

M\*A\*S\*H: A farewell to arms

TV show gets honorable discharge

Old soldiers don't die, they just fade away.

It's better to burn out than to fade away.

MARSHALL GOLDEN

They could have done no wrong Monday night. In every corner of North America, in front of almost every television set, the estimated largest TV viewing audience ever was gathered to say goodbye to some old friends. And when old friends like Hawkeye, B.J., Potter, and Hot Lips leave, there is no wrong—there is only respect.

After 11 years of war and humanity, M\*A\*S\*H has filmed its final episode. And only time will prove McArthur wrong—M\*A\*S\*H, undeniably a soldier in both content and effect, will not die nor will it fade away. It is destined to live on, in the reruns and in our minds, as an institution—one that was both an integral part of growing through the '70's and a standard by which to measure that which we now call "great television".

When *The Carol Burnett Show* went off the air several years ago, many cried as their favourite charwoman left the stage for the last time. But for M\*A\*S\*H there were

General Douglas McArthur

Neil Young

no tears; there was only awe and a suspended disbelief that it was really over.

Perhaps that's why more people watched M\*A\*S\*H last Monday night than have ever watched any single television show before. No one wanted to believe it was over, but to witness its death is to guarantee the perpetuation of its memory.

M\*A\*S\*H broke every convention of the sitcom "success formula" and did so brilliantly. It was a TV show spawned from a film—a sure sign of disaster. And it was a black comedy that often featured unhappy, sobering endings. But perhaps most significantly, M\*A\*S\*H lost four of its main characters and still continued to top the ratings.

The industry may not have been able to predict its popularity but fans knew there was something different about the show. In an era of high-tech, glossy, "happy ending" alternative. It was about real people in real situations—something the public was obviously yearning for. It

blended the right amount of character identification, razor-edged wit and human trauma needed to convince the audience that they had a personal stake in the weekly events.

And of course, there is Alan Alda. It was fitting that the last M\*A\*S\*H began with a close-up of Alda's face and end with a shot of him flying over the now famous Korean mountain because, more than anyone else, Alan Alda was M\*A\*S\*H. It was his Groucho Marx humour, his unpredictable eccentricity and his human weakness that made M\*A\*S\*H worth watching. And it was Hawkeye's farewell that surely aroused the most emotion.

From a critical standpoint, the show was what you would have expected—vintage M\*A\*S\*H humour and drama, tinged with a feeling of finality. Memorable moments include the chicken-baby on the bus, Winchester's chamber orchestra, Klinger staying in Korea after fighting so hard to get out and Hawkeye's and Hot Lips' farewell kiss—a mere 45 seconds long.

It is unfortunate, yet unavoidable, that Monday night's show was given the astounding commercial hype that it received. With 30 seconds of air time selling for \$450,000 (more than the Superbowl) it is not surprising that CBC cut eight minutes from the show to make room for more ads. There was a mere five minutes of M\*A\*S\*H between every two minutes of commercials yet, in the end, it just didn't matter. No amount of commercials or slightly soppy writing made a difference. M\*A\*S\*H was leaving and they could do no wrong.

It is fitting that the writers ended the series before they ran out of material (arguably already a little thin in the last year). This was one old soldier who was better left to die, than suffer the indignity of fading away.

4 Simple Minds

New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84)

Virgin

SANJAY DHAWAN

This little-known Scottish band achieved modest success in the North American market with their single "Love Song". The Toronto public, however, has yet to appreciate this band's incredible talents. This is largely due to the narrow-minded conservatism of most radio program directors in this city. All due credit to CFNY-FM for picking this album the best of 1982.

Simple Minds is a veteran band which has been together for six years and has five albums and numerous EP's to their credit. On this latest effort, the rough edges seem to have been smoothed out and their musical direction clearly defined, thanks to the exceptional effort by producer-engineer Peter Walsh.

Lead vocalist Jim Kerr, whose voice resembles that of Roxy Music's Bryan Ferry, said in a recent *New Musical Express* interview, "I really am interested in power and powerful things, but now I'm much more interested in quieter power. It creeps around and takes you." The band's subliminal power is portrayed through a heavily predominant rhythm section headed by their brilliant bass guitarist Brian Forbes, whose crisp style seems to thunder through the rest of the instruments.

The band's pretentious lyrics and self-indulgence in their music seems to exemplify not only their "quiet power" but a subtle elegance as well, which is very evident in Michael McNeil's lush keyboard work. The real idea behind the album can best be summed up by another quote from Jim Kerr from the same *NME* interview. He states, "Dreamers are the kings; I think. You really need to have courage to dream and courage to back up a dream and realize that it is not a fairytale but an inspiration."

EXTRACKS

Rare David Bowie

RCA

PAULETTE PEIROL

If the recent additions to "tunnel graffiti" at York (such as "I'll be a rock 'n roll bitch for you") are any indication, there are many David Bowie fans in need of some sober reality. For those who wonder if Bowie's artistic existence has been reduced to periodic video and film appearances, breathe a sigh of relief. Released by RCA, Bowie's *Rare* L.P. is now available as a British import. The album is mainly a compilation of Bowie pieces, chronologically ordered from 1970 to 1981. Although the *Low* and *Heroes* albums should have dispelled any archaic Bowie-quasi-Ziggy-et. al. stereotyping, *Rare* is the ultimate proof of Bowie's musically experimental and innovative talents.

*Rare* should have been titled *Changes Three* since Bowie has cut ties with RCA and is now with EMI in England. Audiophiles eagerly await the import of *Let's Dance Again*, produced by EMI. While *Rare* is a retrospective album, *Let's Dance Again* contains new and original Bowie material. To promote the new album, Bowie will be embarking on a world tour this spring. Performances in Toronto are planned.

For those who are unfamiliar with Bowie, *Rare* offers a good introduction.

Side A begins with "Ragazza Solo, Ragazza Solo", Bowie's Italian rendition of "Space Oddity". Note, however, that the translated lyrics are different. Unlike many other singers, Bowie's multi-linguistic endeavors contribute a unique vitality to his well-known songs. This is often not the case with translations. ("Heroes" en français being a prime example).

"Round and Round" revives an old Chuck Berry tune, complete with strong swinging bass. This contrasts sharply with the eerie surrealistic mood of "Ragazzo Solo".

The listener is again startled to hear the lyrical ballad of "Amsterdam"; *Rare* is not a single mood album like *Low* (largely because Bowie himself did not produce it). In this song, Bowie's voice is emotionally strong and clear, yet controlled. Belted-out lyrics would have detracted from the lyrical quality of "Amsterdam", and Mick Ronson's subtle acoustic guitar strumming compliments the mood well.

"Holy Holy" is too heavy on the

metallic guitar, and is insufficiently mixed, as are most pieces from the *Aladdin Sane* album. This song is a misfit on the album — an endorsement to Bowie, and proof of RCA's lack of aesthetic judgement.

"Panic in Detroit" uses fuller instrumentation and vocals. It reminds us of Bowie's less satisfying years of self-destruction here in North America, with its screeching guitars and wailing saxophones.

"Young Americans" (though now eight years young) seems to express a Bowie yearning. He sings "It's all right - I want the Young American". This is deceiving though, because what Bowie really wants is "one damn song that can make me/break down and cry".

He found it with "Helden" on Side B. Known in English as "Heroes", "Helden" involves the emotional anger of two German lovers separated by the Berlin wall with bombers swooping overhead. "Helden" suggests that the image of Bowie as the externally cold and sterile (Thin White Duke) performer is unfounded. The raw emotion in his voice stabs the listener in the gut.

On the lighter side is "John I'm Only Dancing (Again)" (1975). This is the Bowie that your average prosaic listener is quite content to boogie to. For others, it provides a brief interlude in the emotionally prolific album.

"Moon of the Albama" is a Weill-Brecht original. The Doors popularized it using Morrison's sensuous voice and Manzarek's low, resonant organ playing. Bowie contorts this quality, often changing keys and exploiting unsynchronized instrumentation and voice effects. The result is a raunchy whiskey barode, which does justice to the song's lyrics.

"Crystal Japan", once used as a background melody for a Japanese Rice Wine commercial (what? Not beer...not for Bowie at any rate), brings *Rare* back to where it began, exploring the infinite limits of sound and experience. *Rare* evolves from experimental fantasia to the corruption and alienation of the 'American Dream' ("Holy Holy", "Panic in Detroit", and "Young Americans"), and back again. Indeed, Bowie's life has traced the same circular pattern. The cover depicts a metamorphosed Bowie who has shed all traces of the Ziggy Stardust, Aladdin Sane, and Thin White Duke personae. Sure, Bowie often grins, but in this *Rare* moment, he's definitely smiling. Regardless of what Bowie is doing in Europe, he's content.

A SONNET

Relentlessness of tired life of clockwork  
hassels and bedroom quarrels withunkind  
lovers for unclear reasons, troubled mind  
with no solutions, makes it seem a joke.  
Or should we try another scheme and work-  
out reasons why ourselves cannot be found.  
Tonight we will struggle over this rhyme  
and continue our quest in a rum and coke.  
And when we are plastered, behind drywall  
enclosed in a box, from rain outside, not  
breaking down crumbling as wet plaster will,  
but finding ourselves at last. And recalling  
someday in passing how foolish we fought,  
when we were young and lost and searching still.

Nigel Turner

LOCAL HERO

A beautiful coastline...  
A rich oil man wants to develop it.  
A poor beach bum wants to live on it.  
An entire town wants to profit by it.  
A real-live mermaid wants to save it...  
And only one of them will get their way.



"LOCAL HERO"  
An Enigma Productions for Goldcrest  
PETER RIEGERT • DENIS LAWSON • FULTON MACKAY and BURT LANCASTER  
Music by MARK KNOPFLER • Produced by DAVID PUTTNAM  
Written and Directed by BILL FORSYTH

PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED  
SOME MATERIAL MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN

SOUNDTRACK AVAILABLE ON WARNER BROS. RECORDS

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OPENS FRIDAY MARCH 4th  
AT THE PLAZA CINEMA