended as a bit of light relief after the fiscal and emotional complexities of *Apocalypse Now*, the film, Coppola and his Zoetrope Studios are in trouble again. The profits from The Godfather films have been swallowed, but Waits is fascinated by the man. "He's always changing his mind when he gets inside a film, then he eats his way out… He's a creative maverick who is distrusted by all the cigar-smoking moguls.

"He keeps morale up. Like Orson Welles said, a movie studio is the best train set you could ever want. Coppola keeps a child's wonder at the whole process, even after a business meeting."

Waits became involved in the *Heart* project after Coppola heard his "I Never Talk To Strangers" from the *Foreign Affairs* album, on which Waits duetted with Bette Midler. Originally she was going to work with him on the soundtrack, but because of her commitments Waits found himself in the unlikely company of Crystal Gale.

The film is due for release in the States on July 4, and the soundtrack will be the next Tom Waits album. Were there any problems, I wondered, working on a film soundtrack as opposed to his own solo work?

"In the sense that I'm writing for someone else's approval, yeah. But there are specific musical cues. I started with a lot of titles, and wrote about 12 different scenes, to be used wherever he wanted them, then I strung them together, like an overture for a musical. What he wanted was like a glass of music, that you can add in and take from."

A subject close to Waits' heart was Coppola's proposed film of Jack Kerouac's classic *On The Road*, which has been temporarily shelved. One name being touted as director was Jean Luc Godard, with Coppola producing for Zoetrope. What about future albums, then, Tom?

"After the soundtrack, I'm thinking of putting out an album called 'My Favourites'." Oh, you mean you're singing your favourite songs? "Nah, I'm just gonna take 12 songs by other artists and put them on a record, stuff like 'Lady Of Spain', 'Tutti Frutti' and 'Rudy My Dear', and a picture of me on the cover listening to them."

He did say he'd be going into the studio in the late summer to record a new Tom Waits album, but he does find writing difficult.

"I was a very undisciplined writer until I began to work with Francis… the seasons, when you're recording for a major company, aren't necessarily the same seasons which coincide with your own creative development. It's all a matter of dangerous choices, where to take it, whether to keep it, whether to abandon it.

"I write maybe 20 songs and put 12 on a record. The process is excruciating, it's hard work, but I like it when it's finished."

There was a long delay between *Blue Valentine* and *Heartattack And Vine*, when Waits appeared in Sylvester Stallone's *Paradise Alley*, was working on a book with artist Guy Peellaert (which has since been shelved), and an opera about a used car lot.

He has managed to finish a screenplay for the latter, in collusion with Paul Hampton, who used to be at Famous Music in New York with Burt Bacharach, and hopes that Zoetrope will be interested.

"I just got totally disenchanted with the music business. I moved to New York and was seriously considering other possible career alternatives… The whole modus operandi" – he made it sound like a particularly militant branch of the Cosa Nostra – "of sitting down and writing, and making an album, going out on the road with a band. Away for three months, come back with high blood pressure, a drinking problem, tuberculosis, a warped sense of humour. It just became predictable."

Early days for Tom Waits included a lot of support dates with incongruous acts. I wondered if there was any particular date which stood out from those days?

"I opened a show once for a guy called Buffalo Bob and the *Howdy Doody* revue. He was like an American children's programme host, went out on a tour of colleges, and I'd have to do, like, three matinees for the children and their mothers. He used to call me 'Tommy'; I wanted to strangle the sonofabitch… I hoped he'd die of bone cancer the entire week!"

Was there a particular album of his that he was really satisfied with?

"Not albums, but songs, individual songs. People think that you do most of your growth before you begin to record. It's the downbeat, the drum roll, the fanfare, and boom! You're baptised! For me, it happened during the whole thing, so I felt I'd snuck in the back way. I had a songwriting contract; I'm sitting at a bus stop on Santa Monica Boulevard, it's pouring with rain, and I'm scared to death. I'm making three hundred dollars a month, and I didn't feel qualified. I've always taken on more than I can handle, bitten off more than I can chew, just so's I can see how much it takes to break my back.

"Keeping your anonymity is important as a writer, so that you can go anywhere, any part of town, sit in a corner. Anytime you're swimming around in the American public, '*Well people just get uglier, and I have no sense of time*', you know?"

He did get recognised in Ireland, though, after a TV appearance, and recently completed the US chat show circuit: "It's the furthest thing from a rogue's gallery. They're just like fixtures; you get on and talk about cooking, about how hard it is to get a cab in the rain… *The Devil's Dictionary* described 'famous' as 'conspicuously miserable'."

**FOR SOMEONE WHO** claims to have slept through the '60s, and for whom the '70s mainly meant "living in a hotel for 10 years", the '50s still provide the most fascination. "It gave us Joe McCarthy, the Korean War and Chuck Berry!" And Kerouac, that "strange, solitary, crazy Catholic mystic", who inspired a generation of Americans to go off on the road, to break away from the limitations of the American Dream while pursuing their own. Waits' debt to Kerouac has been well documented.

"My own background was very middle-class – I was desperately keen to get away. My parents were divorced when I was 10 years old, my father's been married about three times, and my mother finally remarried a private investigator. I was at home with these three women, my mother and two sisters, and although they were there, I was on my own a lot…

"I loved Kerouac since I first discovered him. I discovered him at the time I could have ended up at Lockheed Aircraft, a jewellery store or a gas station, married with three children, lying on the beach… A lot of Americans went off on the road, just get into a car and drive, for 3,000 miles, East or West."

With a handshake and a growl, Waits disappeared into a tiny lift that looked like a cell on Death Row. He's an acquired taste, but a taste worth acquiring. Try to judge for yourselves when he comes over again at the end of the month.

I was only sorry I hadn't a chance to tell him about my efforts at trying to emulate Dylan and Ginsberg and stand by Jack Kerouac's grave in Lowell, Massachusetts, armed with my Penguin Modern Classics copy of *On The Road*. A friend and I spent most of one Saturday afternoon trying to find the grave, but conspicuously failed to do so, until in exasperation one of us cried, 'Why can't they bury them in alphabetical order?'"

I think Tom Waits might have liked that. *Patrick Humphries* •

# "We don't pretend or anything"

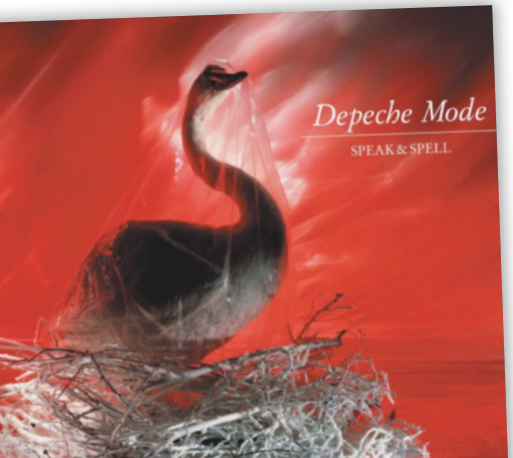
**A new band from Basildon, DEPECHE MODE, have plenty of tunes, but no guile whatever. Under the wing of Mute's Daniel Miller, they explain their MO. "The beat is very important. As long as people can dance to it, it's all right."**

— NME MARCH 21 —

**MUTE MAESTRO DANIEL** Miller has a notoriously sweet tooth – one that's balanced by a taste for bitter extremes. The opposite poles of the spectrum are reflected on his label by Non's noise at the one end and the insipidly saccharine Silicon Teens at the other. No surprise, then, that he has helped produce the fluffiest meringue of the moment in Depeche Mode's "Dreaming Of Me".

"Dreaming" is one of those instant-airplay records that are more a matter of intuition than contrivance – like OMD's debut "Electricity". An infectious synth melody should guarantee it playlisting, but it's the earnest, clutching teen vocal that elevates it.

Ironically, writer Vince Clarke is the only one of the quartet who's no longer a teen. He is – ulp! – 21. "Twenty," he lies gracelessly when the others reveal their ages during a short confrontation in a backroom at Rough Trade.

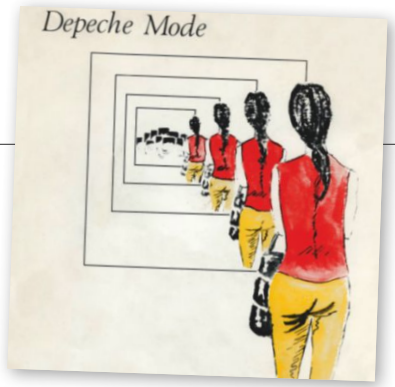



Owing to their extremely shy natures, the four have chosen to be chaperoned by producer Miller, whom they refer to as Uncle Daniel. Only nine months into a fruitful career, they haven't done many interviews and generally support the picture of a guileless but adventurous pop group that one might glean from the single.

Depeche Mode come from Basildon (*Sentence Of The Week – Ed*). They are bass synth player Andrew Fletcher, an insurance man; David Gahan, lead vocalist, electronic percussionist and trainee window dresser; the silent Martin Gore, synthesist and banker; and Vincent Clarke, writer, synthesist and otherwise unemployed.

Their decision to switch from the more conventional guitar trio to an all-electronic lineup was obviously influenced by the attractive pop of The »

June 17, 1981: Depeche Mode outside Blackwing Studios, South-East London, where they are recording debut album *Speak & Spell* – (l–r) Vince Clark, Martin Gore, Andy Fletcher and Dave Gahan




Normal and OMD. They recruited David, bought synths on HP – "Costs £25 a month," reveals Andrew. But why the switch?

"We didn't get into them just for the fashion," insists David. "It just happened that way. A few of our friends were into them and we just liked the sounds."

"And the sounds come easier than with the guitars," admits Andrew.

Meanwhile, the escalation of interest in electronic dance music meant that hometown and nearby discos like Rayleigh Crocs were giving over their busiest nights to Le Beau Monde, mixing soul with the pop of Numan, Human League, Normal, Ultravox, Visage, etc.

"It's strange," reveals Vincent, "that the kids who went to soul clubs are now moving over to this; we're playing an old soul club in Dartford soon which Rusty Egan's opening as…"

"It's just that electronic pop is commercially viable now, whereas two years ago it wasn't," interrupts Andrew. Yeah, even Human League have got a hit now after three years of trying. And a hustling DJ like Stevo manages to convince Phonogram of the viability of an electronic pop compilation, the misnamed *Some Bizarre Album*.

Probably more attracted by the electronic lineup than the "normal" pop Depeche Mode make, Stevo flattered them into contributing "Photographic" – great tune, shame about the words – to the record.

"We met Stevo at Crocs and he asked us to do a track for the album," recalls Vincent. "At the time we had no record company contract and we were kind of interested in this sort of thing, so we did it. We kind of regret it now because of the 'futurist' connotations."

"And we don't like to be tagged," adds David. "What is really looking forward is what's going on at Cabaret Futura – not Classix Nouveaux or us really."

Martin: "Our music doesn't really look into the future or say anything about the future."

Apart from the subject matter of "Photographic", I'd agree, though the title "Dreaming Of Me" and the band's predilection for dressing colourfully might wrongfully link them with Le Beau Monde. There appears to be a tendency towards narcissism ("What does that mean?" they all chorus, nonplussed), but that's countered by their guileless enthusiasm. What'll they do when the innocence is gone?

"Grow into something else, I suppose. I dunno," puzzles Vincent. They haven't contrived any particular image for themselves, he adds. "If people draw any conclusion from the lyrics it's up to them. We don't set out to portray any particular image of innocence; we don't pretend or anything."

Innocence isn't something that can be convincingly manufactured – as The Human League's very belated breakthrough confirms – and if you need proof of that check the wholly natural "Dreaming Of Me". It's obviously a hit – though one wonders if it being on the independent Mute will hamper its progress.

"All I can say is that we're making every sort of legal effort to make it a hit," states Daniel Miller. "We have had some experience with The Silicon Teens in terms of marketing and how best to approach it. I think we're at a stage now where we can make a really concerted effort – hopefully doing the right things at the right time.

"In a way it's sort of a test case. Everybody here [at Rough Trade, Mute's distributors], from distribution through to the promotion side of things [RT do more promotion these days and an independent radio "plugger" is hired], has learnt a lot in the past few years, and that'll hopefully benefit this record.

"It would be nice for it to reach its natural level – be it No 1 or at 74…"

The problem is that "natural levels" of most chart singles are unnaturally stimulated by the sort of gimmicks and incentives for DJs and radio producers that independents can neither afford nor want anything to do with. But that's another story… *Chris Bohn*

## — MELODY MAKER MAY 9 —

**GOD WHAT A** year it's been. Not half over yet and every week they're coming – great new bands bragging, bruising, begging for attention. It's getting so I can't tell me Scars from me Spandaus, but listen to this and listen good.

Depeche Mode, far from being yet another seven-day wonder, are damn near the most perfect pop group these two lug'oles have sampled all season. A couple of cracking tracks – one a narcissistic boppin' beauty of a single called "Dreaming Of Me" that nudged the charts; the other a moody, melodic pseudo-mechanical outing on the *Some Bizarre Album* aptly titled "Photographic" – were enough to put me on the scent.

> "There isn't a futurist scene really, is there? It's only a name"

Several scorching live dates confirmed it. This band has a set full of knowing but naive, intense and yet idiotically simple two-minute gems, that stand quiff and earrings above the ever-growing pile of synthi-pop fad followers. Suss enough to play by the rules, but brilliant enough to break 'em.

Take my advice – name-drop them like crazy, turn on your radio and wait. Watch them storm up the charts, sit back and feel smug as your friends all scramble to follow your lead. Be the first on your block to sport a DM T-shirt and allow yourself a snicker as hoards of nouveau new romantics and grubby electronic garage bands put down their icy frowns and bid to get the drop of Mode magic.

They'll be lucky – I had trouble.

Prior to partaking in the Mute Night Silent Night extravaganza at the Lyceum Ballroom, huffing and puffed from endless games of tag and run-outs, bloated by a batch of greasy McDonald's, slightly upset by a skimpy soundcheck and surrounded by a gaggle of giggling girlfriends, the four Mode music makers crammed into the support-band dressing room and effortlessly enhanced their reputation as an "awkward" interview.

It's not that they're standoffish – they blush and bluster their way through my clumsy enquiries with an admirably artless evasion, never once suggesting the smug smoke-screen that Spandau build around discussions. It's no rehearsed conspiracy – they just feel they have little to say other than what their music offers.

DAVID CORIO / GETTY


**September 25, 1981: the Mode on stage at the Markthalle in Hamburg, Germany**

An example: halfway through the proceeding I realise lead synther Martin Gore has remained stony silent throughout. I ask why and beanpole, carrot-quiffed bass synth player Andrew Fletcher tells me he has strong views on music.

"Have you?" I ask.

He shrugs.

I persevere: Why don't you ask him a question, Andy?

"OK. Have you got your lurex pants on?"

"No."

Quickly, quickly. Back to basics. Depeche Mode were formed "nine or 10 months ago" as a three-piece, two-guitar-and-synth outfit, who according to songwriter, rhythm synth player, old man at 21 and chief spokesperson Vince Clarke, "just about played live, but under a different name. We won't go into that now."

"Oh go on, be a devil," I urge.

"No," he replies.

The next step was to audition a vocalist – enter snappy dresser David Gahan – and then, suddenly, the big swap as the Basildon boys packed up string-picking for good and plumped for total electronics "because we simply like the sound of synthesizers".

The change made little difference to their musical outlook – "Some numbers we did with guitars we still do now," claims Vince – but the drastic upheaval of image worked wonders.

Suddenly finding gigs far easier to come by, they earned themselves something of a residency at Canning Town's Bridge House supporting Fad Gadget, and it was here, in these inauspicious surroundings, that they were discovered by "Uncle" Daniel Miller, the maestro behind Britain's zaniest electronic label, Mute Records.

It was love at first sight; Daniel took the boys under his wing and produced the aforementioned fab single "Dreaming Of Me" without inking any contract. Now, after suitably encouraging sales, he's produced their magnificent follow-up, "New Life", and formally signed them up.

"Daniel's helped us a lot," says Vince, laughing off my suggestion that the Mute man sounds something of a Svengali figure.

"He's been really good."

But why, I wondered, with far bigger and more influential labels hot on their trail, did they choose Mute?

"Well, we trusted Daniel," admits Dave.

"We went to see various majors and we were impressed at first with what they'd got to offer, but it was the same every time, y'know. Daniel seemed a lot more honest. Anything that a major can do, Daniel can do."

So all's hunky dory at Mute. The Some Bizarre connection rankles, however. Spotted by the opportunist Bizarre founder Stevo supporting Soft Cell at Crocs, he approached them to contribute to his compilation and they naively agreed – a decision which they now unanimously regret.

"We didn't play the Bizarre evening here at the Lyceum," elaborates Dave. "We were never even approached to play it. It was only when we were advertised that we knew anything about it. We had no intention of doing it at all."

Why not?

"We're not bizarre," claims Vince. "It's the whole sort of thing about being a futurist band and all that crap. There isn't a futurist scene really, is there? It's only a name."

So how would you describe yourselves?

"A dancey pop band," says Dave.

So what's in a name? Depeche Mode means something like "fast fashion" in French; a keen reflection of the current scene with its constantly shifting styles, but also, perhaps, a perilous prediction that synthi-pop, like mod, punk and 2-Tone before it, is subject to the fickle whims of fashion?

"No, we just found it in a magazine and like the sound of it," claims Dave. "There was no reason why we chose it. We didn't even know what it meant up until…"

"We still don't," quips Andy.

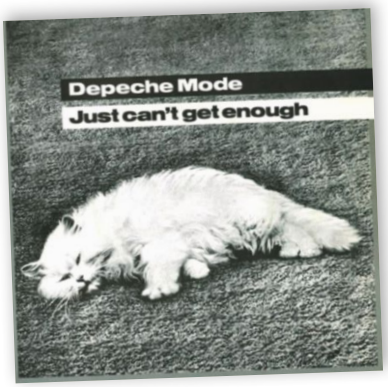
Vince writes his irresistibly catchy songs this way too. A heavyweight talent searching out lightweight commercial sounds and then thinking up cute lyrics to suit, he miraculously turns out the sort of precious little trash classics that Phil Oakey would have given his whole fringe to come up with; the sort that Gazza Numan could have created if he'd only cracked a smile.

Their only peers, in fact, are early Orchestral Manoeuvres.

"You're the first person to mention that," says Vince semi-sarcastically. "It doesn't sound nothing like it to us. Orchestral Manoeuvres use flowing keyboards and poppy tunes, I suppose, but we like different things, y'know – lots of music, no one particular thing. I mean, most of our songs are danceable. The beat is very important – as long as people can dance to it, it's all right.

"You know, if you wanna put us anywhere," he adds, "I think there's a market for pop music and always will be. That's the bracket we fit into."

*Steve Sutherland* ●

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LONDON LYCEUM
LIVE!
FEBRUARY 8

# Confused, drained, dazzled

**NME FEB 14** An evening of outré adventures with Throbbing Gristle, Clock DVA and Cabaret Voltaire.

**A FETISH NIGHT OUT!** A visit to the new school of modern music – art, avant-garde and all those words. No doubt fancy terms and theories will be wasted on boys who band around in dark broom cupboards, going blind and making everyone else deaf. But that's not to say there aren't some interesting activities being pursued in the freedom of the new halls of learning. From left to right: in the lab mixing up the medicine, themselves and the audience we have Cabaret Voltaire. In the workshop we have Throbbing Gristle performing musical electrolysis, and in the gymnasium doing supple cultural somersaults are Clock DVA.

Gristle are a murky mist in my memory. Sanitary towels preserved in jars. Auschwitz. A record that sounded like a dentist's drill. A funny name. Gristle are four – an electrical pulse operator, a bassist/tape modulator, a guitarist and a synthesizer player. They wire things up as they go, they stuff the audience with their wares and it is wearing stuff.

They can't keep their attention in one place for long enough. When they produce one of their infrequent splays of exciting sound it seems to be a mistake; most of the time they are disengagingly trite. Their new single "Discipline" sees people scurrying to the bar with its shunted staccato'd operatic vocals. "Discipline" is an industrial, electro-robotic "Respect".

Genesis P-Orridge becomes a Kevin Rowland in another time, another place – screaming demonstratively on bended knee. But instead of bringing the song to its appropriate pitch and stopping, he lets it degenerate into pure comedy, taking a big tambourine and banging it with a drumstick while he intones, 'I want some discipline, ya hear?' over and over again. TG revert back to their slapdash electro-collages.

Some things are sent to test us. Z'EV, with his five minutes or so of child's play percussion, is definitely one. He battles with aluminium sheeting and metal boxes and I try banging my notebook off my knuckle but nobody takes any notice of me. But then Z'EV is from America.

The revelation of the evening, possibly a lifetime, are Clock DVA: they are going to

## CLOCKS CABS AND CACOPHONY


May 22, 1981: Genesis P-Orridge (born Neil Megson) of Throbbing Gristle on stage at the Veterans Auditorium in Culver City, California

be the best group in the world. They are fashionable, feckless and flirty; smeared with blood, held together with muscle, set off on course with a clear insight on history.

They are hip, tight and extraordinary, solidly based on a splintering hard back funk, and are mesmerising cabaret. James Brown meets The Velvet Underground. They are possessed with a sense of mystery worthy of Edgar Allan Poe – splattered, frayed but fighting; they stand in the middles of the new decadence trying to assert themselves.

A smooth, smooching swell somewhere in the middle of all this bruising and excoriating, they always stick in the throat, in the ribs and the heart. What a funked-up, shacked-up, het-up charge they generate! When I wasn't dancing I was gnawing the skin off my thumb. The best, most exotic dance music since early Pop Group, or vintage Beefheart. They take care of themselves, their history and their emotional discrepancies. In their wake they leave a trail of broken minds, bleeding hearts and memories of a night somewhere.

A night that never was?

At the end they're so wracked and tormented that the last song is so tattered it's almost excruciating. Forgive them? No, I thanked them – it was just how I felt, just how they should have felt: confused, drained and dazzled by their own brilliance. Clock DVA don't fit into the fetish category – they are super rather than abnormal stimulus.

Cabaret Voltaire "top" the bill. But they suffer from the exhausting nature of the preceding acts. A fatigued audience is not what CV are suited to. The first song hits with persistent and insistent riffs, but it is quite simply too long. There is a bare sensuality to their sound, but the rigorous standards under which they operate tends to keep it hidden. The confines and constraints placed on them by excessive dependence on tapes are a big problem here. The songs are mainly musical scrapings put together to form a limited but effective skeleton; they need to slide and shimmer a little and allow themselves to become embossed with some flavours, to throw some shadow over their starkness and anger.

**Clock DVA are possessed with a sense of mystery worthy of Edgar Allan Poe**

I enjoyed the evening; it tested my preconceptions and put me in an impressionistic position. I hope that doesn't mean I was lulled into a position where I could be irrationally reverent towards an inanimate object. The true meaning of "fetish". *Gavin Martin*

# Musical muscle

**NME MAR 14** Ex-Dexys The Bureau visit the Netherlands for debut gig.

**IT COULD ONLY** happen in Holland – buried in a cosy country village lies an old school hall that the local hippies have taken over and transformed into a small concert hall; what the travel brochures would call "Dutch incongruity", I think.

Anyway, as the young Dutch contingent locked up their bicycles outside, The Bureau prepared to play their first ever performance. The Bureau are the splinter group from Dexys Midnight Runners: (Jeff Blythe: tenor sax, Pete Williams: bass, Steve Spooner: sax and Stoker: drums), with Rob Jones (guitar) and Archie Brown (vocals) recruited from little-known soul outfit The Upset, Mick Talbot (piano) – one of the musicians to have escaped the shipwreck of mod – hauled in from The Merton Parkas, and trombonist Paul Taylor rescued from the obscurity of traditional brass bands.

The obvious critical preconception towards The Bureau is that without Rowland's guiding hand and inspiration they'll be nothing more than a group of stuffy soul hack merchants, but each time I've seen them perform, the opposite seemed to be the case. For whatever reasons – laziness, personal weakness or convenience – it would seem that a fair portion of Dexys allowed themselves to be stifled under the gifted, inspirational guiding light of Kevin Rowland (the only new hero of 1980). The Bureau are less regimented and sombre than Dexys, but they still develop a tension and exert considerable musical muscle.

After only three weeks of writing and rehearsing they've emerged with a set of eight songs, well balanced and constructed with flair and poise. The opening shot is frantically athletic – a freshly pulverised version of "The Horse", with Brown doubling on the drums with Stoker.

Archie Brown is a valuable find and, when he eradicates the overly hoarse and gritty textures in his voice, he's in line for future greatness. On a taut punchy number like "Bigger Prize", he gets caught in the movement of the music, the heat and the zip of the horns. On a brooding ballad like "Find A Way", his rich, throaty vocal moves with the group to create a masterful song.

Of course, The Bureau haven't got it quite right yet, but you can't help smiling when you see the way they're heading – confident and dynamic, they allow shrewd balances between finger-popping Motown and manic jazz blowing, for instance. The best way to look at the Dexys disintegration is that they had to split up to continue. Now you can have two good groups for the price of one. Progression and compromise can go hand in hand. *Gavin Martin*

CHURCH HALL, APELDOORN, HOLLAND
LIVE!
MARCH

"I'm going to be one of the survivors in the new era because I know where to be and what to do": Marvin Gaye in 1981

# "I'm not bitter"

**"There is a horrible conflict," says a troubled MARVIN GAYE, seeking refuge in Britain from his many problems in the USA. His disputes with Motown have even poisoned his relationship with his new LP *In Our Lifetime?*. "In fact," he says, "I disavow this as my work".**

— MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 21 —

AFTER NEARLY TWO hours in that bedroom, Lydia finally gave up. By any standards she'd waited long enough for her Marvin Gaye interview – a month she now reckoned – and it was becoming obvious that once again she had missed the boat.

Sitting on a stool in Marvin's small hotel bedroom, she tried to shrug off her disappointment philosophically, cracking jokes to cover her pride.

"OK, well obviously yours is more important, so you can go first," she said to me, making me feel surprisingly glad and guilty in one sweeping moment.

As usual Marvin Gaye's time was being sought, and as usual nobody knew who was going to get there first. My particular meeting had been arranged for two that afternoon and it was now 3.30, while Lydia hadn't even been given a time.

Marvin himself was next door in the living room having important meetings, so Gloria, his publicist, said. A guy had just flown in from the States on account of the success of his new album, *In Our Lifetime?*, which had shot into the US charts at 17. This unprecedented success meant that Marvin was now running two hours late in his day, and that all visitors were shown into his tiny bedroom to wait.

Which is where Lydia (from *Superwoman* magazine) and I waited nervously among Marvin's clothes and books, full ashtrays, unmade bed, empty yoghurt cans and scraps of paper.

Ten minutes after Lydia made her decision and was preparing to go, Marvin walked in. Very tall and a lot slimmer than I'd expected, he quietly introduced himself, and asked us to join him in the living room.

Dutifully we followed to a neat, comfortable room which was a lot grander than anticipated. With us was Gloria, looking increasingly nervous about the situation. So when Lydia admitted that she would be prepared to come back another time to talk, a smile of blazing relief shot across Gloria's mouth and she hugged the unhappy Lydia on the spot. »

EUGENE ADEBARI / REX FEATURES

Marvin just sat serenely by a glass table, patiently awaiting the first interview of the day dressed in a white dressing gown and large brown sandals. In a surprisingly quiet voice he told Lydia he would look forward to seeing her later. Then the bell rang.

Enter the man from *Record Mirror*, on time for his three o'clock interview. Panic started to set in. "Well what are you going to do?" Marvin softly asked his press officer, when he realised who all these people cluttering his sitting room were. "It's your job, love. I'm only the artist…"

Luckily the man from *Record Mirror* knew what he was going to do. He was going to come back later as well, and Gloria damn near hugged him on the spot too.

He'd graciously gone when Gloria leant down and whispered in my ear: "You won't mention this delay, will you?"

"Of course not, Gloria," I said, setting up my tape machine. "Oh good," she said, and then walked out of the room leaving myself and Marvin.

**THE INTERVIEW THAT** followed, I can still hardly believe. It began with his reasons for staying in London after last year's triumphant concerts.

"No other reason," he states, "except I was here, and I decided to be here for a while. Also I felt an extra measure of energy and peace of mind, and the fact that it is more expedient for me to be on this side of the ocean than in America."

Could he expand on that?

"I would prefer that my legal people deal with my financial and personal problems in America at this time, and I be free of the responsibility," he says.

This turns out to be a typical Gaye trait – the ability to make outrageous statements seem as normal as everyday conversation, purely by dint of his restrained, measured voice. His presence, too, is quiet, and commanding, his eyes complementing the illusion by maintaining a steady, piercing gaze. You can't imagine him angry or violent, though if you can believe the stories over the last 22 years, then you'd have to.

His stormy relationship with Motown could alone fill volumes, and indeed a trash novel, written by a former Motown press agent, called *Number One With A Bullet*, is purportedly based on Marvin's career there.

What concerns us here today, however, is Marvin's new album; an album that goes a long way in recapturing his former glories. *In Our Lifetime?* was originally to be titled "Love Man", but that was changed at the last moment.

Don't bother congratulating Marvin on it, though.

"Well what I wanted to do conceptually," he says, "was show the contrast between two very powerful forces that are very eminent here on Earth. These two forces are good and evil, positive and negative, light and dark… however you want to put it.

"I wanted to show with music and the illustration on the cover that this is the area we should be concerned with most. The idea was that I would follow up on this concept and explain in detail how it works exactly, in depth, and what it is I have discovered about life, its purpose, what in fact we are about and why we are here.

"I didn't get a chance to clearly illustrate that with this work," he continues, "because I was stopped about three-quarters of the way through, conceptually speaking."

He stops and waits patiently for the next question, acting as though he's said nothing. Stopped? By whom?

"The pressure is from Motown," he says, "and it's not really a pressure. They simply confiscated the masters before I finished with the work and they released it as you hear it now."

There's a brief silence. What reason did they give? I ask naively. Gaye laughs briefly. "In order to make money."

Because you'd recorded for too long? "Probably." Oh. Another silence.

Later on Gaye will reveal that the new album was conceived from the top of his head and that not one note was written down while recording it. A fact that makes him extremely proud and probably made Motown very anxious, when it came to studio bills.

"Well I'm fond of the new piece," Gaye will say, "because of the way it was created, without writing and music for it. I feel a great satisfaction in hearing it finished. As much of what I did I can hear, because the liberties that were taken by Motown were appalling."

Then he delivers the thunderbolt.

"I can't really claim this piece as my work or my production. In fact I disavow publicly this as being my work."

Across from the glass table I can't really believe I'm hearing all this, its tone is so quiet, so peaceful. In fact, it's a continuation of the war between Gaye and Motown, which started way back in '72 when Marvin created the trailblazing *What's Going On* album, one of *the* black music albums.

Marvin's crime was to take as much time and money as was needed to create the album, directly going against Motown's policy of factory-line hits which must be produced on the spot by the artist.

Since then, even though Marvin was proved spectacularly right in making such a move – not only by the album's sales, but by its astounding quality – Motown USA and Marvin have not exactly been the best of associations.

"I doubt if any artist," Marvin replies to my question about why he has stayed so long with Motown, "has a perfect relationship with his record company. But if one is an artist, one will never have a good relationship with the other side. There is a horrible conflict. If one's artistic nature is true, then he or she is more likely to

VICTORIA APOLLO LONDON
LIVE!
JUNE 18

# An honest joy and delight

**MM JUN 27 Marvin draws on his dazzling career.**

**APART FROM THE** odd dash of Las Vegas, a little hammed-up stage behaviour, and a constant projection of distracting holiday snaps of our hero on a screen behind him, Marvin Gaye, Thursday night, was a pure revelation.

Bearing in mind the, er, eccentric reputation that this man carries before him (a reputation, incidentally, that has in all probability been blown up out of proportion – when did you last stand up royalty?), few could have expected his show to be so riveting.

He came on stage and sensed the enormous warmth and respect the audience was eager to give. To them the only important thing was the quality of his songs… and Marvin didn't let them down.

Assured and confident, he drew on that rich heritage to take us on a journey through his career.

There was early Motown, with Marvin as a dashing Errol Flynn, evoked by "Ain't That Peculiar". And a medley dedicated to Tammi Terrell, with her picture blown up on the screen while Marvin crooned beautifully in front of it.

There was the social comment in the head-spinning music of "Inner City Blues" and "Mercy Mercy". And he broke every heart in the house with a sensuous "Let's Get It On"; sent a flutter round the hall with a "Heard It Through The Grapevine" which bordered on the raunchy; and finally headed off for the '80s with the fine "Praise".

Little material was played off his last album – not surprising in view of the acerbic comments he has made about it; but the obvious relish and commitment that Marvin put into his performance was the crucial ingredient.

He exuded confidence and strength, intuitively knowing when to hold back or burst forward. Tackling his material with such a positive attitude, his performance was soul itself, stunning in its execution and hypnotic in variety. At any one moment you sensed that his unique vocal powers could send shivers up your spine just as easily as filling you with an honest joy and delight.

Even when his microphone broke down just as he was about to show off the full potential voice during "Let's Get It On", Marvin was able to laugh gracefully, crack a little joke and maintain the momentum.

His band, too, proved impressive. From the disturbing reports about short rehearsals a day before the tour, they've grown enormously, tackling with ease everything from gospel influences, short and sweet R&B, and Marvin's own unique brand of soul.

But the show belonged to Marvin. To be honest, I never dreamt he'd be this good. All I want now is another Marvin Gaye concert. And after Thursday that definitely ain't peculiar. *Paolo Hewitt*

run into tremendous difficulties with those who are concerned with (*adopts bored tone*) deadlines, and commerciality and control and all those nasty little words which make us very ill."

He wearily shrugs his shoulders, going on to further illustrate the dichotomy as he sees it of being an artist and yet also having to promote and concern himself with the business side of things.

Could this, then, be his last recording with Motown? "Yes it will," he answers gently.

"I can't imagine how I'll ever record another album with Motown unless a miracle happens. I'm not bitter or anything like that. It's expedience and it's a step upwards for me, actually.

"I feel that if I can find another record company that's more, let's say, more interested in my qualities as an artist, rather than a singer… If I can find a company that is interested more in me as an entity, a complete entity – producer, artist, arranger, musician – and who recognises those qualities in me, and who feels that these qualities are essentially good, and that I should be respected, and that one should be treated special if one is special, then that is the company I'll sign for."

What amazes me most is Marvin's weary acceptance of Motown, and their dealings. With *…Lifetime* he claims he deliberately steered away from the "Motown sound", which gives you some indication, he says, when you listen to the album now, how much they changed it. He also claims, straight-faced: "I have never given more than three-quarters of my talent to Motown at any time in my career. I've always held back."

His reasons are simple. If you treat me right, he says, I'll treat you right. Touché!

Gaye with his children Nona and Frankie Christian at an industry event in 1981

**WHAT MOTOWN COULDN'T** get at, however, was the, uh, concept behind this new album; the eternal battle between good and evil, and Marvin's conviction that Armageddon Time is fast approaching.

"What I was trying to convey primarily," he says, "is that if we're not concerned with survival and understanding… that these two forces [good and evil] are definitely in control of us and that it isn't important what these two forces do really because something is watching us, and something, whether we would like to admit it or not, is in control of us and is probably playing a neat little game of chess with us all."

He goes on to assert that these forces are battling over us to satisfy their egos and there's nothing we can do about it.

"That's the bottom line as I can see it from my years of studying, years of searching for the truth, and the real reason for things."

Ask him exactly who he's studied, though, and Marvin is reluctant to name names, only dropping Nostradamus, the French prophet, into the conversation.

"I wouldn't like to list publications, but many books, many volumes of books written by those I've been recommended who are wise, and when I find that a man supersedes intelligence and transcends to wisdom, I'll read his book. I have a healthy disrespect for intellect; I have all the respect in the world for wisdom."

Similarly, Marvin eschews conventional behaviour to live by his instincts alone. Therefore his ability to stand up to people such as Princess Margaret, last year at a dinner at the Lakeside Club in Camberley, Surrey.

"I'm controlled by my emotions and my feelings," he says softly.

"And if my emotions or my feelings say I shouldn't do something because of a very strong principled position that I must take, then in spite of the consequences, in spite of all that is facing me from a detrimental point of view, then I have to remain true to my artistic nature.

"That was a decision I had to make involving my pride and my dignity and it had nothing to do with the Royal Family. I'm dreadfully sorry I had to make such a decision. I don't know what else to say."

Apparently only a fire-and-brimstone call from Berry Gordy, head of Motown, whose office is supposedly plastered with pictures of himself and royalty, "persuaded" Marvin to appear at the club. When Marvin arrived, Princess Margaret, plus half the guests, had gone home anyway. Still, as Marvin is quick to point out, Bach and Beethoven suffered by living by their emotions, so he's not the first or last. No, what concerns Marvin even more is the impending disaster facing the world.

Food shortage, economic collapse, drying up of natural resources and, eventually, a nuclear war. All this information can be gleaned from the cover of his new album. Marvin is already prepared for the disaster.

"I'm going to be one of the survivors in the new era because I know where to be and what to do."

As for letting you or I into the secret, Marvin keeps tight-lipped.

"That is for people to find out. My job is to predict, and tell the people what I feel the truth is as far as I have ascertained it. If they care to make their own checks, then they'll find out where to be…"

And with that statement I was invited to terminate the interview. I was wheeled out and another wheeled in, to face this complex character whose time is so heavily booked.

Concerning future plans, Marvin has a tour of Africa looming up, of which he says: "I expect to enjoy total spiritual rejuvenation." Right now I can't decide whether that's a good or bad thing.

> "I'm controlled by my emotions and my feelings"


**OF COURSE, WHAT** you didn't know was that while we were talking an important phone call came through for Marvin. It was Berry Gordy, head of Motown.

Marvin calmly took the phone, asked after Gordy's welfare and said: "I just wanted to talk to you after the last time we spoke, because I felt we left each other, uh, unsatisfactorily."

Eventually it's decided that Marvin will send Gordy a detailed list of all he expects from his contract. But as the conversation continues, I can only think of Marvin's conviction that we are all controlled by one power.

"Just pawns in a game," Marvin said. How right he is. *Paolo Hewitt* ●

GETTY

"Listening to a highly amped world is extrordinary, like looking at things under a huge microscope": Brian Eno in 1981

# Eno: the electric boogaloo

Brian Eno explains "My Life In

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# "Work in New York, think in England"

**From New York, BRIAN ENO discusses work with DAVID BYRNE, and much more besides – from videodiscs to a dance troupe he's discovered. "They have developed an extraordinary dance called Electric Boogaloo..."**

— MELODY MAKER FEBRUARY 14 —

AN ISSUE OF *NME* late last year contained one of the most lung-bursting yet unintentional pieces of rock humour yet created. The feature was a question-and-answer interview with the guardian of one of the most formidable pair of frontal lobes in the rock world – Brian Eno. Early in the interview he expounded at length on one of the many topics close to his electronic heart, and ended with a slightly equivocal answer.

Oh, came the next question, do you have a theory on that? Dear God, Eno has theories like other people have daydreams or dandruff. Theories curl through his pores like mental perspiration. Throw him a subject, like under-arm bowling, home taping or the neutron bomb, and he'll toss up a reasoned debate like a seal nosing the balance of a ball.

That, at any rate, is the theory about Brian Eno.

In reality, and a phone call to New York must count, he exudes a reassuring practicality, and even the discreet unbuttoning of a self-contained concept like "primitive futurism" explains itself in the context of his conversation.

Our context was, unsurprisingly, his recent work with David Byrne that led to the Talking Heads *Remain In Light* album and the Eno/Byrne album *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*, released this month The album is interesting not only for itself, an experiment in the bonding of "found" voices, taken from the radio or other records, with Eno and »

DEBORAH FEINGOLD / GETTY

January 20, 1981: Eno and David Byrne experiment with video equipment in New York City shortly before the release of their first album collaboration, *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*

EBET ROBERTS/ GETTY

Byrne's music, but also as a bridging work that straddles the release of *Remain In Light*.

The Eno/Byrne album was recorded before they went to work on the Heads', but parts were re-recorded after a legal problem over the use of a "found" voice, allowing the record to be substantially altered after *Remain In Light* was finished.

So *Bush Of Ghosts* is both a prologue and epilogue to *Remain In Light*?

"Certainly, it was planned as a forerunner, and a version was finished, but we had to suspend it for legal reasons, which turned out to be fortunate. Some parts of the original were weak, and when we worked on the Talking Heads album it became possible to solve some of the problems we had faced.

"My perspectives on my work are always distorted by my proximity to them in time – first excitement, then extreme doubt, which if powerful enough will lead me to scrap it – the legal problem with the original is very handy as an excuse – and then I get to a stage of liking it, generally.

"With *Remain In Light*, I think at the moment that the experiments that particularly interested me worked, but I feel we didn't take them far enough. For instance, the idea of the layered vocals. I wish I had gone a lot further with that. It is an idea I've been fascinated by for some years, and will explore further in the future, but we only really grasped the idea near the end of recording, and as the songs on that album developed very late in the recording process, there wasn't the time to extend the layered vocals idea as far as I wanted.

"One of the other main things we started developing that pleased me was the interlocking instruments idea – instead of having a few instruments playing complex pieces, you get lots of instruments all playing very simple parts that mesh together to create a complex track. For example, there were five or six basses on "Born Under Punches", each doing simple bits that tie together.

"There's one track on that album, 'Listening Wind', that has a lovely feeling and is closest to my current mood – it has a mysterious, dark, slightly lost quality, and there is some of the feeling on *Bush Of Ghosts*. The most obviously different idea about that album is the use of found voices, although I don't feel it to be unique any more."

**ENO AND BYRNE'S** technique on *…Bush Of Ghosts* is to use a number of voices they came across – a Lebanese mountain singer, an indignant San Francisco radio host, an exorcist, a radio evangelist and others – and sew them into the fabric of the tracks as lead vocals rather than background sound effects.

They also used various "found" instruments – ashtrays, garbage cans and so on – to supplement the meagre supply of regular instruments they had with them in Los Angeles, and the tracks were built up with a careful regard to the creative possibilities of arbitrary, rather than random, chances.

Eno and Byrne started collecting interesting voices before recording, and began combing through their new-found library to select their recordings from radio or other records to enhance or create musical moods.


"We are both fairly disenchanted with ordinary song structures – the voice you record is invested with your own personality. What we wanted was to create something more mysterious, and by taking voices, out of context, but featuring them dominantly as the main vocal performance, you can go on to create meaning by surrounding the voice with a musical mood.

"In a way it was an experiment to see if you can create fairly sophisticated moods with voices outside their linguistic meaning. Basically, I'm so fed up with reading reviews of records that concentrate on the lyrics, quoting them as if they had some relevance, but ignoring the music.

How they'll get on with *…Bush Of Ghosts* with some unintelligible and some foreign vocals and no lyric sheet, I don't know!

"The two tracks that work really well for me are 'Moonlight In Glory' [a brawny, percussive track with vocals from the Moving Star Hall Singers from Sea Island, Georgia, whose declamatory style is close to Byrne's] and 'Regiment' [an open, loping drum pattern overlaid by a vocal from the Lebanese mountain singer that sounds like an early call for the Ayatollah].

"I think those are the two real achievements of the album, and I think my synth solo on 'Regiment' is possibly the best I've ever played. People think it's a Fripp guitar rip-off [they certainly do], but it really is me on synthesizer. In fact, I remember Fripp once saying something like I was the best guitar player he'd heard, and I didn't even play guitar."

The broad, rolling style of drumming that typifies the first side of the new album makes a direct link with the "beatier" tracks on Eno's *Before And After Science*, but it was not, said Eno, a conscious link.

"When I make a record, it always seems fairly unrelated to everything I've ever done. But looking at it retrospectively, I can see a piece's antecedents. You're right that *Before And After Science* is an antecedent in the rhythmic sense, and at the same time, on 'Kurt's Rejoinder', I used a found voice for the first time.

"Following antecedents, if you look over the Talking Heads' albums, David's singing style has become more and more preacher, more declamatory, and we found we both have a background in the ideas behind that – the use of single phrases, often apparently or actually unrelated, to replace a conventional lyric – and that led us to our work with voices on the album.

"Also, we are both keen on black music and its rhythms, which comes out strongly on the album. That's another ingredient – a movement towards the spiritual that you can sense around. I don't mean spiritual in the back-to-Jesus sense, I mean in the way it's used in African music.

"There is no distinction between the music you can dance to and music that moves you on a spiritual level. We particularly wanted to be working in this strange area of mood and spirit as well as action or dance."

Looking for clues to current intentions in past achievements is always a treacherous business, but Eno responded agreeably to the idea that the use of "normal" sounds like radio voices or other people's recorded voices sits at no great distance from his previous work in the realm of ambient music – music to surround and unobtrusively support everyday activities.

"I hadn't thought of that particular connection, but it's right. I'm particularly fascinated by radio, especially in America. It's extraordinary just how out of control it is. In Britain or Europe the presenters are picked for their qualities of calmness and obvious rationality – over here it's the ranting fringe that seems to get on the airwaves.

"It sounds such a mess compared to the ordered delivery you get in Britain. Here you get the nuttiest people in charge of the airwaves – it's fascinating. It seems to me that radio in America states the boundary conditions of madness – you have a constant source of extreme points of view on tap!"

With that radio babble on endless stream, Eno has found America, and particularly New York, an ideal workplace.

"I've been living in the US for some time now, but legally I am a visitor, and my psychological status is that of a visitor as well. If you are working, New York is a great city, but if you're trying to think, it's the worst place in the world.

"The whole accent is on action; go go go, rather than contemplation. At the moment I have an apartment in Maida Vale, but I'm looking for a house over there. In the future I shall do my work in New York and my thinking in England!"

An integral part of that thought and work at the moment at Eno's involvement in video development, a technical craft seen as a life-saving, profit-giving miracle a year ago by a music business that had bloated itself into financial panic. The videodisc was to come with the call and thunder of the Seventh Cavalry to save and revive a flagging market – and there, it seemed, the thinking stopped.

"The massive problem is finding something that people will want to watch hundreds of times over, the way you listen to music. Blondie's *Eat To The Beat* way is exactly wrong – a dead end. The strictly illustrational approach just isn't going to work. Neither is the Todd Rundgren way of taking the most advanced computer techniques to create devastating visual psychedelia – that isn't going anywhere either.

"It's like fireworks – astonishing effects that will please you for a few minutes, but they are just effects and not bonded to a deeper structure. I have been doing a lot of work at home on this recently, filming a lot of different things, and observing my reactions to them, and trying to work out what held my attention.

"There are, I have decided, two worthwhile areas. One is to think of video as a static, rather than an active thing; regarding it rather like a painting. You look at it where it is for what it is, not waiting for the next episode or piece of action.

"I have been working with the screen vertically, and filming land and skyscapes that change and evolve very slowly, then putting music to them as an idea for a videodisc. They are interesting not for what is going to happen but what is there – like looking out of a window.

"The second approach I have been working on is the idea of dance. I think the great revolution that will come with videodiscs is that they will make dance a mass form, as records did for popular music.

"Dances and dancers can be watched endlessly and have their own musical form, and I think in a few years you'll have dance groups who just play – obviously it will have its Pan's People side, the MOR end, but there can be some incredibly exciting things on the fringe between dance and performance art.

"At home I have a video of a 10-man black dance group who just get together and dance in their spare time. They have developed an extraordinary dance called Electric Boogaloo, which is exciting, very intricate and includes some unique moves and steps I've never seen anywhere before.

"It's a lousily filmed video with shaky camera work and poor sound, but each time I watch the video I am more and more amazed by it – it is totally engaging."

On top of his video work, Eno is recording and developing various musical ideas that will probably end up split onto different albums.

"One direction is forming that is at an awkward, clumsy early stage. The main influence on it was a Miles Davis track called 'He Loved Him Madly', on *Get Up With It*, which has a very strange atmosphere, as if you are standing in a clearing hearing different instruments at different distances from you. It was mixed with that feeling of distance, and that interests me a great deal.

"While I was in Ghana, I spent a lot of the time with a stereo mic and a tape recorder with a set of those tiny headphones. I would just sit outside at night, often for hours, listening to the environment around me amplified and through the headphones. Listening to a highly amped world is extraordinary, like looking at things under a huge microscope, and I am trying to work out ways of making music with that feeling of relatedness and un-relatedness."

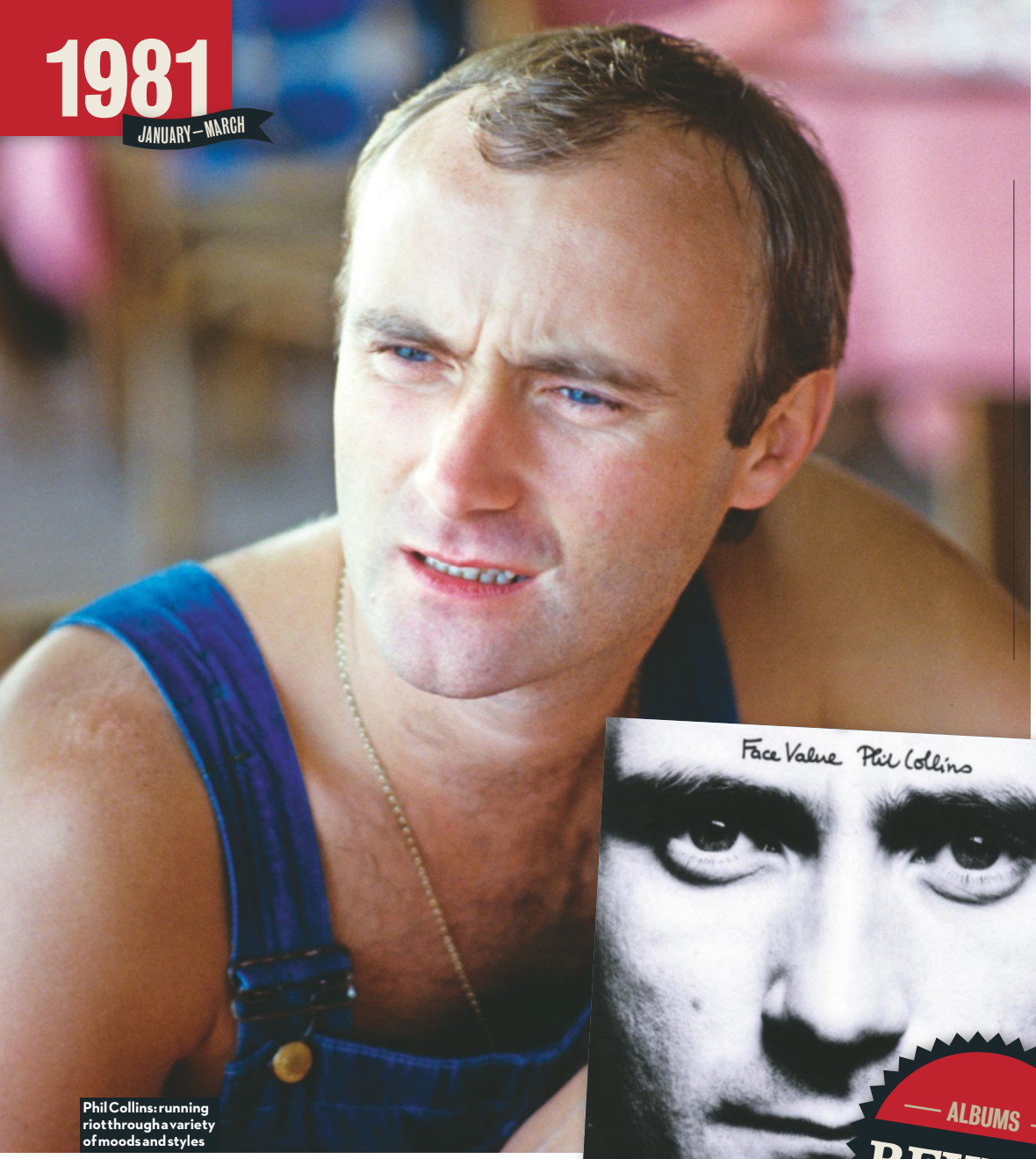
> "I'm so fed up reading reviews that concentrate on the lyrics"


**SUCH EXTENSIVE WORK** with music and visuals – and, most of all, ideas – brings mail and other communications to Eno in doormat measure. Just before we spoke, Eno had finished a day at his office answering the regular flow of letters from interested listeners and viewers.

"I had one today that particularly pleased me from a psychotherapist in Chicago, who wrote to tell me how she had been using ambient music with the children she looks after.

"One child who everyone thought completely deaf started responding to *Discreet Music*, and for a long time only appeared to hear that, but is now slowly responding to other things.

"Another child she wrote about hadn't slept for two years. They tried everything but nothing worked. The first time that child slept after two years was when the played *Discreet Music*," said a contented Eno. "I think that's a compliment." *John Orme* •



Phil Collins: running riot through a variety of moods and styles

ANGELO DELIGIO / GETTY


ALBUMS REVIEW 1981

## ALBUMS

**Phil Collins Face Value** VIRGIN

Let's have the facts up front: *Face Value* is Phil Collins' first solo album. Phil Collins is, of course, the drummer/vocalist with Genesis, the notoriously soporific pomp-rock megastars. The equation insists that this mucker's solo excursion must surely trace the same vapid contours that band have been running their fingers around for so long.

Preconceptions tend, however, to blur the image, distort the outline; predict only confusion; it would be easier for us both if you left yours at the door.

*Face Value* delights in confounding the familiar parameters of that band's style: listening to this album is like meeting someone you thought you knew and disliked and discovering that they've got far more going for themselves than you ever imagined. A cursory glance at the credits he's accumulated for his work outside Genesis should've suggested that Collins had more up his sleeve than his elbow. He's continually put himself about with a promiscuous relish, turning up on albums by Brian Eno, Robert Fripp, Peter Gabriel and, most recently, John Martyn.

Reflecting his eclectic outlook, *Face Value* confirms Collins as something of a musical cosmopolitan; a more suburban imagination would probably have selected one style and disciplined its repertoire to fit, Collins runs riot through a variety of settings, committing himself to the disparate moods and styles with genuine zeal. His enthusiasm lifts his encounters with black music convincingly above mere flirtation, and the inclusion of the joyous Earth, Wind & Fire horns gives the album an authentic clout wherever they appear.

"In The Air Tonight" opens the album, its discreet tension by now familiar though hardly diminished. This is a slightly different version to the single. The "Intruder" drum pattern enters far later; but when it does crash in, the effect is startling. You feel like someone's just burgled your heart.

The immaculate standard set here is continued through to the final grooves of Side One. Opening with a warm wash of sound that recalls the kind of textures contrived by Eno on *Another Green World*, "This Must Be Love" is a delicate ballad, Collins' husky vocal and slightly slurred phrasing evoking John Martyn. Stephen Bishop's backing vocals are maybe a little too glossy and threaten to take the sting out of the cut, but the interplay between Alphonso Johnson's dextrous basslines and Daryl Stuermer's glistening guitar is engrossing.

"Behind The Lines" snaps into focus with an exuberant pop! The EW&F horns explode in a flurry of celebration, over swirling voices, finger-clickin' rhythms and chattering percussion, giving your soul heels to dance on. I don't have a clue about the way this tune sounded when Genesis first recorded it on *Duke*, but I suspect it pales comprehensively besides this version.

"The Roof Is Leaking" follows. A dramatic contrast, the arrangement is unnervingly bleak, Collins' vocal set against stark piano, banjo and slide guitar. Lyrically, "Roof" is in the tradition of Dylan's "Hollis Brown" and Paul Siebel's "Jack-Knife Gypsy"; a brooding evocation of rural poverty. In Collins' song the narrator, watching his family suffer and die, finally despairs for any relief.

Written and sung by someone with a mansion in Weybridge and no shortage of the folding, this might've stretched the listener's credulity to the limit. But Collins' imaginative leap finds him landing surely on his feet rather than flat on his face. His concern is authentically conveyed, the musical detail deployed with crucial accuracy.

Collins dives again into the territory of *Another Green World* with the Enoesque "Droned". A skittering piano phrase is repeated with increasing momentum over Shankar's flamboyant violin slashes and pattering percussion; the final frenetic rush has the giddy drive of something like Tim Buckley's "I Never Asked To Be Your Mountain".

Side One plays out to the elegiac strains of "Hand In Hand". Gentle, lapping percussion, piano and airy synthesizer introduce a drifting theme; the mood's picked up by a low, rumbling bass, given emphasis by Collins' halting drum interpolations, enhanced first by a choir and then the wondrous EW&F horns, back from lunch but as hungry as ever.

"Hand In Hand" is rousing, probably sentimental; but your heart would have to be built like a brick shithouse not to feel stirred by it. After scaling some pretty

impressive heights on Side One, Collins relaxes his grip and begins to coast on Side Two. "I Missed Again" and "Thunder And Lightning" both feature the grooving smack and whistle of the EW&F horn section (augmented by Ronnie Scott's tenor on "... Again"), but neither matches the robust exchanges of "Behind The Lines". "You Know What I Mean" is the album's Big Ballad. The effectively stark introduction is quickly overwhelmed by Arif Mardin's elaborate string arrangement: to the song's cost, Mardin edges Collins from mellow drama to melodrama.

"I'm Not Moving" is lightweight, sub-McCartney; a novelty that doesn't know quite what to make of itself. Introduced by a lovely smoky midnight sax and mellow flugelhorns, "If Leaving Me Is Easy" is the side's standout track. Collins sounds like a man who's just reached the bottom of the bottle; the poignancy of his performance is slightly undermined, however, by the intrusive falsetto backing vocals and the strings tugging too hard for our sympathy.

*Face Value* goes out with a brave assault on "Tomorrow Never Knows", which has a swirling cauldron of synths, horns and voices held together by growling bass and elbow-snapping drumming. Collins' version doesn't have the white-knuckled intensity of the radical Manzanera/Eno/801 interpretation, but its very inclusion here is evidence of Collins' determination to take on as much as possible.

It's also a final confirmation that while Genesis may have their heads in the clouds, Phil Collins has got his feet on the ground.

*Allan Jones, MM Feb 7*

**Fire Engines** Lubricate Your Living Room POP: AURAL

A piece of plastic flying into the ointment, battering the stodgy trends, breaking down the walls of eternal heartache and scaring the pants off of the complacently dejected.

What is to be done? So many think they know the answer – take a superficial look at the deeply felt and masterfully expressed emotions of Joy Division and lift off the gloomy gloss. Paint a soundtrack for Armageddon. Or laugh in its face, gallivant in glad rags and pretend that's some big deal.

Fire Engines have an answer, and they probably haven't even thought about it. Leap out of your chair, ring the bell, scream the klaxon and go chasing in the street. There's life in there – a lot of big noise and not all of it pleasant; spiky, angular guitars jabbering and brawling, and filled with enough energy to light a whole town.

David Henderson and Murray Slade are the guitarists responsible for this cockfight of a sound, flashing their plumes, pecking and squawking in an insane dervish dance, as if every performance could be their last. It's an exhilarating show, drenched with blood and feathers, the pair egged on continuously by drummer Russell Burn, denting cowbells and kit to death, and bassist Graham Main, riffing until his fingerpads are torn.

Inevitably, perhaps, the stamina begins to run down, and by the time they've begun to work their way through Side Two they're staggering around with what sounds like a late-'60s blues-boom riff and then engaging in minimal primitivism which quickly loses its initial charm.

At a recommended price of £2.49, a slight let-up in adrenalin shouldn't worry you too much, though. Fire Engines are crude (with a production to match) and compelling, rough stuff indeed that leaps up, down and inside out, nagging your mind with its worryingly unusual riffs for hours afterwards.

Coming in cheap paper sleeve and plastic bag (presumably the brainwave of Pop: Aural supremo Bob Last), this is music for the depression that doesn't give in to it.

*Lynden Barber, MM Jan 24*


## SINGLES

**Rainbow**
I Surrender POLYDOR

Absolute mayhem! Rainbow grab an old Free riff and hack away at its contours with none of that band's belligerent passion. Not quite as blundering and hopelessly boorish as Whitesnake or Gillan, Rainbow are still an unsightly blemish. And Ritchie Blackmore's solo here should convince everyone that he doesn't know his axe from his elbow. *MM Jan 31*

**Landscape**
Einstein A Go-Go RCA

Landscape are the responsibility of Richard Burgess, whose various associations with the likes of Spandau Ballet and Buggles is explained elsewhere in this issue. This is fleetingly beguiling; a disco-tronic pulse interrupted by eccentric twinges and deadpan asides. Incidental music without much incident. *MM Jan 31*

**Kim Wilde**
Kids In America RAK

The Wilde, the Innocent and the Meymott Street shuffle. Daughter of Marty, Kim turns in an ebullient piece of plastic pop, with more synthesizers than Tangerine Dream. "A hit with a bullet," says discerning features editor Irwin. *MM Feb 7*

**Robert Wyatt** Stalin Wasn't Stalling ROUGH TRADE

Hold the front page, late arrival snatches coveted Single Of The Week spot. An irresistible account of the fall of the Third Reich. Impossible to imagine, but if you can you'll hear Operation Barbarossa set to doo-wop surfing sounds with Wyatt's multi-tracked vocals causing simultaneous mirth and angst. Should be heard on all four BBC radio networks for two hours every day, or at least until Reagan retires. *MM Feb 7*

**Duran Duran** Planet Earth EMI

As empty as a Marcel Marceau soundtrack. Lacking soul and originality. *MM Feb 7*

SINGLES REVIEW 1981


Kim Wilde: ebullient plastic pop

REX FEATURES

# "We never went out of style..."

**Blighted by critics, the police and taxi radios, BLACK SABBATH continue to be a massive concern. "What I resent is people who put down our fans as dummies," says Geezer Butler. "You get some real intellectual people into what we're trying to say."**

**Black Sabbath on stage during the extensive, incident-filled Heaven And Hell Tour of 1980–81: (l–r) Geezer Butler, Vinny Appice, Ronnie James Dio and Tony Iommi**

STEVE CALLAGHAN / REX FEATURES

## — MELODY MAKER JANUARY 31 —

*"It comes back to your basic kid, really. The kids don't have to read in the press to know what to like, or turn on Radio 1 and say, 'Well that's what I've got to be into at the moment, I've got to follow that sort of fashion.' The kids reject all that, so there's not much music, apart from the heavy metal stuff, for them to choose from. Even then there's never been that many bands playing our sort of stuff. I mean, we took it one step further and made it really heavy."* *Geezer Butler, Leeds hotel room*

**BY SIX O'CLOCK** that night, Bridlington-on-Sea, a small Yorkshire seaside town, was dead. Nothing but silence. Down the stone high street, Audrey had finished dishing out her authentic home-made fish and chips in yesterday's papers, and retired to the cosy upstairs of her shop.

A little further down, Gypsy Rose Lee, "as patronised by Royalty", had likewise closed and vanished mystically into the night, leaving behind her quiet, empty streets.

Briefly the town lapsed into a silence, broken only by the sound of the North Sea's dark, gentle waters lapping against the dock's stone walls. Through the darkness, fishing ships silently slid out to sea, their huge outlines eerily floating into the distance.

A poignant silence held, hovered, saw what was coming, and then got the hell out as the first motorbike roared in. To be followed by another, then another and then cars screeching round the corners, music blaring out of the open windows. Deep Purple mixing with the sound of the seagull's squawks. Sullen youths, in leather jackets and enormously flared, frayed jeans, suddenly appeared on street corners, a huge variety of scarves, stickers, patches and badges draped around them.

Wine bottles in hand, they informed the citizens of Bridlington they thought it was not Friday, but the day of the lord.

"Sabbath! Sabbath! Sabbath!"

On the corner by a Wimpy Bar, two local girls crossed the road to avoid a group of males stuffing themselves with chips and cider.

"Oi!" the one with the beard and tattoos shouted.

"Want to see the show tonight?"

The girls quickened their pace.

"Stupid cows," shouted the bearded one, as the girls vanished out of sight, and then stuffed another handful of grease into his mouth.

The Black Sabbath concert was due to start in an hour.

**INSIDE THE HALL** both support bands had finished and the crowd began the chant for Sabbath. Backstage Ronnie Dio was saying his first words to me. "Hello. You got Steve Sutherland with you?" he asked in his distinctive American accent.

He was referring to the not-so-complimentary review of the band the innocent Sutherland had written in *MM* the previous week. I told him no.

"Do you know Steve well?" he inquired. "Because you better get to know him well in a short time. He may not be around much longer."

Oh God, here we go again, I thought. Another step in the right direction for the ever-worsening relations between Sabbath and this paper.

There was the occasion when Tony Iommi met up with Allan Jones for the first time since Jones had penned a not wildly enthusiastic critique of Tony's lifestyle and musical ability. Tony did the only thing possible. He beat the hell out of him.

"No, only joking," said Dio, assuredly patting my shoulder as Iommi, big and large in his all-leather suit, loomed into the dressing room. Ronnie introduces us. "Hello Tony," I say. "Allan sends his regards." A grin appears on his face. And he walks out to tune his guitar.

Dio hears the crowd shouting the band's name. "Why are they shouting for Saxon and not us?" he says with a grin.

*"Basically, the press have never understood us, and still don't now. I used to love the Cream and The Yardbirds and all them sort of bands, so it was natural for me, because I love this sort of music, to go on and play it. Those bands never got much critical acclaim either. But they always had the biggest followings around England."* *Geezer Butler, Leeds hotel room*

**HALFWAY THROUGH THE** set a 60-amp fuse decided enough was enough and blew itself up. It stopped Sabbath just as they were beginning to climb to an awesome climax of screaming vocals, wild guitars and battering drums.

For a second there was silence, and then Sabbath, professionals to the last, grinned and Dio cracked a few jokes while the amp was being replaced.

Five minutes later they were back at it again. Their new show now consists of a large segment of *Heaven And Hell* (their last album), interspersed with such all-time "classics" as

HAMMERSMITH ODEON
LONDON
LIVE!
JANUARY 18

# Comically corny

## MM JAN 24 Or just tedious? Sabbath can do both...

Stop laughing and listen. It wasn't that bad, really it wasn't. Well, OK, that Iommi bloke's guitar solo went on a bit, clocking in at precisely 10 minutes and 53 seconds of pretty standard, yawn-inducing, grease-fingered fret-work padded out with a clever-dick time change or two.

Oh yeah, and I s'pose ol' Vinny Appice's six-minute drum spot can hardly be said to have broadened the scope of superior sticksmanship, but count your blessings: at least the bassist, Geezer Butler, had the good sense to keep his shortcomings well and truly buried beneath the overall barrage.

So what if Ronnie James Dio did sound like he was having big trouble digesting a brick? His complete ineptitude as a forceful frontman made a welcome change from the excessive ranting s of that well-known nutter Ozzzzzzy Osbourne.

So the ghost of Crowley and Wheatley don't stalk the songs like they used to, and so the new ones [sic], "Lady Evil" and "Sweet Leaf" [from 1971], are dire, directionless dirges: at least there were lots of audience singalongs, a super-snazzy light show, a glossy fact-filled programme, dry-ice a-plenty, and a note-perfect "Paranoid" to compensate for the abysmal dross drawn from the latest, lamentable *Heaven And Hell* album which dominated the set. It was opening night, the first of four, the Sabs on the Sabbath, sold out in advance, an outright success and an excellent opportunity to indulge in a little bangin' of de'ead.

Let's not get bogged down in that old argument about the mindlessness or otherwise of heavy metal. Suffice to say when the Sabs were good, they were comically corny, but more often than not, they were turgid, tedious and not half loud enough. It really wasn't that bad – just bloody dull, that's all. *Steve Sutherland*

Ozzy Osbourne's replacement, Ronnie James Dio, on stage on the Heaven And Hell Tour

PETER STILL / GETTY

"War Pigs" (written about Vietnam back in those alternative lifestyle days) and, inevitably, "Paranoid".

To boost it further, Tony Iommi treats us to a 20-minute guitar solo (thanks Tone) and Vinny Appice, depping for the ill Bill Ward, manages about seven minutes on his own. Lights flash constantly, smoke bombs explode, dry ice smothers everyone in sight, and fire is exploded on stage by two jets either side of Dio.

I watch it all from the mixing desk with Dio's wife Wendy, a former actress who endears herself to me by revealing she acted in, among others, *Lords Of The Flatbush*, one of the all-time great B-movies starring Sylvester Stallone and Henry Winkler before he got morals.

Halfway through, I slip off to the bar and ask a nervous 14-year-old just exactly what he sees in Black Sabbath and not, say, in The Jam.

"Well, there's no lights or lasers. It's too serious," he stammers out. "It hasn't got any…"

Glamour? I prompt…

"No, it just hasn't got any… eh… glamour."

I return to the desk and watch the youth of Bridlington go stark, raving crazy.

> "The press have never understood us, and still don't"

*"We've said it ourselves. Why a 20-minute solo? Why a 10-minute guitar solo? Why a five-minute guitar solo? Everyone does guitar solos. Fair enough. But after all it's really the one chance that Tony gets to do his improvisation, other than guitar solos in 'Sweet Leaf', or whatever other songs. I think he deserves to do that, it's his decision, and if he wants to do it he'll do it. Perhaps it does go on a bit, and we have talked about cutting the solo down, and that was Tony's suggestion."* Ronnie Dio.

*"We've never been into fashion anyway. All you've got to do is look at every concert we've ever done in Britain, which have always been sold out from day one. So we never went out of style because we've had such a good following.*

*"You think you're really representing what the kids of today want, and we were to a certain amount of kids. Even when punk got big in '76, like before that, when there was nothing coming out between '74 and '76, completely stale in England, we always had that following. We always stuck to our music, and our fans have always stuck to us.*

*"You'd be amazed at how many people come to us who have the same feelings about the world as us. They're so into the subjects we've covered, and they look to us for more information about it. That's what I resent about people who put down our fans as dummies. You get some real intellectual people into what we're trying to say."* Geezer Butler.

**NEXT DAY WE** go to Leeds. Outside the band's hotel, fans have already gathered, waiting and hoping for a glimpse, or an autograph, or something to justify their long wait in the cold.

Huw, tour manager, and I have travelled on ahead of the band with the luggage and can't help them. I've just been car sick everywhere, so I'm in no mood to help. I go up to my room and await the football results.

Next thing I know the gig is likely to be cancelled. The band's crew have set up the gear and Iommi's amp is picking up a local taxi firm's radio. Along with his breathtaking guitar work, this amp is also broadcasting the taxi firm's orders for the day.

A slight panic sets in. The band consider cancelling the gig. No way, say the police. If the gig's cancelled the kids will riot, and Sabbath will be charged with provoking a riot. They'll have to play.

The taxi firm steps in. Give us £500 – no, a grand, no, £1,500 – no, let's say you give us £2,000 – and we'll go off air for the duration of your show.

Get lost, the band tell them. In the end the band will play and pray it works out. The gig is in the Queens hall. It holds 5,000 people. Tonight an extra two-and-a-half thousand fans will squeeze into the hall.

Ain't no doubt about it. This band is massive.

*"We'd like to be able to touch everyone physically in the audience, and not just the ones down the front who you can really relate to because you can see their expressions and incredible enthusiasm. But there's nothing you can do. That's the way it is."* Ronnie Dio

**THAT NIGHT IN** Leeds, the band suffered just one hitch. When everybody had cleared themselves off the stage, Iommi the lone figure launched into his 20-minute epic. Slowly he built up the solo, beginning in "classic" fashion with soft, melodic chording, before increasing both the volume and velocity of his playing to lead up to a shattering finishing of screeching notes and tortured expressions.

As the solo light shone down upon him, Iommi, sweating, dramatically, crashed out the chords and notes, and with a great flourish stopped suddenly. The next noise myself and seven-and-a-half thousand other people heard was from his amp.

It went: "Car 51, please proceed to Neville Street."

Iommi, much to his credit, threw a quick grin and then hurled himself back into the solo pronto. Backstage I wished that the taxi had been for him.

*"I'm only giving people options, they can take it this way or that way, but the basic idea is still there. Like* Heaven And Hell *to me was all about injustices, especially to young people. The line which I think ties in the whole album – the whole concept of what I wanted to write about – is,* "The world is full of Kings and Queens/Who blind your eyes and steal your dreams."

*"I've seen, Geezer's seen, Tony's seen and Billy's seen so many people who don't have the talent to create themselves, but have the money to get inside your pocket, inside your soul, and take your artistic talent and turn it into financial benefit.*

*"Those are the kings and queens who blind your eyes and steal your dreams, and they do it to everyone. So perhaps what I'm trying to do is to keep up the string of social comment. We're middle-class people who believe that the middle-class people are the structure upon which this world is built, and we're trying to say for them: Look! King and queen… sod them! Don't let them blind your eyes and steal your dreams."* Ronnie Dio

**BACK AT THE** hotel, Geezer Butler sat in the reception area and, in his thick Brummie accent, confessed: "God, all I could think of up on stage tonight was a pint of John Smith's Yorkshire bitter."

*"I've thought about that, whether I could do something else. I've been in it for 12 years now, and just to go and open a shop somewhere or open a pub. When we made* Heaven And Hell, *I took two months off then because I didn't know what direction I was going in. I had a lot of hassles at the time, personal ones, and in the end I just couldn't stay in one place.*

*"I couldn't wait to start playing. The music on the radio was driving me nuts; I couldn't hear anything I liked. Just wanted to go out and play. I just had to go and do it, and this is the only band that can do it for me."* Geezer Butler

**I NEVER EXPECTED HEAVY** metal, Black Sabbath or the Old Way Of Rock to be just as popular as it undoubtedly is. On Saturday afternoon I heard Richard Strange on the radio talk about the "death of rock", and then witnessed queues about a quarter of a mile long within the Queens Hall waiting to buy Sabbath badges, T-shirts and all the merchandising they could get their hands on.

They also stood there, herded about like cattle, shouting and chanting one name – "Sabbath! Sabbath! Sabbath!" – like it was a religion or something. In fact it must be.

Sabbath, to their credit, rode it well, down-to-earth guys, experienced enough to know how to handle success and all its implications. And if ever I questioned their old-fashioned motives and way of working, all they had to do was to fall back on their past record. Four nights sold out here, a couple of million albums sold there.

Of course, it didn't convince me. Sheena Easton can boast the same thing, and to be honest I'd rather have been stuck in my hotel room with *Dallas* than Sabbath. But then, as Dio says himself, "that's the way it is".

For how long is anybody's guess.

*"Who else can we think of that writes the way we write? Judas Priest were meant to be some kind of successor to a band like Black Sabbath, and they still write about 'let's go out at midnight baby and do whatever'. It still boils down to the fact that they're taking what their idea of heavy metal is, which is the more classic end of it, and that's not our end of it at all.*

*"They're still talking about love in some way – love between a man and a woman in whatever perverted way they speak about it. And we don't do that. We have our own piece to speak and it's not what anybody else does. So I think we're absolutely original."* Ronnie Dio

*Paolo Hewitt* ●


# 1981

APRIL – JUNE

## THE CURE, BOB DYLAN, ADAM AND THE ANTS, KRAFTWERK AND MORE

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT / GETTY


# "Wake up and live"

### NME MAY 16 RIP, Bob Marley.

**THOUGH THE SHOCK** is less than that accompanying the tragic slaughter of John Lennon last year, the sense of loss brought on by the untimely death of Bob Marley is scarcely less.

Word has been going around reggae circles for months that Bob was losing his fight against cancer, but the man's own resilience and confidence carried us onwards and upwards in hope. It is significant that, right to the end, Marley refused to think "that negative way". He was, above all else, a symbol of hope and optimism for millions of fellow humans around the world, who saw in the diminutive singer from Trenchtown some aspect of their own sufferings or torments, some resilience and militancy that they lacked or aspired to.

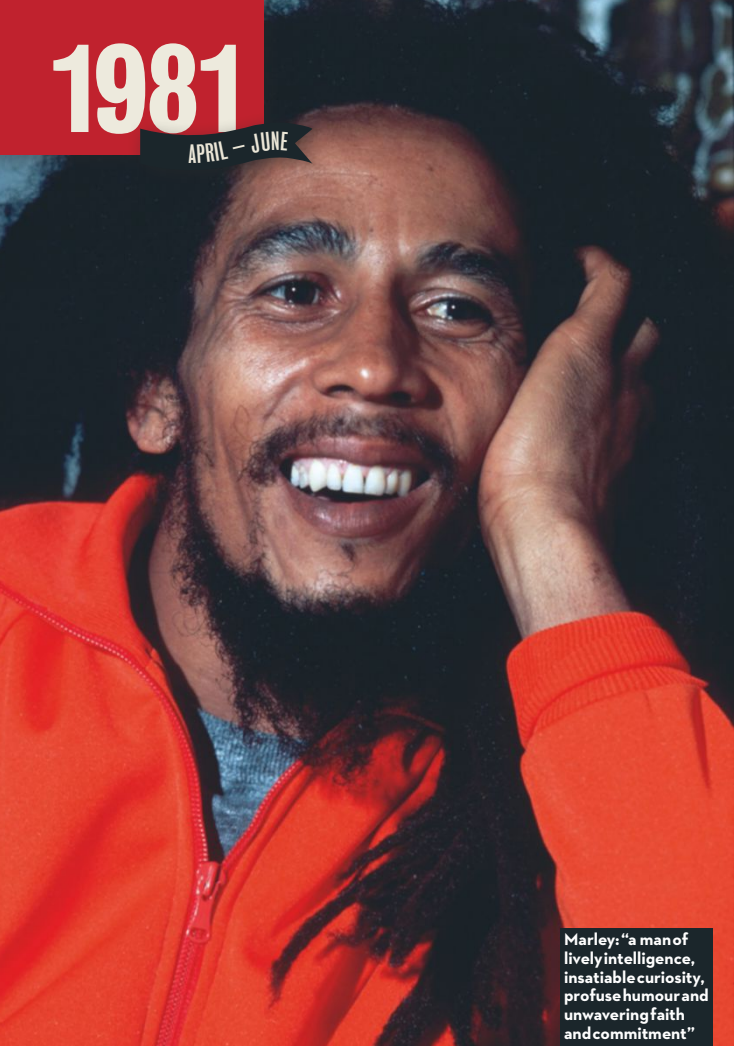
For, if Marley's appeal and his fame was less than that of his fellow spirit Lennon, then the nature of his success and his appeal were more remarkable than that of The Beatles, and certainly in the '70s, more immediate and more relevant to the times, to our sense of being placed in time.

While John took time out and off to discover a personal and domestic identity that fame had denied him, Marley moved progressively nearer the heart of the social and political activity of his time. In 1976 he became the first music star to be subjected to an assassination attempt – when gunmen burst into his Jamaican home and sprayed it with bullets, his offence apparently being to lend support to the campaign by Jamaican PM Michael Manley to win re-election.

He survived the attempt, just as he had survived the iniquities and injustices of social deprivation and racial and class stigma to become one of the truly visionary artists of modern times.

Though the relevance and validity of his religious convictions were frequently called into doubt by his detractors – glib, faint hearts and jaded cynics for the most part – Marley remained for many the apotheosis of rebel pride and sunny outgoingness, of warmth and militancy in unlikely fusion. The paradox was quickly apparent to anyone who met, interviewed or worked »

May 13, 1977: Bob Marley on stage with The Wailers at Houtrust Hallen in The Hague, Netherlands, during the Exodus Tour



Marley: "a man of lively intelligence, insatiable curiosity, profuse humour and unwavering faith and commitment"

ALLAN TANNENBAUM / GETTY

# A Man For All Reasoning

## Obituary By Neil Spencer

in association with Bob Marley. A man of lively intelligence, insatiable curiosity, profuse humour and unwavering faith and commitment, he was also endowed in great measure with the musical and performing talents to conquer the hearts of millions to whom his Rastafarian beliefs were indecipherable at best and offensive at worst.

He was made to suffer in interviews for his adherence to Rasta dogma, though few of his attackers possessed the underlying spirituality that animated his beliefs. The present writer remembers seeing Marley under attack in a German hotel from prosaic German radio interviewers pressing home questions about Haile Selassie's bank account.

"Why you no check the heart that beat instead of the bank account?" he answered, and it seemed then that whatever his failing, Marley was more on the side of life than the grey rationalists who pursued him.

I think it was at the same meeting that I realised the enormity of the pressure bearing down on him – spokesman for Rasta, for reggae, for Jamaica, for black people everywhere, for any people concerned with the advancement to a compassionate world community…

There was another paradox there, in the conflict between Bob's compassion and his belief that mankind would in some way receive the wrath of God's judgement for the unending wickedness of their ways, and his admonitions that "*If a fire, let it burn, if a blood, let it run*," were no idle Sunday-school chatter, but intimations of the Apocalypse that reverberated throughout his work.

Perhaps there was a conflict too between his identity as a black spokesman and the fact that his father was white; not that Marley was in any way racist, simply that his mixed blood made him check the absurdities of racism that much more profoundly within himself.

Robert Nesta Marley was born the son of an English army captain from Liverpool who had left Jamaica by the time his son was born to Cedella Booker in the parish of St Ann's. Bob Marley never knew his white father, but throughout his life he enjoyed a close relationship with his mother, who survives him. There was always uncertainty about the exact date of his birth, and though April 6 is shown on his passport, Marley once informed this writer that the true date was in mid-February.

He spent much of his childhood in the country, and retained a great love of nature and the outdoors, sometimes in later years talking of returning to the land and becoming a farmer.

His family were poor – Jamaican poor, which means very poor indeed. They moved to West Kingston and Marley spent his adolescence learning survival on the lawless streets of the Trenchtown ghetto, where he quickly teamed up with schoolmates Peter McIntosh and Neville "Bunny" O'Riley to form The Wailers, a vocal trio much in the style of the soul outfits to be heard on the Miami radio shows – the pure high-falsetto harmonies of Curtis Mayfield's Impressions were a particular inspiration for the teenage group.

**"If you knew what life was worth, you would look for yours on Earth" – "Get Up Stand Up"**

At first The Wailers were joined by two further schoolmates, Beverley Kelso and Junior Braithwaite, but these left soon after the group had cut its first single, "Simmer Down", for producer and patriarch Coxsone Dodd in 1964.

Marley had already cut a solo single – "One Cup Of Coffee" – two years earlier, when at the age of 16 he had been introduced to producer Leslie Kong by up-and-coming singer Jimmy Cliff, but the record flopped.

The Wailers, however, were an instant success, and over the next three years cut a series of classic hit singles for Dodd, varying in approach between slow ballads in the American soul style – "I'm Still Waiting", "It Hurts To Be Alone" – and furious uptempo ska tunes like "Love And Affection" and "One Love".

The record that sealed the trio's reputation as the toughest, most popular combo on the island was "Rude Boy", a paean to the exploits of the freewheeling delinquent youth who hung out, bored and reckless, on the streets of the capital. The disc triggered a craze for "Rudie" records which swept the charts, relating episodes in the daredevil way of the rudies and their endless confrontations with authority. The group also started to sing ribald sexual celebrations like "Bend Down Low" and "Put It On".

Ever pioneers, The Wailers decided to start their own label, Wailin' Souls, but this venture soon foundered when Bunny was railroaded into prison on charges of possessing Jamaica's national drug, marijuana.

Tosh and Marley cooled their heels. Marley spent some time in America, working at a car factory in Delaware, where his mother had settled. He returned to Jamaica to sign a deal with soul singer Johnny Nash, resulting in a single, "Reggae On Broadway", on CBS. Later Nash would have hits with Marley tunes "Stir It Up" and "Guava Jelly", one of many artists to prosper from Marley's prodigious and song-writing talents.

The turn of the decade found The Wailers reunited and on better form than ever, working with producer Lee Perry – the start of a long association between The Upsetter and Marley – on material they released on their own newly founded label Tuff Gong. With Perry pioneering new sounds and rhythms, brilliantly assisted by the resident rhythm section of the Barrett brothers, and the group, particularly Marley, penning songs whose spirit and insight resound to the present day, the results were truly magical. Songs like "Trenchtown Rock", "Duppy Conqueror", "Small Axe", "Mr Brown" and "Soul Rebel" were Jamaican smashes and began to attract the attention of others less directly involved in the still tiny Jamaican music business.

Acutely sensing the potential of the group to reach a new audience untutored and ignorant of Jamaican roots music – "reggae" was currently enjoying a boom as disposable chart music; the idea that it could have anything to communicate of the weight and import of rock and soul or jazz was alien – Island Records founding father Chris Blackwell signed the group and put them into a 24-track studio with unlimited time; the kind of procedure enjoyed by even the most mediocre of rock talents.

With Blackwell's considerable entrepreneurial talents at the helm, and unlimited studio time (and session players) at their disposal for the first time in their career, The Wailers' dazzling, innovatory *Catch A Fire* LP inevitably made the group a cult within

a rock community largely drained of the revolutionary fervour of the '60s.

Most, however, couldn't cope with the languid rhythmic intricacies of the music and its uncompromising spiritual and social message, and even tours by the group failed to activate more than a minority of either the media (journalists Carl Gayle and Richard Williams were notable exceptions) or the public at large. *Catch A Fire* served as the blueprint for all Marley's albums on Island over the next eight or so years.

Peter Tosh and Bunny both left the group – not without acrimony – after the second album, *Burnin'*, leaving hardcore fans bemoaning the demise of the group and most others heralding the solo Marley on *Natty Dread*, the album that was to propel both him and Jamaican music as a whole into the limelight.

His tour of the UK the summer of its release was one of the most delirious and thrilling shows that many of us have ever witnessed, and people still talk in reverend gasps of the Lyceum show that constituted his *Live!* album of that year. His subsequent recordings – and indeed the live show itself, with the I Three replacing the harmonies supplied by Tosh and Bunny, and a progressively greater instrumentation – have been largely refinements and variations of the formula he evolved in the mid-'70s, its appeal spreading steadily further round the globe.

He's had massive Top 10 and disco hits – "No Woman No Cry", "Jamming", "Would You Be Loved" – and single-handed he has made the concepts of "Dread" and "Rasta" mean something to people who otherwise would scarcely have heard of Jamaica. He inspired the island's music business to look outside its own tiny market, and if the cultural exchange has at times seems lopsided (ie, reggae lost out), then times are still early.

He gave the popular press something to get excited about when they discovered that the Jamaican Miss World had a boyfriend who smoked a pound of marijuana a week, had dreadlocks on his shoulders, and nonchalantly talked of his nine children, the majority of them not by his legal wife Rita, who has been with him since the earliest days of The Wailers and whose support and concern have been increasingly apparent since the announcement of his illness.

Many of Bob's dreams in this life were realised in his lifetime. He travelled to Ethiopia; he saw Zimbabwe "liberated", and the Zimbabwe government's invitation to play at the country's independence celebrations last year was for Marley one of the most important and moving events of his life and career.

Until cancer struck him down, he was in fact on the brink of another stage in his career. He planned to finally conquer America, aided by Stevie Wonder, with whom he had stuck up a friendship and who had written the international best-seller "Master Blaster" about the wiry Jamaican hero. Better would have come.

For Marley and his fellow Rastafarians, there can be little comfort in the idea of the peace and tranquillity of the grave. Marley did not believe in an afterlife… *"If you knew what life was worth, you would look for yours on Earth,"* he sang in "Get Up Stand Up", and he meant it.

I also recall having an intense conversation with the man and his friends on the occasion of the Jamaican Peace Concert in 1978. We were sat on the steps of his Hope Road headquarters, engaged in metaphysical ramblings. "When you're dead you're dead," chuckled Marley, over and over, and appreciative laughter came from his cohorts.

The corollary to that is: when you're alive, be alive fully: "Wake up and live", as Bob said. We could do worse than to follow his inspiration. *Neil Spencer* •

Paul Weller in 1981: protestor, publisher and bonfire starter

# Poetry of Weller

**MM MAY 2 New, diversifying activity from the Jam frontman.**

**TO COINCIDE WITH** the release of their new single "Funeral Pyre"/"Disguises", The Jam – who will be touring abroad on its release date, May 22 – shot a video down in the woods of Woking (the posh end) to accompany their brand-new effort.

The film also involved hundreds of eager extras indulging in rites over bonfires for the benefit of the camera. The woodland bop goes on.

Further news from the Woking Wizards is that their Liverpool gig for the unemployed on Monday was set up in response to The Specials' Mayday London gig. "As The Specials are playing London when the march finishes," said Weller, "we thought we'd play Liverpool for the start of the march."

Weller has just published the second issue of *December Child*, his own fanzine. It's an interesting exercise, taking in essays on George Orwell and the state of TV from various contributors, to the poetry of both Weller and "friends". In fact, this summer Weller has been given one edition of BBC2's *Something Else* to present a poetry programme, which will be filmed in either June or July.

Should be a lot more interesting than the latest book on The Jam to hit the stalls. Published by Omnibus and written by Miles, it contains such riveting info as: "Paul has a regular girlfriend, Jill, who accompanies him on tour." Wow! It's only value lies in the quotes taken from early fanzines; the rest of the superficial copy is all drawn from interviews.

Incidentally, Miles, I could have sworn that Patrick Humphries worked for us when writing his album review of *Sound Affects*. But then Miles obviously knows a lot better, remarking on his review in the, er, *NME*, plus Dave McCullough's in *Record Mirror* when he writes (or so we're told that's what it is) for *Sounds*. *Paolo Hewitt*


ANDRE CSILLAG / REX FEATURES

The Human League Mk II, prior to expansion: (l–r) Joanne Catherall, Phil Oakey, Susan Ann Sulley and Adrian Wright

REX FEATURES

# "We have a big problem: no money"

**NME MAY 2** All change in The Human League. How can a pop band function without any musicians? "We get everything to its absolute boptimum..."

*"Watching them (The Human League) is like watching 1980!"* David Bowie, 1979

**IT IS 1981.** At Virgin Records, employees are drinking champagne out of coffee mugs to celebrate the success of a long-playing record by someone named Gillian, while graven images of Richard Jobson stare lugubriously from the walls.

In an enclosed space some distance removed from these festivities, The Human League – the label's classic underachievers – are engaged in a crisis meeting with senior personnel, the outcome of which will finally and irrevocably redefine the relationship between artists and company, or at the very least the prevailing assumptions concerning life on this planet as we understand it.

"We've given in! We've conceded everything!" declaims Philip Oakey, emerging from the conference room. He presents a faintly extraordinary spectacle. More arrogantly lopsided than ever, his asymmetrical haircut frames a faced coated in sufficient quantities of cosmetics to give even members of Japan a three-week headache. Incongruously, he is clad in a plain black jacket and shirt and blue jeans.

He is accompanied by Adrian Wright, originally the League's visual person but now actively involved in the construction of noises as an additional responsibility, and by Ian Burden, the group's new keyboard player. Adrian is in the middle of a day of rapid and drastic mood swings; Burden merely looks tall and confused.

To the average rock voyeur – assuming that such a person exists and would admit to existing even if he did – the current Human League are not in the best of positions. With those members of the original band popularly credited with the musical brains of the operation occupying themselves with their British Electric Foundation and Heaven 17 projects to considerable critical acclaim (even though their stuff is actually dead boring apart from the brilliant single), it would seem that Oakey and Wright have been left as little more than custodians of a name and a haircut. After all, their first post-Marsh and Ware single was not a lot to write home – or anywhere else – about, and their synthesizer pop and techno-glam visuals have been co-opted by a great many people who were playing orthodox pop and punk when "Being Boiled" first came out on Fast Product.

"They did it better," responds Oakey to this latter point with no small degree of magnanimity. He is eating chocolate, which always renders him considerably mellower if not significantly healthier. "They've only got the money and the hit records, but we've got the satisfaction of knowing that we started it."

"The satisfaction and the overdraft," interpolates Wright.

We begin to discuss the differences made to Life In The League by the BEF defection.

"When Martyn and Ian left," confesses Adrian, "we realised that we had nobody left who could actually play."

**"Rehearsal was totally alien to the old Human League. We never even rehearsed for live"**

How did this affect you?

"Drastically! We had to start playing. I started playing every day and so did he [Oakey] and we did 'Boys And Girls'..."

Oakey: "You went into playing and I went into quality control. That's the difference. The old Human League – and presumably BEF – work on a high level of 'inspiration'. No matter what nasties we'd say about them, they are certainly very inspired about what goes on in their heads and that's why their records can be so lovely.

"We work in a different way – we do loads and loads of different things and pick out the good ones and don't let them go through unless they are really good; get everything to its absolute boptimum. We rehearse, in other

words. Rehearsal was totally alien to the old Human League. We never even rehearsed for live. I would rehearse by singing to tapes..."

Ah yes, tapes. What's all this about Martyn and Ian erasing all the old backing tapes that you used to use?

Adrian: "We wouldn't use their tapes again anyway."

Oakey: "It really surprised me. We went out on this tour and we had to get three people in two weeks and teach them what to do. Two of them were at school and Ian we got in quite a deal later and didn't have much time to work out his lines. We still did absolutely new backing tapes for four new tracks. So we went to London and Bob [Last, founder of Fast and Pop: Aural and manager of both BEF and the League] said , 'Listen, lads, you've only got one copy of these backing tapes, so you'd better get 'em copied.'

"So we made two copies of each: perfect, wonderful, studio copies which I took home. Then we read in the paper, 'Oh, ha ha, we've taken the tapes off 'em. And the really sad thing is that we were using them ourselves to record other things over the tracks because we needed the tape..."

Oh what a tangled web!

"We'd only be doing the big hits from the old set anyway – 'Empire State' roared in at 53 – but when we tour next we'll have so much new stuff to do..."

Material is not, however, the commodity in short supply. Instead...

"We have a big problem: no money. I don't understand why. I mean, we haven't had any hit records, but we have no money and it's a real problem, being on a shoestring and trying to do something that looks amazing. I mean, it's ridiculous."

So, Mr Burden. What's it like being in The Human League?

"I'm not sure. I'm not in yet."

Philip: "Yes you are!"

Ian: "I'm not!"

Philip: "You are! It said so in the papers!"

Ian: "I should believe that then, shouldn't I? I don't know what's going on. I've been on a retainer for two months and at the end of the two months we decide what I'm supposed to be doing. And we haven't."

Well, do you want to be in The Human League?

Ian: "Yeah, I'd like to carry on."

Is it OK if he carries on, Philip?

Philip: (*expansively*) "I'd love him to carry on!"

In that case, Mr Burden, welcome to The Human League.

Burden is, in fact, the composer of the current League single "The Sound Of The Crowd" (a considerable improvement over "Boys And Girls"), though the song is co-credited to Oakey, who explains this seeming incongruity by stating that he earned his credit by "telling Ian to write the song and then changing it once he'd written it".

Oakey's current function would seem to be to tidy up and finish off the immense backlog of songs originated by Burden and Wright, the latter having blossomed as a vocalist, composer and instrumentalist.

Wright hints darkly that it was his desire to participate in the music that precipitated the break-up of the original League. This participation was prompted by his "getting well bored between tours while the others were writing and me having nothing to do but buy more slides".

Oakey, for one, is heartily impressed by these displays of talent and determination from one who'd been little more than band scapegoat and fall guy since the beginning of the League.

In the meantime, BEF and The Human League – now once again on speaking terms – continue to work in weekly shifts in their old studio in Sheffield. Both the studio itself and the old Human League synthesizers and gadgets are jointly owned, so both factions take it in turns to go in and work. Despite all the bitching from the BEF side, Oakey contents himself by remarking that "they're not as tidy as they might be".

"Besides," he argues, "if Ian [Marsh] and Martyn get to be as big as Abba, then we can sell our stories to the *News Of The World* and make a fortune. We've got pictures..."

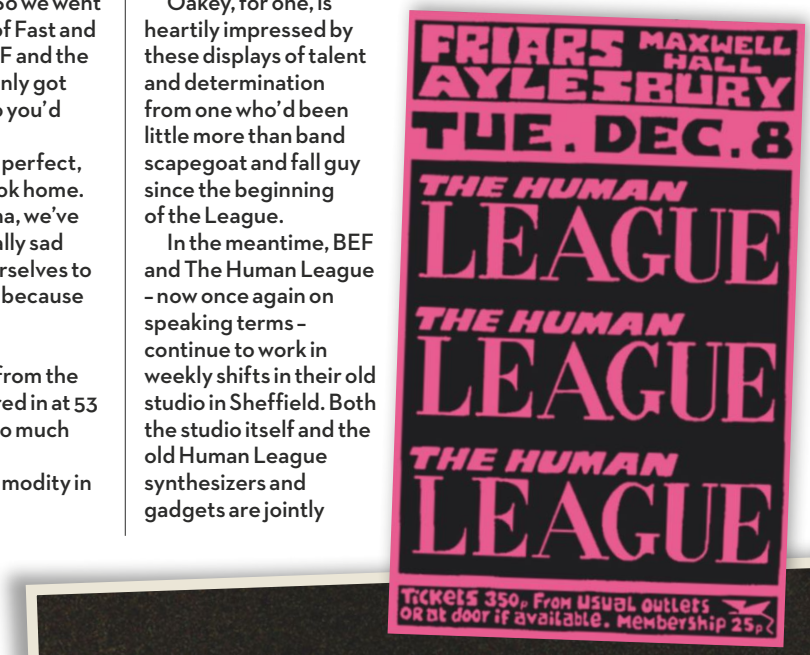
Wright (*gleefully*): "Pictures!"

Philip: "...and I've got my story written up in manuscript form, all the dirt..."

Adrian: "My Life With Martyn!"

And that leaves the haircut (Number 4 last year), once thought to be their sole asset... even that is temporary. Philip is threatening to get his hair cut totally different for the single after next. The consequences of that bode ill for the security of Western civilisation. Even more significant, Burden is threatening to make the League "really danceable". How does this affect Philip?

"Not at all. I can't dance. Not a single step. The girls tried to show me, but... not a single step." *Charles Shaar Murray*




December 6, 1981: the now six-piece Human League appear at London's Rainbow Theatre, the day after "Don't You Want Me" begins a five-week run at No 1

PETER STILL / GETTY

The 26-year-old Stuart Leslie Goddard – AKA Adam Ant – on stage in London, 1981

# “A revolt in style”

**ADAM AND THE ANTS are at their peak. Between sell-out shows and meeting royalty, Adam expounds on art, punk and the new pop aristocracy. “They’ve all got their own style, they all take care of business. They’re all looking and sounding good.”**

— MELODY MAKER APRIL 4 —

BACKSTAGE AND NERVOUS at the Newcastle City Hall, a group of us stand silently on some stone stairs in front of a door marked “Exit”. Holding the door’s iron bars are two bouncers, their huge forearm muscles tensing with every jolt of pressure the doors sporadically receive from the other side.

Everyone is waiting for the Word. We eye the doors apprehensively, a rush of nervous excitement starting to build in our stomach. Suddenly someone shouts “NOW!” and the bouncers fling open the doors and burst into the street.

A huge surge of people hit them in a sudden gush, the bouncers fighting to stop them breaking into the theatre. The first of the party dash past the throng to the waiting coach, the crowd impatiently allowing them to pass, their interest focused solely on one person. And when he finally appears, there’s a huge scream, a chorus of gasps, and the mob move on.

Biting! Pushing! Touching! They try everything as Adam Ant makes the 10-second journey to his seat on the coach. His arms are »


GRAHAM WILTSHIRE / GETTY

flung protectively around his head as he runs through the screaming gauntlet of arms grasping for that one moment, or one kiss, or one touch, or one anything, to remind them of the day they came into his life.

Urgently Adam is propelled along, helped by the desperate pulling arms of bouncers and manager, until he finally steps on to the coach, a strange delirious smile stretching across his face.

The crowd gather round the coach window and tap urgently, waving and shrieking at him. Adam waves back and the coach slowly pushes its way through the crowd. Adam settles back into his seat as the coach picks up speed and laughs out loud. The laugh of relief.

God only knows what he's thinking.

All the time I spent with Adam Ant, I had a recurring feeling: déjà vu. At first I thought it was a dream I'd had and left it at that. But the feeling persisted. So much so, in fact, that it was only on the train coming back that I suddenly realised what it was.

Then I knew that I had been here before. Ten years ago, in fact, when Marc Bolan, David Bowie, Slade and Gary Glitter started inciting the kind of fan worship that Adam Ant is presently experiencing.

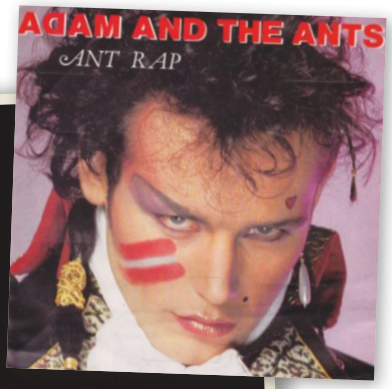
Every bit of the atmosphere that surrounded Adam Ant's Newcastle gig, the faces on the audience, the dressing up, the screaming, biting and pinching, the devotions and the worship, reminded me of when I first fell in love with music. Bolan was my first hero, Bowie my second. I was a fan then and so was Adam Ant. Only now he has five singles in the charts.

As you read this he will probably just be touching down in America for the start of a tour that has already sold out without him even playing one preliminary gig. His album has already sold a hundred thousand copies. He's No 1 in Australia, Sweden and Germany, and in countries that he has never played.

His success is not only confined to Britain. All around the world this man is about to dominate and stomp on every chart. That's his job. Because Adam Ant is the first *true* pop star of the '80s. No wonder I'd been here before.

MICHAEL PUTLAND / GETTY

Adam Ant: "I'm more involved with showbiz than rock'n'roll"




"**DID YOU ALWAYS** have a catholic taste in music?" asks the writer in room 412.

"Yes," replies the pop star. And then begins to explain.

"Because when I was a kid I used to study a lot and all my mates would be going down the club and listening to… It was when the second-generation skinheads were about and I got into that fashion, because it was great fashion when it's done right. It wasn't just a pair of boots. It was Royals, Crombies, sock suspenders, Perrys… Red Flash or Green Flash… turn-ups just right, comb back pocket, hair had to be semi-crop with side parting from a guy near Finchley Road, a guy called Ray Raymonds, I think. It had to be an Italian haircut, you know.

I was at grammar school and all my mates went to the comprehensive, which kind of separated us a bit. I used to sit up there doing my Latin homework, which I was awful at, and listening to 'Band Of Gold' coming out of the youth club every night. It used to be all the Tamla stuff."

"I had an old Dansette player or something. I didn't have much music because I didn't really have one of my own, but I started collecting records. The first record I think I bought was… Eh, I think I had two… I think I had the '1812 Overture', that was the first thing I ever had, then I had the *Magical Mystery Tour*.

"Then I started to buy Tiny Tim, because the first thing I was ever into was Tiny Tim. Purely because he was amazing. I just loved his stuff. Stuff like 'Have You Seen My Little Sue?' and the 78s thing he did. And I just loved him because he was real showbiz."

Loving Tiny Tim and going to grammar school at the same time must have clashed quite a bit, says the writer, filling in the silence.

"It was quite disciplined," agrees Adam. "In a way it taught me to work, because they give you such a lot of work to do at night that I built up a very high workrate. I think that in order to sit down willingly seven nights a week and…"

At which point there is a sharp knock on the door.

It's room service with tea for two. He enters in a white shirt and smart trousers, puts the tray down and asks Adam for three autographs. Adam graciously agrees, signs the paper and room service disappears. Adam settles himself again on the bed, his luggage scattered around him.

On the dressing-room table cassettes he has with him for the tour lie among the bottles and tubes of makeup. They include *The Idiot* by Iggy, *Low* by Bowie, the Dexys Midnight Runners debut album, *Triumph* by The Jacksons, a self-made compilation tape of the Stray Cats, Human League, Madness, The Jam, Heaven 17's "We Don't Need This Fascist Groove Thang" (which Adam is crazy about) and various others. There is also "Rise" by Herb Alpert.

Elsewhere clothes are scattered about with books and other bits of bric-a-brac. "I think with homework," says Adam, picking up the conversation again, "you either do it because you see that there is going to be something in it for you at the end of it. Or you don't.

"Well, I was capable of doing it and in a way all the work I've ever done, having been like an only child, did enable me to entertain myself. I had in mind going on to further education, but when I got there I realised I was better at the arts and it had to be art school. I had to do something involved with painting,

because I was the only art student at school," he says laughing.

"I was the only one who did A-level! Towards the end of it, because the art master left, I used to more or less teach the whole school's art classes. I used to stand in because I was the only A-level student. And that was quite good, because there were some quite heavy classes and there were some quite hooligan-styled kids and you had to earn their respect. If they gave you any lip you'd have to deal with it in a way they would understand rather than come on with the headmaster stuff which was nonsense. But that was alright.

"There was no help there at all," he continues. "There was no information available at that school [Marylebone Grammar, by the way], into higher education. I remember talking with the headmaster in the corridor and he said to me, 'Right, you're doing History, French and English'.

"I said, 'I want to do History, English and Art', and he said, 'Art isn't a subject. Art's just a hobby.' So I said, 'I've got no intention of going to university at all.' He said, 'But you'd get into university.' I said, 'I don't want to go', and he never spoke to me from that day on. Never. That was the end, but that was all right." Adam shrugs his shoulders. "I used to play a lot of sport. Rugby, cricket, things like that…gymnastics I used to do a lot. I liked gymnastics."

He rubs his eyes with a finger and you can't help noticing how tired he's looking these days. Beside him are the leather trousers that he will wear on stage tonight. He was up till six the previous morning sewing studs on them.

"I don't think anything I've learned in my life, I've wasted," he muses. "I think that everything I've learnt or been told I've catalogued somewhere. It doesn't matter what it is. Like even a bad experience is really valuable. I believe that if somebody has been beaten up really badly, they kind of spend the rest of their lives trying not to get in the same position. And that in a way makes you think about your mouth when you shout it off.

"Also everything you say, everything you say is a product of what you've been told. Like I maintain still that there's no original thought. I haven't got an original thought. The originality comes in how I clash the ideas together and present them. That's all it ever is," he admits.

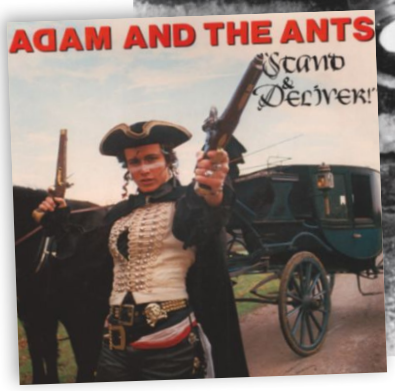
I smile to myself, and remember the time *Melody Maker* called him a "loquacious" individual. I still stand by that two years on.

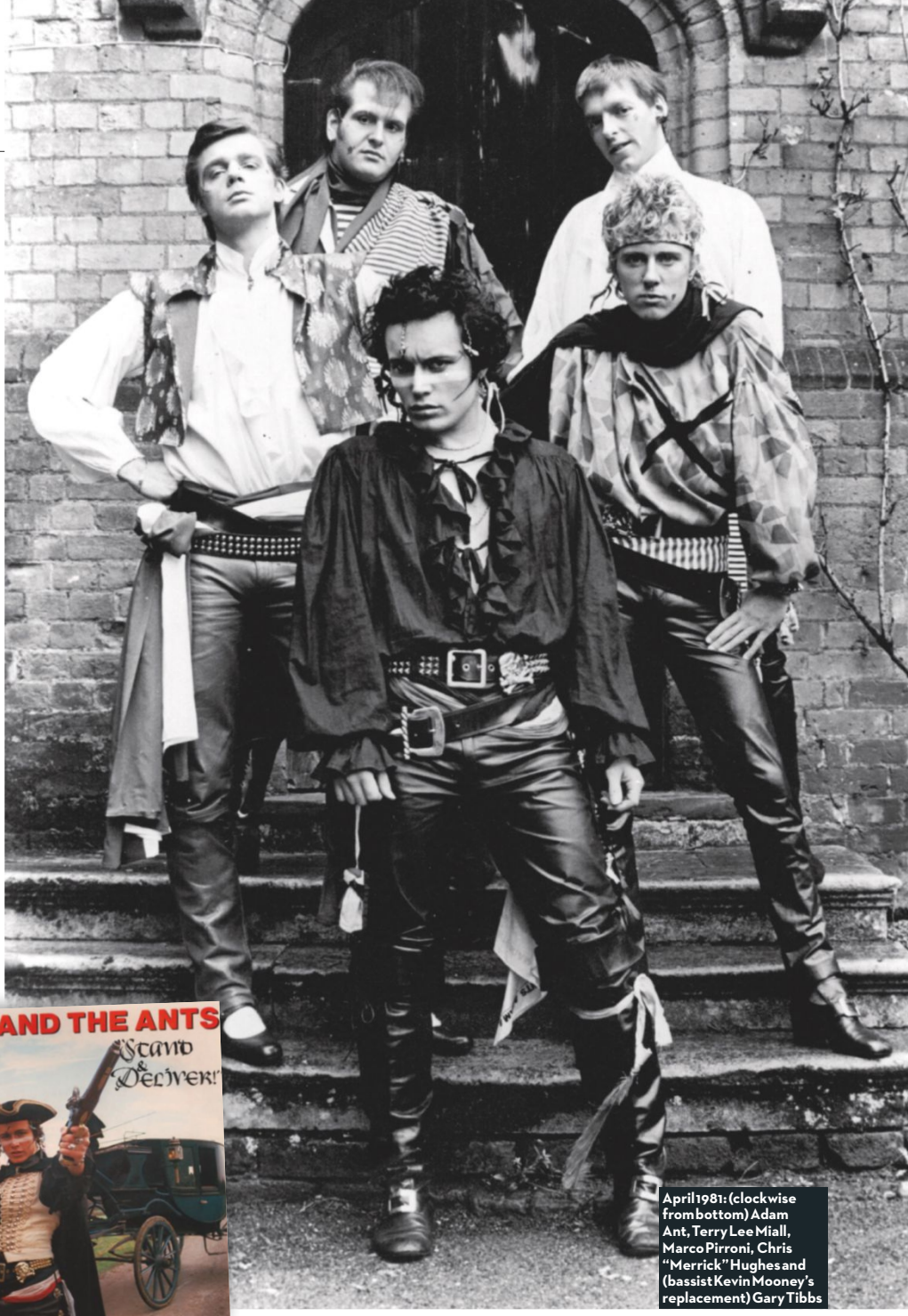
"I did in fact form my first group at school in the sixth form," reveals Adam. "I forget what it was called. Something useless, but…"

The sharp ring of the phone cuts him off. "Excuse me," he says and reaches over to pick it up. It's two fans that have been waiting for Adam outside the hotel. They haven't got the tickets for tonight's show. Can he meet them?

"Well, I'm a bit busy at the moment," says Adam. But he agrees to come down in half an hour's time. I glance at the miserable day outside the window and remember how lucky I am not to be standing outside Newcastle City Hall.

"Where are we?" asks Adam. "Ah, yes, well I was playing bass and singing. I styled myself on Paul McCartney. I learnt his solo albums, his first three solo albums. And Jack Bruce was quite a hot player at the time.



April 1981: (clockwise from bottom) Adam Ant, Terry Lee Miall, Marco Pirroni, Chris "Merrick" Hughes and (bassist Kevin Mooney's replacement) Gary Tibbs

> "I styled myself on McCartney, learnt his first solo albums"

I just, more or less, listened to bass players I liked in order to learn. That was my first group. We just did covers; just did old rock'n'roll songs. We did some Cream songs, Wishbone Ash songs, nutty things like that.

"Blues songs as well, because when I was playing the bass I also taught myself at the same time honky-tonk guitar, Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, and really began to get into that. Branched off into that and just got into Big Bill Broonzy and Bessie Smith and all that kind of stuff. I was really into that for two or three years, and I really did a lot of research."

In fact, in everything that Adam involves himself he does "a lot of research". "Because I think there's so much to listen to in your lifetime that you're in danger of actually losing out on it.

"There's something in everything. Something in every kind of music, every type of music, and to be quite honest the least influential music I've listened to is rock'n'roll, really. The most influential when I was at college were Roxy. I was really into Roxy and that's when I wrote a letter to Ferry.

"I was at art school and I was given a project to do on an artist from the 20th century, and I wanted to do Ferry because I felt he was a little unusual. He wrote me a letter back on Roxy paper and it really was good »

GETTY

"Avast, me hearties!": Adam heads off in pursuit of booty on a first North American tour, March/April 1981

because I began to realise that there was a so-called pop star who was an artist too. Up until that time there was T Rex and all the glam bands, which was great, but there was Ferry still having the time to write that. And I began to get very involved with artists such as Allen Jones…"

**AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL** Adam went to Hornsey Art College and joined a band called Bazooka Joe. Their leader was a guy called Danny Kleinman. Adam still remains firm friends with him – Danny designed the American Indian logo for the last tour.

Danny and Adam regularly played Hampstead Town Hall in Bazooka Joe, and here again all those familiar faces start turning up once more. "Dury in the Kilburns and Strummer in the 101'ers – you better believe it they were great. The rest of the band you didn't look at, but he was great. And I remember seeing him down the Nashville and you could see it then. Somebody asked him to sing "Route 66" and you could see it in him, the anger. He said, "You can take 'Route 66' and shove it right up your backside."

> "I never said that Adam And The Ants would never go on *TOTP*"

Adam felt the same excitement when a band called the Sex Pistols supported Bazooka Joe at St Martins College Of Art in November 1975. "Because they had the arrogance, you knew they were going to do it and I left Bazooka Joe over it. I said they're great."

Adam then formed a band called The B-Sides, "who never got out of South Clapham bedrooms", and also made a lot of money selling home-made jewellery at Hornsey Art College. He made enough money to buy equipment to record with, and when the first Adam And The Ants lineup came together, there was Adam handing out the tapes of the songs he'd recorded for the band to learn.

For the next three years the Ants, in various lineups, built up a steady punk following, gaining a notorious reputation as Adam utilised his past art student career to design badges and logos around the work of such erotic pop artists as Allen Jones. Adam's stage show too, with his leather and makeup, was just as sensational. His view of punk was that it was simply entertainment.

"I still maintain that nobody knew what the fuck John Rotten was singing about for a long time. To me it was always a revolt in style. You know 'Anarchy In The UK', so what? 'Schmanarchy In The UK', I mean who cares? The only person who thought it was political was Malcolm…"

Indeed McLaren was to make a crucial reappearance in Adam's life three years on from that first punk explosion. After the release of *Dirk Wears White Sox*, Adam's debut album for Do It Records, after a brief sojourn with Decca, McLaren took control of the Ants, who were by now selling out every time they breathed without the support of anybody but the kids, and introduced them to the idea of using African drums as on the Burundi album.

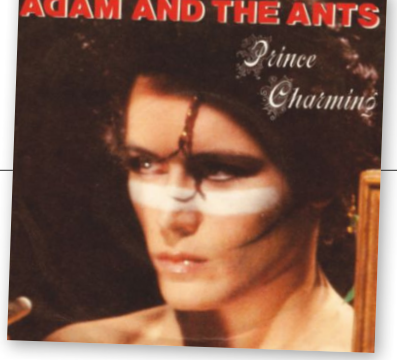
Adam took the idea, left Malcolm, signed to CBS and effectively blocked any chance Bow Wow Wow ever had of huge success. Dog eat dog? Ant smash dog more like it.

**SINCE HIS ASCENSION** to status, Adam Ant has been doing some strange things. Like appearing on *Jim'll Fix It*. Like meeting Princess Margaret and playing the *Royal Variety Show*. Like reissuing old singles. Like he used to be a punk, man. Our leader. And now look at him. A bloody pop star! He's sold out well and truly good. Bastard.

You're getting slagged off these days, I say to Adam. "Of course!" he replies. "But I mean I will do. I'll be more slagged off because I find that with the hits comes the writs. Let's put it this way. If in 1977 someone gave me a sandwich one cold morning and are now suing for… 'If I hadn't given you that bacon sandwich you wouldn't have lived and then you wouldn't have gone on to this success, so give me 15-20 grand' and believe it, then it's crazy. You can become very bitter," he concedes. "But I don't want to. I believe that I'm right and they're wrong."

He shrugs his shoulders once more. So why play the *Variety Show*?

"Because (a) it was for charity and for a very good cause. And (b) I offered my services to the Royal Variety Club Of Great Britain. Basically, there's no middlemen, and I am more involved in showbiz than rock'n'roll. I don't think rock'n'roll is showbiz. I think rock'n'roll is rock'n'roll and showbiz is showbiz, and doing the show was great because I met a lot of really nice people and there's no threat to them.




"You know in rock'n'roll there's this kind of dog-eat-dog shit, there really is. I've got to hate everybody because I'm Adam And The Ants and they're the Stray Cats and they're The Human League. I'm just telling you now," he says, getting a little stroppy, "that one of the nicest things about this success is that I've been able to meet and befriend people like Brian Setzer, Gary Numan, Paul Weller… people like Kevin Rowland – I haven't met him yet but I hope to – because I admire them. I can sit back and not feel threatened, not feel competitive, but just feel great.

"And if you look at the bands I've mentioned, plus Madness, they've all got an idea. They've all got a sound. The Nutty Sound, the Cat Sound, Intense Emotion Revue… they've all got their own logos, they've all got their own style, they all take care of business, they're all into looking and sounding good. The look has got to be as good as the sound, and neither has to be overwhelmingly important."

Clearly Adam is aware of where the Ants fit into things. And he's so right. The bands just mentioned are to the '80s, albeit in different shapes and sizes, what Slade, the glam bands, Bowie and Bolan were to their era. Fine. But doesn't it sound cosy up there. All pop stars together. I bet you were sneering at this a year ago, Adam – *Top Of The Pops* and all.

"No, because I never said that Adam And The Ants would never go on *Top Of The Pops*, I never limited myself, although I didn't think that there would ever be a situation where we would be asked, purely because I felt that there was no way I was going to compromise musically or ideal-wise." [Bet you loved that last sentence, punk…]

"And I haven't!" he shouts from across the bed.

"When me and Marco went in and recorded 'Kings Of The Wild Frontier', that was all we had. We financed our own tour with the publishing deal we'd got on the strength of 'Cartrouble', and if anybody tells me that 'Kings…' is a cop-out, then I will stand corrected. Because there is no way that song was acceptable eight months ago. It was a heavy-duty song. We went for it and it wasn't No 2 then and we still went for it. Then 'Dog' came. Then 'Antmusic', blah, blah, blah.

"But all those songs were written so far beyond and recorded that I was going out and doing the kind of things that I'd always done. The difference now is that I am able to fulfil promises I made to myself. I've always wanted good merchandise. I've always wanted to play a class joint, and I've always wanted to have fun."

That's not what the punks say, though, Adam. They say you were the leader and you betrayed them. You could have been a real contender, Adam, instead of what you are now… a pop star.

"I can deny that most sincerely," replies Adam on the question of being a punk figurehead. "Maybe I was, but if I don't set out to be, there's no reason why I should acknowledge the fact and go along with it. I'm sorry if I offend people by not going out there and painting the big A on my jacket [populist punk sign denoting anarchy], or hanging out and signing with Backstreet Records or some crazy company. Because I've done it! I've done that and it doesn't work. Or rather it does work but you don't get paid for it. It's not what I want. I'm not being honest with myself. But I would stick by every song, every note and every word that I ever said. And still say."

It's not just Adam, however, who is sticking to his past. Both Decca and Do It are busy scrubbing around for old Adam material. Decca are going to have to go to court for their troubles and fight Adam for it. The problems with Do It, Adam hopes, can be resolved amicably out of court. CBS meanwhile, as well as reissuing "Kings" owing to public demand, and with Adam's blessing, are preparing for the release next month of the… gasp… swoon… faint… new Adam Ant single entitled "Stand And Deliver".

"When Joe Strummer heard it," laughs Adam, "he said, 'What's he doing now? The Milkman or something?' It's really funny; I really liked that, that was a great bit of humour. I'm very pleased with the lyric and I'm very pleased with the sound. That's from an album that we've written; Marco and I have written the next album and I think people are going to be a bit surprised with what we're going to do. The video with this single is very important. It's the first video single for me. I worked with Mike Mansfield and he's great.

"It really illustrates the lyrics, which are about not being intimidated by any fashion. Really it's an Errol Flynn video! I just wanted to do all the things I like seeing in movies in a three-minute video. It's like a three-minute Hollywood movie and it involved hiring a horse and a real 16th-century carriage and going in a wood in the freezing cold, jumping through a plate-glass window, doing all these kind of nutty things. And you really did endanger your life jumping out of trees. There's no way I could fake that, and I like the idea of actually making the effort."

So it's highwaymen now, is it, I cynically ask.

"No" says Adam firmly. "We're not going from anything to anything else. We're just going to incorporate everything I've done. This look is the incorporation of four different makeups I've done in the last three years."

His tone is calm and cool, his vision clear. Whatever you think of him, Adam knows exactly what he's doing. "It's always pandemonium," he says about his new lifestyle as an '80s pop star, "and I know artistically that I wouldn't feel as calm if I hadn't written the next album with Marco already. I'm always trying to think ahead."

If that's true, then where Adam sees his music heading will dismay a lot of people. "If I can push it a bit more into showbiz I'll be a very happy man, because it will be a very sad day when showbiz is a dirty word. At the moment it's just 'if you've got the time, you've got the money'. And there you have it," Adam says smiling. "Two new lyrics."

Talking of which, what do you do with your money, Adam?

"Apart from spending it on lawsuits, I haven't seen it yet." He pauses. "I'm sure other people will ask me for it before I get it."

It's time for the show.

> "I've always wanted good merchandise, to play a class joint, have fun"


**ADAM AND THE** Ants' first gig in three months, with Gary Tibbs on bass for the first time, was sheer pandemonium. The sell-out crowd went bananas every time he moved. The band put on a real spectacle and Adam got more cheers for taking off his shirt than for any song.

Clearly he's a sex symbol first and a musician second. For some. For others, the Ants sound is one of the most provocative around. For Lynn, a receptionist at the hotel Adam was staying in, it was his looks and body first, music second.

For Dexys Midnight Runners standing at the back of the hall, who knows? I should have asked them but got lost in the crowd. In fact I nearly got trampled on in that crowd. But that's only to be expected. At present Adam Ant is the hottest thing in showbiz anywhere. A fulfilment of a thousand fantasies.

Afterwards, on the coach, slumped in his seat and the greasepaint running down his face, he declared the gig a draw. Halfway through the show he could feel his legs going and consequently couldn't move that well.

He let out a groan and the German reporter siting behind him said, "There vas not much leaping around tonight, Adam. *Ja*?"

Adam just grinned and took another swig of Pepsi-Cola.

Over steak and chips, Adam Ant looked up from his food and said to me, 'Did you ever get that feeling of 'I told you so'? There you are, mate – I knew I was right."

He pops in another chip. Adam Ant is home and dry. *Paolo Hewitt* •

# "Not an unfriendly group"

**With Pink Floyd's PA in tow, THE CURE set out to convert audiences to their new, spacier, sound. Interviewed: a well-adjusted, intelligent unit. "It's not like we're saying, 'Oh we're alienated,'" says Robert Smith. "We just don't feel like that."**

— MELODY MAKER MAY 2 —

IT HAPPENED TWO nights running. The Cure were about four numbers into their set. As they paused for breath between songs, yells went up round the hall – "Forest!" "Primary!", "10.15 Saturday Night!" We've paid our money and we want *hits*, dammit.

Singer and guitarist Robert Smith stepped to the microphone and said: "This one's called 'The Funeral Party'." I thought I saw a hint of a smile. Backstage at the New Theatre in Oxford, drummer Lol (or Lawrence) Tolhurst is recuperating from a brisk conveyor-belt stint of autograph signing with the aid of a bottle of vodka. His disciplined, lucid percussion bears an equal share of the weight in Cure's sound, joining Simon Gallup's sharp-edged bass and Robert Smith's open-ended guitar and synth work to complete a finely balanced equation. With the band's third album, *Faith*, vaulting up the charts, and a new single "Primary" they'd just played on *Top Of Pops*, »

RAY STEVENSON / GETTY

Robert Smith: "The Cure's like a reflection of our lives, it's not the other way round"

"It's like being married": Smith with drummer and Cure co-founder Lol Tollhurst (left) and the group's second bassist, Simon Gallup


The Cure's dressing room has been besieged by autograph hunters. The majority are shy girls aged about 14, the rest are serious young men. Some of them had met the band earlier in the day when they visited the Music Market record shop. Drummer Tolhurst treats it all with amicable detachment.

"We always sign autographs, because we think, 'Well, it doesn't cost us anything, and if it gives someone pleasure for a couple of days, why not?'" He apologises for talking too much. There's little or no artifice about The Cure. They've received a certain amount of flak for their aura of seriousness and lack of dedication to the things which supposedly make rock'n'roll a "celebration" – sex & drugs & drinks & stomach ulcers & inhalation of vomit.

There's no denying that much of their music is sombre, but I'm surprised at just how friendly and uncomplicated the three musicians are – even the enigmatic Smith. His problem is that he delivers his jokes so quietly that it's easy to miss them.

The previous night found The Cure in Brighton – more or less a home-town gig, since the band come from Crawley. Smith was disappointed that the crowd had apparently come expecting a greatest-hits package (though the band's current set includes most of the yelled-for numbers anyway).

Smith points out that The Cure always play some of their older material to give audiences a frame of reference, but he's at a loss to understand why new songs are often treated as filler to be endured before the old favourites at the end of the set.

"You should really go and see a group expecting something different. Otherwise you may as well listen to our records, 'cos the sound's a lot better generally than it is on stage and we play a lot better."

Simon Gallup adds: "People don't go and buy books they've already read, or buy records they've already got."

But of course The Cure aren't the only band to feel burdened by audience expectation. It would be surprising if they weren't. In their case, the problem has been compounded by their abrupt change of musical style since their 1979 debut album, *Three Imaginary Boys*.

It was produced by Chris Parry, to whose Fiction Records the band are still signed, and who continues to work with The Cure in a more-or-less managerial role. Parry, in collusion with engineer Mike Hedges, did a smart but misleading job on *…Boys*. The album's 12 tracks were sparse, twitching pop, all chicken-wire guitar, neurotic bass and post-punk vocals. I loved it, but when the follow-up, *Seventeen Seconds*, appeared, it came as a shock. Gone were the succinct and snappy songs, replaced by longer and less-defined pieces. The prevailing mood was brown bleeding into grey. I didn't like it at all.

Now there's *Faith*, very much a progression from "Seventeen Seconds" but introducing a sense of measured power and completeness. Both albums saw Mike Hedges stepping into the producer's shoes, first in tandem with Robert Smith, and most recently with all three Curists.

"I like *Seventeen Seconds*," says Smith, struggling to be heard over the protesting whine of the band's hired Transit van. "I much preferred it to *Three Imaginary Boys*. There were only so many songs on the first album because they were drawn from the two years before we recorded it. The songs we always preferred were "Three Imaginary Boys" itself, "Accuracy" and "10.15 Saturday Night". If they'd been expanded, any of those songs could have fitted on *Seventeen Seconds*.

"As it was, most of the songs on *Imaginary…* were really embryonic, they were just put down. They were very naive. It worked in that way, but the whole thing was too much like a compilation album."

> "It would be impossible for someone else to fit into The Cure now"

If that sounds far-fetched, try to catch the band live, because the proof is there. Songs from the first album like "Grinding Halt", "Fire In Cairo" and the title track are fleshed out, their original diagrammatic form shaped into something smoother and more fluid. "Accuracy" pivots round an elastically swinging pulse, while the band rip open the tense throb of "10.15" to unleash fierce chunks of controlled energy.

Though he feels that Chris Parry exerted far too much influence over the sound and shape of *Three Imaginary Boys*, Robert Smith isn't too unhappy about it in retrospect.

"If we'd produced it ourselves it would've sounded completely different. It would have been a much softer album, and maybe it wouldn't have had as much impact. So it was good in a way that Chris *did* produce it, because it threw a perspective on the songs that we'd never seen before, and so we could always see how we wanted to develop."

Since those days, both band and sound have changed. Original bassist Michael Dempsey quit following The Cure's traumatic tour with Siouxsie

PETER MAZEL / REX FEATURES

& The Banshees, when two Banshees went AWOL and Smith ended up playing guitar with both Siouxsie and The Cure. Dempsey, now with The Associates, was replaced by Simon Gallup, with keyboard player Matthieu Hartley joining at the same time. Hartley cashed in his chips after recording *Seventeen Seconds* and touring Australasia, leaving The Cure as a trio again. It works best that way.

"It's like realising that there isn't gonna be anyone to fill the fourth position anyway," says Smith. "It would be impossible for someone else to fit into The Cure now, really, because it's so insular it's untrue. It would take somebody about 10 years to be accepted, I think, on the same level that we accept each other.

"And it's so open between the three of us – there are no secrets. It's like being married in a way. It's that type of intensity that you have to build up. 'Cos I've known Lol since I was five and I've known Simon for about six years now.

"I sometimes think a fourth instrument would be nice, but only because I'm playing the guitar *and* singing, and sometimes I just wish I could stop playing the guitar for a song or a coupla songs and not have to do anything except sing.

"But when it's balanced up, that's the only advantage to having a fourth member – the disadvantages roll into the hundreds."

Matthieu Hartley, it seems, had trouble accepting a role which at times could best be described as "peripheral". Simon Gallup also had to undergo a rethink when he joined the band.

"In a way I had to un-learn a lot of things, because I used to like playing eight notes a second or something. But now I don't really care any more – I play one note a minute now."

**HAVING RE-ESTABLISHED A** coherent and intimate group structure – creative input is split three ways, though Smith feeds in the bulk of the original ideas – The Cure are now looking for different ways of presenting themselves. The current tour is called "Picture Tour" because, instead of a support band, The Cure are showing a half-hour film called *Carnage Visitors* every night, accompanied by a specially written soundtrack. The film is a chunk of black-and-white animation, made by Simon Gallup's brother Ric, who's a model maker. Unsurprisingly, the film features Ric's own models.

"He's like a mad person out of a fairy tale, "explains Smith. Simon Gallup doesn't punch him in the mouth. "He sits in his garage making strange models. The idea to have a film was there when we were making *Seventeen Seconds*. People often think you're being self-indulgent when groups talk about making films, but there's a lot of ideas that spill over from making records. It's not like you can just make music, because it doesn't work like that, there's lots of other things.

"The Cure's like a reflection of our lives, it's not the other way round, so we're not trapped in a group. It seems stupid to limit it just to music."

But though Smith claims to like the film because it's naive, the accompanying music carries it. It's a single piece, built on a gradually evolving rhythmic pattern which sounds a little too much like Pink Floyd for comfort (if you buy a copy of *Faith* on cassette, you get a cassette of the film music thrown in free).

Smith explains that it was composed in one night, using a rhythm box and a bass guitar which had gone out of tune. "We're not psychedelic," he says. "We don't take psychedelic drugs…"

Though it's hardly a revolutionary idea to use film, it works because it lets The Cure shape the mood of the whole evening. Smith explores the topic of support bands.

"There were lots of reasons for not having support bands. On the last tour we did, we put a thing in the music papers saying that any local bands that would like to play with us should send a tape in, and we chose a local band from each town we played in. Some of 'em were really good and it worked really well.

"But the trouble is if we arrive late for a soundcheck or something goes wrong, we've got to make the choice – either the support band gets a soundcheck and you get half as long as you need, so your sound's awful and the audience is disappointed and they may not even like the support group. Or the support group doesn't get a soundcheck and you get a good one and the audience is pissed off all the way through the support act because they can't hear anything.

"And then we were worrying about why there should be such things as support groups anyway, and a main band, and how can you justify who is better than who…"

So goodbye support bands, at least for the time being. Having taken the decision that a Cure gig will be The Cure, the complete Cure and nothing but The Cure, are the band equipped to handle that amount of responsibility? I suppose it's a foregone conclusion that the answer is yes, and the reason for that is essentially Robert Smith's determination.

**THOUGH HE'S ONLY** 22, Smith possesses a steely intensity of purpose which has already seen the band through its changes of style and personnel. Since they started, The Cure have always taken the long view – no dizzying record company advances, no efforts to cash in with quick commercial singles and even a refusal to put in extended periods of time as a support act to other bands. They've pursued their own track with dogged single-mindedness.

"I don't think it's generally a good idea to be a support band," says Smith matter-of-factly, "because you can get locked into that feeling of being inferior. Also, audiences are generally lukewarm towards support groups, unless it's a whole package like the Final Solution things where the audience is probably equally divided between wanting to see one of four or five bands.

"Until the Banshees tour we'd never really been a support act, and on that one we were more like special guests. There were usually three bands on, and we didn't wanna be, like, the Banshees' support group."

At the same time, the band haven't been afraid to steer away from the relatively commercial feel of their first album in pursuit of a sound which owes nothing to any of the more bankable musical tangents which are currently doing the rounds.

As the musical landscape becomes increasingly fragmented into sub-groups trying to grab a piece of the ever-diminishing commercial action, The Cure have veered off in the opposite direction. Their music has become increasingly moody and atmospheric. They don't hurry.

Smith: "That's something somebody criticised us for about a week ago, saying that maybe we were getting flabby in that the songs were getting longer. But I don't see why, if you don't even claim to be working within a pop format, you should have to conform to the idea of a three-minute song.

"People say, 'Oh, you can put down anything within three minutes, any emotion', which is probably true. You can probably put down any emotion in 15 seconds if you just say it, y'know, 'I feel sad' with a tribal drum beat behind it. But it's just developing an idea – it's not revolutionary, it's been going on for hundreds of years – but I think if »


you've got an idea which you think is good, you should allow it to develop itself. And you also lose the idea of verse/chorus/middle eight/chorus/end in a song, and getting away from that is really important to us."

It's enough to make Mickie Most opt for voluntary euthanasia. But The Cure do what they must do and they do it well. Even if Smith protests with mock disgust that all Lol Tolhurst ever does is eat and smoke Marlboros, The Cure have booked themselves an open-ended ticket on the train out of Crawley and nobody gets left behind.

"We're not an unfriendly group really, are we?" Robert Smith asks me, only half rhetorically. "I think we're quite friendly."

And I think it matters to him. *Adam Sweeting*

## — NME MAY 16 —

**IT'S A PERFECT** day for brooding along with The Cure, a muggy limbo neither too hot nor too cold, the sky's overcast but not grey enough for rain and anyway the three Cures and this *NME* quack are already sheltered inside the group's shoddy white tour bus.

Parked next to the dank canal behind Chelmsford Odeon, the bus is dwarfed by the giant purple and yellow articulated truck that hauls the PA equipment they've hired – so drummer Lol Tolhurst blithely reveals – from Pink Floyd.

"We're using possibly the best PA in England," states Robert Smith, their quietly confident guitarist, for reasons that will become apparent in a moment. Bearing in mind the first time we met – three years ago in a Surrey hotel lounge where The Cure were playing with a skeleton set-up that would make the buskin' Shakin' Pyramids appear overdressed – we're both aware of the change in the trio's material circumstances. Smith obviously more so, thanks to the stream of malicious comparisons some have drawn between their moody new music and the bloated Pig Floaters from whom they've hired a PA.

These comparisons invariably come from those who nurtured The Cure as a trio of loveable whackos who composed skimpy oddball nuggets like "Killing An Arab" – a wonderful three-minute résumé of Albert Camus' *The Outsider* – "Plastic Passion", "Boys Don't Cry" and "Fire In Cairo". Just out of school and good-looking too, they were every jaded cynic's dream combo: witty, bright and trashy enough to epitomise the over-lauded garage-band ethic.

But none of their singles hit and after 18 months of trying it looked like The Cure were destined for obscure cult status. So when they disappeared everybody assumed them to be a spent force. Wrongly, it turned out, as The Cure returned with a hit LP, *Seventeen Seconds*, and single, "A Forest", which on the surface were far less commercial than their debut LP, *Three Imaginary Boys*.

*Seventeen Seconds* was more an extended 12-inch single than an LP; it was one melancholic mood sustained through a series of songs by a specific drum sound. The vitality and likeable mistakes of the first LP had been replaced by something equally, though less noticeably youthful: broken love. The mood, it seems, continues through to their latest LP, *Faith*. Even sadder and gloomier, it concerns itself with ageing, loss of innocence and death.

Their fans argue that The Cure have matured, their critics that they've "progressed". Predictably for this trio, they provide easier and cheaper fuel for their detractors than their champions. The new mood music demands greater precision, there is less margin for error. Thus the expensive PA, acutely conscious though the trio are how the leap in size and quality of hardware would be taken.

Let's return to the back of the bus and seek some kind of assurance from Smith.

"We're careful to avoid [sounding empty]," he cautiously says, "though it wouldn't seem that way from the pomp rock-style trucks. After we hired the PA we had a day at Shepperton to see how it would look all set up. It was really absurd seeing it all, 10 times bigger than the equipment we usually use. But then we got to thinking we've always gone on tour with equipment breaking down. And at the moment it's reliability we want."

Earlier, noticing my eyes latching onto the giant articulated truck, drummer Tolhurst gleefully anticipated a headline: "From punk to pomp," he joked. I laughed. When were The Cure ever punks?

**THE CURE BELONG** to that comprehensively educated amorphous mass that has replaced the traditional middle class and now stretches to include the swelling ranks of young unemployed, the children of shopfloor workers, office workers, executives, teachers and middle-grade civil servants. It's massive and still on the rise, yet it's one that pop groups – The Kinks and Fad Gadget excepted – are most reluctant to align themselves with.

Despite its size and scope, few have successfully explored it, finding it much easier to reinforce the stereotypes using the ready-to-wear language of *Sun* headlines. The Cure, however, simply sidestep the dogmas they feel no affinity with and touch instead upon the habits and emotions of this anonymous majority. Though they make no attempt to disguise their roots, they never get maudlin or soppy about them. They maintain a sufficient detachment to write accurately enough to involve them, going by the size and makeup of their audience. Evidently their schoolboy readings of Camus have stood them in good stead.

Does Smith still feel as, er, alienated as the murderer in "Killing An Arab"?

No, he replies, but "since we don't live in London we haven't got drawn into that whole rock'n'roll myth. So for us it is still normal and that's the whole point. It's just like normality with a detached view, because it's not like we're trapped there. We travel a lot and when we return we're almost like observers in our own home, which is what gives our songs the air of detachment. It's not like we're saying, 'Oh, we're alienated,' or things like that, because we just don't feel like that."

Detached though they feel – living in suburban Crawley, West Sussex – there's a dreamy quality about their music that falls short of the troubling introspection of Joy Division copyists, therefore dispelling another popular convention: that of the troubled, starving artist. Smith exudes a positive air that is implied by choosing *Faith* as the title of their new LP.

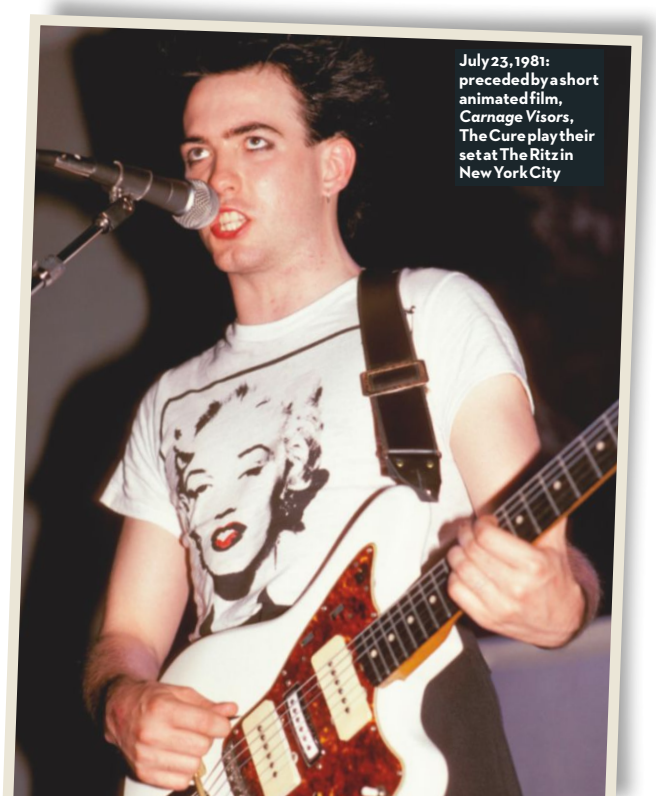
"Yeah, I'm confident – to the degree of nausea sometimes," Smith smiles. "It's just second nature to me. Confidence is usually frowned upon, but I don't know why. It's like the stereotype of the cowering Kafkaesque figure, forever nervous. I mean, you can feel those emotions, but still feel confident that you'll win through. If you think you're not going to, then why bother?"

Smith doesn't deny that he's had it easier than some. When he left school he chose to stay unemployed for eight months before the release of "Killing An Arab" and was fortunate that, unlike many of his contemporaries, his parents didn't pressurise him into a complex about it by insisting he worked or left home.

"It came to the point where I'd rather have killed myself than get a job," he asserts. "I told Social Security to give the jobs to those that want them, that I'd rather stay at home listening to music, but they'd tell me I had to work and I'd just ask, 'Why?' Which is the point most people don't get."

He does realise that such a decision isn't so easy for others, but he can't see the point of wallowing in misery, when unemployment should be – as Bow Wow Wow and others are discovering – far more enjoyable than working in dull jobs, providing you can stretch those Social Security cheques to cover your needs.

Smith jokes: "I brewed homemade lager so I wouldn't have to spend a lot of money drinking, which is a good hint for all you out-of-work people."



July 23, 1981: preceded by a short animated film, *Carnage Visors*, The Cure play their set at The Ritz in New York City

EBET ROBERTS/ GETTY


July 5, 1981: The Cure appear at the Rock Torhout festival in Belgium

**THE CURE AURA** of comfort shouldn't be mistaken for complacency. It often is and often causes resentment. Because The Cure have never fitted into any tribe or attempted to follow any fad, critics find them difficult to pin down. Their clothes don't help, being an odd mixture of nothing and everything that has gone down in the past few years.

Today, Robert Smith is wearing a leather jacket that makes his arms hang like Yogi Bear's and baggy trousers, while his hair's pushed back into a never-witnessed-before porcupine spray. Lol Tolhurst's outrageously voluminous trousers and mismatched, smart jacket enhance his reputation as Cure fall guy and comic. "The Cure confident?" asks Smith. "Lol's not confident, but then he uses the wrong brand of toothpaste."

Bassist Simon Gallup's cowboy punk clothing is offset by cutely made-up doe eyes.

The audience that turn up to Chelmsford are similarly difficult to categorise. Hardcore punks mingle with peacocks attracted to the synthetic strands of their music and the High Street teens whose concept of fashion stretches to the latest lines at Marks & Spencer. It's a cross section that The Cure cherish, one arrived at without overt wooing or compromise. There's no Cure-look for them to emulate and indeed few new tunes in the current repertoire that they can go home humming.

The combination of The Cure's own cosy backgrounds and a non-aligned, apparently uncommitted audience upsets some, whose sneers have not only been stupidly dismissive, but downright condescending.

"Somebody who did a review of us at London's Dominion said all the audience looked like Noel Edmonds," recalls Smith. "He's supposedly the stereotype of the people who go and see The Cure. It's just not true, but anyway it's only fashion that made him say that. It's really frustrating trying to get through that initial wariness of people saying, 'Oh, what do they look like and where do they come from?' It's irrelevant. I don't know the backgrounds of any of the groups I like. Their songs affect me and that's enough."

> "Yeah, I'm confident – to the degree of nausea sometimes"

**CURE CONCERTS LEAVE** very little to chance. As soon as people enter the auditorium they're taken in hand by taped music guaranteed to create the right ambience. The music ranges from Jimi Hendrix to Gregorian chants – spot the importance of the latter to the likes of the gloomy "The Funeral Party". More pointedly, The Cure have dispensed with support groups in order to diminish the odds of the mood being shattered by inapposite outfits.

They've replaced it with *Carnage Visors*, a short animated film made by Simon Gallup's brother Ric. It's not very good, just a series of evolving shapes for people to look at, while Smith's austere soundtrack further imposes the correct conditions for The Cure's entrance. Isn't all this talk of pre-conditioning disturbing? Not really, as it's basically motivated by the urge to provide a coherent evening's entertainment.

"At least we've got some say over what kind of mood the audience are in, so we can start off from the same point every night and go off on a tangent from there," explains Smith. "On previous tours we would go on into a pre-conditioned environment, but one created by the support band, not us."

The Cure's delicately forceful music deserves that early break, meaning new songs aren't lost early on while winning over the audience. Songs like "Primary", which might pinpoint The Cure's coming of age, are far removed from the naivety of their earlier songs. As likeable as those favourites are, they don't really fit into The Cure's current set, but unfortunately they're interspersed with newer songs, somehow shattering the moods the group have so conscientiously established. Why do they do them?

"I think it's nice remembering things," says Smith. "Having old songs is like having old photographs, you can look back on how you used to feel. I can remember what we felt the first time we played them, and that helps prevent me from getting out of control."

And self-control, even discipline, is very important to The Cure, especially their music. Their playing is excellent, their skills always subordinated to the simple demands of the songs. A pop sensibility and that pervasive beat renders all comparisons with the pomp of previous generations absurd.

A bit precious, perhaps? Only if viewed from the suffocating narrow confines of nouveau punk.

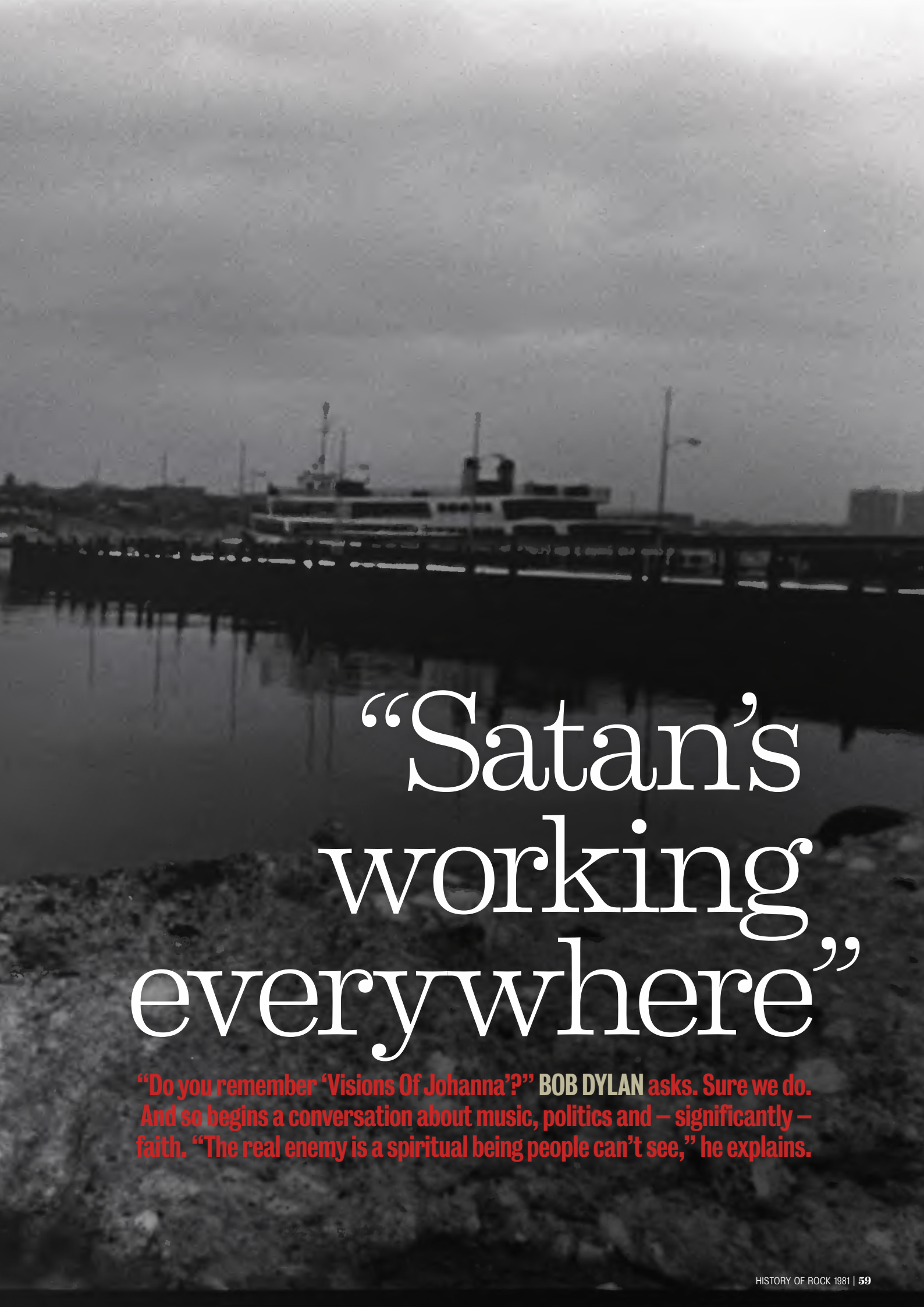
"The preciousness doesn't worry me," says Smith, puffing his chest out aggressively and pulling his fists back ready for action. "WHO'S BEING PRECIOUS NOW, PAL?" he snarls.

You really shouldn't allow yourselves to be threatened by The Cure.

*Chris Bohn* ●

ANDRE CSILLAG / REX FEATURES

"I think that everything that's happened is like a preview of what's going to happen": Bob Dylan photographed at Kentucky Dam Village State Park, 1981



# "Satan's working everywhere"

**"Do you remember 'Visions Of Johanna'?" BOB DYLAN asks. Sure we do. And so begins a conversation about music, politics and – significantly – faith. "The real enemy is a spiritual being people can't see," he explains.**

## — NME AUGUST 15 —

**HARMONICAS PLAY THE** skeleton keys of the rain that drapes Munich in grey drizzle for Bob Dylan's two-day stay in the city.

Our Mercedes taxi splashes its way through sodden streets toward the muzzled grey modernist shapes of the Olympic complex built to house the '74 games and where tonight's show will be staged, in the splendid indoor sports arena, to an audience of several thousand.

Munich is the 11th stop on a European tour that will take in eight countries and 23 shows, around a third of them in Britain. Being in the business of a ceaseless quest for a Bob Dylan interview (one of several score, if not hundred), I get to see shows in Paris, London and Munich where the quest will, to an extent, be realised; a brief backstage rencontre being promised by Dylan's management.

This was Dylan's sixth or seventh visit to Europe in his 20-year career and this time round it was different. A lot has changed since Dylan last trod Albion's shores, not least the social and cultural fabric of Britain itself.

The expected media fanfare came, but it was muted in comparison to that afforded the '78 trip, when Dylan was seen as the consensus of the ongoing "rock" tradition handed down from the '60s; still the enigmatic and unrepentant rebel carrying the standards of alienation, protest and emotional and spiritual exploration forward into the future.

This time it was Bruce Springsteen's turn to be fêted as a visiting American superstar supreme, likewise set at the heart of a rock tradition whose myths are, for a growing number of young Europeans, now despoiled, overtaken by everyday reality or the new myths of punk and post-punk.

The national press, radio and TV didn't seem to know quite how to respond to the new, Christian Bob Dylan; and for them it was a case of better the cosy fantasy scenarios of last-chance power drives down endless American highways than the uncomfortable moral imperatives of Dylan's new kingdom.

Dylan's refusal to bow to the myths of rock – he'd always kept an ambiguous, open relation with "rock" anyway, what with his folk roots, the frequent diversions into country, blues and anything else that took his fancy – and his insistence on his personal salvation had cost him heavy with critics and fans.

To some of them, any type of born-again Christianity smacked of US president Ronald Reagan's "moral majority", even though Dylan's new songs have consistently spelt out an anti-establishment stance, the protest era rekindled if anything. There again, any spiritual values smack of humbug to a sometimes desensitised youth culture, more caught up with the materialist and consumer values it professes to despise than perhaps it realises or cares to admit.

Christian or not, in the gritty business of attracting paying customers, there are few artists able to command the allegiance that Dylan still does, and ugly rumours of unsold tickets finally gave way to near-capacity audiences. Around 120,000 saw the British shows.

As at Earls Court, a hard look at the Munich crowd reveals plenty of original Dylan fans, many contemporaries now advancing into affluent middle age. Many more, no doubt, couldn't meet the commitment of tickets, transport and babysitters. The younger fans that Dylan has always attracted seem more prominent at the Continental shows, where rock tradition and contemporary protest – the German peace and eco movements and their equivalents in France, Benelux and Scandinavia – have not diverged the way they have in little ol' post-industrial UK.

It hasn't all been "watching the scenery go past the windows", though, as Dylan describes the touring process. A Danish daily paper ran a front-page story attacking Dylan, accusing him of paranoia and claiming he kept a veritable squad of Israeli bodyguards on hand to assuage his fear of assassination. Dylan was so incensed by the story, he called an impromptu press conference in north Germany where he denied that John Lennon's slaying had provoked any panic in him.

"I might as easily be run over by a truck or something," went the tone of his reply. I never did see more than a couple of security chaps, backstage or front.

Otherwise, Dylan's European jaunt can be safely judged a success. It didn't even rain at the sometimes optimistically staged open-air shows – aides speak of the way it's, ahem, miraculously stopped raining an hour or so before showtime, recalling some of the talk I'd heard around Marley tours. ("He had a voice that could really touch you," Dylan says to me later when he crops up in conversation. The two never actually met, however.)

Dylan's strategy on this tour has been to present a set that straddles almost his entire career, harking back to his coffeehouse days on numbers like "Barbara Allen", "Girl From The North Country", featuring a healthy slug of '60s hits – "Like A Rolling Stone", "Tambourine Man", "It's All Over Now, Baby Blue" – and


"It's so immediate, it changes the whole concept of art to me": Dylan on the significance of live performance, 1981

REX FEATURES

reserving pride of place for his post-conversion songs, to which he seems to bring an extra vocal commitment.

His singing this time round was quite astonishing, clearly superior to all his many past styles, from all of which he borrows for the present. With the horn section of '78 now thankfully nudged out – the present group is more supple and understated – the harmonica has found new favour. Indeed, the acoustic and harp spots were among the most affecting of the show. You could almost hear the audience gasp unbelieving joy every time he picked up his acoustic guitar, feel them tingle whenever Bob whipped a mouth-harp from a pocket and piped that crazy, angular, plaintive harmonica music of his round the hall.

At a time when conventional rock performance is increasingly derided by many musicians and fans, to Dylan it seems that the performance is the crucible of his art, an all-important testing point.

"It's so immediate, it changes the whole concept of art to me," he tells me later.

Hearing him draw from that awesome vault of material he's stockpiled over the last two-score years, it was impossible not to marvel at the sheer volume and quality of his writing. Never did "Masters Of War" sound more apt than in the precipitous war-mongering climate of the present. Other songs – "Like A Rolling Stone" being the obvious one – seemed likewise to acquire a new resonance in the light of Dylan's Christian beliefs.

Dylan's new material continues to reflect his Christianity, though the songs of the new LP, *Shot Of Love*, are less directly devotional in their approach, taking the Christian code as the bedrock of his observations rather than merely preaching, as *Saved* too often did. Dylan's enthusiasm for his new record is only intermittently contagious, but certainly the album boasts some of his finest work in years, particularly the touching melancholic "Grain Of Sand", where Dylan's retrospection over his life leads him to state "*No inclination to look back on any mistake/As I hold this chain of events that I must break.*"

The new songs – which may or may not be called "Angelina" (a title already fabled among fans) and "Caribbean Wind" – he mentioned in my interview sound exciting, promising a fusion of his '60s sound of the *Blonde On Blonde* era and his '80s sensibilities. One aide spoke of the new songs "being as prophetic in their way as the old ones… Maybe their real time will be some way ahead in the future."

Whatever one may feel about Dylan's conversion – and the ridicule and depth of scorn to which he has been subjected for his beliefs is unfair – it's obvious that we will need some kind of spiritual dimension to our credo if we really are to build the New Jerusalem among the dark, satanic mills.

For all that, I was a little taken aback when the man took exception to having a "Christian label" attached to him when he has so virulently informed everyone of his religious beliefs. People don't constantly refer to Pete Townshend as a Meher Baba follower, because he's always kept his beliefs in context. End of sermon.

> "I feel very strongly about this show. It has something to offer"

**IN THE EMPTY** lot backstage in the athlete's changing area, Bert, a Dutch Dylanologist from *Oor* magazine, and I are lined up for our brief audience with Dylan.

"Oh God," comes the unmistakeable voice through the open door of the dressing room as an aide reminds him of our impending presence and we catch a glimpse of Dylan pulling on a sock.

A minute later and we're shaking hands with the maestro, who seems as nervous as we are, with the air of a man slowly exhaling the potent adrenalin charge of two hours on stage at the hub of 7,000 people's attention. His stage threads – black trousers, the satin bomber jacket with its curious golden design – lie limply across a chair, Dylan now wearing a sloppy white sweatshirt, jeans and training shoes.

He looks beefier and stronger than all those "wiry little cat" descriptions of history suggest, more sporty; the scene seems almost collegiate. The eyes are large, washed-out electric blue, and riveting, still topped by the great burst of locks.

We chat about the show, which Dylan didn't like – "You couldn't hear anything and the audience was kinda strange; you should have been at last night's show" – and about press reaction to the show. Dylan seems to feel the papers gave him a hard time whatever he does with the old songs: "You just can't win."

I remark that "Maggie's Farm" is a popular song in Britain these days, and Dylan and the bassman, who's also present, exchange blank looks before the bassie mumbles "Maggie Thatcher" and they break into laughter, me wondering about the slow association after a week playing down on the farm itself.

He'd heard about The Specials' version but wasn't familiar with it. He mumbles something about "punk waves and new waves" as he packs his stuff, before offering, "I like George's song."

"George?"

"Boy, George's song is great."

Oh, George Harrison. (It transpires the two spent some time together on Dylan's stay, inspiring him to play "Here Comes The Sun" at one Earls Court gig. One wonders whether they discussed *Monty Python's Life Of Brian*, which Harrison financed.) I mumble something about whether he thinks the old songs seem to get new meaning in the light of changing times and his new beliefs, and Dylan fixes me with a piercing look.

"I'm different," he says. "The songs are the same.

"The songs don't mean that much to me, actually," he continues. "I wrote them and I sing them…"

There's nothing from *Desire* or *Street Legal*, though.

"We could do a completely different set with completely different songs. They're all old songs, even the ones from *Slow Train*… are old now.

"I tell you, though, I feel very strongly about this show. I feel it has something to offer. No one else does this show, not Bruce Springsteen or anyone."

Was he surprised at the amount of hostility the conversion to Christianity had brought?

"Not surprised at all. I'm just surprised to hear applause every time I play. I appreciate that. You can feel everything that comes off an audience… little individual things that are going on. It's a very instant thing."

Outside, the tour bus is ticking over and filling up with musicians and road crew, and one of the gospel quartet is doing a soft-shoe shuffle in the rain. Tomorrow, comes the word, is a proper interview, at the hotel. Maybe.

I went to see the gypsy, staying in a big hotel in the centre of the town, where the occasional appearance of a denim-clad roadie provides colourful contrast to the assembled grey ranks of German businessmen.

Pre-match nerves vanish as I trot out onto the turf of Dylan's fourth-floor suite. To one side, a TV flickers without sound. Dylan wanders in wearing a black leather jacket and white jeans, and we start committing words to tape. He talks slowly, his speaking voice deeper than you'd expect from his singing, and not at all like sand and glue. The replies come carefully considered and usually as evasive and noncommittal as we've come to expect over the years.

**NS: Someone told me you'd been working with Smokey Robinson. Is that right?**

BD: No… we were doing a session, along with Ringo and Willy, as he was rehearsing across the street with his new band, a new show. I'd seen him on the street going in, so we went out on a break and said hello.

**You didn't work with him?**

No.

**Are you pleased with the new album?**

The last time I heard it I was. I haven't heard it since I left for Chicago. Which was at the beginning of June. I was satisfied enough to leave town.

**The sound is a lot rawer. A much looser sound.**

Well, I had more control over this record… That's the type of record I like to make. I just haven't been able to make them.

**Why's that?**

Well, usually, I've been working quickly in the studio, and for one reason or another I just get locked into whoever's producing, their sound, and I just wanna get it over with.

**Who produced this one?**

Chuck [Plotkin] and myself produced it. Bumps Blackwell did *Shot Of Love* with me, which he helped with a great deal. You remember him?

**No, who's that?**

Bumps did all the early Little Richard records and Don & Dewey records; he handled all the Speciality records. »

June 21, 1981: Dylan with bassist Tim Drummond in Toulouse, France, on the first date of the European tour to promote *Shot Of Love*

**That's the rockiest track, right? The rest is bluesy, or some of it has a reggae lilt. Do you still like reggae?**

There's not much difference between country and reggae when you take away the bass and the drums; they're very similar.

**You've always seemed to have one foot in rock'n'roll, Little Richard and all that, and the other in blues, folk, country, traditions…**

Well, I love it all, whatever might be popular at the moment.

**Do you still do everything in a couple of takes?**

On this album we did.

**I'd heard you like to work in a very spontaneous way.**

With this new band we can usually work very quickly with a new tune.

**Is it nearer your "mercurial sound" with this band?**

Yeah… it's a little hard to produce that on stage of course. The only time we were able to do that was with The Band on those Bob Dylan & The Band tours in the '60s. Because the sound back then was so raw and primitive, the sound systems wouldn't give us anything else. And when The Beatles played, you could never hear The Beatles. Even the Stones' people were screaming and there wasn't much sound. You could never hear what you were doing.

**I have to ask you about the Lenny Bruce song ("Lenny Bruce Is Dead"). You said it was very spontaneous.**

That was a really quick song for me to write. I wrote that in about five minutes… I didn't even know why I was writing it, it just naturally came out. I wasn't, you know, meditating on Lenny Bruce before I wrote it.

**It's a very compassionate song.**

It is.

**It's in the tradition of your songs about folk heroes like "Hurricane", "George Jackson"…**

I thought "Joey'" was a good song. I know no one said much about it. I thought it was one of those songs that came off and you didn't hear that much about it.

**Looking at the other songs on the album, there are a lot of criticisms of people in high places. Would you say that's true?**

(*Laughs*) Yeah, that's always true, I guess… I don't really know, y'know. I'm not sure how it hangs together as a concept, because there were some real long songs on this album that we recorded, a couple of really long songs. Like there was one we did – do you remember "Visions Of Johanna"?

**Sure.**

Well, there was one like that. I'd never done anything like it before. It's got the same kind of thing to it. It seems to be very sensitive and gentle on one level; then, on another level, the lyrics aren't sensitive and gentle at all. We left that off the album.

We left another thing off the album which is quite different to anything I wrote, that I think in just a musical kind of way you'd like to hear. And in a lyric-content way it's interesting. The way the storyline changes from third person to first person and that person becomes you, then these people are there and they're not there. And then the time goes way back and then it's brought up to the present. And I thought it was really effective, but that again is a long song and when it came to putting the songs on the album we had to cut some, so we cut those. Now what we have left is an album which seems to make its kind of general statement, but it's too soon to say what that general statement is.

**There's a reference to "the politics of sin" on "Dead Man".**

Yeah, well, that's what sin is, politics. It just came to me when I was writing, that's the way it is… the diplomacy of sin. The way they take sin, and put it in front of people… the way that they say this is good and that's bad, you can do this and you can't do that, the way sin is taken and split up and categorised and put on different levels so it becomes more of a structure of sin, or, "These sins are big ones, these are little ones, these can hurt this person, these can hurt you, this is bad for this reason, and that is bad for another reason." The politics of sin; that's what I think of it.

> "I don't really want to walk around with a sign on saying 'Christian'"

**Do you still feel politics is part of the illusion?**

I've never really been into politics, mostly I guess because of the world of politics. The people who are into politics as a profession, you know, it's… the art of politics hasn't changed much over the years. Were there politics in Roman times? And are there politics in communist countries? I'm sure there are.

**You feel what the world is facing is more of a spiritual crisis?**

Oh yeah, definitely. Definitely. People don't know who the enemy is. They think the enemy is something they can see, and the reality of the

DANIEL JANNIN / GETTY

enemy is a spiritual being they can't see, and it influences all they can see and they don't go to the top, the end line of the real enemy – like the enemy who's controlling who you think is your enemy.

**Who's that?**

What, who you think your enemy is?

**Yes.**

You would think the enemy is someone you could strike at and that would solve the problem, but the real enemy is the Devil. That's the real enemy, but he tends to shade himself and hide himself and put it into people's minds that he's really not there and he's really not so bad, and that he's got a lot of good things to offer, too. So there's this conflict going, to blind the minds of men.

**A conflict in all of us?**

Yeah, he puts the conflict there; without him there'd be no conflict.

**Maybe that struggle is necessary?**

Well, that's a whole other subject… Yes, I've heard that said too.

**When you said "*Strengthen the things that remain*" (from "When You Gonna Wake Up"), what were you thinking of?**

Well, the things that remain would be the basic qualities that don't change, the values that do still exist. It says in the Bible, "Resist not evil, but overcome evil with good." And the values that can overcome evil are the ones to strengthen.

**People feel that fighting oppression is more important than spiritual interests.**

That's wrong. The struggle against oppression and injustice is always going to be there, but the Devil himself is the one who creates it. You can come to know yourself, but you need help in doing it.

The only one who can overcome all that is the great creator himself. If you can get his help, you can overcome it. To do that you must know something about the nature of the creator. What Jesus does for an ignorant man like myself is to make the qualities and characteristics of God more believable to me, 'cos I can't beat the Devil. Only God can. He already has. Satan's working everywhere. You're faced with him constantly. If you can't see him, he's inside you making you feel a certain way. He's feeding you envy and jealousy; he's feeding you oppression, hatred…

**Do you feel the only way to know the creator is through Christ?**

I feel the only way… let me see. Of course you can look on the desert and wake up to the sun and the sand and the beauty of the stars and know there is a higher being, and worship that creator.

But being thrown into the cities, you're faced more with man than with God. We're dealing here with man, y'know, and in order to know where man's at you have to know what God would do if he was man. I'm trying to explain to you in intellectual mental terms, when it actually is more of a spiritual understanding than something which is open to debate.

**You can't teach people things they don't experience for themselves…**

Most people think that if God became a man he would go up on a mountain and raise his sword and show his anger and his wrath or his love and compassion in one blow. And that's what people expected the Messiah to be – someone with similar characteristics, someone to set things straight, and here comes a Messiah who doesn't measure up to those characteristics and causes a lot of problems.

**Someone who put the responsibility back on us?**

Right.

**From your songs like "Dead Man" and "When He Returns", it's obvious you believe the Second Coming is likely in our lifetimes.**

Possibly. Possibly at any moment. It could be in our lifetimes. It could be a long time. This Earth supposedly has a certain number of years, which I think is 7,000 years – 7,000 or 6,000.

We're in the last cycle of it now. Going back to the first century, there's like 3,000 years before that and 4,000 after it, one of the two, the last thousand would be the millennium years. I think that everything that's happened is like a preview of what's going to happen.

**How strict is your interpretation of Christianity? The original Christian seems to have a different faith and belief that got lost.**

I'm not that much of a historian about Christianity. I know it's been changed over the years, but I go strictly according to the gospels.

**Have you seen the Gnostic Gospels?**

Some place I have. I don't recall too much about them, but I've seen them.

**Are you going to make any more movies?**

If we can get a story outline, we will… I'd like to.

***Renaldo And Clara* was very symbolist, and your songs on *Street Legal* were full of Tarot imagery. Have those interests left you now?**

Those particular interests have, yes.

**Do you think that "occult" interests like the Tarot are misleading?**

I don't know. I didn't get into the Tarot cards all that deeply. I do think they're misleading for people, though. You're fixed on something which keeps a hold on you. If you can't or don't understand why you're feeling this way at that moment, with those cards you come up with a comfortable feeling that doesn't have any necessary value.

**You were also interested in Judaism at one point. You visited Israel and the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Do you feel that your interests at that time are compatible with your present beliefs?**

There's really no difference between any of it in my mind. Some people say they're Jews and they never go to a synagogue or anything. I know some gangsters who say they're Jews. I don't know what that's got to do with anything. Judaism is really the laws of Moses. If you follow the laws of Moses you're automatically a Jew, I would think.

**You've always had a strong religious theme in your songs even before you became a Christian.**

(*Angrily*) I don't really want to walk around with a sign on me saying "Christian".

**It might appear that way to a lot of people…**

Yeah, but a lot of people want to hang a sign on you for whatever. It's like Mick Jagger said, "They wanna hang a sign on you."

**In a *Playboy* interview three years ago you said you agreed with Henry Miller's saying that "The purpose of the artist is to inoculate the world with disillusionment." Do you still agree with that?**

(*Laughs*) That's pretty good for Henry Miller… maybe that would be good for what he wanted to do. Maybe that's the purpose of his art.

**Not yours?**

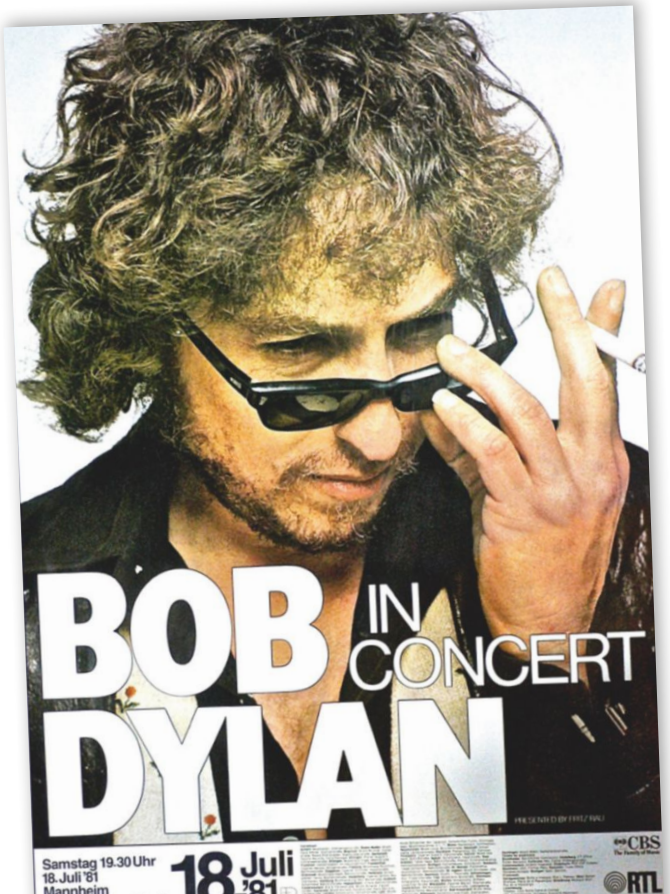
Well, what I do is more of an immediate thing; to stand up on stage and sing – you get it back immediately. It's not like writing a book or even making a record. And with a movie – it's so difficult to get anything back working on a movie; you never know what you're doing and the results never come in until usually years afterwards.

What I do is so immediate, it changes the nature, the concept, of art to me. I don't know what it is. It's too immediate. It's like the man who made that painting there (*points to painting on wall of hotel room*) has no idea we're sitting here now looking at it or not looking at it or anything… Performing is more like a stage play.

**You haven't painted your masterpiece yet, then?**

No. I don't know if I ever will. I've given up thinking about it, though.

*Neil Spencer* ●



# "We see ourselves as studio technicians"

**On tour with KRAFTWERK. Having recently rebuilt their studio, the band now embrace the computer age. Ralf Hütter talks German humour, Coca-Cola and "vertically organised" music. "We have nobody to listen to," he says. "We have to impose every question, and try to find the correct answer."**

— NME JUNE 13 —

*PART 1: "Art is not a 'profession'. There is no essential difference between the artist and the craftsman. The artist is an exalted craftsman. In rare moments of inspiration, moments beyond the control of his will, the grace of Heaven may cause his work to blossom into art. But proficiency to his craft is essential to every artist. Therein lies a source of creative imagination."* *From the first proclamation of the Weimar Bauhaus, 1919*

SPAIN MIGHT CURRENTLY be in turmoil, what with its armed forces' flexing of musclebound strength posing a threat to its still unsettled democracy, but there are no ripples of unrest to disturb the afternoon siesta of a dozing Barcelona. Only the foolhardy tourists who flood the city every summer brave the unrelenting heat and dust of the streets.

Many of them are from Britain and Germany, and it's easy to see what attracts them: the city's proximity to the sea, its odd, indigenous architecture and, of course, a good exchange rate. For the Germans its location also fulfils a romantic northern longing for the warmth and promise of the south and the Mediterranean.

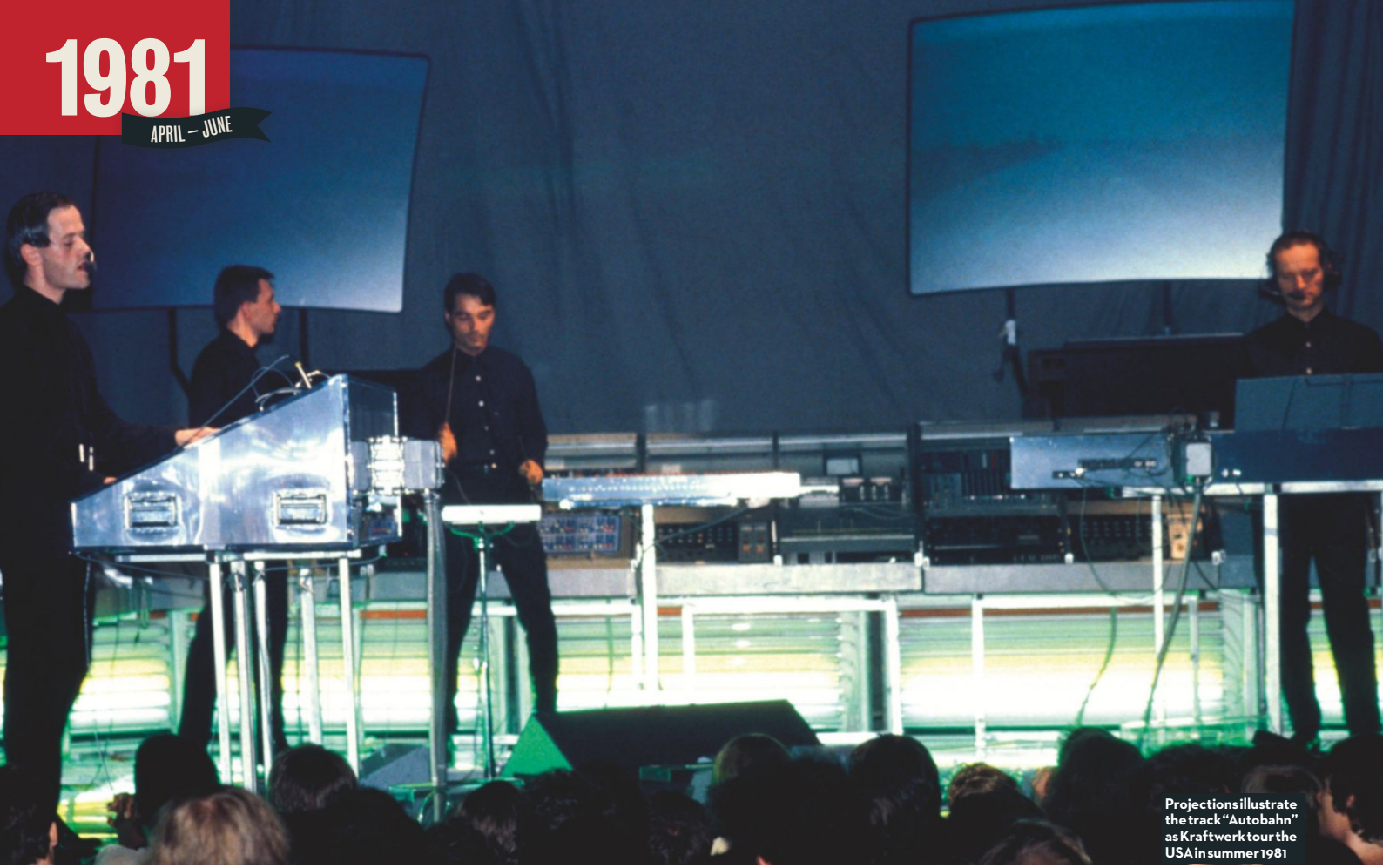
Kraftwerk, too, feel the urge. Their main motivating force Ralf Hütter wandered through Spain a decade ago – so he reveals later to a Spanish record company executive from the back of a taxi careering through the night – but he was put off by the hippies clogging islands and

KOH HASEBE / GETTY


Kraftwerk at the Keio Plaza Hotel, Tokyo, September 1981: (l-r) Florian Schneider, Wolfgang Flür, Karl Bartos and Ralf Hütter

# A computer date with a showroom dummy

And we'll fahr'n, fahr'n, fahr'n auf der Autobahn — until big daddy takes our Volkswagen away. Chris Bohn and Anton Corbijn do the Spanish hustle with Kraftwerk



Projections illustrate the track "Autobahn" as Kraftwerk tour the USA in summer 1981

EBET ROBERTS/ GETTY

resorts like Ibiza. Besides, he doesn't enjoy the tourist role, preferring instead a more constructive purpose for travelling, like work.

Consequently Kraftwerk's European tour satisfies both their wanderlust and their need for communication/feedback. Despite their modernity, a fear of flying means they are driving themselves across the Continent – so far down from Düsseldorf through Bavaria and the Alps to Italy, across to the South of France and down again, through the Pyrenees, to Barcelona. From city to city, concert to concert, disco to disco.

Yet there's none of the whining rock "road goes on forever" aura about their tour. It's more a dignified, inquisitive jaunt across countries, its moods, pleasures and languors so beautifully evoked already by their seven-year-old hit "Autobahn". That great, compellingly endless tune was Kraftwerk's stunning entrance into a gleaming chromium world. They had made earlier records that fiddled about with more extreme noises which they later smoothed out into sweet melodies, like the "Pineapple Symphony".

"Autobahn" was, however, the first real stirring of their innovative pop sensibility – a witty synthetic delight concocted from mock traffic noises and a wide, open-spaced tune, motored by then intriguing new electronic percussion and a mechanical rhythm. It, suggested a harmony between the aggressive, awe-inspiring Autobahn network crisscrossing Germany and the lush landscapes it traverses. And ever since Kraftwerk have reconciled the spirit of Mother Nature with modern technology, recognising that real progress must embrace them both.

Acknowledging the futility of simply retreating to the country, they have instead achieved an immense understanding of computers and machines, which they have placed at their service. Theirs isn't a dumb worship of inanimate objects, but a sensible relationship with them; they don't make an idiotic cult of speed and modernity, as did the Italian Futurists. They have too much respect for the accomplishments of the past for that, be they those of the Bauhaus or the architects behind Vienna or Versailles.

Take a *Trans Europe Express* trip with Kraftwerk and see how they recall the grandeur and decay of old Europe through fabulous futuristic noises. Go to work with *The Man Machine* and discover a proper working relationship between man and his urban environment, perhaps recognising for the first time the splendid brittle beauties of new cities and industrial scenery. Tune in to *Radio-Activity* and learn just how romantic Kraftwerk can get, how well they drain conceivably maudlin melodies of sentimentality, thus adjusting the spirit of the old to the new.

Go see Kraftwerk in concert and marvel at the reconstructed working environment of their studio – all of which accompanies them on this tour – and at the videos projected onto screens behind each member that so wonderfully illustrate what they're doing. And, finally, puzzle over and absorb Kraftwerk's extraordinary harnessing of so much technology to create a complete word-sound-vision entertainment that is as simple as it is spectacular, as provocative as it is plain, as comical as it is earnest and – most importantly – as spiritual as it is temporal.

Predictably, in their rush to ride a fashion, too many of the new electronic poppas have been too busy to burrow beneath Kraftwerk's surface sheen. And in their search for a comfortable niche they've even got that much wrong. Robotic gestures are just the final topping for Kraftwerk, not a raison d'être, and similarly their descriptive postcard views are the culmination of penetrating analysis and thought. Kraftwerk's finished work is simple, stylish and on the button – that of the futurists is faddish, foppish and simple-minded.

**FROM-CITY-TO-CONCERT-TO-DISCO. THE GRANDEUR** of old Barcelona is as near to a perfect – ie, contradictory – setting as you can get for Kraftwerk.

They're staying in an imposingly haughty regency hotel that at first appears at odds with their austere monochromatic image. Offstage, Florian Schneider (the other half of Kraftwerk's production team) fits, dressed as he is in a neutral-coloured windcheater with a little knapsack on his back for his wanderings. For reasons of privacy they have requested that Anton Corbijn and me should stay in a different hotel – fair enough – but they are unfailingly polite and friendly when we meet.

Kraftwerk like to observe the formalities, sensibly concealing their real personalities from public scrutiny. However, the impassive gaze of their showroom dummy stageselves – pitched somewhere between Buster Keaton and William Burroughs – becomes animated in conversation. Rumour has it that Wolfgang Flür and Karl Bartos – the glamorous rhythm half of Kraftwerk – can't speak English, if they can speak at all, and this too turns out to be a fallacy. A brief meeting with the group before they rush off to a soundcheck is resumed in the dressing room after the concert. The reaction had been good; thus they're more relaxed and communicative.

Bearing in mind the flourishing of electronic pop in Britain, Karl is eager to know how well they might be received on their visit. No competition, I assure him. Magazine have split up. Simple Minds are inactive. Heaven 17 hidden away up north, Numan retired, and the rest are but poor, directionless imitations of Kraftwerk.

But most forward of the Kraftwerk entourage is long-time offstage collaborator Emil Schult, whose long curly blond hair pulled back into a pony tail, tanned bronze features and tight black satin pants make him

an unlikely component. After passing a few good-natured comments about my dress sense, he launches into a tirade against cities. "Cities are dirty, filthy places," he observes. "Five days in Barcelona are like five years off my life. Are there any back-to-the-country movements in England?"

No, they were discredited by hippy failures. At the moment there is nothing to match the strength of the European ecological movements that are willing to battle against police and paramilitary riot officers to prevent nuclear power stations appearing on their doorsteps. Or the strong eco-party lobbies – like Germany's Green Party – that win votes and respect from the mainstream.

He smiles knowingly and then continues: "It's a much better life in the country. It's good that there is a new consciousness in songs like that one from Talking Heads about breathing good air. In some ways that is what Kraftwerk are about too."

This is the man who co-writes Kraftwerk songs and works on their graphics. He spends eight months a year on an island in the Bahamas where he is building a one-roomed house, and he's critical that the natives have been corrupted by Western ways. "Once they were strong and healthy; now they eat too much sweets and sugar, so they have become fat and soft. But you can't tell them it's bad," he despairs.

Schult fits into the Kraftwerk operation along with the computer technicians and mathematicians. Theirs is a multifaceted, all-embracing corporation that preaches through its practices. Its ideals come close to that of Das Bauhaus, the '20s school of thought with whom they share a great affinity.

"I see us as the musical Bauhaus," concurs Ralf Hütter. "In their time they could work in theatre, architecture, photography and short films, but they did not really have the technology to apply their ideas to music; we now have it. We see ourselves as studio technicians or musical workers – not as musical artists."

But it's not all work. Wolfgang and Ralf are habitual disco-goers, so after the concert, while Florian and Karl go looking for something to eat, the dancing duo visit Barcelona's Studio 54. They look great, twitching like animated versions of the figures they bring on stage during "Showroom Dummies" among the bizarre mix of half-naked go-go dancers, Travoltas and tourists looking for a good time.

They're totally engrossed in their own movements , seemingly oblivious to all around them. Yet, as with all the environments they choose, they become very much part of it. So much so that I'm surprised Ralf Hütter is up in time – I'm surprised I'm up in time – for the scheduled interview only a few hours after we leave the disco for bed.

He betrays no signs of tiredness from the previous night or exhaustion from the tour. In close-up his youthful looks are belied by the streaks of grey in his hair. He is composed, yet good-humoured, his soft voice willing to answer any questions, his English vocabulary seldom failing him. What's more, his confidence in what he's doing means there is none of the self-conscious stuttering that many English groups lapse into when they discuss their work.


"We'd spent three years breaking up our studio and rebuilding it"

***PART II:*** *"Whose details and history are in the government computers – the security force alone has records of more than two million citizens – a person affected has no means of discovering, any more than they can check the combinations possible with this information and that from other computers… To produce a complete 'inventory' of the population there is at present being developed in the Federal Republic an information system and registration law which recalls the frightening visions of Orwell's* 1984*: There is a plan for what are known as personal numbers."* *Sebastian Cobler:* Law, Order And Politics In West Germany

***NME*: When I saw the titles of your new record were to be "Computer World" and "Pocket Calculator", my first impressions were that Kraftwerk had slipped into self-parody.**
**Ralf Hütter**: Why did you think self-parody?

**The pursuit of new age themes from showroom dummies through robots to computers…**
Well, I think that for us it was the only thing we could do at that moment, because we had spent three years breaking up our studio and rebuilding it with computers. Just by looking around us – around our studio and outside – it made us see that we were surrounded by computers, that our whole society is computerised. And as we were working on the connection between numbers and notes, computers seemed the closest subject for us to do. It was not intended in a parodic way. To us it seemed like the next step, from robots/physical automation to programming of thoughts within Kraftwerk and within society. Within Kraftwerk because everybody is programmed sociologically. And by working over the years with reproductions on machines, tapes, photos and videos we found out so much about our own programming of a long time ago, a time when we were not aware of ourselves being programmed – in education, by parents, or those other things.

**The combination of studying computers and building them in studio was almost a cleansing process of previous programming?**
Yes, "processing" is the word to describe the thing. Everything in our studio is now interconnected through the computers, so we had to rethink the whole system and program ourselves into that. Now everything is automatic, but we can always interfere as we have access to the programming. It means that we can now play anything, and that completely changes our relationship with physical music. You can no longer say, "That's good music, but we need three more trumpets", because if we want sounds we obviously just make the sounds ourselves. It's going to create new tensions and possibilities for us.

**Does that frighten or excite you?**
We are, uh, nervous, but we are also fatalistic.

**Why fatalistic?**
Because we are German and there is a fatalistic German quality of going all the way. There is never a question of maybe using a little computer here and plugging it into the synthesizer there and keeping the rest of the group as it was before. We close the door for three years and don't open it. We try to do it all the way, imposing the process as a discipline on ourselves, really taking all the way and then going out of the room to see where that takes us. I think that is very Germanic.

**Broadening the subject slightly, the title track "Computer World" hints at international conspiracy in its lines "*Interpol and Deutsche Bank, FBI and Scotland Yard*".**
Well, now that it has been penetrated by micro-electronics, our whole society is computerised, and each one of us is stored into some point of information by some company or organization, all stored by numbers. When you get into Germany at a border, they place your passport into a machine connected to the *Bundeskriminalamt* in Wiesbaden so they can check whether you can enter or leave, for various reasons other than whether your passport is correct. It goes much further than that, there's a whole philosophy of, er – it's our 1981.

**But the willingness of the people to accept something like the Wiesbaden police computer complex seems to indicate that a majority »**

**of the German people wants order or at least a regulated lifestyle.**
If you are insecure about basic instincts of yourself, then you have to look and maybe listen to outside impulses to tell you what to do. Which is not exactly what we are about, but certainly what a lot of Germany is about, and by living there, working there, we can't dissociate ourselves from it completely. We have certainly discovered that those things are part of our programming. And working with computers all the time you become very much aware of how the control thing works and could be done – especially in Germany, where computerisation of control organisations is very big. There are stores and societies which control your financial situation, so the whole computerisation gets more like a *1984* vision. Our idea is to take computers out of context of those control functions and use them creatively in an area where people do not expect to find them. Like using pocket calculators to make music, for instance. Nobody knew you could do that. We always try to do things to break the normal order – and knowing it so well from Germany, we know how to break it… possibly (*a slight smile*). It's about time technology was used in resistance; it shouldn't be shunned, reviled or glorified. Yes, we created a softer attitude, going much more into the human behaviour of those type of things. What we always try to do is to plug ourselves in and steal a little away from those companies, using guerilla tactics to steal from the rich conglomerates… like we got this mathematician into doing something he wouldn't normally do – help make music. And we communicate data to him by computer, avoiding then the post office telephone monopoly on communications.

> "It's about time technology was used in resistance"

**It's ironic that Kraftwerk have a reputation for being so distinctly German – in dress, observation of formalities, eating cakes in cafes – when you obviously don't like some aspects of modern Germany.**
*Ja*, that's the war; we have to go through this whole process because in England, or in America, you have a living culture, but in Germany we don't have that. In the war Germany was finished, everything wiped out physically and also mentally. We were nowhere. The only people we could relate to we had to go back 50 years into the '20s. On the other hand, we were brought up in the British sector and that's nothing we could relate to. There's no living musical thing other than the 50-years-old musical thing or semi-academic electronic music, meaning psychologically we had to get ourselves going. And that has only been possible with our generation. You can see the generation before ours that is 10 years older and they could not do it. The only thing they could do was get fat and drink. There was so much accumulated guilt that it physically took another generation to be productive, to be willing to say, "OK, I'm doing a song called "Trans-Europa Express" or something. That's why we don't have any contact with people older than us. It's just impossible – it's a real break. But now with our generation it has begun again, with the films of Fassbinder, Herzog and Wenders or the writing of Peter Handke, for instance. Our music was used in the last section of *Alexanderplatz* [the '20s novel of Alfred Döblin, recently subjected to a controversial TV serialisation by Fassbinder]. There was about 20 minutes of visions and horror sequences with our music.

**How about relations with your parents?**
It's difficult, but they are several years older, even pre-Nazi… we certainly represent the generation with no fathers. We have nobody to listen to, no old wise men or anything. We have to impose every question on ourselves and try to find the correct answer. That we were completely alone was very hard to accept at first, but after a few years we find that it is also in some ways encouraging, because it gives you possibilities of doing new things.

**In England we're partly encumbered by useless, decaying traditions that are nevertheless difficult to cast off…**
I think so, but that will crumble away…

**Getting back to your generation, weren't the RAF/Baader Meinhof Gang cited as reasons for the increased surveillance that resulted in the Wiesbaden centre?**
Maybe, but the people who created Wiesbaden are just putting their minds on the table. I mean, they have that in their heads for a long time, so if it were the Baader Meinhof Gang or the weather that gave them the excuse they would have done it, because that is the only thing they would think about doing. The people involved were brought up in Nazi kindergartens; they always see things in terms of punishment, guilt, restrictions, everybody in a role. And they can never find out what they are like and they can't go that far back into the programming process to change their modules of behaviour. The guy responsible for Wiesbaden is retired now, but he probably imposes the same system of order in his house – it's so much part of his system.

**Your generation had two choices – identify with the foreign cultures of occupying powers or go back to the '20s?**
I think we are very anti-American in a way because we were feeling so much how they came to Germany with Coca-Cola and chewing gum. As children we at first thought it was great, you know, big uncle coming down the street with Coca-Cola. I can still remember when I was very young how they came through the streets on tanks giving it out. We took it at the time, but over the years you more and more doubt what's happening and where you stand. It has nothing to do with nationalistic feelings, it's more a cultural thing; it has to do with more spiritual feelings, continental feelings…

**Were you worried that your identification with Germany would be misinterpreted abroad?**
No. For us it was more an identity thing. It was the process of finding out who we were. The whole thing of Kraftwerk going through those different LPs… like *Autobahn*, everybody in Germany said that singing German lyrics was crazy. Can you imagine that 75 per cent of our radio programmes were in English. Naturally we don't want it all to be in German, but such a high percentage? It is becoming better now – I'm really complaining about a few years ago.

**Having talked to younger German groups, like D.A.F. and Der Plan, I'm always impressed by their sense of purpose and their willingness to talk about their music – an area which English groups often hedge around.**
Well, it's so hard in Germany to be productive that you have to discipline yourself very much and put yourself through a lot of effort to get anywhere. When we first started it was impossible to find anywhere to play. We built our own equipment, telephoned and arranged anything ourselves… it was just little guerilla tactics in order to get anywhere. And once you have decided to do it, then you have adopted it as a lifestyle. But finally it has broken here and there is much activity in German now. It is no longer the case of people denying their identity and having to sing in English.

**The intellectual process that has obviously gone into the construction of your LPs manifests itself in a simple pop form. Do you think it's getting so simple that people are missing the point?**
No. We consider our music minimalist to a point and that again maybe has something to do with our so-called classical upbringing, where one of the highest goals is to play very complicated pieces. We would rather go for the meaning. If we wanted to play complicated things with our equipment it would be just a matter of pressing one or two more buttons. Besides, I never like practising because that is again part of the system of order – you put the notes in order. The system imposes itself in every aspect of human life; not just passports, but music, too. This created some very strange feelings in myself at the time. Our music is very primitive – the German word is *gerade aus* [straight ahead] and that is the best word for it. Simple means a little stupid, minimalistic means reduced, but *gerade aus* means you know where you are going and you try to get there as fast as possible. We once called our music *Industrielle Volksmusik*. I think that's what we stand for. We're very much involved with environment. Düsseldorf is called "The Office of the Rühr" (the heavy industrial belt of Germany) – it is all glass and steel and concrete and blocks…


"There's some degree of black humour in us": Kraftwerk in Tokyo, September 1981

**Many so-called futurist groups took *The Man Machine* idea the wrong way, taking a simplistic view of extolling machinery when they should have just used it.**
*The Man Machine* is more like establishing a balance between man and the machine, more a friendship, otherwise we would have called the album "Machine". Also, in the '70s everybody was calling their albums something like "Man", everybody simplistically talked so much about human qualities – "*I love you baby, forever*", for example. But we wanted to talk about the relationship between man and machines and the Russian context of *Rabotnik*, meaning worker. We always thought of ourselves as workers in sound – not musicians or musical artists, but as musical workers, going into the studio to work. And the whole thing was to develop that. We had so many problems in the '70s because nobody was attuned to it.

**Coming back from last night's concert, your collaborator Emil Schult spoke of back-to-the-land movements and a healthier, more natural lifestyle. He said that Kraftwerk in a way represented this.**
That has to do with the second electronic revolution. We went through the mechanical side three years ago and now it's the electronic data and processing – we are getting more into software and organisms, how organisms come about. There's a tendency to read bio-rhythms within the group of people who live in our home. For us there's no longer a difference between all those things – they've all been part of the programming process. One time we called our Kling Klang Studio the "Electronic Garden" – we have bridged the gap between music and technology.

**Kraftwerk's relationship to computers is more ambivalent, then?**
Ambivalence is right – we're not glorifying anything. It's more like by living in West Germany you can see how society can be manoeuvred with these electronic computers. What we are trying to do is firstly make that transparent and then maybe try to expose how you can do other things, because computers are like blank tapes: you can cover them with bits or change their direction even though they, too, can change – they did change – our attitudes towards music… It's really hard to express this in words because *Computer World* is still so close that I haven't reflected upon everything in it.

**Don't you get the urge to make more of this in your lyrics, which are mainly plainly descriptive?**
We always try to plant lyrics like clues, use them as codes, because otherwise lyrics tend to catch you intellectually and only that. That would disturb our *Ganzheit* [wholeness] principle. Also, it's part of our Germanic thing, the little symphonic thing, where words are there, but voices aren't mixed very high. Our main thing was mainly sound and the words just slipped into our music.

**The music was a system of contrasts once – loud/quiet, soft/hard, melodic/cacophonous. It's become more unified, easier on the ear.**
Yes, but we have gone more *radikal* synthetic. Everything we do now is completely produced by computerising the whole thing. Even the rhythms are horizontally and vertically organised.

**The Kraftwerk personnel seem strongly integrated into the Kraftwerk persona; is there a difference between your stage and private persona?**
Our personal life is our stage life; sometimes we get confused and sometimes I get mixed up. It's just a level of awareness, a feeling for the moment. There is really nothing else we do apart from Kraftwerk and related things. We have no other choice than going totally into that thing.

**It's strange that you haunt the discos, enjoying the physical activity of dancing, perhaps?**
Yes (*with a sly grin*), but we are dancing very mechanical. To us it's all part of… we are situationists. It's hard to express – maybe we should write some more songs about it. Like "Showroom Dummies", which says "*It's two o'clock, we start to dance, we are showroom dummies*", coming to life. We are also living in the streets, in the cities, everywhere. We can't separate this life from that. It's all one life and at the end we are dead.

**Do you see Kraftwerk as a comedy of manners?**
That's behaviour? Certainly there's some degree of black humour in us – we are mostly wearing black! There's a certain tradition of humour where we live, that has become part of us.

**There seems to be a gleeful happiness about you during the performance of "Pocket Calculator" when you all leave your keyboards to perform a dance routine at the front of the stage.**
Yes, because mostly we are physically bound to elaborate equipment. Florian bought a [musical] pocket calculator last Christmas in the department store, brought it to the studio where we started playing around with it. It was a new thing for us. It was a minimalistic liberation for us. I think that mini electronics are very interesting.

**Being so interested in video and automated beings, why have you taken to the road instead of sending out visual/mechanical aids as stand-ins?**
We did that before, a couple of years ago. In New York we played a press show with dummies. And one time in Paris to launch *The Man Machine*. What we wanted to do this time was put ourselves through the whole new situation of going out with our entire studio, because we had been locked in for three years to make this new album and concept; for the first time we would be able to go out, walk around and come back the other way. It's a really open thing, because we don't know how it'll turn out. It will reflect in our music, because we always draw our ideas from the work we do, putting our music and machinery through this whole process.

**Do you take a fatalistic interest in things at the point of crisis, when things are in the balance?**
(*After a long pause*) Maybe, because that's the point where changes come about and maybe, subconsciously at least, we are very easily bored by a stable situation. Electronic music is a very liquid situation, not like rock'n'roll, which is a very stable format. We're not in a box like that, we're not afraid, we're attracted by certain things in motion… *Chris Bohn* •

KOH HASEBE / GETTY

Motörhead: marauding assaults on the senses

ALBUMS REVIEW 1981

## ALBUMS

### Motörhead No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith BRONZE

They're not joking. In the rock'n'roll gross-out stakes, Motörhead take the fur-lined biscuit. I've seen them around a dozen times, including their monumental Heavy Metal Barn Dance in Stafford last year. I used to think that *Overkill* was a heavy album, that *Bomber* was over the top and that *Ace Of Spades* was louder than an atom bomb in a foundry.

But this... this is ridiculous. How producer Vic Maile managed to piece this together without his very brain liquefying and making a break for the studio exit, via his ears, I'll never know.

The facts. *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith* is a live album recorded at a variety of British gigs during the band's tour earlier this year – with the exception of "Iron Horse", which I suspect is taken from the aforementioned Barn Dance of 1980. Lemmy's introduction to that track, by the way, should go down in history. "This one," he mumbles "is dedicated to all the Angels in here – and everyone else, really."

And the music? Just about what you'd expect – but more so. The Motörhead classics are all there, naturally – "Motörhead", "Bomber", "Overkill", "Stay Clean", "No Class", etc, and, while it may seem like a reviewer's cliche, it's true to say that they sound fresher than ever.

It's no easy task to make a live album. Few artists have ever managed to pull it off.

Somehow, after repeated listenings, the attraction begins to pall. You find yourself picking just selected tracks. You get irritated by the bum notes, the flagging tempos, the voices that just fail to hit the expected notes. Offhand, I can only think of Jerry Lee Lewis' *Greatest Live Show On Earth* from 1964 as being a completely successful set recorded in concert.

However, I have a feeling that Motörhead may have equalled Jerry Lee's achievement with *No Sleep*.... A curious comparison to be sure, but then Motörhead, like Jerry Lee, are simple, straightforward rock'n'rollers who put the most colossal physical effort into their performance.

That, I think, is the reason for the success of both Motörhead and *No Sleep*.... All the tracks are full-tilt, marauding assaults on the senses. There's no danger that Motörhead would every attempt a ballad or indeed anything that doesn't require the shedding of a couple of gallons of sweat.

It would be hard to put up a case for Motörhead being great musicians, although guitarist Eddie Clarke does show a remarkable facility for speedy runs up and down his fretboard and an innate ability to sustain notes almost beyond the endurance of either player or listener.

But then virtuosity is scarcely what Motörhead are all about. This is gut music to be experienced rather than be listened to. "Bomber" is the perfect example. Philthy Animal Taylor pounds his drums like a jack-hammer gone berserk, Lemmy coaxes gargantuan groans from both his bass and his larynx, and Fast Eddie stabs his guitar through the wall of sound with the dexterity and facility of a champion fencer.

The pacing is perfect, from the opening notes of "Ace Of Spades" to the vast cheer that greets the final chords of "Motörhead". Perfect because it is unchanging and unrelenting. Motörhead know only one speed, and that's flat out.

Is it good? I happen to think it's magnificent – a display of brute force and power which most other heavy metal bands would find hard to even approach let alone emulate. I once heard it said, by a record company A&R man, that *Overkill* was the most important heavy metal album to come along since Black Sabbath's debut.

Following the same line of thought, I'd suggest that *No Sleep*... has set the standard for heavy metal in the '80s. It's a yardstick by which everything else will be measured. *Brian Harrigan, MM Jun 6*

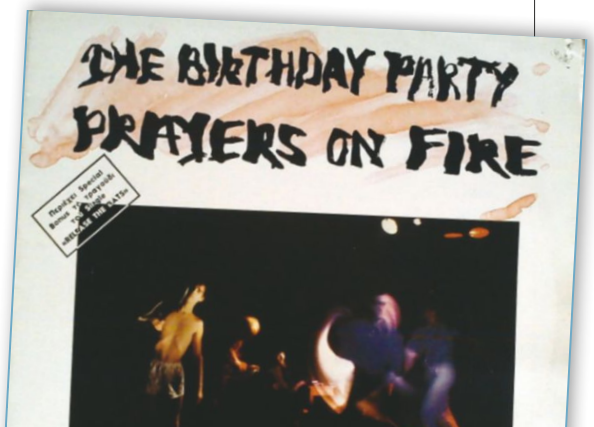
### The Birthday Party Prayers On Fire 4AD

One night several months ago the eyelids were growing heavy and the mind was wandering idly into another dimension as the John Peel show demonstrated yet again its inability to hold my attention for more than a couple of minutes.

Preparing to flick on a record, a hand suddenly froze over the turntable, an ear turned, and the brain was held by a sonic blitz that snapped out of the speakers. I had just been exposed to The Birthday Party for the first time. Without protective clothing.

Let's get the jokes about Frank Ifield and Rolf Harris out of the way first and just say that The Birthday Party are the hottest thing to emerge from Australia since... well... since whatever.

Formerly known as The Boys Next Door, they recorded an album under the name, became The Birthday Party, visited




FIN COSTELLO / GETTY

Britain last year and returned to Australia to record this album. They're now back in Britain indefinitely.

People who take Beefheart as a prime inspiration usually end up looking like five-year-old kids trying to copy Rembrandt – just listen to early Pop Group or Clock DVA to see the pitfalls – but The Birthday Party's achievement is in using Van Vliet's influence with intuition and understanding, simply using some of his ideas as a base camp for the expedition.

The end result is a sound that is uniquely personal, angular, thick and fleshy. It's spat out with demonic ferocity that's enough to scare the Y-Fronts off even the most blasé of listeners and recorded in what sounds more like an inferno than a studio.

If you're one of the few people who live near a shop that will actually play records on request, and then ask to hear "King Ink", Side Two's opening track. It's a cauterising assault built around a monster of a bassline, with guitars jabbing cruelly and singer Nick Cave crying out with manic intensity. If not, take a chance and buy.

I could rabbit on for pages, but can't help feeling that words are pretty inadequate when faced with this kind of burning commitment. Hear the record, forgive them for the Brecht and Weill-inspired overkill that ends Side Two, and see them.

*Lynden Barber, MM Apr 25*

### Rolling Stones Sucking In The Seventies ROLLING STONES

Strange really, if you bother to think about it. All that talk from the Stones camp about the quantity of songs which were left off their last two albums. The delay between *Some Girls* and *Emotional Rescue* was attributed – if memory serves – to the material the band had accumulated, the surfeit of which had left the Glimmer Twins spoilt for choice.

Ironic, then, that the second Rolling Stones album of the decade is a compilation. Not that the Stones haven't been well served by compilations throughout their career. Decca have wrung about every possible permutation from their Stones' catalogue, and their spell with WEA resulted in the 1975 *Made In The Shade* and the 1978 *Time Waits For No One* collections.

EMI aren't slow off the mark with *Sucking In The Seventies*, and a pretty paltry collection it is. Only two unreleased tracks and a live version of a 1978 song. The remaining tracks are culled from earlier albums: two from *Some Girls* ("Shattered" and "Beast Of Burden"), one from *Love You Live* ("Mannish Boy"), three from *Black And Blue* ("Crazy Mama", "Hot Stuff" and "Fool To Cry") and one from *It's Only Rock'n'Roll* ("Time Waits For No One").

The motliness of this current complication is compounded by the fact that two of the songs – "Time Waits For No One" and "Fool To Cry" – were available on the last compilation.

The only real interest, therefore, on this album lies in the three "new" tracks. The live version of "When The Whip Comes Down" is the Stones going through their well-practised paces at some unknown arena; the familiar chugging guitars and rock-solid rhythm section state emphatically that it is the Stones live and hard at work on one of the raunchier songs from *Some Girls*. Fine, but it adds little to the studio version.

"If I Was A Dancer (Part Two)" comes from the *Emotional Rescue* sessions, and as the subtitle indicates, it's in the same disco vein as "Dance" from that album. It's a competent, unremarkable outtake, punctuated by some sweet brass sounds.

The one real point of interest comes with "Everything Is Turning To Gold"; vintage Stones from the *Some Girls* sessions, a crashing rocker, with good Jagger vocals and some relentless percussion from Watts.

And there you go, a maxi-single's worth of new material for the price of an album!

I don't believe this sorry state of affairs is entirely the Stones' fault (except that they take so bloody long making an album, there's a necessity for some "product" to fill the gaps between albums). The album was geared for the American market, but obviously any Stones fan worth their salt wants everything with the band's name on, however unreasonably the album is compiled.

The album's cover, with its drab black lettering on a plain white background, reflects the paucity of its contents. On this evidence, if this is the Rolling Stones sucking in the '70s, it's only to gob right in the eye of the '80s.

*Patrick Humphries, MM Apr 25*

SINGLES REVIEW 1981

Springsteen: exposing our hopes and fears

## SINGLES

### The Human League
**The Sound Of The Crowd** VIRGIN

The verse is merely a retread of "Crow And A Baby", the League's very worst song, but the chorus is enough to make your mother tap her fingers lightly on her knee as she magnanimously offers, "Hmmm, catchy little number..." I can't really make up my mind about this one, which probably means that it's not that great. *MM Apr 25*

### Kraftwerk
**Pocket Calculator** EMI

The great-granddaddies of Teutonic techno-bop return from retirement, their reputation unexpectedly enhanced in their absence, and deliver one humdinger of a dance track destined not to be bettered in aeons. Blip-and-beep perfect for the nouveau robot manoeuvres currently in vogue at the discos, it takes mechanical minimalism one step nearer nonexistence with deadpan vocals, meaningless lyrics and a sparse, basic beat. The B-side's (surprise, surprise!) the same in Japanese. Right time, right place. Right place & No 1! *MM May 9*

### The Clash
**The Magnificent Seven** CBS

No bones about this one, Jack: it's a great record. Their best shot from *Sandinista!*, this 45 is The Clash's answer to disco and Sugarhill rapping. It features a superb bassline and sound, an intelligent lyric, and succeeds beautifully because Joe Strummer understands that the rhythm of his words are just as important as Mick Jones' careful funk guitar. The Great Work Rap is upon us. A compulsive dance number and you can listen to it as well. Give it a shot. *MM Apr 11*

### Bruce Springsteen
**The River** CBS

It's an odd choice for a single, but nevertheless an example of Springsteen at his finest, the hopes and fears of the man-and-woman-in-the-street expressed with stark melancholy.

The same goes for "Independence Day" on the other side, one of Springsteen's most moving songs ever, a song that crawls under your skin and makes you want to weep.

If you've been put off by the excessive mawkishness and grimace-inducing sexism on some of *The River* (the album), if you hate the car imagery which makes Springsteen sound like a send-up of himself, or if you simply think he's an overblown hype, then this package should be enough to make you see why thousands of people are prepared to go to almost fanatical lengths to get to see the man live. Now go and buy *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*. *MM Apr 25*

### The Teen Idles
**Minor Disturbance EP**
DISCHORD

Ever wondered where the real punks go now that the Subs and Ruts are prancing and posing around in their poncy new hairstyles? To the States, that's where. America's Teen Idles are so cliched, crass and cross, they're cute; playing so fast, loud and lousy, they make The Dead Kennedys sound like Queen. Frantic, fabulous, futile fun. Try it. *MM May 9*

ROB VERHORST / GETTY

June 9, 1981: the day after the last UK date of The River Tour at the NEC Arena in Birmingham, Bruce Springsteen visits U2 backstage after their concert at Hammersmith Palais, West London

# “Money isn’t the end”

**BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN grants an informal audience from the dizzy heights of success. Still, he remains earnest, helpful and utterly grounded. “The sell-out doesn’t occur when you take your first limousine ride,” he explains. “It happens in here…”**

— MELODY MAKER MAY 9 —

STACKED ON THE left of the typewriter are two blank cassettes which should contain the voice of Bruce Springsteen. But like Kevin Rowland and Elvis Costello, Bruce doesn’t like tape recorders or notebooks.

Before starting this European tour he did two formal interviews with music papers – the only press likely to draw him out – one with *Rolling Stone*, the other with *Musician*. And that was enough for Bruce.

He doesn’t need that kind of publicity to sell records or gigs. He doesn’t need it to boost his ego: that kind of superficial security he can do without.

“And also because it ends up me-me-me-me all the time,” he told me last week, laughing self-deprecatingly and thumping himself on the chest.

So we instead we sat in his dressing room and chatted. Within minutes the intensity of the man came through: he was searching for words and talking about matters not easy to articulate. »


ADRIAN BOOT / URBANIMAGE.TV

By the end of the hour I felt as though I'd made a new friend. That intimacy comes through on record, and more so in his current three-hour show, where the songs range from the deep emotion of "Darkness On The Edge Of Town" to the vibrancy of "Rosalita".

On the latter, Bruce, Gary Tallent, Clarence Clemons and Miami Steve jump down into the audience to heighten the communication; performer and listener look each other straight in the eye.

The same was true offstage; with the tape whirring, the conversation we had could never have happened. So how do I know I haven't misquoted him? That's just the price you pay.

**BECAUSE IT'S BEEN** six years since he last played here, and the aura that surrounds him, Bruce Springsteen has become a legend, an untouchable saviour even. The mystique is perpetuated by stories of mammoth concerts that become celebrations, Bruce climbing billboards to deface his posters, opening shows with "Badlands" on the day of Ronald Reagan's election.

And here, coming down the lobby of the hotel Sofitel in Lyon, France, is Bruce with girlfriend Joyce. "Going out to play golf?" jokes one of the road crew.

Along comes Dave Marsh, Springsteen biographer and husband of tour manager Barbara Carr. "Us guys are going out to have a look around the town right now, but we'll be back later. Catch you then." And off he went to catch up with Bruce.

Six-thirty, and still no sign of the tickets for tonight's show, so I head for the bar. Two bearded, muscular technicians wearing Springsteen T-shirts are sitting there.

"What time's the show tonight?" I ask.

"There ain't one," says one of the guys. "Least we ain't going to be there if there is." And they burst into laughter.

"What do you mean? I was told tonight."

"Like we said, no show. It's tomorrow. The president's got the hall tonight to make an election speech or somethin'. Gig's cancelled. It's tomorrow."

I get that sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach. I've only got enough money to stay tonight.

Then [journalist and Springsteen intimate] Dave Marsh walks into the lobby. I explain my predicament. "Don't worry," said Dave. "Bruce will look after you."

And the next night he did. After my first Springsteen concert, still suffering from "the first time you see Bruce glow", as they call it, he welcomes me into his dressing room.

Bruce is wearing a tastefully embroidered shirt and smells faintly of embrocation; I'm a bundle of nerves. I stall for time and ask him about Robert De Niro.

Somewhere along the line I'd heard they were old drinking buddies. Legend even has it that Bruce gave Robert De Niro the immortal "Are you talking to me?" line from *Taxi Driver*.

"Nah," says Bruce. "I met him a few times, but Clarence knows him better. You should ask Clarence about him."

It's time to start talking seriously. How does he feel in retrospect about his early albums?

He grimaces. "Ah, I was kinda loose when I made those albums," he says dismissively. "The other day, in fact, I was driving home and 'Blinded By The Light' came on the radio and…" He flicks an imaginary switch off in mid-air.

We move on to the infamous hype period that CBS instigated for his dramatic *Born To Run* album. An album that simultaneously nearly killed him, but instead set him up as the Great White Hope.

"Well, one of the bad things about all that hype business," says Bruce in almost a whisper, "was that it made us look as though we'd come up from nowhere, when we'd been playing the bars for years before that."

To get away from the intense pressure that followed, Bruce packed his bags and headed for home: New Jersey, where he was brought up. There, he says, he discovered himself. As a kid he never bothered with reading books or any of that style. Back in Jersey he started reading.

Could he give any titles? Bruce motions to the bags that have been packed and ready to go back to the hotel.

"I made a list, actually, of all the books I had read and were important to me, but I guess it's somewhere in there." Currently he's engrossed in *The History Of The United States*.

Also in Jersey he discovered movies. "I started going to see films for something else other than enjoyment."

It was from this period of self-awareness that *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* was created. Bruce had not only discovered himself, but he'd also seen the lives of those around him. The forces that had affected them.

He agrees now that *Born To Run*, his previous album to this period of discovery about life and himself, did have "a lot of overblown romance. But it still contained the seeds of realism." Bruce points to the last verse of "Jungleland" as proof of this assertion.

These seeds of realism flowered on *Darkness*…. His toughest album and most realistic, when it appeared in '78 it locked in perfectly with the mood that punk had created in England. But whereas punk was only starting to address the problems of identity and purpose, Bruce nailed the problem in one.

"Yeah, it's funny that," says Bruce, "because in America I looked around and no one was writing about this kind of stuff."


REX FEATURES

Springsteen on stage with E Street Band tenor saxophone player Clarence Clemons, 1981


Later on, Bruce describes *Darkness…* as "a guy trying to discover who he is and where he's going to".

Did he think *Darkness…* was optimistic? "Yeah, I think so," he affirms. "'Badlands' – that's optimistic, raising yourself above it all." We move on to *The River*. He tells me that out of his five albums, this one is his favourite.

I tell him that it seems to be a balance between the romance and glory of *Born To Run* and the gritty, hard realism of *Darkness…*.

Eagerly he agrees. To him, it's so important to have the two. "That's why put 'I Wanna Marry You' next to 'The River'. 'I Wanna Marry You' is a guy who sees someone from a corner and as soon as he does it's…" He motions with his hands to try and articulate that first rush of blood and love. "It's…" he repeats, both of us laughing.

"But 'The River' itself balances that out," he says, getting serious again. "So you have the two of them. And that's important." He goes on to explain further. To him, during the '70s, because of the things that have rocked the nations – "things like Watergate" – people have just lost the ability to dream.

"It's been knocked out of people," he says wistfully. What a part of his music does is try to re-establish that quality.

One of the reasons he loves rock'n'roll so much is because it gives people such a vitality and sense of being alive. From "Anarchy In The UK" to "Born To Run", anyone can testify to that vitality. Dreaming is a part of that sense of being alive, hence Bruce's interest and stress on it.

Simultaneously, though, he realises that songs like "Cadillac Ranch" and "Fun, Fun, Fun" must be balanced by the kind of realism to be found on *Darkness…*. "That's just as important."

There are other matters, too. Bruce sees himself and fellow E Streeters presenting and representing some kind of idea. Part of that idea is to remain as accessible as ever. This is a Very Important Thing.

But how, I wonder, did Springsteen (who may finally be the man to replace all those pathetic wasted songwriting teams of Plant and Page, Richards and Jagger), balance that accessibility with the enormous success he is now enjoying? On every single date of his European tour he has sold out consistently. In Britain, 250,000 people wanted to see him at Wembley. In Amsterdam they wanted to give him platinum records for *The River*. He explains carefully and with great deliberation.

"I haven't changed my way of living all that much, you know." He's always been lucky enough to eschew the trappings that come with success. It's something he hasn't found hard to do.

"I don't know if I can articulate this properly," he says, frowning. "But this room (*he gestures to the quite large place we're sitting in*) and money, it's there but it's not important. It's not the end.

"You see, the sell-out doesn't occur when you take your first limousine ride. It happens in here," thumping his heart. "And somewhere private." The reason it hadn't happened to him was because he wasn't built in a way that he could be sucked into it.

"A lot of good people with something to say have fallen into that trap," he says quietly. "It's when you get fat and lose your hunger," he stresses. "That is when you know the sell-out has happened."

That's why that trip back to Jersey was so important for him round about the time of *Born To Run*, when he first walked into enormous success. Because he knew who he was, where he was coming from and what he was writing about, he could see the dangers inherent in succumbing to the temptations. "*Darkness…* was the first album where, afterwards, I saw myself as a man at last and not a kid any more."

Another reason for his ability to be true is the people he surrounds himself with. Good people who guided him and protected him, but not in a cotton-wool manner. Honest people.

Bruce's writing has changed a great deal now, a fact he readily admits. "I'm not writing for the people I grew up with as a kid," he snorts, "because they're all married with a dog and kids now."

He writes about himself and the way he sees things now. As a man. He hopes that the people who come to see the show are able to feel a two-way thing with the band. Each party can look into each other's eyes.

Did religion ever affect him, I wonder? He shakes his head and tells of how, at an early age, he realised that the people teaching it relied on fear to instil it in him.

> "*Darkness…* was the first album where I saw myself as a man"

He looks up at the ceiling when he's saying all this and I tell him that's exactly why I stay in bed on Sundays now. You shouldn't have to look up to anything. "That's it!" he shouts, grabbing my arm. "It should be like this," and we're face to face.

Time now, though, is running out. People keep entering the dressing room to take things out to the truck and they keep giving Bruce lightning glances.

Sensing this, I ask him what else is good about the band and the music he's playing. Putting out his hands, he stresses how music has become far too divided.

"It's stupid," he says, "if you like this music and can't like that music. And if you like that music you can't like this music. That's how it's gotten and we aim to smash all that. Transcend those barriers.

"We get all kinds of ages at our gigs and that's great." At this point Dave Marsh enters the dressing room to tell us he's going and clearly, though we've only touched the tip of the iceberg, enough is enough. When Joyce comes in a minute later it really is time to go.

As we pack up our stuff I ask Bruce a last question about a story he had told on stage that night. It had been told as an introduction to Bruce's version of Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land", and concerned the time Bruce and Miami Steve had played a gig in Memphis and afterwards decided to visit Elvis' house at about three in the morning.

"Was that true?" I asked.

"Oh yeah," smiles Bruce. "Actually, me and Steve were hungry and we asked this taxi driver where the best place to eat was. He said Gracelands and I said, 'Forget the food, let's go see Elvis.'"

Which is what the boys did. The taxi driver wasn't too keen on the idea, however, and kept warning them about the dogs and guards that surrounded the house. Bruce took no notice and just told him to keep driving. When they all got there, Bruce scaled up the wall to Elvis' house and started up the driveway. As he got nearer he could see that there was only one light on in the entire house.

Suddenly from out the woods, out stepped a guard.

"What do you want?" he asked, his gun hanging from his hip. "I come to see Elvis," Bruce said innocently.

"He ain't there," the guard replied. "He's in Lake Tahoe."

Figuring that the guard was lying, and glancing once more at that window with its light shining bright, Bruce explained he was in a band. They'd played Memphis that night. They were quite a popular band.

In fact, Bruce had been on the cover of *Newsweek* ("And I never tell anyone that," laughs Bruce, "which shows what a cheap shot it was.").

The guard remained unimpressed. "Well, can you tell him I called?" asked Bruce. The guard said he would and Bruce walked back down the drive, glancing over his shoulder at that one room.

"And you know," says Bruce, "that light in that room… it just had to be Elvis."

As long as he keeps thinking that, then the Promised Land is still only round the corner.

**WHAT'S HE REALLY** like? On my return to England I heard that phrase more times than I care to mention. And the answer was always the same.

Bruce Springsteen is rare. Rare in that he is totally unlike any rock star – or whatever the phrase is – that I've come across. He actually is himself, not an image. There's no falseness, no show, no pretensions.

He knows who he is and he isn't ashamed, nor does he try to hide himself. And he's intelligent, immensely likeable, a little vulnerable, moral, strong. And above all, alive.

He refuses to go under, come Watergate or Reagan. Two incidents in Rotterdam last week show the kind of man he is.

After the first gig, a party was held to give Bruce some platinum records. Dick Asher, who is a very important person within his record company's scheme of things, had flown in to make the presentation.

Only Bruce didn't make it. He felt ill. And his first responsibility is to his audience, not to bigshots. Earlier that night he had stood up and sung "This Land Is Your Land". He'd changed one of the last lines to "*From California to the streets of Brixton*". *Paolo Hewitt* ●

# Gut force

**MM JUN 6** Bruce Springsteen's show is predictably great.

BRIGHTON CENTRE
BRIGHTON
LIVE!
MAY 27

**TRYING TO WRITE** about a Bruce Springsteen concert without reinforcing the man's reputation for scarcely believable stage performances is like trying to cross the Atlantic in a paper yacht. Do it and you're sunk.

The simple fact is, when you see Springsteen for the first time any lingering doubts about the yards of superlatives that have been heaped on him over the years evaporate like ether. When Springsteen's up there on stage a lifetime's hopes, passions and frustrations explode in an uninhibited cry matched only by the sense of exhilaration and freedom a mountaineer must feel on reaching the summit.

And if at times Springsteen strays too near the edge and stumbles down the slopes towards sentimentality, it's a slip that's dwarfed by the magnitude of his overall achievement.

I must confess my biases. When *Born To Run* came out in 1975 I used to literally rush home to play it, and I still regard it as my favourite rock album of all time. So when I heard the E Street band playing "Backstreets" – my favourite rock track of all time – at Brighton with a force that matched and even surpassed the intensity of the original, I was swept along on a tidal wave of overwhelming emotion.

With *The River*, Springsteen seemed to have lost his touch, often descending into banality; most of the "rockers" appeared to be different versions of the same song, and tracks like "Sherry Darling" and "Hungry Heart" seemed lightweight in comparison with much of his earlier work.

Since the concert I've realised that *The River* is not An Album in the same sense as *Born To Run* or *Darkness On The Edge Of Town*, but should be seen as a record that closely follows the dynamics of a live Springsteen show; an epic that balances the hedonistic joy of rock with the more complex exploration of the human emotions that characterised earlier songs like "Badlands" and "The Promised Land".

But the songs are only part of the story. The recordings only hint at the power that the E Street Band achieve on stage; they begin with the kind of gut force that most bands only begin to achieve at the end of set.

And of course there's Bruce's famed athletic achievements on the floorboards, though the most surprising thing about watching him is how he refuses to fit the traditional mould of rock superstar as demigod, but rather melts down the barrier between artist and performer.

**Occasionally the heartfelt honesty strayed too near to the sentimentality of hardcore C&W**

Springsteen certainly doesn't look like a rock star – short and almost stocky, with none of the exaggerated sexuality of a Sting or a Jagger – and he wasn't perfect. Sometimes the clowning and hamming went too far, such as when two "doctors" tried to force him off stage on a stretcher near the end of the set (a short one by his standards, two-and-a-half hours including two encores).

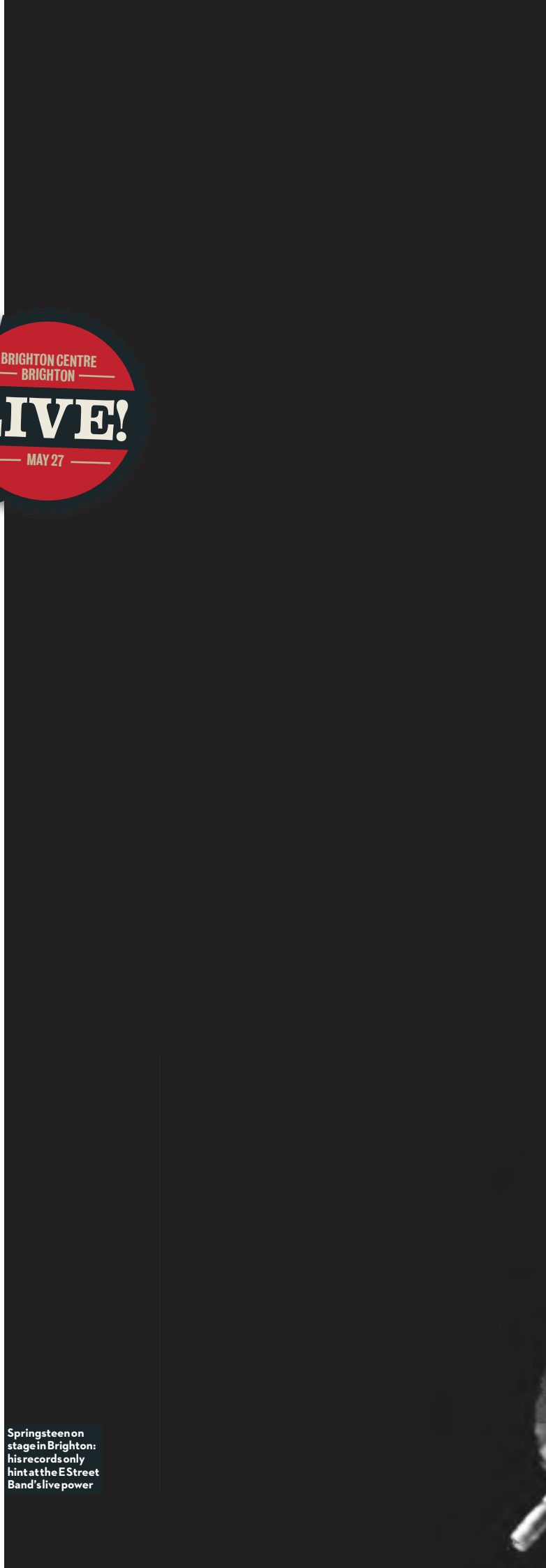
Occasionally the heartfelt honesty strayed into slush territory, going too near to the over-the-top sentimentality of hardcore country & western in the new song "Johnny Bye Bye" (about Elvis Presley's death), and sounding uncomfortably close to the sickly John Denver on Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land" (although Denver would never include a line about "the streets of Brixton").

But complaining too much about points like that would be like winning a Rolls-Royce in a Kellogg's competition and moaning because the windscreen washers don't work.

The sceptics among you are probably going to write this off as yet another predictable "over the top" Bruce Springsteen review, but the power of Bruce and the E Street Band on stage is enough to move even the emotionally crippled.

Disbelieve at your own cost.

*Lynden Barber*



Springsteen on stage in Brighton: his records only hint at the E Street Band's live power

REX FEATURES

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NEED ANY BACK ISSUES? SEE PAGE 144

# Readers' letters

**MM/NME JAN–JUN** Hardin missed, Sabbath defended, Haley recalled and more...

## Order of business

"The name 'New Order' has nothing to do with Nazis" – Alan Erasmus, Factory Records (Gasbag, February 21).

Do you need any more convincing?

Incidentally, I seem to remember an America band called New Order which included ex-Stooges.

**Dominic, London W2 (*NME* Feb 28)**

*Our American correspondent writes: "Guitarist Ron Asheton, who was indeed a Stooge, formed a band called The New Order in 1975 in LA and their '77 LP sleeve featured Nazi uniforms and assorted regalia. Ron (now a waiter in a vegetarian restaurant – fact!) is famous in the Midwest for his huge collection of Nazi gear and he wore some of it as far back as 1969, when with The Stooges. He went on to form the pathetic Destroy All Monsters and is an all-round helluva nice guy."*

*So Factory's New Order are certainly keeping nice company. Don't you think it's about time they changed their stupid name? – Ed*

## RIP Tim Hardin

Many thanks for Colin Irwin's honest tribute to Tim Hardin just when it seemed his death was going to warrant scarcely any attention at all. Unlike Lennon we won't have three lovely songs in the Top 10 to listen to. In fact, his records were never easy to get and will probably be impossible to find now. Just imagine a *TOTP* with "Hang On To A Dream", "Misty Rose" and "If I Were A Carpenter" on – what a dream.

**GRAHAM VARNEY, Spring Bank West, Hull (*MM* Jan 24)**

## Bruce talk costs lives

On reading Paolo Hewitt's Springsteen interview I was amazed to see the words "those pathetic, wasted songwriting teams of Plant and Page, Richards and Jagger". Where has this guy been for the last 15 years?

Does he really think that people who can write such classics as "Moby Dick", "Whole Lotta Love" and the powerful "Stairway To Heaven" (deemed by millions to be the greatest ever rock song) are pathetic? Or that *Their Satanic Majesties Request* is a wasted album? It makes me wonder if he has ever even heard of the Rolling Stones or Led Zep. I am a firm believer in everyone holding their own opinion, and this character Hewitt may not like these bands or this type of music, but to call them pathetic and wasted is to insult the intelligence of millions of dedicated fans.

By making such a statement he has done his own reputation as a rock critic (sic) no great service and I, for one, will read his future offerings with a pinch of salt.

**TONY MURCOTT, Wolfscastle, Dyfed (*MM* May 30)**

VIRGINIA TURBETT / GETTY

## Off colour remarks

After reading your May 9 issue, I feel you have gone too far. First – you implied on April 25 that from then on *MM* was going to be filled with superb colour photos. They were dreadful; the one of Bruce Springsteen was blurred. Compare those with the quality of a good photo.

You also make no prior announcement or explanation about the price increase. The price increase would have been worthwhile if all your issues were 64 pages long, but in the following week's issue there were only 48 pages in black and white and filled with very poor quality journalism.

As usual, there was an article making out some obscure group to be the most important contribution to rock music in the decade (Depeche Mode). What angered me even more was a direct transcription of a Radio 1 interview with Randy California by John Tobler. Admittedly, he did the interview for Radio 1, but there is still no excuse; this is a music mag, not the *Radio Times*.

Please return to the standards you had back in the good old days of 1978, when I first started reading *MM* and all issues were filled with at least 64 pages of good journalism.

**ALISTAIR McAULAY, Sandyford, Co Dublin, Ireland (*MM* May 30)**

## Heavy words

If you can't find anything good to write about Black Sabbath, please don't bother yourselves writing anything. In a recent live review you again hammered them ruthlessly into the ground. I'm not just another headbanger, but I have a great interest in other rock forms, such as Tull, Floyd, Kansas, Crawler. I also support Genesis.

The critic responsible for the review almost stated that Sabbath is a combination of four very undesirable persons, whose unsurpassed lack of talent serves as a lesson to all. If Iommi can't play lead guitar and Geezer can't play bass and so on, how come they sell out all their concerts? How is it that nine out of their nine studio albums are peaches?

Sabs can still boogie with the best of them – Saxon, Iron Maiden, whoever you care to mention.

Also, please let Led Zeppelin rest in peace. In a recent review of UFO's latest album, I saw the word Zeppelinesque. I wonder is it a case of Led Zeppelin are dead but won't lie down. I hope not.

I'm proud of Sabbath. They may be old and creaking in places, but that's part of their appeal; that and great music.

**BILL PERRY, Belfast, Northern Ireland (*MM* Feb 7)**

## Haley! Haley! Rock'n'roll

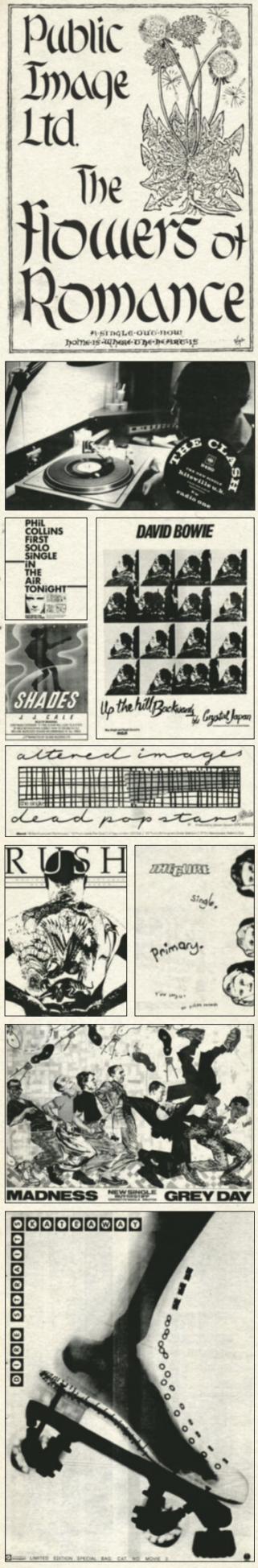
It must have been about 1957. I was about eight years old at the time. We used to have one of those old accumulator radios high up on a shelf in the kitchen. I vaguely recall enjoying the songs I heard on that radio: "Tea For Two", "Swedish Rhapsody", "Love And Marriage", and then one day this record came out of the radio and took over the whole room. The song was "Rock Around The Clock". Bill Haley was the beginning.

**ALAN GRIFFEY, Thurlow Road, Torquay (*MM* Apr 4)**

## New music, please

Why is it that Radio 1 insists upon churning out 10 or 15-year-old classic records? It is sad that today, when there is so much new talent (notably U2, Comsat Angels, etc), we are still inundated with Presley, Haley, Lennon and the like.

**MARK HURST, Brook Street, Macclesfield (*MM* Apr 4)**




# 1981

JULY – SEPTEMBER

**IGGY POP, THE SPECIALS, WAH!, SCOTTISH BANDS, SOFT CELL AND MORE**

# "We never had trouble there"

**NME JUL 11 What happened when a skinhead band played a pub gig in an Asian neighbourhood.**

**THE MORNING AFTER** the night before, the Hambrough Tavern in the West London suburb of Southall was a smouldering, blackened shell.

Only an end-wall bearing the forlorn sign "A Traditional English Pub" remained to remind the curious crowds of onlookers of its former identity.

The previous evening, Friday, the Hambrough had played host to its last-ever live attraction – The 4-Skins, The Last Resort and The Business – and to the hundreds of skinheads who descended on the area from outside. By 11pm, the pub was in flames and the streets surrounding it were the scene of pitched battles between the police and young Asians, whose community makes up the majority of Southall's population.

It was a fully fledged race riot, as serious as the disturbance which gripped the St Paul's area of Bristol last year and Brixton in London earlier this year. Within 24 hours, the Toxteth district of Liverpool was ablaze as well – violent clashes and looting culminating, on Sunday night, with the police's use of CS gas for the first time on the British mainland.

The scale of the rioting was to eclipse anything that had gone before. But certain things make »

REX FEATURES

# THE BURNING OF SOUTHALL

**PAUL DU NOYER reports from the town where Britain's first inter-racial riot erupted into flames**

NING after
before, the
gh Tavern

immigrants in the past.

Caught physically in the middle, the police's role the night before was undeniably difficult and dangerous, but to the Asians, their action was seen as a defence of the


July 3, 1981: in Southall, on the western fringe of London, the Hambrough Tavern burns after a gig by East End Oi! band The 4-Skins


Cars, vans and shops were burnt out during the Southall riot

REX FEATURES

Southall different. Unlike the other trouble spots, for instance, it is not a tough and run-down inner-city ghetto, but a normally quiet residential area, notably free of racial tension. But because of its dense concentration of immigrants, it has a symbolic significance for both sides of the race issue. It was this that made Southall a flashpoint in 1979 when a National Front meeting in the Town Hall led to a clash with Anti-Nazi demonstrators, in the course of which Blair Peach, a New Zealand teacher, lost his life.

What also sets the Southall riot apart from the others is the clear suggestion that it flared up as a result of provocation from outside – in the form of two coachloads of allegedly fascist skinheads arriving from the East End in buses laid on by The Last Resort's manager – as opposed to the spontaneous eruption of tensions within the area itself.

And that poses a couple of questions which have not, as yet, been entirely answered.

One curious aspect of the affair must be the decision of the Hambrough Tavern to book a group like The 4-Skins who, regardless of their own motives and beliefs, have at least the reputation of attracting militant right-wing supporters. To do so at a popular local gathering place in a predominantly Asian high street seems unusually insensitive.

Until three weeks ago the downstairs room of the Tavern was regularly used as a club, under the name The Cavern, for promoting local acts – helped out on one occasion by Ruts DC, themselves from the same part of Middlesex.

Ex-promoter Marc Hall, however, who ran the gigs under his "Not So Famous Music" logo, was recently told by the owners that The Cavern had to close. In its place, the pub would run live music upstairs, and look for bigger names to pull in the crowds.

The 4-Skins booking was one of the first undertaken on the basis of this new policy. Other acts were to include Cock Sparrer and The Byrom Band. "I don't think they know what they're doing there," says Hall. "The Cavern was a completely peaceful place. We never had trouble there." Landlord Paul McInver was away at the time of the incident.

For their part, the local police say the only prior indication they had of possible trouble was a tip-off that something might happen in Greenford, a few miles away. Consequently they turned up in the wrong place, and there was no significant police presence in the vicinity of the Hambrough when violence did break out.

**Trouble began in the early evening with skinhead attacks on Asian shops in the high street**

Trouble began in the early evening with skinhead attacks on Asian shops in the high street, causing a 400-strong crowd of Asian youths to lay siege to the pub where the skinheads later went to watch The 4-Skins' set. When police reinforcements did arrive, their priority was to form a cordon around the pub and get the skinhead faction away. But they couldn't prevent the Asians from venting their rage on the building itself by destroying it with paraffin bombs.

In Southall on Saturday morning, Asian youths were to be found giving impromptu press briefings along the pavement to the hordes of white journalists. Those I spoke to were bitterly dismissive of police claims that the trouble came as a surprise. "They must have known," said one. "They're not that stupid."

According to another, some sort of confrontation was taken for granted as soon as The 4-Skins' appearance was announced, some days previously. Indeed, the word to be heard most frequently on locals' lips on Saturday was "protection" – both as a justification for the youths' massive turn-out the night before, and as an indication of their resolve to abandon the passive stance associated with Asian immigrants in the past.

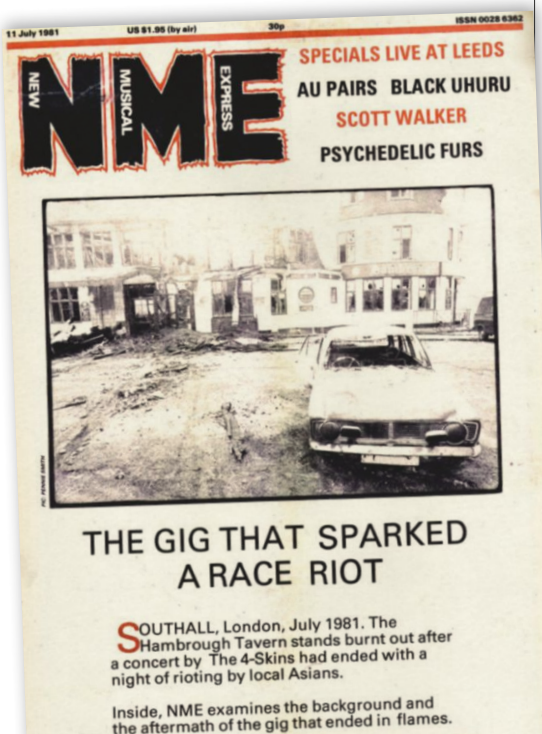
Caught physically in the middle, the police's role the night before was undeniably difficult and dangerous, but to the Asians, their action was seen as a defence of the fascists' right to "invade" a peaceful area. What is beyond doubt is that Asian confidence in the authorities' ability/willingness to defend them has hit an all-time low.

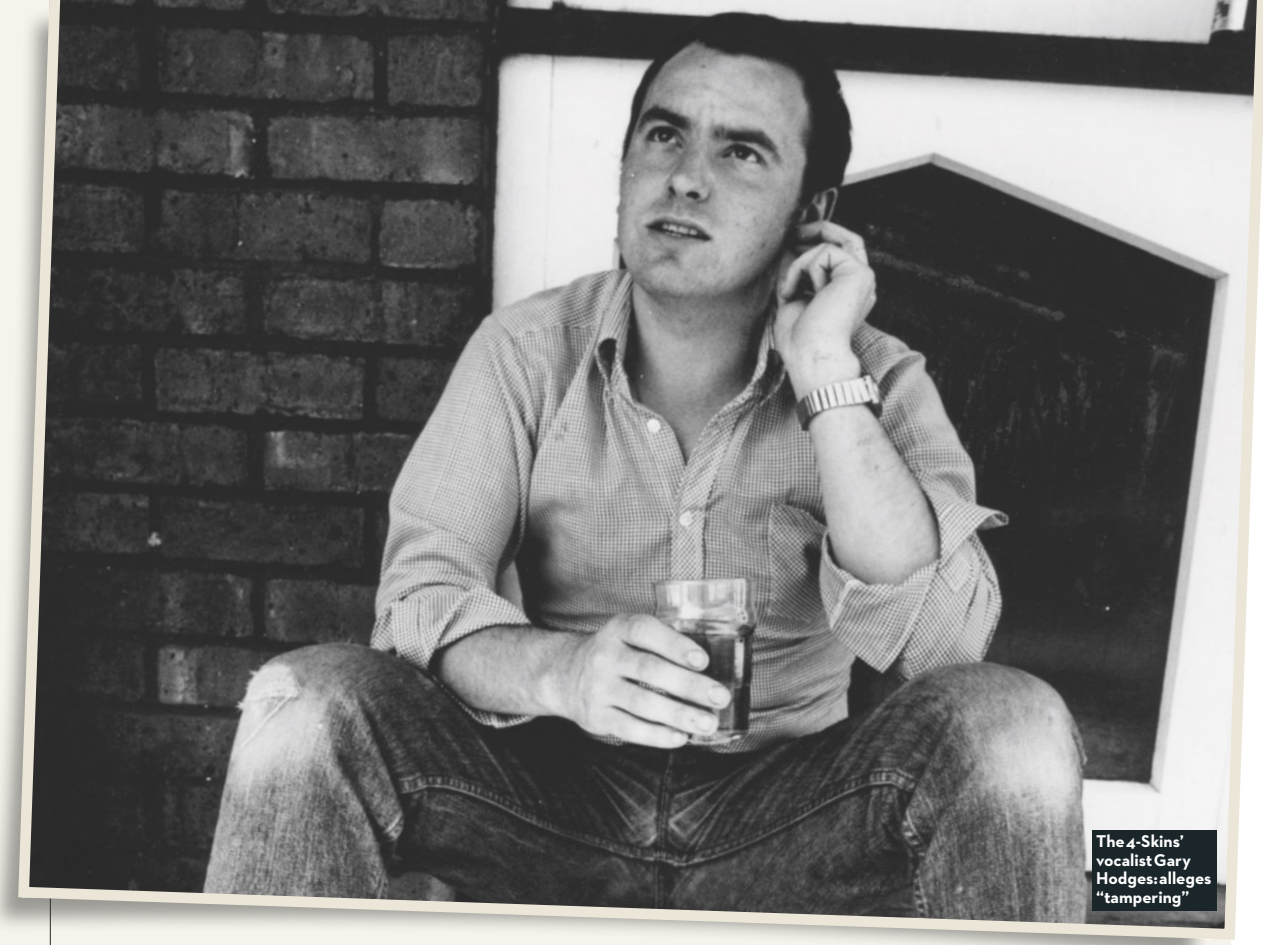
The police are, as ever, reluctant to ascribe a racialist motive to the white youths' arrival in Southall. But this contrasts with the statements of Asian witnesses. They say that the skinheads – generally held to have numbered 200 – turned up in vans, taxis and coaches, the last bedecked with racist slogans and symbols, and went down the high street to the pub causing damage and shouting racist abuse. When skinheads smashed the windows of the Maharajah Stores, a grocery, and abused the owner's wife, Mrs Nirmal Kalhan, her daughter phoned friends for help, and soon the youths of the entire community were galvanised into action.

And leaflets promoting a "white nationalistic crusade" were in evidence at the pub itself, where the bar staff barricaded themselves into a back room when the attack began. Of course, it's highly unlikely that anyone could have foreseen the ferocity with which Southall exploded on Friday night – although in an age of rising racist violence, much of it well documented, and against a background of economic decay, few can claim to have been altogether surprised.

If the Hambrough Tavern was unwise to accept the booking, then they've certainly paid a heavy price for their mistake. Whether the police could be more alert to the dangers presented by extremist provocation is another question, now the subject of an official inquiry. Twenty-four people will appear in court on July 16, on charges connected with the riot.

Perhaps the least that anyone involved in rock music can do is to ensure that never again are their actions suspected of helping to fan the flames. *Paul Du Noyer*





The 4-Skins' vocalist Gary Hodges: alleges "tampering"

# "We can't get gigs"

**MM AUG 29 Post-Southall, The 4-Skins attempt a comeback.**

**THE 4-SKINS' FIRST** appearance since their ill-fated Southall gig broke up in confusion on Friday amid allegations of sabotage. The band were forced to leave the stage after a mysterious series of power cuts which they believe were made deliberately.

Ironically, they'd set out that night to prove that their gigs could run smoothly as anyone else's. They'd arranged the booking at a small pub in Mottingham, South-East London, under the name of The Skans, with support band The Business going out as Bollyguns. They'd invited only friends and press, including a BBC film crew. And everyone was on good behaviour, band and fans alike.

"Since Southall, we can't get gigs under our own name, and not as many shops as we'd like are taking our single," said Gary Hitchcock, 4-Skins' manager, before the gig.

"No one believed a word we said about Southall. As far as they were concerned, we went down there for trouble and that was it. Hopefully, we're going to use tonight's gig to show that we can play without any aggravation... to say to people, 'Come on, give us a chance.'

"We've had to keep it quiet because you do get morons who think it's the thing to do to go to a 4-Skins concert, go 'Sieg Heil!' and smash 13-year-old kids in the mouth. But it's not like that. We've played some right rough places without any trouble. And if we got another Southall, we'd have to call it a day. So tonight we want to set the right example."

Things started off smoothly enough. The Business finished their set without incident, referring to the Oi! controversy before their own version of Sham 69's "Tell Us The Truth": "This is for the media who didn't want to know the truth..."


And so to the 4-Skins, whose set began encouragingly enough. They were playing strongly and well without giving or getting any provocation and there wasn't a "Sieg Heil" in sight. But then came the power cuts, first in one number, and then another, and another. With them came the worry that the growing frustration might boil over into something unpleasant.

It didn't. Half the crowd eventually got up on stage and helped the band finish singing a number without any power at all. A potentially angry situation was defused, and the group went off.

It was at this point, though, that several characters decided to continue the show themselves, bellowing out choruses of "Rule Britannia" and the National Anthem with a defiance that was notably out of keeping with the general atmosphere of the evening. They did the band an enormous disservice.

Afterwards, vocalist Gary Hodges commented: "That singing would never have happened if we'd been able to play the full set. I suppose it was a reaction. Most people were happy just singing along with us when the power went.

> **"I'm well sick. We had the makings of a good gig and it got spoilt"**

"I think someone was tampering with the power on purpose. I'm well sick. We had the makings of a good gig and it got spoilt."

A spokesman for the pub said the power cut off automatically when the music reached a certain level. But no one could explain why this hadn't happened during the soundcheck or The Business' set.

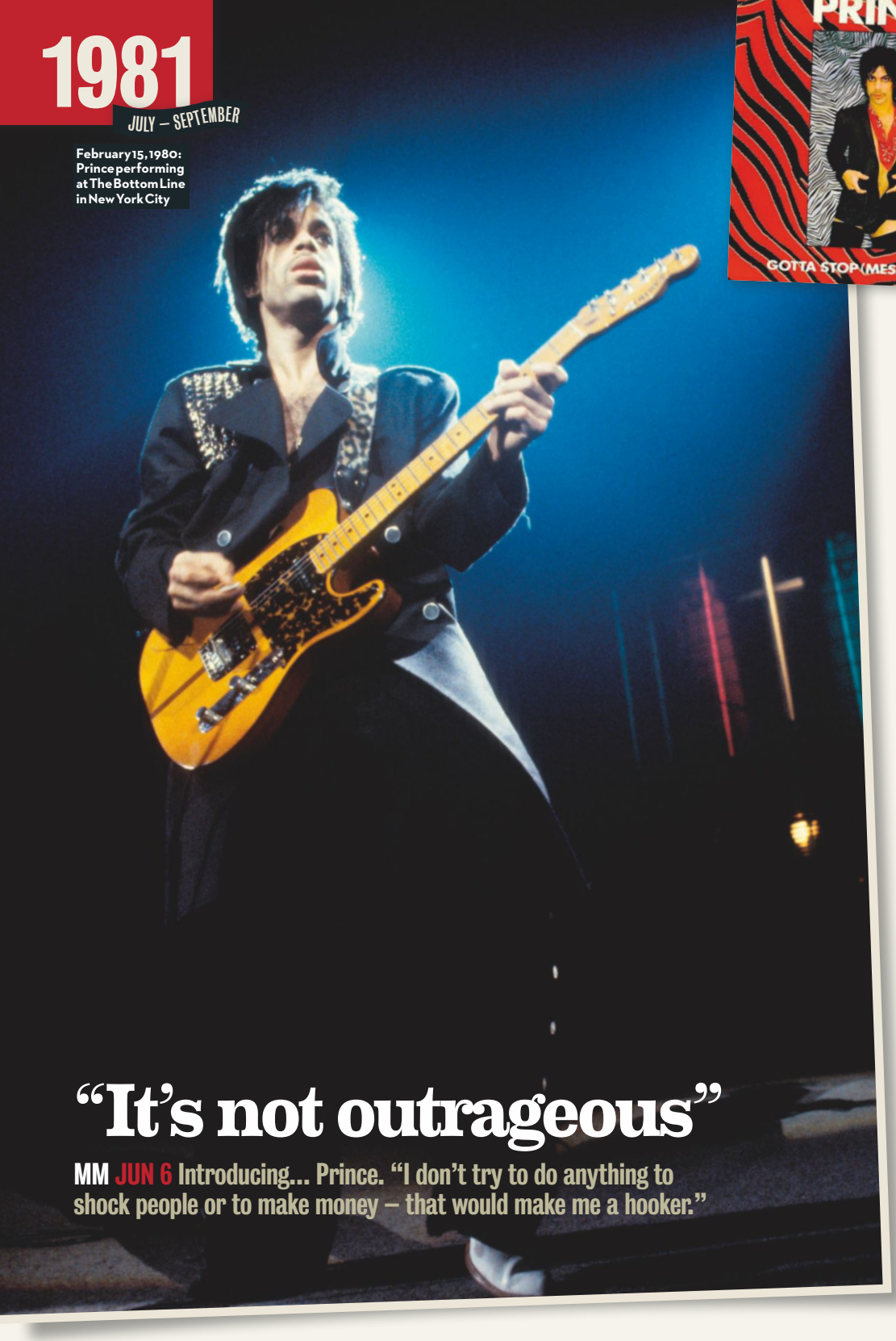
Despite this latest setback, The 4-Skins look likely to persevere with their comeback campaign, and more secret gigs are expected. *Carol Clerk*

## JULY–SEPTEMBER 1981

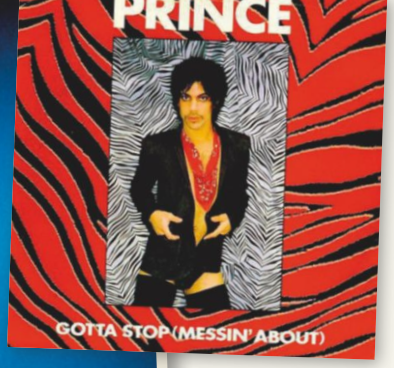
➤ At last – the full details of the upcoming Stones album, which is intriguingly, titled *Rolling Stones Tattoo You*. It comes out on the band's Rolling Stones label on August 31. It's to get a simultaneous release throughout the world – the idea being to cut out the possibility of sales of import albums. The 11 new tracks featured are: "Start It Up", "Hang Fire", "Slave", "Bulldog (Little T & A)", "Black Limousine". "Neighbours", "Worried About You", "Tops", "Heaven", "Ain't No Use" and "Waiting On A Friend". "Slave" features Pete Townshend on guitar and back-up vocals. *MM Aug 1*


➤ Despite his withdrawal from live performances, Gary Numan releases a new studio album on September 4. The album, *Dance*, is Numan's first studio album since *Telekon* last year, and features 11 new Numan tunes, including the single "She's Got Claws". *MM Aug 29*

➤ With the release of Bob Dylan's new album *Shot Of Love* on CBS, Dylan fans might be interested to know that Dylan's recording debut has recently been made available on the RCA International budget label. The Harry Belafonte album *The Midnight Special* is now available for around three quid, featuring Dylan on harmonica on the title track. *MM Aug 29*



February 15, 1980: Prince performing at The Bottom Line in New York City




# "It's not outrageous"

**MM JUN 6 Introducing... Prince. "I don't try to do anything to shock people or to make money – that would make me a hooker."**

**THE QUIET LITTLE** man with bovine, brown eyes and a whisper of a 'tache stares absent-mindedly out of the hotel window across London's rain-swept rooftops.

"Actually," he decides finally with pronounced hesitation, "I think it's much more embarrassing talking about these things than doing them. I mean, I find it a lot easier to sing swear words than to say them. And when I first had a girl, I found it really hard to tell my mother, but Lord knows, I didn't feel embarrassed while I was doing it to her."

The man shifts in his seat, fidgets with his fingers and smiles uneasily. He's nervous – so nervous he gives me the jitters. I remember the quote from the *New York Times*: "With his sassy grace and precocious musicality he is heir to the defiant rock'n'roll tradition of Elvis Presley, Jimi Hendrix and Mick Jagger."

I look again at the slightly dishevelled figure sitting before me and figure I must be in the wrong room. Just to check, I ask for his history and, yep, believe it or not, this is definitely Prince. Christened by his father – a jazz musician – from his fictitious stage name, Prince is the fairytale story of a juvenile runaway who really made good. At only 20 he has two platinum albums behind him in the States and a third, *Dirty Mind*, rapidly approaching the mark despite a total airplay ban owing to the risqué sexual overtones of its lyrics. Already a critically lauded star back home, and accompanied by a wild reputation, he's now making his first tentative foray into the foreign market with a one-off show at the Lyceum.

The first thing I was burning to know was what made a man referred to as the "solo Bee Gees of the libido" by *Rolling Stone* on account of his falsetto vocals and naughty-naughty songs, take to the stage, with his five-piece band, dressed in a studded leather coat, Y-fronts and black thigh-length tights?

"To me it's not outrageous, it's comfortable," he replies, trying to force a smile. "I've always dressed the way I've wanted to, and if it goes with the music it's only because the music is part of me and so is the way I dress. I don't try to do anything to shock people or to make money – that would make me a hooker."

Prince is not a prat but neither is he the wunderkind America desperately tries to make him out to be. He's accomplished – he's master of 26 instruments, composes and plays virtually everything on all his albums and is the youngest person ever to self-produce for Warner Brothers – he's flash, intelligent, a bit too self-obsessed for easy conversation, a little bit silly and kinda strange too.

Things like his father leaving home, his brother flitting in and out of slam and a period lodging with his sister all seem to hold a fathomless fascination for him and he constantly calls upon his past, almost endowing it with some spiritual significance, as he struggles to explain the motives behind his music.

"I saw an analyst once because I was wondering why I was so sexual-minded and why I wanted to go against the grain so much, because it got me into a lotta trouble a lotta times," he reluctantly confides. "He asked me to talk about my childhood – y'know, 'when you first experienced this and first experienced that'. I realised that, when I was young, I used to read my mother's dirty novels and I was more taken with them than anything – it was a lot better than comic books."

This apparent self-discovery has, he claims, not only enabled him to develop as a more full, unfettered personality, but has given him new confidence in his work.

> **"My problem is that my attitude's so sexual that it overshadows everything else"**

"It was a revelation recording this last album," he explains more excitedly. "I realised that I could write just what was on my mind and things that I'd encountered, and I didn't have to hide anything. The lyric on the new album is straight from the heart,

WARING ABBOTT / GETTY

whereas the other albums were more feelings, more dreams and fantasies, and they stuck to the more basic formulas that I'd learned through playing Top 40 material in old bands. That's probably why they were so big, but that's really upsetting for me because you say to yourself, 'Well, do I just wanna be real big or do I wanna do something I'll be proud of and really enjoy playing?'

"'I Wanna Be Your Lover', was a big hit off the second album," he continues, "but it was hard for me to play that song after a while. I'll never get sick of playing the stuff from the *Dirty Mind* album, because I'll always remember what state of mind I was enduring the time it was recorded."

The frankness of the third album, dealing with strictly taboo subjects like incest and lesbianism, was bound to keep it off the radio despite its seductive disco settings, but the subsequent notoriety ensured the sales, and anyway, according to Prince: "The sales weren't important. There were points, I must admit, on the first two albums where I was writing to get a hit, but that was too easy. I don't like to do things that are easy – it's more of a challenge for me to write exactly what happened, exactly what I feel at that particular time. If I think a certain thought and I put it down on paper exactly like I hear it in my head, that's a challenge to me as a writer.

"More than my songs have to do with sex," he says, "they have to do with one human's love for another, which goes deeper than anything political that anybody could possibly write about. The need for love, the need for sexuality, basic freedom, equality... I'm afraid these things don't necessarily come out. I think my problem is that my attitude's so sexual that it overshadows anything else, that I might not be mature enough as a writer to bring it all out yet...

"I'm gonna stop this soon," he suddenly spurts. "I don't expect to make many more records for the simple reason that I wanna see my life change. I wanna be there when it changes. I don't wanna just be doing what's expected of me. I just wanna live... until it's time to die..."

He trails off and that's the end of the interview. I rise; reach the door and turn to say goodbye, but he's already back there, gazing out the window. I remember a line from one of his songs – "*Sex-related fantasy is all that my mind can see*" – and ponder on the dark, mysterious beauty turning tricks in the private bedroom of his mind. *Steve Sutherland*



Madness: taking steps to prevent the sale of NF pamphlets at gigs

# Policy statement

## MM AUG 15 Madness articulate their anti-racism.

**MADNESS HAVE ISSUED** a policy statement on racism, following claims that neo-Nazi organisations have been recruiting at their concerts. The allegations, which refer to Madness, Bad Manners and other bands, are made in a report by the Centre For Contemporary Studies.

Madness say:

- They do not support any political group which has racist policies.
- Their career has been inspired by musicians like the Jamaican Prince Buster; their single "The Prince" came out on a label belonging to The Specials – a multiracial group – and they fail to see how anyone could assume that they supported any racist group.
- They joined forces with the promoters of their Hammersmith Odeon concerts to try to prevent the sale of National Front literature outside.
- They do not support racist policies, and they urge their fans to join them in speaking out against racism.

# "A few tracks..."

## MM AUG 8 A new band for Robert Plant.

**RUMOURS OF A** collaboration between Robert Plant, John Paul Jones and Cozy Powell were fuelled this week by confirmation that the intrepid trio have been recording together at Rockfield Studios.

Speculation began when Robert Plant's occasional band The Honeydrippers pulled out of a recent Dingwalls gig, with the former Zeppelin vocalist said to be restructuring the group.

A spokesman close to Cozy Powell said: "Cozy was recording a few tracks for Robert Plant, but I don't know what it was they recorded. He was booked for a session, but then he's done sessions for Graham Bonnet, Jeff Beck, Bernie Marsden... you name them and he's done sessions for them."

At Swan Song, Zeppelin's old company, a pressperson said: "I've passed your enquiry on to Robert's manager Peter Grant, and if he hasn't rung you back, then they haven't got anything to say."

JULY–SEPTEMBER
# 1981

➤ A high court judge has ordered that the one existing copy of the world's rarest Beatles single should be handed over to Paul McCartney's solicitors. Owner of the single is John Lowe; a former occasional member of The Quarrymen, under which name it was recorded in 1958. Tracks are Lennon's rendition of "That'll Be The Day" and a Harrison/McCartney song entitled "In Spite Of All The Danger". *MM Aug 1*

➤ At last, a Neil Young film you can actually see. *Rust Never Sleeps* opens at the Screen On The Green, Islington, on August 27 for three weeks. The 108-minute film was shot during Young's 1979 US tour with Crazy Horse. The Neil Young Appreciation Society are considering petitioning Young to tour over here, and a magazine – *Broken Arrow* – is being prepared. *MM Aug 22*


➤ A new Bob Marley album, *Chances Are*, containing eight previously unreleased tracks is to be released by WEA International on September 25. Six of the songs were written by Marley, and the whole set spans a 10-year period of his recording career. His widow, Rita, is featured on backing vocals. A single, "Reggae On Broadway", is due. *MM Aug 29*

FIN COSTELLO / GETTY

# "Unique, that's the word you're looking for"

**A trip to Scotland to investigate new musical stirrings from AZTEC CAMERA, FIRE ENGINES and JOSEF K. Things are certainly looking up. "I used to have a bleak outlook on life," says Roddy Frame. "But then the sun came out..."**

— MELODY MAKER AUGUST 22 —

**THE MYTH OF** London as the cradle of Britain's rock culture has crumbled dramatically in recent years. It began with Birmingham's 2-Tone label, then Factory emerged from Manchester, and Zoo and Inevitable from Liverpool. And if any confirmation was needed that London no longer dominated the industry, it's come this month with a fierce onslaught on the big city from a surge of genuinely exciting new talent from Scotland.

The Scots resurgence has been engineered by the fierce independence of boy genius (and world musical authority) Alan Horne, who founded Postcard Records in Glasgow, while Fast Product supremo Bob Last gave Edinburgh a second David to attack Goliath – Pop: Aural.

While some bands, like the Scars, still looked to London for their fortune, the bands fostered by Horne and Last determinedly made their records north of the border, and left the kilts to Spandau Ballet. The result is a new belief and commitment in Scots rock, and a new incentive for local bands who suddenly saw that they could flourish beyond the jaded circuits and played-out rituals of the Southern metropolis.

Yet, unlike 2-Tone and Factory, the new Scottish labels are not in pursuit of some special and ultimately inhibiting "sound" of their own, as this month's invasion by Pop: Aural's Fire Engines and Postcard's Orange Juice, Aztec Camera, and Josef K has so clearly proved.

So what of the others? Is Aztec's Roddy Frame really Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney rolled into one? Do the Fire Engines dress up in silly uniforms? And how existentialist can Josef K get?

You may not find all the answers here, but it'll be as near as dammit. »


KERSTIN RODGERS / GETTY

Aztec Camera's Roddy Frame: "All the early stuff I wrote was very punk"

## AZTEC CAMERA

**EAST KILBRIDE, GLASGOW'S** overspill satellite, is the home of Scotland's brightest pearl, Aztec Camera. Down its cold, grey streets lives an unassuming trio whose music will break the meanest heart of stone. Armed with only their hopes and songs, they came to London for the first time ever this month to play just their third show of the year, and held The Venue's normally blasé audience in rapt attention for over an hour.

They were hauled back for a triumphant encore, and were paid one of the largest fees in their short career – £125! As 17-year-old Roddy Frame, the group's singer, writer and guitarist, said afterwards: "It was a great gig – we don't usually react with an audience like that. We're usually very shy!"

Having only heard, and loved, their first single, "Just Like Gold"/"We Could Send Letters", the depth and relaxed confidence of their performance came like a revelation, giving credence to the ravings of Postcard's Alan Horne.

Persuaded by Josef K's Malcolm Ross to see the Aztecs support The Rezillos, Horne was sufficiently moved to write later: "It was like stumbling into Max's to find The Velvet Underground, but this Lou Reed was 16 and the audience were 61. We had all been proven wrong; there was another group in Glasgow apart from Orange Juice."

Apart from their youthful charm, Aztec Camera are distinguished by Roddy Frame's gift for singing and writing songs that are driven by the most exquisite, twisting melodies, and sculpted into dynamics subtle enough to be called serene.

It was back in 1979 that Roddy formed the group with drummer Dave Mulholland and bassist Alan Welsh, since departed and replaced by Campbell Owens. "David and I were in a group called Neutral Blue," Roddy told me. "I was the lead guitarist and we used to do stuff like 'White Riot'."

Prophetic stuff, perhaps, though today they choose one of The Clash's milder statements of early intent, "Garageland", as one of the two cover versions in their set – the other being the *Parkinson* theme tune! How such a catholic taste in material is rendered into a cogent whole remains a mystery.

As the tropical storm raging in North London competes against the group's soft, musical voices, Campbell explains how the inclusion of "Garageland" is more a happy coincidence than a rediscovered paean to forgotten principles.

"We were practising in a friend's garage and someone suggested we do it as a joke. I suppose we are a bit of a garage band, though, but that's because we haven't got anywhere else to practise, so if anybody's got any offers!"

The unaffected maturity in Roddy's latest songs could not be further from the three-chord thrash that would later mutate into the wonders of Oi, but in the beginning things were quite different.

"All the early stuff I wrote was very punk," Roddy admits, nervously glancing at the floor. "I try and concentrate more on melody and chords now – there's hardly any lead guitar in the songs either."

Two characteristics seem to be especially outstanding in his work: the unusual, almost jazzy chord progressions exemplified by a new gem called "The Spirit Shows", and the searingly poignant, emotional lyrics, a sample of which run: "*You said you're free, for me that says it all/You're free to push me and I'm free to fall/So if we weaken we can call it stress/You've got my trust; I've got your home address/And now the only chance that we can take/Is the chance that someone else won't make it all come true*" ("We Could Send Letters").

It makes sense to discover, then, that Roddy's current heroes are more likely to be Wes Montgomery and Django Rheinhardt than Magazine or The Clash, and that instead of lyrically aping The Damned's "New Rose" he says his approach is "much more upfront these days".

"I can only do songs that really mean something to me these days," he says. "I try and capture the feeling I had when I wrote the song when I'm singing it as well. That way it always works better."

Living in East Kilbride, a town equivalent to England's Milton Keynes, seems to have nurtured the group's endearing sense of survival humour, and while they all see it as "rather dull and drab", they say there's nowhere they would particularly prefer to live. Going into town with their mates on Saturday afternoon and sipping the occasional carry-out at home are high spots in their dizzy social life.

At first this helped give Roddy a "bleak outlook on life", but this, he adds, faded. So what happened? "Aw, the sun came out," was his smirking reply.

Small gigs like their recent stint in the Glasgow Spaghetti Factory are their life-blood, with intimacy high on the list of priorities. "I just couldn't believe how many people were at The Venue," Campbell recalls in awe. "There were 957! I know because I counted their legs and divided by two!"

Likewise, the thought of signing with a major record company terrifies them. Roddy: "I'd hate to be with a big company. I don't want anyone pressurising us to come up with material or to do it in a certain way. I'd rather take three years to do an album that I really like – every song has to be a good one. I don't want an LP with any fillers on it like so many others."

> "Intensity – that's what I think we achieve"


In fact they aren't far short of having enough original songs (leaving out the singles, including the latest, "Mattress Of Wire") for an album that will hopefully be recorded in the autumn, which goes under the provisional title of "Green Jacket Grey".

Even for this they don't intend to expand their lineup, preferring to push to the frontiers of their present possibilities. "I think it's interesting to see what we can do as a three-piece," says Roddy, who has only recently acquired a proper semi-acoustic jazz guitar. "I think we can do a lot within the framework we've got."

On this point nobody's arguing, and when I urge them to summarise their style, the effervescent Campbell comes to the rescue: "Unique, that's the word you're looking for."

Magic? You better believe it.

## THE FIRE ENGINES

**BREAK UP, NOT** down! Their music is made of shattered surfaces, broken moods and shredded images. Such linear agility allows spiritual appearances by Beefheart and T Rex in any typically segmented composition.

**FACTS**: The Fire Engines are (from Scotland): David Henderson on guitar and vocals; Russell Burn on drums; Murray Slade on guitar. Records, released on Bob Last's Pop: Aural label, based in the group's home town of Edinburgh, are: Singles: "Get Up And Use Me", "Candy Skin". LPs: *Lubricate Your Living Room*. Speakers for the group are David and Murray. Subjects are:

**VENUES**. Prior to their Heaven show, with first-time live backing singers and strings, the largest London date was the Lyceum.

David: "Most people missed us at the Lyceum because we were on first. Heaven was much more exciting, very fast. It was quite interesting, because that's the first time we've played in front of an audience for about three months – we had a big break while Murray was at college."

**PACKAGING**: With Fast Product, Bob Last made pure packages available that contained little except more packages. The Engines' new compilation LP for the American market bears the message "Ready Packed For Action Fun".

David: "I think it's important that things have a label as such but the people concerned should get the chance to label themselves. We designed the cover of our album, but I feel we're just a group. We never saw ourselves as an Edinburgh group."

By showing multiple aspects at once, The Fire Engines establish themselves as the true futurists. Uninterrupted motion is conveyed through a grand musical transparency of overlapping styles.

**INDIES**: Though "Candy Skin" came near to making the national charts, their real success has been mainly visible in the so-called independent charts, with both singles and album enjoying long stays at the top.

David: "The Rough Trade attitude makes me puke. That independent bullshit! They don't want any stars or superstars – that's disgusting. We want to get across to as many people as possible, so we will use all the aspects of the business around us to our own advantage."

It's common knowledge among the cognoscenti that The Fire Engines only came down to play at Heaven so they could see the royal wedding on the cheap.


**MEDIA**: Their contributions to other popular expressions include writing the music for a fringe play called *Why Won't The Pope Come To Glasgow*, which they describe as "very Brechtian", and a cowboy film made on Super 8.

David: "The printed word is dead. It's so outmoded now. Journalists are generally very irresponsible. I mean, most of the music press is not worth getting your fingers dirty for.

"I admit the build-up has helped a lot. There probably wouldn't have been so many people at Heaven if it wasn't for the coverage we've got. It's given us a lot of access to things we needed – it has its good points.

"Generally, though, I don't like the music press. They're so limited and sterile. The layouts are so old-fashioned for a start. They never change from week to week. The only thing that makes them change is when new groups come along and do things themselves. I love television, but there's no control over it. We should have more access."

**THE NEW POP**. Murray: "I think it's just coincidence, any similarity to The Fall, though there is that kind of Northern thing in our music as well. There's something ancient there – something to do with King Arthur. I dinnae ken what it is though. On the other hand, I quite like listening to some disco stuff."

David: "We all listen to so many different things, but I don't hear much that is really new. First it was rockabilly, now it's funk. People are falling back on old styles to cover their lack of ideas and relax in the security of the past."

**SCOTLAND**. David: "Most people who work in the music business in Scotland are assholes. They're all cokeheads totally interested in making money and nothing else."

Murray: "We've known Bob Last for years now and he's one of the few people who are alright. He just showed an interest. He's out to make money alright, but not at our expense."

Listen to The Fire Engines. They could jar you into REACTING, THINKING, MOVING! Their dance is Break Up! The message to Wake Up!

## JOSEF K

**DON'T STOP. DON'T** even pause. Go head over heels to Josef K on their staccato rush, their burning iridescence, above all their terrible urgency demands immediate attention.

Forgive an unpredictability that springs from untamed spirits. Ignore diversionary production diatribes in misleading reviews, they have made one of this year's most haunting LPs – suitably named and lovingly played, *The Only Fun In Town*.

A timeless collection of immaculate songs, *Fun…* represents the group's second attempt at 33 rpm perfection. Guitarist Malcolm Ross explains: "We scrapped the first LP because we simply didn't like the results. I think we rushed into it really. Alan [Horne] had just started Postcard and he decided it ought to make some money, so he suggested we make an LP just because he knew if Orange Juice made one they wouldn't be happy with it, but he thought we would be satisfied with what we could do at the time.

"Looking back, I don't think we really gave it enough thought. We just went, 'Oh we've got enough songs, we can do an LP.'" Recorded at the 24-track Castle Sound Studios on the fringes of their native Edinburgh, the final results came nowhere near the sound and feel they hoped to capture.

"I must admit it turned out really bad. We put in too many things – too many gimmicky things: slamming doors and background shouts, that sort of thing."

Still on the dole, yet realising starting afresh meant a straight loss of two grand, they unanimously agreed to go back to square one – dedication, as you can see, sometimes costs more than blood, sweat and tears.

Brushing aside this setback, Josef K have an unshakeable confidence in their music which has nothing to do with shallow bravado, and they started the ominous year of '81 playing on the same bill as Orange Juice in Brussels' Plan K, a vast converted sugar refinery split into five floors of freaks, films and transvestites.

The force behind Les Disques Du Crepuscule and Factory Benelux, the enigmatic Annik and Michel, suggested the group recorded a single ("Sorry For Laughing"/"Revelation") at a tiny garage studio before departing. Vindicating their earlier decision, it was happily realised that at last a place had been found which allowed their energy to come through.

Imagine their chagrin in discovering that nearly every reviewer saw the resulting unorthodox production (a group effort) as sadly misconceived. Crackling with a rough exuberance, the treble-high guitars and unusually delicate bass-drums axis proved too much of a culture shock, while the mixed-down vocals were decidedly out of order for those unfortunate souls addicted to the sterility of high-tech attack.

It's not as if they came near to the neo-Luddite style of the early Fall. Never slipping into the excessive opulence of new psychedelia, they achieve a satisfying clarity without sacrificing the subtle tensions and fierce exigency that is so close to the soul of Josef K.

There are, it seems, no regrets from the group. "We're all very happy with the LP," Malcolm says in whispery Scottish tones. "We wanted to sound hard and aggressive but not heavy. In fact we used to be a lot more trebly – we've mellowed a bit!"

"Besides," adds bassist David Weddel, "I'm not sure what difference all the reviews and hype make anyway. I mean, The Fire Engines album sold 11,000 while the Scars, who had a huge promo campaign behind them compared to The Engines, sold 12,000. We've already sold 10,000," he announces triumphantly, "and that was just in the first two days!"

**JOSEF K ALL** met each other at school in Edinburgh. Paul Haig, the group's singer, lyricist and second guitarist, started the nucleus with his then next-door neighbour, drummer Ronnie Torrance. Later, joined by Malcolm, they made their first stage appearance as TV Art at the Pollock Halls in Edinburgh.

This was around the beginning of '78. "We were very influence by Television and Talking Heads at the time," Malcolm recalled, "except we were a bit poppier – in fact we were dubbed a power-pop band, although we never claimed to be."

The departure of their bass player Gary McCormack left a space for David, who gave up his role as roadie/manager, marking the beginning of a harsher and more personal group style that would eventually evolve into their special mix of oblique melodies over brittle, angular guitars.

During those formative days their inspirations were closer to the surface, and TV Art were seem as a kind of mutant cross between Lou Reed, Television and The Only Ones. Wunderkind Alan Horne remembers them as being "very half-baked. Malcolm was playing Steve Cropper's part from 'Dock Of The Bay' at the soundcheck and I thought, 'Oh great.'

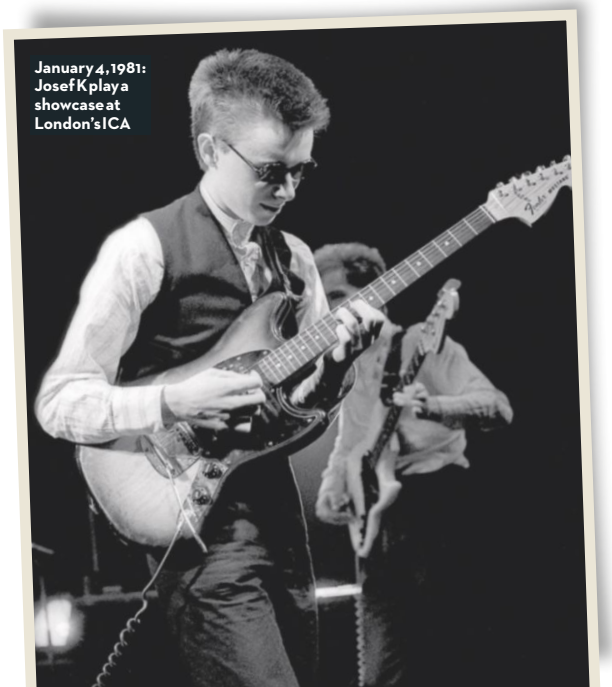
"Then they'd do a Roxy Music song and I thought, 'Oh God.' They did have one song that stood out though, called 'Chance Meeting'."

This was to become the first Josef K single on Absolute records. Only 1,000 were pressed, backed by a song called "Romance".

Dipping into Subway Sect, they continued to move on, releasing three further singles, "Radio Drill Time", "It's Kinda Funny" and "Sorry For Laughing" as well as recording the lost LP, 10 copies of which were retained for posterity.

Along the way they collected a reputation for erratic but sometimes electric stage shows – an image unbroken by their recent appearance at London's Venue, where they failed to realise their full potential.

Imagine an unholy cross between Lou Reed and Frank Sinatra singing "*sometimes I know it's crazy to exist*" against a wall of shrill, razory guitars and you have the sound of Josef K. This, as Paul would say, is "intensity – that's what I think we achieve, intensity". *Ian Pye* •



January 4, 1981: Josef K play a showcase at London's ICA

DAVID CORIO / GETTY

# "I can see through your clothes"

**A place of highs and lows, IGGY POP's career is in something of a slump. The man himself, however, is in rude health, discussing love, sex in the street and Ronald Reagan. "I cried when Nancy said she ate bananas instead of apples so she wouldn't wake up the President..."**

"Who needs charity?": Iggy Pop photographed in France, August 1981

PETER NOBLE/GETTY


iGGY pOP

— MELODY MAKER JULY 11 —

# Rattle of a simple man

**LITTLE JIMMY OSTERBERG** cut his slice in the immortality stakes on his instincts. Unleashing the floodgates of a manic kid spirit, he railed into the night – a deep, primal roar from the soul – publicly abused himself, cut some gigantic records and seized his time.

Raw power! Overtly male and very rock. The energy was channelled through a tight sinewy body, the emotions expressed via a gloriously rich voice that matured so far it became a ruse to disguise the emptiness of his contemporary material.

The debts of his life-affirmative thrash are countless. Nobody ever really celebrated the benign indifference of the universe better than the Ig. In a perfect rock'n'roll world he should have died some mysteriously confused death and closed the legend. He didn't of course, and at 34 he's got a new album to tout.

The third in a declining series that began with *New Values* (see any?), slipped to *Soldier* and finally plummeted on *Party*, it shows a man revelling in a brash and unashamed ego through material that has acquired the stained and second-hand air of an increasingly malodorous youth culture.

Flat and rarely profitable, Iggy's *Party* is a very dull affair and comes nowhere near doing justice to an intelligent survivor who, on current evidence, equals (in person at least) the vibrancy of his best work.

As part of the promotion campaign for the new product, Arista have booked him into a small but comfortable hotel (its modesty dictated by the poor sales of the previous *Soldier*) for a gruelling session of interviews with assorted hacks. Taking my place on the treadmill, I eventually find Iggy in his favourite place of the moment: the bar!

A small, still well-defined figure dressed in jeans, a red, ribbed sweater and black pointed shoes is hunched over what turns out to be one of many drinks of Swamp Mud-Pernod mixed with coke and ice. Turning to greet me, the eyes glare in fearsome penetration but the delicate handshake is warm and open.

"I can see right through you clothes," he tells me. "I see what's there."

Praying I'm wearing my best underwear, we begin by discussing his visit to Marley's funeral, which obviously left a great impression and a good suntan. His face is lined, but not blatantly so for his age, and like so many "hip" Americans only the shape of his nose has really changed over the years.

The once proud Roman bridge has been slowly eroded – the one visible legacy of the infamous drug habits. I've been given strict instructions not to dwell too much on the past, as this has been covered exhaustively elsewhere. I get straight to the point and ask if he thinks the new album is as good as his work with the Stooges or Bowie.

Without hesitation he was off: "I think there's things on this album that cut my classics. I'm really pleased with it. Now I only want to go further in a similar direction for a few years more."

Is this self-delusion or blind faith? Considering the record's major statement runs thus: "*Rock is rock / Give it a shot / Rock is rock / Whether you like it or not*", it seems prudent to move on to pondering the worth of his latent obsession with superficial buddy relationships and frantic pleasure seeking. Iggy, however, is reluctant to dig beneath the wine and streamers, preferring instead to justify his songs as aural *cinéma vérité*.

"You see, I tried to make sure that each song had a setting. Like 'Sincerity' is in The Lucky Number Bar – that place really exists – I hang out there. It does stay open till four, you know. And uh… whenever I'm in Chicago, when I go to the Lucky Number there'd be these two big six-foot girls that would show up.

"They'd say, 'Hey Iggy, listen, we wanna take you home and do a couple of things to ya'. And they took me to this Lithuanian suburb and just, and just… they IMPRESSED ME! And now I go back there and they just assault me, you know. I'm in ecstasy until about 8.30 in the morning and then they drop me off wherever I'm staying.

"Things like that I've found an affection for – bits of Americana (*he calls the new album his American album*) that got dropped for a few years. We're the Wild West again – things are getting really great."

> "I believe in everything Reagan does. I'm a lot like him"

**IT TRANSPIRES THAT** "Pumpin' For Jill", for example, is based on a florid chapter in the recent history of the hottest libido this side of Prince. Down in the French quarter of New Orleans, Iggy fell in love, but the encounter was hardly akin to the first embraces of our Charles and Di.

"She was a real chick. I fell in love with here for about 30 seconds. I haven't been in love for years and years… but for 30 seconds I was truly in love.

"We were walking down the street and it was Mardi Gras, right? Then we saw this enormous sign: 'AMYL NITRATE SOLD HERE'. Can you picture that?! And I'm going like…" (*Exaggerated double take*). "So I have this instant dual reaction. One side of me is saying, 'Hey, dat's illegal, betta go an do it!', and the other side is saying, 'But I don't really like it a lot.' You know what I'm saying, right?

"So I decided I'd go and do it, because it might be a better quality or something. So they put this mask on you in this place. They kept the stuff in gas form in the replica of a human skull made out of transparent plastic with a tube that comes down to your mouth.

"Then you put the mask on and inhale it. For 30 seconds I cried on her shoulder, you know. I just cried. She's a very beautiful girl anyway and I loved her in my own way, in my own fashion for a day or two – I'd love to see her again but she's married. She lives with a dental assistant in St Petersburg – that's why I say in the song '*I wonder if you'll hear it*'.

"After we took the nitrate she was saying things that were really beautiful, then we thought, 'Well it's Mardi Gras – let's lay down in the street and go.' So we did. We just lay down in the street and started making love as people do, you know.

"And we stripped off our clothes and were screwing. We didn't realise what was going on around us, but a crowd of about a hundred had gathered, right, and they're all going, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, do this, do that,' and everything, and I started getting more pissed off. I said, 'Bet you guys never get any!'

"Then a policeman came along and said, 'You assholes better move along right now or I'll bust you.' So we finally had to go to the financial zone to consummate the act. We did it in the bushes. I ruined a good pair of trousers from Johnsons, actually. It was right next to the International Trade Centre. She was a beautiful woman, you know."

As well as sex and partying, the new record also pays tribute to the rise of the rich Southern American states and their unbridled licentiousness.

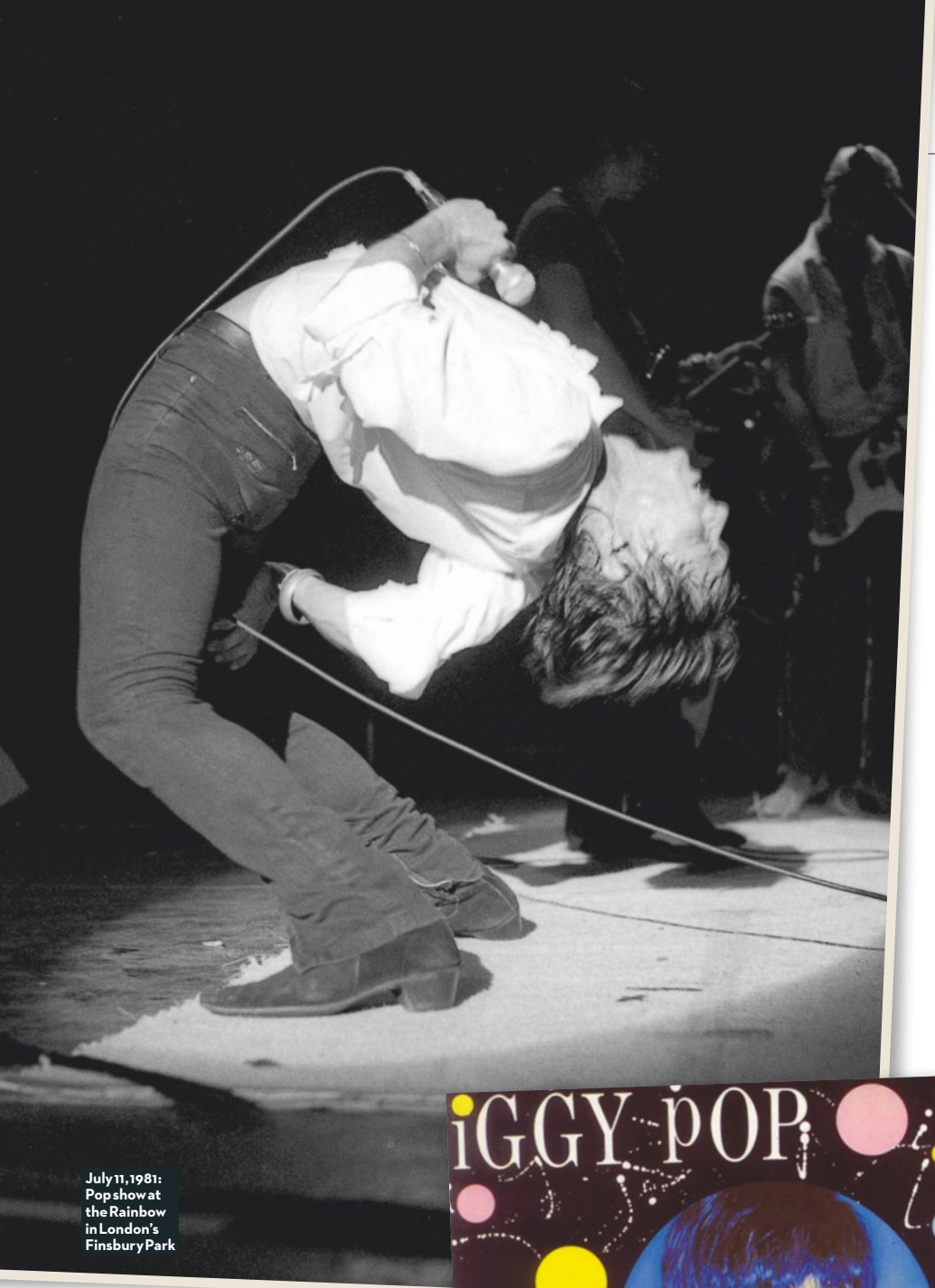
"They have a society there where there's a certain understanding," Iggy offers in an effort to explain his conversion to the gospel according to JR.

"You remember those old concepts of right and wrong – remember that? That was before trade unions, right? They have a simple understanding of right and wrong, and in Texas they've managed to make anarchy work. Life there is wide open. There's not a lot of charity in Texas, but then again who needs charity?

"I'm sorry, I realise we're in the country that has traditionally expressed the greatest sentiment for dogs and cats while being cruel to its lower classes, but in Texas it's wonderful."

**AT WHICH POINT** he reveals the solution we've all been desperately grubbing around for to solve the nation's malaise: "You should restore power to the monarchy. Until then all your great minds are going to become pop stars [obviously a veiled reference to Adam Ant] and move outta the country anyway. I mean, whatta ya goin' to do – go socialist like France? America's becoming the last bastion of capitalism. We're becoming the last bastion of liberty!"

You mean Reagan represents the traditional



July 11, 1981: Pop show at the Rainbow in London's Finsbury Park


American ideal to you?

"Listen, I'm a simple guy," he replies gravely, "and I know a liar from someone who's telling the truth, and he's a good man. He has his countrymen at heart.

"He has his people at heart. He's the best thing that's happened to our country since sliced bread. The guy prayed for that guy that shot him – I think he's a very good man, very sincere."

Was Reagan anything to do with Iggy's return from self-imposed exile in Berlin, then?

"He was almost the prime reason. I returned to America when I decided Reagan had a good chance. I basically believe in everything he does. I'm a lot like him, you know. I'm interested in liberty and earned equality. EARNED equality!

"So I wanted to go back and tell people at my gigs who they should vote for. It was my way of campaigning for him – he's a helluva guy."

On his own admission, Iggy works to a peak under some form of solid partnership, or better still, directorship. Consequently the quality of his work relies heavily on the chosen guide or accomplice.

Bowie and the most talented of the Stooges, James Williamson, both managed to provide the required discipline, and from their inspired stability he produced his most satisfying and substantial work. These days Ivan Král, Patti Smith's ex-sidekick, has taken their place, bringing with him the sloppy, outmoded Stones-style raunch on which he based his career. Instead of giving the Ig a much-needed jolt, Kral has provided a soft, easy chair in which the singer can roll around languidly, cocktail in hand.

Further work with Bowie seems likely, but on mention of James Williamson, with whom Iggy is said to have come to blows, he merely frowns, rushes to the bathroom and mutters: "I will never work with James again. I found his attitude to music sorta like a betrayal. As far as I know he's doing computer research and he's probably very happy at it.

"I like the band I've got now so much," he continues, refreshed. "They're MEN! And I wanted to work with some MEN! I don't make any more money than them. We got together and we've developed a funny little vision of our own, you know." Double, perhaps?

Is it right you prefer to be called Iggy and not Jim these days?

"Well Iggy's kinda taken over. Really it's an imploding kind of name. It's really pretty offensive, it's like yuk! But I've gotten to the point where I actually relish it. I enjoy it. I remember Jagger shouted at me the other day in his usual unpleasant manner, 'What shall I call you?' I said, 'You can call me Iggy.'"

There seem to be distinct parallels between himself and Jagger these days, I suggest, as both become entertainers or performers rather than creators.

"Well I think Jagger has displayed a consistent sincerity in his lyrics and songwriting that should be a beacon for our times."

I don't believe this!

"I think he's a great man. I don't like him and he don't like me, but he's showed great stamina."

In conversation and throughout his lyrics, Iggy rattles off contradictions like there was no such thing. On the one hand he romanticises the enforced camaraderie found in bars and rock bands, on the other he complains: "I found myself with the usual bums." In fact, many of his emotional observations swing with the wild zig zag of a lush.

Like a modern John Wayne, he makes hymns to the male ego while at the same time indulging in naive Hollywood sentimentality of the worst sort. "I cried when Nancy Reagan said she ate bananas instead of apples so she wouldn't wake up the President," he proudly stated at one stage. He should have been lurching over a bottle of whisky when he said this, but he was coming back from the bathroom.

"The pleasures in my life have been men, women, wine, beer and bourbon – but men and women come first." Aw shucks, Ig.

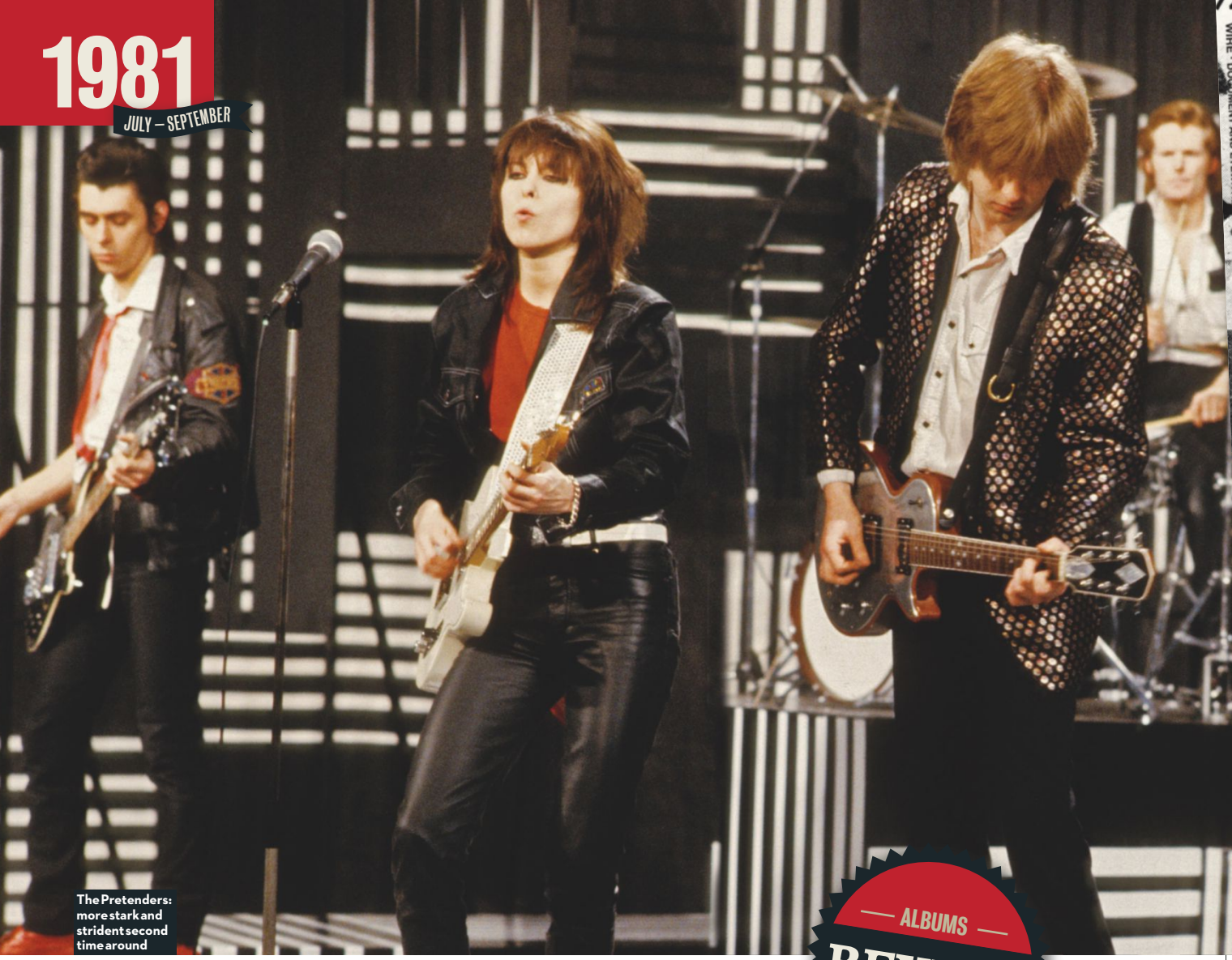
"I've never known an audience let me down," he suddenly announces. Does that include those lucky enough to witness the early Stooges? The ignorant who pelted him with abuse and every available missile?

"Well that's why I hurt myself; I wanted to let them know how much they were hurtin' me. I was saying, 'This is what is goin' to happen to you if you don't loosen up, you pricks. You'll get cut too.'"

When I focused, Iggy was sharp, and in the hour I spent with him he was always polite and considerate. It would be so easy to write him off as a ravaged and wrinkled has-been, but this would not only be mindlessly glib but well wide of the mark. If anything, he's just fallen in with the wrong company.

Iggy's time hasn't gone – it's just slipped sideways. *Ian Pye* •

DAVID CORIO / GETTY



The Pretenders: more stark and strident second time around



ALBUMS REVIEW 1981

## ALBUMS

### The Pretenders
**Pretenders II** REAL

Be it ice hockey internationals, royal weddings or lovemaking, there's a cloud that's constant – the curse of the brilliant debut. The better the first effort, the more urgent it becomes to improve and/or surprise; even to match the first effort is inevitably deemed insufficient.

It's a fact of life the Pretenders must now be bitterly ruing. Eighteen months ago they offered a defiantly determined clarion call for the launch of the '80s with a stunning album of raging beauty that quickly perched itself arrogantly on top of the album charts in tandem with the missionary single from it, "Brass In Pocket".

It and they were deservedly lauded for amalgamating the angry, aggressive tradition of rock with aching tenderness and pain. These qualities remain intact on the second album – there's vulnerability about Chrissie Hynde's vocals and lyrics, for example, that frequently rips open your heart. And a couple of tracks – "Birds Of Paradise" and "Waste Not Want Not" – outstrip anything on the first.

Yet... an air of disappointment hovers each time I reach the end of Side Two (despite the exuberant, triumphant blaze of the "Louie Louie" finale). It's the feeling of deflation that invariably comes from extreme anticipation; the relentless harshness that occupies so much of this record (particularly Side Two) and the unremittingly desperate, twisted nature of so much of the material.

"*We're all of us in the gutter... we fall but we keep getting up*," sings Chrissie on "Message Of Love", and it evokes the mood of the entire album. Cold, harsh, and desolate, every time she opens her mouth you expect the earth to shudder.

The band surround her with grim-faced stridency: stark and brutal. Charged, emotive and intensively effective, but light entertainment it ain't.

Opening track "The Adulteress", a quirky backdrop, sets a harrowing mood that's cemented by "Bad Boys Get Spanked", a raucous diatribe against regimentation and preconditioning, full of sexy undertones. Both are fearsomely powerful, but later on we're into tracks like "Day After Day" and "Jealous Dogs", which continue the furious ardour without their attendant depth, and the patience begins to snap.

It's frustrating, for when the anguish is unforced, with every nerve end exposed as on the softer, reflective "Birds Of Paradise", then they are more compelling (and appealing) than ever.

It works well, too, on the expected Ray Davies song, "I Go To Sleep", which is given a pained serenity, while you already know all about "Message Of Love" (which still sounds like a classic) and "Talk Of The Town".

"Pack It Up" is alternatively intimidating and wry, offering a rare glint of humour with its opening McEnroe cry of "*You guys are the pits of the world*", and spitting through its own jaundice... "*I don't like your trousers... your appalling taste in women... your insipid record collection*," roars Chrissie at some anonymous makeweight


STEVE MORLEY / GETTY


with cruel scorn. The whole terse collection suddenly, unexpectedly explodes on the final track, "Louie, Louie", which isn't the song you think, but a new Hynde number set to a tune approximating "Midnight Hour". It brazenly flaunts its own derivativeness as if in parody of the whole rock'n'roll charade (perhaps also reflected in the sleeve's imitation of the first Rolling Stones album cover).

Whatever the motives, it's a welcome show of joy in a hard, depressing work. This isn't the backlash, but it's not easy to love an album that strains so hard to be overtly unattractive.

*Colin Irwin, MM Aug 8*

**New Age Steppers**
**Action Battlefield** STATIK

If, as Dennis Bovell suggests, The Slits are making reggae for a modern *Sound Of Music*, then New Age Steppers (Mk II) featuring the irrepressible Ari Up on vocals, etc, do a pretty fair *Doctor Zhivago*.

Painfully overlong, ruefully lovesick, *Action Battlefield* boasts moments of beauty in miles of stodge. A feast of front-room fun(k) and ritzy reggae, it's full of flash effects, false starts and stops and (what we used to call) jamming, but fails because it falls for too many gimmicks and too few real ideas. As a stab at a dance-stance it's a real party pooper – it plods where it should prance.

As an experimental production job on seven reggae standards, it's often interesting, occasionally amusing but never essential. As a paean to excess it only goes to prove that moderation and matriculation are, 11 times out of 10, the best pop policy.

*Steve Sutherland, MM Aug 8*

**Wire Document And Eye Witness: Electric Ballroom LP / Notre Dame Hall 12 inch 45**
ROUGH TRADE

It was a dilemma; at the Lyceum, Joy Division were scheduled to play (we didn't know, but it was to be their last major appearance in London). Over at Camden's Electric Ballroom the same night, Wire were billed to appear (as it turned out, their last gig, period).

After much dithering I chose the former, and this recorded document of the Wire gig vindicates the decision. Featuring 21 tracks, 17 of them previously unrecorded, this is a reminder of the hard-edged starkness suggested by the group's name, a series of grating furrow-diggers as rough as a night in a Bronx gutter.

It's a harrowing experience – and not one easily recommended. Late Wire, stripped down to the metal, connect like a socket in the anus – Colin Newman's vocal hysterics frequently painful instead of pained, Gotobed's drumming as lumpy as school rice cremola.

Around the time these tracks were recorded the groups were experimenting with various audiovisual presentations on stage, which may explain the baffling nature of much of the *Electric Ballroom* LP. On display are such scintillating offerings as directionless tin-can bashing (Woodstock raindance, bad-acid-a-go-go), smug haranguing of the audience, and unintelligent stabs at minimalism and constant whining, and if that doesn't put you off, then the sleeve descriptions ("vocalist attacks gas stove," "12 percussionists with newspaper head-dresses", etc) should do the trick. A thoroughly shoddy package. *Lynden Barber, MM Aug 8*

## SINGLES

**Siouxsie & The Banshees**
**Arabian Knights** POLYDOR

More menacing childhood memories dredged up and dressed up in tired old riffs and jaded Banshee dynamics. Siouxsie sounds jaded, disinterested; McGeoch is typically vague, wrenching out the standard guitar atmospherics. Thin, brittle, forgettable; no push, no magic; keep away from this voodoo.

*MM July 25*


**Shakin' Stevens Green Door** CBS

Shakin' Stevens' recent records have an increasing air of novelty about them; it's difficult to take them seriously even as fun. This really needed Dave Edmunds at the desk to bring it into focus. Stuart Coleman's production is adequate, lacks colour; pursuing no particular direction, Stevens' vocal is awkwardly stilted, hurried and badly mannered: still somehow likeable through the confusion, though.

*MM July 25*

**Soft Cell Tainted Love**
PHONOGRAM

Soft Cell are bouncing on the sprays shooting out from our basic doubt. "Tainted Love" – twist the vowels up as they do, feel the forces behind the simplicity of love. Don't take them for granted, don't underestimate them because of the sound – it has nothing to do with nonsensicals like Duran Duran or Depeche Mode – it has real anguish. *MM Aug 1*

**The Specials Ghost Town** 2-TONE

Informed sources tell me that when Chrysalis first heard this they nearly refused to issue it as a 45. So much for 2-Tone independence. But I see the problem. First hearing left me baffled, too. Second hearing left me shrugging my shoulders. Third hearing, I was hooked. "Ghost Town" is magnificent. Written by Dammers, the lyrics are typical and topical, the imagery chilling and the whole thing reeks of Dammers at his cheekiest best. Suddenly The Specials have got a future again, and what a future. *MM June 13*

**Tenpole Tudor Wunderbar** STIFF

Music from the ultimate madhouse, "Wunderbar" is insanely raucous, a crashing barrage of lunatic riffs, demented percussion and whacked-out vocal contortions. Eddie sounds like the stitches are bursting in his larynx and the absurd bierkeller chorus arrives just in time to rescue him. Mindless, daft, loveably loonoid; a hit of monstrous proportions, surely. *MM Jul 25*

SINGLES REVIEW 1981


Siouxsie: losing her voodoo?

GETTY

# "The first classic in years!"

**Introducing WAH! and the brains behind it, PETE WYLIE. He's a disaster live, and wants to rap, but believes himself a genius: "If Wah! is any good, people won't just become fans, they'll be inspired by it to do things, and not just to be in groups."**

— MELODY MAKER JULY 11 —

**IN A SCRUFFY,** but spacious third-floor office, just where Liverpool's Bold Street meets Renshaw Street, a telephone rings. The man at the desk sighs like a steam train, drops the thousand-and-one things he's trying to do simultaneously, and lifts the offending receiver.

"Hello. Pete Fulwell?" enquires the voice at the other end.

"Speaking," says the man sharply.

"Oh, hi. Steve Sutherland, *Melody Maker*. How ya doing?"

"Awful," comes the curt reply.

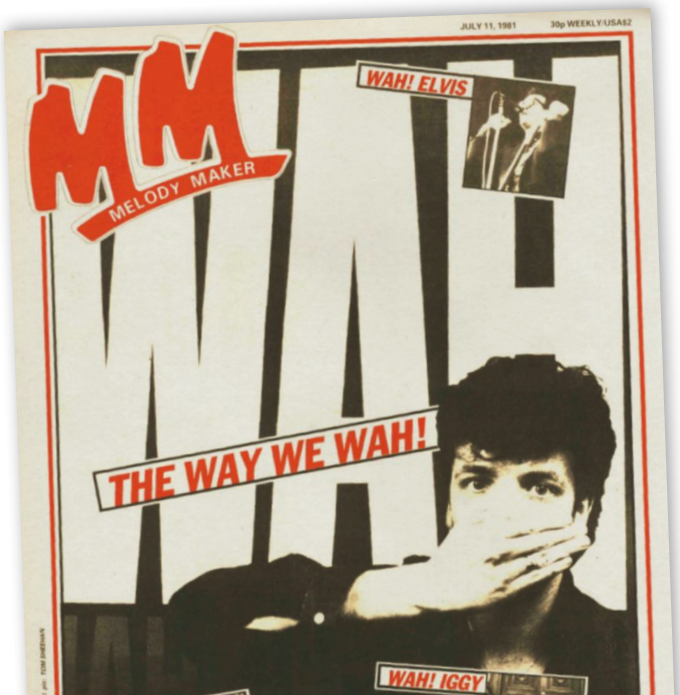
"Really?" enquires the voice, betraying equal degrees of instinctive intrigue and honest concern. "Wassamatter?"

"Look," replies the man bluntly, "if you'd been stuck in an office with Wylie for three months, you'd feel bloody awful…"

Pete Wylie, founder, guitarist, singer and sage at the centre of a fast-mushrooming phenomenon widely know as Wah!, is everything you've ever heard, read or imagined him to be… and more!

So much more, in fact, that when the man from *MM* arrives on the doorstep of this self-same Liverpool office five days later, naively believing that Wylie might be able to help him with a few enquiries concerning a certain superb record with the rather unusual title of *Nah Poo = The Art Of Bluff*, his manager, Mr Fulwell, has just thrown an almighty wobbler.

He slagged off the scouser's girlfriend and brother, called them Wylie's lackeys, and accused the man himself of outright arrogance before taking off – according to the injured party – to the sanctuary of the nearest seedy bar. »




PENNIE SMITH

"I want Wah! to be something that people can love, but not just blindly": Pete Wylie at a rehearsal space in Liverpool

Wylie's unperturbed. He's been through all this a million times before. It's just the price you pay for being born hyperactive; endowed with masses more vision than any mere mortal has any God-given right to; possessed of a mouth that often chooses to adopt a mind of its own at the most inopportune moments; and gifted with a talent so bold and blatant that it actually seems to tread that cliched thin line between real genius and complete insanity.

Seated around him are his usual audience: Washington, Wah!'s bassist – a thug-like being with a heart of gold; Loafer-Go-Go, alias Stephen Johnson, Wah!'s new(est) guitarist; Wylie's girlfriend Sharon who, he fondly reckons, resembles boss Bunnyman Ian McCulloch ("Hey! Maybe it's Freudian"); Wah!'s Scots roadie, Wylie's brother, and a gaggle of giggling Rasta friends.

Hear now the mighty words of Wah!.

"Where shall we start?" asks the writer.

"Let's start at the very beginning. It's a very good place to start…" sings Wylie. "Was that right? Julie Andrews? Yeah! Julie Andrews! Number-one formative influence."

"And number two?" enquires the writer, somewhat sheepishly.

"Number two? Washington – big influence. Number three? Equal third, Burt Bacharach and Loafer-Go-Go. Psychedelic interview number 647…"

**QUICK, SOMEBODY! STRAITJACKET** the bastard!

"Right, well," says the writer, initial panic over. "Wah! used to be Wah! Heat. Now Wah! Heat are Wah!. Why?

"Long story, this," says Wylie, winking. "Gotta think about this… Washington! Say what you said the other day!"

Washy pulls himself up into a cross-legged posture on the desk, unwittingly coming to resemble a garden gnome, and enigmatically offers: "I have forgotten."

"Wah! Heat was old and Wah! is new," rescues Wylie.

"That's what he said and that's about the truth of it. It's a different group. Partly because of that and partly because, er… Wah! was the only bit that counted…"

"And it's universal!" shouts Washy.

"And it's universal! Exactly!" echoes Wylie. "You don't need to know any English to know what Wah! is. It just goes W-A-A-A-A-H!… except more soulful than that. I've just had a chilli con carne, and I can't be soulful after chilli con carne."

"OK, I'll let you off this time," offers the writer magnanimously. "So now the album's out…"

"No!" chides Wylie. "The *LP* is out!"

"Oh, sorreee," whistles the writer. "Explain yourself, sir."

"Well," says Wylie, "when music was rock'n'roll music" – he says it hesitantly, because you have to be hesitant when you say 'rock'n'roll' music these days – "when it was a vibrant, excitin' thing that was not too full of itself and not too much of an intellectual exercise, people made LPs. And then, when the mid-to-late '60s started, things started getting intellectual and people started taking drugs and music became… er… the big thing, y'know, an ART FORM."

There's venom in his voice.

"It spoiled a lot of it, took a lot of the guts out of it. The Moody Blues made albums and… I dunno… let me think… who made LPs… the early Stones…"

"Bo Diddley," offeres Washy.

"Bo Diddley! Yeah! Bo Diddley made LPs and we feel more affinity with Bo Diddley than The Moody Blues and a lot of the groups these days sound more like The Moody Blues than The Moody Blues did!"

"C'mon. What's in a word?" teases the writer.

"Well, I mean, I 'ate sayin' 'album'," confesses Wylie. "I feel like some kinda prannet. I feel like cringin'. It's like when people call girls 'chicks' – not because I'm anti-sexist or pro-sexist or whatever; besides me feelings on that subject – I just 'ate that word 'CHICK'," he spits.

"It really makes me wince, y'know? So I don't say 'album', I say 'LP'. But there is a marked difference, y'know. We just wanna get back to a thing… that partly fits in with us changin' the name as well, 'cos Wah! is just like a shout, like a big scream… a 'BETTER SCREAM'," he cries, delighted at introducing the group's first single into the conversation.

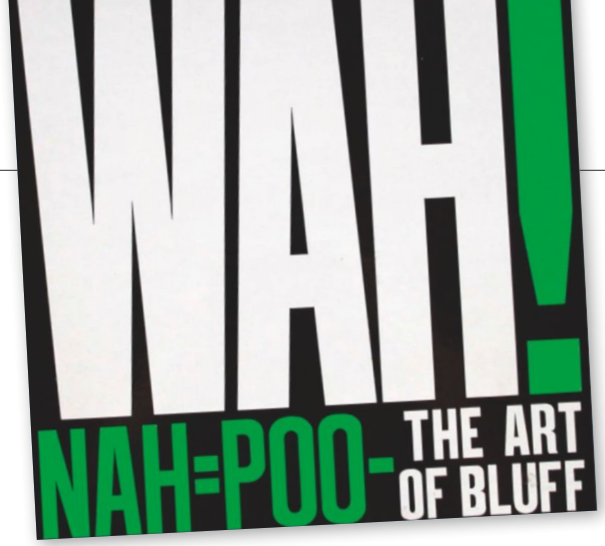
"It's a primeval scream," says Washy.

"Primeval! Yeah!" shrieks Wylie, overjoyed. "Something you don't think about too much. You know, you can be off your 'ead drunk or you can be in fuckin' total pain and you can still shout Wah!.

"But," he adds mischievously, "you can't sit there going, 'Well, I think the relationship between the diameter of the LP and the… eh…

PETER ANDERSON

**"Hopefully two shows won't ever be interchangeable": Wylie with his band's earlier incarnation as Wah! Heat**




circumference could well mean the metaphysical pyramid forming.' Know what I mean? It just comes out as a slobber.

"'Alf the time the LP was accidents anyway. Sometimes the best records have been made by accident. Like, if The Velvet Underground had had decent equipment and decent studios they wouldn't have sounded anything like as good as they do."

**"TALKING OF ACCIDENTS,"** the writer wickedly interrupts, "your live shows are often bloody disasters. I've seen you twice and…"

"I've seen us all the time," bellows Wylie, "and it's always a disaster! No, some nights we'd be the best band in the world. Really! And then another night… well, we had to cut corners all the time. Like one night I'd borrow a different one which was not as reliable or something.

"We set ourselves standards but not precedents; I think that's what it is.

"We don't want it to be a tame thing, and hopefully two shows won't ever be interchangeable. They will be different, because I tend to want to talk during the songs, though I haven't learned to rap yet. It's coming, y'know!"

"Dear God: the Wylie rap. I can just hear it now," thinks the writer, and hurriedly changes the subject. How much of the idea of Wah!, of the essence of Wah!, can you actually ever achieve?

"I dunno, because I'm still not sure what that ideal is," admits Wylie. "I'm changin' me mind. You see, one of the things that I don't like about the music press is that it perpetuates some bad ideas, y'know. And so people read a certain thing and they think that there can be no change from that.

"Like when we first started, I had my set of ideals, the sort you get in the shop round the corner, y'know, and I set myself some standards and then I found that 'alf the time the ideals were just ridiculous, things weren't like that.

"It's like you watch an old Brando film like *On The Waterfront* and you think, 'What a fuckin' incredible guy', y'know. But if you ever met 'im I'm sure he'd be a prat. People just see the image and they miss out a lot of the truth of things, so I've been willing to let me ideals change and I don't mind saying that they've changed."

The writer mentions WEA – the major label to which Wah! have signed their own Eternal label – making a lot of money and retaining unprecedented artistic control in the process.

"I've never said that I didn't want money," counters Wylie. "People think that if you sign to a record company it starts weakening you. It hasn't weakened us, you know. It's made us more determined not to let it slip.

"The idea of selling out is a ridiculous thing. It's not to do with record companies; it's to do with the characters involved, the strength of character. It doesn't mean that I'm compromisin' meself or anything. None of us are willing to do that!

"We wanna make Wah! our favourite group, basically, and not just in terms of entertainment but in terms of inspiring people, making people wanna do things. If Wah! is any good, people won't just become fans; they'll be inspired by it to do things, and not just to be in groups."

> "We draw the line between Jimmy Tarbuck and Kafka, y'know"

**THE WRITER NOW** commits the unforgiveable and asks Wylie if *Nah = Pooh* completes the hat trick started by *Boy* and *Searching For The Young Soul Rebels*?

"Yeah! I love it! I think it's a great LP. I think it's a classic. It's the first classic LP to be released in years, y'know," he says modestly. "There have been some good LPs, everybody makes good records now but nobody makes great records, and I think this is a great record."

"But now it's out," asks the writer, "haven't you lost that certain cultish element of mystery and surprise?"

"Wah! are a lot of people's favourite group," he replies, "and that's on the strength of two singles. But the LP – people will be floored and stunned and amazed by it," he says, blushing. "But if people think the next LP's gonna be like this one, they're dead wrong. We're changing all the time. We just treat the LP as almost an indication of things to come."

"No. It's much more than that," demands Washy. "It's the eye of the storm."

Wylie goes off to relieve himself and the writer takes the opportunity to ask Wash how the hell he can stand to work with the guy?

"S'all right. You just gotta know how to tackle 'im. I know where his Achilles heel is…" He signs off in frustrating silence.

But doesn't the ever feel mad that people always tend to treat Wah! as the Wylie show when he's also been involved since the outset?

"No. Not at all. I enjoy it…"

"Enjoy what?" says Wylie, striding back in, fumbling with his zipper.

"You being the star," says the writer.

"He's the star!" he roars, pointing at the grinning Washy.

"I wish people would sort this out. His sort come over here, take our homes, take our jobs, take our women, take your place on the cover of the *NME*…" he grins back.

"This cover's mine, ya mother."

"Wah! have been around a long time in one form or another, at least as long as the Bunnymen," the writer intercedes, attempting to reimpose some semblance of normality. "But it's taken you a lot longer to get this alb… sorry, LP out. Don't you worry you've missed your time?"

**"YOU DON'T MISS** the boat with stuff like this," says Wylie, for once deadly serious. "This is timeless. Everything we've done has been justified, I'd say, and I reckon we could stop after this LP for six years and come back and just wipe it out again… start again and still be better than most.

"I just can't believe it – there's fuck all stuff like 'Anarchy In The UK' around now. When I first 'eard that I got butterflies in me stomach, and when I first 'eard The Clash it was such an electric thrill. I want us to have the same effect, to have the power, the passion, make records people care about, love… I want Wah! to be something that people can love, but not just blindly.

"I want Wah! to be sex music for ant people – that's a-u-n-t. This is the truth coming out now. The real reason we're moving away from intellectual stuff and into more honest natural things is because we never used to get girls at the concerts, so now we've gone for the matinee idol approach; we draw the line between Jimmy Tarbuck and Kafka, y'know. Just call me Jimmy Kafka.

"No really. All this stuff, all this talking now, I dunno if it counts at all," he sighs, genuinely puzzled. "A lot of the time, I'll say something like a half-thought which isn't really well formed, and I'll say it now and I'll think later, 'What I really meant was THIS!'

"But people are just so lazy when they read it; they just read the words and they don't use their instincts, so… it's like the monster with seven letters… rockism… just another lazy man's word, y'know.

"It's really funny, 'cos when we talked to Adam Sweeting last year, we mentioned it then, it was just like a joke – 'Oh, the race against rockism', y'know – but it summed up a lot of the feelings we had about bad habits, doing things without thinking about them, lazy ways out. The word would've died then, but because we mentioned it in *NME* as well, everyone went, 'Phew! Great new word', and that was exactly like a symptom of whatever we were talking about, y'know."

"Sorry you ever said it?" asks the writer.

"The BANE of my life – in capital letters," says Wylie. "Oh no, I've just mentioned it again! Now we're really focked."

"WYLIE RETRACTS ROCKISM, I can just see the headline now," laughs the writer.

Wylie grins, walks over to the window and shouts for the world to hear: "I have seen the error of my ways! W-A-A-A-A-H!!" *Steve Sutherland* •

# "New songs, new fashions"

**What is going on with THE SPECIALS? The best British band has just scored a major No 1 with "Ghost Town". Still, during the group's recent break, uncertainty has grown. "It's not a 'break' like sit down and do nothing," they explain.**

— NME AUGUST 8 —

THIS GROUP… IS coming like a ghost group.

Well, so the rumours go, anyhow. With every week that passes, it seems new stories are circulating – stories of the Specials-To-Split? variety, detailing disagreements, dissatisfaction, internal feuding or lack of communication.

A lot of it stems from what looks like an ominous inactivity – up until, that is, the group's recent string of one-off dates and that magnificent chart comeback, "Ghost Town" – combined with bursts of solo activity on the part of various individual members.

As I write, The Specials are packing toothbrushes in preparation for what they call their "works outing", a jaunt that will take them to New York, where they'll make another festival appearance. But what happens after that?

The answer right at this moment seems to be that nobody knows for sure. If reports of The Specials' impending disintegration have been exaggerated, or are just plain mischievous, it's also fair to say that the group's emergence from collective hibernation is not going like clockwork. They've had a meeting – sounds like this place – in fact they've had several, but the outcome isn't clear yet.

At the outset of my interview with singer Terry Hall and guitarist Lynval Golding I was especially asked not to press them on "the future". Now, if there's one thing guaranteed to arouse a journalist's curiosity, I suppose it's a request like that. But really, I was honour-bound to comply. In any case, unofficial group supremo Jerry Dammers has indicated his willingness to make matters clearer just as soon as he's able – and I hope to follow this feature up by talking to Jerry in a few weeks' time, on his return from America.

Let's hope that everything does get sorted out, and for the better. The Specials, quite simply, are too good a group for us to lose.

Although there's no doubt that the individual talents involved could all find worthy ventures to occupy themselves with, well, it just wouldn't be the same, would it? It's »

DAVID CORIO / GETTY

July 4, 1981: following a march from Leeds city centre, Terry Hall and The Specials headline the Rock Against Racism event in Potternewton Park

especially ironic that they should be uncertain about their plans just at the time when their reputation has never been higher.

"Ghost Town", by uncommonly common agreement, was a classic No 1 single. Apart from its musical merits – showing once again how skilfully the band can expand and develop on their early ska-based pop fusion – it was a song of the moment. Like the Pistols' "God Save The Queen" being top in Jubilee week, "Ghost Town" was evidence of pop's sporadic knack of fingering the pulse of reality. *Top Of The Pops* celebrated its 900th anniversary in a gushing mush of nostalgia and trivia, while the streets outside exploded with the pent-up pressures of dead-end adolescence.

And there, crowning it all, The Specials matched fun and humour with that hypnotically sombre warning: "*Why must the youth fight against themselves? / Government leaving the youth on the shelf.*"

Just over a month ago, The Specials sealed their return to live working by heading a Festival Against Racism at a stadium in their home town of Coventry – the scene, not long before, of a racial murder, plus a continuing catalogue of bigotry and violence. Shortly after, the group re-emphasised their commitment to the original 2-Tone ideal of harmony by playing the Northern Carnival Against Racism at Leeds. Another benefit, at London's Rainbow Theatre, lent their support to the Campaign For Jobs. These occasions were peaceful and positive. It's in the nature of things, therefore, that they passed by almost without comment and publicity.

**IT'S MORE THAN** idle curiosity, then, that leads us to speculate on the state of The Specials. If ever there was a group you could describe as "important", then it's this one, particularly in the UK, 1981. As explained, my interviewees Terry and Lynval were, apologetically, unable to throw much light on the topic of Where To Next? – but it's no secret that their stance on crucial issues hasn't faltered one bit.

Lynval Golding – "the envy of the group" just now, by virtue of three splendid suits he's liberated from his father's wardrobe – regrets the period of idleness that followed their last proper tour in late 1980.

"I would have preferred to do a lot more, but unfortunately I haven't done enough. I like working. I'm bored when I'm not doing anything."

Terry Hall, looking relaxed and dapper as ever, adds that the lay-off was a group decision, not imposed on anybody. He's kept a pretty low profile this year, too, but insists it hasn't been time wasted.

There was, of course, the 2-Tone film *Dance Craze*, which kept the ball rolling in terms of public exposure. That was a slight disappointment, I thought, in that it wasn't much more than straightforward live footage, recording the first phase of the 2-Tone phenomenon – Lynval and Terry can't work up a lot of enthusiasm for it either. Neither will own up to having seen it right through.

But according to Terry, a simple live document "was all it was meant to be. We wouldn't dress up as Arabs or something, to make a story."

He adds that a follow-up film venture is unlikely – "unless it's a comedy", he says, with just a tinge of cryptic irony.

In view of the recent inactivity, and the solo activities (which have largely been outside of the 2-Tone umbrella as well), does 2-Tone still represent anything more than The Specials' label name?

Terry Hall: "At the start, it was black-and-white clothes, and it just tied into everything: the 'ska revival' or whatever it was called. As anything now, obviously it's not as big now as it was, because there aren't many bands on it any more. It's just a label. We always preferred it to be on 2-Tone to being on Chrysalis or whatever."

At this point, it's worth recapping briefly on what the other five have been up to: Neville is running his own Shack label, Brad is doing likewise with Race Records. Jerry has just completed a single, "The Boiler", with Rhoda, Specials-friend and ex-Bodysnatcher. Horace has done some recording of his own, while Roddy Radiation has his "skabilly" group The Tearjerkers.

**HAS THE GROUP,** I wonder, been strengthened by this lay-off?

**TH**: "Individually, yeah. But as a band… we'll find out. It's helped us to work on our own ideas. I mean, I haven't been doing nothing for the last six months – I've been working on new songs, new fashions, everything."

**LG**: "I think what these six month have done for the individuals is help them get out of themselves more. It's given them time to write songs, which is good. It's good to have a break. It's not a 'break' like in just sit down and do nothing. It's a break to think of new directions and work on new ideas, which I think was a good thing."

**TH**: "A lot of material's come out of it. We've never been able to write as The Specials anyway, never as seven people. Every song that we've done has come from one head, or at most three heads, and then you take it to the rest of the band."

Yes, the "Ghost Town" EP, for instance; the three songs on that are written by three different people. Would you like to see that trend continue, spread the writing around the group more?

**LG**: (*cautiously*) "I personally would like to see more, instead of one. Two, three or four people writing together, 'cos I always think two heads is better than one. I personally like to work that way."

I think it was always a strength of The Specials that – live, anyway – not too much attention was ever focused on one person, it kept switching.

**TH**: "Yeah, that was the idea of it, not to have a star. And I think it has worked. No one's that big-headed."

**LG**: "If there was a star in the band I don't think it would have worked. It works well when people can contribute to the band, y'know? There's seven in the band, and it works a lot better that way."

There was a story, though, that you were both unhappy with the way your two songs turned out on the EP, that you want to re-record them.

(*Dismissive laughter*) "That was shit-stirring," says Terry Hall of the rumour. "People are just trying to split us up again."

Lynval agrees that he's not happy with "Why" as it ended up, but rules out a re-recording. Terry, for his part, dryly describes himself as "over the moon" with his contribution "Friday Night, Saturday Morning". I let the matter drop.

I understand you're still having meetings to decide the group's plans for the future.

**LG**: (*sniggering*) "We have meetings every four days."

**LG**: "Never decide on anything!"

**TH**: "I don't know what we're doing. Either it'll come to us or it won't come to us…"

**TH**: "We'll carry on meeting for another six years, every week, and never agree on anything."

(The resigned, listless tone of their voices doesn't suggest a group that's in a healthy state, internally. So I ask…)

Is the group healthy? Or are you thinking of packing it in?

**TH**: "Not this week, anyway (*laughs*). We're alright up until Sunday night. Every week's completely different."

**LG**: "You just can't… (*giggles*). You've just gotta wait and see, y'know?"

**TH**: "If it carries on, it carries on."

Oh well. Time to change the subject, I suppose.

"Ghost Town" topped the nation's charts at a very appropriate time, I thought.

**LG**: "It's strange, y'know? I never expected that song to be No 1."

**TH**: "Somebody asked me if the Socialist Workers Party put us up to it – ha ha! – if they'd planned it, if they wrote it. No, it's just a coincidence, a bad coincidence."

> "You can't not allow people from the NF to get into gigs"

The Specials in the 1981 2-Tone concert-footage documentary *Dance Craze*


**LG**: "It's terrible when you have a song like that and you see that, gradually, it's all coming true. Like, that kid got killed the other day up in Liverpool, y'know? [David Moore, the crippled boy run over by a police van during a riot in Toxteth on the eve of the royal wedding.] It's a bit frightening when you predict something's gonna happen; it's always horrible when you actually see it's coming true."

You two still live in Coventry. What are things like there at the moment?

**TH**: "It's quietened down again."

**LG**: "I think that since we done that gig in Coventry [the Festival Against Racism], although we lost a lot of money, I think it was well worth losing that money for what it's actually achieved. I mean, like before you used to get the tension in town, it used to be terrible. But now, it's like what we've done has actually got through. The residents round outside expected trouble, the police were out in force, they expected a big fight, a running battle – and it never happened. So it's proved that this concert did something in the end, 'cos what people was expecting was a fight, and there wasn't any fight.

"Even for me, walking in this town on Saturday afternoon, it was really frightening, and police everywhere. But now it's a lot different, a lot better. So I'm convinced that what we've done has actually helped to calm the whole thing down a lot."

It must be good to feel that you're getting somewhere, then, that you're not banging your head against the wall.

**LG**: "It's great. I think that's one of the best things that we've actually achieved, to get through to the public in that way. And even if it costs us a lot of money, so what? It would be good if there was more bands trying to do things like that. 'Cos let's face it, I know it's like saying to the kids, 'OK, we hope that things'll get better.' Its hope – I know it's not enough. But at least you're trying to calm things down a bit."

But haven't you had a policy in the past of not playing to NF-type audiences, of stopping the show if they try that on?

**TH**: "Yeah, that was like preaching to the converted 'cos we don't want them there, but…"

**LG**: "I think that's stupid, really, because if you're gonna get through to – it's best to get the people who've got different views completely, and talk to them about it. You can't go and talk to people who believe in what you're doing anyway. To me, *that's* like knocking your head on a brick wall. You've got to try and get through to those who've actually been brainwashed to believe its right to take a life. Those are the people that I think we should try and get to the concerts, so we can talk to them at least.

"'Cos if you try and push them to one side they'll only get worse. Because you get those at the top who are just using them for their own little game and they get a good laugh out of it. It's alright for them, but the kids there – it would be stupid if we say we don't want 'em there. They should be there so we can show them what they're doing wrong.

"Like, I've been attacked by this racist lot already anyway, so you'd probably think I should be all 'I'll kill the bastard'. But I think it's better to – like we did this gig in Plymouth and I was talking to this guy there and he was in the NF. And by the end of the conversation he was completely different. And to me that's what's needed.

"You've got to be able to do that. It's not like you're going out to preach to people, but it's an opinion: I've got my own opinion and I should be able to talk to people. And he's got his own, and we can sit down and come to some sensible agreement. Why the hell should you want to go out and murder somebody; what the hell are you going to achieve?"

So you don't want to draw up battle lines. But you still run the risk of trouble at gigs, don't you, when all factions are allowed in?

**LG**: "I know sometimes it can get out of hand. But as you say, why should you draw a line and say, 'You lot stay over there, and you stay there,' and have a pitched battle. That's stupid."

**TH**: "We did a show at Liverpool the other week, and we did 'Why', and as Neville was doing his toasting '*…with a Nazi salute and a steel-cap boot*' there were a few people going like that (*giving Nazi salutes*) to it. So the second time around we said, 'You've got it wrong.' So they went like that (*giving peace signs*) to it. I mean, that's not converting them, but it shows a healthier sign. You can't not allow people from the NF to get into gigs, because if they want to get in there they will; all they've got to do is take their Union Jacks off. But we'll try and get them out the hall if they sieg heil or shout out abuse because of people's skin colour."

**AS THESE COMMENTS** demonstrate, not to mention The Specials' records and their commitment to playing benefits, this is a group that's never been afraid to address the more serious issues of the day. Escapist they're not. Yet at the same time they've never conformed to the boring old "political band" stereotype. I asked Terry how they've managed to keep up that militant approach but remained, above all, supremely entertaining and enjoyable. How come they've avoided the dull-and-worthy trap?

**TH**: "'Cos we're not from Leeds! No. Perhaps 'cos we don't go completely overboard with it. I mean, I don't know about Marxism or communism or socialism or whatever; I just don't understand it. I haven't been educated to understand about politics. But all I have is my own beliefs, and when I see people fighting about skin colour, and when I see poverty, it annoys me. It upsets me. And I can only comment on that, on what I believe…"

All that remains now is to see if The Specials can hold on to the most important belief of all: belief in themselves as The Specials. *Adrian Thrills* •

REX FEATURES

# The Projected Passion Revue

THE PLAYHOUSE NOTTINGHAM
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AUGUST 16

**MM AUG 22** The new-look Dexys Midnight Runners present "three different acts, spiritually in tune".

**A LOT OF PEOPLE** laugh at Dexys Midnight Runners. They say they're stupid. Conceited. Arrogant. They scorn the clothes they wear and the image they project. They believe the music to be a pale parody of soul. The band are a bunch of clowns.

Cheap humour, my friend, cheap humour. No one, but no one, could be as dedicated to their craft as Dexys Midnight Runners. Under Kevin Rowland's undisputed leadership the band have grown away from their former aggressive incarnation into something far more introspective, but something in turn with far more depth.

These new Dexys seem more united now, with a clear common purpose. They project a unique spirit and in turn a whole lot of soul. Musically, judging by the new material, they've now mastered the art of creating instantly memorable songs that carry a depth of feeling. "Show Me" is the classic example – a superb hookline punched home by blazing horns, the sturdy rhythm section and Rowland's beautifully phrased vocals imbue it with a massive strength and lasting power.

Similarly, a new epic called "Until I Believe In My Soul" is five minutes' worth of awesome emotion, translated through a deft melody that's punctuated by horns and Rowland's superb falsetto vocals, stopping only for a quick burst of be-bop music halfway through. "Until I Believe..." is the positive proof of Dexys' progress. Before, Rowland only hinted at the versatility he possesses in his voice, but this no one could have expected.

**They're now creating instantly memorable songs that carry a depth of feeling**

His voice flickers with emotional fire as he reaches inside himself, constantly searching to transmit his obvious internal struggle. The music builds slowly and dramatically and then stops suddenly. The audience is hushed and spellbound as Rowland falls to his knees and then jumps back up again, falling again as he begins shouting throughout this heartfelt workout, *"I will punish my body until I believe in my soul, punish it! Punish it!"*

On paper it may read like a cheap stunt. On stage Sunday night it was positively frightening. Only a band as strong as Dexys are now could have attempted such a thing. Further proof of their new-found maturity was in the way the band structured their set.

After opening with an unnamed instrumental, the band ran through a dramatic "Tell Me When My Light Turns Green" before hitting the fragile beauty of "Soon". Transfixed, the crowd watched Rowland as he sang his tale of promise and intent, letting Micky Billingham hang onto the song's fading organ notes as the band positioned themselves to tear into the heart-rushing

S.GLYN-JONES / ADRIAN BOOT

Alto sax player Brian Maurice on stage with frontman Kevin Rowland in the Dexys Mk II lineup

Former Secret Affair drummer Seb Shelton and guitarist Billy Adams help Dexys achieve "more depth"


"Plan B". With a song as heady as this, its power could be so easily lost in lesser hands. But Dexys are tight and disciplined. Each member concentrates solely on the song, before "Plan B" is taken down to just bass and drums and the band begin chanting.

A slight pause and a glorious intro of horns signals the arrival of "Dance Stance", a classic song that ranks with anything you care to mention. Beauty and strength mixed to match; you could feel the audience gasp as the shivers ran up their spine.

Ain't no doubt about it, for all the sneers and cheap cracks that Dexys get every time they dare mention soul, they are unmatched in projecting that very quality. No one comes near them.

By training, working and relaxing together they've become a single-minded force. Able to deliver an unequalled emotional power, their brave shows grip an audience like no other. From the forceful attack of Paul Speare's and Brian Maurice's saxophones, to the concise power of Seb Shelton's drumming and Rowland's emotive vocals, there are no weak links.

Each cog works on an emotional power and intent, and at the end of a Dexys show you feel emotionally drained like never before. It pays no respect to traditional rock show values, but instead demands attention and respect. Both for yourself and the band. It deals with the heart and soul and tries to clarify confusion in the minds of its audience.

Rowland thankfully doesn't set himself up as a leader, but acts the catalyst.

That quality of constant striving led to the introduction of the Projected Passion Revue. A show that (in the words of the programme) presents "three physically different, though spiritually in tune, acts coming together to make one complete show".

Therefore the show opened with only one half of the comedy duo The Outer Limits. With his partner missing, Nigel Planer struggled through on his own, occasionally witty and quite a lot of the time not. Eventually he conceded defeat on his heavy metal epic joke as impersonation of two characters proved far too much for him, and he made way for Torque, a dance group.

Far more interesting than the contrived eroticism of Hot Gossip, Torque are four females and two guys who dance with grace and imagination to an equally thoughtful soundtrack. Always mesmerising, they provided a welcome alternative to nearly everything that moves in current music. Intense emotions and passion of this quality has been fading from music for years now. Dexys are reinstating it with verve, strength and intelligence.

No wonder people don't like them.

*Paolo Hewitt*

Soft Cell's Marc Almond, 1981: "We wanted to put emotion into electronic music"

# "We're not dilettante at all"

**From art school, SOFT CELL have made their beds with synthesizers, Northern soul and intimations of a life of vice. And now they're in the charts! "If we wanted to be pop stars," says Mark Almond, "we could've been really obvious and shallow"**

— NME SEPTEMBER 12 —

"BRING ON THE carnival people!" barks the authoritative voice of a stage manageress, who is trying to instil a sense of urgency into the final dress rehearsal before a rare live *Top Of The Pops* broadcast, now only three hours away.

In the coffee bar outside the studio, nobody responds. Well, going by the gaudy array of costumes, she could be calling anyone, be they the Dollar drum majorettes, the cosmopolitan-clothed Funkapolitan or even the assembled cast of the BBC's next prestige production *Nancy Astor*, what with their showy Victorian evening dress.

As it happens, she's paging the obvious: the train of Mardi Gras extras brought along to illustrate Modern Romance's ridiculous and opportunistic "Everybody Salsa". Evidently the producer's limited idea of "good television" overrules quality control.

Aware of *TOTP*'s visual limitations, John Foxx – looking like a stylish cross between Rhett Butler and Beau Brummell – has assembled his own props. "Meet my drummer," he says, introducing the majestic bust he's carrying under his arm. His TV group is fleshed out by human sculptures Eddie Maelov, resplendent in Noel Coward lounge suit, and Sunshine Patteson, in elegant evening gown.

"He's here to remake *The Great Gatsby*," John joshes Eddie.

"And Sunshine's, eh, late for the wedding," Eddie kids his partner. »

FIN COSTELLO / GETTY

Meanwhile a bunch of office boys have strayed onto the set – oh my God, it's OMD after a colour supplement primer in American preppiness.

Sitting in the middle of this fanciful costume ball, this week's No 1 unit Soft Cell appear to be cinderellas – and that's despite singer Marc Almond's wristloads of bracelets and studs and the brassy gold necklaces dangled around his neck. Bemused by their chart bedfellows, Soft Cell scan this evening's roll call.

"John Foxx, Gary Numan, Teardrop Explodes, Orchestral Manoeuvres, us – it'll be dry ice a-go-go tonight," predicts Marc with a giggle and a groan.

Actually, Numan couldn't make it, but he has sent his video. So, apart from The Human League, who weren't invited although "Love Action" had yo-yoed up to No 3, tonight's *TOTP* is a valuable survey of the ever-evolving electro-disco beat – from pioneer John (Ultra) Foxx, through popularisers Numan and OMD to former pupils Soft Cell.

Soft Cell have absorbed their lessons well. "Tainted Love" – once a Northern disco hit for Marc Bolan's partner Gloria Jones – is one of the most assured and stunning syn-ful dance singles released this year. In its combination of streamline software simplicity and sensual throb it reinforces NY heroes Suicide's experiments in emotion-tugging electronics without repeating them directly, as they had done previously with the earlier "Memorabilia".

They've taken the whole thing a step further on the 12-inch version, which effortlessly merges with the B-side version of The Supremes' "Where Did Our Love Go" via an extremely inventive, cool melodic burndown. Natural little touches like that contribute to "Tainted Love"'s transcendence of genre prejudices. They elevate it, and by implication the whole electro-bop, above the fickle clutches of the fad fiends and place it in the public arena where it belongs.

Nobody should be surprised, hurt or disappointed that Soft Cell are sitting pretty at the top of the BBC charts.

**A LONE, LATIN-TINGED** trumpet sounds through the corridors and seeps all askew and off-key into Soft Cell's dressing room. The duo make an odd couple – "It wasn't planned that way," they assure me.

Singer Marc Almond, from Southport, is small, effervescent and giggly; and musician David Ball, from Blackpool, is tall, laconic, almost morose and more conscientiously artisan than artist. Unsurprisingly, Marc dominates the conversation.

"There," he sighs, "I've gone and hogged the interview again."

Marc plays frontman with relish – all Liberace gestures and varying voice pitches – while David is the natural straight man who is still wondering what all the fuss is about. What with the former's flutterings and the latter's refusal to participate in the creation of the Soft Cell myth, the duo were at first comfortably dismissed as vague and flighty futurists prepared to ride whatever bandwagon was available.

The first one to happen along was the *Some Bizzare Album* compilation put together by East End futurist DJ and lovable pest Stevo. When it came out, the Some Bizzare boys were seen as poor relations to the more stylish publicists of the Spandau Ballet/Rusty Egan set. Stood up against Spandau svengali Steve Dagger, or even Blue Rondo's Chris Sullivan, Stevo appeared as little more than a court jester.

However, as Spandau and Blue Rondo's attempts to stay ahead have resulted in increasingly absurd fads, the unforced emergence of one-time bizzaro groups Depeche Mode and Soft Cell sets the whole operation in a far better light. Compare, for instance, Spandau Ballet's degeneration from kitschy visionaries into hack funk plagiarists with Soft Cell's rise from the rather trashy aesthetes behind the Bizzare song "The Girl With The Patent Leather Face" to dancehall favourites and decide for yourselves who's created the New Soul Version. And suddenly it becomes apparent that Stevo was closer to the pulse than the rest.

"Stevo has been knocked an awful lot," states Marc. "He's been called all sorts of things. Paul Morley said, which was really untrue, that Some Bizzare was a nice sort of home for all these little groups that nobody wanted. Well, nobody knew whether to want them or not then because they were unknown. I admire Stevo for going out to be untrendy, for turning down groups who were prepared to be on the album, accepting the futurist tag and all."

> "Kraftwerk are the innovators of this electonic dance music"

Whatever, *Some Bizzare Album* just wasn't very good. Groups like themselves and Depeche Mode have improved upon the original premise, and B-Movie promise to do the same. Otherwise *Some Bizzare* was a plainly uninspired collection of groups grappling gamely with the blueprints of originals like Kraftwerk and Suicide. Being something of a purist, David is less tolerant than his partner of the electro-boppers who've slavishly followed the patterns of the masters.

"All the originals get left behind," he mutters ruefully. "Kraftwerk should have got much higher in the charts. They're the innovators of this electronic dance music and they're so much better than all these shitty little things…"

Marc collapses into shrill, slightly embarrassed giggles, but David continues undeterred.

"…that get into the charts. It's true," he asserts. "I'm just saying what I think, you know. It makes me sick to see all these stupid little kids with scarves tied around their heads playing what Kraftwerk were doing four years ago. It just irritates me."

David is painfully aware of the fact that detractors – like myself – once used to dismiss Soft Cell with similar disdain.

"I don't consider ourselves as part of that," he baldly states. "We don't emphasise that we're an electronic or synthesizer group. It's just an instrument that we use – it's versatile and we like it."

Soft Cell have gone beyond the stage of infatuation with all things mechanical. They've soaked up ideas and forms, which they've since subordinated to their own needs, as opposed to lapsing into the dumb, cliched worshipping of machinery. Because they don't wear their art like a badge they've sometimes been considered superficial dilettantes.

"We're not dilettante at all," responds Marc reasonably. "If we were like that, we could have made easy, safe moves all along. But we wanted to put emotion into electronic music. We were sick of people saying that electronic music was to suck your cheeks in

"We like people to think there's something seedy in our backgrounds": Dave Ball (left) and Marc Almond

FIN COSTELLO / GETTY

to, or to pose against the Berlin Wall to. On the other hand, if we wanted to be pop stars, which in a way nauseates me, we could have been really obvious and shallow. We could've made 'Everybody Salsa', you know."

He pauses; a look of fear clouds his face: "There, now they'll never speak to me again."

**SOFT CELL EMERGED** from the twin backgrounds of Leeds Art College and Northern soul. Though first and foremost soulboys, they didn't meet on the dancefloor but in a classroom at the aforementioned college, where Marc was studying performance art – on the same course, incidentally, as Indian rubber man Fad Gadget – and David was just "fiddling about with synthesizers".

Their performance training isn't immediately apparent from their *TOTP* "Tainted Love" show – David does the standing still quite well, while Marc twitches engagingly through a clumsy set of extravagant gestures barely in sync with the words – but it was a valuable grounding.

"It instilled in us the need to be independent," recalls Marc, "because the course we were doing consisted of being put into a big studio with all these facilities and then being told, 'Right, whatever you do, go ahead and do it. It's all up to you and you've got three years to make something out of it.'"

Marc performed; David produced the soundtrack. What they did then isn't relevant now, says David. Marc more helpfully expands.

"For me, my performance-art background is only important because it gave me the confidence to get out there on stage. It was just, like, exercising myself in getting up on stage and not caring if I make a fool of myself. After that, it's just a case of looking back on things you did three years ago and feeling a little red-faced about them, if only because your ideas improve a lot in the meantime."

> "We've said what needs to be said about going out and having fun"


More telling is their apprenticeship in Northern teen disco – NOT the sophisticated clubs where the DJ plays a never-ending stream of jazz-funk imports from New York that nobody recognises or indeed would bother taking home with them. Their roots are in a poppier dance, in the tunes that occasionally make the charts; "Tainted Love" is their tribute to the teen dance.

"We both like Northern soul, '60s music and the 12-inch record," explains Marc. "We thought we would try to bring that '60s sound and style of song into the '80s, but the problem was of how to do a 12 inch of 'Tainted Love' without doing the boring, very standard thing of stripping it all down to the bass and drums and re-editing the sound, which is putting me off 12 inches in a way.

"Then we had the idea of doing an instrumental bit in the middle and going into another song at the end, almost like a medley tribute to where we come from, those songs that made an impression on us. It was originally just going to include a few bars of 'Where Did Our Love Go?', but we like the way it turned out and included the whole song.

"And we even had a slight tongue-in-cheek drum break in the middle – that's the crashing of dustbin lids and Syndrums."

Before talking to Soft Cell, it was easy to think that the radical leap in quality from the earlier "Memorabilia"s' Suicide-made-painless to the distinctive torch reading of "Tainted Love" was more down to producer Mike Thorne than the duo. The wonderful segue, for instance, is a disco producer's trademark. However, it becomes apparent that it was the duo who went in with the ideas and Mike Thorne made them work. It wasn't the production of "Memorabilia" that was at fault, but the song itself. The duo still quite like it, though they acknowledge the sound improvements of their hit.

"We had liked Mike Thorne's production of Wire," says Marc, "and anyway he is a less obvious choice of producer than Daniel Miller [the Mute man who produced "Memorabilia"] for electronic music. We're very pleased the way things have turned with Mike and we're going to New York soon to record a new single and LP with him."

"Tainted Love" could mark the beginning of the end of their long-standing love affair with disco. Being a Friday-night DJ at Leeds Warehouse, Marc Almond is fully aware of all its innovations and fluctuations. But these days its appeal is wearing thin – the music's either too distressingly uniform or too unconvincing in its fickleness.

"You can't go on forever on the dancefloor," admits Mark ruefully. "There is still some great disco coming out, but it's coming to wear a little thin on me. I hate this new Latin music, though the real Latin music is great. I mean, how can people who have no roots in Puerto Rico bring out this kind of real personal music?

"I think it's really depressing," he sighs wistfully. "If that's going to be played at the disco then I'm staying at home. I hope the fad doesn't last, then the people who genuinely like it can stay with it and leave behind the people who just like wearing Spanish hats."

He pauses for breath, then continues the assault: "It's the same with funk as well. There's some good stuff, but most of it is horrible. The only funk that is different and exciting is James Chance & The Contortions."

Dave concurs, griping: "There's a lot of rehash, nothing new…" …until Marc interrupts with loud handclaps and absurd chant (number 3?): "*Get on down to those dancing feet/Get on down to that Latin beat!*"

"If this is the new innovatory funk," he sneers, "then I'm sorry – where have I been for the past few years? The real new funk isn't Spandau Ballet's 'Chant Number One', it's people like Cabaret Voltaire. Some things on their *Voice Of America* have a very James Brown feel."

Disillusioned with the dancefloor, where do you turn to from here, Marc?

"To the bedroom, I think," he giggles. "It's getting to the stage where we've said what needs to be said about that, about going out and having fun… and then come the tears.

"Our writing is getting more personal, a bit deeper and a lot sadder. It's about reaching into the stuff and writing things that you have to feel about. Sad, so-called serious music can be entertaining, too. The Walker Brothers, for example, made real emotional music that made you feel all funny inside, after which you felt happy."

**SOFT CELL ARE** one of the few units who have a genuine claim on the new cabaret, even if theirs is as much Batley Variety Club as the Berlin kind. Their entertainment is effusively emotional in the showbiz tradition, ridiculously expressive, mildly satirical/comical and hilariously self-indulgent.

"If nobody else is going to dance, I certainly am," boasts Marc.

And in the best tradition of Northern variety it's also a little grubby. For reasons known only to themselves, they've taken to having publicity shots done in sex shops with peculiar props. Offensive? Sexist? Not really, just daft.

David: "We like people to think that there is something shady or seedy in our backgrounds that nobody knows anything about."

Have you?

"We're not saying!"

"We're not interested in being clean and goody-goody," explains Marc.

"We like writing songs about sex and trash. We did that consciously to get a dirtier image, really. The LP will be called *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret*."

"We got one song from a *News Of The World* headline, 'Sex Dwarf Lures A 100 Disco Dollies To A Life Of Vice'," he laughs. "We felt it just had to be put down and immortalised."

To the people who have to sell them, Soft Cell are depressingly difficult to pin down. Neither *angstvoll* nor mechanical, they match cool electronics with body-heated emotion.

"People tell us that we're directionless," admits Marc. "Well, if I had a plan and knew what I would be doing in three years I wouldn't bother. It's more exciting to be directionless – this is the perfection that we're aiming towards. We want to be aware of everything – people's feelings, the media, trivia, deepness, everything! And if that's being dilettante and directionless, then I am dilettante and directionless and GLAD!"

*Chris Bohn* ●

# 1981

OCTOBER – DECEMBER

## ABC, DURAN DURAN, DEAD KENNEDYS, THE POLICE AND MORE

# "I'm disappointed"

**MM OCT 10 The Specials split as Terry, Lynval and Neville form a new group. Jerry Dammers is "glad they stayed for 'Ghost Town'".**

**THE SPECIALS, AS** we exclusively predicted last week, have split up. Well actually, to be totally accurate, The Specials as we know them have come to an end.

As we said, Lynval Golding, Terry Hall and Neville Staples have quit to form a new band.

They're calling themselves the Fun Boy Three and have a single released under this name on October 30, titled "The Lunatics (Have Taken Over The Asylum)" with "Faith, Hope and Charity" on the B-side. The three are staying with Chrysalis.

Why the three have decided to leave, what precisely the other four are doing and generally what the hell is going on remains uncertain.

Chrysalis press person Chris Poole said that he wasn't in any position to make any further comments about the future of The Specials. He said it was likely that the Fun Boy Three would do an album and would tour eventually but was unable to elucidate further.

According to our story, Jerry Dammers and Sir Horace Gentleman are sticking together, while Brad Bradbury is concentrating his efforts on his commitments with Race Records and Roddy Radiation is said to be working with a rockabilly band.

Stop press: Late on Monday, Jerry, who with Sir Horace and Brad is accompanying Rico, said: "I'm disappointed but I'm glad they stayed in the band long enough to record 'Ghost Town'."

JANETTE BECKMAN / GETTY

Splitting from The Specials but staying with record label Chysalis: (l–r) Neville Staples, Lynval Golding and Terry Hall as Fun Boy Three


This Heat's Charles Hayward (right) and Gareth Williams, who left to study dance in India after the release of punningly titled second album *Deceit*

# "It's time people saw reality"

**MM DEC 12 Introducing, in their subterranean lair: This Heat. "We play for long hours most days each week."**

**GO PAST THE** solitary townhouse, down the long valley, underneath the glass and wrought-iron canopy, through the door on the left, past the gallery, and you find yourself at the heart of a half-concealed labyrinth of artists' studios not far from the centre of world-famous showcase for monetarism, Brixton. Behind the vault-like door of what appears to be a meat refrigeration unit lies Cold Storage studio, where This Heat are melting atmospheres into shapes of awesome proportions.

Let's make one thing clear, in case their recently released second album *Deceit* gets lost in the flood of vinyl trash. This Heat have made a record crammed with daring imagination and disturbing intensity, an album that's been one of my most frequently played in '81. Forged in a foundry of pre-apocalyptic tension, *Deceit* is music that mirrors the fears of the modern age, remembers the past, and acts as if they've never been apart.

And this dowdy workshop is where the alchemy works; where they made part of the album and recorded their forthcoming Rough Trade single "Greenfingers". This Heat – currently just the two , Charles Hayward and Charles Bullen, following the departure of Gareth Williams – work in here with the single-minded determination of artisans, the walls a symbolic shit-filer for keeping out what they see as the impurities of conveyor-belt pop.

Not that they'd agree with such symbolism. "People see things in symbols all the time," says Hayward the "drummer" (though they're both multi-instrumentalists). "The symbols are empty. It seems to me the whole of Europe's living inside symbols and it's time people saw reality. The division between people because of how old they are or what clothes they wear is just a symbolic division, an intellectual game."

Hayward looks strangely English and almost old-fashioned when he walks into the studio wearing his grey suit and bicycle clips, a striking contrast to Bullen, a dark, towering figure who displays a vaguely '60s-ish air of dishevelment – an appearance no doubt encouraged by the fact that he's been up all night working at the mixing desk.

Bullen, a quietly intense character, doesn't listen to much of the music produced by his contemporaries in the wacky world of rock 'n' pop, and the only radio station he listens to is the BBC World Service – he likes to compare the news to the information given out here.

This Heat have been together for about six years, yet Deceit is only their second album, and often it appears as if they don't exist at all. They admit that – at least in the past – they've been isolated and confined. "We don't normally talk much about our history, but time moved very slowly in some ways," explains Bullen. "My personal clock moved very slowly for the first three years that I was in This Heat. We do gigs very rarely – once every three months sometimes. We play for long hours most days each week."

> **"For me it's been a question of investigating a lot of old music"**

They have, they feel, changed though, especially when they toured in Europe some time ago. Hayward now sees the relationship between music and life as a major area of concern. "That is the problem. Just people together in a room making music, how that reflects outwards to everything, how much you're living in a cloud cuckoo land when you enter this really fantastic [musical] world. *Deceit* is a consciously social record. I think it's very Now."

The record's preoccupation with contemporary political concerns screams out from the cover – the front is a death mask, a collage made from blurred images of money, blood, a mushroom cloud and the Stars & Stripes; the back is a similarly composed display, including cut-outs from government "survival" leaflets.

Besides the obvious pun of the title, there's a more serious intent. This Heat see the world as a series of deceptions, and their lyrics address themselves to different manifestations of what they see as ideological deceit, like consumerism, and the idea of continual social progress. Bullen and Hayward see their role as removers of the mask.

"Let's not pull the wool over our own eyes," says Hayward. "Let's understand that this is what's happening, because only when we know can we make moves. Us stumbling along in the dark, the Great Deceiver's perfectly aware of what's happening.

"The First and Second World Wars are interrelated inextricably, and the Third World War's going to be part of the same thing. I was reading some review of a play at the ICA... 'all this is done so that they can wear cleanly pressed shirts and drink good brandy'. And that's what's happening – there are people who want to ensure they can have cleanly pressed shirt and good brandy."

Suspicions that there's a whiff of crudish conspiracy theory in the air – though I have no quarrel with many of their basic assumptions – grow stronger when Bullen says he thinks it can't be long before Crass are put in jail. When I mention the fragmentation of youth subculture into various warring tribes, Hayward says this is "intentional".

"Once you have a mass of people who are completely at each other's throats then they're the easiest thing in the world to control, manipulate, especially when they think they're in a free society."

LESLEY EVANS

If it's "intentional", who has the intention?

"I really don't think it's a question of 'they', it's a question of organisation, structures perpetuating themselves. There are people who profit from all these things, but they're people who are riding on the crest of that structure. Maybe they've inherited that position, they're inside a dynamic they're not really in control of, but they profit from it, and so they perpetuate and accentuate certain aspects of it."

The ending of *Deceit* – an instrumental track called "Hi Baku Shyo", a Japanese phrase literally translated as "Suffer Bomb Disease" – puts across This Heat's message in dramatic terms , but their new single "Greenfingers" shows a different side of their concern for the human race's relationship to its environment.

"It basically says 'grow food'," says Bullen. "We're not saying 'go and live on a farm', you can't do that. The food that I was given as a kid – I'm sure me mam loved me and all that, but there was no awareness of where it comes from. You can get into specific details – buying stuff from South Africa or stuff like that."

This Heat produce music that defies glib categorisation, that splinters into a variety of moods, from ultra-violence to calm serenity, and welds seemingly incongruous elements like noise, sound collage, fierce splays of electric guitar and traditional English folk singing into a homogenous unity. Some will see them as part of the "avant-garde" – a mistaken assumption. "The avant-garde, for me, is a self-conscious thing," explains Hayward.

"Once you're self-consciously trying to go where no man's gone before, wilfully trying to develop a vocabulary, then you're not really understanding where music stands in a cultural flow. You're force-feeding something."

Bullen: "And I'd say I've been guilty of that in the past."

Hayward: "All of us have been guilty; there's been a lot of that. It's a question of being yourself, which opens up such a personal sound that some people would say it's inaccessible and avant-garde. For me it's been a question of investigating a lot of old music, a desire to reconnect to a seam that was suddenly broken. It was the result of industrialisation, and I'd say it reached its fruition with the First and Second World Wars."


Traditional English folk singing isn't the only ethnic influence on This Heat, though. Both are fascinated by music from all over the world, whether Irish and Swedish folk, Grecian music, or roots reggae. "I found the interesting thing about listening to music from other parts of the world is finding the similarities, because they're indications of where music relates immediately to the body," says Hayward.

"If we're dealing with a totally smashed culture – where we are now – then to rebuild we have to find the universal truths, find what rhythms work, why they work, what tonalities work in a certain position... to understand how music affects directly." *Lynden Barber*

# "I've gotten some criticism"

**MM OCT 17** Introducing: unlikely chart star Laurie Anderson.


Anderson: describing decentralisation

**"O SUPERMAN", LAURIE ANDERSON'S** eight-minute single of extraordinary evocation/irritation, quality/deficiency, invention/monotony looks, single-handedly, set to challenge all our glib, pat notions of performance art as some Beckett gone barmy.

Lovingly patronised by Radio One, and selling faster than WEA can press up more copies, "O Superman" is a small segment of a four-part, eight-hour (!) multimedia show called *United States Pts I–IV*, an affectionate critique of modern Stateside society: "The first part is about transportation, the second is politics, the third money and the last love. What they are are combinations of film and slides and talking and gestures, a lot of electronics and music. There are maybe 12 or 15 songs in each part – I'm still working on *Part III* right now..."

Anderson, an alarmingly fragile, punk-cropped 34-year-old with a soft Chicago accent, first had the brainwave/storm after graduating from Columbia University with a sculpture MA and no realistic means of making a living. Combining her artistic education, tale-telling talents, musical background and flair for pure invention, she started performing all over America to ecstatic reviews; lauded by punks and professors alike.

**"I like Captain Beefheart – he's my favourite"**

But does it translate/appeal to a British audience? "Oh yes. The structure is built to describe a country, to describe the decentralisation of where I live and what it means to live in a highly technological society – the United States. But, generally, it's about the bottom falling out of the centre of whatever your fantasies are about your sense of place."

How specific is it? "Well, I've gotten some criticism for the political per se ideas in *Section II* – 'know, 'How come you're using these political ideas and not really resolving them?' I couldn't believe that sort of reaction, because first of all I don't know what to do about them; secondly, as an artist, I feel free to use that information; and third, I'm just not running for political office."

So what's "Superman" about? "Well, one of the most important things to me is not to be didactic and to create a situation that is special enough for people to make up their own minds as much as possible... To be honest, I didn't really think that these songs would translate onto record – I thought they'd just be too blank without the pictures but now I think it could be possible, so the plan is to try some of the songs from this series."

If, as she says, the hypnotic "O Superman" was written unspecific, other parts of Anderson's vision are crucially accessible. For instance, the story of William F Buckley; a man who, while leafletting the public to preserve private property, is bundled from a shopping centre (the centre of civilisation – in itself a stab at consumerism) because he's found to be trespassing.

Where do these ideas come from?

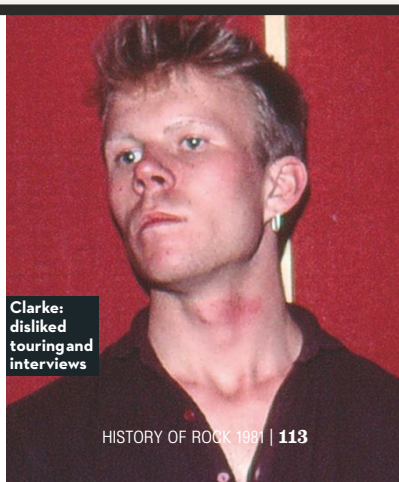
"I dunno, my influences? I like Captain Beefheart – he's my favourite. But I probably have no taste – I like almost anything. I'd sit through any movie just 'cos I think it's so amazing – that light, just shimmering up there – tssst! And the best is that people are all eating in the dark together, y'know, popcorn and drinking cokes – it's not as lonely as TV. One of the reasons I like being with people..." *Steve Sutherland*

REX FEATURES, GETTY

# Tour tensions

**MM DEC 12** Vince Clarke leaves Depeche Mode.

**DEPECHE MODE ARE** now a three-piece – keyboard player and main songwriter Vince Clarke has left. He'll continue providing material for the band but won't be touring or recording. Tensions have been building in Depeche Mode for some months. Vince was reportedly unhappy about the touring aspect of their work and has quit to concentrate on songwriting.


Clarke: disliked touring and interviews

# "I'm a 30-year-old millionaire!"

**THE POLICE are doing very nicely indeed. Still, frontman Sting isn't remote from current events. Nuclear weapons, civil disobedience... he has a view. "I don't want riots," he says, "but I can see why they happen. It couldn't be worse for the kids."**

— MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 10 —

"THERE'S A WIND in Munich," explains Andy Summers, "that makes people go crazy."

Oh yeah?

"It blows at certain times of the year and people who are susceptible can... y'know..." – he rolls his eyes around the dressing room and bares a fine set of pearlies – "lose control. It's like the effect a full moon has. You don't believe me, do you?"

Well, since it's coming from somebody who's taken the art of the gentle wind-up further than a Swiss clocksmith, it does, perhaps, require a smidgen of the old sodium chloride for an easy passage. It might make sense, though. Ever since landing in this beautiful but mixed-up kind of city things have been... well... odd.

What can you say of an airport that doesn't believe in flashing lights or men with ping-pong bats to guide your plane into position. But instead has a large van bearing the words "Follow Me" on its back in two-foot-high letters?

Why the road leading to the Munich Hilton should be awash in inches of water or its reception hall in about eight species of dog are two eternal mysteries to ponder in quieter moments.

At least someone's certain... "The Police? Oh no, the bus hasn't got here yet. The gig's at nine and the soundcheck's at six, so they'll probably be leaving here around 4.30." This from the tour manager, perhaps? No, from the girl who hands out the room keys. The noun "drink" and it's bosom adjective "large" spring to mind. »

LYNN GOLDSMITH / GETTY

Sting by the pool at AIR Studios Montserrat in the Caribbean, where The Police recorded their fourth studio album, *Ghost In The Machine*

Outside the Marquee Club in London's Soho, December 1981 – (l–r) Sting, Andy Summers and Stewart Copeland

ANDRE CSILLAG / REX FEATURES

Actually, the Police have arrived. A knot of relaxed but businesslike guests bustle through the mirror-ceilinged lobby and rapidly vanish to their rooms. Not everybody has journeyed on the coach. Andy Summers (why am I already certain he's going to become a wayward influence?) likes trains and eschewed the video-equipped luxuries of the bus to chug his way from the last town. "This isn't right," he surmises.

"I'm supposed to be here early waiting smugly for them, and they beat me by 30 seconds."

Guitars and suitcases spill into the lobby, fans ragtaggle around the band, some clutching pens, others cameras; a few have both and want the chaps to sign the Polaroid pictures they've just taken. This is efficiency. And this is The Police back on the road.

> "At least the riots have got the government out of its sleep"

**IT'S FRIDAY OCTOBER** 9 in Munich, the last date of a slim seven-gig mini-tour designed to put the buzz back into playing live. From the barrage of smiles it's apparently been going very well. Tomorrow will be the start of their first true holiday almost since the band began – no albums to record, no rehearsals to attend, no appearances to make until December. These are happy boys.

Wish the same could be said of the drinks machine in the hotel room. Multilingual instructions obtusely hint that each of the eight buttons will propel a particular beverage into a tray underneath the fridge. Number two is a can of Coke. Press number two, "clank, bong", open drawer, nothing. Press it again, "clank, clank, bong", still nothing. Give up.

Decide on an orange juice, number three. "Clank, clank, clank… thud", open drawer. Inside is a can of Coke. What was that about a wind?

Time to move, and Sting, in black jeans and a sheepskin jacket, unusually thick for the surprisingly warm clime, is already in the back of the lobby and introductions are made. His first remarks prove him to be a man – ahem, like myself – of questing observation. "Lot of dogs in here, aren't there?"

A fair pride of autograph hunters, too, including one with a broken leg.

"In our country it's traditional to sign the plaster," points out Sting to the hobbling Kraut who had initially proffered a sheet of paper. A leg is presented and a ballpoint wielded which immediately sinks nib first into the soft outer material. Medical advance, it seems, has no place for the autograph collector.

More autographs on the bus from within the ranks. This tour obviously includes material from *Ghost In The Machine* which features Sting playing saxophone. The third matter of equally apparent note is that you can't sing and blow brass at the same instant. A horn section was required. New Jersey trio The Chops are it – Darryl Dixon, David Watson and Marvin Daniels.

They do an excellent job, but at the moment they're doing some superb blagging. In truth they want a couple of signed pictures of the band as keepsakes, but are a bit embarrassed about admitting it. "This is for the family album?" quizzes Stewart Copeland as he inks across his image. "Fuck no, I'm gonna sell it," says Dave.

As the contorted profile of the Olympiahalle crests the Munich traffic jams, Stewart wonders about the architectural completion. "Are they still putting it up or something?" That's how tonight's venue appears. It looks like a huge metal tent barely supported by a posse of erratic cranes, themselves tottering drunkenly around the perimeter.

Inside, the overwhelming impression is of a large mattress about to fall. For a moment he's marginally distracted and comforted by the fact that Genesis have just finished playing the place, and in fact had booked out of the Hilton not many minutes before The Police tumbled in. Phil Collins left a letter at reception: "Just bought the album and I love it, love Phil".

"He BOUGHT it," says someone.

**INSIDE THE HALL** there already seems to be a band on stage belting through a Police track. "Just the roadies brushing up on a few of our songs," reveals Mr Copeland, who, overtaken by the location's Olympic urge, sprints away down the stairs. I've never known a man disappear so quickly. He runs everywhere, and this from someone who later claims to be lazy: "If I happened to be a guitar player I'd be a real wimp; it's just as well I play drums."

He even succeeded in running around a disco that night. Flailing through an undergrowth of German limbs and drinks, I tried to keep up with him as he made a circuit of the place. Hopeless. Wedged tight between a pillar and a Teutonic boozer, a long night of short breaths and immobile arms (panic… can't reach money to purchase alcohol) pressed close on the horizon. Suddenly a voice boomed in one ear: "Well that's it, shall we split?" We walked out two minutes after walking in.

Back at the hotel, Sting had offered a slyly grinning invitation… "Come and see me around seven. I'll be on the floor." And he was. Boots and socks off, sheepskin jacket rolled up as a pillow, he stared at the dressing room ceiling. This, it unfolded, was the Alexander Method, a system of relaxation developed by an Australian actor to prevent pre-performance tension. I had to admit that it closely resembled the northern hemisphere practice of "lying down", or "falling down" as it is occasionally known. But according to Sting, a hard surface coupled with massaging of the big toe has helped relieve a few throat problems.

Last weekend it was his birthday: "We always seem to work on my birthday. I got very drunk, there was lots of cake flying around and the support group had the whole hall singing 'Happy birthday to Sting'. I'm 30."

Feels different, does it?

"Yes it does, actually. It's an interesting time to reassess and plan ahead and think of yourself at the end of the next decade. I also looked back on the last 10 years – an abortive university career, a career as a teacher, now I'm a 30-year-old millionaire, hah!"

Of course, I haven't reached that august milestone myself.

"Ha ha ha… oh, fuck off," laughs the man. One nil.

They are all distinctly "up" right now – a combination of an idyllic bout of recording and a short burst of highly successful gigs.

"Montserrat, where we did *Ghost In the Machine*, worked out really well," says Andy "Munich Wind" Summers. "On the last album at Hilversum we didn't feel as if we'd got far enough away and there was a lot of pressure from us."

Sting was more specific: "It rained for four weeks and I had a cold." But the sunny atmosphere of Montserrat was conducive to a bright, spontaneous album, two of the tracks, "Demolition Man" and "One World", being one-track wonders.

Harking back to less ecstatic times, Andy opines that depression usually sets in when they've been on the road for too long. "That's when you start losing perspective, everybody wants to leave the group and suddenly you can't remember what you were like before the group happened."

How do you cope with it?

"Well… I read the Bible and pray a lot. Let's kneel brother…"

You sod, I should have learnt by now.

"Omegaman" describes a way of getting through those moments, a way which he finds tougher to explain in person. "There are times when you can break through depression and recognise, almost as if from the past, a positive feeling. It snaps you out of it, like a memory… it's hard… when you feel lonely… and I think everybody does… it's nothing to be ashamed of…"

Are you grinning again, Summers?

One alerting discovery is that beneath the cheery exterior they all share a measured fatalism, though in different areas and at variant strengths. While the world tours and the viewed misery have given them a determination to change matters, or at least point out that they must be altered, it's also imprinted an inevitability on their reasoning.

Perhaps continued existence in a world where gigs always go down well (even if the band are dissatisfied with them) and albums always sell by the millions (even if the band think they're patchy) contributes to that. So as Stewart Copeland argues that most people missed the point of "Invisible Sun" – and it's in fact a song of inner strength and determination – maybe the hope they have is born of desperation rather than inspiration. I laugh lest I cry.

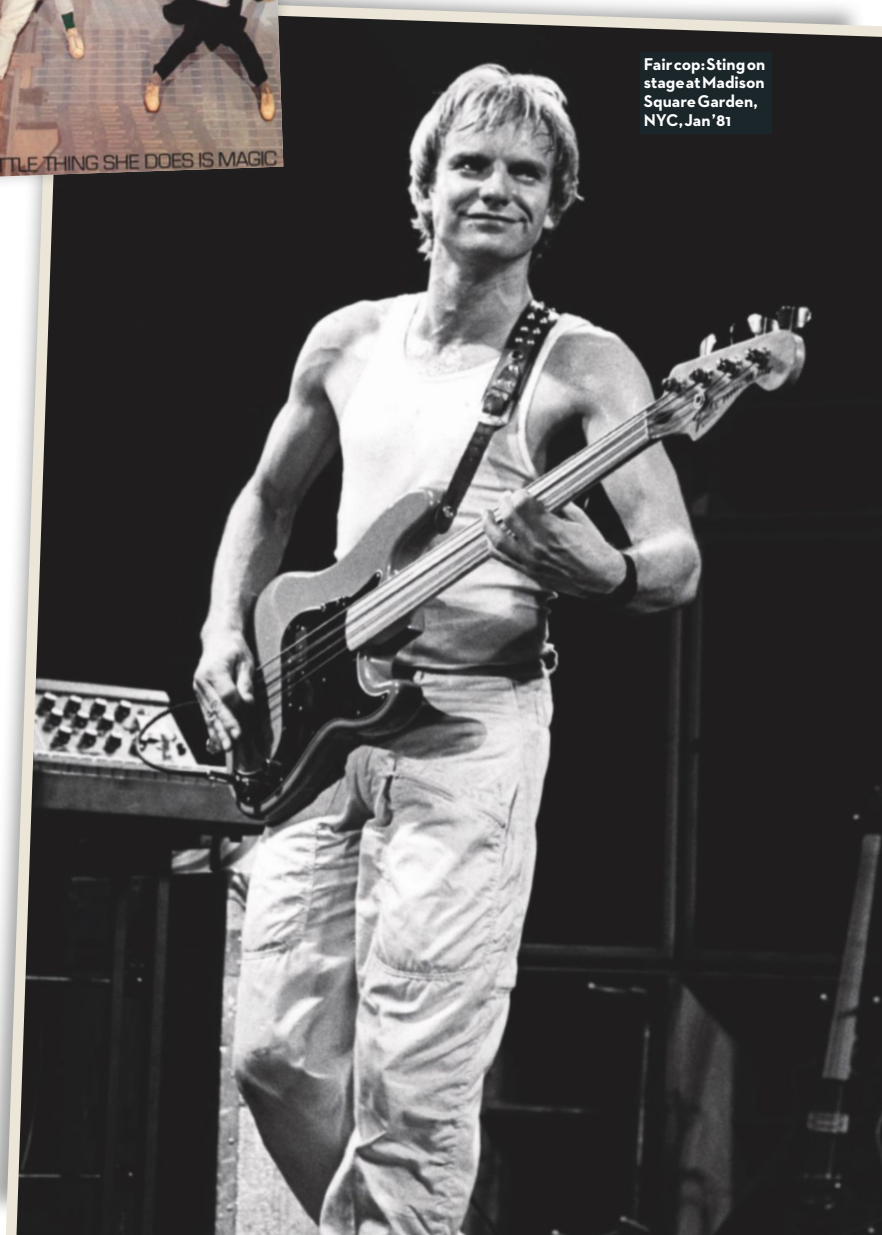

**"THERE IS NO** shadow of doubt in my mind," says Sting, again from the floor, "that one day, whether by accident or design, they will be dropped, and they have to be got rid of either by peaceful means or not."

The conversation in this case is running down the frightening alleys of nuclear war and warheads. But of the whole sentence it's the last word – "not" – that worries me the most. What does he mean, and realising he's just argued himself into a moment of truth, Sting pauses before taking a leap.

"Well… I think rioting is a start. Genuine justified anger as appeared in England this year. Yeah," he continues, warming to the conviction, "burn it down. You've every right to. I don't want riots, I don't want burning, but I can see why they happen. It couldn't be worse for the kids, society's done fuck all for them, and at least the riots have been successful since they've got the government out of its sleep."

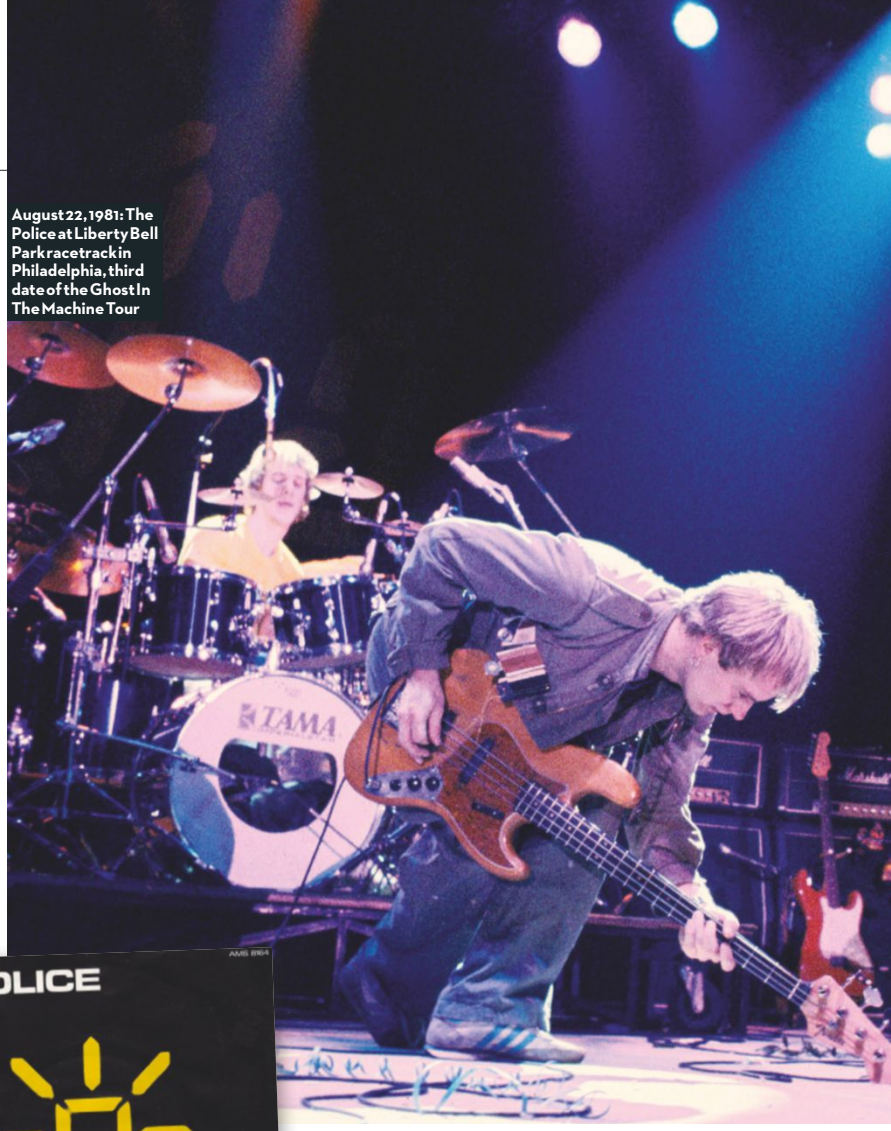
The Police insist the "Invisible Sun" promo film shot around Belfast and rejected by the BBC was not a message but a statement of fact. Sting's wife, who comes from the city, sat in during the editing, balancing every Catholic and Protestant image, ensuring it was non-sectarian.

Stewart Copeland refuses to draw the boundaries even that tightly: "It could be Kabul, Addis Ababa or any city, maybe not even a city. There are a lot of places in the world where life is unbelievable but it goes on. It's not a film about the problems of Ireland, but about people living their lives in spite of them." »



Fair cop: Sting on stage at Madison Square Garden, NYC, Jan '81

EBET ROBERTS / GETTY




August 22, 1981: The Police at Liberty Bell Park racetrack in Philadelphia, third date of the Ghost In The Machine Tour

He say that far more gruesome scenes appear on TV news throughout the week but because of their regularity and slot they cease to sink in. However loud the alarm clock rings, you can eventually stop hearing it. Shift focus to *Top Of The Pops* and there's no resistance.

"I can see why the BBC turned it down," says Sting, "but I disagree, I think it should be shown for exactly those reasons. It is a chilling film, it sends tingles up my spine every time I see it. There was a chance of talking about real issues in pop music, but the BBC wouldn't let us. The inference is that all pop music should be meaningless, banal and stupid…"

This isn't the sole focus for their fatalism. Their own fame has lately been getting a considerable dose of objection; not least from Andy Summers. "There is a conscious move towards a lower profile and to lose the three laughing blond heads; there are other groups in England who can do that now."

Manager Miles Copeland puts it more bluntly. "Thank Christ for Adam."

The faces have vanished from the cover of *Ghost In The Machine*… sort of. The three digital hieroglyphics aren't the title spelt out in runes but computerised mushes for each of the band. The one in the middle is Sting, the top three arrows representing his stand-up hair.

"It's been fun being famous," ventures Stewart Copeland. Excuse the mild cough, Stewart, but you're hardly good copy for Anonymity Weekly. "Yeah. But the image is not so important any more, it's done its job and it can be relinquished. There are problems: like buying underwear at Woolworths and disappointing the girl behind the counter because you didn't get extra large."


One of the questions posed at Sting is whether he wants The Police to be the biggest group in the world in five years. "I'd like the world to be here in five years. Basically, I don't need another No 1, it doesn't give me any more ego massage than I've already got, it's just a game now. It's nice to be No 1, but I'm not going to commit suicide if we're not. It was more important to produce something of integrity. There will be a hit, the game will be played to the hilt next month, but it wasn't vital that 'Invisible Sun' should be No 1, just that it should be released. *Ghost In the Machine* was an important step, because everyone was expecting a sequel to the last three, which didn't happen.

"As for the next direction, who knows? I don't care right now. I don't care whether we go on, or are successful as a group, it doesn't worry me. I'm genuinely more worried about my kids having reasonable lives, living till they're at least 20. Being the biggest group in the world doesn't matter a fuck compared to that."

Honestly, they really are in a good mood. The mattress-shaped venue hasn't collapsed yet. If it did, around 8,000 kids would be going to bed early – though judging by spirited examples of limb-tangling happening in the gloom, the thought of an early night isn't far from certain minds.

**STILL BACKSTAGE, A** German reporter has cornered Stewart but is more intent on a little role reversal, spieling forth with a lecture on Polish Solidarity. "There must have been something wrong with his tape recorder, everything we said came out of the speaker. It was like being interviewed over a PA."

Somewhere in the audience is Mike Oldfield. He'd made a silent appearance at the soundcheck and would later put in an even briefer and quieter one backstage. Also reported to be hovering in the vicinity are Kirsty MacColl, Matchbox, Soft Cell and Leif Garrett, and they're all apparently taking lodgings at the Hilton. Was there any way of warning them about the drinks machine or the dogs? Some things you just have to find out yourself, I guess.

This gig is no velvet glove. Any set that starts with "Message In A Bottle", "Don't Stand So Close To Me" and "Walking On The Moon" has more to do with cast iron than cotton wool. There's no sparring; this is body blow after body blow from a fast, ardent police force. The Olympiahalle has probably witnessed limbs moved in a more graceful manner but never so many shifted at once.

Halfway through, girls are sitting down and dancing, waving arms in place of legs that no longer support them. Miles Copeland had reckoned that at the biggest, wildest Police gigs one person faints every 30 seconds. I don't know who this person is but I'm glad it's not me – I'd hate to have missed it.

The Chops are still feeling their way in, and though they frequently embellish Sting's lines they never depart from the spirit – hard rhythm, not gooey melody, like the heartbeat spikes on an ECG. They slip in as neatly as a spoon in soup and come up brimming.

The one slow moment is "Invisible Sun". The German audiences are less familiar with it since their single was "Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic", also shared by the States. In comparison, "Shadows In the Rain" functions at a similar pace but never seems to touch the ground, suspending itself on a chime of guitar harmonics. Sadly absent is the final trio from *Ghost In The Machine* – "Omegaman", "Secret Journey" and "Darkness". Fully attendant are "Roxanne", "Can't Stand Losing You" and "So Lonely", all delivered wearing steel jackets.

> "The image has done its job now and it can be relinquished"

They bounced back to one of Sting's earlier comments: "I consider songwriting as my main job and I think I'm genuinely good at it. Being a musician, singer and performer are merely side effects." Side effects? That's like saying Robin Hood approved of archery because it got him out of doors.

Munich would seem peculiarly short of backstage adulation or lunacy, though Andy Summers does inform The Chops that before the English gigs commence they'll be expected to get some blond wigs. "That's nothing. Sting wanted us to dress like SCHOOLGIRLS…" Yes,

MICHAEL PUTLAND / GETTY

they have enjoyed themselves, no they don't usually do much live stuff, yup, there sure were a LOT of people out there.

The coach ride back to the hotel is uneventful, the pursuance of an after-gig meal less so. The hotel restaurant is closed. Undoubtedly the cook has been standing in a breeze, but down the road apiece is a Greek place that Andy knows and swears by. Someone phones and books a table for 15 people. We march to the door: "How many are coming?" – "Four" – "Oh".

The first taxi driver has never heard of the place. The second knows it intimately and declares his colleague in front to be "stupid", by an evaluation born out by the number plate "MAD 4335".

So here we are – Andy, Miles, photographer Tashi and myself sitting in the middle of a table for 15 – a sort of budget last supper. Fortunately the rest, including band, crew and promoters, pile in five minutes later – steak and a remarkably small quantity of alcohol are consumed.

Stewart doesn't indulge in the stuff, reckoning it unsafe for the system. This he informs me on the plane home the following day, about 30 seconds before upending a cup of British Airways coffee down his trousers. With great face, he calls the stewardess. "Could I have another coffee? Most of the last one is in my lap."

"Certainly, sir. I'll bring you a soda water… [what for, an underpants cocktail?] to remove the stains." A fine example of lateral thinking.

The steaming diversion had interrupted a discussion of Police alternatives – projects outside the band.

There was Sting's acting: he'd departed at 6.30 that morning to meet a director in London and would shortly begin filming *Brimstone And Treacle* at Shepperton.

"It's definitely a good move for me," he'd confided. "A real coup, a real acting part. The thing about films is they're other people's dreams, they're as flimsy as that."

There was Andy's album with Robert Fripp. "It was so different, just Robert, me and an engineer. It will probably come out in late spring with maybe a tour in autumn. Half of it is two guitars and the rest we built up between us. Several of the songs have a Chinese pastoral effect… very pretty."

Plus the fact that Mr Summers is also an accomplished photographer (having impressed Tom "Chief" Sheehan at an earlier meeting), is currently assembling a book of works and is watching his material appearing in *The Face*, *Sunday Express* colour magazine, *Hot Shoe* and *Creative Camera*.

"I just want to go back to London, where I haven't spent any time for two years, take photographs – and go across the road to buy a packet of cornflakes… that sort of thing."

The Copeland targets are more long term. "Filmmaking. We're all interested in it from some angle, but there's not room for each other. There's no part for me in Sting's film, and for me to make a movie… well …

"Sting gets 10 offers a week, and I could never afford him anyway. Besides, my idea of the medium is different. I'd like to direct *Star Wars*. The thing is, I won't know if I'm any good at it for years; there are a lot of techniques to be learnt. Knowing how to express yourself in any medium is what being an artist with an 'e' at the end is all about. I do have an 'e' there, just a small one."

And one extra scheme bobs along in the surf. In August the band went to Canada to put together tapes for a double live album recorded around the world over the last two years. Officially it's finished, but it may yet have an '81 appendix of *Ghost In The Machine* material.

You might also count the projected arrival of Sting's second child, an event he's vowed to attend. "I was gigging for the last one and I still haven't been forgiven, even though it did pay the rent that week."

But the disparity of exterior intention doesn't have a simile within the music. Though Sting is most often quoted about the lyrics' political tone, it's not a unilateral declaration.

Andy Summers: "Stewart and I will listen to the lyrics and endorse them before they go on the album to see if they make sense to our lives. We've been round the world two or three times talking to each other, and if Sting's going to write something, we know what he's talking about."

Sting: "Some lyrics are really banal, just a signature; others are very important. I'm getting better at writing songs of objectivity. Originally they were very subjective, about an individual – alienation, feeling lonely, depressed, love affairs. I think the development has come about through travelling and I'm getting better at writing about the world. I've stopped caring about me."

Stewart Copeland: "My interpretations of the lyrics are my own and the value of the lyrics to me is of many interpretations. People who play music often have this form of expression thrust upon them. I happen to be highly opinionated, but whenever you go into details my opinions are only operable to my perspective, and for that purpose I distrust that form. It's why the songs are kinda vague, umbrella-like."

And so, bring on the night.

Darryl, David and Martin heed for sleep since their US flight leaves around nine the next morning. The promoters hand the band thank-you mementoes – wallets. "You don't think they're trying to make a point, do you?" whispers the chap Summers, who not wishing to see me left out earnestly passes a small package across the table. "I want you to have this."

It's a chocolate. Thanks, Andy; I'll keep it till it goes mouldy.

Sting had already got his parting shot in. With an even more alarming 5.30am call in prospect, he took the early elevator to bed. "I used to have a beard like that," he nods at my chin. "I grew out of it though." Oh, yeah: funny thing, I had my hair cut the other day and the girl with the scissors asked if I was trying to look like Sting.

"No, mate. Not good-looking enough," he shoots as the lift doors close on a million-pound, 30-year-old smile. One all. *Paul Colbert* •

January, 1981: Dead Kennedys frontman Jello Biafra and guitarist East Bay Ray at a club in Sacramento, California

# "We enjoy annoying people"

**"I'm all for cultural terrorism," says Jello Biafra of the DEAD KENNEDYS, the US punk band cutting a swathe through the UK. "We're trying to create change through art rather than physical violence. If something needs to be said, we're not going to shirk from it."**

— NME OCTOBER 17 —

FILMS LIKE *DIARY Of A Nymphomaniac* and *Swedish Virgins* take a backseat tonight as Birmingham's Imperial cinema plays host to what the gutter press, city fathers and the Mecca Organisation would have you believe is a whole lot more harmful and perverted than fifth-rate skin flicks.

Laydeez and Gentleman, your attention please – they've been scorned in San Francisco, treated like lepers in LA, dreaded in Dundee. Let me hear it for the loudest, the brashest, the cleverest and the funniest punk band in captivity. I give you the Dead Kennedys!!

For the first few songs Biafra's mighty voice carries the group and their absurdly knuckle-bound sound – mesmeric gutsy guitar, punched bass rivets and crude slamming drums – right into the heart of the crowd. Then, just when it seemed like nothing could stop the Dead Kennedys' crazy psycho-drama from reaching its high-pressure peak they hit overload and, bang, East Bay Ray's guitar amp gives up for the fifth and last time on their whistle-stop British tour. The next 15 minutes see the stage filled with squatters rather than invaders, mostly drunken berks and publicity seekers with nothing to offer except apathy, indolence and ignorance. Biafra handles the hecklers with tact and a brave cutting edge.

"Look at this lazy sod," he says, indicating a rotund idiot who's deposited himself at his feet, "he sits on the middle of the stage and passes out as if he was at a Pink Floyd concert."

There's a lot of idiots trying to grab his microphone. Jello gives as good as he gets: "It's funny how everybody wants anarchy, but they also want to rule at the same time," he smirks meaningfully. »

LARRY HULST / GETTY

Eventually the amplifier is replaced and the stage cleared after the group has treated the audience to a minimalist (bass, drums and vocals) version of the epileptically mimed narcotic satire "Drug Me". The songs are half old and half new, not the sort of thing I'd want to listen to every day, but "Landlord", "Too Drunk To Fuck" and "Holiday In Cambodia" are classics of their kind, and new songs like the commendably straightforward "Nazi Punks – Fuck Off" and "I Am The Owl" are right up there with them.

What sets the Kennedys apart from other punk bands is the intelligence of their songs, which, while never losing sight of a basic punk motto – think fast, react – are crafted to go beyond the obvious, gobbling up facts and attitudes to see things through to their logical, often macabre conclusion.

"In the States there's a lot more of what is called 'slam, dance and crash' from stage invaders. They get up on stage and quickly dive off, rather than just sitting there like a bunch of bozos. You do get a bunch who try to jump on other people when they aren't looking, but generally it's a lot of fun."

Biafra is togged out in his winter wear, happily exchanging news and views with a collection of fans, some of whom have been following the group for the past three evenings, sleeping in the bus stations and eating very little to keep expenses low. Everyone is on their way to the second gig of the evening, across to the city-centre Cedar Club where Discharge are playing. Biafra is an avid record collector and right now he's overawed by the outpourings of numerous US and British third-wave punk bands.

On the one hand he's just released *Let Them Eat Jellybeans*, a compilation of groups that would otherwise never be heard of outside their home town, on the Dead Kennedys' own Alternative Tentacles label, and on the other… well, there he is right at the front of the stage for the Discharge performance, pushing, pogoing and grappling with the best of them as the angry cleansing spirit of Discharge fires through their mini meisterwerk "Does This System Work?".

**JELLO BIAFRA** – no one could ever pronounce his real name, so he changed it – moved to San Francisco from Colorado about five years ago. Before forming the Dead Kennedys he'd been an insurance salesman, an actor and a journalist. The latter he did for enjoyment, and I imagine he was very good at it. He gave it up because "it became a bit too much like school. I ended up doing all my copy the night before the deadline." Since joining the Dead Kennedys he has made a marked impression in an election for the mayor of San Francisco, part of his manifesto being that all businessmen would be made to wear clown suits. He's also had his group banned from all the predictable places. That's undoubtedly because in the great big world of American rock 'n' youth culture (not so much of the great) the crazy, jabbering, mad-eyed anger of Jello Biafra is something to be thankful for amid the witless bluster of the Ramones, Springsteen, Blondie et al. The Dead Kennedys are one of the few American groups that give any clue towards the mass disaffection which the young people of the country must be feeling in the wake of Reagan's war-mongering.

The group aren't afraid to attack idiocy in their own ranks either; with the superb, subtle-as-a-flying-mallet rant "Nazi Punks…" they shame many of their English counterparts. In view of recent events, aren't they wary about playing the song in Britain?

"No, not at all. If something needs to be said, we're not going to shirk from it."

Do you get Nazi rabble in your gigs in the USA?

"Many of them don't know what it means. They just think swastikas shock their parents because they've been brought up by a bunch of right-wing assholes who've told them that it's cool to be a racist. We figure that if they're going to be punks and listen to punk music then they might as well really listen to it and understand it and realise that it's not just a bunch of racist crap."

"What about Oi, though? That's racist, isn't it?" asks a fan from London.

"Some of it is and some of it isn't. I haven't seen an Oi gig over here and I haven't met any of the bands. On the *Oi!* album I liked Peter And The Test Tube Babies and Garry Johnson because they seemed to be bringing other influences into play besides HM punk. I think we're probably closer in our thinking and where we're coming from to Crass, and maybe even Discharge, than we are to the so-called Oi bands. We are not afraid, nor are we ashamed of being political. Even 'Too Drunk To Fuck' turns into a political song because of all the self-proclaimed moralists and church groups who tried to get the song banned over here. Incidentally they gave us free publicity and our first hit single, which I thought was funnier than hell."

"Too Drunk To Fuck" is the Dead Kennedys' only single release this year, along with "Bleed For Me" on *Urgh! A Music War* and "Nazi Punks…" – their contribution to the *Jellybeans* compilation, the only new music from them this year. It's perhaps the most powerful record they've made, a special mix of Molotov guitar cocktail and sterling production which certainly sees off the most celebrated moments of the Stooges. It is also a very funny record.

Biafra smiles slyly from behind the brim of his pint glass.

"Far from being offensive, I think it was an educational song. It's exactly the sort of thing that your mammy or Sunday school won't tell you about. I think the people banning the record are the people that it's happening to.

"What I find really funny is how we can distress people who haven't even met us. One of the things that keeps us going is that we're really antisocial people, and though we do have big audiences here and we're considered mainstream, we do enjoy annoying people, getting under their skin and forcing them to think."

**THE NEXT DEAD** Kennedys release is an eight track "anti-church" EP (as yet untitled), which will provide the link between their rushed and mis-produced first album and their second album and will continue the psychedelic strain of "Holidays In Cambodia".

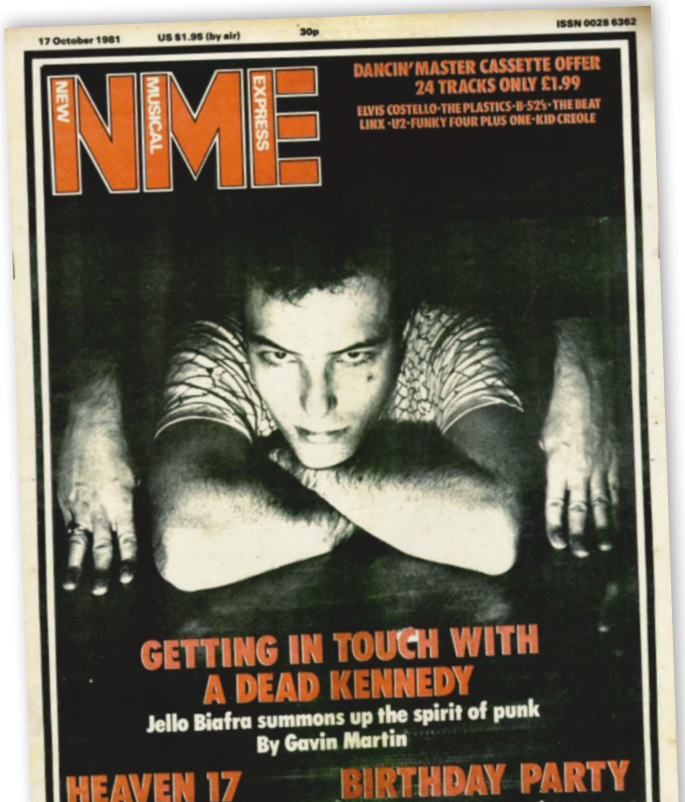
"America has all these right-wing church groups at the minute that put Reagan in office. They're called the Moral Majority and they're run by Jerry Falwell, who's a television evangelist who rakes in 50 million dollars a year. He's going political at the same time and he's got his hooks into Reagan and all these conservative money organisations who run ads against liberal politicians all over the country. When George McGovern was running against Nixon they put posters saying George McGovern is a baby-killer because he was for legalised abortion.

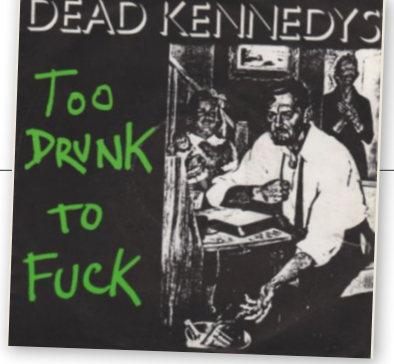
"This is the way the MM thinks. They aren't nearly a majority nor are they in any way moral, but they are a force that must be crushed. They're as scary in our country as the NF is in yours; probably more so because it is all older people who have put their money behind it. Insurance companies have put money into it because if women don't get equal rights then they don't have to pay them full premiums. This is what has helped create what is known as The New Right.

"The Moral Majority want to force Christian prayer in school, bring a police state into play, with unlimited surveillance by the FBI and the re-introduction of the treason laws, meaning guess who'd be the first to go? They want to make abortions illegal, so that you'd have to go to Mexico with rusty knives in the basement to get rid of unwanted children.

"We have a song on our EP called 'Moral Majority', but we played in Glasgow and no one understood it. It's something that people have to watch, because I've never seen a 'Christian' Bible-toting religious cult turn so blatantly fascist in America. They don't use swastikas; they use crosses and Bibles, so that a lot of people haven't caught on to them yet."

Just like the 'Reverend' Ian Paisley, Jello and guitar player East Bay Ray were recently ordained at






a college in America where they more or less sell the certificates over a counter. The good thing about this is that as men of the cloth they can't be considered for drafting. While Biafra's interest in politics far outweighs his interest in religion, the former stretching back to when he was about five years old and began passing up on the cartoons so he could watch the news, he has flirted with certain spiritual phenomena.

"When I was in drama school I had some really good instructors and directors who thought nothing of giving kids parts that were difficult for Broadway adults. I had mostly 'method' directors, where you build the character from within and find out what makes them tick, rather than a 'technique' director who makes you take so many steps, breathe, step back and speak, etc. I don't relate to that at all.

"Method acting comes into play with our performance and sometimes it really sinks in and we're totally demonic and possessed, like our Liverpool show this time. In the 'ha ha to Adam Ant' department, I went to a Sioux war-dance where there are definite forces going on that are not scientifically explained. I couldn't put my finger on what it was exactly, but it was definitely a very uplifting experience for me.

"I also do relaxations that I learned in theatre classes and try to apply them to medicine and to get rid of colds. I got rid of a knee injury that way which I got diving off stage and going kneecap first into a monitor. It's something I've barely touched on, but I'm keen to explore when time permits."

> "You've got to want to inflict something on someone"

**BEING ON THE** road with the Dead Kennedys is an amicable enough proposition. The other members might not say much, but they are accommodating and keen-eyed observers. Three of the group wear Clark Kent glasses offstage – guitar players East Bay Ray and Micro Wave along with Klaus Flouride, who looks like a younger, healthier Elvis Costello. The band's latest recruit is drummer Darren, who comes from Chicago and previously played with The Aliens, backing band to famous acid casualty Roky Erickson, and Darren still keeps his "arm in" playing with The Speedboys, a local San Francisco group, when the Dead Kennedys aren't in action. The group emphasise the fact that they are all reclusive and separate characters and it's a fusion of all their outside interests which brings about the Dead Kennedys' ravaged vision of America.

In addition to Darren's drumming outside the band, East Bay Ray produces a couple of local bands and experiments with synthesizers. He's a big fan of various German electronic musicians and is on the lookout for a suitable synth player for the Kennedys.

Biafra runs the American end of Alternative Tentacles' operations and a local radio show, while coy Klaus (he won't tell his age) keeps a travelogue of tapes from each town the group visit for an as-yet-unrevealed purpose. He has his own very strong views on the Dead Kennedys, as I found out when I asked if they were out to shock their listeners.

Klaus: "We don't want to shock people for the sake of shocking people. We're not like the Plasmatics; we want to shock people into thinking. The Dead Kennedys are not here to cash in on the Kennedys' name or to cause them more grief – they've had enough grief already. What the name represents is the downfall of the idea that everything is getting bigger and better. You just have to look at the difference between people like Eisenhower and Haig; Eisenhower was genuinely elected president and his last statement to the public was, 'Beware of the military industrial complex.' Haig will ask people to embrace it."

The last time an American musician was asked for a reaction to the shooting of President Reagan in these pages, he claimed to have been in tears on hearing the news. So was Jello Biafra, though for different reasons.

"I was staying with friends in Orange County and I'd just fallen asleep when there was a banging on the door and someone was shouting, 'Biafra, Biafra, get up, Reagan has just got shot.' My initial reaction was, 'Let me sleep', but eventually I got up and we sat in front of the TV and laughed like it was a Marx Brothers movie."

Do you support terrorism?

"People who don't want to obey an army sergeant and just want to have fun with guns are no better than anyone else, much worse probably. But I'm all for cultural terrorism, trying to create change through art rather than physical violence."

This "art" you talk of, is it misunderstood?

"People who don't want to use art as a weapon aren't artists at all. You've got to want to inflict something on someone, be it positive or negative. Rather than just trying to entertain, to please and to sell. In no way is that art."

Biafra eschews all form of drugs, mainly because he's seen so many musicians throw away their talent on stimulants.

"As a music fan, that bugs me a lot. Coincidentally or not, one thing I've noticed since Reagan came to power is that there's a lot more speed and a lot more heroin and a lot more of everything dangerous available and being fed to the punks. In the suburbs there's suddenly all these people taking acid; I think it is totally planned in order to torpedo another youth cult before it starts, just like acid and pot torpedoed the hippies before they could overthrow Nixon."

Of course there are far more subtle and widespread ways of controlling and influencing youth so that they become fodder for the state's insatiable cravings.

"It only dawned on me about a year ago that everyone I know had a real bitch for a second grade teacher. I think that's the year they try and break your spirit and make you conform and learn the rules to obey rather than ways to create. I think the fact that they emphasise planning and de-emphasise creativity explains not only why idiots who go through art school adding crudeness to childishness get labelled as geniuses but also why they've managed to produce a race of idiots. The American school system is a very vicious instrument of corporate control."

**JELLO BIAFRA MAY** sound like one of life's great paranoids – maybe he just sees things as they are and ploughs on regardless. There can be no doubting the validity and good sense of the Dead Kennedys as a subversive thorn in the flesh to both American society and its behemoth-fuelled rock industry. They aren't strangled by guilt complexes, but their accomplished comic-stripped, razor-edged dynamics make no secret of past crimes.

Above all else they say: GET UP, DON'T BE STUPID. THINK FOR YOURSELF.

"'I Am The Owl' is about Watergate criminals who come out of retirement. It's sort of a composite of several dirty tricks that have gone on over the years, by the FBI and the CIA. There's a line about LSD – it's about this guy who was the leader of a gang of semi-thugs. They fed him full of acid and let him loose on a freeway, where he just wandered around until he was knocked down. They tried to hush up and pretend it was a great mystery, but a friend of mine has a father in the police and we got to hear about how they sat around drinking after hours, congratulating each other on getting rid of this local annoyance."

"'Keyhole Factory' is about this chemical factory owned by Allied Chemicals in Virginia and how they've manufactured toxic chemical spray and dumped the waste in Chesapeake Bay, which is now closed to fishing. The people who worked there were given no masks, so they breathed all this shit into their lungs and started to get double vision, become impotent and get all gnarled and spastic. The company offered them all spectacular Hot Rod cars if they didn't say anything, but by that time everyone was too gnarled and spastic to even drive."

Aren't there lobbies and outrages about this sort of thing?

"There are lobbies against it, but the lobbies of the chemical industries are much stronger because they have much more money. The US government is pushed around by lobbying groups on the far right."

In the Weimar Republic a lot of big companies financed Hitler's rise to power and a lot of them are still very successful today.

"Something that's very scary is that General Motors sued the American government after World War II for bombing some of their factories in Nazi Germany which had been kept open during the war. And they won."

Don't you think it's ultimately futile straining against the power and cut-throat tactics of these bodies?

"It takes time. I just hope , unlike the '60s – where people made a definite dent and then gave up, turning out to be almost as conservative as their parents – that everyone keeps pushing this time." *Gavin Martin* •

The Human League: showing up the pathetic farce of pop mythology

REX FEATURES

## ALBUMS

### The Human League *Dare* VIRGIN

The story reads so ironically... remember that "band" from sunny Sheffield, stuffed with self-esteem but starved of success, scrabbling around with desperate gimmicks like complete anonymity?

Remember those slide shows, that wizard-jape-that-never-was when machines were supposed to hold the stage while the "band" (sometimes) deigned to join the audience? Remember how no promoter in the land wanted to know?

Remember the split – the so-called theory, talent and taste of the "band" all going Heaven-wards while the turkeys and tarts were left to tour the name, pick up the tabs on a ruined career and (surprise, surprise) turf out/tear up the charts?

One fringe, two girls and the world's at their feet. '81 Human League are the weird reverse of their techno-dream roots; they look (even sound) like the ultimate front personality over performance, style over substance – one big bold boast.

*No more messing* – The Human League.

And *Dare* is no bluff, more a hide-and-seek game of malleable manifestos and hollow (self-) claims. A tease... and why not? What a subversive stand from a synthetic sham! Pioneers, potential... be damned! No one, but no one, since The Monkees, then the Pistols, has been this conventionally "bad" and so gloriously gotten away with it.

Non-musicians, a non-singer, tacky performers, a *Crossroads* mentality (Phil's divorce in the dailies!), appallingly crass lyricists, ponderous melodies (with the odd flash of flair) but – the crux – one magnificent single.

So "The Sound Of The Crowd" (included here) was the clue – the politics of fashion set to a metronome beat and bleating back vocals – but "Hard Times"/"Love Action" (the 12-inch, of course) was sublime. (One of) the greatest singles ever made. No bull!

No accident: calculatedly bland and bouncy, it still gets me up-and-at-'em at two in the morning when (would be) funkier things leave me dead in the bar. And *Dare* unashamedly flaunts the age-old notion of the follow-up, the formula, fame... magnificently mocking the idea of progression-as-achievement.

Listen, you got "Love Action" – that's your lot. *Dare* is almost a parody – the second-best track, "Seconds", is "LA" in reverse. Polished, perfectly imprecise, it finds The Human League flush, (artistically) finished but the show must go on. All let's-pretend-pompous, it's cornily consistent, cultured, crude, elegant, cheap... anything you want it to be.

Me? I think it's a masterpiece. Sure to upset some, sell to millions more and so it should the way it tramps all over rock traditions. A trite sound, a retarded glam image and a mock respect. All the appeal in the world. The songs, if you must know, are like the Banshees, Orange Juice, latter-day Skids – the only ones that commit unabashed megalomania to vinyl and sound just how you'd expect them to sound (fabulous fence-sitters saying sod all in authoritative tones). The slow ones ("I Am The Law") are boring; the fast ones ("Do Or Die") are fun.

*Dare* should show up the pathetic farce of pop mythology once and for all.

The Human League (bless 'em!) are letting us down, I'm loving it and they're presumably (hopefully) laughing fit to split up next week. The "band" are, at last, the most terrific trash; *Dare* is one deliciously, definitively daft album and "Love Action" remains a gem in a void.

Phil Oakey inspires one thought these days: no more heroes. Thanks to *Dare* I can honestly say my badge-wearing days are well and truly over? And listen; you've no idea how happy that makes me feel. *Steve Sutherland, MM Oct 17*


### Joy Division *Still* FACTORY

It shouldn't have happened, but as it did let's take consolation in the fact that Ian Curtis' death on May 18, 1980 didn't so much bring Joy Division's journey to the heart of darkness to an abrupt halt as freeze it for all eternity at the brink of discovery. At least we can still travel that far with them, and though they of all groups had positioned themselves well for a final breakthrough, who knows if they'd have been able to cope on the other side?

As it stands, their quest remains just that, its purity unspoilt by repetition, bad moves or false conclusions, and as a pointer it is none the less valuable today. Joy Division's progress from the blind thrashing of the prototype Warsaw towards the closeness of their second and last LP proper, *Closer*, was astonishingly fast. Best of all, it was founded in a courageous analysis of their own condition, which is presented on *Still* as a struggle towards a new, more complete consciousness far removed from the generalised and unhelpful street squabbling of the punk that spawned it.

Instead of moaning about the mess they were in, Joy Division confronted it head-on and discovered the causes of the current depression to be deeply rooted in spiritual rather than material impoverishment. They registered a profound estrangement from the ugly environment they were living in and shock at the callousness of the age they were living through. Yet recognition wasn't enough, especially as they were perversely fascinated by that which repelled them. Their music's tension often emanated from their approximating the characteristics of the very things they found oppressive, either in undeniably attractive abstractions of


Haircut 100: frenetic funk with touches of salsa and rap

cityscapes or in superbly drilled militaristic marches.

Unlike the dumb futurists, past and present, they neither embraced nor glorified the speed of modern life, but presented it as a symptom of their malaise. The better and more experienced they got, their contrast of ugliness and beauty became more a sophisticated blend, which accurately encompassed Joy Division's confusion with the horror occurring all around them.

Just as they refused to disguise the ambivalence for expediency's sake, they wouldn't shy away from pain either. On the contrary, they seemed to view exposing themselves to pain as one (personal) way of breaking the aura of insensitivity, suggesting that through brutality or self-abasement they might achieve those elusive moments of true feeling. Not for nothing did they encore with The Velvet Underground's "Sister Ray" ("You should hear our version of 'Louie Louie'. Wow," deadpanned Curtis).

Joy Division realised they were playing a dangerous game, but obviously they felt it a necessary one or why else would Curtis have sung such revealing and immensely moving lines as: "*I'll walk you through the hard breaks/Show you all the outtakes/I can see it getting higher/Systematically degraded/Emotionally a scapegoat/I can see it getting better*", and the ecstatic affirmation: "*LOVE! LIFE! Makes you feel! Higher. Higher. Higher! HIGHER!*"

The song – "The Sound Of Music" – is one of the previously unreleased nuggets that make *Still* so essential. While Curtis seemed to be singing as much to convince himself as the listener, the group composed a matching disturbed accompaniment built on a brooding rhythm, around which guitarist Albrecht neatly tacked notes accumulating in intensity to match the swelling passion of the voice.

At their best, Joy Division were awesome, frightening and beautiful – never more so than on "Dead Souls", made widely available here for the first time. "Dead Souls" featured Joy Division at their most majestic and metallic, it encompassed their virtues of discipline and self-control, and somehow embodied the tragedy of their vision – their grasping after the unattainable and the inevitable disillusionment that would come with realisation of the futility of the quest.

At their formative, Joy Division were more literal and less incisive, relying on their favourite authors for ideas. "The Kill", for instance, was as close a summary as you could get in two or so minutes of Dostoyevsky's *Crime And Punishment*, though it was rescued by the persuasive see-saw rhythm.

Joy Division never resorted to faking emotions. Their concerts seemed to be purgative experiences, especially for Curtis, who found release in intense, brief bursts of butterfly movement. To watch him was like witnessing the last just man accepting the sins of the world as his personal burden. His voice would often strain and crack, and at the Birmingham concert it sometimes got lost altogether in the shoddy mix. Nevertheless, the two live sides work as a patchy retrospective, despite the fact the synths went horribly awry on most of the *Closer* material. It's highlighted by "New Dawn Fades" for obvious reasons: "*Different colours/Different shades/Over each/Mistakes were made/I took the blame/Directionless/It's plain to see/A loaded gun/Won't set you free/So they say.*"

Bearing in mind how quickly an audience grows accustomed to emotional shocks to its ordered system, expressing such naked feelings must have got harder every time. But Joy Division presented them with that hardest thing to swallow: reality. Theirs was all the more indigestible as it juggled together the commonplace with the taboo, brutality with sensuality and stark horror with simple, appealing melody.

Joy Division might not have equated making themselves felt with hurting the listener a little, but they never spared themselves in their pursuit of experience and truth. You can feel it still. *Chris Bohn, NME Oct 17*

SINGLES REVIEW 1981

## SINGLES

### Haircut 100
**Favourite Shirts (Boy Meets Girl)** ARISTA


True confessions. Live, I thought they sounded too much like Talking Heads circa *Fear Of Music*; isolated on this single, they're magnificent. Incorporating touches of salsa and rap into one gloriously cohesive whole, the Haircuts deliver a dancefloor beauty of furious frenetic funk belied by the singer's innocent vocals.

There's some great horn work around the middle, followed by a steamy sax solo. Christ, it even translates on the radio, and you know that can't be bad. Just another example of how rock's main centre has been totally destroyed, leaving space for everything to come through.

Which is why this will make the Old Guard throw up their hands in despair, while the cool listener will head for the dancefloor where boy always meets girl.

And excuse me. But can I have the next dance? What did you say your name was? Oh, do you live round here? *MM Oct 10*

### Laurie Anderson
**O Superman** ONE TEN

About to be picked up by WEA for major distribution, this sickly little record is apparently in great demand. I can't imagine why. Unbearably coy, Miss Anderson discovers studio effects and breathes out an eight-minute little ditty to Superman through her phone answering machine. All it will take is one of those wimpy little jockeys to pick up on this record and shove it down our necks every hour and lo and behold... a hit single. Actually, it does have a certain charm. But in such hard times charm is never enough. *MM Oct 10*

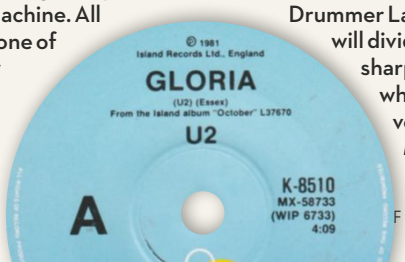
### U2 Gloria ISLAND

Always aiming to be different, U2 are fast becoming masters at creating classic pop material. Still gloriously epic, U2 divide opinion faster that Steve Ovett can run.

Personally, I can't resist them. I can't resist Bono's incredibly rich voice. I can't resist The Edge's unique guitar. And I can't resist the way in which their music constantly aims for the emotional heights, pushed along by Adam's heartbeat bass and Larry's subtle drums.

"Gloria", however, differs a lot from old material. Not particularly musically, but more in tone and mood. The main riff and intro is a swashbuckling affair, creating a pure rush of excitement as Bono's choirboy voice collides with The Edge's slightly psychedelic guitar.

But without warning the song suddenly hits a weird patch of stray pianos and guitars, gagged bass and drums, before heading off into its wonderful finale. A lot darker than before – we're about to see a new side to U2. Drummer Larry thinks it will divide their fans sharply. I know which side I'm voting for. *MM Oct 10*




DAVE HOGAN / GETTY

# "We try an' 'ave a laugh"

**But being MADNESS is not without its problems. Now movie stars, they're still prisoners of public expectation, worldwide. "You feel like a puppet. And you're not a puppet, you're a musician" says Woody.**

MICHAEL PUTLAND / GETTY

Madness shoot the cover for their third album, *7*, in London, 1981: (l–r) Lee Thompson, Mark Bedford, Chas Smash, Mike Barson, Suggs, Chris Foreman, Daniel "Woody" Woodgate

# A crash course in European Madness

## — MELODY MAKER OCTOBER 10 —

**ONE: THE CONCERNED** campaigner in the neatly creased suit cottoned on quick that these chaps – the kilts, the crew cuts, the cases – must be celebs. Kitchen staff and kiosk attendants converged and chattered over signed paper napkins – extraordinary animation from a species hitherto deemed devoid of all human response. The bar had been opened especially, the private planes were fuelling… a VIP buzz.

He approached, cautiously at first, then more boldly with the gait of a man with right on his side and – just in case – a fresh-faced snapper before him.

"Excuse me, I'm from the local press, petitioning signatures for blah de blah de blah." Polite, if strained, compliance. Slow recognition on his part…

"Er… before you go, would you, um, do something nutty for my photographer?" Seven scowls, a mock-up scuffle, Lee darts forward and the intruder exits, chuffed with success.

As the automatic doors glide shut behind him, I just spot the sticker, there, undetected, smack between his shoulder blades for all the world to see. No one, but no one, messes with the Maddy boys.

**TWO: MADNESS ARE** in a Belgian TV studio – a two-day breach in pre-tour rehearsal – to promote their new single/album/film and accept awards for past achievements.

Carl Smyth (Chas Smash to you) is dressed in armour, brandishing a sword and charging a miserable stuffed tiger with frightened glass eyes and a tacky old tail. Lee (Mr Sax) is beating pots full of bamboo bushes with the butt of a rifle. Woody (Mr Skin) is togged out like the Artful Dodger hitting on a large cigar.

Bedders (Mr Bass) is collecting sink-plungers into a Habitat bag. Suggs ("seven-foot-four blond Apollo") is flat on his back toking fags and chanting: "Om!" Chris ("King Of The Sydney Mods") is bellowing mild obscenities down a megaphone and chalking gross inanities on a snazzy revolving blackboard.

Meanwhile, oblivious to all, bespectacled, besuited Barso (ivory-tickler and flash bastard) is deep in page 12 of his paperback novel.

Suddenly the cry goes up: "Bring On The Wimpy Walker!"

Photographer Tom "The Chief" Sheehan, obliging with shamefully little encouragement for a man of his age, staggers before the cameras in a rerun of last night's dancefloor triumph, attempting something painfully reminiscent of a balding bell-dancer doing a vertical backstroke. He promptly pulls a muscle.

The presenter, a two-legged powder-puff with vaselined hair, looks suitably terrified as 10 minutes of "freeform nuttiness" had just put paid to his fact-finding interview. The Belgian producer's lapping it up, loving every minute.

Cut. The boys stop dead and silently knock off for lunch.

**THREE: HEY WOODY!** I reckon the new album's the heaviest thing you've ever done. Is it gonna harm your… um… nutty image?

"It's got to, 'cos it's tiring me out. Every time we go to Europe it's Nutty… You put on your ska suits… yes?"

D'you regret you ever manufactured the idea in the first place?

"No, not at all. We 'ad a great sense of naivety in the early days of what the music business and the world in general was all about, and on stage it didn't matter. It was exciting for us all to get up and enjoy the music with everyone dancing their bollocks off and 'avin' a good time. That's what 'Nutty' was all about….

"Now we've just done a really good classic example of nuttiness – all these interviews. We just act stupid and take the piss out of people because it's so ridiculous – the whole pose and smile and look this way and do this and do that. You feel like a puppet. And you're not a puppet, you're a musician."

But the more you do it, the more you encourage it:

"Well, we've gotta live, we've gotta earn money and we're in the rock'n'roll business."

Did you ever dream it would turn out like this?

"No way. Never ever. But I'm beginning to realise the more money you get, the more you have to sacrifice yourself. None of this band likes to be trapped at all – we're all quite rebellious – that's why I think we act nutty – it's just a way out of it really."

Do you feel trapped, then?

"Not recently – no. I mean, in the early days I thought it was the thing to do, like 'ave the image, wear the clothes and say what I was supposed to say, but I discovered after a while that I was only lying to myself and to the band as well, although the media loved it.

"I thought if I turned up the way I wanted to look, the band would say, 'Oi! You scruffy-lookin' twit – wear this! Wear that!' But they didn't. They respect people for being themselves.

"We're all individuals at heart. It's only the music that keeps us together really – I mean there are obviously friendships, but it just shows that you can't put a label on us. That's why we decided on 'Nutty' ourselves; we put ourselves in it, really, by calling our music 'The Nutty Sound', 'cos we couldn't stand people saying, 'Are you a ska band or are you a rock'n'roll band or are you a jazz band…?'"

**FOUR: MADNESS STORM** Amsterdam in extraordinary style – tams, kilts and Doc Martens. The dope dealers don't know what to make of it, but the boys in the gay bar are more than delighted. We should be in Brussels right now, but threat of an out-and-out mutiny secured a night off in Europe's sin city.

Monday, though. The lucky seven luck out. The Paradiso's closed, The Milky Way ("The club you can sup between bars without ruining your appetite…" –Tom Sheehan) is shut – no action.

Bedders is worried his mum would kill him if she could see the club he's about to enter.

Chrissie Boy tries to deposit me in the path of a speeding tram; we eventually get horrendously drunk, hail a cab and head hotel-wards to bed – a disappointment.

Chas: "You fly, you've 'ad some crap on the plane and all you wanna do is 'ave a look round, send a few postcards 'ome… but you get pushed into a studio and someone says, "Eeer, de nutty skanks, nutty dis, zany, zany, nutty, great!" and you think, 'Fuckin' hell, can't wait to get 'ome.' Know what I mean?"

Barso: "They don't 'ave a clue what it's all about."

Chas: "It's beyond a joke, because when you're abroad people don't actually know what you're doing. To me, Madness in London is MADNESS madness. There's loads of ways of madness, right? But to them it's just a laugh and a giggle, but that ain't what it's all about…"


**FIVE: THE INTERVIEWER** looks nervous. Virginia or Vanessa or someone from Radio Veronica has met this lot before. Here, in the empty cinema, five rows from the front after a farcical platinum disc presentation ("Do we have to look surprised?"), she tries to eke a little sense out a desperately stupid situation.

"Vot ees your f…" The script disappears from her hand and reappears two rows down and travelling furiously. "Vot!…" She shrieks as something grabs her ankle and tickles her ear simultaneously.

"Vot," she composes herself, "is your feeling about?"

"It's about 'ow we started… it's about 'ow we started… it's about 'ow we started…"

One voice builds to seven, to a chant, to a roar, to the premature end of the interview.

"Great," grins the cameraman. "Cut."

*Take It Or Leave It* is about how Madness started. Each band member invested "something like a thousand quid", Stiff met the other half of the bill, and they made the movie.

Why?

Chris: "'Cos it's better than 'avin a Rolls, innit?"

Suggs: "Well, we 'ad two albums of music from the early days but nothing recorded visually, and it was important to us. The visual side of Madness was important to our success, to the position we stand in now. One of the reasons we did it was because no one else had done it. Most rock films are about how you're on the road, y'know, and it's all success, success, success…"

Bedders: "We just decided to show people what it was like before we got any records out at all. Actually, I think if you look at the movie, at the very beginning when the band started up and hardly any of us knew each other, you'll find it will reflect the most recent album now."

Exactly – a distinct drop in nuttiness in favour of what? Social conscience? Realism? Honesty?

Bedders: "Honesty. It's very honest. I think that's the main thing about the film…"

Woody: "It's so true. When I first saw it – when it was just being put together – I was really worried it would be the most boring film that was ever put on this planet – I couldn't imagine anyone would wanna see it. But it's our lives…"

Bedders: "Yeah, it got to the stage where you started remembering what it was like, started getting those feelings."

Woody: "It really was an uncanny experience. I walked onto the set where there was Mike, Chris – y'know, the real old band – and I felt completely out of place. I felt as though I was a traveller from the future coming into the past. It was really weird even saying hello to everyone…"

Suggs: "When you look back at things, they always seem better, so obviously everything we did in the film I thought, 'God, that was brilliant in those days.' But then you realise things change and that in five years you'll look back on this – a TV show in Holland, doing fuck all – and think, 'That was really good fun.'

"Making the film, I realised we had a really good time, but it wasn't really all that great playing the Nashville and Dublin Castle [pub in Camden Town] on the same night, or being scared by a load of skins at Acklam Hall…"

Barso: "It's a different thing, right? 'Cos when you're startin' out, it's a whole different vibe about the group – you think you're doing something right different, it's you against…"

Chas: "When you're starting out, you're the bollocks, y'know, and you do it, play it, prove it to people, show 'em what you can do.

"You've got the buzz, there's no one else like you. But now it's harder, the buzz is different – you've done it for a couple of years."

Suggs: "Word soon gets around, y'know. 'Madness aren't as interesting as they were, they used to be nuttier and funnier.'"

Barso: "I used to get right sick about it, really worry about it. I used to think, 'We're all washed up, we're past it', but I don't really worry any more – we've passed that point now."

What keeps you going?

Chas: "'Cos we get on. I couldn't stick it with a band that was one person leading, who had all the ideas, did all the writing, and you were just sort of like an image for him. We do get on, and I don't think there's many people I can get on with."

Suggs: "…And we try an' 'ave a laugh, I think, on the whole…"

> "The buzz is different now – you've done it for a couple of years"

**SIX: WHILE THE** cameraman loads up another roll of film, Kelloggs – the band's manager – grimaces, embarrassed that his boys have to be put through this degrading rigmarole. Just then Chas appears from the costume department dressed as GI Joe and launches into a hilarious Jimmy Cagney routine.

Those who understand literally fall about laughing; the rest just gape in awe and panic.

Madness is infectious and in their movie, their new LP and their present attitude, they display a heartening new maturity. That *Take It Or Leave It* and the new album are released roughly in tandem may be coincidental (except, of course, commercially), but both take great pains to perpetrate diversity and individualism over strait-jacketed image.

Barso reckons the newie's different "'cos everyone can play better now", and Suggs puts it down to more ideas kicking around and being followed up.

Bedders claims: "There ain't much funny goin' on these days to write about and I think everyone's becoming more and more aware now that maybe we have to comment on things. At the start we wanted to steer clear of commenting on anything really, but I think now we're being drawn into it more and the people in the band are getting more opinionated."

Whatever, Madness songs are suddenly the best about; bouncy, unpretentious dance tunes set to "sneering" (Bedders) lyrics. "It's like Motown songs," says Suggs. "They're really happy but the lyrics are all 'Oi, you're an only child, you're an illegitimate…'"

An example of new Madness Motown is "Day On The Town". Here's how it works:

Suggs: "When I wrote the lyrics to that I just wrote all about when you bunk off school 'n' that – the emptiness, y'know? The main objective of the day is to not pay the fare and anything else that 'appens is a bonus. You get on buses; you go to Hyde Park, the West End…"

Chas: "And there's fuck all there. You gotta pay to sit down – there's no seats nowhere. You wanna sit down, you gotta go and buy a cuppa tea somewhere. When you're a kid, you just go down there and play the tube, bunk buses… it's depressing, the West End. Any city centre is just for tourists and that's what it's all about."

Suggs: "It was just meant to be empty, just memories of me goin' round Hyde Park and Oxford Street, gettin' on buses, gettin' off buses, walkin' up and down, people nicking things, tourists… that's it."

Chas: "I mean, I bunked in to see *The Sting* five nights out of seven down the Muswell 'ill Odeon 'cos we 'ad nothin' else to do. If I wrote a song about that it would be pretty borin', because it was pretty borin'. Really borin'."

Suggs: "We try and find a happy medium between everything, y'know. Try not to be too banal and not just do it for the sake of the humour and not just do it for the sake of the seriousness and not just do it for the sake of the money and not just do it for the sake of trying to prove yourself.

"We do everything with a certain amount of good intention, a certain amount of trying to make some money, and a certain amount of trying to enjoy it while we're doin' it."

Hey Suggs. Do something nutty for my photographer!

Answer unprintable.

***SEVEN* IS THE** name of the Madness album. It is this year's finest. BUY!

*Steve Sutherland* •

# "You plan your own destiny"

**ABC formed in 1980, in opposition to "false philosophising, intellectual arguments, fake tortured souls..." Since then they've made glamorous appearances and a great single, "Tears Are Not Enough". "I don't feel any pressure," says Martin Fry. "We know we're good."**

— MELODY MAKER NOVEMBER 31 —

GETTING BACK TO basics. ABC are a five-piece pop group from Sheffield about to change your life. Or, at least, try. They've played a dozen gigs so far, had huge press coverage, signed a major record deal and just released a superb debut single, "Tears Are Not Enough"/ "Alphabet Soup".

The latter is a magical, whimsical, musical introduction to the band ("*I hold in my hand three letters ABC*"), its members (David Palmer – drums, Mark Lickley – bass, Martin Fry – vocals, Mark White – guitar, Stephen Singleton – sax) and a whole new career idea.

Self-important. Self-possessed. Self-promoting. Self-esteem. What makes them think they're so special? "Mr Golden Throat" Fry spills the fundamentals: "Because we feel the need to employ care and do things right."

Then why ABC?

"Well, it's international. Basically, all European countries will understand what ABC means. It's the first three letters in the alphabet – it's clean, simple and it's big and it's bland and it's a framework to put everything into.

Ideologically that's fine, but...

"OK," he whispers over beef stroganoff in the restaurant of his choice. "When I say it's open, I don't mean that next week I'll be wearing a psychedelic Mood Six outfit and the week after that something in the kinda salsa swing mode. It's the fact that it's more effort to produce a musical identity within that framework.

"It's all there for you, it's a blank slate. It's not like calling yourself anything, really. From the original point it's just a nonentity and we've got to make an entity from it." »

DAVID CORIO / GETTY

# A beginner's guide to ABC

**July 1, 1981: Martin Fry fronts ABC at new-romantic hangout Legends nightclub in London**

**At present ABC are little more than a reputation. Does that create pressure?**
No, I don't feel any pressure because we know we're good really; the publicity's not something we've engineered in some mystical sort of way.

**But it's not every day an unknown band starts getting a front-cover exposure…**
Yeah, I guess people are gonna be cynical – I can understand that. But I think when they see us play live and have heard the record it will sort of acquit us to some extent. I know what you mean, but it's important to set ridiculously high standards for yourself, otherwise you can't meet your own ideals.

> "From the sublime to the cor-blimey in three-and-a-half minutes"

You don't wanna meet 'em, you wanna be searching for them and striving for them. That's part of the way we operate and will continue to operate – just creating bold, stupid plans if you like, and then trying to live up to them.

**Part of this campaign involves the sporadic release of self-produced postcards and leaflets – little manifestos of intent from the nerve-centre of their own Neutron label.**
The whole prose side of it is as important as being in a band, singing or playing – that's something that seems to be forgotten. The idea is to use your imagination and then put all these ideas into practice through visual things – though the media IS the message. Actually do it, not just talk about it.

**So what are ABC saying?**
From the start it's just the basic manifesto; that you can be intelligent and kinda mobile; you can be suss and you don't have to be mindless. It's part of the whole eclecticism, the bag, the soup – just throwing everything in.

**For all their chameleon yearning, ABC are, at present, the best of our new home-grown funk bands.**
Yeah, that's been said. When we first toyed with the idea of trying to make music that approached a Rose Royce or Chic or… I dunno… George Benson or Ronnie Laws, the initial idea was to take these examples, like food on a menu, and try and work something new out of them, but since then a lot of people seem to have been working along that line. To be fair, we formed this group on… I think it was July 1, 1980, and at that time it seemed like a radical idea for five white Caucasian youths in their late teens, early twenties, to be playing disco music, trying to radicalise it.

**Why did it happen? Why do/did ABC need to exist?**
I think it's part of the old dissatisfaction. What was there in that period? A lot of false philosophising, a lot of over-intellectual arguments, like a fake sort of madness, fake tortured souls… d'you know what I mean? There was that sort of art feeling, art involvement, and I think people just realised what a cul-de-sac that was and just wanted to move and dance and create something a bit more vibrant.

**Before ABC, Mark, Martin and Stephen were Vice Versa, a synthesizer band attempting to create "electro-violence, attempting to make a synthesizer sound exciting and dangerous and soulful".**

**The fool's errand folded after several unsuccessful singles and they started the search for "a group that was powerful and passionate and a rhythm section that could answer any question".**
Then it wasn't a question of dashing down to an A&R department or going crazy to play the Marquee or the Moonlight. It was a question of cataloguing songs, to show people what we could do. To write something along the lines of 'Tears Of A Clown'.

**A pretty tall order!**
Yeah, but I think these are the sort of things you should aspire to – say, "Anarchy In The UK" OR "What Becomes Of The Broken-Hearted?"… the masters. A tall order… yeah! But I think that's what makes music vital.


**LIKE SPANDAU AND** Blue Rondo, ABC are anxious that their gigs become "events" rather than just another night out watching a band. Their latest ploy, opening the A-Z Club in

"You can present something sharp, literate and danceable": Fry and guitarist Mark White at Legends

DAVID CORIO / GETTY

the basement of Queensway's Plaza Hotel, was a magnificent miscalculation.

A concrete cell that made the Marquee look like Madison Square Garden, the legal capacity stretched to 300 and someone said there were 150 on the guest list.

ABC don't need this incest; despite the lights failing, the PA packing in and Martin's garish compere's glitter suit, the set was a 25-minute blinder. The promise performed. Wanna see 'em? You should!

**Where next?**
I don't think it's necessary to play a great number of gigs. We don't wanna be a studio band like a Hot Chocolate, but more like Linx or Sheena Easton… selective. You owe it to yourself to keep that control. I don't like reading about groups who say, "Oh, the record company fucked up on it or…"; like, anybody but themselves. I take responsibility for ABC. It's under my control. You plan your own destiny, I believe that. You choreograph mass stardom.

**You sound confident.**
I am confident. Sometimes we've been blowing our own trumpets in interviews or whatever, but I'm not massively egotistical – just realistic. We're good, we HAVE to be good.

When we record an album I'd like it to be our Volume 1 Greatest Hits album. Before that we wanna record three or four singles – the idea that revolutions occur at 45 rpm, the idea that you can be radical within the framework of making singles, the idea of making four-minute symphonies, from the ridiculous to the cor-blimey in three-and-a-half minutes."

**What's the radical message?**
Just that you can present something sharp, literate and danceable.

**That seems so narrow – pop about making pop, making a record about making a record. Isn't your scope broader than that?**
Yeah. Love. Coming back to human situations time and time again; something as simple as that. About how people treat one another. "Tears Are Not Enough" is basically about that, about direct statement. I think that's essential. It always was and it always will be.

**But pop's becoming so convoluted and self-obsessed at exactly the time it shouldn't be. It's becoming almost a joke to make a statement…**
No, not a joke. The way to do it is to make a statement that's attractive. The mass audience isn't interested in the sort of Scritti Politti political way. If you put things on a plate people just aren't interested, but to be able to write a song about boy-meets-girl and have the ideas evolve round that – that's an achievement.

**So mass acceptance is important to ABC?**
Yeah. As a sign of respect in a way. I'm totally against the idea of working in a minority cul-de-sac. I think it's pitiful when groups have to do that. I'd like to think that our contemporaries, at some point, will be things like Kellogg's and Heinz. I like the idea of impermanence, of selling our records in supermarkets with a "sell-by" date and a pizza on the back. Things don't have to be permanent like fast food, the idea that everything has a shelf-life. Our records should have durability and disposability.

A-Z CLUB, BAYSWATER LONDON
LIVE!
OCTOBER 18

# Hell in the marketing

**NME OCT 24** ABC's "spry rage" is blackened.

So I am left alone to be rational. So, things, like… lust; the inopportune coupling of ABC and the A-Z Club. A one-night stand that should never have been and certainly not seen. The A-Z is a miss-place, a coal bunker from 1977, still pokey, a bundle of wet leaves soggy underfoot, a wet weekday wall in the Marquee, trying to, dying to… be a place to fling, to cling in, to… morrow.

So sorrowful an event. The A-Z boasts video cocktails and other code works but, sneery me, IT DOESN'T HAVE A CLOAK-ROOM. Just a place to faint onto a fag end. Is this the sleep end of this year's club craze? Black and smelly, cramped and SELL ME? Show me.

But the other. Always other. Just… the sort of questions ABC are basking in. Questions like: can we step outside history by slipping into one another's arms? And if not…

…Die untying the knot? ABC, of course, are so upset by the errors of the Lover's Discourse, which is of course a crash course in Truth (and therefore in self-deception). The A-Z blackened and blighted ABC's spry rage. ABC (say, see, flee) rattle the symbols of conventionally condensed bitterness.

There is no point in labouring the lost opportunity – that the A-Z was a disgrace at a critical point in the ABC career course. They hated it. They went through (with) it. Love's decline into mere ceremony is as close to the "truth" of the A-Z appearance as I need to get. I could be descriptive, but where would that take us? Back. I could deny, but then, you have your spies. I'd rather destroy, move on and enjoy.

ABC: thaw.

ABC: oh, you!

ABC: don't die.

But while we're on the subject: why does Martin Fry keep repeating himself? Does he want to be hit? Has he already been hurt? Has his quest for true love – and therefore for Truth itself – even begun yet? He has the ragged tempestuous nerve of one who has yet to resolve promises and problems.

For the time being: one hell of a performer; one hell of a Star in the making, if you like. If you like, one personal Hell in the making and marketing.

Fears are quite enough. It is quiet enough to be roughly caressed by the coarse tides of expectation and rumour (the wreckers of many a good Truth).

For the real time, ABC are sex machine, desiring machine, pop machine, verb machine and any one of them verve machine, tongue machine, perspiring machine, success machine. In "Tears Are Not Enough" and other as yet unreleased poisons, ABC have a linguistic and catalytic hold on rendering pleasurable many of the Lover's more lamentable discursive positions (but primarily melancholy, in completeness and disrespectful vigilance).

**These SONGS are surely surface-tough yet yielding and adoptable as a Level 42 "Love Games"**

These SONGS are as surely surface-tough yet yielding and adoptable as a Level 42 "Love Games" or a Costello "[Good Year For The] Roses". Isn't it obvious and marvellous that so much diversity can co-exist? And if they can… oh my.

In other ABCs: art of giving, kindness, distress, laughter, loneliness, patience, physical appearance, the physical gestures, self-probing, solitariness, love of speech, love (fatal) of truths.

Exc-use: a game with truth is always a game with life. ABC know this and demonstrate it craftily in the fusing of "I" and "d" in the whispers of "Tears Are Not Enough". Martin Fry scared the loving daylights out of us with his obvious feeling, and feel for the obvious and compact aphorism; eg, that true Love is only found at the end of a journey through misery and filth.

A-Z. And back again.

(It is interesting to note that in the alphabet of Love Martin Fry is, at some point or other, m/f.)

ABC: capability to seduce technology.

ABC: culpability to surrender to vocabulary.

ABC: I ONLY HAVE YOUR WORDS FOR IT.

Don't specify – hum the hints of the coming hypnosis, tear up the blueprint; don't frequent the A-Z. Let our singers do the talking, let ABC do the nightshift. My fundamental disagreement with Martin Fry (tears can be enough, conditionally) does not halt my adoring feelings.

Anyone who raves about POWER the way… anyone with a jacket like that. ABC have "it" and I shall savour the waiting. For that is all, really, that there ever is to savour. After all. *Ian Penman*

**CONFUSED? YOU WON'T** be. ABC say what they mean. Mean what they say. Are starting to go. I hold in my hands three badges from the Phonogram press office: "ABC", "Neutron Records" and "Tears Are Not Enough". The record hasn't left my turntable in two solid days.

ABC: this is just the beginning. *Steve Sutherland* •

Julian Cope: adopting a more "solid-sounding" stage name, Kevin Stapleton

PAUL COX

LIVERPOOL CLUB ZOO
LIVE!
NOVEMBER

# Loose but focused

**NME NOV 21** The Teardrop Explodes unveil Club Zoo. A few old pals turn up.

**THERE ARE MAYBE** three dozen souls in the whole club and The Teardrop Explodes are five of them. Julian Cope is on stage, performing a dramatic song about Leila Khaled, his head and face entirely covered by a dishcloth.

The rendition ends. "Wow. That was emotional, man," drawls a loud, sarcastic voice in the crowd. Cloth off, Cope is down on the dancefloor in an instant – wrestling his adversary to the death.

"Scrap!" pant the excited onlookers. "I'm warning yer, Julian, I'll tell me mam!" warns the tormentor (a gap-toothed rockabilly named Box Head) his head lodged somewhere between the singer's hip and elbow. The Teardrop Explodes are home and back among friends.

They're back and they're opening a new venture called Club Zoo, Zoo being their original label and present management company. For three weeks from tonight, Club Zoo is housed in a Liverpool city centre niterie: for three nights a week, Teardrop will play two sets. In early December they'll move it to Dublin. In early January it'll be in the Hammersmith Palais. So far, the project's unpublicised, accounting for the uniquely low turnout. But word will spread, and the crowds will come. And Club Zoo aims to offer them lots of surprises.

I stayed for nights one and two – four Teardrop sets – and surprises there were. There's a new lineup for a start: Julian, guitarist Troy Tate and drummer Gary Dwyer remain, rejoined by their keyboardist of yore, Dave Balfe (looking happy as a sand boy, despite his past differences with the frontman), and a brand-new bass man, Ronnie Francois. Then there's Cope's new haircut. Then there's a repertoire of new songs, from the forthcoming *Wilder* album, which the group are using these "low-key" appearances to break in gently.

"D'you like it here? Is it all right like this?" Cope keeps asking. Club Zoo is a pet project of his and manager Bill Drummond, and he's anxious that the peculiar circumstances shouldn't alienate the sparse audience.

"There's no Marlboros in the ciggie machine," objects somebody near the front. "Oo are yer?" enquires another. Perhaps Julian shouldn't have introduced himself as "twee Edwyn from Orange Juice".

(As a matter of fact, Julian Cope has changed his name to Kevin Stapleton. "I'm supposed to be championing, like, ordinary people," he explained to me. "And 'Julian' just seems too wimpy. I thought 'Kevin Stapleton' had a nice solid, down-to earth sound to it.")

"OK, what shall we do now?"

The crowd requested "Geno". What they did do, with slight variations from one set to another, was a handful of faves on 45 – "Treason", "Reward", "Passionate Friend" – and lots of unfamiliar stuff.

The presentation's loose, lots of playing around, song selections made on the spur of the moment. But thankfully it's more than a mere rehearsal in front of a paying public. Teardrop, ultimately, give a good, and enjoyable, account of themselves. Black bassist Ronnie Francois (former employment includes The Sinceros and Lene Lovich's band) is especially useful, his playing adding a hard and spunky edge. What with Cope being in good voice too, the new sound is more direct than they've seemed in ages.

Although the newest songs like "Colours Fly Away" and "Falling Down Around Me" come with a full complement of weirdness, the overall impression is of a less indulgent and more focused group.

The oldie "Sleeping Gas" sees Julian revert to the bass awhile – more generally, he sits astride a backwards chair or on a stool (the way that a torch singer should do). Like "Leila Khaled Said" and "Seven Views Of Jerusalem" suggest a vaguely Arabic flavour – pity I chose tonight to unveil my Swinging Rabbi look for Winter, '81 – but attractively, rather than pretentiously. In Liverpool' Club Zoo – before a hyper-critical, ego-deflating crowd of old mates, rivals and all-purpose piss artists – pretension wouldn't have stood a chance. *Paul Du Noyer*

# Keeping promises

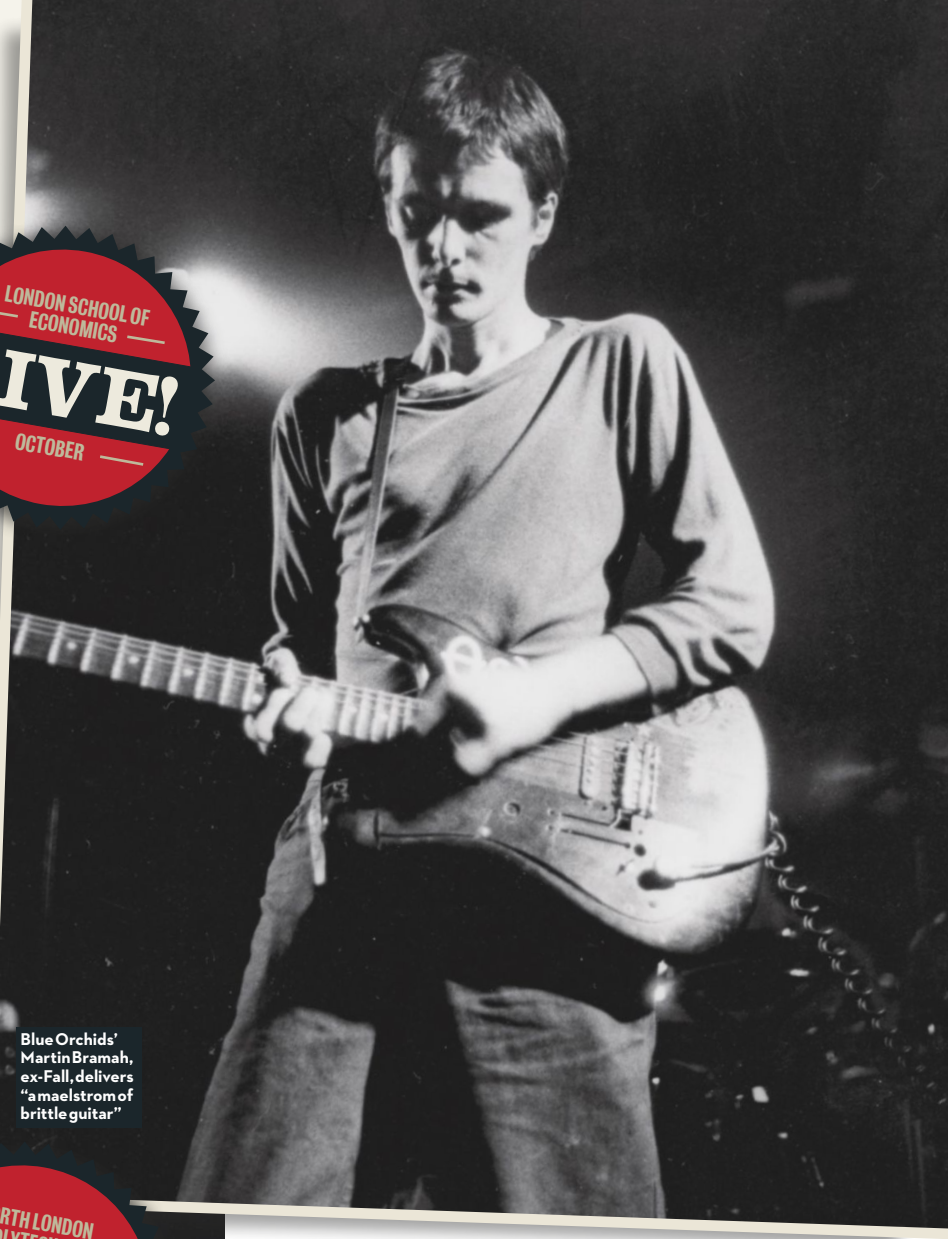
**MM OCT 31** Aztec Camera and Blue Orchids advance on different paths.

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
LIVE!
OCTOBER

**PASSION AND POETRY,** power and persuasion – a night of extremes. Blue Orchids, at last, are more than sporadically brilliant. Surpassing any pseudo-psychedelic tendencies and those tense Television comparisons, they're finally out on their own, functioning on the brink between creativity and chaos. A soaring Mancunian maelstrom of brittle guitar, carousel organ, showband bass and jazz-heavy drums, the Orchids are now! Watch, wait and listen; there's magic in the making. The twilight world is theirs. And, after such intensity, comes… the soothing balm.

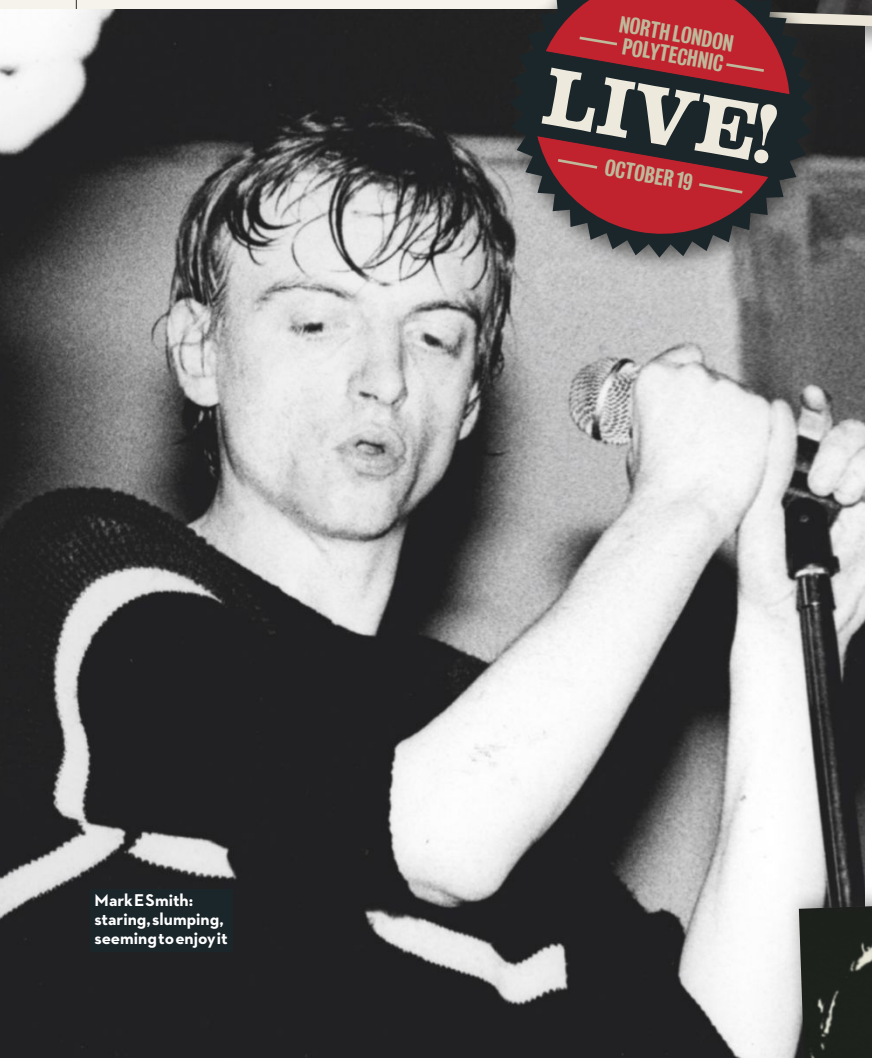
Aztec Camera's manicured sound of preppy suburbia infiltrates against better judgement; seduces the bile that, thanks to McCartney, instinctively baulks at pop ballads. With a soft-smooch shuffle, a maudlin grasp of melody and bitter-sweet vocals, Camera effortlessly create what only the infamous Edwyn and elusive Vic Godard aspire to: an unembarrassed, white, lovers rock. "We Can Send Letters" and "Mattress Of Wire" are already firm crowd favourites, and there's plenty more where they came from.

Both Camera and the Orchids may delve in the past to push for the future, but both are currently confounding expectations, growing in stature, keeping their promises. At this stage, we can't, shouldn't, but probably will, ask for more. Well, ask away… they're ready. *Steve Sutherland*



Blue Orchids' Martin Bramah, ex-Fall, delivers "a maelstrom of brittle guitar"

NORTH LONDON POLYTECHNIC
LIVE!
OCTOBER 19



Mark E Smith: staring, slumping, seeming to enjoy it

# Callous charisma

**MM OCT 31** The Fall drum up more confusion.

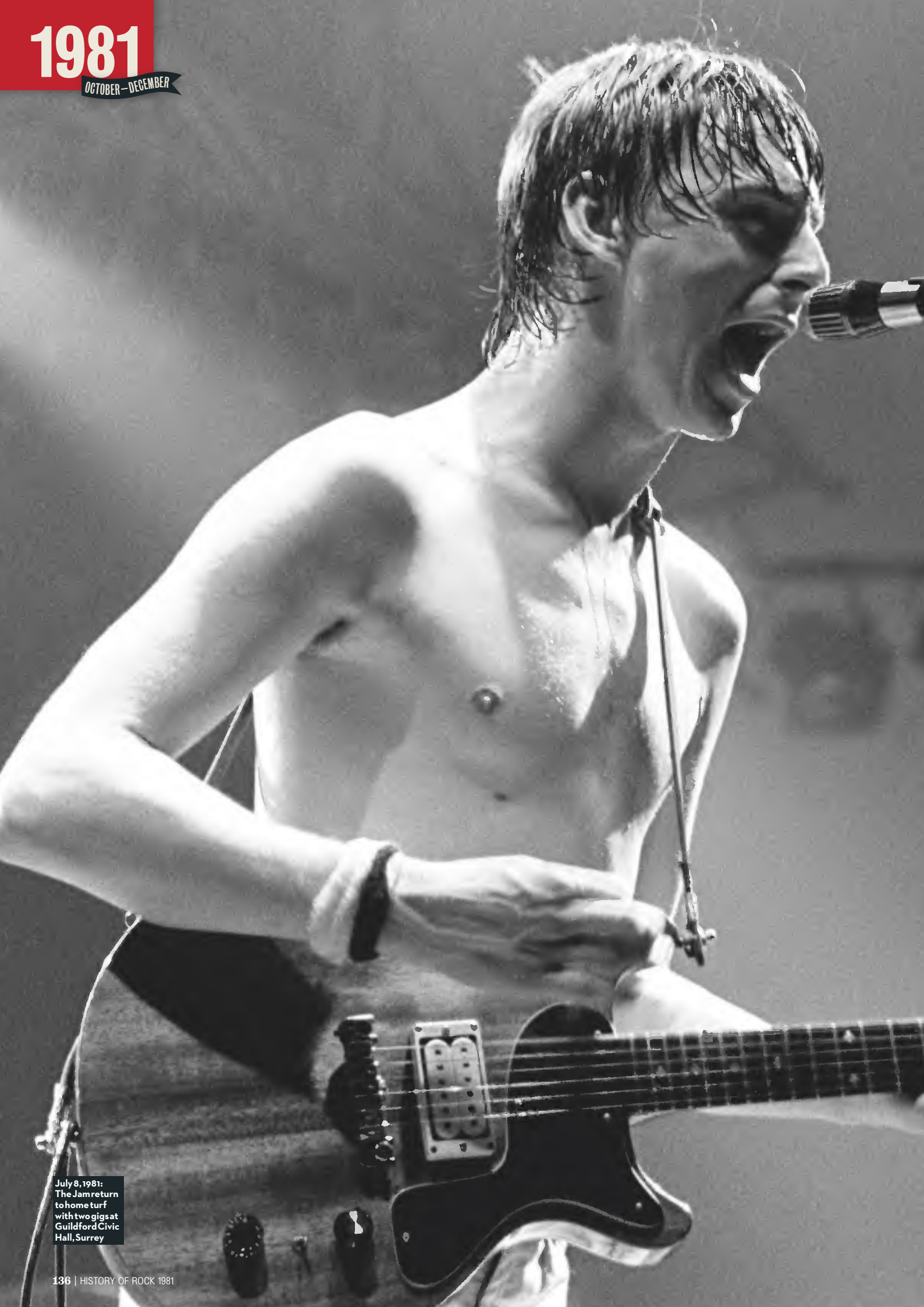
**THE ABSOLUTE BEAUTY** of a deliberately planned unprofessionalism is the potential it affords for compete unpredictability. The Fall, more than any other surviving contemporary outfit, have cheekily cultivated this fine art. Their unpredictability is their only predictability… or, to put it more plainly, The Fall are still crap.

Mark Smith and his merry mercenaries attack entertainment like a shoplifting spree, grab all the notes the audience needs and keep stuffing themselves, piling it up until it all tumbles out in a heap on the dancefloor. Two drummers now! – such an unruly megalomania, such a callous, comic charisma.

The Fall turn anti-entertainment into entertainment, if you see what I mean. I mean, I wish I could see what THEY mean! Mark blathers on, works up a sweat, works himself into a lather, does his Quasimodo slump and amphetamine stare… why? He seems to enjoy it (I think). I enjoyed it too – at least, I remember dancing until I got bored. Perhaps this is the protest against rock's religion? Perhaps this is the point?

I've no idea what songs they played – the sound was so bad it was impossible to distinguish one from another. Deliberate? Look, I don't understand The Fall any more than you do, but I reckon they're fun, and after over three years of antagonistic existence, that's one mighty big compliment. *Steve Sutherland*

KISHI YAMAMOTO, JUSTIN THOMAS



July 8, 1981: The Jam return to home turf with two gigs at Guildford Civic Hall, Surrey

# “Worth taking a chance on”

**With the threat of nuclear war mounting daily, musicians have decided to protest. THE JAM and THE BEAT are on charity LP *Life In The European Theatre*. “The follow-on from this would be getting people like Sheena Easton and The Nolans involved,” says PAUL WELLER.**

— NME DECEMBER 12 —

THERE’S A GREAT poster out now. It’s done old-movie style, titled Gone With The Wind, and it shows Margaret (Scarlett O’Hara) Thatcher in a passionate clinch with cracked actor Ronald (Rhett Butler) Reagan. The caption reads something like: “She promised to follow him to the end of the Earth… He promised to organise it.”

Brilliant. But let’s forget the lunatics who’ve taken over the asylum, and look at some individuals doing their modest bit to organise the planet’s survival – via music.

Survival Music, for it is they, have organised a compilation LP entitled *Life In The European Theatre*. It features (mostly well-known) tracks by one of the strongest lineups of British acts you could imagine, who’ve all donated their music free. Proceeds from the album go to four causes – CND, Friends Of The Earth, Anti-Nuclear Campaign and European Nuclear Disarmament (END) – and 50 per cent to a fund set up by the four campaigns, plus the musicians, plus Survival Music.

A young guy called Chas Mervyn is the driving force behind Survival Music. It was when he was working as tour manager for The Beat that the idea of an album came up – one that would »

VIRGINIA TURBETT / GETTY

raise funds, get some sort of message across and demonstrate the strength of feeling on the nuclear issue among musicians of this generation.

Chas left The Beat to work full-time on the project. Months of planning, negotiation and arm-twisting later, the record's ready – to be put out worldwide, through WEA, with sleevenotes by EP Thompson (the great writer/campaigner) and musical contributions from such as The Undertones, the Bunnymen, Stranglers, Au Pairs, Clash, XTC, Dury and Gabriel. Their record companies all co-operated, in the end, but the groups' enthusiasm was total. (Linx were keen too, but found out just too late.) So I met Chas Mervyn to talk about it all.

Madness, Terry Hall of The Specials/Fun Boy Three and Bad Manners – who are all on the LP – hoped to come along, but *TOTP* commitments wouldn't allow. But The Jam – Rick Butler, Paul Weller, Bruce Foxton – were there, taking a breather from recording, and so was The Beat's Dave Wakeling (fresh off the Birmingham InterCity and a married man of just 24 hours' standing).

So… this is what we sat round and said. Except that my bits have been rewritten to make me seem witty, pithy and articulate.

**Chas Mervyn:** All along it's been the groups pushing. If they hadn't been so keen it would never have happened, because we're asking people to give away something for free. The bands' response has amazed me right from the start.

***NME*: The Beat were in on the idea at the beginning, weren't they, Dave?**

**Dave Wakeling:** Yeah, we met people from the various organisations when we did "Stand Down Margaret" (proceeds of which went to the anti-nuclear movement). When they saw there was money to be shared out, they lost their differences, whereas before they never trusted each other. So we thought it'd be a good idea to extend it.

**Chas, how did you decide who to approach?**

**CM:** It was obvious that certain groups were concerned, just by the material they were writing, and then musicians would suggest others.

**DW:** There was hardly anyone who said no.

**Paul Weller:** (*sharply*) Who was the ones that did? Give us the names.

**CM:** (*diplomatically*) Later.

**What was The Jam's reaction, Paul?**

**PW:** We'd obviously do it. It was the first time we'd got involved with anything like this – not because we're lazy, but, dunno, it was only the other week that I actually even sent off for a CND membership. There must be thousands of people who are against it but don't know how to get involved. Same with us.

**DW:** It's a fear of joining organisations. As soon as they get well organised they end up in-fighting, over who's gonna be social secretary or something. But here, the thing we're talking about is so important, even if that bickering does go on, it's still worth taking a chance on it.

**PW:** It's the thought of having a card as well – it's like joining the Boy Scouts. But it's what it achieves in the end, that's what really counts… The follow-on from all this would be getting people like Sheena Easton and The Nolans involved.

**DW:** Yeah, MOR Against The Bomb. Probably the majority of people who like groups on this LP already hold that view anyway…The Nolans were quite into doing it, but I don't know if they'd be allowed to.

**CM:** It's not as if it's a political issue, it's something that affects everyone's lives. It's just immoral to kill millions of people.

**PW:** It's a question of your future. At the root of it everyone's interested in their own future, so that'll get across to most people.

**DW:** It's funny: I think it is having an effect, 'cos I don't usually think that pop music does have any effect. But the fact that groups are involved has something to do with so many young people being willing to protest in England. Whereas before it used to be just Europe where they'd have big demonstrations and England would be apathetic.

**Rick Buckler:** Young people have put it out of their minds in this country for a long time.

**PW:** But that applies to Britain politically anyway. Whereas you talk to people in Italy or France, they've got definite political views.

**Also they don't have this long-standing, complex emotional tangle that we have with America.**

**PW:** But I think that feeling is changing in England now that we're only like America's sublet.

**DW:** We're just the fender on the front of the car: not an ally at all, just a cushion. One danger, though, now that people are thinking differently about America, you could easily fall into the trap of thinking Brezhnev's great – and he's just as uncaring as Reagan.

**PW:** That's what I liked in Tony Benn's speech at the rally – that you've got to resist American generals and Russian generals.

**DW:** Yeah, he did a good speech, really good.

**This is the stigma, isn't it, that you're playing into the Russians' hand, that the Kremlin is rubbing its hands with glee at the demos in Western Europe?**

**DW:** That you're not even consciously communist, that you're being duped. But every time America stands up for South Africa or whatever, the Kremlin rubs its hands with glee. They don't need a marketing budget of their own, just keep letting America make mistakes for them…

Trouble is, neither system is working at the moment. Anyone in power can think, if they can expand that'll make it look better: all of a sudden you've got plenty of coal, plenty of steel, plenty of uniforms. Put half the unemployed in an army and get them killed, put the other half in factories making weapons.

It's a quick, simple answer. Everyone can get a flag out and feel proud 'cos they've got something to fight for again… We have to pretend that all the kids on the other side of the line really hate us, so we've got to get them or they'll get us first.

**RB:** As soon as the level of understanding comes up, the better. And obviously one way of doing it is through the youth.

**DW:** The main way of communication among young people is music at the moment. There ain't a newspaper you can buy every day and find out what's happening. A lot of young people rely on music, not just as a way of forming opinions, but of keeping their spirits up…We're trying to organise a festival in Austria next year – three-day event, 50,000 people – half from the East and half from the West, with some bands from the East as well.

That'd be good: just to sit in a field for three days with somebody from Poland. A real education.

**PW:** That is the only barrier, propaganda. It's not even language; you can always overcome that.

(Chas Mervyn explains how the LP's sleevenotes will be translated for each country of release, and all the vital contact addresses will also vary. Both Weller and Wakeling emphasise how travelling in groups has made them aware of what's happening around the world, and of how much we all have in common.)

> "It's embarrassing to think we could destroy ourselves"

**This LP contrasts with the American *No Nukes* release. This is directly political, and specifically anti-war, where that one was more narrowly environmental, rich West Coast dodos, an extension of Me Generation politics.**

**DW:** We definitely learned some lessons from that. It made the whole thing really respectable and comfortable, something to stick on your coffee table and you don't have to think about it any more. In the end there was loads of American groups just dashing to get on that LP, when their record companies were saying, 'Do you realise your two biggest competitors are on this record?'

**CM:** But I think all the bands who've been involved with this have made it very clear from the beginning how

The Beat in 1981: (back, l–r) Andy Cox, Ranking Roger, David Steele, Everett Morton; (front) Dave Wakeling and Saxa


they feel. And instead of being some limp LP that happens to have its proceeds going to a cause, it has some points to make, with a real strength of feeling.

**DW:** Probably the best way to sell it in America would be the idea that if there's a nuclear war, record sales would plummet…

**A BAD MANNERED PHONECALL** from Louis Alphonso.

Direct from the *Top Of The Pops* studio, Bad Manners' guitarist Louis rang me to explain their involvement (namely offering the album's one previously unreleased cut, "Psychedelic Eric"). When they were approached, he said, they accepted right away.

Although "…Eric" itself is not especially anti-nuclear in content, the move's a bit surprising from a group that likes to avoid politics.

"We have basic political beliefs," Louis replies. "But we don't like to preach them."

Much as he respects groups like The Clash and Specials, Bad Manners just don't feel it's them to get too serious in song. That said, they'll use an opportunity like this LP to make a gesture of support for something important. And then the pips went.

**PW:** The biggest enemy is the media, especially the daily papers. Like the Right To Work march from Liverpool, that was put down in the papers as more communist infiltration and all this crap.

**DW:** I think this cause is good, because it's harder to discredit. You don't have to make a huge political decision to decide you don't want to be blown up. It's fairly common sense. But yeah, it is dangerous when the media have a vested interest in the news and what people are meant to think. As the situation becomes more extreme, then music becomes more and more important as a means of communication.

**PW:** Well, at the present time it's the only form of media without some sort of censorship.

**DW:** Yes, 'cos the people in control think it's all a bleeding racket anyway. So you can get away with some fairly serious things in your songs and they pass totally unnoticed.

**PW:** Music is a communication system for young people, but for people in general it's the daily papers. Whatever you see splashed on the front page of *The Sun*, that's your topic for the day.

**DW:** And even if they don't totally believe it all, it's still depriving them of real information, so it works just as well. A lot of people go, "Nay, I don't believe what I read in the papers", but it's what they don't read there as well.

**PW:** At the root of it, what I find the most frustrating is that it's the same thing it's always been: the majority, which is us, is ruled by a minority.

**CM:** And yet that minority are the only ones who are safe if there is a nuclear war.

**DW:** I do sometimes think that it's a whole con, and the Americans and Russians know what the plan is for the next 10 years, and they need to keep their populations in a state of fear to maintain their respective positions. And if it is that, then it's an even bigger waste of money…

It's important that the LP's music is fairly different, 'cos it's dangerous to have a fashion thing where it's "in" this week to wear a CND badge. Then all of a sudden, if that type of group goes out of fashion, the people don't want to wear a CND badge, because it's musically what was happening last week. It's important to show the issue as being bigger than its constituent parts. In a lot of ways it's a fairly fickle situation, the pop world. And stuff like wanting to survive should be more important…

It is embarrassing to think that we could destroy ourselves, y'know what I mean? You just feel a prat, for being part of a system that can't do any better than that.

**RB:** It's like knowing something's gonna fall on you and not bothering to get out the way.

**DW:** We certainly feel capable of more than that. Anyone you talk to in a pub feels infinitely capable of better than that… And this nonsense of, "Give us a future." They don't own your future; it's your future, just take it. The question is, are we responsible enough to take our own futures?

(*A pregnant pause. We slurp our tea. Paul Weller criticises the insensitivity of all centralised authority. Chas Mervyn relates the year's riots to that same dogmatic lack of official imagination.*)

**DW:** That's the problem with the system at the moment. They're trying to make this early-1950s suit fit somebody who's living in the 1980s. So they keep having to put tucks in it, and hems and darts to make it fit, rather than saying perhaps we should have a new jacket for the '80s.

I think Margaret Thatcher was genuinely shocked when the riots happened, really surprised that people were that angry. I used to think she was dead callous, but I think she's just dead out of touch as well! Not a clue, and yet she's making decisions on our behalf.

***NME*: It must have been embarrassing for her, if nothing else, when she meets all the other heads of state. Like going to a posh party when your own kids have just crapped on the front lawn…**

**MEANWHILE ABSURDITIES MOUNT** up. I mentioned the case of the man who spent thousands on a nuclear shelter for his back garden. When he went out to check it, it was flooded: it was letting the rain in.

"Sounds like an Irish bomb shelter," said Bruce Foxton. "One with a sunroof."

"Great!" laughed Dave Wakeling. "'Bomb Shelter With A Sunroof'. If you lot don't use that for a lyric, then we will."

And, given The Beat's dedication to this album project since the word go, maybe it's right the last word should go to Dave… Dave?

"Yeah, well, if it all goes wrong, could we just say it was The Jam's idea?"

*Paul Du Noyer* •

FIN COSTELLO / GETTY

# "We're almost like Pink Floyd"

**In the eye of the new romantic pop-star storm with DURAN DURAN. Rivals with Spandau Ballet. Besieged by teenage fans. Can they keep their headbands when all about them are losing theirs? "I'll be mad before I'm 20," says keys man Nick Rhodes.**

— MELODY MAKER DECEMBER 21 —

**NICK: "I'VE JUST** worked out why so many more blokes are coming to our gigs this time round…" Why's that? "Because they've heard that so many girls come…"

Sheffield, Manchester. Duran Duran… a collection of "Careless Memories"… so this is romance…

Sandra turned up in Southampton, screamed out front, blagged her way backstage and made demands. Poor little rich girl; already had everything daddy could buy. Wanted something more. Andy offered an old pair of socks; she grabbed them, hopped in the Rolls and was gone.

A telephone rings in a Birmingham suburb: "Hello. It's Sandra. Can I speak to Andy, please? Oh, Andy; I got your number from Simon Le Bon's dad. I rang him pretending to be an old friend. I'm sorry. I hope you don't mind… but, look, I've still got your socks. They're in a plastic bag on my bedroom wall. Oh Andy! Can I come and see you?

Click. So this is seduction…

In the corridor's half-light, the chambermaid fumbles the key in the lock, pushes open my hotel room door (number 642… the man in 325 died last night!), turns and brazenly winks.

"You're with the band, aren't you? Well, aren't you the lucky one? You've got the double bed…"

Well, I always considered myself slow, often downright stupid, but now I reckon I must be prematurely senile. Honest, the words just formed by themselves: "Ta. OK, love, I'll raffle it later. Bye…" So this is success…


**THE MERCEDES DRAWS** up within 10 yards of Sheffield City Hall's stage door. A three-second sprint should see the boys safely out, in the back and away. Twenty minutes later they're still stuck in »

ANDRE CSILLAG / REX FEATURES

Duran Duran in their hometown, Birmingham, in May 1981: (l–r) John Taylor, Simon Le Bon, Nick Rhodes, Roger Taylor and Andy Taylor

the frost on the limo roof, scratched, mauled, buffeted, bruised, surrounded by dozens of small screaming girls who're just desperate to love them to death…

So this is my insanity…

"My God! What a stupid question! That girl's just said, 'Do you know you're very good-looking?' I mean, what sort of question is that?"

John shoves his champers, steak and chips across the table at Manchester's flashy Legend nightclub and resigns himself to increased interruption and acute indigestion.

"I don't mind, really. I mean, there was a time when Simon got really pissed off and started acting a bit cocky, saying – y'know – 'I don't want to know about this lot', and it's really hard for me to go down the Rum Runner, because all the girls bitch at my girlfriend and all the blokes go, 'Coo, look! He's wearing the same clothes he wore two weeks ago – what a tramp!'

"But then again, I'd really hate it if I went out and nobody noticed me at all – then I'd start getting really worried…"

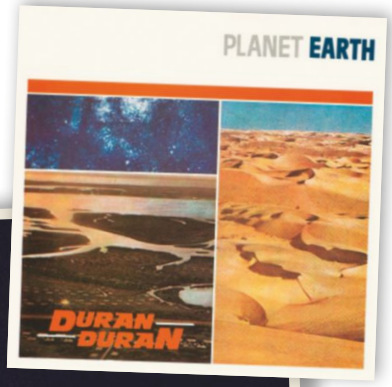
Nick sighs: "I think I'll be mad before I'm 20. I mean, I go out shopping or something and first there's three or four people and then a few more and then a few more, just standing staring at me and then, suddenly, I'm surrounded…"

As if by divine intervention, little miss sweet 16 in frilly blouse, decorative headband – y'know, the full new romantic regalia – chooses this moment to cease her doe-eyeing, take a deep breath and stumble forward. Her arms slap around Nick's shoulders, pulling his painted head towards her and their lips meet for a brief moment. She reels, swoons, her eyes roll back and she hits the floor in a dead faint, just like so much meat. "Oh Christ," groans Nick. "That's never happened before…"

So this is routine…

The call came in a hurry. The Stray Cats have blown out *The Oxford Roadshow*, will Duran fill in and mime "My Own Way?" But of course, all good publicity. The man behind the camera says: "Plenty of time – you're not due on till a third of the way through the show."

Mandy starts to administer makeup, the door bursts open and a breathless girl tangled in wires and clamped inside headphones shrieks hysterically: "Come! Please! Quick! You're on NOW!"




REX FEATURES

"He does put on weight very easily": Simon Le Bon fronts Duran Duran at Birmingham Odeon, December 21–23, 1981

**SIMON NONCHALANTLY ADJUSTS** his silly red-towel headband, makes for the dressing-room door and smirks: "Hey Steve, look at Nick. He's overdone the eyeliner again. Hey Nick! You look like a bleedin' panda bear!"

The first verse is already half over as the last Duranie (their word, not mine) – that's drummer Roger – finally makes it onto the set, still applying mascara. The boys crack up – such a delightful disaster…

"We've become very relaxed these days," Nick informs me later. "We're almost like Pink Floyd or something. I mean, at the beginning we used to worry all the time. I remember when Spandau started getting all that publicity, I went to check them out at the Botanical Gardens just to see whether they really were cornering the disco-rhythm market. Of course, thank God, they were useless…

"See, when we started, we were just five men in a boat rowing out to sea, but Spandau got a motorboat and roared past us out into the middle. Now they've run out of petrol and we've got our oars, we're rowing past them all and they're just sinking. Hey! I think that's a pretty good analogy, don't you?

"I'll tell you what – that tour we did supporting Hazel O'Connor did us so much good. It meant we played everywhere from Manchester Apollo to the Marquee, tested them out, learned how to win an audience.

"Like Chris Spedding said to me, 'If you rehearse nine days a week, you become very good at rehearsing; if you play nine dates a week, you become every good at playing live.'"

John agrees: "We really wanted to play live and it paid off. The kids who come to see us – I know who they like. I can see their badges; it's us, The Human League, Orchestral Manoeuvres… and I ask them, 'What about Spandau?' and they say, 'Oh, they never play, they've become all snobby'…"

Suddenly the chauffeur butts in: "You'll never guess what, Nick – some old girl just asked me a very personal question about you."

"What's that?"

"She asked if you're bisexual."

"And what did you say?"

"Yes, he isn't…"

"That's a good answer."

So this is stardom…

**NICK HATES LEAVING** the fans in vain out in the cold; can still remember hanging around waiting to pester his own personal heroes. Andy agrees: "If you're not gonna see them, at least you should let them know when you're gone."

Not so long back, Andy was in the same sort of crowd himself – helping demolish David Bowie's Roller outside Newcastle City Hall.

The transition from hunters to hunted was swift and surprising. How has it changed you, John?

"Well, we've become a lot more confident now. We don't seek other people's opinions so much; we feel we're

# A weighty lifelessness

## NME JUL 4 Duran Duran's debut LP remains stolidly earthbound.

**Duran Duran** Duran Duran EMI

Everybody's already talked far too much about it, this modern dance, this new romance that has thrown out the old and ushered in the few. This fancifully dressed elite has dazzled New York into thinking that London swings again. NY's all-embracing acceptance of the peacocks has endowed their vain strutting with an importance it previously lacked, possibly convincing them that London really could be overrun with pirates, highwaymen Elizabethans and gringos. However, they better keep talking as not all of us are convinced.

Not that conviction is at all important – talking itself is what this new breed is best at: they entertain through the gossip columns, colour supplements and, when luck will have it, chat shows, selling the image first with the products to follow shortly. In such a media-preoccupied scene Duran Duran thus begin at a disadvantage, being based so far away in Birmingham. They've also eschewed the elitist games of the Blitz crowd by quite honestly and accurately professing their home-grown scene to be rootsier and more fun-orientated in its pursuit of finery. Their less nonsensical utterings haven't hampered them so far, but their dourly earthy qualities undeniably dim their impact. Better a delicately embroidered white lie than the rather plain truth in this particular arena.

Spandau Ballet and Visage have understood this only too well. They and their gaggle of publicists and pariahs have bundled together a jumble of chic, theatrical wardrobe and delighted, self-satisfied squeals into a boldly appealing manifesto powerful enough to intimidate outsiders into believing they're missing out on something, whereas Duran Duran can only conjure up about as much mystique as the early, ham-fisted Japan. They make all the "right" moves, but they make them too tentatively. They're too tied to the accepted steps to surprise us and they're too knowing to pass as naive explorers. Worse, they refuse to acknowledge that to this new breed of tasteful consumers the appearance of disposability, of transience, is essential – even if, like Spandau Ballet, they want to make a career out of it. For their debut LP they've sought proper guidance by commissioning a Malcolm Garret/Assorted Images sleeve and a Colin Thurston (ex Bowie and Magazine) production.

The result is a sensibly packaged, respectably safe and self-consciously worthy record that belies the promised glamour of their two earlier singles – both incidentally included here.

These two songs established their individuality, where most of the rest contentedly rearranges stock scenery – and then none too skilfully. Possessed with their own importance, Duran Duran haven't got the wit or lightness to play around with the scene's key words and phrases, as do Depeche Mode. Instead, like Ultravox, they attempt to create magnificent artifices from swirls of synths and guitars over imposing disco-rock foundations. Duran Duran's collapse through their weighty lifelessness, though this is partly the fault of Colin Thurston's lacklustre production, which reduces stridently colourful highlights to fit the densely homogenous whole.

Their songs roll gracelessly and inexorably forward with all the ponderousness and implied artfulness of a young Barclay James Harvest. The best, surprisingly, sounds most like those old hacks. Called "Friends Of Mine", it twists and spins its mass of sounds into an engaging chorus with a witty panache lacking elsewhere – the two singles excepted.

Musically, the laborious Duran Duran don't really conform to the new breed of self-described stylists' hedonistic ethics; that they crop up in their playlists alongside electro-disco, funk and jazz is less in recognition of Duran Duran's class than the fact that they're one of the few groups to have been produced by the ranks.

Duran Duran only confirm that, for the moment, this breed makes better consumers than creators. *Chris Bohn*


capable of judging for ourselves. I don't really take any notice of the press these days. I mean, I'm more interested in what my mum thinks of our records than what the papers say about them. Sure, you take notice sometimes, because sometimes it hurts – like when they started saying Simon was fat. We'd say, 'Well, yeah, Sime, you'll have to watch it', because he does put on weight very easily. But if we started to be really swayed by press opinion, I think that would be the end…"

That's not what I was getting at…

"OK, I know. The worst thing that could have happened to us would have been the ego thing. Like Julian Cope – he hasn't got anyone to intervene; his band just says, 'Yes, Julian, anything you say.' But with us there's no one person; there's always four other pairs of boots ready to go in, four other pairs of hands ready to pull you down. It's a very democratic outfit. Cope can't decide whether he wants to be a pop star or an intellectual…

"You speak for yourself – I'm into pure pop. I'd much rather be a pop star. We've been getting a lot of slagging for attempting nothing more than pure entertainment, y'know, all that 'let them eat smoked salmon' business. But that's so hypocritical, because what about Adam? What about Funkapolitan? They're no different but they don't get slagged because that's all fun for the feet not the head, so it's supposed to be OK…"

"People are always slagging us off for being contrived" continues Nick. "I think ours is one of the least contrived albums in the last 10 years. I mean, Spandau are contrived in every way, heavy metal's contrived with all the tight trousers and guitar solos, Rondo are contriving all that brass thing, but we just didn't care when we did that album; we just did what we wanted to do.

> "I think ours is one of the least contrived albums in the last 10 years"

"See, people never seem to get us right; they either think we're a stupid con like the new Bay City Rollers or they take us too seriously – y'know, good musicians, good image, all that. We're neither, really, we're in-between."

So this is bon voyage…

**I'M STILL TAKING** the piss out of Nick at four in the morning over the tour programme error which lists his favourite musicians as "Bowie and ELO" instead of "Bowie and Eno".

"Look, you sod, why don't you come to Leicester tomorrow?"

I can't if you want to make our Christmas issue.

"Oh well. It's been nice having you around anyway."

Now there's an apposite phrase – it's nice having Duran Duran around, too.

At 10 the next morning I'm creeping out of the lift on my way home. The foyer is crawling with girls.

"Are you the drummer?" asks one.

"No, he looks more like John's brother," says another.

"Are you really his brother?" she gasps.

I must admit it – I told a lie. *Steve Sutherland* •

THE HISTORY OF ROCK

# Missed any of our previous issues?

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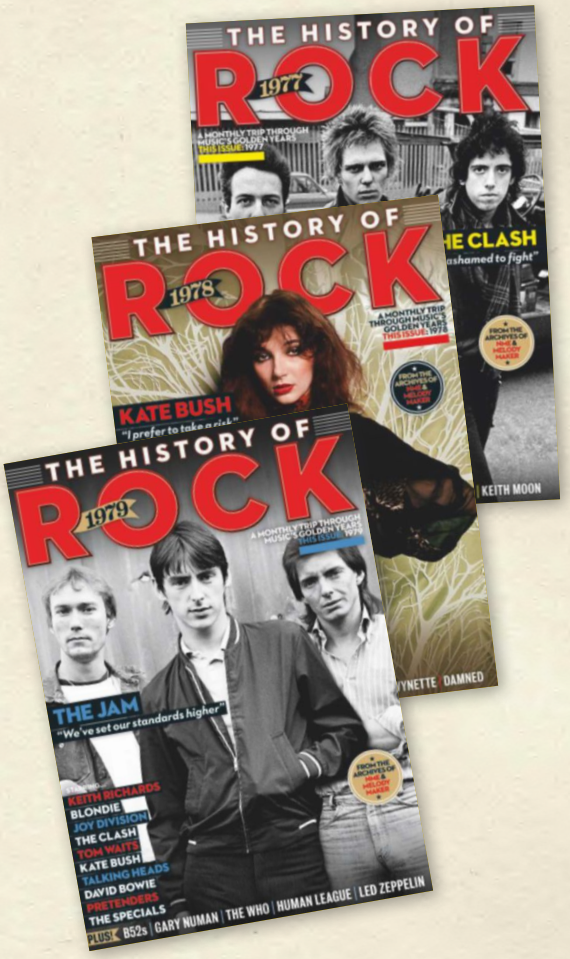





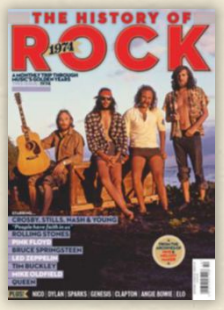


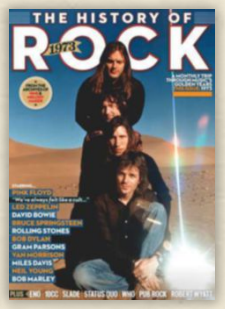


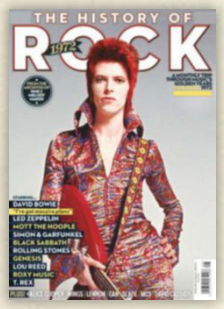









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# Readers' letters

**MM/NME JUL–DEC** Desolation in the rows, jive in the lingo and other grumbles...

## Stoned while trying to keep seat

LP WINNER!

Having been an ardent believer in the integrity of Mr Robert Dylan for some considerable time now, I felt it necessary to voice my discontent at the apparent disarray over tickets for his forthcoming concerts at the NEC in Birmingham. After obeying all the rules specified for purchase of three tickets and duly sending off my postal order at £8.50 per ticket (plus 30p ticket booking charge) for Saturday, July 4, I subsequently received three tickets for Sunday, July 5, all £7.50 seats.

Firstly, I can live with the fact that I have to organise alternative arrangements to make the Sunday date, bearing in mind the rare opportunity of seeing the guy in concert once again.

Secondly, I am prepared to put up with bum seats as at the very

least I have tickets, despite the fact that they were applied for as soon as dates were announced.

But the third and final annoying little factor I cannot accept is how I am being ripped off for three miserable quid without any mention of a refund for the sum when tickets were sent.

I can visualise the mammoth task of distributing tickets, but I am sure Harvey Goldsmith et al will be well taken care of when the euphoria is over. Money doesn't talk, it swears!

**GARY GROVE, Tennyson Rd, Coventry (*MM* Jul 4)**

## Nice Bob if you can get it

As an inveterate Dylan Fan who has followed with an insatiable appetite the man, his music and psyche for more years than I care to state, I would like to say that the Earls Court concert I attended was a joy to cradle.

The critics who philosophise with their pens can cut all they wish, but to the 140,000 disciples who paid to see him, everything in the garden, if not lovely, is far better cultivated than the wilderness that has grown around him in the past 20 years.

**COLIN BRINTON, Colchester Road, Wix, Essex (*MM* Jul 18)**

## Atlantic crossing

When did you last call your girlfriend "baby"? Can anyone tell me why so many British bands and performers still find it necessary to Americanise their songs? Many English vocalists seem to adopt a false American accent when they sing – just listen to their pronunciation of words like "dance" or "chance".

Bands endlessly sing about their "baby", which is not only the most overused word in pop but just isn't in any way an English expression.

The worst cases are when you go and see some local band who have never been outside of Bromley passionately screeching cliched lines like: "*I was cruisin' down the highway with my baby*", "*I've been runnin' on empty for too long*" or "*I ain't got a dime for the phone*".

It's not that I don't like American material, but I prefer to hear it sung by genuine US artists who can perform it with a bit of credibility.

Fortunately, things have been getting better recently. People like Squeeze, Ian Dury and Madness are writing songs about the real world and aren't frightened of singing them in English accents.

But beware! Keep your ears open! There are still plenty of others whose brains cruise down Sunset Boulevard while their bodies are cruising down Penge High Street.

**MELVIN RUTTER, Croft Road, Norbury, London (*MM* Sept 19)**

## Hard rock and a hard place

Thursday 12th November, Newcastle – Gillan

Friday 13th November, Newcastle – Gillan

Saturday 14th November, Newcastle – Gillan

Sunday 15th November, Newcastle – Gillan

Monday 16th November, Newcastle – Judas Priest

Tuesday 17th November, Newcastle – Judas Priest

And those prats on the telly wonder why there's a glue sniffin' and alcohol problem in the area.

**CHRIS MOISER, Fenman, Newcastle (*NME* Nov 28)**

## Last words on Ian Curtis

I think it's time some essential things were said about Ian Curtis and the way critics romanticise and sentimentalise his suicide. Why won't they accept the fact that he was a FAILURE?

Chris Bohn writes: "Let's take consolation in the fact that Ian Curtis's death didn't so much bring Joy Division's journey to the heart of darkness to an abrupt halt as freeze it for all eternity at the brink of discovery." I get the feeling that Chris Bohn doesn't have a clue what Ian Curtis was writing about; his journey to the heart of darkness wasn't leading anywhere except six feet under.

Critics seem to believe that his death was incidental to the music. Wrong. Ian Curtis' state of mind, as portrayed in the later lyrics especially, clearly needs some drastic alteration.

His way was a little too drastic. Ninety per cent of the *Closer* lyrics present the distressing picture of Ian Curtis falling apart at the seams. For example, the guilt in "*Mother I tried, please believe me/ I'm doing the best that I can/ I'm ashamed of the things I've been put through/ I'm ashamed of the person I am*"; the total disenchantment with life itself – "*Existence, well what does it matter?*"

He saw love as his destiny. No one took his dreams away. Things became so unbearable that he killed himself. Cop-out. It seems stupid to glorify anyone's inability to cope with life, no matter how well they articulate it. It seems at times that certain critics' think we should aim to attain the status of an Ian Curtis before he died. Personally, I'd rather not go on the road to nowhere.

PS: I do actually like Joy Division a hell of a lot but resent what I think is the distorted, pompous image you give them.

**J BINGHAM, London SW15 (*NME* Dec 12)**

## And finally

Wake up, *NME*! Your trousers are around your ankles!

**C Rose, Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire (*NME* Dec 5)**

*Thanks. We wondered where the draught was coming from – Ed.*



EBET ROBERTS / GETTY


# Coming next... in 1982!

**SO THAT WAS** 1981. Broooce!

Certainly, that's not it from our reporters on the beat. The staffers of *NME* and *Melody Maker* enjoyed unrivalled access to the biggest stars of the time, and cultivated a feel for the rhythms of a diversifying scene; as the times changed, so did they. While in pursuit of the truth, they unearthed stories that have come to assume mythical status.

That's very much the territory of this monthly magazine. Each month, *The History Of Rock* will be bringing you verbatim reports from the pivotal events in pop culture, one year a month, one year at a time. Next up, 1982!

## U2

**ON THE ROAD** to world domination with the Irish band. "That old cliche of rock'n'roll rebellion is a joke at this stage," says Bono. "It's so conservative, you could actually write a rulebook, you know, on how to behave as a rock'n'roll rebel… and I think rebellion starts within your own heart. Dyeing your hair red is not necessarily any indication of a menace at all."

## THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

**ON THE ROAD** with Nick Cave and his demented post-punk band. "The band's just a little monster we've created that we don't seem to have any control over any more," says bass player Tracy Pew. "It's like the nerve reaction when you pull off a spider's leg and it keeps on kicking…"

## DEXYS MIDNIGHT RUNNERS

**"I BUY ONE** music paper every week, usually the *NME*," says Kevin Rowland, returning to the interview fray. "I leaf through it and I try to read it, but when I get halfway through an article I just have to put it down. The way musicians go on about their music makes me sick…"

## PLUS...

SCRITTI POLITTI!
THE ASSOCIATES!
OZZY OSBOURNE!

FROM THE MAKERS OF **UNCUT**

# THE HISTORY OF ROCK 1981

Every month, we revisit long-lost *NME* and *Melody Maker* interviews and piece together *The History Of Rock*. This month: 1981.
*"Those memories come back to haunt me/They haunt me like a curse"*


*Relive the year...*

## BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN REMINDED THE WORLD HOW TO DREAM

## THE CURE UNVEILED A DRAMATIC NEW SOUND

## BOB DYLAN GRANTED A RARE AUDIENCE

...and **THE SPECIALS, U2, PAUL WELLER, BLACK SABBATH, ADAM ANT** and many more shared everything with *NME* and *MELODY MAKER*

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