

General Public successful reincarnation

By RICK JANSON

Embodying a careful marriage of Caribbean rhythms and wave music, the English Beat appealed to a broad audience when their first album, *Just Can't Stop It*, appeared in 1980.

After two follow-up albums and a greatest hits LP, the band disintegrated leaving many wondering if

their unique sound would ever reappear.

When listening to the opening track of *All The Rage*, the premiere offering from General Public, it is as if an old friend has returned.

Ranking Roger and David Wakeling—two former members of the Beat—have assembled a new band together that initially sounds very much like the old.

In *Not Your Cool* the danceable rhythms, the energetic performance, the sexy sax and Ranking Roger's vocals break over you like a wave.

As the LP progresses though, some elements of the former band become noticeably absent. Much of the gritty Caribbean feel to their music has disappeared. A pop style has taken over the dominant role in what was formerly an equal marriage. The brass is also a lot less evident in the new band as guitars and keyboards play a larger role.

After getting over the differences between the old band and the reincarnated one, there is still a solid album left inside the sleeve.

In addition to the five members of General Public, a number of guest musicians are brought in to

give the music a variety of textures and styles. Particularly noticeable is the Clash's Mick Jones, whose guitar work has a strong presence on the LP.

The lyrical style has also progressed. In addition to the innocuous, playful lyrics that distinguished much of the Beat's work, there are a number of songs that are more a rallying cry than the kind of social criticism we previously saw in songs like *Mirror In The Bathroom*. In General Public, the band is critical of the forces that control society and the chorus urges the general public to strike back.

In *Day-to-Day* the band recommends:

Fast for the running, keep

*your cool
and have your say say say say
so,
silent hunger must get stronger
cause
you're waiting for that day to
day, day to day,
your reactions can make or
break the world,
stand and be part of what
you're meant to be,
your reactions can hold or set
you free,
stand and be firm, just check
the terms.*

If anything, General Public seems to have found some direction in their work and are no longer content to be just another progressive dance band. The golden age of protest music may yet return. □

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