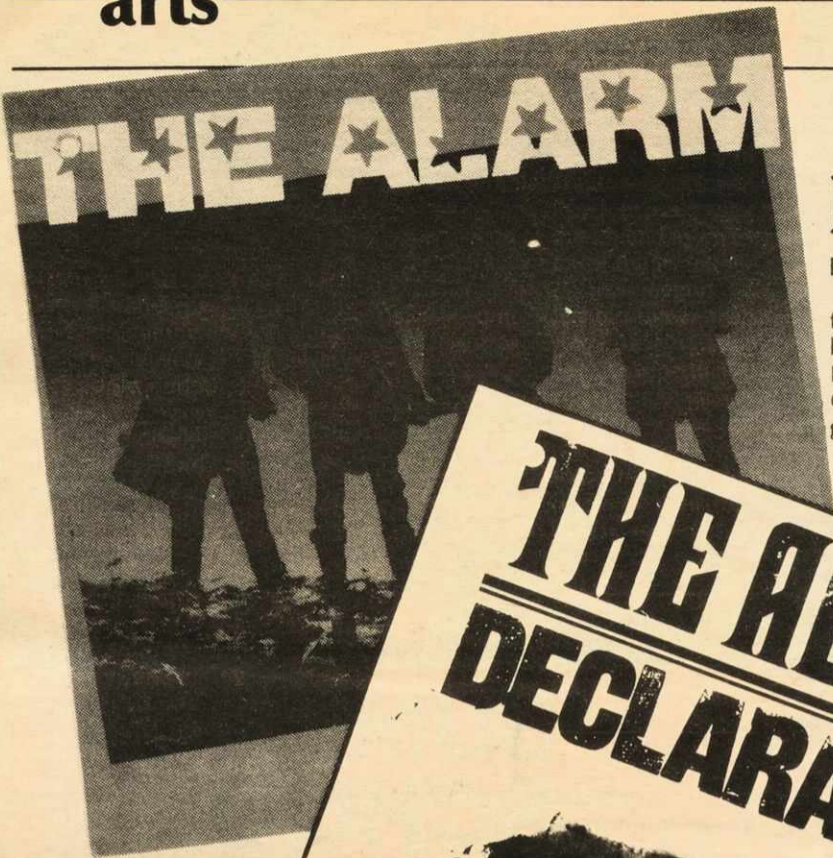


arts



Look Out for Luna Twist

by David Lutes

Luna Twist is a new group from Belgium that has apparently been making some waves in Europe. *Look Out*, their first Canadian release, is an intelligent, danceable and solid album

that could win them more than a few fans on this side of the Atlantic.

Look Out shows Luna Twist to be a bunch of very dexterous plagiarists. The sound is a blend of some serious electronic melodies with powerful, funky rhythms and the occasional new pop overtone, courtesy of early XTC.

The funky dance beat is what initially catches your ear. Owing as much to the white proponents of this sound, like the Talking Heads, as it does to more serious funksters, *Look Out* provides the listener with some ready-made dance floor hits. In fact, the one steady component of Luna Twist's sound is the punchy, aggressive beat provided by bassist Filip Moortgat and Dirk Van

Gansbeke on drums, with Moortgat's and Dirk Blancheart's guitars helping the illusion along. However, the stiff, jerky delivery borders on a kind of parody, and with lead singer Alan Tant's vocals occasionally echoing Talking Heads' David Byrne, one can't help but wonder if the boys aren't poking a little fun at more earnest funk copycats.

With subsequent listens, though, Luna Twist does become more than just a dance band. The way Blancheart imposes some very melodic synth lines over the above mentioned rhythms makes for a couple of interesting and quirky cuts. And the band seems to have a fixation for strange effects being thrown into a song at odd times. These elements combine to force you to pay attention to what is going on when you're listening.

When the elements click, paying attention can be worth it. On tracks like "Decent Life" and "I Never Talk To Strangers" you get a sense of the band's potential when they decide to play it straight. These two songs are much more fluid and hypnotic than most of the rest of the album's offerings.

Other cuts that are worth mentioning include "Look Out (You're Falling In Love)" with its very jumpy, light approach to the trials and tribulations of young love and "Fill In The Words," a witty little electronic number, ready-made for you budding young lyricists out there.

The clunkers on the album are hard to explain. The songs like "Oh, Oh, Oh" and "African Time" share the same sound as other cuts, but the elements never seem to mix properly and hence the songs come up short. However, the pluses outweigh the minuses here, and *Look Out* remains a solid collection of eclectic tunes from these young Belgian rockers.

In Canada, Luna Twist records on Ready Records (the label of the Spoons and Blue Peter). If you have problems getting a hold of a copy locally, they invite you to order directly from them. Send inquiries to "Ready Records", Box 670, Station "A", Toronto, Ontario M5W 1G2.

Who flicks the Alarm anyway?

Review by Ken Burke

Riding hard from the westland of Wales, The Alarm tilt their cowboy hats, cock their acoustic guitars at a threatening angle, and salute their spiritual forefathers, the Clash ... and the Monkees.

Don't get me wrong—this excellent debut E.P., self-titled *The Alarm*, easily shows why they're one of the most exciting new groups to appear out of Britain last year. You see, I'm not using the Monkees as a put-down. It's the prefab four's irresistible enthusiasm and strangely naive spirit that welds this strange musical combination to my brain when I put on *The Alarm*. Musically, they're from a whole other place completely.

If you've been lucky enough to hear an obscure Clash single called "Groovy Times," then you already have the right musical reference point. On that pre-Sandinista! song, the Clash's electric attack is traded in for firmly-strummed acoustic guitars and loud, brash harmonica solos. On this E.P., The Alarm take that sound and use it for their own musical battles.

The style of their musical attack brings to mind the Clash as well. For one thing, it's safe to use words like "musical attack" to describe it. Both in the songs themselves and Mick Glossop's production, all instruments are to the fore, playing at full volume (the acoustic's amped way up). There aren't many solos or long breaks, and the lyrics are shouted

as much as sung. It's what was called frontline rock—no instrument takes a back seat.

It's The Alarm's political stance that weds the Clash and the Monkees in my mind. While they sing about the same things as Joe Strummer does, there was always a strong realistic/cynical tone to his lyrics that gave them their rage and power.

The Alarm start from a more earnest maybe even naive position. "C'mon everybody, why can't we work together?" seems to be the underlying message behind the songs here. Sample these group-written lyrics:

"Hear our sound, hear our voice, we're growing stronger and we'll go

marching on."
"Let's keep the flames of hope alive / and never let the fires die."

It's idealistic, sure, but a bit too starry-eyed for my tastes. To me, that all smacks more than a little of the Monkees' heroic exclamation in "Hey, hey, we're the

Monkees" of "We're the young generation / and we've got something to say." But at least they seem to be looking in the right direction if they're interested in gaining social commitment. If they stay together they might just get focused enough to make their attempt at a rainbow coalition work.

The Alarm joins big sound bandwagon

Review by Siobhan McRae

With the release of *Declaration* the Welsh band The Alarm has gone for an overall "sound" along the lines of U2 and Big Country. Obviously I.R.S. is hoping they'll achieve the same type of commercial success that those two bands have attained in North America.

The Alarm have a lot going for them—youth, talent, energy, optimism and commitment. Their only problem I can foresee is a decline of originality in favour of a proven success formula. U2 and Big Country are

very good at what they do but that doesn't mean that The Alarm should try to sound like them.

One of the most original aspects of the band, as demonstrated on their first E.P. *The Stand*, is their use of acoustic guitars. On *Declaration* acoustic guitars are still being used, but in a lot of cases they are pretty much drowned out by the upfront drums and vocals. The overall effect is a whirlwind of sound and while this approach has a definite appeal it doesn't really add anything to the songs.

Take the cut "68 Guns" as a case in point, since it is to be released as a single. It's a good tune, with a strong melody line and a convincing vocal. But the "big" production brings in an excessive amount of bugle calls and military drum sounds. It ends up being melodramatic rather than dramatic.

I don't mean that the idea is bad, it's easy to like that sort of thing, but I think the song would have been better if it had been treated a little more simply. It just doesn't need all that pretention.

Another cut especially guilty of this sort of over-production is "Blaze of Glory." The rest of the songs on the album are either treated in a suitable simple manner ("We Are The Light") or in a way that is powerful without being particularly excessive ("Shout to the Devil").

Anyway, buy the album because you're bound to enjoy it. But just keep your fingers crossed that on their next release The Alarm don't feel the need to sacrifice any more of what makes them unique in order to get a sound with mass appeal.