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# Sleepy's

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## Live Gary palatable

by Gisele Marie Baxter

There was something truly romantic about Gary Numan's career in its brief first phase. He was always a person with big dreams: demonstrated by his sustaining love of airplanes, his ability to translate his visions of now and the future through the keys of his synthesizers, and his stage shows, in which he gave himself to his audience in a blaze of light and electronic glory.

That phase is over now; Numan retired from live performances with what must have been a magnificent three-night-stand at London's Wembley Arena late last April. He now has new dreams, as a recording artist, a pilot, and (quite soon) a filmmaker and writer. The transition was marked with the release of two albums' worth of live material, available here as the **Living Ornaments** package. The concerts recorded took place in September of 1979 and 1980 at London's Hammersmith Odeon, and feature a cross-section of songs from Numan's four studio records, with two numbers previously unavailable here.

**Living Ornaments** is quite attractively designed, featuring several concert shots (including two group pictures of the band -- so that's what they look like close up!), a list of all the dates on Numan's various tours, and a special message from Gary,

thanking the fans for their incredible loyalty and dedicating the albums to us (oh yes, I'm a fan, or haven't you guessed?).

As for the songs, I have a few arguments with the choices. There is too much material from **The Pleasure Principle**, not enough from the brilliant **Replicas**, and at least one more song not familiar to North American audiences should have been included (something unusual, like his version of "On Broadway"). "Conversation" is far too slowly paced, and so tends to drag, despite its lovely viola line. However, the production is generally good, especially on the 1980 set, and it's interesting to see how the audience's enthusiasm increases from 1979 to 1980.

So what are the best numbers? The opener, "Airlane" glides along brilliantly and features some bright new electronic effects. The songs from the first **Tubeway Army** album are the most effective of the 1979 set, especially "My Shadow in Vain," which portrays with its tough, catchy melody the nightmare world of a valium addict, and "The Dream Police," which has a great lyric and a much-improved instrumental arrangement, with razor-sharp guitar work from Russel Bell.

The songs from **Telekon** are

all very well done; "Remind Me to Smile" is considerably livelier and more direct than it was originally, and the impressive instrumental arrangement of "The Joy Circuit" is beautifully effective. Both of the **Replicas** classics are (in the 1980 set) in excellent form. "Down in the Park" is given an exquisite piano introduction and remains Gary's most valid and poignantly terrifying song. "Are 'Friends' Electric?" has been musically reinterpreted; it counters stark and orchestral textures fascinatingly, yet loses none of its power.

The best song of the whole package is the 1980 English

single, "We Are Glass" which should have been released here earlier. It has the declarative quality of a manifesto, excellent synthesizer lines and powerful drumming from the consistently great Cedric Sharpley. Also, Gary Numan sings this song better than he does anything else on either album. The cheers which surround this number are well deserved.

If everything on **Living Ornaments** had as much power and conviction as "We Are Glass" it would have been a truly great package. It stands, however, as a valid farewell to one phase of Gary Numan's career. Within a few weeks, I'll review Numan's new studio record, **Dance**. Then, we can speculate on the next phase.

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