



ingfield standard "Stay Awhile" to the grittier Sternberg tunes like "Suspended Animation" and "Cuckoo Clock" and then right on down to

pure country/pop.

Lene Lovich, by comparison (which is hardly a good idea) is playing with a completely different set of tricks. Where Rachel is coy, cute and quite possibly a pain in the arse, Lene plumps for the aged and proven enigma formula. She won't even reveal her nationality, for Chrissakes, although word has it that she too is an American.

But there's more to separate the two than Ms Lovich's secrecy or even her kooky, feet-long plaits. There's not a jot of the Yankee country sleaze on Lene's debut album, *Stateless*. And it's far more of a total component too, with co-writer/companion, Les Chappell contributing a fair amount to production.

With a few exceptions — notably Nick Lowe's "Tonight" and the re-working of the already re-worked-by-The-Rubinoos "I Think We're Alone

Now" — almost all the tracks on *Stateless* are written by Lovich and Chappell. It seems she favours her own tunes above the others; she sings them harder and harsher in a voice not unlike Television's Tom Verlaine or, with a stretch of the proverbial imagination, a tuneless Patti Smith. In addition to the backing provided by Chappell (guitar), Nicky Plytas (keyboards), Bobbi Irwin (drums), Ron Francois (bass) and Jeff Smith (synthesizer), Lene herself plays a fair saxophone, though not a great deal of it.

NME has, rather curiously methinks, compared both Lene Lovich and Rachel Sweet with Deborah Harry from Blondie. Results were favourable on both counts. Which doesn't really mean that either of these women are stunners. But they're sure as hell not whippy.

Louise Chunn

SWEET & LOVICH

Lene Lovich and Rachel Sweet are the only women currently signed to Stiff Records. Although distinctly different from one another, both have managed to avoid what seems to have become the prevalent pitfall for a lady at the mic; neither of them is a 'whimpy woman' singer of the doe-eyed, sugared-up voice variety. And that's a relief.

Rachel Sweet first. At 4'11" and 16 years of age, Rachel Sweet is something of a phenomenon in the business. Sure, her hometown Akron, Ohio and numerous American cities undoubtedly produce girls of her ilk with terrifying regularity. What's rare is that a girl like that — the drum majorette, the star jock's girlfriend — should end up touring Britain with the likes of Wreckless Eric, should sign with a record company which also promotes a somewhat degenerate Cockney cripple. But, as far as Ms Sweet is concerned, it's all a part of the bid for fame and fortune.

Rachel Sweet started in show biz at the age of 5. Seven years and several TV commercials later, she toured the States as the support act for Mickey Rooney. At 12 she made her first recording, a country single which flopped badly. Her next effort, a tune culled from seven she recorded with Ray Baker in Nashville, hit the American Country Charts; it reached No 94.

But the answer to her dreams proved to be lurking far closer to home. Long-time friend and neighbour in Akron was Liam Sternberg, producer of Stiff Records' *Akron Compilation*. He included Rachel in the local talent recorded for that disc and went on to produce her first album late in 1978.

Critical reaction to *Fool Around* was mostly favourable. NME was impressed, saying she sang like a 'girl re-incarnated' and praising her subject matter — anything that was adolescent, female and twittish. But, as Ms Sweet says, *Fool Around* is a 'showcase' — a selection of all that is possible. Which takes us from the Dusty Spr-

BE STIFF UK Tour (Oct-Nov '78) — Left to right: Lene, Mickey, Rachel, Jona and Wreckless Eric.



WHO'S STIFF?

Ian Dury

One of the better known personalities who has, unlike Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe, remained within the Stiff stable once the going got better.

Ian Dury started out with Kilburn and The High Roads; his time with The Blockheads marks a second time round success. *New Boots and Panties*, his one and only album, remained in the English charts longer than anything else but Abba; "Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick" did similarly stupendous things as a single.

Albums: *New Boots and Panties!!* (Stiff, 1977)

Mickey Jupp

On the scene for many years now, Mickey Jupp is one of those curiosities who "for some reason known only to God and the fates, has been passed over while lesser men achieve fame and fortune." (Max Bell of NME)

His influence as singer and songwriter has been felt by such notables as Eddie and the Hot Rods and Dr Feelgood whose "Down At The Doctors" is a Jupp original. And the albums recorded by his previous band, Legend, are now collectors' items.

Jupp was signed to Stiff Records last year.

Following critical approval of a compilation album of old Legend material, he recorded *Juppanese* in August of 1978. Pressed in blue vinyl for the colour conscious, it features Nick Lowe as producer on one side and Gary Brooker for the other.

Albums: *The Mickey Jupp Legend* (Stiff, 1978); *Juppanese* (Stiff, 1978)

Jona Lewie

Keyboards man Jona Lewie was a founding member of Brett Marvin and the Thunderbolts. In 1972 they changed their name to Terry Dactyl and the Dinosaurs and, with the Lewie composition "Seaside Shuffle", rose to the top of the charts. And that was that.

Now Jona writes and produces all his material for Stiff Records. Providing a clue to the content: his latest single, "The Baby, She's on the Street", was described as "a cross between Fats Domino and Kraftwerk".

Albums: *On the Other Hand There's A Fist* (Stiff, 1978).

Lene Lovich

Born in Detroit, Lene Lovich studied sculpture at art school in England. There she joined The Diversions, a soul band featuring Les Chappell, currently her guitarist and co-writer.

When The Diversions split up she signed with Stiff, recording *Stateless* with Chappell, Nick Plytas and two of the Sinceros, Ron Francois and Bobby Irwin.

Late last year, with Jona Lewie, Mickey Jupp, Wreckless Eric and Rachel Sweet, Lene Lovich toured Britain on Stiff Records' chartered train. This was followed by eight nights at the Bottom Line in New York with the Be Stiff crew, then a British tour as the headliner earlier this year.

The release of her first single — "Lucky Number" — came at about this time; in the second week of release it had already reached the Top 20.

Albums: *Stateless* (Stiff, 1978)

The Rumour

Best known for their support of Graham

Parker, The Rumour have always remained a band in their own right. They came together in the mid-seventies, after assorted beginnings which included the ill-fated and much-maligned Brinsley Schwarz amongst other outfits.

In 1975 Parker and The Rumour fell upon one another in a London pub; they have played together since. This partnership has not prevented The Rumour from following their own directions. In 1977 Phonogram released their 'solo' album *Max*; Stiff Records are behind the latest contribution and also their first single, Brinsley Schwarz's "Frozen Years."

Albums: *Max* (Vertigo, 1977); *Frogs, Sprouts, Clogs and Krauts* (Stiff, 1979).

Rachel Sweet

Positively precocious, and only sixteen, Rachel Sweet hails from Akron, Ohio. In 1977 she recorded two tracks for Stiff's *Akron Compilation*, and soon after signed with Stiff Records.

Fool Around, her debut album, was produced by Liam Sternberg and features Brinsley Schwarz and members of Ian Dury's Blockheads. Single from the album, "B-A-B-Y", reached the Top 30 in the UK and was followed this year with "I Go To Pieces."

Albums: *Fool Around* (Stiff, 1978).

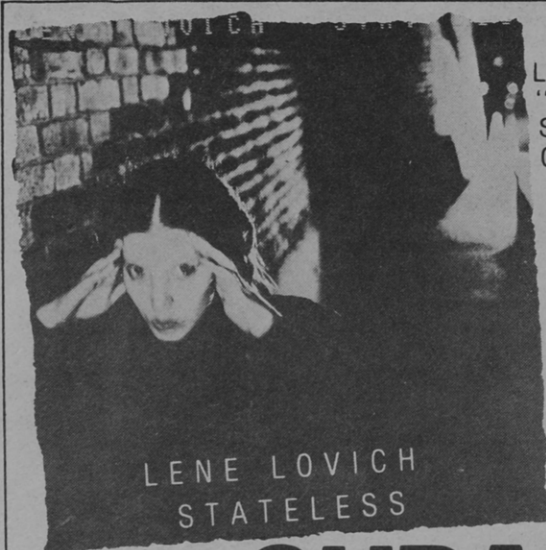
Wreckless Eric

Having just quit his job as a quality control inspector in a lemonade factory, Wreckless Eric, in late 1976, became one of the first to sign with the newly conceived Stiff Records.

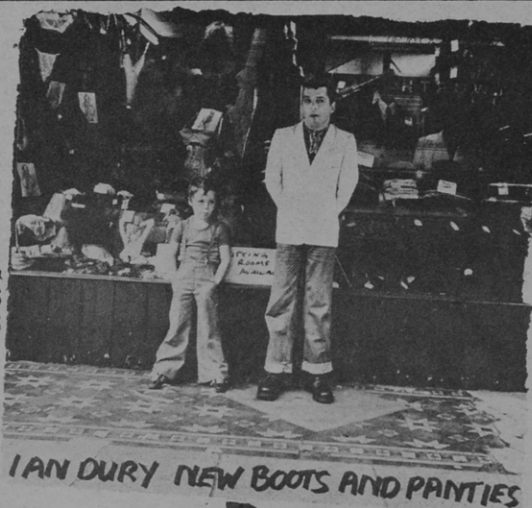
His musical background far from extensive, Eric has nevertheless featured heavily in the Stiff promotion, starting with a 45, "(I'd Go the) Whole Wide World" produced by Nick Lowe and a B-side, "Semaphore Signals", under Ian Dury.

Since then Wreckless Eric, with his band, The Firm, has recorded two albums, in addition to appearing on numerous Stiff compilation records.

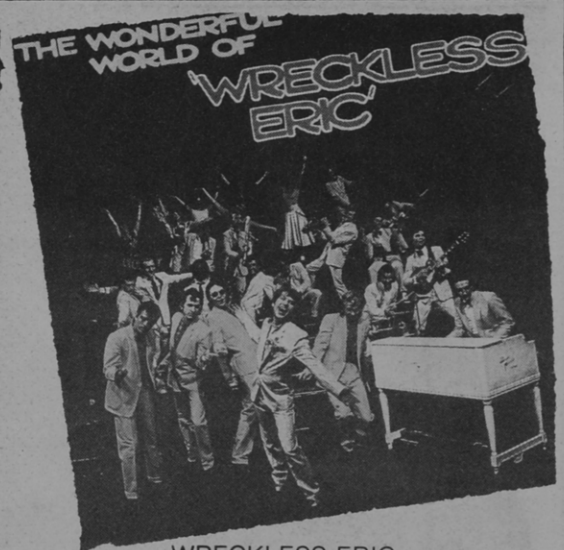
Albums: *Wreckless Eric* (Stiff, 1978); *The Wonderful World of Wreckless Eric* (Stiff, 1978).



LENE LOVICH
"STATELESS"
SEEZ 7
CSEEZ 7



IAN DURY &
THE BLOCKHEADS
"NEW BOOTS
& PANTIES"
SEEZ 4
CSEEZ 4



WRECKLESS ERIC
"THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF
WRECKLESS ERIC" SEEZ 9



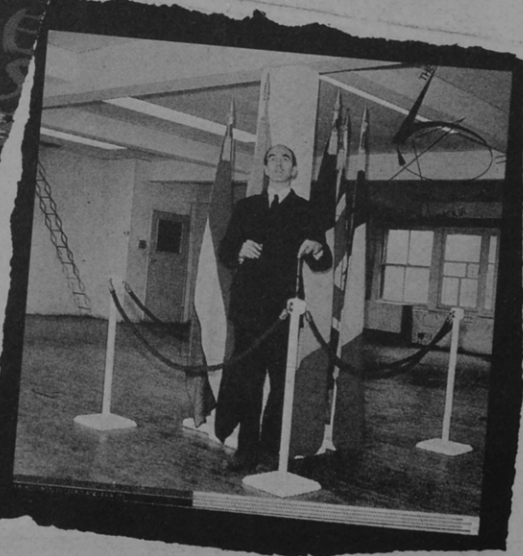
RACHEL SWEET
"FOOL AROUND" SEEZ 12



JONA LEWIE
"ON THE OTHER HAND
THERE'S A FIST" SEEZ 8

MICKEY JUPP
"JUPPANESE" SEEZ 10

THE RUMOUR
"FROGS SPROUTS CLOGS AND
KRAUTS" SEEZ 13



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