

# Technopleasure with Gary Numan

by Gisele Marie Baxter

Gary Numan might be called the first real star of techno-pop. His synthesizer-driven experiments in science fiction on vinyl produced one of the most popular songs of last summer, "Cars", and a hit album in "The Pleasure Principle". This popularity made the critics suspicious, and they started condemning Numan as a carbon copy of David Bowie, who made outer

space music profitable in the early 1970s.

The criticism is not quite fair. Bowie is a very talented man, but has always been too much of an "artiste" for my taste—he is in many ways a cabaret singer whose electric sound translates his sophisticated lyrics into a rock idiom. Gary Numan is more direct, more accessible, and has produced in "The Pleasure Principle" a fascinating

record.

The sound is excellent; the orchestration clear and uncluttered. The band plays well together, but I must give special credit to Cedric Sharp-ley, whose stylish, energetic rock drumming electrifies the songs. The synthesizers create moods—of loneliness, of sadness, of alienation and paranoia—and counter-melodies of an often haunting, transcendent beauty.

Numan's very controlled voice is a good vehicle for his lyrics: it has an edge which lends credibility to his songs. However, it is more effective and more emotional when he takes it down to a lower key, as in "Complex", which is the most beautiful song on the record. "Complex" has a strong quality of sadness even in the paranoia it expresses: its protagonist does not like his alienation, but cannot reject it. The song uses piano and viola evocatively. The synthesizers are more understated than in other songs, yet give the track an edge of longing.

The songs, on the whole, create visions of a future world in which machines have become so powerful that they are the masters of mankind and even of a lesser, yet still complex, order of machine. They create (as in "Engineers"), they destroy ("M.E."), and ironically, they offer the only security in a threatening environment ("Cars"). Numan often plays the role of the victim in his songs: "Here is my car/I can only receive/I can listen to you/It keeps me stable for days/In cars." However, he can also become the villain: he is the despairing destroyer of "M.E." (I turn off the pain/Like I turned off you all"), and he is one of the sneering, malevolent mechanics of "Engineers". If safety can be found in cars in Numan's future world, it is a dubious safety at best. The album's title is ironic: there is no pleasure as we know it in a world ruled by machines.

Gary Numan's verbal images are sharp and concise; the music gives them a fuller sense. At times, "The Plea-

sure Principle" overreaches; it attempts something its lyrics cannot quite capture. Yet Numan's music is both haunting and energetic, and has a great visual quality. One can easily imagine it as the soundtrack of an ambitious science fiction film.

"Telekon", which is Gary Numan's fourth album in two years, has just been released, and the first single, "I Die You Die", is starting to get radio airplay. It is a fantastic, lovely song, crisply produced and yet more complex and personal than anything on "The Pleasure Principle". No matter what the critics say, I think Numan is an artist to watch in the 1980s. He has the ability to take the basic themes of rock—romance and politics—into some fascinating territory.



## No Nukes keeps your socks on

BY G. Forsyth

The ads quote *Rolling Stone* magazine: "No Nukes knocks your socks off". Don't believe it. The movie, like *Rolling Stone*, lacks the requisite energy to untie your shoes, let alone destroy your hosiery. Simply, *No Nukes* fails to entertain either musically or cinematically.

Filed during a series of five concerts held last September at Madison Square Garden, *No Nukes* features the talents of Graham Nash, Bonnie Raitt, the bemused James Taylor, the equine Carly Simon, John Hall, Jackson Browne, and Bruce Springsteen. With the exception of the latter two, the musicians performed in a lacklustre fashion. The songs were uniformly dull, utterly forgettable and uninspiring (perhaps the unkindest cut of all). Further, the soundtrack lacked bass throughout most of the movie, resulting in an overall flat and punchless sound.

The two high points were supplied by Browne and Springsteen (they do not perform together in the movie). Browne turned in an energetic and determined performance on "Running on Empty" that saved the movie's first half from falling asleep. The second half of the movie was redeemed by an exuberant

and tumultuous three-song appearance by Springsteen and the E-Street Band, highlighted by the dramatic and triumphal "Thunder Road". Unfortunately, the atrocious editing in this sequence was inexcusable, and the soundtrack was annoyingly thin in spots, both of which detracted from what was otherwise a fine performance.

The movie's attempt to convey its anti-nuke message was boringly earnest. The performers would sometimes exhort the crowd to chant, "No nukes! No nukes!" Browne and Nash both gave interviews, in which they appeared serious and concerned about the perils of nuclear waste. Indeed, Nash displayed a warm and energetic personality—one never doubted his sincerity in the project for a second.

Perhaps the fatal flaw of the film was its musical status. Surely a call to action should be expressed more passionately than was done in this series of enervated musical performances. In sum, the movie boasts two or three exciting musical scenes, widely separated by gobs of boring, albeit well-intentioned, anti-nuke pedagogy. Alas, good intentions do not always make for good movies.

## Upcoming Movies

Thursday, Oct. 9th, *A Clockwork Orange* is playing in the McInnes Rm. Sunday's film presentation at the Cohn is the highly-touted 1971 Japanese film *The Ceremony* (with subtitles). The Oxford is holding over *Smokey and the Bandit II*, while the Casino is opening with *In God We Trust* on Friday, and the Hyland is opening with *Hopscotch*. Also opening on Friday: Paramount 1—*Ordinary People*; Penhorn 1—*Song of the Earth*; Penhorn 2—*Why Would I Lie*; Penhorn 3—*Private Benjamin*; Downside-view: 1—*Song of the Earth*, 2—*Coast to Coast* (recom-

mended), 3—*My Bodyguard*. Held over are *Oh God, Book II* at Paramount 2; *Middle Age Crazy* (recommended) at Scotia Square; and *Divine Madness* at the Cove. Wormwood has *The Great Dictator* (recommended) on Friday, *The Atlantic Film Sampler* on Saturday and Sunday, and *Kanchenjunga* (Satyajit Ray Series) on Wednesday. There are experimental films Tuesday in the MacAloney room at 12:30 and the Art Gallery at 8 p.m., this week featuring a Kenneth Anger film and a satire of Bergman films.

**Crack a pack of Colts along with the great outdoors.**