

Listen ...

by Gisele Marie Baxter

Summer music is supposed to

for cruising and beach parties
be lightweight, designed only

and so on, right? And that might
excuse this summer's radio pop,

which collectively resembled a
joke with a punchline which

missed its cue, correct? Not quite. There are classics of the season - some early Beach Boys and Drifters songs, for

example - and even last summer saw some of the year's best - "Cars", "Train in Vain", "Echo Beach", "Brass in Pocket"... - on the charts. Besides, this summer's offerings were more pretentious than playful.

What did we have? Styx's screechy, petulant pop from **Paradise Theatre**, REO Speedwagon's shopworn lyrics in their bland pseudo-rock settings, April Wine's juvenile heavy metal thrashings, and others, similarly forgettable in nature, clung to the charts. The Electric Light Orchestra released **Time**, which again wed state-of-the-art, absolutely beautiful recording techniques to simple, even banal, pop tunes. Be warned - they sing in French on their new single, and pas tres bien, I might add.

So amidst all this trifle, were there any gems? If you were willing to look a little further than top-40 radio, or any system of mass-market charting, there were some invaluable offerings. For instance, there was **Boy**, the auspicious debut offering from Ireland's U-2. Actually, this has been around for months, but it was only in May that I discovered this wonderful band of Dubliners. Their music both celebrates their youth and contemplates the beginnings of manhood in a fresh and compelling way; "I Will Follow" is the best single of the year so far. There is an incredibly lovely Gaelic lilt which insinuates its way into their atmospheric, electrifying guitar work. U-2 is a brash yet lyrical band with a hypnotic power.

PolyGram released a compilation album of John Foxx's post-Ultravox solo work; this was an entrancing collection of sophisticated electronic rock, always sharp and often quite witty. The debut effort from Killing Joke was a sort of avant-garde rock, providing angry visions from the other side of some nuclear apocalypse. Powerful yet utterly captivating and even danceable, this English band proves again that rock music has much more room for exploration.

Also, there was intriguing new music from Adam and the Ants (sheer fun, with a touch of provocation and sly pretension), Ireland's Undertones, Japan, and in the spring, Gary U.S. Bonds, who does a smashing duet of the Cajun classic "Jole Blon" with Bruce Springsteen. Late summer saw the long-awaited second Pretenders album, and Chrissie Hynde's almost transcendently lovely rendition of "I Go to Sleep" (listen to the perfect little quiver in her voice as she takes it up high) more than convinces me that the lady is back in fine style.

So, there was actually some excellent music available this summer. One particularly important release, both for the summer and the whole year, was the domestic issuing of Joy Division's last album, **Closer**, which is remarkable. I'll have much more to say about it next week.

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