

10CC reaching perfection

It was with the release of *The Original Soundtrack* that the English quartet called 10 CC became more than a critic's pet rock group. *The Original Soundtrack* gave the group the public recognition that they had so long deserved but which wasn't forthcoming in their first two albums, *10 CC* and *Sheet Music*. With the success then, of their third album, the arrival of their fourth should be an event that many of their new legions of fans have long awaited. And their fourth, *How Dare You*, is every bit as excellent as their *Soundtrack* album (nothing, however, should be taken away from their first two albums; their production work and musical finesse is as polished as their latest release). The members of the group seem to alone possess the ability of knowing what they want the final result to sound like; and unlike many musicians they know how to go about this. This album, as well as their other three have been produced and recorded by the members of the group itself, while Eric Stewart, a highly versatile member of the

quartet, handles all the engineering and mixing chores. Since they have an active part in putting the album together from writing and composing to the final mix, their albums reflect their desire to attain perfection in all aspects, trusting the attainment of this goal to no one else.

Upon listening to *How Dare You* I was struck by the complexity of the album; it is complex in its music, vocals, and for that matter complex in what ideas the group was trying to project to the listener in their words, the everchanging tempo, and the mood of their music. Each selection on the album is a mood piece, capable of portraying any emotion or state of mind by simply altering the instrumentation of the piece and changing the vocal delivery of the words that accompany the music. The album also exhibits some rather extensive production work not only in mixing many diverse musical tracks into a final master tape capable of being pressed but also production work in altering in several of the selections

the voices of the group in an attempt to match the effect that the music has created. As well, the album is highlighted by a vocal harmonizing with various instruments which creates a new departure in music. As well, they use descending background choruses as a means to transcend from one musical mood to another. The music is also strengthened by the use of some rather obscure instruments; six string and double basses, zithers, rizo-rizo, wood blocks, sleigh bells, cabasas and castenets, as well as a great variety of guitars, keyboards and percussion equipment; everything short of the kitchen sink it seems.

On the surface the album revolves around a theme, but to many listeners this theme may be hidden beneath the music, words, and the production qualities of the album. 10 CC in *How Dare You* seem to be involved in fantasies; childhood fantasies (daydreams of the future), adolescent fantasies (love and dreams of the future), adult fantasies (materialistic surroundings, power and love), and the bitter-sweet realities of adulthood.

The first two selections of *How Dare You*, "How Dare You" and "Lazy Ways" are two of the better examples of the production capa-

bilities of the group, and they attest to the mixing creativity of Eric Stewart. The title piece features gradual music transitions that melt one into the other while the second selection employs the groups vocals as a means of rapidly changing the tempo and the mood of the music and the presentation of the words that accompany it. "I Wanna Rule the World" is a fusion of childhood, adolescent, and adult fantasies of power and it deals with how these three age groups think it can be attained, and also why it is important to attain this power over so many lives. The song reveals the adult fantasy most dramatically of all; as a former child who was downtrodden by his classmates. He wants to attain power to show them that they were wrong in their assumption of him. As well, the selection contains an element of childhood rebellion as well, perhaps a repressed desire in the case of the subject, calling on the tots of the world to unite and overthrow the grownups.

"I'm Mandy, Fly Me" is a selection that is reminiscent of the highly produced latter-day releases of the Beatles in not only the music that they present here but in the evasive vocals as well that produce for us an adulthood fantasy that is hard for us to decipher. This selection more than any other piece on the album demands several listenings to allow us to understand what it is trying to tell us. "Iceberg", exhibits more production work, employing reverb and other such techniques to create an audio effect of a man's apparant insanity that was brought about because of his former neglected life as an orphan. His only release from inner tension is to use the telephone as an instrument of his aggression and it perhaps implies in part the title of the album.

"Art for Art's Sake" employs drums and other percussion aids to change the mood of the selection (unlike the other pieces which used guitars and keyboards to attain this) which is created by the vocal score of the group. The song is a reflection of adult reality, of materialism, of all the things that money can buy; silver, gold, art and even the undying love of a particular person. "Rock'n' Roll Lullaby" reverts for a brief time to the time of childhood day dreams and it is contrasted to the day when no more fantasies remain. "Head Room" is about the unknissed teenager and the music reflects his moods from a slow bluesy jazz number to an excited country-like piece. This transition is further heightened by a similar contrast in the vocal accompaniment of both musical moods. "Don't Hang Up", which is the feared future of "Rock 'n' Roll Lullaby", is a phonecall by man to his former wife and it reflects on the fantasy-turned-to-reality phase of *How Dare You*. Again the changing music corresponds to the changing moods of the conversation and it is a re-enactment of former realities that have almost become fantasies again in the mind of the man. He bemoans his situation and wishes that things are again as they once were and admits his situation, stripping away all his fantasies and daydreams. But in telling the truth his ex-wife hangs up on him; so much for reality.

How Dare You, by 10 CC, is far removed from the descriptions once accorded to them in their first album *10 CC* which was described as a combination of the vocal characteristics of the Beatles, Beach Boys, and some of the 1970's rock groups. Their music has become a part of the musical aura created by the seventies and some are prone to say the reverse of this is true. However, 10 CC is no longer the musical compromise of the music of several past eras, and *How Dare You* testifies to this.



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