

# Adam and the Ants going uphill

Review: Adam and the Ants  
**Prince Charming** (Epic JE 37615)

by Gisele Marie Baxter

This is the band which assured us of their music "You may not like it now but you will." And they proved to be right -- I didn't at first, but I do now, believe me. Consider this a coda to my best of 1981 review: an appreciation of the third Adam and the Ants album, **Prince Charming**.

Adam and the Ants are not part of a trend, though they certainly

captured the British charts for the best part of last year. They were into pirate gear at the same time as the New Romantics, but looked more like a street gang with a good sense of flash and dash than a band with a strong aesthetic sensitivity; besides, they also wore warpaint and feathers. Their sound defies precise definition -- you can dance to it, but it uses no electronics. And singer-lyricist Adam Ant takes an anti-Establishment stance which sees aspects of the rock 'n' roll myth as part of the Establishment.

So consider **Prince Charming** the latest installment in the Ant-person's guide to life. It may not be as wildly inventive, as gloriously fresh, as last year's **Kings of the Wild Frontier**, but it still represents new hope for modern pop, if you can recognize which parts of it to take seriously. The best components of **Kings** are still here -- the tribal drums and cross-rhythms, the chants, yells and whistles, the incredibly tight harmonies and the guitar/bass interplay -- though they're given a jazzier, brassier production which, at times, is almost overwhelming. Adam Ant's vocal is exceptionally good; it can be aggressive, persuasive, theatrical and utterly attractive, and often all at the same time. From flamenco to rap to rhythm 'n' blues to country, this music is varied and sometimes parodying, but there's enough of originality to indicate that this band will progress and continue to develop their own sound while defying labels.

Lyrically, **Prince Charming** proceeds to define the whole business of being an Antperson, with more realistic awareness, if less subtlety, than **Kings**; the role involves a balance of individualism and solidarity, and the effect seems to be that while heroism is fun, it's also vital. Also, Adam takes a few well-aimed stabs at the music industry and the critics, with their pre-conceived notions

of what constitutes integrity, as well as the politically self-righteous stand taken by some rockers.

So tired of anarchists looking at me  
Don't need their credibility  
"Destroy!" they say, "Defy!  
Condemn!"  
As long as you don't destroy them

This (from "Ant Rap") might

seem like a whine from a band with no politics of its own, but Adam came up through the ranks of the first punk explosion, and saw first-hand how some aspects of that scene degenerated into capitalism and materialistic manipulation.

Best songs? The "Rap" features some amazing cross-rhythms, maintains a frenetic pace, and has Adam chant in French pretty well for a London-born art school dropout named Stuart Goddard. The title track is a wild arrangement of flamenco guitars, unsentimental romanticism and has one of the album's central lines: "Ridicule is nothing to be scared of," which is an essential part of the Ants' formula for survival. But the best of the lot is "Stand and Deliver" with its crashing percussion, wonderful layering of choruses and often sharp lyrical stab, at both the various trends of the pop music hierarchy and their blindly devoted followers: "So what's the point of robbery when nothing is worth taking? It's kind of tough to tell a scuff the big mistake he's making."

In more than one way, **Prince Charming** is a reaction to what happened after **Kings**; now that that's out of their system, the Ants can move on to even better things, and I think they will. May the powers that be stay with you, Adam and the Ants, and may you never, no matter how famous you get, forsake your wild frontier.



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## The world of Beckett's *Endgame*

by Stan Beeler

"Can there be misery loftier than mine? -- Perhaps." When is a tragic situation no longer tragic? When the suffering and pain of the human condition is no longer represented by the artist as a magnificent fate. Playwright Samuel Beckett shows us the pain of mankind aware of his fate, but unable to be proud of it.

The result is a kind of nervous laughter. Beckett's heroes have often been compared to the circus clown with his strange clothing and painted frown; the kind of person who staggers here and there under the load of bad luck that fate has awarded him. There is, however, an important difference between the laughter that is evoked by these tragi-comic figures and the characters in Beckett's plays. The audience cannot separate the fate of the clown from its own.

As is usual, the Neptune production of Beckett's *Endgame* owes a good deal of its total effect to the set designer. Roy Robitschek has captured the essence of Beckett's vision of a world in which time has run down. Squalor; a one room dwelling (it doesn't deserve to be called a home) that suffers from the makeshift repairs of a man who has no cause, to hope. Things are stuck together to last only for the moment because it all may end at any time. As the curtain rises on this mess a door opens at the back of the set and John Neville, in the guise of Clov, squeaks into the room. The squeaking of Clov's stiff legs adds to the total impression of "not

quite humor" that is the soul of this play. We can pity the man for his handicap but the squeak -- that is just too much -- we laugh.

Clov is the only ambulatory person in this bizarre household. Beckett has divided the social structure of his microcosmic world into three basic units and Clov serves the function of scientist and worker. It is his job to take care of Hamm who has the keys to the food cupboard and Nagg and Nell, Hamm's crippled parents. Hamm is the philosopher, writer, and controller of the means of production all rolled into one. Roland Hewgill portrays this difficult character with a great deal of insight into his artistic function. Hamm provides a running commentary upon the state of despair into which modern man has fallen. He cannot even take his own pain seriously. He is blind and requires that his servant check the situation of the outside world by climbing with great difficulty to the high windows of the room and peering out with a telescope. (Science) Clov reports that there is nothing to see but greyness. Nature is a dead, featureless object to people in the spiritual condition that Beckett presents.

Hamm's parents, Nagg and Nell, are the lowest members of Beckett's minimalist representation of society. They actually live in two matching garbage cans and depend upon Clov for everything from feeding to keeping the sand in the bottom of the cans sanitary. One gathers that he is none too diligent in the latter service. Keith Dinicol and Patricia

Henman portray accurately these hopeless people trapped in the past attitudes of the poor. Nagg shows himself to be a willing victim when he accepts Hamm's bribe of a sugar plum, though he knows full well that there are no more in existence.

*Endgame* seemed to many of Halifax's theatre-going population to be a strange choice for Neptune. We have come to expect a slick, highly marketable product that is at times in direct competition with movies. Suddenly we are presented with philosophical



content, minimalist structure and God (perhaps that is not appropriate here) knows what else. There are rumours that this sort of experimentation has not gone over well with the more conservative of Neptune's supporters. However, it would seem to me that it is a wise move to attempt to interest that section of the population that the rest of the world designates "over-educated." They will at least get good reviews from the university press.