

The Gary Numan story: part 2

The pleasure principle

By TOMO
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With the release and subsequent success of the album "Replicas", Gary Numan's music began to take the direction that he had wanted it to take all along. Tubeway Army was still in existence when the album was released, but by the time the album and single 'Are "Friends" Electric?' had peaked, Numan had a new band and he finally terminated the existence of Tubeway Army by releasing all subsequent material under the name Gary Numan, and instructing Beggar's Banquet, who had new faith in his abilities, to discontinue the name. Both the album "Replicas" and the single 'Are "Friends" Electric?' were landmarks in electronic pop music. "Replicas" was a classy collection of original electronic songs which betrayed none of the rough edges or the approach of the first album. It contained 'Down In The Park' which had been released earlier with little success but which was in actual fact a clever, slow beckoning song about alienation and personal relationships. The song became a hit following the success of "Replicas."

"Replicas" also showed enormous versatility, ranging from the precise 'Me, I Disconnect From You' to the rocky instrumental 'When The Machines Rock.' The album was indisputedly hailed as a brilliantly conceived, performed, and executed album. 'Are "Friends" Electric?' was a natural hit song - novel, catchy, unusual lyrics - all the ingredients for a commercial hit. Musically, it was deceptively simple - uncomplicated but original melodies and mixtures of sounds which were played competently.

Prompted by Numan's astonishing and rapid success, Beggar's Banquet made the logical move and re-released the first album 'Tubeway Army' and the first two singles, and these all moved into the charts as Numan gained in popularity by the day. Numan, still without a major offering to his name, was by this time completing his first solo album "The Pleasure Principle" in the studio with his new band, and pre-release sales soared despite the fact that Numan hadn't performed live since early 1978 at a small gig in London with Tubeway Army. As Numan put the finishing touches to the new album, Beggar's Banquet released a single from the album - the legendary 'Cars'/'Asylum'. The single, another amazingly simple but compelling song written and performed in clinical

fashion was an electrifying hit in Britain. Despite indifferent reviews, the single rocketted to the Number One position and remained in the charts for many weeks before slipping out. By this time "The Pleasure Principle" was released and riding the top of the album charts.

When "The Pleasure Principle" was released, it had mixed acclaim. The press, who had been hoping that the novelty of 'Are "Friends" Electric?' was going to develop into something deeper and musically profound were very disappointed. The album was anything but profound and furthermore, didn't pretend to be; it was an extension of the "Replicas" album using similar themes and ideas, all treated in the same successful, clinical, mechanical way. Numan was perfecting his style rather than allowing it to develop. As a result, the critics hated the album and criticized Numan for copying Bowie, a rather petty remark since on close reflection, they are nothing like each other except for a passing similarity in dress. The press felt cheated and the fans loved it - they wanted more of the same, and Numan knew it.

The album was a stark, cold, emotionless portrait of Numan's view of life. Consisting of ten compelling but unhappy songs with excellent musical and lyrical content, the album (and Numan's new image - a change from the dyed blond hair to sombre grey suits) was mistaken as an empty attempt at blatant commercialism, when in fact it was intended as and actually was uncomplicated and simple but serious pop. Either way, the fans bought it in quantities and it soon became a Number One album, shortly after its September release. The album rounded off an unprecedented year of success for Numan as the success of "Replicas", 'Are "Friends" Electric?' the re-released material, "The Pleasure Principle", and 'Cars' all happened in 1979.

To a certain extent, the critics were right - Numan's view of life which he seriously believed and felt and put down in his songs was very depressing and gloomy. "The Pleasure Principle" album contained ten songs all of which had single word titles, such as 'Cars', 'Metal', 'M.E.' and 'Conversations'. Numan was in effect marketing the despair, confusion, alienation, and desperation which oozed from all his songs. Numan pictured a mechanized state of cold, heartless humans and he wrote songs which would bring this out through his syn-

thesizers and musical devices. What the critics overlooked was the fact that not only were synthesizers the perfect instruments for this kind of music, and Numan the perfect image, but that this kind of music matched the atmosphere of unemployed, violent Britain perfectly. The fans knew it and Numan knew it. What's more is that the press became convinced that the whole venture was a blatant attempt at commercial trickery when in fact it was more honest than many other accepted commercial ploys. The press were continually irked by the fact that someone could make a fortune out of selling sadness and alienation, that someone could actually be a machine-hero and get away with it.

Fortunately for Numan, bad press didn't spoil his popularity, even though when he ventured on a road tour of Britain right at the end of 1979 to promote "The Pleasure Principle" album the press tore him to pieces. Numan had warned that his stage performances might betray a lack of experience but the press accused him of covering this up with his spectacular lighting and stage show which included rotating robots and banked lighted panels and platforms where the members of the band were positioned. Unfortunately, for the press and Numan, the press also made the mistake of labelling all of his efforts as musically worthless, whereas in actual fact most of the material was interesting enough to be worth listening to, and some of the material was genuinely innovative. From "The Pleasure Principle", 'Airplane' was an exceptional instrumental whilst there was the effective 'Metal' intended precise manner.

Numan's impact on the music business in Britain in 1979 was undoubtedly phenomenal and yet no new groups like him sprung up around him. This is apparently because Numan, in carving out his niche with his particular style, carved out the entire market and made himself inimitable. In 1980, Numan signed a new deal with WEA which required him to record an album a year for the next three years and which gave him a very comfortable position financially. Early in the year, the beautiful song 'Complex' was released from "The Pleasure Principle", and although it was not an obvious commercial song, it was a hit. Whether it succeeded in appeasing the critics is difficult to say, but at this stage Numan

REEL REVIEWS

By CHRISTIE WALKER

What do you get when you put a has-been actor, and a young, new comedian together? "48 HOURS," of course. Looking extremely over weight, and sounding extremely stupid, Nick Nolte plays Jack Cates, an under dog cop, who springs Reggie Hammond (Eddie Murphy) from prison in order that he might track down a couple of killers on the loose. Nolte spends the entire movie talking as though he has a baseball bat shoved down his throat, and acting like the tough kid on the block. Well, maybe that's not his fault; the dialogue is nothing short of inane. There's not much you can do with lines like: "I've been shot. I don't believe it."

Oh well, all is not lost. Eddie Murphy, star of Saturday Night Live, actually manages to survive the poor writing and mediocre directing and emerges relatively unscathed. Thank God. Murphy could well be the Richard Pryor of the 80's; he certainly has all the qualities. Hopefully producers will disregard "48 HOURS" as a movie and watch Eddie Murphy. Although he has very little to work with, except for a large, and seemingly unending selection of four letter words, he makes Hammond the only worthwhile character on the screen.

"48 HOURS" spends much of its time hurling racial insults, spilling blood, and racing through the hilly streets of San Francisco. To what end? Well, there is no profound message in "48 HOURS", in fact there is not much of anything in the movie. Basically, someone got smart and took advantage of Murphy's talent. Smart, but believe me, that's all that is smart about "48 HOURS".

Horror fans will have the opportunity to see one of the classic horror flicks of all time when Alfred Hitchcock's thriller "PSYCHO" plays in Tilley 102 on Sunday, Jan. 30th at 7 and 9 p.m. Admission is only \$2. For all those who have seen "PSYCHO", you may be interested in hearing that director Richard Franklin is reopening the old Bates Motel in "PSYCHO 2". Anthony Perkins and Vera Miles return from the old cast, but the Janet Leigh part will be adopted by Meg Tilley of "TEX" fame. Watch for this one!

Finally, for all those STAR WARS fans, the third movie in the "Star Wars" saga "REVENGE OF THE JEDI" premieres on May 25th. Made for a mere 32.5 million dollars, "JEDI" will see the return of Luke Skywalker, Han Solo, Darth Vader, Yoda, R2-D2 and C-3PO. It should be a huge success, but only time will tell.

Thanks to my movie partners, "The Sexual Dynamos!"

See you at the movies.

left Britain to do extensive successive tours of the United States, Europe, and the Far East. The 12" version of the 'Complex' single, with live versions of 'Bombers' and 'Me, I Disconnect From You' on the flip side sold well, and whilst still on tour overseas, two further singles, equally as successful as 'Complex' were released - 'We Are Glass'/'Trois Gymnopedies' and 'I Die:You Die'/'Down In The Park (Piano Version)'. Numan returned to Britain in the fall in time to do a British tour - the 'Teletour' - to promote the release of his second

solo album called "Telekon" which was released in September of 1980, and which marked a further stage in his musical development, or, as the critics preferred, his demise. Numan completed the year by doing a charity concert for children at the Wembley Arena in London before returning to the States to perform again - this time with the Telekon stage show. Earlier, at the beginning of the 'Teletour', Numan, to the surprise of everyone had announced that it would be his last tour and that he intended to retire from live performances immediately after the U.S. tour.