

The concept of total entertainment/escapism was cuffed aside four years ago, and, until now with Adam and the Ants, it hasn't really looked like resuming an influential position in rock and roll.

Adam Ant, who first became noticeable through Derek Jarman's punk movie, *Jubilee*, has a number of firm philosophies and ideas on his position and responsibility as an entertainer. Even talking to him on the phone to CBS London he came across as a guy loaded with missionary zeal, his mission to provide an alternative to what he sees as a music scene dominated by esoteric existentialists and to give value for money in the current economic depression.

Clear, determined Cockney came across the line and we started with Malcolm McLaren. Where else?

Adam Ant was briefly managed by McLaren. What did he learn from punk's Ayatollah?

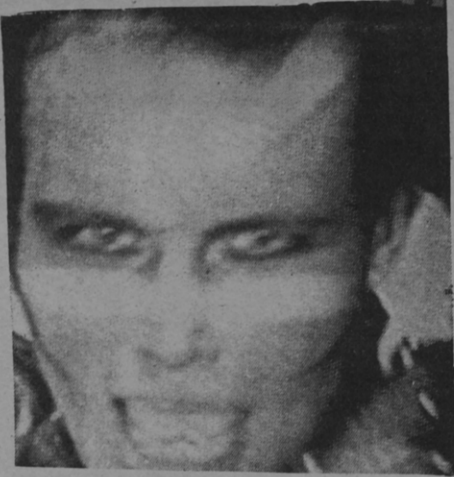
"I learned I didn't wanna work with him and I

learned I didn't wanna be like him. But he's a nice guy and I paid him 1000 pounds to work for me for four weeks to help me out of a few problems I had with a company I was in, and he did. He went through my (first) album and he helped me to come to terms with the fact that if I wanted to enjoy more commercial success then I had to be less esoteric and less self-indulgent with my writing. Which is true. So it was great but I didn't wanna work with him."

Ant doesn't smoke or drink, he's into dressing in Red Indian garb on stage and he doesn't like rock'n'roll. Why?

"Well the bands are all getting into drug lifestyles, very esoteric albums where the audience, don't know whether they're comin' or goin' and the bands are wearin' very grey dull clothes because they're very existentialist and very deep and they're bein' dropped left, right and centre by record companies. You can only fool so many of the people so much of the time and then the audience wanna see some action.

## Adam rants 2



He detests rock'n'roll for its "decadence" yet at the start of last year he released his first album, *Dirk Wears White Sox* which has been described as "cheaply sensational" in its treatment of taboo subjects. So surely even Adam Ant has dabbled with decadence in the past?

"No. Decadent for me is things like drugs and goin' on stage like out-of-it completely and just using a cult thing to survive and to abuse your audience with. I find violence decadent and I've written songs about very taboo subjects that people interpreted as decadent, like S&M sexual deviancy, fetichisms and assassinations. But these are things that are around us and I wanted to come to terms with them musically, as an artist, right? I just don't go along with the rock'n'roll lifestyle, the macho penis-substitute guitar scene, the who're-you-goin'-to-bed-with-tonight and all this kind of nonsense and orgies. This is what rock'n'roll has become."

But was *Dirk Wears White Sox* cheaply sensational, looking back?

"When you deal with taboo subjects and you really go out on a limb and write a song about it then people think that you're just trying to be sick. There's a song on the album about John F. Kennedy called 'Catholic Day' because when he died my mother was in hospital and there were a lot of nuns there praying intensely for Kennedy to live. It mattered to me to write a personal song about his death and what I felt as a young child. It had been portrayed to me as a romantic death but when I researched it I found it was nothing of the sort, the guy had his brains blown out and I wrote a very brutal song about it. If people think that's sensational then that's their prerogative."

The idea of dressing up and putting on a show appealed to many people in the glitter's heyday. Days long gone, thankfully. Ant is concerned to lead people from what he sees as the

present stifling despondency of the rock scene to the colourful more optimistic beliefs of "Antmusic".

With Roxy Music for spiritual guidance ("Roxy were the band we modelled ourselves on not musically but in style as in trying to maintain a quality over everything"), a fairly dependable album, in places, *Kings of the Wild Frontier*, and a warrior spirit, of sorts, Adam and the Ants have been topping albums' and singles' charts. But the live performance is the thing:

"It's like a challenge y'know. The audience come and play in good faith and there's not a lot of money about and if a kid parts with X amount of money then he should be given something, he should be taken right out of reality so when he goes home he'll never forget. I look at concerts as events for artists and audience, artists are absolutely nothing without their audience and I have to remind people of that coz a lot of artists around tend to think they're gracing their audience by even being in town or talking to a kid. If a kid asks me for an autograph then I know why he's asking me as I ask people for autographs coz I am still a fan, and I look at it as a great compliment, an honour, it's exciting. And if somebody comes through the door to my show then that's another compliment and it's my duty to grab their attention and entertain them."

Antmusic also offers humour?

"Yeh, if you can apply a certain degree of light heartedness to heavy topics then you can take a lot of taboo power out of them. If you can prevent things from becoming too serious then there's always hope. At the moment we're faced with a very real world situation economically. We can either sink or swim and I think it's a musician's duty to provide some sort of escapist entertainment coz I think right now people need that. They don't need to go out and hear other people moanin' and groanin' and that's what's goin' on over here. And all Marco (lead guitarist and co-writer) and I are trying to do is provide something that's a bit escapist and a bit showbiz but well researched and sincere."

"You've hit the nail right on the head" was Adam Ant's reaction to my conclusion that Antmusic seemed to be in positive opposition to economic and idealistic pessimism and as such was becoming very popular: "As long as the audience is getting value for money then I think everything esle should ride along quite healthily."

So Antmusic is geared for popular consumption and although there's no reason to doubt his sincerity, his showbiz trappings smack of media attention-grabbing. Sure I can admire his enthusiasm but rock'n'roll as a spectacle eventually leads to the devaluation of the music involved. Alice Cooper, amongst others, can tell you much. Ant is a splash of colour on a grey landscape, but somehow that greyness is easier to relate to.

Escapism may help you forget but it doesn't help you understand. But it's your prerogative. **George Kay**



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## IMPORTANT NOTICE

## TO ALL MUSICIANS, BAND MANAGERS, AND AGENTS

Over the past twelve months, a lot of concern has been expressed by various people in the New Zealand music industry with respect to the many problems we face in this industry and how these problems have been affecting the livelihood of musicians endeavouring to creatively earn a reasonable living, working at what they do best.

Consequently, several prominent musicians, band managers and agents called a series of meetings in Auckland and at the Sweetwaters festival to outline these problems and discuss possible solutions. Three meetings in all were held and over 50 professional bands from throughout the country were represented. It was unanimously agreed by those present at all meetings that an association should be formed and an executive committee elected, consisting of four musicians and four music business chappies and an appointed secretary (to be screened by the four musicians), to work towards solving the many complex problems that exist in this business.

A list of possible candidates for the committee appears below; if you know of anyone who should be added to this list, please send in your nomination (see below) before March 31. A final list of nominees will then be sent to you early in April with a voting form.

Once the committee is selected, their first task will be to set a budget, decide on a membership fee and determine which problem areas require immediate attention.

This will be an association run by musicians for the benefit of all musicians. Support yourselves

Mike Chunn

Hey Bud.  
Have you ever worked and not been paid?  
Ever recorded and not been played?  
...and the PA and lights cost more than you made?  
Suck on this:

## COMMITTEE NOMINATION FORM

Band Name.....  
Contact..... Phone.....  
Address.....  
We hereby nominate .....(name)  
.....(Address)

Please send nominations to 'The Association', Box 47-299, Ponsonby, Auckland, before March 31, '81. Ta.

### MUSICIANS

Harry Lyon  
Simon Elton  
John Dodd  
Hilary Hunt  
Neville McCarthy  
Dave Marshall  
Tom Sharplin  
Steve Hughes  
Andy McDonald  
Dave McLean  
Chris Burt  
Tim Powles  
Chris Harrison  
Keith Ballantyne  
John Thompson

Coup D'Etat  
Furys  
Flying Doctors  
Ainsworths  
Warning  
Lipservice  
T.S.R.A.R.B.  
Push  
Blind Date  
Furys  
Tectones  
Mad Ranks  
Pleasure Boys  
Hattie & Hot Shots  
Willie Dayson Band

### BUSINESS BOYS

Malcolm Prenderville  
Chris Parr  
Terry Condon  
Brian Jones  
Mike Corless  
Phil Warren  
Charley Gray  
Ian Kingsford  
Jim Wilson  
Mel Tizzard  
Chris Cole  
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