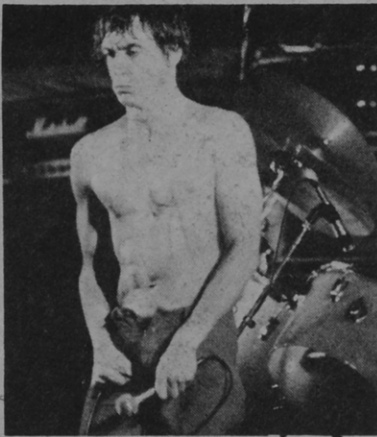




The Beat



Iggy Pop

THE BEAT
CBS
20/20
PORTRAIT

Those disappointed the Knack couldn't build on the promise of their first album with the studiously frantic and overdone *But The Little Girls Understand* will find more than adequate compensation with this pair. Overseas claims that both 20/20 and the Beat have been influenced by the Knack are surely false — they're much closer to pre-Knack bands like Dwight Twilley — but what the Knack should be given credit for is opening the floodgates for these bands to pour through. And there will be many more like this before 1980 is over, advance reports suggesting the Plimsouls could top them all.

Stripped down, there really isn't a whole lot of difference between these two. Former Beach Boys engineer Earle Mankey (his "Mau Mau" single is worth importing) is allowed to encroach on 20/20 a little with his penchant for studio sound gimmickry, but they keep on top of him enough of the time to let their basic strengths shine through. Bruce Botnick did the Beat, and his producing filter is ultimately the better one.

Both bands diet unashamedly on the 60s, 20/20 even throwing in some needless whispering about Paul being dead on the fadeout to the otherwise thoroughly loveable "Tell Me Why". There are, it seems, other 'Beatle clues' on the album, but I haven't bothered looking for them. 20/20 say they went for the textured harmonies of the Hollies, but it's the Beat who actually sound more like them — given the added maturation in guitar power from 1965 England to 1979 America. Both bands sing and harmonise well.

The Beat rose out of San Francisco's Nerves, who sold 10,000 copies of an EP in 1977 that included a version of "Hangin' On The Telephone". The record was given to Blondie in an attempt to get support work, but Blondie told them the song sucked. As did the band. Six months later Blondie had a hit with it.

The Beat shouldn't have to worry about such might-have-beens now. Their debut contains music Blondie — and many others — should trade limbs for. Only one ballad, and that doesn't work, but a fistful of sparkling pop-rockers with great gangling guitar middles and unavoidable hooks.

20/20 are about 3½ tracks short of being really nifty. They suffer more from the American pop-rock group malaise of racing hastily into the studio with only three-quarters of an album than the Beat (the 'okay-We've-finished-the-album-where-are-the-girls' syndrome) but they do have some real goodies on the first side.

Neither the Beat nor 20/20 sound as desperate to be seen to actually belong to this new trend as the Knack. They both have the spirit of 1965 off pretty good, and if they add an inventiveness they currently only suggest they might manage, then the 1980s could be a lot of fun. We might even get back to singles.

Roy Colbert

PUBLIC IMAGE LTD
SECOND EDITION
VIRGIN

Pre-conceptions are dangerous as they can lead to a set of narrow and unfair judgements of an artist's next move.

When Johnny Rotten turned his back on the Sex Pistols everybody expected him to initiate a Mk Two version of the prototype. Certainly, few were ready for PIL but both bands were similar in that they were fuelled by his desire to react against the accepted state of rock'n'roll. The Pistols were a jolt in 1977 and PIL are a jolt in 1980 and their real value lies in their ability to undermine the complacency and predictability that the music scene slumps into.

Right from the outset Lydon, and co were savagely satirising the record industry's procedure and norms. Anti-image, anti-commercial and deliberately esoteric in their outlook, PIL shrugged off any hopes of head-banging with their first album — bare and sneering. It was hardly rock'n'roll said the 'fans' but the critics liked it because it seemed/sounded significant.

The second album (available in Metal Box

form on import for forty bucks or as the *Second Edition* locally pressed for fifteen bucks) like the first will send the same people running for cover and the same critics delving even deeper into the superlatives. Suffice to say it is an impressive though difficult album to enjoy.

Lydon is as caustic as ever but vocally he's levelled his sneer to a more matter-of-fact phrasing especially on "Albatross", where, lyrically, he seems to be referring to the McLaren and Sex Pistols' schtick. And on "No Birds" he takes a well-aimed blow at suburban tranquility:

*Bland planned idle luxury
A caviar of silent dignity.*

But ultimately the album's emphasis lies in the music. Keith Levine's guitar scrapes and claws like chalk over blackboard, the only suitable backdrop for Lydon's cynicism. Yet it is Wobble's persistent bass which provides the heart of the music particularly on "Albatross" and "The Suit". On "Radio" the band arm themselves with synthesisers and create a lush expanse of muzak as a dig at the inoffensiveness of the medium in question. They can be humorous too.

Second Edition is a marked improvement on their first album and it is, at least, an album to be respected as an attitude even though you may find the music uncomfortable. It's meant to be, listen to it.

George Kay

WARREN ZEVON
BAD LUCK STREAK
IN DANCING SCHOOL
ASYLUM

The image of a sub machine gun lying on a pair of pink ballet shoes catches the almost-schizophrenic quality of Warren Zevon's new album. How else can one describe an album that has a smattering of Stravinsky-like string interludes between songs which are firmly in a rock idiom?

The album has the same duality of style that made itself felt in Zevon's previous work. Some well-turned imagery distinguishes laments such as "Empty-Handed Heart", whilst in songs like "Play It All Night Long" Zevon lets the rather black humour of the song speak for itself:

*Grandpa pissed his pants again
He don't give a damn
Brother Billy has both guns drawn
He ain't been right since Vietnam*

There is a strong humorous streak in the album — songs like "Gorilla, You're a Desperado" with modern man exchanging his LA apartment for a zoo cage and letting his simian friend try to cope with modern living. And then there are Jackson Browne and Rick Marotta with their laconic "What's her name...Ahh..." chorusing in "A Certain Girl".

The cream of LA's laid-back school are on hand, for once the material is worthy of their musical skills. A fine album.

William Dart

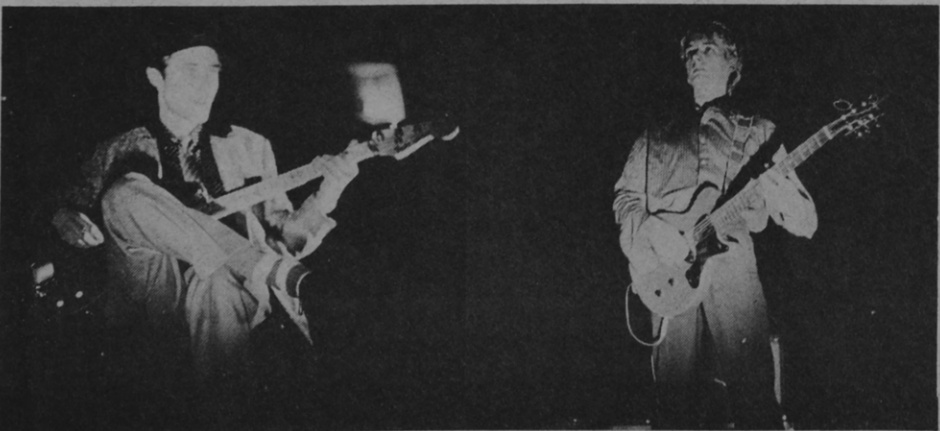
IGGY POP
SOLDIER
ARISTA

Yup, it's that time of year again. Iggy Pop has survived another twelve months and that means a new album but this time round he's a soldier not a casualty or true confessor. This trip Iggy's defences are up.

Surrounded by a battery of new recruits including the legendary Glen Matlock and ex-XTC Barry Andrews, Mr. Pop is sounding pretty fiesty. Matlock co-writes three and weighs in with the solo goods on "Ambition", vintage Sex Pistols style with Andrews leading out on keyboards and on one of his collaborations with Iggy, "Take Care of Me", guitarist Steve New becomes Steve Jones for three minutes as the chords are slammed out with bravado to spare. The killer blow is "Mr. Dynamite", more Matlock music as Iggy waxes tough about being betrayed and Steve New flicks around a chilling guitar line.

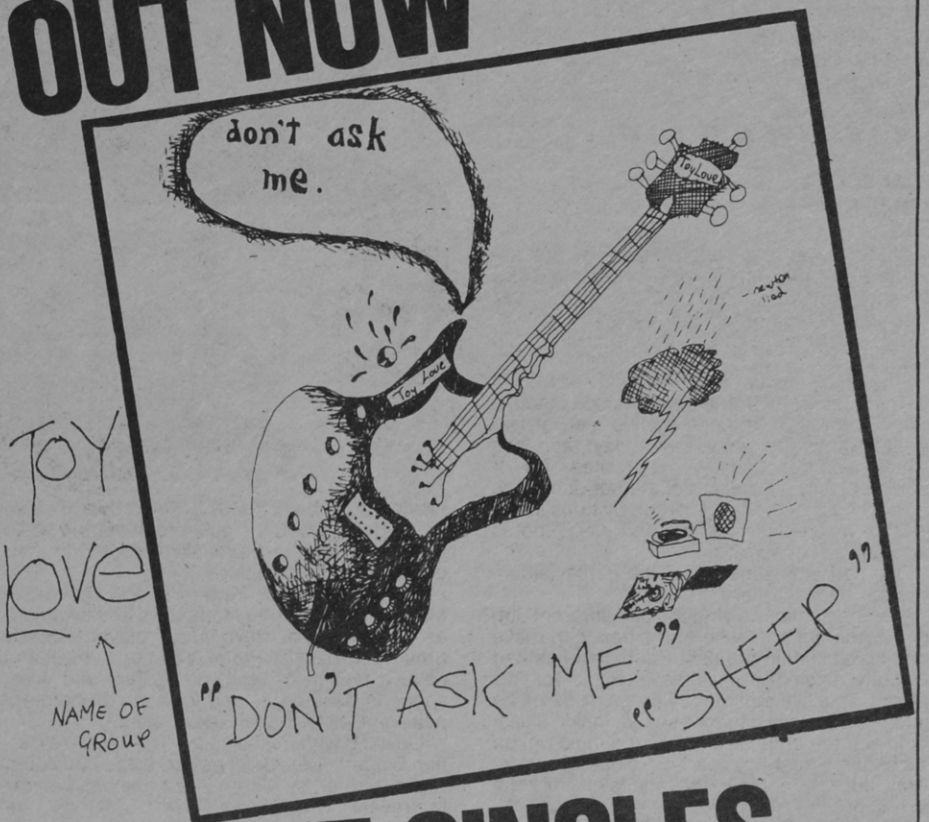
Soldier hasn't the same personal investment of *New Values* and in that respect it's not as rewarding, but if you're looking for rough and tumble rock'n'roll in the age old Pop tradition then *Soldier* is where *Lust For Life* left off.

George Kay



Jah Wobble and Keith Levine, PIL.

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LONG NIGHT BLUES

(IN PIC SLEEVES)

wea

20 WAYS TO STAND YOU ON YOUR FEET

ELVIS
COSTELLO



and the ATTRACTIONS

20 WAYS TO

I CAN'T STAND UP
FOR FALLING DOWN
BLACK & WHITE WORLD
SIVE GEARS IN REVERSE
B MOVIE
MOTEL MATCHES
HUMAN TOUCH
BEATEN TO THE PUNCH
TEMPTATION
I STAND ACCUSED
RIOT ACT

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OPPORTUNITY
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KING HORSE
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