

The birth of Tubeway Army

By TOMO
Brunswick Staff

Not every Canadian has heard of Gary Numan and his special breed of clinical synthesized electronic music which for the last four years in Britain has cornered and monopolized a previously unexploited and little known market. However, many North Americans have been exposed at some time or other to a simple but somewhat hypnotic song of Numan's called "Cars" which seems to have the ability to attach itself unobtrusively to one's subconsciousness to be stored for retrieval at a later date, much to the surprise of the person who can't explain their remembering the song. Although "Cars" is probably the limit of exposure for the average young Canadian (since it was Numan's largest North American hit), the song was only the tip of a much larger electronic phenomenon in music in England.

If Numan weren't such a solitary and individualistic type of performer, one might be tempted to suggest that his contribution to British music can be viewed as a convenient transition between the Punk movement and the newer styles of the New Wave and New Romantic electronic bands. Numan however has always denied such an easy classification and has remained isolated throughout his short but rapid development. Certain links with specific parts of newer movements can be seen but the isolation prohibits generalization; this factor, coupled with his gigantic success in Britain, Europe, Japan, and to a lesser degree the United States, makes him all the more interesting. Despite a small record label, little real musical training, unprecedented antagonism from the music press who saw him as another, cheaper form of Bowie, and a crude, rough punk beginning, Numan became in four years a millionaire with eight albums and fourteen singles behind him but in the early days, they didn't know too much about him. Numan was born Gary Webb on March 8th, 1958 in Hammersmith, London. As a typical London teenager, he quickly became drawn into the music scene and became obsessed with the idea of making it as a star. Right from the start, he wanted to create a type of music which relied on synthesizers more than on the traditional guitar - by his own confession, Numan could hardly play an acceptable standard guitar, but he could anyway detect a need to experiment in other directions.

possibilities of synthesizers, Numan knew he was not the first person to experiment with this still relatively radical medium - Ultravox, Kraftwerk; the Moody Blues, and even the Electric Light Orchestra in the mainstream of commercial Pop had been using synthesizers to some degree. Numan was convinced however that the approach that was needed to carve out something new for the 1980's was an almost total reliance on synthesizers. Despite his disillusionment with the Punk movement, Numan formed Mean Street, a Punk band, in a desperate attempt to get some experience and a record contract. This was in 1977 when the Sex Pistols had shot themselves to immediate notoriety with "Never Mind The Bollocks" and record companies were signing any Punk band that moved. Punk ruled the roost as the Stranglers, the Jam, the Damned and other groups made it to the top under the Punk label.

Numan eventually was proved right about the temporary and limited potential of Punk, as the movement was slowly dying by 1980, to be succeeded by a brighter and more vivacious style of music later labelled as New Wave. In 1977 however, Numan was trying to achieve some recognition and not doing very well for himself. Mean Street was a disaster both musically and personally - Numan and the rest of the band could never agree on the songs and the musical direction of disintegrated. Not to be discouraged, Numan got together with ex-Mean Street bassist Paul Gardiner and uncle Jess Lidyard who could play drums and together formed a new Punk band called Tubeway Army in 1978. The band was intended to start off by playing Punk, and then, according to Numan's plan, develop into an electronic band once they had achieved recognition.

Tubeway Army was signed up by a new small record label called Beggar's Banquet, a much larger WEA group. The group recorded an album and released two singles ('That's Too Hammersmith, London. As a Bad/Oh, Didn't I Say?' and 'Bombers'/Blue Eyes O.D. Receiver') that year. The album which was an excellent first recording - a mixture of original Punk/guitar material written by Numan - received reasonable reviews from the press but sold badly. The album contained twelve songs including some good recognizable gutsy guitar songs such as "Please Listen to the Sirens", "My Shadow in Vain", and "Friends". The memorable songs from this

IT MUST HAVE BEEN YEARS

A radio plays 'White Christmas'.
It's been doing that for years.
If somebody leaves the station,
Please don't talk to strangers.
Can't you see they're not like us.

The vacant flesh of U.D.'s
Stand, leaning by the walls.
You can see them thinking over
Ways of merging with the
thoughts.
You never dare to dream.

They want to relive all my
memories.
Give me 'the service' daily.
Maybe it was mother.
I can't seem to remember,
Much of all these days.

Picture open doorways,
No pick-ups by the taxi boys.
Just a bed near the window,
And an old lamp by my pillow.
And the things I have to do.

(From the album Replicas, words
and music by Gary Numan.)



first album though are those that hint at the electronic leaning in Numan's songwriting; thus "My Love Is a Liquid", "Every Day I Die For You", and "Steel and You" were excellent songs which gave an early idea of Numan's potential and a demonstration of his great skill with the synthesizer.

Many people however, including Beggar's Banquet, weren't ready for this attempt at Punk, and the record became a total flop and was deleted. In 1979, Numan recorded his second album under the name of Tubeway Army - the classic "Replicas" album. This record immediately displayed that Numan was determined to record electronic music and not Punk, and whilst Beggar's Banquet continued to disapprove of this trend, there was nothing they could do - Numan had his contract. The album clearly was no compromise - all ten songs were written and performed as synthesizer songs. Beggar's Banquet, unconvinced by the album, and much to Numan's dismay, 'Down In The Park'/'Do You Need The Service?' flopped, and "Replicas" made no real immediate impact on the market. Numan was left wondering whether he had made a gross miscalculation of the market he was after, and again in despair began auditioning for a new band.

Beggar's Banquet meanwhile were fast losing their patience with Numan and were prepared to write him off as a lost cause. Numan, who all along had said that the single that should be released was 'Are "Friends" Electric?'/We Are So Fragile' then pleaded for its release from the album. Beggar's Banquet refused and Numan left feeling that his new band must find a new

label. Then, by a stroke of luck, Tubeway Army was offered some television and radio coverage based on their previous offerings. Numan returned to Beggar's Banquet and convinced them that 'Are "Friends" Electric?' should be released. The single was released and shortly after appearing in the Top 20, it soared to Number One, and "Replicas" followed close behind topping the album charts. Tubeway Army, by the time the single hit number one, was pretty much defunct. The new band, consisting of Chris Payne on keyboards and violin, Russell Bell on guitars, keyboards, electronic devices and synthetic percussion.

Denis Haines on synthesizers, and Cedric Sharpley on drums (plus Billy Currie on synthesizers, borrowed from Ultravox) got together quickly and went into the studio immediately to rehearse for a new album. Numan concentrated totally on

songwriting and vocals from this point on and, as "Replicas" with its haunting and hypnotic synthesizer meandries such as 'Down In The Park', 'I Nearly Married a Human', and 'Me, I Disconnect From You' lingered in the charts still being hailed as a brilliant, innovative music, the fans and the press waited excitedly for the next development.

Broadway comes to town

By CHRISTIE WALKER
Brunswick Staff

Who would have ever thought that Broadway could come to Fredericton, N.B.? Well, anyone who attended "Everything's Coming Up Broadway" a musical revue held at STU's Edmund Casey Hall on Jan. 16 and 17th, knows what we mean. A broad, and varied range of old and new musicals were represented in this entertaining salute, due largely to the excellent vocals of Deanna MacDonald, Shawn Wright, and Sharon MacDonald. These three young entertainers should be commended for their efforts held responsible for the difficult task of captivating an audience with songs only. Musicals from "Annie" to "My Fair Lady" to "Fame" were represented in the show.

Also, to be congratulated were the fine pit band, who sounded more like a full or-

chestra. The band consisted of Les Brookes on violin, Greg Moffitt on piano, Don Bossé on percussion, Jamie Newsome on bass and Garry Hansen on guitar. Bossé and Moffitt were also producer and musical coordinator respectively.

A classy black and white stage was tasteful and understated and was designed by Heather MacDonald. The show was funded by Don Bossé and various Fredericton merchants, with the profits being donated to the Edmund Casey Fund Raising project.

For those people who missed their chance to see "Everything's Coming Up Broadway," they will have the opportunity to catch the show again when this musical troupe gathers once more on the stage of Edmund Casey Monday, Jan. 24 at 8:30. Tickets are \$2.50 for adults and \$1.50 for children and are available at the door. Enjoy!