

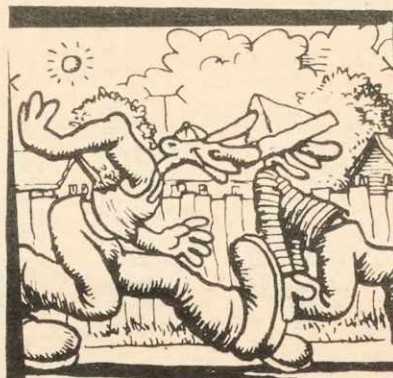
Non-stop dancing to the english beat

by Gisele Marie Baxter
Review: *The English Beat*,
"I Just Can't Stop It"
[Sire XSR 6091]

One of the best things to come out of England this year has to be the revival of ska, that infectious combination of Caribbean rhythms, soul and 1960s-style dance music. The English Beat is well on its way to becoming my favorite ska band. Although this musical form is limited, this debut has several neat little touches which make it one of the most immediately captivating records of the season—such as the crisp Jamaican-style percussion on "Hands Off... She's Mine", and the punky

rock'n'roll of "Two Swords". This could even be the party record of the year—guaranteed non-stop dancing!

The English Beat is a six-man band of terrific musicians and strong singers. Bob Sargeant gives the excellent selection of original material and covers of ska and soul classics a professional but effectively edgy production. The songs thrust you into a rough-and-ready world of gamblers and gangsters, pretty girls and men who get them only to lose them, working-class heroes and selfish blokes. On the other side of the fence are the oppressors and the opportunists. The



English Beat can take you back to the days when rock'n'roll was still very close to rhythm'n blues. Motown was a brand new label, and the big lyrical concern could be the

attractive girl who could play an excruciating game of hard-to-get. However, these people also know that they live in a very political world, and when they acknowledge this, their lyrics can be quite sharp, even exceptional.

"Stand Down Margaret", recently a smash hit for this band in their native England, sardonically attacks that country's Conservative Prime Minister, from the point of view of someone who has probably seen his share of unemployment lines: "I see no joy/ see only sorrow/ see no chance of your bright new tomorrow/ so stand down Margaret." The music, despite the theme, is still danceable, and wonderfully effective.

One of the best things about the ska revival is that it puts the saxophone back in its proper place as a rock'n'roll instrument. Most of the songs on "I Just Can't Stop It" demonstrate this, such as the energetic cover of "Tears of a Clown" (which has a neat, quirky, almost technopop little keyboard introduction), and the strong yet wistful treatment given the remake of "Can't Get Used to Losing You".

"Best Friend" is among a number of standouts on this record. "I just found out the name of your best friend/ You've been talking about yourself again," the English

continued on p. 15

Chop Phooey!

by Michael McCarthy
Movie Review: *The Octagon*,
Paramount 1

Most discerning moviegoers will know enough to avoid this film after being told that it is a martial arts film. For those fans of the genre, *The Octagon* will likely provide only flawed entertainment.

To begin with, the hero is an American who is laid back and peaceful, with none of the verve and excitement of, say, Bruce Lee. There has been an attempt to establish a moral dilemma with regard to choosing to fight against terrorists, or stay out of other peoples' lives. The attempt fails, largely due to macho posturing, and all it accomplishes is to divide the movie into a fairly slow

first half, and a battle-filled second half, in which most of the action is concentrated. The star can give the appearance of ability in the martial arts, and physically can be believed. Most of the fighting, however, suffers from such things as gunmen refusing to shoot the hand to hand combatants; groups of ten or more assailants attacking the protagonist one at a time instead of en masse; wounds losing effect after thirty seconds; and a thirty minute struggle against fifty opponents having no deleterious effect on the hero. The plot is derivative, featuring a training school for assassins, run by the hero's step-brother, and a beautiful woman who is threatened by the killers. The dialogue ranges from insane (I

just don't go for it") to blatantly cute (Girl: "That's rubbish." Guy: "Glad you recognized it.") The moral dilemma is confused, dragged out, unfitting, and unsatisfactorily solved. The acting is deplorable. But who cares about acting and dialogue in a martial arts movie? The telling defects are the lack of action in the first half, the aforementioned loss of credibility in some aspects of the fighting, and a general sluggishness and lack of attention to detail. The combat segments are not laughable, but neither are they distinctive. In general, a poor attempt to meld a socially relevant story line with an action structure, resulting in a whole that is less than the sum of its parts, which weren't such a bargain in the first place.

Downchild's Road Fever—98.7 degrees

by Chris Hartt + Young

Road Fever, Downchild's new album, can be tolerated by just about anyone, myself included. To enjoy it may be slightly more difficult. To quote my doctor: "it's a little warm, but nothing to worry

about." Road fever must be a viral attack quickly repelled by the bodies' defences—it doesn't develop into anything of significance.

The record is a palate of medium blue, not too hot and not too cold. The circulation of this record is limited to the slight upbeat blues fans. The

tunes never go past the point of "Kissy Face" from the "We Deliver" album. There is no cut which has the intensity of "Got to Get my 88's Straight", but there are some real draggers. "Half Ain't Been Told" is incredibly boring. Dave Wright's version of "O Canada" is thrilling in comparison. "Half..." seems to only have half the band involved, the 'song' is but an instrumental with a slow blues beat and a piano solo overtop. There are no vocals, at least in the sections of the song I listened to (I couldn't bear it all).

I can't say much about the music in each cut in particular because it all sounds like the same, inoffensive blues. It doesn't venture into hard bop or slow drawl, but stays between. The album is not bad, but it doesn't send me out to feverishly search record stores to buy it for all my friends and relatives for Christmas.

But don't get discouraged. The album has some merit: it sounds a little constrained, and gives the impression that live it'll be a lot better than Memorex could ever do. Go see them Saturday night, we are, it's got to be best show so far this year.

Pop Music Poll 1980

by Gisele Marie Baxter

Well, here comes the end of another year. The first installment of the 1980s is almost history, and 1981 records will soon be joining 1981 automobiles on the markets. So what was worthwhile musically in 1980? You'll find out this critic's choice early in January—and your own in February, if you fill in your ballots and return them to the *Gazette* offices, on the third floor of the Dalhousie Student Union Building, by the last week in January. Consider this an invitation to vote in the Dalhousie *Gazette* Pop Music Poll. Exercise your franchise! Anyone who reads the *Gazette* is eligible to vote. Fill in as many blanks as you care to, and try to keep your choices to one per blank—although if

you genuinely feel one category deserves a tie vote, then by all means say so!

1. Best Album—
2. Best Artist or Group—
3. Best Female Vocalist—
4. Best Male Vocalist—
5. Best New Artist or Group (must have released a debut album in 1980)—
6. Best Rhythm and Blues / Reggae Artist or Group (because I consider this the most crucial sub-category of pop music)—
7. Best Instrumentalist (name instrument)—
8. Best Producer—
9. Best Single (must have been released as such and received radio airplay)—
10. Best Song (this can be a single or an album track; name the album if it is on one)—

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