

'Clue' into Robert Palmer

by Gisele Marie Baxter

Review: Robert Palmer, "Clues" (Island XLIP 9595)

Admittedly, I have not paid much attention to Robert Palmer except in the past couple of years, when he has enjoyed quite a bit of success with records like "Double Fun" and "Secrets". These records produced some strong, stylish pop, but "Clues" is the album which really has me listening to Palmer: it is captivating and as intriguing as the title suggests.

This English singer-songwriter, who now lives and

records in the Bahamas, has produced a rhythmically and stylistically diverse collection of songs, ranging from reggae and calypso, to rock'n'roll, and even to technopop. There are five Palmer originals here, as well as Lennon and McCartney's "Not a Second Time", Gary Numan's "I Dream of Wires", and a Palmer/Numan collaboration ("Found You Now"), which sounds a lot like some of the Eastern influenced music on the Police's "Zenyatta Mondatta", with fewer concessions to Western pop. (It is the sort of song which tends to grow on you and become quite



persuasive, but I still think it would have benefitted from a stronger keyboard arrangement.)

Lyricaly, most of "Clues" deals with the problems and paranoias of modern life and modern relationships. Two of Palmer's tunes (and two of the best on the record), "Looking for Clues" and "Johnny and Mary", do this with sophistication, sympathy and humour. "It's crazy but I'm frightened by the sound of the telephone/ I'm so afraid the caller might have awful news," Palmer sings over an incredibly infectious technopop/reggae beat, and the lyric subtly extends from paranoia about life to paranoia about a specific relationship. "Looking for Clues" employs an effective vocal arrangement, a xylophone break, and the guitar chord I associate with Public Image Ltd.'s experimental sound, all over the throbbing synthe-

sizer-and-guitar line.

"Johnny and Mary" is one of the loveliest singles to infiltrate the pop music charts this year. Its whole power lies in its subtlety: in Palmer's restrained yet emotional vocals, and in the controlled production, particularly the compelling keyboard and percussion arrangement. This terse little tale of insecure Johnny and sympathetic yet determined Mary is told with more conviction than many people of the Thrash & Bang school of Emotional Music could achieve.

The other best song on "Clues" is Palmer's passionate rendition of "I Dream of Wires", which is one of Gary Numan's strongest compositions to date. Numan (on keyboards) and the bassist from his own band provide excellent background accompaniment, in an arrangement which is both dramatic and

ically clear. For once on the record, Palmer leaves the modern world for a future which has all but mechanized life out of existence: "I am the final silence/ The last electrician alive. . ."

The juxtaposition of "Wires" with the calypso rhythms of the gently humorous "Woke Up Laughing" is an exquisitely brilliant idea.

For those who prefer their music less experimental, there are two direct, danceable rockers in "Sulky Girl" (which also has a sharp, witty lyric) and "What Do You Care?" Robert Palmer's singing on "Clues" is consistently strong, clear and appropriate to the music chosen, and the selection of music, with its respect for pop traditions and its willingness to try new directions, is laudable. I can recommend "Clues" as an important release, because it has class and energy.

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Dal Gazette Pop Music Poll

by Gisele Marie Baxter

Those of you who picked up the January 15 issue of this paper had a chance to read a Gazette critic's opinion of the music of 1980. Now is your chance to voice your opinion, by voting in the Pop Music Poll. Bring in your ballots to the Gazette offices (third floor of the SUB) or drop them off at the enquiry desk on the main floor of the Student Union Building. Fill in as many spaces as you want, and if you feel one category deserves a tie, by all means say so. Results will be published in February. (Only vote for 1980 material.)

1. Best Album—
2. Best Artist or Group—
3. Best Female Vocalist—
4. Best Male Vocalist—
5. Best New Artist or Group (must have released a debut album in 1980)—
6. Best Rhythm and Blues/Reggae Artist or Group (because I consider this the most crucial sub-category of pop music)—
7. Best Instrumentalist (name instrument)—
8. Best Producer—
9. Best Single (must have been released as such as received radio airplay)—
10. Best Song (this can be a single or an album track; name the album if it is on one)—

Ronnie's Revenge

This week the Gazette presents the first, and perhaps the last, of its proposed series of public opinion polls. The continuation of this series depends on the success (in more ways than one) of this feature.

This week Ronnie Regan was inaugurated as the 40th, and perhaps last, president of the United States, a country found on your map just slightly south of Canada and north of Mexico. This country is known to possess

nuclear weapons and Ron is just the kind of guy to use them. This poll is to determine how many people think the world is about to be blown off the map and who'll go first.

Please put an 'x' in the appropriate box after each question.

Will Ronnie use nuclear weapons? Yes No Don't know

If yes, when will he use them? This month Next month Less than six months Six months to a year More than a

year
 Will he nuke Canada? Yes No Undecided

Which of these places will he nuke first? Akron, Ohio Plains, Georgia Chappaquidick Bangor, Maine Tehran, Iran

Please choose the nation that you think Ronnie will nuke first and put it in the blank. The person (s) who guesses right will win an all expense paid trip to that place.