

Propaganda doesn't live up to its name

by "Switch"

Propaganda
1234
Virgin Records

If you're looking for something new in music, Propaganda's 1234 is not going to give it to you. It is a newly released album, but the word new can't be used as a description in any further sense. Actually, if you're inclined to listen to light pop or new age style music (not to be confused with new wave) you might find something in 1234 that satisfies you. For me, 1234 does nothing more than elicit memories of other people's music that I consider good for atmosphere and/or music to study by.

Let me elaborate: music to study by is, under my definition, music that is there to blot out all other noise in the room that might distract you, but that you don't have to pay any attention to. I guess the concept is much like that of elevator music, but in a different class.

Only two tracks even attempt to demand attention, (and if I were a DJ on a top 40 station, I might give it to them), "Vicious Circle" and "Only One Word."

David Gilmour plays lead guitar on the latter, achieving an interesting sound that is overworked in a song the over-production bug kills dead. "Vicious Circle" opens up with the peaceful sound of crickets chirping and twists up into a pop tune that has great potential as a dance floor hit, but, again, another can of Raid is required.

Howard Jones appears as the co writer of two songs, "Heaven Give Me Words" and "Your Wildlife," but as far as I can see — or hear, for that matter — does more damage than good. Neither of these songs are memorable. Jones sings backup on "Heaven Give Me Words," but is lost in the muddled layers of sound. Certainly there are no comparisons to be drawn between 1234 and Jones' *Human's Lib*.

Betsi Miller, the lead singer of Propaganda does have a pleasant voice. With the exception of "Vicious Circle," however she really doesn't do anything very interesting with it. Propaganda end up sounding like Kim Wilde or Swing Out Sister on one of their weaker days. Too bad, too, because what Miller plays with on "Vicious Circle" is reminiscent of earlier attempts, and does have

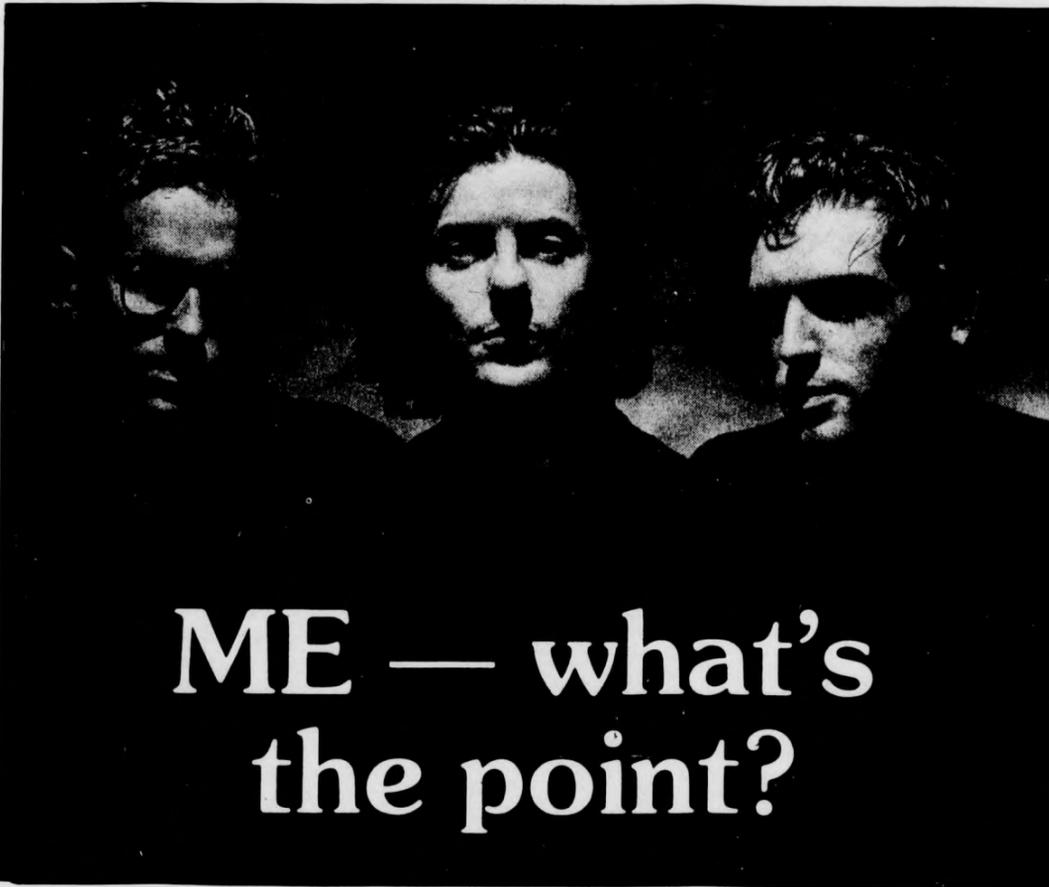
the potential to get her somewhere.

The high point of the album is the instrumental sound of Propaganda. When they stop trying to sell their lyrics and their record they achieve greatness. The

instrumental reprise of "Vicious Circle" is ethereal and new ageish. I left wondering if they would be more suited to doing all instrumental music. And, I would like to advise them in this day and age not to brag about using a

Fairlight synthesizer, especially in the way they use it. For the most part, anything with a few microchips and some keys would do them fine.

My final words . . . don't buy 1234 unless you have to!



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by Ira Nayman

Modern English
Pillow Lips
TVT Records

I mean, what's the point?
Modern English has rerecorded

its mid-eighties hit "I Melt With You" for its latest album, *Pillow Lips*. The original version was pretty good, I guess, but the new version does absolutely nothing creative, original or the least bit worthwhile with it.

So, like, what's the point?
"I Melt With You" is the first single off the album.

No, really, what's the point?
The rest of the album contains uninspired synth-pop that tends to ask for little imagination from the listener (ie — it all sounds the same). You would think that ME (as the band narcissistically likes to be called) would realize that its

music, not much to listen to in the first place, has been supplanted by rap and heavy duty funk on the dance floors of the nation.

Pillow Lips is pleasant enough, but, what's the point?

I mean, here is an album with a blue flower on the cover and a red flower on the sleeve. Am I supposed to be offended by the sexual suggestiveness of these pictures, or what? And, what about the band's obsession with one particular portion of female anatomy? Is ME lost in a morass of adolescent sexual fantasy, or . . . Just what is the point, anyway? Damned if I know.

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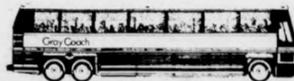
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