

aboutroundaboutround

by Michael Dennis Skeet

POINTED STICKS:
Perfect Youth
(Quintessence QLP002)

Rock 'n' Roll used to be a lot of fun. It's nice to see that some of the young people today have rediscovered this, and such a thing really comes through on the debut album recorded by Vancouver's Pointed Sticks. I say this realizing full well how pretentious that last sentence sounds - the fact is a surprising number of people in their late twenties neither understand nor appreciate rock 'n' roll as it's played in the '80s. This is a pity, as the so-called 'New Wave' is really nothing more than a return to the sixties.

Perfect Youth (Quintessence QLP002) is a real giggle - a lot of fun to listen to. The musical richness coming from an essentially spare arrangement is part of that legacy from earlier times. The lyrics have more snap to them, though, and this serves the band well.

There are no bad songs on *Perfect Youth* and several quite good ones. Never does the music fall into that common trap - the sin of repetitiveness. Nick Jones, who pulls most of the song-writing weight, has crafted some good pop songs, and has had the sense to keep things relatively simple, not taking himself too seriously. He even shows (though he may be reluctant to accept the compliment) a good grasp of the theory of The Hook.

At times, though, Jones' whiny tenor grates on the nerves. The album's best moments come with the harmonies. Likewise the band sounds best when it plays in tight ensemble; there are no musical egos being stroked here.

The emergence of bands such as The Sticks and Doug and the Slugs from the depths of the Vancouver Pub 'n' Club scene bodes well (we hope) for the Canadian recording scene, and forces the Central Establishment to pay more attention to Vancouver as a musical and recording centre. The independent attitude of the West Coast permeates *Perfect Youth*; in turn this record sends breath of something fresh into Canadian music.

BLONDIE:
Autoamerican
(Chrysalis CHE 1290)

Turn the album on, and suddenly you're listening to what could be a new sound track for Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. By the time *Europa* is over, you're convinced that *Autoamerican* (Chrysalis CHE 1290) is not even a typical pop record, much less a typical Blondie record.

In some ways, *Europa* is a miniature of the album as a whole. It's bold and

different, and takes Blondie in entirely new directions. It's also cold and mechanical, and, ultimately, impersonal. And through it all, Deborah Harry glides serenely - at a time when serenity is the last thing the song, the band, or the album need.

Harry's passionless performance is what brings the curtain down on *Autoamerican*. The album thrusts in so many different directions that, without a unifying central factor, it might as well be the 101 Strings doing a pastiche of the Beatles. Debby Harry should be the unifying factor; unfortunately, she isn't.

Credit is certainly deserved for the choice of material. The songs range from the urban *Sturm and Drang* of *Europa* through the calypso of *The Tide is High* to the Cole Porter-esque *Here's Looking at You*. An air of jaded sophistication is just right for the latter tune; unfortunately, that's all Harry has to offer, and the air very quickly becomes stale.

Autoamerican is a significant departure for Blondie, just as *Remain in Light* was for the Talking Heads. Unfortunately, instead of loosening up, as did the Heads, Blondie gives a tighter performance. It's almost as if the band as an entity had doubts about the album from the start.

STYX
Paradise Theatre
(A & M SP-3719)



The members of Styx take themselves and their music very seriously. I suppose somebody has to. I myself find it hard to listen to this Chicago band without becoming either hysterical or nauseous.

Styx has just released a new album entitled *Paradise Theatre* (A & M SP-3719). It is apparently a concept album, built up around the 30 year history of the Chicago moviehouse of the same name. Just what the concept is remains unclear, though. Is the *Paradise Theatre* really America? Are we then the audience, watching the decline of a super-power? Or is it all just an excuse for some fancy cover-art?

Whatever the answer (or whatever the question, for that matter), you can bet that it'll be delivered in the typical Styx style - which is to say, the typical Supertramp style. Why people continue to put up with Dennis DeYoung's Plastic Apocalypse is beyond me - especially when the original is so accessible and (if you avoid Paris) so much better.

DeYoung displays little originality or wit in his compositions - only a little talent for mouthing platitudes. How can you take seriously a man describing his woman's putting up with numerous failings and indiscretions, who sums it all up by saying "I guess that's the way it goes, the way that it goes." Further, all the production wizardry in the world (and

there is some decent work here) can't cover for a sound that is fundamentally hollow at the base.

Sell me to Barbara Streisand. Force me to attempt to have an intelligent conversation with a group of Barry Manilow fans. Take my Kodachrome away. Anything, only please don't make me sit through another Styx album. I beg you.

NEXT WEEK: Okay, so I didn't get Steeleye Span in this time. It just needs a bit more work, that's all. I can only listen to British pseudo-folk music for so long before I break out in hives. Maybe I'll have the review done by next week. Is that all right?

up and coming

Citadel:
Shoctor Theatre: *Whose Life is it Anyway*, through Feb. 1
Rice Theatre: *The Servant of Two Masters*, through Feb. 8. Tickets at BASS.

Theatre 3
Automatic Pilot, January 28th to February 15. Tickets at BASS

Theatre Network 11845 - 77 St.
Twilight Series, every Sunday at 8 p.m. For more information call Paula Jardine at 474-6111.

Ring House Gallery
On campus, January 8 to February 15: A Growing Collection: The Collier Collection of Chinese Folk Embroideries. Ph. 432-5834 for more information.

Student's Union Art Gallery
Sylvie Stevenson, "The Parallel Series", two shows of her recent works, Jan. 30 - Feb. 15.

Student's Union Art Gallery offers a full program of art and craft classes and an innovative series of weekend workshops. Fee discount for university students. Winter session starts Jan. 26, running for 10 weeks. Call SUB Art Gallery, at 432-4547, or the HUB Textile Studio at 432-3061.

Princess Theatre,
Thursday, Jan. 22, and Friday, Jan. 23
Three Women, Monday, Jan. 26, *Knife in the Head*.

Edmonton Jazz Society
Sat., Jan 25, 7:00 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Presents *David Grisman Quintet* - Tickets available: SU Box office, HUB mall, Mike's, Attractions Ticket Office (Eaton's). Show in SUB Theatre.

Alberta Baroque Ensemble
A concert of vocal and instrumental work by J.S. Bach. Sunday, January 25, 3 p.m. at St. Andrew's United Church, 9915-148st. Admission free.

Edmonton Songwriters in Concert
Ma Fletcher, Joan MacIsaac, and Christopher Lewis, Jan. 23 at 8:00 p.m., Centennial Library Theatre, admission four dollars.

Bartok
Lecture and Recital by Dr. Damiana Bratuz, a noted authority. Lecture Jan. 29, 1-29, Fine Arts Centre at 3:30 p.m. Recital Jan. 30, Convocation Hall at 8:00 p.m.

Dinwoodie Cabaret
Featuring *The Pointed Sticks* Saturday, Jan. 24. Tickets at HUB or at the door. *Pretty Rough*, Fri. Jan. 23, at 8:00 p.m.

National Film Theatre
Citadel Theatre, Zeidler Hall, Thursday, Jan. 22, *Sansho the Bailiff* (7:30) and *The Life of Oparu* (9:00), Friday, Jan. 23, *The Life of Oparu* (7:30), *Lola Monte* (9:00) Sunday, Jan. 24, *Born Free* (6:00), *Cheyenne Autumn* (7:30).

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