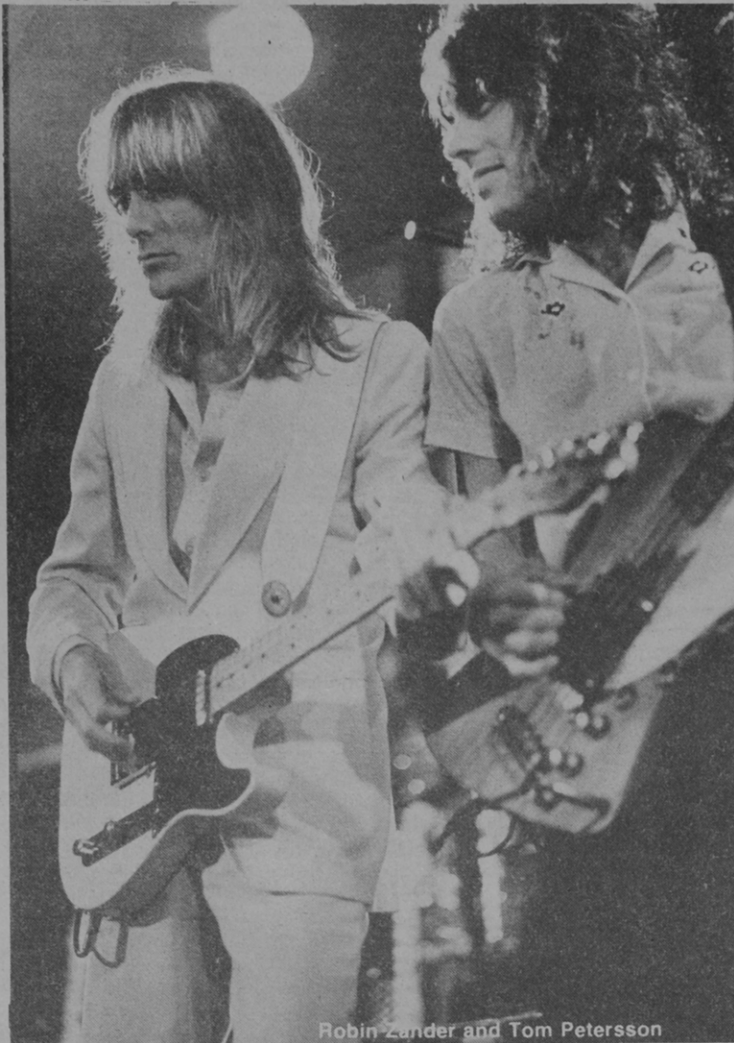


RECORDS All This And Heaven Too?



Robin Zander and Tom Petersson



Bun E. Carlos and Rick Nielsen

Cheap Trick Heaven Tonight Epic

Although their approach is different, Cheap Trick, like the Twilley Band, the old Raspberries and the Shake Some Action/Now Flamin' Groovies, are a contemporary American band drawing many of their ideas and moods from the diverse '60's British scene. Yet despite their obsessive borrowing from the Beatles/Who/Move vein of achievement, there are signs that Cheap Trick are managing to develop something of their own mainly through the sweat of chief songwriter/guitarist Rick Nielsen.

Nielsen is an eccentric character whose gawky Marx Brothers image is in direct contrast to the pin-up features of vocalist Robin Zander and bassist Tom Petersson, and whose bizarre lyrical slant gives the band an original edge. This much came out on their second album *In Colour* which, although uneven, contained some exhilarating songs, namely "Southern Girls", "Big Eyes", "Come On" and "Downed" which boasted some of Nielsen's wackiest lyrics:

*I'm gonna live on a mountain
Way down under in Australia,*

*It's either that or suicide
It's such a strange strain on ya.*

Heaven Tonight sees Cheap Trick steppin' out more confidently and consistently, intent, it seems, on becoming household names. "Surrender", their new single, opens the album and immediately Nielsen's Townshend guitar style and Zander's classic pop vocal technique become obvious; all these to a knee-slapping chorus and lyrics like "Then I woke up, Mom and Dad are rolling on the couch Rolling numbers Rock and rolling, got my Kiss records out," and it's got to be one of the best 45's so far this year. "On Top of the World" with its jumpy rhythm belies the hard luck story in the lyrics, in fact Nielsen seems to prefer a half-humorous downer touch in his words. "California Man" is done well but the Move did all that needed to be done with that song. *Way* get sex and a hard driving Stones' feel (sic) on "High Roller" and tongue is well and truly in cheek for the word-play of "Auf Wiedersehen", "Sayonara oh suicide hari kari kamikaze." See what I mean.

Side Two provides a sharper focus as to Cheap Trick's influences to the extent where it is actually possible to pinpoint specific old British classics from which Nielsen and Co have stolen,

or recreated odd pieces as a basis for their 'own' songs. The title track, slow and threatening, is built around Lennon's tortured guitar refrain on "I Want You" from *Abbey Road*; the closing song, "How Are You", bears a close rhythmic resemblance to "A Day in the Life Of"; "Stiff Competition" has a rushing chord structure which the Who had prior claim to, and "Takin' Me Back", a great song, has an arrangement and vocal delivery that Jeff Lynne would have been proud to call his own, and probably did, when he heard this.

It's easy to be negative over Cheap Trick's hero-worship plagiarism but they are saved from a landslide of lawsuits through their ability to arrange the ideas of others with snatches of Nielsen's nifty melodic twists and turns. In fact, Cheap Trick show more gusto and sheer nerve on *In Colour* and *Heaven Tonight* than most bands can muster during entire careers. If you can suspend judgement on their passion for re-creating British rock standards and concentrate on their own fresh qualities, then Cheap Trick will serve quite adequately as this year's palliative.

George Kay

obviously did not possess the raw menace of The Sex Pistols. Indeed the musical debt The Rats owed to the likes of Bruce Springsteen, Lou Reed and Dr Feelgood was all too apparent. So much so that, despite its melodic strength and powerful execution, it was far from satisfying in terms of originality.

All this has changed with the new album. In places it is quite boldly original with apparent experimentation in both melodies and arrangements. This is a risky proposition for a band which cut its teeth on hard rock and conventional balladry, but it works well. To make the transition more palatable for the cautious, the set includes some familiar rock'n'roll swagger in "Blind Date" and The Rats' patented power chord race on "She's So Modern".

But there is a lighter pop feel to much of the new material. This is best displayed on "Don't Believe What You Read" and "Can't Stop", where Johnny Fingers' excellent keyboards are to the fore with all their tuneful bounce. Also new for the band are the appealing calypso overtones of "Living In An Island" and the choppy rhythms of "Like Clockwork".

The songs may be lighter but there's no chance of the delivery becoming flabby. Always just below the surface is the unmistakable ripple of true rock'n'roll brawn. Simon Crowe on drums and Peter Bricquette on bass know what hard tight rhythm is all about and they're supported by the rugged power of Garry Roberts' rhythm guitar. Garry also contributes the guitar solo on "She's So Modern" which is a gem of tunefulness and really good fun besides. Gerry Cott who holds the lead guitar spot scorns the buzz saw approach. With his grasp of the guitar's more melodic potential he serves as an excellent foil to Fingers' keyboards.

Vocalist Bob Geldoff's pursuit of Mick Jagger's crown takes him well over the top at times but you've got to admire the man's enthusiasm. Modest Bob's lyrics are usually worth a listen too. But he simply can't resist imitations. This time out it's Phil Lynott of Thin Lizzy in a number called "Rat Trap".

This is the first *true* Boomtown Rats L.P. On the showing given here they remain a band to watch. Though the apparent potential is still greater than the actual achievement, this is not an album to be dismissed lightly.

Dominic Free



Genya Ravan

Genya Ravan Urban Desire 20th Century Fox Records

How can this seductive street animal, with her glycerine sweat and tattooed stars, qualify for the status of rock and roll veteran? But Genya Ravan (once Goldie Zelkowitz of Goldie and the Gingerbreads) has been around since before most of us got long pants.

Starting off in a New York group led by Richard Perry, now a not unknown producer, Genya went on to fame with the all-girl Gingerbreads, touring with such luminaries as the Animals and the Stones. Later she cropped up with a brassy soul band, Ten Wheel Drive, before dropping out of sight.

Now she's back with a superb self-produced (she's produced the Dead Boys) album that could be one of the all-time sleepers.

Vocally, her phrasing is based heavily on the best soul singers. She exudes power, but beyond the incendiary drive of a "Back in My Arms Again" she can conjure up the heartbreak of one of Phil Spector's heroines.

In fact, the opening "Jerry's Pigeons (Are Above Us All)" has the thrust of Spector at his best. As the song fades, Genya starts crooning lines from "Da Doo Ron Ron" that "sound" like an afterthought, but they're so perfect they can't be.

The song seems to sum up the album, a New York tenement view of rock and roll, just as the neglected Kenny Vance album *Vance 32* was rock from behind the eyes of a doo-wopper. Vance's album deserved better than relegation to the deletion bins, but perhaps it was a trifle on the esoteric side.

Genya Ravan, on the other hand, is pure, straight ahead raunch. As a bonus, Lou Reed duets on a track. The blistering heat generated by Genya Ravan and her superlative backing band are a perfect complement to the icy Lou.

Ken Williams

Who Must Change

Who Are You The Who Polydor

In all fairness, I ought to state my prejudices now. My favourite Who albums are *Who's Next* and *Quadrophenia* — most of *Tommy* brings me out in hives.

I suspect that those fans whose tastes incline the same way as mine will love this record. Those who are looking for *My Generation Part VI* or another *Tommy* are pretty much out of luck. You will probably fit in with that portion of the press in Britain which has taken *Who Are You* as a sign of collective senility on the part of the band — a sign that they can't get up and do it even one more time. However, that attitude begs the question of whether they have any intention of trying.

The album kicks off with Townshend's statement about those knockers — "New Song". He says, "I write the same old song with a few new lines, and everybody wants to cheer it..." Townshend at least is determined not to end up like some of his contemporaries, eternally recycling the same old song (despite what some of his audience might want). The rest of the record seems to be an attempt to live up to the promise of its opener.

There are obvious innovations throughout. John Entwistle contributes three songs out of the nine here, and at times he makes startling departures from his usual 707 bass style. Keith Moon also has times when his playing is unrecognisable as the Moon of old — sharp and crisp where once he might have been florid.

Townshend returns to synthesiser — adding touches which link *Who Are You* closely to



Quadrophenia. He also displays a remarkable advance in piano technique over his previous forays. His playing on "Guitar and Pen" is especially accomplished — showing out as well as Rod Argent's contribution to the title track. Even his guitar playing shows touches not visible on previous Who albums: he verges on jazz stylings in "Music Must Change", for example.

Roger Daltry is in many ways the least convincing performer on the album: in fact both Entwistle on "905", and Townshend on "Guitar and Pen" turn in vocal performances which, while less 'grand' and technically impressive than Daltry's, have the humanity that seems to have drained from his voice a little. In some ways he is the performer who maintains the strongest links with the old Who.

The album closes with Townshend holding forth on the subject which has obsessed him for two years or more — punks. While so many are

acknowledging him as the source of the English New Wave, he is still canny enough not to be tempted into an imitation of his twenty-one year-old self. "Who are You" is something for the punks to aim at, not something for them to feel at home with. It combines all the advances made on the record boiled down into one song — with everyone turning in a performance unmatched since "Won't Get Fooled Again".

Keith Moon doesn't need an epitaph — but I still feel glad that his last record with the Who should be this good.

Francis Stark

No Traps For Rats

The Boomtown Rats A Tonic For The Troops Ensign

It would be something of an understatement to say that 1977 was a year full of promising debuts by new bands. But if past experience is anything to go by, for every band to make it with a strong second offering there will be at least two who blow it. The Boomtown Rats make it with *A Tonic For The Troops* but not without playing with fire.

Though The Rats titled themselves "The Sex Pistols Of Ireland" when they emerged in 1976, the resemblance between the two bands was certainly not musical. Rather it was a reference to a common history of attempts by the rock music establishment to first ignore and later to stifle these noisy, energetic newcomers. Matters were not improved by The Rats' spokesman, Bob Geldorf, having one of the fastest lips in town.

When their debut album appeared last year it