

Records in review

By DARYL BARTON

Compatible to its creator's history Queen's latest LP *The Game* is a further continuation of the band's progressive experimentation. However, we see in this instance a change that smashes thru the wall of commercial success with greater ferocity than ever before. Unfortunately, what it takes away from Queen's unique abilities is even greater.

The Game is not an album that can be categorized as previous ones have been. The characteristic syncopations and abrupt rhythm changes are missing, which is surprising and, I think, scary to previously inseparable fans. This is a very modified Queen! With this album, the operatic endeavours of the past have been bent aside to satisfy the impersonal listener who thinks combinations of disco and new wave are the "in" thing.

Queen, and essentially its figurehead, Freddie Mercury, seem now content to experiment with well-spent musical facets of the past, whereas in the beginning the band was intent on originality. Early songs showed the band as virgorous pessimists, boastful of their self-acclaimed superiority and excellence. The world, as viewed in songs like *Son and Daughter* would not improve to meet their standards. But did they care? Queen was above it all, anyway.

In part, Queen began their present transition with *News of the World* LP. At this point they seemed to focus their efforts ultimately on pleasing the public, while maintaining their reputation as an egotistical foursome. Freddie's air of superiority was evident long before he became successful however. Freddie chose the name "Queen" because of its universality, its sense of power. Freddie wanted everyone to know he was a genius he believed himself to be. Yet with *The Game* he is reluctant to promote this image further.

It suddenly becomes debatable whether or not Queen has any desire to expand itself and flourish in idiosyncrasies as in the past. The use of a synthesizer is a first, and the combination of the short, cool-dude haircuts and the black leather jackets they sport on the front cover does little to promote a new image. It merely makes us think of Freddie and the boys as uneducated punks (which they certainly aren't) and either laugh or shake our heads in dismay.

The album itself is a series of statements on life and ensuing love that put together might have come from a renowned reject of the world, still trying to make a name for himself after being admitted to a psycho ward. The air of superiority that once gave the band a degree of prowess that deserved respect has now brought incoherency to their music.

The opening track, *Play the Game* is an easy-paced invitation to carelessly let love become a part of your life. Done in the classic Mercury style it is the most recognizable cut off the album.

The next two songs usher in the debut of Queen disco. *Dragon Attack* features a zesty solo by super-guitarist Brian May,

although its hardly as tantalizing as a Brighton Rock. *Another One Bites the Dust* is a John Deacon composition featuring an array of crafty hand-claps and Mercury moans that somehow sound a lot less scientific this time around. However, rather than thrusting angry statements of life's bummers in our faces, Freddie's vocals merely point them out to us in a very nonchalant fashion. As on *Jazz*, Freddie is totally relaxed, in fervent pleasure rather than honesty. Pushing the lyrics at us with breathless gasps at least had an effect and caused us to react. This style tends to attack a satirical unimportance to the song and the singer. To Mercury the disorder sung about doesn't exist and so his concern for our sake amounts to nil.

Again in *Don't Try Suicide* he initially pleads, "Don't do it," and ends up taunting the thoroughly confused victim (by this time) to go ahead and "Blow Your Brains Out." Consequently we see Freddie's declaration, "Nobody gives a damn" as very appropriate, especially when applied to Freddie!

His indifference is shown further in John Deacon's *Need Your Loving Tonight*, a playful, straight-ahead rocker. He claims he'll be unconcerned when spotting his girl with another guy, "I'll eat my heart out cos I love her, love her, love her."

Crazy Little Thing Called Love continues to voice his unconcern over love. An Elvis-like voice and a smooth fifties sound highlight here. My first impression was that no other band of today could have produced such a hit. Yet who else would have the obstinacy to attempt it (then again, there's always the Knack.)

Drummer Roger Taylor's contributions to *The Game* are *Rock It* and *Coming Soon*. The former's theme sees Roger going downtown on a Saturday night and getting "some of that prime jive." *Coming Soon* dwells on the headaches he faces in the morning. His engine may be revved up at night but in the morning it's overheated and blown a head gasket.

With *Sail Away Sweet Sister* Brian May incorporates that rockabilly beat he created so dominantly in *We Will Rock You*. This tune is sung by Brian whose voice lingers between the merrily-told lesson in *Good Company* and the calm honesty he used in singing the folk-type '39.

Save Me ends the album on a surprisingly and passionately serious note. Mercury's voice is one of a romantic and pleading divorcee. Undoubtedly the strongest vocals on the album, the contrasting vibes of hope and insecurity are reminiscent of *A Day At The Races*, *Let Us Cling Together*.

The Game to me prompts an immediate and drastic question - will Queen's musical direction lead them to similar efforts in the future? Disregarding its initial appeal due to a totally fresh sound, I seriously wonder if *The Game* represents just that to Queen, a game! And if so, can this be attributed to a lack of drive, and musical direction, or can we conclude that Queen in recreating old material and becoming a so-called universal pop band, that recruits used, and on the most part, useless, ideologies and musical purposes. I wonder, are Queen's intentions sincere or are they chipping their material off of a rusty convention of the past, gone stale for no apparent reason.

Queen's syncopatic and unique style have always been a testimony to their pride in their abilities. Being the first band in the eighties to have two No. 1 singles gives them no reason in my consideration to hold their heads up high though. Rather, dragging themselves in the dirt with inferiority might constitute a much more rational image of these four artists, when one considers the quality of so many top 40 acts today.

The inner sleeve of the album shows the members of Queen all posed in a basically identical setting, yet with different shades of light preference and varying personality and appearance innovations. This suggests that possibly the originality and wonder of Queen's songwriting still does exist, and maybe even in greater proportions than ever. But the signs of Queen's creative imagination are few in this frivolous effort. My hope is that Queen's individual talents will probe the future with much greater energy and individualism.

Such deliberations make me wonder whether I will still be on the boat of fans they can now claim when they reach that new horizon and their next effort is released. Is Queen's destiny an adventure to be shared? If not, my next Queen album could end up in my garbage collection.

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Hopscotch reviewed

By JOHN HAMILTON
Brunswickan Staff

Walter Matthau is synonymous with light and laid-back humor, and in his latest film he upholds this image as an eccentric and loveable secret agent. The movie is *Hopscotch*, an amusing yet in some ways disturbing escapade involving spies, beautiful women, chase scenes and exotic locales. Matthau plays Miles Kendig, a sort of slowed down version of James Bond, who quits the CIA over a demotion to the filing room. He decides to get revenge by writing an expose of the agency one chapter at a time and sending copies to major world governments.

Kendig takes off to Austria and plots his revenge, literally, in co-operation with an old ex-spy friend, who also happens to be a wealthy and beautiful baroness played by Glenda Jackson. They work as a team and most of the rest of the movie is a cat and mouse chase with Matthau and Jackson one step ahead of the CIA* FBI, KGB and anybody else who cares to join in.

Watching the movie reminds me of taking a drink of iced tea: it maintains an even keel of mellow amusement but has few really good or bad moments. Matthau and Jackson work well together, but unfortunately, Jackson, in my mind a very talented actress, only appears in about 1/4 of the scenes. Her only appearance in the entire movie without Matthau is one of the higher points in the production, where she tells a

bumbling spy on her tail that "My dog detests the smell of stupidity." That's a line worth remembering. Ned Beatty puts in a good performance as the tight-lipped ulcer-ridden, blood-thirsty Myerson, a killer-turned-CIA boss who is one of the targets of Kendig's embarrassing expose. Perhaps it is the cold-bloodedness of Myerson and his attitude toward death that disturbs me. Obviously real CIA agents feel as casual about killing or "termination" as Myerson does, but when he grits his teeth with satisfaction when Kendig finally gets terminated, the gruesome mood created is incompatible with the light-heartedness of the rest of the movie.

While not exactly a piece of fluff, the plot and lines in *Hopscotch* tend to get "cutesy" at times. Personally I can only stand so much of Matthau's bumbling eccentricities before I get bored. There is some very good photography, though; the movie opens at a Bavarian beer fest, and there are some shots bordering on the artistic of Salzburg, Bermuda, and an especially nice aerial ballet sequence between a plane and a helicopter over the White Cliffs of Dover.

You won't experience any profound emotional impact from *Hopscotch* but it is an evening of light and relaxing entertainment if you have nothing else to do.

HAMILTON'S RATING 6/10
Playing at the Gaiety Theatre.

NITECAP

BY KEVIN TENNANT

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