

MEN WITHOUT HATS Pop Goes The World (Mercury Records)

Uncle wants me to try to give a nice review this week, here we go.

Men Without Hats have now brought out their fourth album, but this time it's not very impressive. The band has definitely changed but unfortunately it has regressed towards this top forty stuff that little Tinnie boppers listen to.

The only song I found remotely enjoyable on the album was the title cut "Pop Goes The World". The rest of the album is just crap.

Ivan's writing ability has definitely regressed since the 1985 release of *Freeways*. I have to admit that the keyboardist for the album is pretty good, with a sharp sound that told you his talent surpassed that of anybody else on the album.

Taking an overview of the album it is okay, but there is no way I would run to the record store and buy it.

Stephen Seabrook RHEOSTATICS Greatest Hits (X Records)

Rheostatics are a four-piece group: 2 guitars, bass guitar & drums, with everyone but the drummer singing. They reside in Toronto and overall I found them quite enjoyable. Sounding a lot like something a Canadian collegiate Replacements would have done, the nine cuts on this album touch on various musical styles.

"Crescent Moon", the opening song, is pretty cool with a Grapes of Wrath guitar sound and melancholy vocals of this girl who's leaving town...

The obligatory country tune, "The Ballad of Wendel Clark: parts one and two", will leave you breathless, if only for its sheer Canadian square dance potential. And this wonderful piece of music has a message too - if you know who Wendel Clark is (well... he's just this guy, you know...).

Other cuts that impressed me include: "Higher and Higher" ("This is some dancing party/All of the stars and the moon have fallen ... I chased the girl with the pills in her purse/"), "Public Square" (acoustic, Neil Youngish) and "Delta 88" (the only tune here that really works up a good sweat!).

Possibly the only disturbing thing about Rheostatics is that they are sooo Canadian! Maybe I should respect them for that, but I find overdone

Nationalism rather unsettling. Anyway ... the band cuts a fine line somewhere between 54:40 and the Northern Pikes ... nearly everyone into whitewashed college-rock should like them. I do.

Buy direct from: X Records, 255 Derrydown Road, Downsview, Ontario Canada.

Richard Thornley

SAQQARA DOGS Thirst (Pathfinder Records)

This is the debut full-length album from this New York based band. Saqqara Dogs consists of three established musicians: Bond Bergland - guitars and voice (formerly of the San Francisco industrial band Faëtrix); Chris Cunningham (a.k.a. Sync 66) - stick, organ, basses, cello and voice (formerly of James White and the Blacks); and Hearn Gadbois - percussion and membranes. Saqqara Dogs produce a very textured, rhythmic sound, similar to bands like King Crimson and Df Juz, and also to Jon Hassells' Fourth World projects (although not as quiet and meditative).

Heavy rhythms are pounded out not on conventional modern percussion instruments, but on traditional African and Middle Eastern drums. Over this complex rhythmic base, Berglands' (usually extremely distorted) echoed guitar carves out beautiful sound/noise scapes. The music is quite varied, from semi-classical acoustic work (on "Gregorian Stomp") to distorted, piercing wall-of-noise feedback (on "Game of Love") to the moody sparseness of the eight minute-plus instrumental "Witness Chamber". Only three out of the eight compositions are vocal. The vocal pieces tend to be weaker due to the surprisingly bland vocal work. The lyrics, unfortunately, aren't that good either. The music, however, is great. Bergland is one of the best guitarists I've ever heard - he could give Robert Fripp or Fred Frith some serious competition. Altogether, a challenging album that manages to be both easily accessible and exceptionally creative.

Available on LP, cassette, and compact disc from: Pathfinder Records, 611 Broadway, Suite 726, New York, N.Y. 10012, U.S.A.

James Hamilton

VITAJAZZ



SID & NANCY

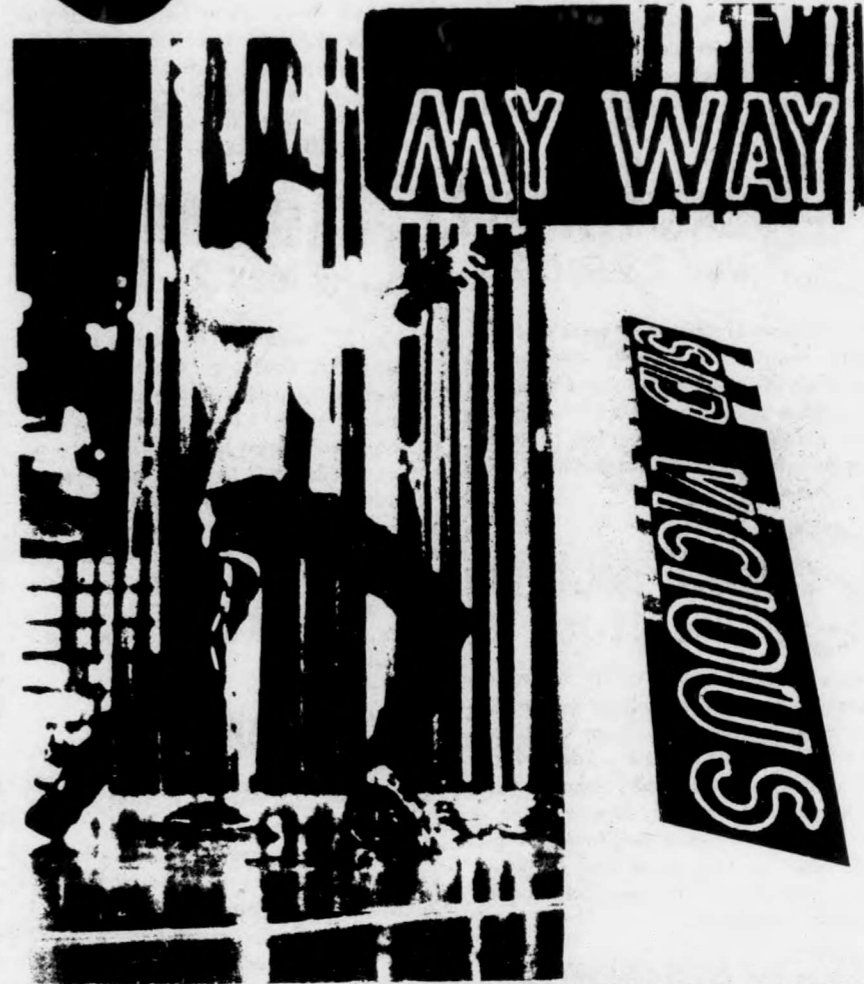
Director:
Alex (Repo Man) Cox
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The most repeated word in *Sid & Nancy* - besides "f*ck" is "boring" or "boredom," but if this word describes the attitude of punks, it does not describe the film itself. The film is a love story, not a documentary on punk rock like *D.O.A.*, *The Great Rock and Roll Swindle*, or *The Decline of Western Civilization*. But, as you might imagine, the love story of Sid Vicious and Nancy Spungen is somewhat wilder than, say, that of Lt.-Col. B.F. Pinkerton and Madame Butterfly.

The wonder of *Sid & Nancy* is its continual transformation of events and actions which society deems shocking and repulsive into moments of full audience empathy. One critic picks up on just such a moment: "When Sid bashes his head against a wall so as to impress Nancy - who's hands are bleeding from punching it - we feel the tenderness of a courtship ritual." And overall, there is a transformation of their love story - filled as it is with graphic scenes of degradation and self-destruction - into one of mythical proportions. The shot of the pair in silhouette, kissing in a dark alley while garbage falls down all around them, romanticizes a scenario which would otherwise be repellant to non-punk viewers. In this one moment, Sid and Nancy are raised to the stature of icons -- not of punk subculture, but of romantic love.

Nevertheless, the punk atmosphere is what makes this story different from other love stories. The ethics and attitudes of punk allow Cox to create a startling vision of love laced with a very black sense of humour. In Cox's own words: "There's an awful lot of very strange and insane stuff attendant to being in love that normally doesn't get dealt with in films." In *Sid & Nancy*, he deals with it.

Pam Lougheed



A rare picture of Sidney out enjoying the joys of the New Brunswick deer season shortly before his untimely death.

LESS THAN ZERO

(Director Marek
Kanieuska)

One thing which really pisses me off is to see stuck up young prigs that haven't had to do a thing in their lives, save pronounce republican correctly, for the millions that Daddy stuffs in their piggies so that they can go off and smash up vintage convertibles and snort shit out of a gold plated crack dispensers while they mingle with the hamsterhead slugmeat that sells them the candy in the first place. Alright scream class schismist if you want - see if I care. That's basically what we have here though - the screenplay of Bret Easton Ellis's supposedly brilliantly sick exposé is nothing more than the boiled down residue of the novel with a few sprinkles of hollywood glitz ground into it to catch the post-Hughes generation off-guard.

The plot is entirely predictable and although Robert Downey playing the dead-end

rich kid Julian is certainly a developing talent, Andrew McCarthy who plays the goody two shoes friend is often less than convincing. Jami Gertz who plays the randy slum bag girlfriend is responsible for ruining a large number of, what needed to be, poignant scenes.

The cinematography though is excellent. The audience is frequently treated to a number of spectacular pieces of visual imagery including the majestic vision of a plethora of wind generators spinning slowly in a desert dawn.

In all, it is nowhere near as depressing as it should be. Screenwriter Harley Peyton should be castigated quite severely for attaching too much glamour to an actual scenario which is more likely to be an anti thesis of this film.

STEFAN GREER

