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the work of the serious Celtic stadium rockers.

It is well known in critical circles that U2 have been long-time Echo and the Bunnymen fans, and it is not extravagant to suggest that McCulloch's singing and songwriting and Will Sergeant's ringing guitar work left a mark on Bono and the Edge.

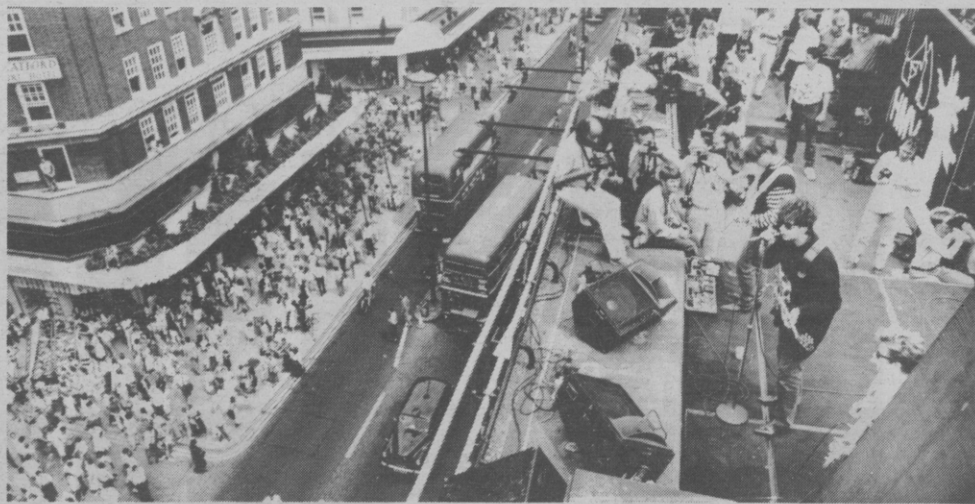
"With the new U2 LP," says McCulloch, "a lot of people came out and said there were traces of Echo in there, and I could see that. He's changed his style of singing a bit, under-playing certain things."

"I know they've all been fans of ours, except for *Ocean Rain*, presumably because it wasn't a rock album. Back then, I was thinking, wait until Bono and co hear this — they're still singing anthems!"

Don't misjudge McCulloch; he's not bitter or jealous of U2's success. "If there are going to be stadium bands, then better U2 than Foreigner. Their goal seems to be being the biggest rock band of the 80s. In the alphabet, they're already Z, I don't know where they can go from there."

The Bunnymen's goal is loftier than packing huge stadiums and pushing megamillion units.

"I'm ambitious in that I've always wanted to go down in history as being important, as being great, as having something," says McCulloch. "Not necessarily just on the music side, but to stamp our personality and individuality as people and as a group entity. We want people to say, That's Echo and the Bunnymen — they did it their way! That plus, They wrote 'Killing Moon,' is all I'd want or need to hear on my deathbed."



Bunnymen do rooftop concert in London.

Remote

Doing it their way has seen the Bunnymen play some of the most unlikely locales ever for rock 'n' roll — the remote Isle of Skye off Scotland, the Peak District, and London's historic Royal Albert Hall.

"I don't ever see us playing the really massive places," insists McCulloch. "It works for U2, because that is a one-dimensional rockist thing, with everyone joining in. But we're about fragility as much as power. You have to be able to hear a pin drop when we're doing 'Ocean Rain' or 'Killing Moon.'"

"A football pitch is a football pitch." Fragility coupled with power. That is just about the essence of the Echo sound.

McCulloch's inspirations are Leonard Cohen, Jacques Brel, Lou Reed and Jim Morrison, which helps account for the poetic thrust of his lyrics and vocals.

The Doors are the reference point most commonly tossed McCulloch's way.

"I only really started listening to them after people said I sounded like Jim Morrison. If someone said you sounded like Frank Partridge, you'd probably make more of an effort to hear Frank Partridge, whoever he is!"

"Originally, I couldn't see the comparison. The Doors were very bluesy, whereas we were always more choppy, more English. Maybe it is the phrasing. First, I had wanted to sound like David Bowie, but gradually I thought, yes, Morrison does sound like a man, doesn't he, whereas the Bowie voice was more ethereal, more outer-space. I guess I got more into the earthy, manly side."

Libido

The erotic and sensual are of increasing appeal to Ian McCulloch; marriage and fatherhood (a year-old daughter) don't seem to have diminished the lad's libido.

"I like that sexy element more than ever now. It is more important than proving you're a moody young man, and it gets people going! Learning not to be precious is something I've learned since *Ocean Rain*."

The Doors' legend clearly retains a potent attraction for McCulloch. A magazine ad for the best-selling *Doors Live* video catches his eye — "Is this from when Jim was still the

Lizard King?" he enquires.

Turns out Ray Manzarek is a big Echo and the Bunnymen fan, and he persuaded them to cover the Doors' classic 'People are Strange' for the soundtrack of the vampire film *The Lost Boys* (Manzarek produced the song also).

"If he sees nothing wrong with us doing a Doors' song, I don't see why anyone else would," says McCulloch.

Even if the Bunnymen hop becomes hip in the States, don't expect McCulloch and his comrades to desert their beloved Merseyside home.

"Liverpool is a beautiful place, it is not bleak at all, and I hate it being portrayed as such," says McCulloch, referring to the "dead end streets" image of the city given in films like *No Surrender* and *Letter to Brezhnev*.

He's fiercely proud of the city and its people. "They're probably the cleverest people in England. Even the stupidest people have learned to get by. They should channel that and take over England, or move Parliament from London to Liverpool."

Defiance

When his local, left-wing city council openly defied the Tory government, McCulloch says he was "quite proud, even though they turn out as much bullshit as Downing Street. I just thought it funny that of all places to say no, it had to be Liverpool."

The hypocrisy of politicians as well as television evangelists is the theme of 'All in Your Mind,' a new song that fits the American controversies superbly: "All you thieving wheeler dealers in the healing zone..."

Similarly, an early Echo favourite 'All That Jazz' was aimed at "potential fascists and left-wingers — that flock of sheep out there that are led through their lives. 'See you at the barricades babe' was a bit of a rip-off of Paul Simon's line 'Slip out the back, Jack.' It was a fanciful way of saying something slightly heavy."

Not that this is a message band. Mood and atmosphere take precedence, or as McCulloch was recently quoted as saying, "I'd rather be known as a good singer than a writer of obscure metaphysical poetry!"

"I want to be singing when I'm 40 [he's now 28], but I don't know what style. Yes, maybe Jacques Brel or Leonard Cohen — his last album was *brill!*"

Here's one Echo that intends to fade away slowly and gracefully.

Kerry Doole

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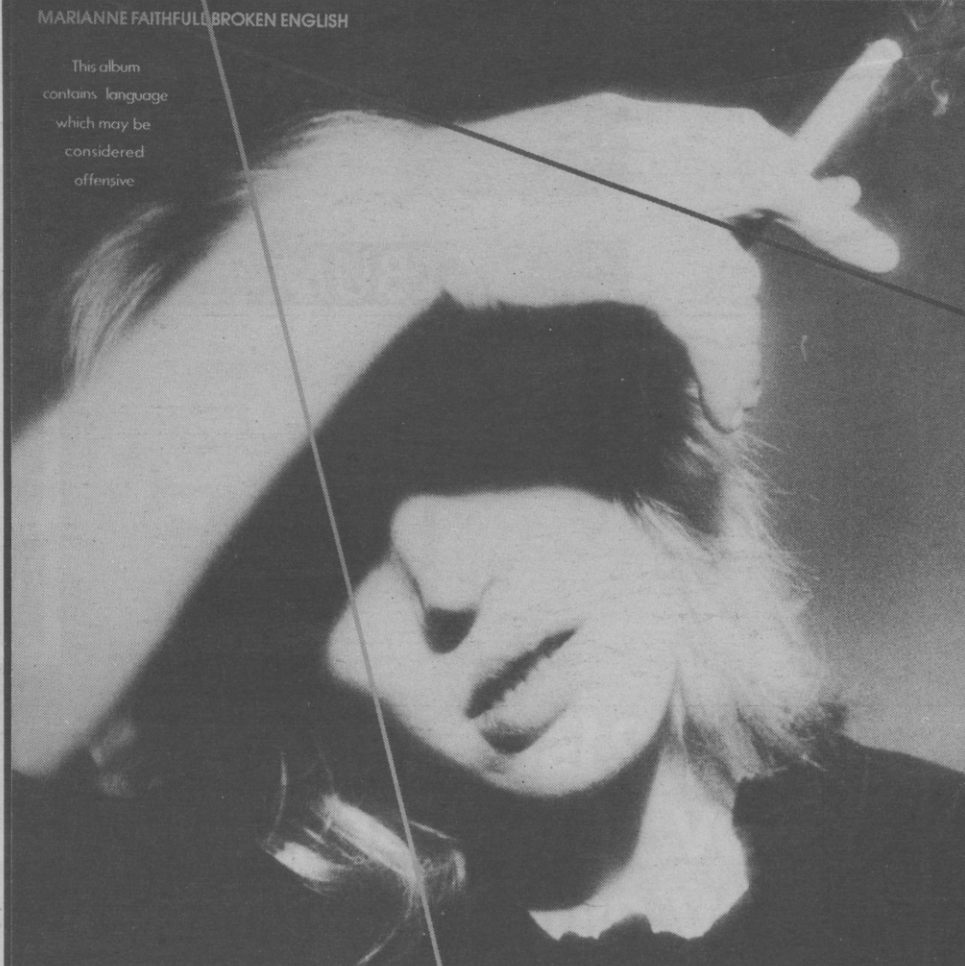
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