

by Geoffrey Jackson

Today I've decided to discuss my favourite magazine, at the considerable risk of revealing myself as some sort of reactionary elitist. The magazine I am speaking of is the *New Yorker*. Yes, I know it's a snobby anachronistic, and often pedantic magazine. It also prints some of the finest writing you are likely to find anywhere.

The *New Yorker* is an acquired taste. No one likes the first issue they read, it seems far too strange. There are no photos (except for the sumptuous ads, but more on them later), the headlines are modest and surprisingly vague. It's often hard to tell where one story begins and ends, and even harder to tell what some of them are about. Being used to the grabby graphics of modern journalism I found the *New Yorker* almost incomprehensible at first.

The magazine began in the thirties under the editorship of Harold Ross (now virtually a legendary figure in American publishing). It was intended to be a local magazine for New Yorkers. Ross managed to attract some of the greatest talents in America. James Thurber and Dorothy

Parker were among his finds.

Today the *New Yorker* has an immense circulation, especially for a magazine of its elite character. Why? Because rarely an issue goes by without at least one exceptional article. Last fall they ran a terrific two-part story on the Solidarity movement in Poland. Last January there was an extremely detailed three-part article on the nuclear arms race. Last week's issue had a very intriguing essay by Bruno Bettelheim on Sigmund Freud.

The *New Yorker* also runs short stories, often by very topnotch writers. This week's issue has a new story by



Irish writer, Edna O'Brien. One warning though: the *New Yorker's* short stories are notorious for being peculiar and incomprehensible but there are brilliant exceptions to this rule that make up for all the obtuse works.

On the lighter side there are cartoons all over the magazine. The *New Yorker* prides itself on its cartoonists and its pride is well justified. Many people pick up the magazine just to look at these drawings. The reviews are also fun, especially the theatre reviews to all those Broadway plays you'd like to see one day. (It also gives you a terrific edge at a cocktail party to be able to casually refer to the latest Hal Prince

production).

I especially like Pauline Kael's film reviews. I've been fond of her since the day she described that Brook Shield's disaster, *Endless Love* as "a predictable fiasco, still, it's considerably worse than one might have expected." Right on Pauline!

But I mustn't forget one of the secret delights of the *New Yorker*, the ads. Gorgeous ads selling gorgeous things to the gorgeous people. I've seen ads for \$200,000 dollar watches in this magazine. The designer clothes, fine crystal, quality leather goods, combine to create a very snobby effect, and it is et al, fun to look at them and wonder what it's like to be able to buy Christian Dior jewelry.

The *New Yorker* is not a magazine for everybody, it's far too odd to have mass appeal. Yet one *New Yorker* cartoon probably describes their readers best. It shows a man standing before a newsrack filled with magazines of the People-Time-Newsweek ilk. He asks plaintively, "Don't you have any magazines for people who like to read?" That's the *New Yorker* for you, a guaranteed two hours solid reading in every issue.

DIRECT DRIVE by James L. Stevens

Shake It Up
The Cars
Elektra/Asylum Records X5E-567

After my first listening, I merely wrote this album off as being another Cars album featuring typical "Cars music" with "Cars lyrics" and "Cars sound". But there is a slight surprise for you. Under closer scrutiny, I found that The Cars offer a little (and only a little) more than music and songs that all sound as if they can be found on their first and second albums.

Throughout the album, and particularly on side two, the band has added some very good electronic and synthesized percussion tracks. These tracks are usually subtle, and only noticeable if you are listening to the music. Their addition gives The Cars some more depth to their sound. This added depth is best heard on the tracks "Think It Over" and "This Could Be Love."

Following with slight deviations from The Cars norm is the cut "Maybe Baby," which is more of a rocker than most of the material written by the band.

Then there is their first single from the album. I am very quick to admit that the song "Shake It Up" is as typical of The Cars as you are going to get. It sounds like one of their earlier songs slightly reworked so that it can be re-fed to the AM masses in radioland. It is close to being the worst cut on the album (there are two others that are less than prime material).

My overall opinion of the album is that it is not bad, yet not outstanding either. It is just a good album, and much better than their last effort *Panorama*. But if you already own more than one album by The Cars, there really aren't very many reasons to buy this one.

Dare!
The Human League
Virgin Records Ltd./Polygram VL2230

A blast from the past: Date - 1977. Disco is big time music, senseless as it may be.

Where was The Human League then? Their album would have been a top-seller, as it contains very little other than synthesized electronic disco. The album is neither progressive nor inventive (almost assuring it some radio play). The music on *Dare!* was done by others such as Gary Numan and Ultravox years ago, and it was done with much more innovation and atmosphere.

The Human League have attempted to cash in on the rising popularity of "electro-pop", but they are non-musicians making muzak to make money. The only instruments used on the album are synthesizers and a keyboard. While these can be used to great effect, The Human League has only created a hollow, throbbing sound that is both mindless and boring. This is a real disappointment to me, because I enjoyed their 4-song EP, titled *The Sound of the Crowd*.

The Human League have released the cut "Don't You Want Me?" as a single from *Dare!* This, I assume, is supposed to be their best, yet it sounds like a re-hashed disco hit from 1977. It is trashy "electro-slop" and is far from being interesting to listen to. One cut I did like is "The Sound of The Crowd," although it is to be nothing special. I just think it is the one flicker of light on an otherwise dark album.



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