

Police

# Purposeful Punk

by Matt Adamson

The public spawning of punk rock in 1977 with the Sex Pistols, among others, touched a raw nerve in the popular music establishment. Airwaves laced with gutless middle of the road (MOR) formats and disco have seemed like the only choices available for most of the middle seventies, and record companies sat smugly watching the public, starved for decent rock, buy whatever was available.

British working class anarchism coupled with some painfully bad musicianship caused punk's early dismissal and consequently it has never received the exposure in North America it has in the U.K. The result is that many rock fans have missed the development of "New Wave". With no acceptable radio station in the area Haligonians were treated to several press reports of the Sex Pistols' sensational behavior on their American tour (the band broke up after the tour), and the arrival of Elvis Costello via the boob tube on Saturday Night Live. The road between the two is much travelled and it is only now that we are seeing the results of solid experimenting by some capable musicians with the raw, driving punk sound.

The Police have combined a driving, sometimes even danceable beat with several decent vocals on their first release, *Outlandos d'Amour*. The strongest aspect of the group is their vocals. The full throated harmonizing gleaned from the Everly Brothers style that the Beatles turned over so successfully is still appealing. Melded with a tight, hard driving sound of punk base lines, rock n' roll guitar and blasting drums the Police have a mix that, for the most part, works.

The group has been around the rock scene for awhile—Sting, lead vocals and bass, played the Mod leader in the Who's film *Quadrophenia* and appears in drag in the Sex Pistols film; Drummer Stewart Copeland used to be with

Curved Air, and lead guitarist Andy Summers had a stint with Kevin Coyne and Kevin Ayers. Sting best epitomizes the bands punkness as he chugs his way through each cut; having his lines indiscriminately peppered by Copeland's drumming. The weight that forces this band away from the hard core punk label, however, is the rocking wind out style of Summers' lead guitar and the rich vocal harmonizing of all three members.

The band is best on straight rockers like **Truth Hits Everybody** and **Roxanne** but seems to drag a little on some of the slower paced cuts. The willingness to try different tacts and still retain a sense of driving purpose are what puts the Police a slight cut above the rest. They also prove that punk has had a lot to do with putting the rock back in rock n' roll and it is the new wave bands who are injecting a breath of fresh air into today's music.



The Police

Outlandos d'Amour



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