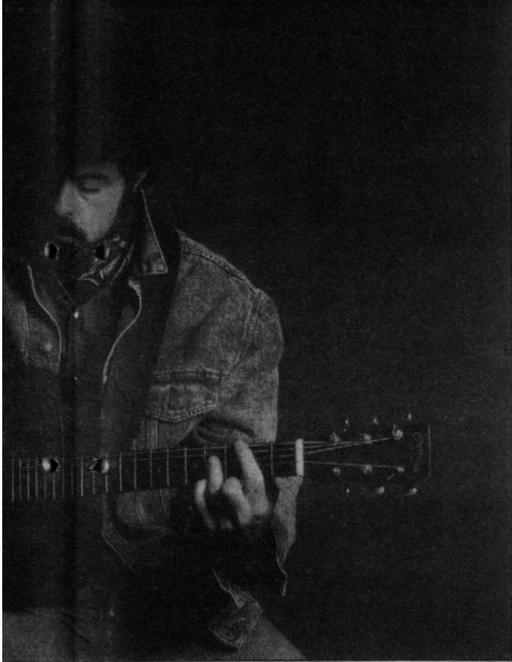


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SELL BAND

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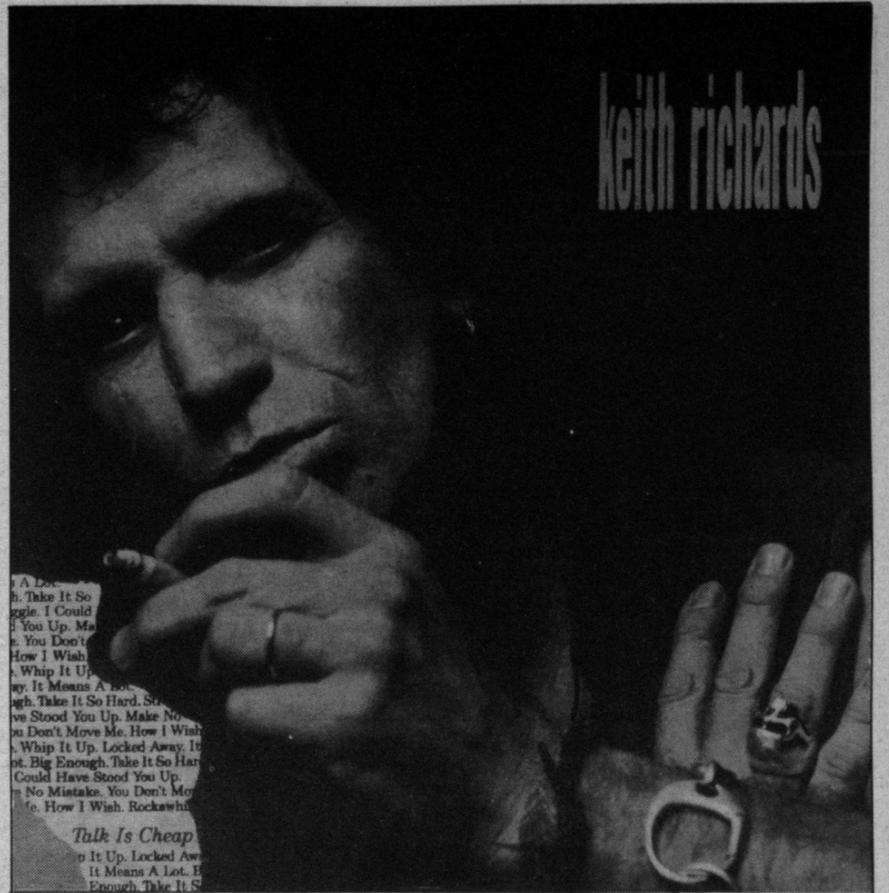
Richards wins solo Stones sweepstakes

Keith Richards
Talk is Cheap
Virgin

by Raj Nigam

With the release of *Talk is Cheap*, the solo debut by Keith Richards, a reassuring dose of reality has been injected into the rock 'n roll monolith. With the exception of perhaps Robert Plant, none of rock's mainstays have done much of musical merit lately. Sting and a cast of thousands portificate their way across the globe, Bono's political autoeroticism limps its way agonizingly onto screens across the nation, and in both instances the frenzy of social awareness has all but obliterated the very essence of these artists' nature — to wit, the music has been overlooked.

Thankfully, the same cannot be said of Richards, who has assembled a top-flite band of session veterans, and brought in a variety of guests for added punch. Former bandmate Mick Taylor lends a hand in the 50's rave-up "I could have stood you up (but I didn't)", alongside Chuck Berry pianist Johnny Johnson, and the smoldering groove of the James Brown-ish "Big Enough" is enhanced by the presence of bass player "Bootsy" Collins and alto sax man Maceo Parker, both sidekicks of the Godfather himself. Drummer Steve Jordan, alumnus of "the world's most dangerous band", is credited in both a co-production



and co-writing capacity, but make no mistake — this album has Keef's fingerprints all over it. If there was ever any question as to who wears the pants in the Rolling Stones, this album will lay to rest those doubts once and for all.

The production is loose, occasionally muddy, and most of the lead vocals (all handled by Richards) sound like they were laid down at 4:30 a.m., after I pack too many Marlboros. In short, this album combines the most endearing elements of

any Stones album. Richards axe sounds better than ever, and he fires off more of his patented blues-drenched licks off within the framework of simple three-chord progressions.

This, ultimately, is why Richards succeeds, for he sticks to what he knows best, and unlike that other errant Stone, couldn't care less about keeping up with whichever latent poseur happens to be sitting atop the charts. If your record collection is looking a little full of itself, this album may be just the remedy.

Paced throughout with solid rhythm, and flickering guitar, the album precludes the flippant and often condescending sneers that tend to greet country music of this type — heartfelt and with more than a modicum of integrity.

Road to Bayamon is certainly one of the finest efforts of the year in country music; deserving not only a place in the record libraries of more enlightened 'afficionados' but allowing us a small glimpse into the lives of ordinary people caught up in a too-fast changing world.

sweepstakes

From the opening bars of "Just A Little Bit" through to the outstanding "At the Dark End of The Street" (Are you listening Freddie?), the overwhelmingly rich vocals and the dynamic Ry Cooder-led musical base carry the listener on an effortless aural journey down a soul road to the 60's and then back again to the eighties. The blend of R & B, Blues, Gospel and soul that permeate this album is a testament to the standard against which pretenders are judged. This should be the album that finally brings this dynamic duo to the attention of a much-deserved and far wider audience. They deserve it, and so do you.

Now that's what I call a compilation

The Housemartins
Now that's what I call quite good
Go!/MCA

by Mike Spindloe

In their relatively short career, The Housemartins established themselves as one of the more tasteful of the many British white soul bands to emerge in the '80s. *Now that's what I call quite good* is a double album (single CD/cassette) retrospective which collects singles, B-sides, demos, radio session takes and even some ordinary album tracks. It serves as both a good compilation album of hits and an interesting package for collectors due to the large number of previously unreleased and non-LP tracks which have been included.

It's easy to see why The Housemartins were much more popular over the big pond than in North America. Like the Style Council, their outlook is distinctively British, and while there is nothing remotely inaccessible about their music, they steered clear, for the most part, of the cloying commerciality of bands like Wham! or Culture Club. This may seem like a strange comparison, but The Housemartins' music is pretty lightweight stuff; what they may have lacked compared to these bands was a charismatic and colourful front man.

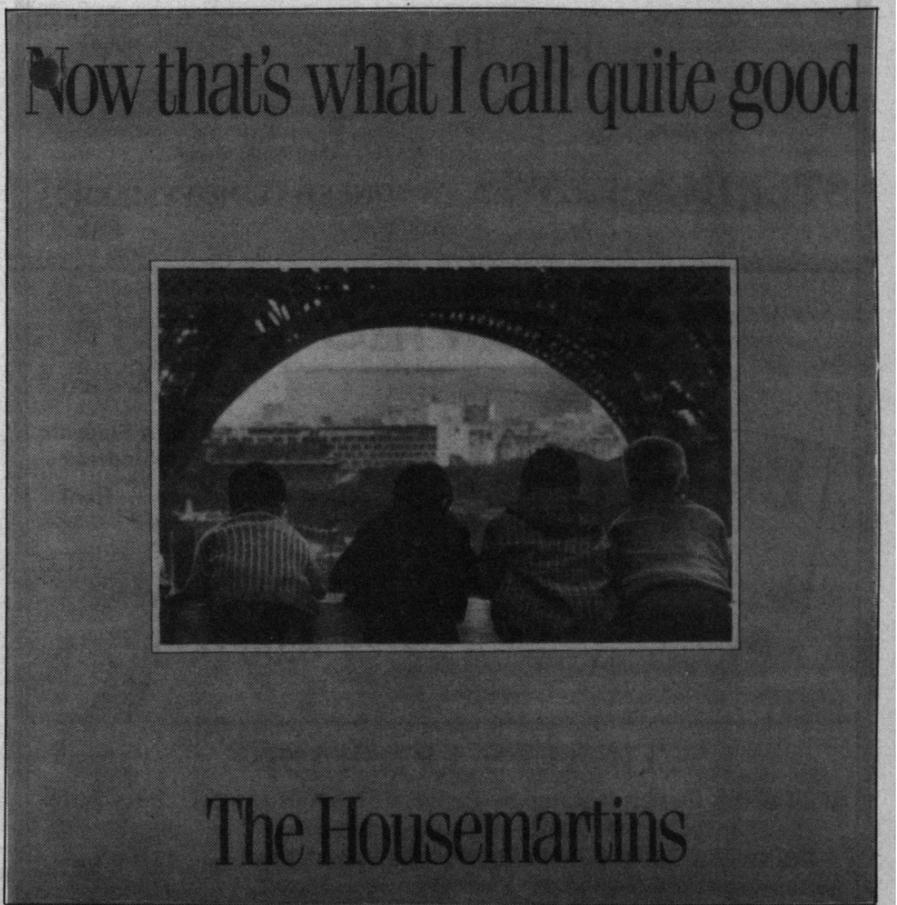
Their self-deprecating sense of humour is also perhaps foreign to North American audiences. How many bands would include this description of a song ("Everydays's the Same") in the liner notes to their greatest hits album: "One of the band's last musical ventures and possibly their worst. Lyrically vague and musically unimaginative... Although originally written in 1983, it wasn't until... '87 that the band actually

became desperate enough to record it." style; witness their wonderful versions of

These comments are typical of the liner notes, which are also quite informative, especially if you're dying to know how the band's singles fared in New Zealand. Beyond the notes, though, there are two full discs worth of heartfelt, unpretentious pop-soul (or "Garage Gospel") songs that

show a band that chose substance over Carole Kings's "You've Got a Friend" and the classic "He Ain't Heavy, He's My Brother" (the latter done acapella).

In the end, it's only jukebox music, but The Housemartins did it well and deserve to be remembered for that. *Now that's what I call quite good* is recommended as the best possible form of that remembrance.



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