

# Shut up and play, Simon Townsend

Sweet Sound  
by Simon Townsend

Review by David Lutes

Even before I had heard the first track of *Sweet Sound*, Simon

Townsend's first major release, I know I was in trouble. I mean, there is really no way to pass judgement on Simon without considering certain familial connections.

Yes, you guessed it, Mr. Townsend's brother is none other than Pete Townsend, and Pete is arguably the most influential rocker of the last 15 years. He also appears as the producer on *Sweet Sound*. So I decided to purge myself of as many "compare and contrast" exercises as I could.

Let's begin with a quote from Mark Brzezicki, a member of Big Country, who plays drums on *Sweet Sound* and has known both Townsends for years. "Simon Townsend is a young Pete Townsend. Not because he wants to be, but he just can't help it." This is true. Imagine growing up and having your older brother be the guitarist for the Who. You couldn't help but be influenced by him. And *Sweet Sound* shows this influence.

It's not the "maximum R&B" of the early Who, it's not "My Generation". But it's not "Slit Skirts" either. Instead, what we get is a hybrid of Pete's dense guitar and synth sound and the inexperience and youthful energy of Simon. For the most part, it works.

*Sweet Sound* is an album by a talented musician who just needs a little more songwriting expe-

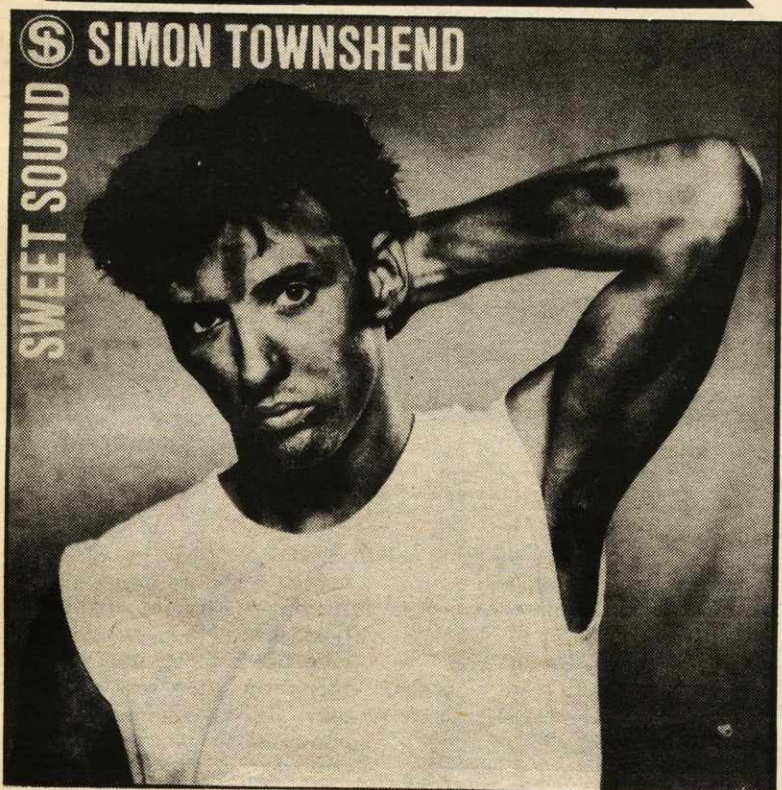
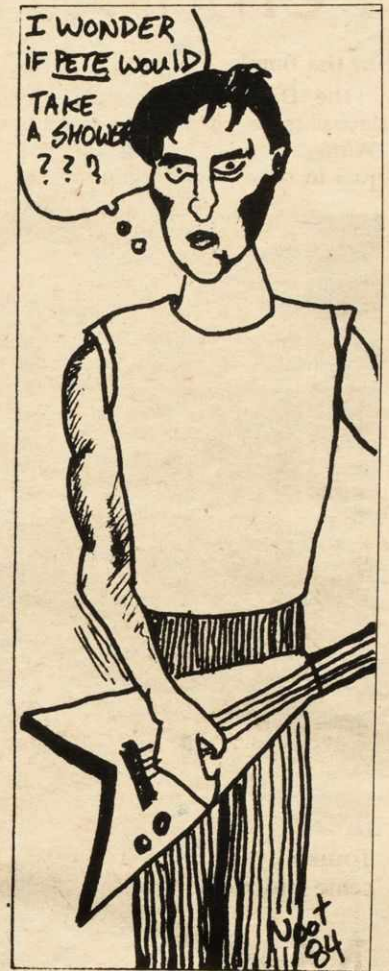
rience. The record has an upbeat pop-rock sound that makes for enjoyable, sometimes exciting listening. The songs where musical quality excels are the title track and "I'm the Answer", both tough guitar-rockers. The moody "On the Scaffolding" also deserves mention.

Townsend's problems lie in his lyrical ability. Much of what appears here as lyrics makes very little sense. It seems that in search of a rhyme Townsend sacrifices meaning. This method often gives a very muddled feeling to a song. Then again, he might just be too deep for me. But I don't think so—at least I hope not.

The second side of the album is what suffers most from this mis-match of music and lyrics. Except for the second semi-lucid "It's All So Real", the meaningless lyrics make the whole side boring and forgettable.

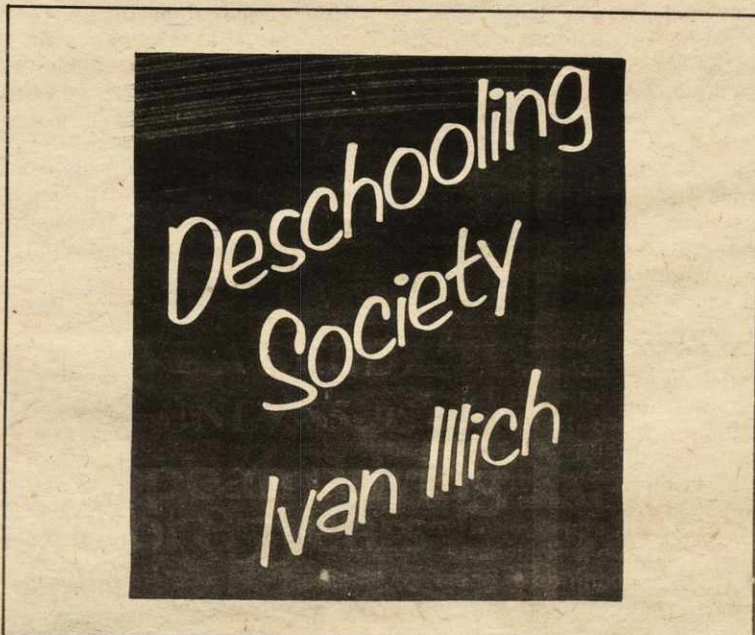
Taken as a whole, *Sweet Sound* is neither the let-down I expected nor the minor masterpiece it could have been. In spite of the lyrics the sound clicks, the players and playing are outstanding and brother Pete's production is right on. Let's hope that Townsend's future holds some-

thing more than these "sweet sounds."



## Ahead of its time

# Important book on learning



people, "when pressed to specify how they acquired what they know and value, will readily admit that they learned it more often outside than inside school."

Originally published in 1971, this book did not raise much of a stir. Many of its recommendations were too far in advance of its time, such as setting up computer lists of people who wished to learn of the same subjects with knowledgeable people (as opposed to a formal classroom situation), and the sociological implications of the massive amount of information transfer made possible by new technology. Illich perceived this six years before computers had advanced to the point where a simplistic video game like "Pong" was possible.

In the same vein, much of this book is still far in advance of our time; the book is full of refreshingly new concepts tossed about freely. **Make no mistake, this is an important work**, and many of Illich's ideas will be resurrected by later, lesser writers.

The book's one problem is Illich's writing style, which is slightly anachronistic and at times unclear, tending toward the use of obscure references. It is not difficult to read, but I found I sometimes had to read a passage twice to follow the thought. This is a very small price to pay for the information to be gained.

Rating: Nine out of ten.

*Deschooling Society*  
by Ivan Illich  
Harper Colophon Books  
New York, 1983

Review by A.D. Wright  
Learning and school are not necessarily related, claims Ivan Illich in "Deschooling Society". In fact, he says the purpose of schooling is to perpetuate schools.

Schools create an educated elite and society "grades the nations of the world according to an international caste system . . . [A nation's] dignity is determined by the average years of schooling of its citizens, a rating which is closely related to per capita gross national product, and much more painful . . . The United

States is proving to the world that no country can be rich enough to afford a school system that meets the demands this same system creates by simply existing..."

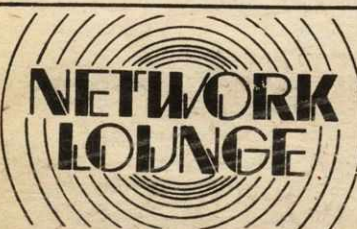
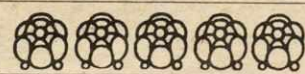
Illich says the worst danger of schools is that they create a false link between learning and curricular teaching. "By making [people] abdicate the responsibility for their own growth, school leads many to a kind of spiritual suicide." In effect, education is seen as a commodity and personal growth is merely the freedom to choose between pre-packaged goods.

He contends that "education is assumed to be the result of an institutional process managed by the educator," except that most

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