

'SIOUXSIE & BANSHEES' FROM PAGE 12

The fact remains that Siouxsie has at times been promoted as a pinup ...

"Not promoted. But you can't stop people having a picture of you and ... thinking what they want to think. I'm not disgusted by that. But we don't promote that ourselves."

You've also been a fashion leader.

"That's because I hate fashion. Fashion's always behind something, or making a uniform out of something. I'd rather people just wear what they want to wear and risk getting laughed at."

It's quite a paradox, fashion following someone who's anti-fashion.

"It is very weird. I don't really notice it but the band tell me. I just hate all that, going to trendy clubs and so on. It's weird walking down Oxford St, shops have dummies that look like me and secretaries are gettin' into it (laughs)."

"It's strange walking into somewhere and thinking you're looking into a mirror when you see someone who looks just like you. It's great to think you're inspiring people but when you actually see people who watch every detail of you, it's very weird."

Is it scary being watched?

"I don't mind them watching but I just don't like the dissection of something. I don't like doing interviews saying 'What is your music? Why are you doing it?' All I can say is I like doing it, I don't analyse it. If I like something I don't analyse why I like it."

The swastika thing was a part of the early image that caught on. Does she regret it in hindsight?

"No, only in the sense that people thought it was a political statement, which it wasn't. I still think something like *Cabaret* is very attractive looking. It was more sexual than political, just something that was attractive."

"I mean, I'm not into Maoris, but this is a Maori skirt. I got it in Hawaii."

She fingers a plastic 'bone' tunic hung around her neck that is not in the least Maori, but nonetheless looks quite attractive.

Another part of the visual appeal is the band's videos. How much input is there from band members?

"We like making them, it's frustrating knowing that we can't be in more than one place at a time. All the places, like here, we haven't been able to get to until now. We'd like people in those places to at least see something of us. Because the records aren't always released on time, or released at all. TV will pick up on video, where the radio won't play the records."

Early on, the Banshees seemed a lot more literate than most of their counterparts. Was Siouxsie writing before she was Siouxsie?

"No. I only really started when I was able to hear music, hear words, rather than write them down. It meant more of an incentive to write."

Those lyrics have always been quite abstract.

"Yeah. We've never actually been a sloganeering band, the music's never been like that. The songs are more visual than telling people things."

So is there any kind of message with the Banshees?

"As I said, there's no slogan, it's just ... be yourself. Do what pleases you. We're fortunate in that we're not dictated to by the record companies."

We heard a lot about your voice trouble last year. It seemed you wouldn't be singing again for some time, but you're back on the road again.

"It was a big scare when we were in Scandinavia, but then I got back to London and saw a specialist there and there was a lot less of a drama about it. I rested a bit and then got involved in doing the album."

"All it's meant now is that I've said we're not doing more than so many dates in a week. It's more enjoyable, I mean we never did want to slog away. Like 10 dates in a row or something ridiculous like that."

Is something of the softer singing on *Dream-*

house the result of your voice troubles? 'Cocoon' for instance?

"A lot of things happened on this album simply because of the situation. I mean, 'Cocoon' was just bass and drums and I sang along with it. It wasn't really a thought-out way of singing, just a natural way."

It's obviously enjoyable having Robert in the band?

"Yeah, he's playing with us because we get on with him. Because we're the same kind of thinkers we've kept in touch since the last time he played with us. (Smith filled in on the *Join Hands* tour, prior to McGeoch joining.)"

"The relationship with John just went sour. He got very ill, very embarrassing. He got, without saying anything, into the trappings of the rock star. We don't all want to go to these places or take these things that are offered us. He was a great guitarist, but he got very poisoned."

"I hate that cliché. That's why Robert's playing with us, because he's not a clichéd rock guitarist. That's the way we all feel."

Even down to his contribution to the *Creatures* projects, Budgie seems to have established more of a public profile for himself than most drummers ever do.

"Yeah, I think it's the nature of the group, that. That's another reason John's not with us any more, he wasn't contributing much. It's definitely not the front female singer with the session musicians."

Siouxsie is still doing all the stage vocals. Would she like Smith to share some in the future?

"No!" (laughs).

Why not?

"Umm ... because I think he can still do stuff on his own."

How long is he likely to stay with the band?

"I don't know. How long am I likely to stay on this planet?"

Some would say you're out of this world already, Siouxsie.

Unhappy Endings

Ever get the feeling you've been cheated? Not in the sense of anyone's deceit, but when natural order falls away to unmask a cynic's world. That kind of world belongs nowhere. The cynic's spirit stalks the universe like an undead, unhappy soul.

It fell on Mainstreet tonight. Because it should have been so good the concert was that much more of a disappointment when it failed to work.

Time and time again it seemed that this is where it would fall together — with 'Night-shift', 'Christine', 'Happy House' — but each time it missed. There seemed to be a wall between the band and the audience, both sides reached but couldn't touch. All of a sudden it was right — Siouxsie was prancing, wicked creature, the music swelled. At last! But, abruptly the band left the stage. They were called back for an encore, a stunning version of 'Spellbound'. But as it finished, Siouxsie mumbled something into the mike, she left, and there was no more. If the entire night had been like those last two songs, it would have been worth many times the ticket price. As it was, the end only served to illustrate how unsatisfactory the rest had been.

Much of the blame must lie with the sound. Siouxsie's voice spent half the night buried in the mire and Robert Smith's guitar never surfaced. But the Banshees did not help their own cause. When Siouxsie's mike failed during 'Happy House' they scampered off the stage like frightened rabbits. Surely the band could have jammed while the fault was fixed, Siouxsie could have danced. The perfect opportunity to add the spark of spontaneity and they ran away. And their failure to recognise that things had finally gelled with the encore bordered on the criminal.

It was just a bad gig. They happen on world tours. But why did it have to happen here? Maybe tomorrow night. But we've got to go to press before that.

Live

John Martyn

Mainstreet, Jan 31.

In 1977 John Martyn, speculating about future directions for his music, commented: 'I'd like the nasty bits to get nastier and the gentle bits to get more gentle.' In 1983 he looked back on that prediction as "definitely accurate." If his recent records have, perhaps, veered more towards the gentle — particularly considering the progressively lush productions — then his Mainstreet performance was definitely nasty.

The once acoustically gentle 'Bless The Weather' and 'Solid Air' received fierce electric reworkings, echo-plex full frontal. And delicate instrumental colourings of recent ballads such as 'Could've Been Me' were reduced to harsh primaries by the power trio treatment. Tougher numbers, especially in the prolonged guitar solos, at times approached the grossness of heavy metal. 'Didn't Do That' lost its exhilarating swing (if not its pace) while 'Johnny Too Bad', always a mean one in Martyn's hands, had every last vestige of lilting reggae beaten flat.

There were exceptions — 'Glorious Fool' utilized space and subtlety — but on the whole the sound was thick, raw and angry. Martyn's vocals mostly growled, rarely purred.

A murky sound overall was further deteriorated by Martyn's feedback problems early in the set. Consequently the lovely floating basslines of Allan Thomson were often swamped.

John Martyn has expressed himself well pleased with his current performance approach. That some of his fans did not feel so happy after this gig is, I guess, our problem.

Peter Thomson



Musical Youth

Records

Musical Youth

The Youth of Today

MCA

'Pass The Dutchie', one of last year's most appealing singles, opens this album and sets the tone for some amazingly strong and mature statements.

Musical Youth are Dennis Seaton (15, vocals), Junior (15, drums) and Patrick Waite (14, bass), and Michael (13, keyboards) and Kelvin Grant (11, guitar and toasting). They were formed a couple of years ago in their hometown of Nechells, Birmingham, by Junior and Patrick's father, Freddy. He was a member of the Techniques, a popular Jamaican vocal group of the sixties. Freddy himself did the vocals until Dennis took over.

So, have they managed an album of any credit? Does 'Arry drink Steinies? The Youth of Today is the freshest, most invigorating slab of plastic I've heard in yonks. And it's not all fun, either. These kids care about their world and they're not altogether happy with it. 'Blind Boy' chides a backsliding youth who is rapidly heading for destruction. 'Youth of Today', the less successful follow-up single (can't understand why), expresses the dilemma of being young and 'under heavy manners'. Ditto 'Mirror Mirror'. 'Young Generation' says they come 'fe mash up de nation', and they're not fooling. There are also a couple of neat numbers on the agonies of adolescent love and some very tasty slices of dub.

The rhythms sit nice and tight (a lot of polish and hard work has gone into this sound) and the approach throughout is thoroughly professional.

Musical Youth have made a

very important record. They've had a certain amount of guidance in the songwriting and production field, but this album is still *their* achievement. The youth better wake up to what's happening in their world and the grownups better get their act together and leave the youth a world to inherit. Without wanting to exaggerate, this record speaks for a generation.

Duncan Campbell

Andy Summers and Robert Fripp
I Advance Masked
A&M

Summers has thankfully avoided the all too common solo project trap of trying to be something he is not. Rather than struggling along as a singing, songwriting one man band, he has stuck to what he knows. To project lyrics properly requires charisma (and no little ego) and Summers has wisely chosen to speak through his playing. And who better to enlist for a real musicians' album than the eminent Mr Fripp?

Fripp's preciseness throughout contrasts ideally with Summers' freer playing. Naturally, the album is guitar-based, although guitar synthesizers appear more frequently than the old-fashioned axe. The two take turns with the lead role in some pieces and duet, in a manner that usually transcends the "duelling banjos" syndrome, on others.

The album falls surprisingly close to a pop format. There are 14 tracks, each with its own distinct identity (never quite yer actual hook). However, it can also be listened to as a series of movements building an entirety. To call it background music would be dismissive, but it certainly doesn't shout.

An honest, imaginative and competent album, without being earth-shattering. It's also better than the last Police album.

Russell Brown

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