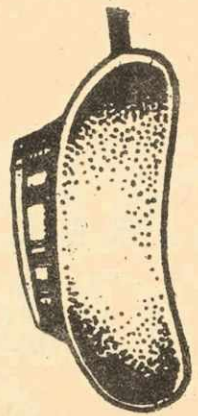


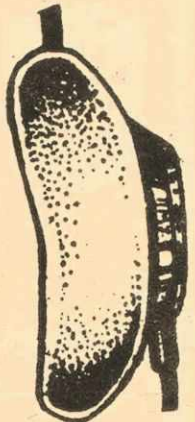
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**SOUND  
TRACKS**



by Mark Teehan  
**SUPERTRAMP** —  
"Crime Of The Century" (A&M). My first exposure to this album was through a friend who had been flipping out on it since early December. Upon hearing it, I too was initially knocked out by its sterling production and grandiose, innovative arrangements. Sympho-rock with imagination it seemed. Then after getting into "Crime" a bit more, I had my doubts; something "not quite right. Missing substance? Too much theatrical flash? I wasn't sure. Most strange. At this point my reaction still borders on the Ambiguous/undecided, but I'm impressed enough with Supertramp's potential and technical excellence to call "Crime" a flawed success. Part of the problem lies with the ambitious, perhaps pseudo-pretentious nature of the LP; the band never lives up to the initial promise shown on the opening track or really make the album's thematic concept work as a whole. It all depends on what you're willing to settle for.

If you're a production freak, and into the classical/art-rock axis typified by groups like Genesis, Yes, and ELP, then chances are good that you'll eat up "Crime Of The Century." That's not to simplistically lump Supertramp into a certain category or imply that they slavishly imitate the aforementioned groups. It's just that, in the tradition of most English progressive-rock groups, the Tramps music tends toward the complex, with their arrangements and sound being very intricate and polished. They've actually got a closer affinity to the rock opera work of Peter Townsend and The Who. As a playing unit, they're a bitch of a band and have one of the tightest, most energetic rhythm duos of any prog-rock outfit I've come across in Bob Benburg (drums) and John Helliwell (bass). This, plus the fine keyboard work of Richard Davies and Roger Hodgson, is what gives the band its musical appeal. Couple this with Ken Scott's Superlative production Wizardry - also a hallmark of most Anglo groups - and you've got a tempting combination. The band really sparkle on the opening "School," featuring a chilling harmonica into straight outa Clint Eastwood land, uptempo fury sounding like a reincarnation of the Doors, and the sombre "Asylum" with its well-thought out arrangements and panoramic vista. Benburg's powerful drumming and Hodgson's penetrating guitar

work stand out here. However, in the areas of songwriting and lyrics Supertramp do not fare so well over much of the album, though the quality of the performances and production tend to obscure these deficiencies. Another obscuring factor is the conceptual nature of "Crime," with all the tracks meshing right into one another; taken as a whole the album is impressive, but upon closer examination many of the individual cuts don't hold up well.

As for the LP's theme, it would seem to be an autobiographical/mind-game approach to the hassles of growing up in post-industrial, technological Angleland (shades of Quadrophonia). A study in adolescent frustration, alienation, loneliness, and rage with nebulous cosmic connections (check the cover out). Due to the vague, uncommitted writing style of Hodgson and Davies one can never be too sure of exactly what's behind all the frustration - alienation, or what in fact is the "Crime of the Century" ("the rape of the universe"?). Where do you wanna start? On the title track, the culprits responsible are depicted as power trippers after lust, greed, and glory; in an effort to be more precise, the authors - from out of the blue - point out the guilty: you and me! The old "the world is as we are" trick. Well that sort of stuff sounds like a cop-out to me, and a pretty poor way to end an album that makes pretenses of having a loftier vision. The connection between the personal concerns of the first 6 tracks and the apocalyptic foreboding/cosmic overtones of the last two is indeed obscure. Hodgson and Davies can depict the superficial veneer surrounding real life situations and emotional concerns, but they clearly lack deep perception/insight into personality/character and the realities of living in a modern, mass society.

On "School" the pair do a fairly adequate job of covering adolescent doubts/rebellion against parental despotism and educational strait-jacketing, but most everywhere else they waste words, repeat cliches, and generally spend an inordinate amount of time saying the most basic things. In spite of this clumsy writing style, I find the lyrics salvageable on "Hide In Your Shell" and "Asylum," in the sense that they develop along coherent lines and point to well-defined themes: the first dwells on the fact that most personal

problems are self-originating, suggesting as solutions self and other person-love; the 2nd deals with the need for sincerity and spontaneity in personal relationships. The worst excesses occur on "Bloody Well Right," where the title is continuously re-cycled with its dumb refrain, and on "Dreamer" with mindless throwaway lines like "well can you put your hands in your head oh no" repeated **ad infinitum**.

In a similar vein, the musical structure of most of the material on "Crime" leaves something to be desired. The band can go anywhere in style, but more often than not they flounder in a sea of chord changes, fancy motifs, and pointless passages. Hodgson-Davies, for the most part, string together melodic pastiches (often banal ones at that), relying heavily on the intrinsic qualities of the band and studio wizardry to forge them together. The result is that most of the tracks have a lifeless, artificial neutralism about them that I find frustrating after awhile. All the clever over-dubbing, echo effects, etc. can't hide the fact that there's very little natural, organic (melodic) development among the songs. Technical flash for its own sake is a dead end, a fact which many newer 70's bands are too stunned to appreciate. Unless you say something through the music itself it all becomes rather pointless and alienating.

All this said, "Crime Of The Century" is still an album worthy of attention. And Supertramp show enough promise here to keep me interested in their next (4th) outing; with a stronger vocalist, better songwriting, and a more moderate approach they'll be a band to be reckoned with. Keep on smilin!

**THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY CHAIRMAN WILLIAM WOLFE** will discuss Scottish political and cultural nationalism at a public meeting in The MacMechan Auditorium, Killam Library on Friday, March 14, 1975 from 11:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.  
**Attention Arts & Science Students**  
The deadline for applications for the Junior Year Abroad Programme at the University of Lancaster has been extended to **14 march, 1975**. Applications and information can be obtained from the Awards Office, Room 125, Art and Administration Building.