

# ECCENTRIC

NUMBER 7 JAN-FEB 84

25p

AZTEC CAMERA

SLEEVE NOTES



BIG COUNTRY  
**DEPECHE MODE**  
**PAUL YOUNG**

EYELESS IN GAZA

NEW MODEL ARMY

SOPHISTICATED BOOM BOOM

JOO LZ  
ALARM  
HURRAH  
cherry boys

BEN WATT

# DEPECHE MODE



I first talked to Andy Fletcher one and a half years ago. Vince Clark had just left, and was beginning work on Yazoo. Andy seemed disillusioned with the band's involvements. I saw Depeche Mode's future as being limited. A band could not sustain on such a low morale. Not for the first time; I was wrong.

ESN: You have said in the past you do not enjoy touring. Is that still true?

ANDY: Basically, yeah, I've got used to it now so it's not too bad. It's not my favourite pastime.

ESN: Is it the actual playing or just what is attached to it?

ANDY: Just the travelling really and the routine of everyday being the same, nothing changes.

ESN: If you were working forty hours a week in a nine to five job it would be the same.

ANDY: I know exactly, but when I left my job I thought I was going into something different from that; and it turned out the same. In the end, there is no substitute except doing nothing. Even then you get in a routine.

ESN: You are labelled as having a teen audience. If that is so they have remained surprisingly loyal. Personally, I don't think it is so unbalanced.

ANDY: This tour's been really good. A couple of rows have been young girls. There has been a larger majority of blokes than of tours past. Still a lot of teenagers; a young audience compared to most bands. I think we are pulling away a bit now. That is good.

A reason for this development must be the less blatantly pop-orientated singles. The press actually judged the new LP, Construction Time Again with no preconceptions, and gave it credit.

ANDY: Yeah amazing, we're really pleased. That is the first LP to have rave reviews all round. Only one paper was a bit...bad. Construction Time Again is also selling remarkably well abroad; in France, Germany, Sweden and Holland. The only exception is America. We've killed that one.

ESN: Do you think your image is too neat for the Yankee rocksters?

ANDY: No, I don't think it has anything to do with that. I think it's because nobody has

heard of us over there. Only a minority of Americans are interested in English music. If we made a survey 99½ people out of 100 would not have heard of us. To become known we would have to go there and tour for six months. We don't want to do that. We are going over for a month, and hopefully get a good support. We were there in March. We supported the Psychedelic Pure in one gig to 7,000 people. If we had headlined Chicago, we would have pulled 500 people. Instead we took a support, and got two encores. Hopefully when we go back people will have remembered us.

ESN: As you will know a lot of Americans are 'into rock and guitars'. The visual side of three blokes tapping their organs sedately and some pansy singing at the front; may not appeal.

ANDY: They can't take it really. Big Country did well in the U.S. album charts. They are sort of real rock 'n' roll. They preach guitars.

ESN: Is the title 'Construction Time Again' a comment on the band's progress?

ANDY: Just a title off a song which epitomized what we wanted to do. The whole theme of the album was 'caring' also the worker, hence the hammer on the cover.

ESN: You do seem to be moving away from the theme and taking a slightly more political stance.

ANDY: Basically, each member of the band has different political beliefs. We're not very far left at all. The LP only expresses basic social beliefs. It doesn't really say anything far left.

ESN: Everything counts, lyrically, caused quite a stir. Maybe the lyrics were not so significant to all who bought it though.

ANDY: That's the thing though, if somebody buys the record they are likely to read the lyrics and get something out of it. Everything counts (although most people thought it was about too much food or something) made some people think, that's what matters.

ESN: Had the Gang of 4 released those lyrics I would have figured it straight away. 'Everything Counts' seems so removed from 'Just Can't Get Enough' for example. (Maybe that song was really an anthem for the peasants!).

ANDY: You must consider that wasn't really us. Vince does not particularly care about lyrics. We are not disregarding our past, they were really good times. We still do some of those songs. At the time he was really embarrassed about some of the lyrics. A couple of times we had to turn round and say 'No, we're not singing that'

ESN: What about 'Pretty Boy'?

ANDY: That was supposed to be taking the mickey out of the worship routine. A real poppy tune. One of the last songs Vince wrote for the band. By then he was very disillusioned with the routine and being public property.

ESN: Ironic that it went down so well at the time I think with the particular make up of audience. You have criticised the first LP publicly which is surely confusing for people who bought it especially if that is their reason for liking you.

ANDY: A lot of people say 'we like the early stuff, the first LP.' We have no time for those people. We thought the second LP was better, and the third better still. Our main criticism is nothing to do with the songs but the basic electronics we used at the time. We have advanced so far since. When we look back and see what we used then we just get embarrassed. It was pretty weak. It showed we had no experience in studios. If we were to do it now it would be a lot more powerful.

ESN: You have introduced synthesised drums on stage I noticed, from the soundcheck.

ANDY: We use them on a couple of songs, also we have some corrugated iron and a large pipe which we scrape and hit.

ESN: A lot of synthesised bands are totally against the use of guitars for the sake of it, but I noticed an acoustic lurking in the shadows of your stage... Of course rock is not a dirty word anymore.

ANDY: No it isn't, ha! ha! It's in at the moment.

ESN: Morale in the band seems to be high.

ANDY: Spirit is as high as it has ever been. Right before 'Everything Counts' we were not so confident. That and the LP's success has boosted us. There is definitely a couple more LPs in us.

ESN: Presumably, the music will continue to become more intricate.

ANDY: Hopefully yeah, if it stops developing it is time to stop.

ESN: What about reproducing it on stage.

ANDY: You'll find out tonight.

Indeed I did. Also the high morale was much in evidence. More smiles, less of them forced, I felt. In the past I had visions of Andy propped up by a whisky bottle before and after shows, not now. I could be wrong of course.

SIMON MCKAY

# JOO LZ



Joolz has recently released a three track EP on Abstract records. The A side, 'War Of Attrition' contains seventeen 'fucks' and other such despicable wording. 'The Latest Craze' has proved to be the much played, playable side. Jah Wobble composed a musical backing in support of the wording. A lot of work went into the A side especially, although it was obvious it would be unacceptable to D.J.'s. It is supposedly a good dance record, which adds what is almost a profound twist considering the literature content.



"The pieces had to be presented carefully. The idea in mind was; a film on record, you watch through your eyes. The music is the equivalent to a film score. The music had to be unconventional because the wording lacked rhythm."

The EP is not at all representative of Joolz performing live; Indeed Joolz has a tendency to be more the dragon, less the poet.

"Basically, I stand there and tell stories. The poems are more like pros. They are not rhythmic. It can turn a lot of dialogue into something dramatic I act out. I'm lucky if I get a mike to use, let alone a monitor. Someone turned a strobe on me once: I have to refer to a book. 'Fuckin' hell turn the buga off.' 'I was trying to put some dramatic emphasis on you.' 'Ridiculous, do you think I'm a dance-band?' Joolz's performance depends entirely on the audience.

"Sometimes I pack up the poetry, which can be more fun: They shout at me....I insult them, they have another go. It can get into a long dialogue; forget the poetry. I sometimes worry I won't get paid for not doing what I was supposed to do. Some audiences just sit there, so you give them the old routine."

Most people say they would try to deliver as good a performance to one person as they would to a thousand. Joolz is not like this.

"No, two's my limit. One person gets too embarrassed! I played a large theatre once, to two people. I made them come and sit on the front row. It's my show. I want to see your faces. They were paralysed with shame. They wouldn't have dared leave. Poor buggers."

Joolz had turned down a number of record offers, including two from major labels. She is very wary of going up fast and being stranded. She has worked by playing high on every tatty club in the country

over the last two years; totally premeditated as an alternative to 'zipping off in a cloud of magnesium.'

Joolz is by no means a megastar. Strangely enough; due to the nature of her performing, has found it necessary to employ a minder. Not a penguin, instead a friend of a friend.

"I get an awful lot of hassle anyway when I'm on stage: Sound, Fine. Great they go along with you, shouting and heckling. I have a go back; lovely. I come off stage Whap! I get it in the neck. On the last tour I came out of the dressing room to get a drink at the bar. 'Who the fuck do you think you are? Who the fuck you fucking. Fucking this and that.' I asked him 'What's up with you then?' 'Think you're clever 'cos you played the Lycaum don't you? Fucking popstar: Face on the cover of Time Out. Think you're it don't you?' 'What do you want me to do stay in the dressing room?' 'Yeah, would do wouldn't you. You bloody snob!' You can't win. A lot of weird people, usually big heavy guys! Think because you're a girl on your own and you're on stage that you're some kind of slag or prostitute. They don't go for me too much because I'm...fairly... sort of... err...mmm...kind of frightening to some people. Sometimes it's very uncomfortable. The choice has always been, when I support someone, stay in the dressing room on my own, or come out and watch the band; sticking my neck out on my own."

Joolz has made a number of television appearances this year. One of the more memorable, was Channel 4's Loose Talk.

"It was live television. I adore live T.V. They rush around being really careful with you; so you won't do anything dreadful. They had this woman interviewing me, who was the biggest pain in the arse I had ever met. They rushed round and said, 'Don't hit her, don't hit her.' 'Me? As if I would?' Allright, but don't draw blood.' I just tore her to pieces she was useless. I got really annoyed with her. She was the editor of a



girl's magazine called Look Now. They had previously done a telephone interview with me. Her great trumpcard was 'you can't be rude to me, because you're in my magazine next month.' I just howled with laughter. She actually said that. It was wonderful. It happened in a live theatre, the audience were laughing at

her too. I didn't talk to her, just talked to the audience. She said things.... I said 'she's simple,' to them. I had just done my hair bright red. It was driving the cameraman mad. It was vibrating on the film; like fluorescent. On screen it looked like a 60's psychedelic movie, such was it's affect on the film. I had a good laugh. T.V. pay good money too."

At the age of 28, Joolz has indeed discovered the essence in life. She has been introduced to her favourite tickle; barley wine and grapefruit juice. Also she finds while sitting in a photobooth, it is quite delightful to have a Mare Bar unceremoniously showed down her fiery mouth,

SIMON MCKAY

# cherry boys

The Cherry Boys released their third single, **KARDONAH CAFE** (The cafe is now a Harvey's burger-bar: In the summer it displayed posters for the single in it's window) last June. It just failed to get in the top 40. I am told by a press hand-out, their new single, **SHOOT THE BIG SHOT**, could be 'the big one'.

The Cherry Boys include their address on record releases and have had it broadcast with their four Radio 1 sessions. The address is; 206 Bebington Road, Lower Bebington, Mirral, Merseyside, L63 7NY. Despite being a relatively unknown band they sell Cherry Boys T-shirts at the gigs. As Graham Jones the manager explains, they have their uses.

"We broke down on a moor on what felt like the coldest night last year. It was a three mile walk to the nearest telephone. I asked one of the band to come with me and received the usual overwhelming support."

"Fuck off Graham", demonstrated John Cherry, guitar and vocals. "I walked on my own, wearing four 'Cherry Boys' sweatshirts and t-shirts," continued Graham.

The current Liverpool scene is headed by a new cult band called the Beatles, (Yes, the misspelling is deliberate). John Cherry bears resemblance to John Lennon, who actually plays in the Beatles. There are other bands in Liverpool though.

"As well as the Wah's and Bunnymens, there are loads of new bands popping up all the time. The bands all go to one another's gigs. Before the warehouse burnt down -

two days before we were to play incidentally- there were so many people on the guestlist, 'Oh we're in a band', propping up the bar, trying to be noticed by the other bands," said Jimmy Hughes, keyboards and vocals.

"The competition is healthy, and keeps you on your toes. We gigged in Liverpool consistently until the last year or so. People became complacent," said John. Keith Gunson, bass and yet more vocals (a very vocally band the Cherry Boys) adds jubilantly;

"We've played Manchester more than anywhere this year. We go down really well at the colleges there." Graham treats me to another anecdote, this time about the band's appearance at Futurama 4 in 1982.

"The Icicle Works, another Liverpool band, were playing too. Before we left Liverpool they had agreed we could use their drumkit. When we got there we found out we were going to be on different stages. With about thirty minutes before we went on we didn't have a kit. There was a bloke setting one up on the stage we were going to use. I asked if we could use it. He was reluctant, but finally agreed. After the gig I saw him again. I asked him which band he was in. 'New Order', he replied!"

Before King Kurt were throwing dead cats and maggots, the Cherry Boys were shouting 'give it rice!' It developed to the stage where people were bringing rice and throwing it at the band. In comparison to King Kurt it seems tame. As Graham optimistically points out though, "If we played Hammersmith Odeon, could you imagine the stage covered in two tons of rice, and the band still playing."

## CHERRY BOYS (from p.6)



"I'm only glad we didn't shout, 'give it shit!' comments Howie 'D' Winnsse, drums and no vocals but a refugee from a lunatic asylum.

"We covered Janice Long in butter at the Wersseyside awards. She wasn't very pleased.

It ruined her dress," said John. "Janice does swear off air. 'You've ruined my new suit you big bastard!' she shouted at me." admits Keith. "I don't know how we got the session with her."

In a November issue of the rather wonderful JUST 17, Janice is to be seen emptying her handbag: Out popped a Cherry Boys demo tape, amongst other things. This incident certainly did not harm Graham Jones' friendship with Peel. It may have enhanced it.... I don't know. Graham sent John a letter inviting him to John Cherry's birthday party in Liverpool. The band knew this. Graham 'lets it hang out' again:

"I picked up the phone. Keith was imitating Peel. I realised it was Keith straight away. We started talking about something else. I sat down again, after ringing off. The telephone went again. 'Hello Graham, this is John Peel.' I thought 'fuckin' hell Keith! what's your game?' I was about to give him a mouthful when this voice said, 'Hang on..... while I turn down those damned awful Thompson Twins in the hotel foyer. I hate them, they're a load of shit.' Of course it was Peel, wanting to know what was going on in Liverpool."

Whether 'SHOOT THE BIG SHOT' is a hit remains to be seen. The Cherry Boys do have two major companies behind them. If my calculations are right, and I was correctly informed, they will have already recorded their debut LP.

SIMON MCKAY

# HURRAH!

Paul and Taffy, both guitar and vocals, have been playing together for a couple of years. After a couple of abortive attempts at making music have finalised Hurrah! In addition; Dave on bass, and Damien on drums. Paul compares his musical involvements.

"We've a lot more communicative, actually listening to one another play now. We sound tighter as a unit."

"We're more open to suggestions. More give and take. We like varied music. All four members put their ideas in", but in Taffy.

"The groups you have been in do have an influence on you. We do have quite a healthy blend of influence." Damien indicates his previous involvements, actually with Passage (Wow!). Damien is opposed to what he describes as a concept band e.g. Death Cult and the 'dark-priest syndrome. He sees Hurrah! laying the emphasis on songwriting, the point he thinks a lot of bands miss.

The Fab Four are stuck in a bit of a time warp. They remain unconcerned with present trends and fashions in music. Paul announces a disrespect for popstar images. Damien thinks to some degree it is necessary

to project a blown up or magnified personality to attract attention. The minute somebody straps a guitar on; it arouses all these ghosts of rock stars. Rock music is such a common denominator."

I say rock music is so common. Hurrah! do have a strong sound though. Melodies are used freely on some songs, barely on others. Paul plays a 12 string guitar. At times it sounds shrill and piercing. At others it can be mellow. Whatever tone, it is well mixed with Taffy. Dave overhears them all at times. Damien gets in a textured 'jazz influenced' click and bang occasionally. If a set is going badly, it does not matter. Paul and Taffy are always willing to crank up their guitars and totally ruin the sound balance. Hurrah! would argue 'too many bands use the same guitar setups'.

'Hip, Hip' the last single, was quite well received. Even before it came out Hurrah! were almost disowning it. Admittedly it is not as strong as the live version.

"We tried to produce 'Hip, Hip' ourselves, hearing it in comparison to something like the Style Council.... We didn't want a big production. It's a pity we didn't have enough money for a decent production though." The flipside 'Flowers' was much more representative, even flattering. Paul continues; "We knocked it out in two hours, keeping it simple and raw. We do need a decent producer though."

Hurrah! claim to still be in an early stage of development, they see a lot of scope for branching out. Taffy blurts, "We would like to go and record an album, to at least clear the airwaves. It's hard to work on new songs when loads of people haven't heard the old ones yet. Live; we keep chopping and changing them, to get them across."

"The older songs are not indicative of what Hurrah! is. The more recent songs are groping towards something," injects Paul.

"There is less melody in the new songs. They rely more on structure. It will be interesting to see what the next batch will be like, as we are moving away from straight-forward songs. This has not been a conscious decision. Damien has made a difference to the band though," continues Taffy.

Hurrah! are not a band easily categorised. Major record companies interested in the band require a 'slight' rearranging of the band's characteristics.





"We're not prepared to compromise on the sound we want. We're told to dress properly for the important dates in London. In some aspects we are prepared to compromise to an extent, but not enough for us to reach our full commercial extent," states Paul. Taffy adds;

"Hopefully, we'll get better and be able to afford the freedom to play what we want to play."

Unlike Kajagoogoo, and their ilk, created for instant appeal and the less fortunate sideeffect of being instantly disposable: Hurrah! are built to last, if they play it their way.

SIMON MCKAY

#### HIGH FIVE-COLD STEEL GANG

'COLD STEEL GANG' is the High Five's first single. I admit I am biased towards them; having seen and liked them a couple of years ago. They played a strong set then. The two tracks on this single, ARE YOU HAPPY being the B side, is a sample of what is an even stronger set now. 'Cold Steel Gang' is a more subtle anthem than the Alarm would offer. An accomplished, well proportioned song; the breaks fit perfectly. The harmonies add a 'commercial break' to the song, more so towards the end. The drums stamp, the bass resounds, the vocals are distinctively nasally .... the guitar steps; reminding me of a staircase I once knew.....

# AZTEC CAMERA



Although Roddy now carries a 'hairstyle', having had the fountain removed, he is still not too convincing as a rockin' popin' star. I complimented him for his wonderfully pretentious strutting as he launches into intricate (ish) guitar solos on stage. Much to my surprise he claims; to take offense, claiming to have been serious.

"The hair was a bit of a nuisance; loads of wanks with long hair going around these days," Roddy comments on his groovy new haircut. Still no justification of the strutting I can quote.

I do not think Roddy's songwriting is losing it's freshness. However, I did pose this question. 'Just to get him going.' Roddy thinks 'not', too, but thinks being riled is a good thing at least. Agreeing on that point I comment on the failure, chart-wise, of 'Walk Out to Winter', I expected it to be a 'smash'. Did the record company, Rough Trade, take the blame?

"To an extent, yeah. Some people probably had the album and didn't want to buy the single. Some people probably heard the single and bought the album. We've sold a lot of albums."

Three months before Aztec Camera signed to WEA there was talk of a few interested majors. When I suggested Aztec Camera may be 'CBS ing it' in future, Roddy thought 'WEA ing it' was more likely. I suggested the right deal could profit all round. Aztec

Camera had the negotiating power, easily measured in press and T.V. exposure as far as a record company is concerned. The band could make more from a major. If they did it through Rough Trade they would also be 'making it'. Obviously a major label is not a charitable organisation and somewhere along the line they would expect to 'be making loads of it'. Three months later Aztec Camera have done this, denoting 5% of their earnings to Rough Trade. Anticipating this move Roddy stated, "Rough Trade will still work with us, doing certain things and still very much connected. They would not sacrifice us for the good of themselves. If we get the right deal Rough Trade could make more from us in the next four years, than if we were to stay with them."

Roddy writes and arranges all the Aztec Camera songs. He has said in the past that the band is basically just the medium through which they are performed. When Roddy says the music is going to be more American influenced, it will of course be that. Again, I thought he was taking the michael, again Roddy claims to be serious.

"I meant that actually. I want to do something that's well produced with that American sound: Where it is dead black and white. Something soft and sweet with something really heavy on top. An example would be to have a really bland guitar sound with heavy drums on top."

AZTEC CAMERA from p9

'Oblivious' is probably not too representative of the band's new direction. The discovering of their true inner-selves? 'Oblivious' has been rereleased. I would have thought it to be a non-starter, all possible customers possessing the original or the LP. The incentive of a free single is offered though.

The words 'train' and 'snow' crop up a lot in Roddy's lyrics - Roddy comments on this fixation.

"They're images I like. Snow represents a good time of year. You're not hot, so you do move things because you're awake. It makes everything seem clean."

Perhaps, if Roddy is going to be repetitive Campbell should write songs. There was a time when he did. Now he leaves

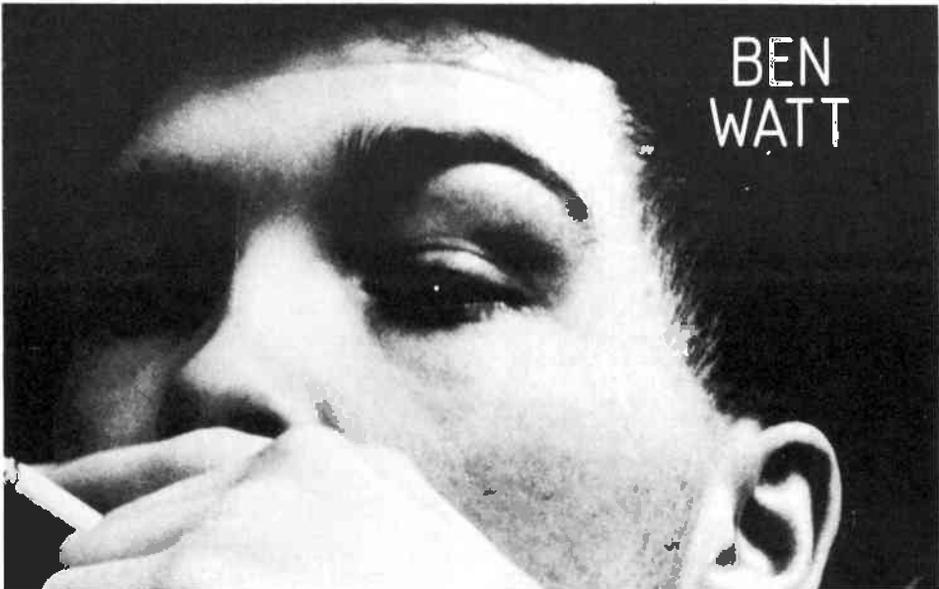
it. If they both wrote, the competition would be a good thing. Obviously Roddy will already be competing with the last song he wrote. "But surely Mr. Frame, that extra push...."

"Yeah, it's all getting very profound," quips Roddy, the man of many words.

I was interested to have heard Aztec Camera had been indulging in their own version of the Clash's 'Garageland', as an occasional encore on their last tour. I ask if there was any particular reason for doing that song.

"Not particularly; It's a good song, a perfectly healthy song for any band to play," answers Roddy. I had not heard their version and state I would like to hear it and was a performance likely that night. "Depends; if you want to hear it, we probably won't."

SIMON MCKAY



Forgive me if I do not stretch this introduction to a quick comparison... pigeon hole and then into the content. Ben Watt, however, does write songs and performs them as a solo artist; but not all of the time. Ben also comes complete with Tracey Thorn as "Everything But The Girl".

It came to my mind that a solo artist has only himself to blame for non-production of the goods. Ben is probably in a strong position for producing the goodies without hindrance. "I've always written songs on a guitar only, it allows me time to concentrate on the melody and structure and lyrics before I worry about anything else... more recently I find that I can hear the bass or percussion part in my head even when I've

only written the guitar part so it's just a question of finding the right people to play the other bits ...that's what's happened a lot-in some cases I'd listen to the original part and think of something new on the spot and go back and record it immediately... it worked that way as well ... whatever the case it doesn't prevent me from writing the original tune, after all, that does seem to be the most important part"

A more experienced Ben seems more relaxed in his songwriting now. Rather than complete a song that he knows he will not like he tends to write a few bits here and there, find a good chord sequence but not use it till perhaps two or three weeks

later. "I'm a lot more choosy now and I like to think I have a better idea of what will ultimately sound good... that tends to cut down the dross and leaves me with perhaps two or three good songs when before I would have had as many good ones amongst seven bad ones." When it comes to performing these songs Ben points out they have never been played with a band. If Peter King is around he sometimes helps out on saxophone. "I suppose I still have faith in the fact that a good song should sound good whether it's played on a guitar or with a full rhythm section and orchestration... I also do it because no-one else does it really... it's good for audience contact too... it also means I get more money!"

On "North Marine Drive" there is the line: "...and this cold hasn't helped at all..." That was such a trivial after-thought. I found it amusing. I asked if it was a send-up of self-pity.

I'm glad you brought that up... let's face it, no-one really listened to the lyrics when they reviewed the LP... they just thought ...sh, singer-songwriter, must be an introverted little shit... "Long Time No Sea" is quite tongue-in-cheek... a mixture of solitude and a realisation of how pathetic and unimportant you really are in relation to the world in general... the depth of feeling counter-pointed with a wry smile... if you listen closely you'll find songs about social wretchedness, contradictions in the idea of freedom, and songs not only of sorrow but of annihilating, not indulgent nature of self-pity."

"North Marine Drive" ends on Ben's version of "You're Gonna Make Me Lonesome When You Go". Unsurprisingly, that is a song of Dylan's Ben likes, and has probably been listening to for years. Considering that influence though... is it hard not to be natural about the song, and to avoid adopting the style of the original version?

"I've never adopted a singing style. I always sing what comes out naturally. Many times I wish I had a different voice, rougher especially, not so pure, so fucking English!... still that's the way it is so I make the most of it. I had to do quite a few takes on "North Marine Drive" before I was anywhere near happy with voice. As for the Dylan song, well I've always thought that was about as far away from the original as you could get!"

Like most music-makers, when it comes to press exposure, Ben is only featured when he has just made a record release. Ben does not feel the impact of releasing an LP, then being forgotten until the next one seems limited or unprogressive: "As Annie Lennox once said, "You're only as good as your latest single." I wouldn't want to push something that wasn't there by making constant TV appearances and

repeating myself time and time again just to stay in the public eye. Anyway I like the idea of popping up every now and then and submerging for a while. The public are fickle ... if you give them too much they'll get bored with you and then you're fucked. Anyway, there's plenty of other good stuff around ... why hog the picture when other things deserve a look-in?"

Ben does not have any imminent plans for his solo career. He thinks people have had enough of his wingeing and whining for a while. Next he will be pursuing "Eden", the title of the intended "Everything But The Girl LP ...

SIMON MCKAY

# BACK ISSUES

## ESN 4

BUNNYMEN, SIMPLE MINDS, YAZOO, GANG OF FOUR, ROMAN HOLLIDAY, KISSING THE PINK, BLUEBELLS, OK JIVE, FASHION, BELLE STARS, CHINA CRISIS, THE DAINTEES .

## ESN 5

U2, TRACEY THORN, BUNNYMEN, THOMPSON TWINS, SOUTHERN DEATH CULT, AZTEC CAMERA, HIGSON, HAZEL O'CONNOR, PIGBAG.

## ESN 6

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# EYELESS



Eyeless in Gaza have been with us for some time now, leaving a trail of releases stretching back to early 1980. The curious name of the group was taken from the title of Aldous Huxley's novel, which itself was pinched from a line in John Milton's "Samson Agonistes". Both works concern a spiritual quest, a search for sense in being: a theme evident also in the work of the group.

Martyn Bates and Peter Becker both live in Nuneaton, an unglamorous industrial and market town, caught between the larger centres of Birmingham, Coventry and Leicester - and like those places, suffering from high and rising unemployment. Martyn bought his own house there last year.

"I'm often asked why we don't move to the "big city", as though it's some kind of obligation you have to fulfil if you got involved in music as a means of living. People think there's something wrong with you if you don't!"

This attitude is part of and reflected in the music of Eyeless in Gaza. They apart from the preening and paranoia of the pop-biz, a considerable factor in maintaining their natural perspective and integrity. It's natural then, that they should be attached to that paragon of the "indie" virtues, Cherry Red. Martyn affirms this.

"We're content with Cherry Red, as they allow us to go at our own tempo. There's not the pressure to pump out material to meet deadlines, or at set intervals like a machine - that would go against our whole nature."

It was only last year, after some considerable soul-searching that Pete and Martyn left their full-time jobs (lab technician and hospital porter respectively). Clearly they don't want to become divorced from the mainstream of human experience and activity, "real life" if you like. When I spent some time with Martyn in preparation for this piece, he spoke enthusiastically about using his free time to start work on his garden. He confessed, laughing, to an insatiable appetite for tomatoes - which he is determined will flourish there!

Are Eyeless in Gaza now more confident with their means, so that they can positively pursue ideas which occur?

"Yes, and we've grown to know one another better and so work better together - whereas before it was very much pushing up against one another. Initially the whole thing was very abrasive..."

That abrasive quality is evident in Martyn's singing on the early records, often savage and bitter, the lyrics less intelligible than on "Drumming the Beating Heart", the last LP - a point Martyn is keen to pick up.

"Certainly - that was a lot to do with the way I was using my voice, more as an instrument in terms of tonality and phrasing. I still use it like that, but increasingly as an instrument for conveying a lyric. Diction has greater importance for me now. I'm not as "convoluted" as I was, personally. I feel more open and willing to communicate directly than on the first two LPs. All that distortion ... I was trying to get through, but it came across aggressively.

It often has a cathartic quality - Martyn apparently purging himself of a whole range of emotions.

"To me that's the criterion for the art: that's why we do it. We still see ourselves as artists rather than entertainers - though obviously when you're on stage you want to entertain and communicate with your words and music. We're not entertainers with a big E. It's still the most important thing to feel that there's a sense in what we're doing. Obviously, the day we just start

# IN GAZA

going through the motions, then that's the day we'll pack it all in. Right now, every time we come back to it, we do so fresh - there's always something new and challenging to do. OK, it sounds clichéd but when we've exhausted the permutations and new ideas, then we'll stop. It's a vehicle for emotional release, a platform for all that goes on in your life; and the feeling must be genuine, constantly."

It hardly need stating that Eyeless in Gaza are very prolific - together and as

individuals. Pete has had a couple of solo projects issued on tape - now deleted; and a few months back Cherry Red released Martyn's "Letters Written". The latter is a 10" mini LP, finding Martyn in relaxed, reflective mood. Its tender songs represent a modest collection of personal thoughts and half-dreams, perhaps best heard in the soft, melodic, yearnings of "Overflowing Look".

All this question of how Pete and Martyn work together in more practical terms. It's Pete who has the background in the clubs - and on that subject Martyn has a few comments,

"Pete sees it as good schooling as regards such things as arrangement - along with the fact that it paid for his equipment! I think those evenings of bingo and bitter sessions, with Yellow Roses of Texas, Yellow Birds, Yellow Ribbons and Y Viva Espana were some kind of baptism with fire!

"As between us, the ways we create material are changing now. It's still basically down to me to come up with the lyrics, though - in fact I insist pretty much on this; and in fairness I think that's because it's necessary to be close to what you're singing about, for it to mean anything. That works then for the basic outline for the song or tune. Pete and I then consider this in rehearsal as regards arrangement, time signature, instrumentation - though, in the main, this is Pete's department. But overall, now there's more flexibility, more freedom to experiment with the rules in preparation of the material."

Eyeless in Gaza are represented on the Cherry Red "Pillows and Prayers" compilation by "No Noise" - unfortunately, because the listener is not hearing the music of Eyeless in Gaza now. The new LP may demonstrate that even more. But what next for Eyeless in Gaza? The new LP has just been recorded - is it a further extension

into the territory of "Drumming the Beating Heart"?

"Not a radical change. We've got quite a diversity of material hidden away. We never force anything. I couldn't say "It'll be different tomorrow" because that's not how we approach making our music. We've tried to crystallise what we've been doing before, to render it still sharper ... to try and communicate a little more clearly. In the past we've always worked, as I said, by laying things down in one take; and this I think we're rightly revising that now.

"I think if we're to capture people's attention with what we've got to say, we must modify our approach without selling our ideals short though I know it's easy to sit here and just say that. I believe in our integrity; that it's got us so far. We now see the value in greater patience, spending more time over the original idea, in order to do justice to the material, to show a song in its true light. With Scritti Politti, I was sceptical about the apparently sweeping change, the "sell-out thing; but now I can see a thread carried through - and I think "Songs to Remember" is great!

"We're very pleased with our new LP, "Rust Red September". I think you'll be surprised! It's far and away the best thing we've done - with themes of hope, optimism, new beginnings, reassurance, sustenance, elevation, wonder ... the music feels like dreams."

Eyeless in Gaza have had a scattered impact, spread through many countries from Scandinavia to Greece: which seems a little odd in view of their limited success at home, being confined to a fairly limited following. Each LP sells about 10-12,000 copies in the U.K.

"Hmm - this cult thing. That's it. You've come to the crux of it really. It's as though we've reached a threshold. The cult, well that's great. It's something we've achieved through the honesty of our approach, our self-belief and tenacity - and we still adhere to that, as I said earlier. But, now it's come to the point where creatively we need more feedback. We need to feel that there's something happening "out there", that we are getting through in a larger way. It's a necessary for our creative future. You need to feed off some response that's coming back to you. There's that whole thing about "artists just want to be loved", but it's true. We need that revitalisation - creativity can't self-regenerate forever."

JON TAYLOR

# SOPHISTICATED BOOM BOOM

Sophisticated Boom Boom did their first session for John Peel two years ago. Since then they've done..... well a couple more sessions for him, and even... a quick interview and video in the Tube's first series. Apart from the occasional gigs, that is it. The band are affectionately known as the only band to do three Peel sessions and not have a record label. Funnily enough they find themselves being compared to another Scottish band, The Twin Sets. They also are without a record release, the twist is their third session also went out recently. I find both bands totally wonderful and fail to see the point of 'those who resist.' Sophisticated Boom Boom have had offers from a couple of independents though but decided to stick out for a major (Snob). CBS have paid for the band to make a demo tape. Whether they release it or not is to be seen. The band are now prepared to go with an independent if necessary.

The Peel sessions are important though. They have got the name, and changing sound, known. They will count as important milestones for those about to 'know'. I comment that the first session was a bit rough.

"You're telling me," Laura snaps." Strangely enough it is Peel's favourite.... We prefer the one we have just done; everytime." I mention the evolution of the sound.

"It's probably lost some of it's characteristics, because we're concentrating more on arrangements and the musical side; Jackie adopts a modest tone." once you learn how to play your instruments more proficiently, you want to play more complicated stuff."

A fifth member, Irene, on guitar has also been added for extra proficiency and sophistication. Irene's counterpart, Tricia, is the evil looking one. She wrote the suitably wicked lyrics for the first session. It included the line: 'Hey, hey, I'm on an ego trip, surrender to me,' which is liable to make your skin twitch. Tricia comments, "I feel self conscious writing lyrics, It depends what you're writing about though. You think 'yeah, I'll be really clever here,' and it may sound really pretentious. It's hard to write unless you are inspired. People always think it is about you too. 'Oh, I know where that came from!' You can only write from personal experience; have to be careful what you say though."

Two years ago Sophisticated Boom Boom were supposed to play Newcastle. It was cancelled because Tricia was appearing in a play the



same night. Bizarre as it may seem, she was the witch of the piece. She apologises, admitting it 'takes 10-15 years to become a famous actor, whereas it only takes 3-4 in a band to be a famous 'popstar.'

"Even if we do nothing again we've been lucky to do enough to tell our grandchildren." ponders Jackie. She had the cheek to write 'Duran Duran rule OK' on my notebook. The worst was, she meant it.

The band have enough songs to skip a debut single release, and just do an LP. They feel able to do an LP. How immediate this is, depends on any labels. CBS are likely contenders. Laura gets the last quote, "It's good to have been together for two years or so. You have a better idea of what you want to do. If we get signed up we should have a better idea of what we want to do."

SIMON MCKAY

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## SWALLOW TONGUE - GOT TO BE THERE

A cover of a Jackson 5 song. The emphasis seems to be directed at the chorus. This I find a bit offputting. A very pleasant, listenable record; competent, safe and very commercial. The B side 'Hitch Up Honey' is a contrast, but does not show a radical difference. It shows more character, as the pattern of the song is not so rigid, and thus I found it more enjoyable.



Big Country having played through their set with all the fervour of U2 (minus the acrobatics on the balcony), retired to the dressing rooms for a wee dram.

The usual rousing anthems of "Fields of Fire" and "In a Big Country" were ecstatically received particularly by the mass at the front. Smokey Robinson's "Tracks of my Tears" gave relief from the usual thumping beat and guitar arrangements typifying their music. Wor bonny Stuart commented that although none of them came from around Newcastle, they'd been made to feel like real Geordies".

After a short breather and reunion with his son, Calum and wife, Sandra Stuart and Co. venture out to meet the

# BIG COUNTRY

fans in the lobby. That over with, Stuart emerges, garbling a load of unintelligible Scottish garbled as "I'll be wi' ya in a minute girl..."

Stuart having disappeared, bassist and backing vocalist comes to my aid.

During the gig Stuart had said that this was the first time Big Country had played Newcastle; as they'd already played Dingwalls and The Tube, I asked Tony what had been meant:-

TONY: Yeah, well last time we played- the only times we've been to Newcastle- one was to play at Dingwalls which was more or less when we first started out and the second time was when we came to The Tube, but we've not really done any kind of decent-sized gig so this is like our first time-I mean 'cos Newcastle got missed out on our last tour and we'd thought that if we were going to do a six week tour at least we'd get to Newcastle, but for some reason it got missed out and the nearest we got was Sunderland.

ESN: So it was just a matter of size?

TONY: Yeah...but it's not really how big the hall is, I mean we're not into that big ego thing at all. It's just that last time we played Dingwalls it was very small, hardly advertised -a few people turned up and they had a great time anyway but we knew that there was a lot of people here now that wanted to see us.

ESN: How would you compare Dingwalls with something like tonight?

TONY: It made us realise that we were right in the first place and it's just great to come here and know that people want to see us and enjoy us and we want to come here and play and enjoy it as well. It just makes for a happy thing all round.

ESN: There seemed to be a lot more confidence flowing through the band than the last time I saw you at Phoenix Park. Is that because of more chart success, the venue or what?

TONY: Well, we haven't really had that much more chart success after Phoenix Park than we had before.

ESN: Are you receiving a better reaction in Scotland?

TONY: You're bound to get more...what's the word?...I don't know. It's just different in Scotland. Audiences are great everywhere, I don't want to put the English or British down, but they have a different attitude.

ESN: It must be like U2 in Ireland!

TONY: Or Juluka in South Africa!

ESN: They're getting chucked out aren't they?

TONY: Yeah, I think so. Anyway, it's because we're an Anglo-Scottish group that it's hard for people to believe that we're half Scottish and half English, but if people want to regard us as a Scottish group, it doesn't matter, they can regard us as an English band, a British band or what the hell they want as long as they enjoy us!

ESN: The band puts across a Scots image though with all the tartan shirts, celtic guitars etc..

TONY: It never was a purported image though. It was never done specifically to do that.

ESN: Are you going to play America?

TONY: Yes, we're off to America in October. What that means for us is that we're going to take our music to whoever wants to listen to it and we've been told that the Americans want to hear our music so we're going over there, it's the same with Europe, same with Japan, we're all human beings, everybody has the right to share our music if they like it and if we're the ones playing it then it's up to us to travel. It's like us standing outside signing autographs; I think it's something that groups should do, it's something they should not shun. The fans don't pay 5 or 6 pounds to see a production like this and then be shunned at the end of it. It's a waste. There shouldn't be any mystique about this at all. The only that should be a mystique should be the individuals private life which I don't think anybody's got the right to pry into, but anything about the group "Big Country" people should be allowed access to.

I just feel it's a shame that other groups don't adopt...It's like...I feel wrong saying they should adopt the attitude, it shouldn't be an attitude, it should be natural. I mean, obviously we do stay out for an hour signing autographs and things now,

but there's going to come a time, maybe next time we tour England, when we won't be able to do that because there's going to come a time when there'll just be so many, and we'll be signing autographs longer than we'll actually be on-stage playing so it's going to be a case of maybe doing samples and taking a few people every night and seeing them rather than seeing everybody. But, we'll have to push ourselves to the limit before we can start winding down.

ESN: I suppose if you get too big, it'll become too impersonal anyway, because of the size of the halls etc.

TONY: Well, actually that's something we're going to try and aim to control.

ESN: Even in America?

TONY: Even in America. I mean there's no way we're going to play stadiums. This band will definitely no longer exist before we start playing stadiums, and I know how every individual in this group hates that situation, to the extent that we don't care if it means us losing a million copies of sales. Christ, we can always go on the dole like everybody else.

SIU OLIVER

#### PINK INDUSTRY—WHO TOLD YOU, YOU WERE NAKED?

Pink Industry, have been around for a few years under other names and different phases of music. WHO TOLD YOU, YOU WERE NAKED? is raw enough to be a debut LP. As a response to big productions that is the point: Marked by the basic packaging. Quite a sophisticated record considering it was recorded on a two track in Ambrose's living room. The vocals do have a living room sound to them. I cannot think of a more appropriate place to listen to the LP though.

The tracks contrast slowly. 'Walk Away' is instantly appealing, this starts side one. 'Urban Jazz' ends the side. The BBC may be interested in this track for one of their 'sound effects' LP's. What category they would use puzzles me.

Jayne uses her voice in different ways; sings, chants groans and croaks. The rhythms change as new sounds are introduced. The LP is not a slight rearrangement of standard instruments and chords: It could qualify as a BBC 'sound effects' LP.

Somebody in the record company's advertising department made a balls up though. They forgot to promote the LP's main gimmick. Did you know certain records can induce your record player to act as an air conditioner?

# NEW MODEL ARMY

New Model Army, definitely a three word band, have recently released their second 'smash hit' single 'GREAT EXPECTATIONS'. I did not expect the band to comment on the single with this statement. "Recorded at Greenhouse Studio. Produced by Tim Farry, who is a prat and the studio was shit. Mark Angelo rescued the A side by way of remixing. Dar record company budgeted against a remixing of the B side. They stood over our shoulders as Mark was doing all those wonderful mixes reminding us 'Time please'.

A much relieved Stuart, bass (lots of them... all at once), speaks.

"We nearly cried when we heard the two in comparison. What if the first one had gone out?"

Justin, guitar strumming and vocals, with looks alone is striking fear into the hearts of the bravest rock journalists. Even Uncle John expressed his reserve at first. This is all unjustified. One of Justin's 'terrifying' characteristics is the gap in his front teeth. The band's sound man has explained to Justin that more treble is needed on his microphone's sound balance to compensate for the gap. There are cynics who would be surprised that Justin says N.M.A. are too soft with their record company. I do not think the band are prepared to be so pliable in future. The single was a close thing as they say.

Justin grabs me in a headlock, and earns a quote.

"I do not see myself as a musician. Stuart is, he can play anything. Technically, I can't play that well. I am more of a lyricist. I enjoy singing, but I am not a natural. One percent of the people are tone deaf and will never sing a note. Another percent are born singers like; Diana Ross and Michael Jackson. The rest can sing a bit. The more you go at it the better you become learning the restrictions of your voice. I am one of the masses.

What a band plays is taken as less important than what they look like. A band is expected to have a frontman. He should have a good haircut and be good at interviews. We all have different haircuts." (Humour). "We have completely different interests in music. We all fit together



though, like pieces of a jigsaw; perfectly. Socially we don't necessarily stick together though."

Rob, the grappling-gun-like drummer adds, "The motive of N.M.A. is not to be a famous band, rather be a good band. Not to say we don't want fame and fortune, because we do: Recognition, big crowds and a bit of money."

"It's good to be a working band. Playing is the end as much as the means," adds Justin.

"There are other ways we could make money. We do this because we enjoy it. Once we stop enjoying it, will be the time to pack in," continues Rob.

Justin and Stuart do most of the song-writing between them. They take the music seriously, but not necessarily themselves. (Justin admits the band do not have a lot of cool). A song will not be performed half-finished or nearly finished. New Model Army are professional on stage. Justin talks about the construction of the band's songs.

"I used to be naive enough to think you had to shout and scream as loud as possible to get power in a song, and that singing is losing power. Like an instrument; a voice should be used quietly at times too, and build up. It is very dull for a band to convey only one emotion. Most of our songs are about different things. One is 'Spirit of The Falklands', that is a straightforward political song. 'Young Gifted and Skint' is a song close to our hearts of course; about owing money out and having none to give. We

try and put loads of different ideas into a song, making everyone sound different to an extent. When we construct a song if we realise there is a rhythm we've used before, we won't use it again. We're restricted to an extent being a three piece. We are going to introduce keyboards and bass pedals for Stuart." (I am frequently told Stuart can learn to play anything instantly!) "It's down to the whole thing about being interested in music and not just the game."

The band have been touring with an extended set. They are about to finish four or five new songs. Presumably, some of the older songs will get the chop. I wondered if the new songs would reflect a radical change. Justin summarises.

"We didn't have a direction before, so I cannot see it progressing in a certain line. I can see it changing, but I do not know where it will go."

SIMON MCKAY

