

THE BREAKFAST CLUB

Knights of steel
pure mediocrity

By NAIRNE HOLTZ

WELCOME TO RIPPED vinyl on vinyl. Five knights of steel with scabrous appeal calling themselves Keel sing songs about copping a feel on their debut LP *The Right to Rock*. Pure droning hard rock with little instrumental talent, ragged vocals and no originality. The songs were mostly written by the band themselves and their producer Gene Simmons. The lyrics are indistinguishable but with song titles like *Spe-ed Demon* and *You're the Victim, I'm the Crime*, wanting to hear them is debatable. With powerful hardcore and metal bands like Discharge and Iron Eyelash around, don't bother with this mediocrity.

An interview
with a critic

By BARRY WALSH

THE FOLLOWING IS A DISCUSSION between Al, a typical young university student who loves music, food, and movies, and his pal, The Music Critic, which I recorded live on location at a local cinema.

Al: Let's sit here, Critic, old pal.

Critic: Very well.

Al: Did you bring my popcorn?

Critic: I did. Here you are.

Al: Gee, thanks. The movie's starting ... Hey, I know that song.

Critic: And you should, dear friend. That is the latest single from Simple Minds, entitled, *Don't you (Forget About Me)*, currently receiving heavy airplay on FM and AM radio stations across the country.

Al: Uh, yeah. It's a good song.

Critic: I shall concur with you on that statement, mon ami. This song may lack the booming percussion and dense production of previous efforts from the band, but it is extremely melodic and works quite well when considering it within a pop framework. The song is performed in an exuberant, sincere fashion, and is definitely one of the better songs on radio these days. It also speaks well for Simple Minds, who, with this effort, have proven their versatility as a pop band and have disproved the accusation that they are merely a producer's band. Ah, but this is not a Simple Minds Review.

Al: Review? What review? And why are you talking into that tape recorder?

Angry Movie Buff: Will you guys shut up? I can't hear the movie.

Critic: As I have previously stated, *Don't you (Forget About Me)* is exuberant, vibrant, and a sparkling pop effort. However, when it comes to the rest of the music from *The Breakfast Club* (Original Motion Picture Soundtrack), the spark is dead. The

soundtrack was composed and produced by act pop-producer Keith Forsey, whose credits include production work of Billy Idol, Nina Hagen, Donna Summer and the Psychedelic Furs. With this solo effort, one receives the impression that Forsey should stay behind the board.

Al: I think you should have stayed home.

Critic: The soundtrack album includes performances of Forsey's songs by Wang Chung, Karla DeVito, Elizabeth Daily, Jesse Johnson, Joyce Kennedy, and, of course, Simple Minds. However, with the exception of the Simple Minds track, the songs are techno-pop formula trash. Forsey's songs are to blame for the most part—despite Daily's energetic vocal on *Waiting* the song still contains nothing that will stick with the average consumer. Melodically, the tunes are extremely weak. Instrumentally, most of the songs plod along like tired burros, perhaps due to the presence of over a dozen uninspiring session players (who are, incidentally, the whores of the recording industry). Karla DeVito and Joyce Kennedy may

indeed be fine singers, but with music that sounds like *Twenty Minute Workout* rejects, their talents are laid to waste. It simply sounds all too familiar.

Al: Look, bud, I've been listening to your pseudo-intellectual "I know music inside and out" rap for over twenty minutes now, and I'm getting good and sore! First of all, this music is not supposed to be an awesome collection of art—it's a movie soundtrack!

Critic: True, but I've heard some extraordinary soundtracks in my day, such as *Cat People*, *Apocalypse Now*, and, most recently, Pat Metheny's beautiful soundtrack for *The Falcon and the Snowman*. Just because the music is played in a movie, it does not mean that people aren't listening. And when this music is released on an album, then it must be judged as such; a collection of songs, not a musical backdrop for visual images. When judged on this level, which is the only level upon which to judge it, this album fails miserably.



interesting things with their music and saying important things with their lyrics. Every once in a while, however, one may get the urge to travel back to the music of the seventies — the days of Kiss, Tom Petty, and the Osmonds. We no longer have to dig out those dusty old LP's from our closets. Utopia's new release, *POV*, has all the elements of the seventies music. And don't worry — they haven't added anything new.

While listening to this album, one may get the impression that Utopia does not know exactly what it wishes to do musically. The use of synthesizers seems to indicate that the group is aware that it is 1985; the heavy percussive element in most of the material gives a hint that the band would like to rock like some of the better metal bands around; the extensive use of vocal harmonies shows the pop side of the foursome; and the lyrics bounce back and forth from being cornball to meaningful within the same song.

While variety, when intentional, is an admirable quality, when this quality is present with no apparent purpose, it sounds more like confusion. Perhaps the band cannot decide whether to leave behind the security of the seventies musical formula for the possible perils which may await them if they attempt a noticeable change. Whatever the problem, the middle-of-the-styles style they have chosen does not work.

There are both good and bad notables on this album. The two worst songs, *Stand for Something* and *Mystified* are supreme examples of the confusion the band seems to be experiencing. The former track seems to want to say something but finally reduces itself to the lines *We are fighting and dancing in the street*. The latter song opens with Todd Rungren singing in a quasi-B.B. King manner that unintentionally begins the tune with a good laugh.

The production skills of Rungren and Willie Wilcox are apparent in *Secret Society* which, although shaky lyrically, is clean and polished musically. The best cut on the album is *More Light* which is, hopefully, an example of what the next Utopia album will be like. In this song, the vocal harmonies are used sparingly and are therefore more powerful; the beat of the song changes; the use of a synthesizer adds to the strong percussive unit and the lyrics are strong.

More Light is the last song on the album. It tells of facing obsolescence. Perhaps this is Utopia's worry — they have been around for a time. If they can progress further with the change that is present in *More Light* however, perhaps they will grow into the eighties while still retaining that which has made them unique and musically relevant through the years. As their last song positively states, *And if it takes forever we will find our way back to the fire*. Judging from the band's past musical successes, it certainly won't take that long.

Al: Yeah, I guess you're right. The music does kind of stink.

Critic: Well, thank you for your opinion, wrong though it was.

Al: No problem.

Critic: Well, that solves that.

END OF TAPE

Utopia not
utopian vision

By JANICE WALSH

The 1980's have, thus far, been exciting years for most music listeners. Bands such as The Parachute Club, Simple Minds, and U2 have been doing