

The Gary Numan Story: Part 3

Please push no more

By TOMO
Brunswickan Staff

Numan's announcement of his intention to retire from live performances, and his new record deal with WEA, which demanded a modest three albums in the next three years, was greeted with shock and disappointment by his fans and disbelief from the press. The latter, still hungry to tear Numan's newly acquired position at the top of the pop ladder to pieces, condemned the decision as the latest ploy in Numan's marketing strategy. In actual fact, both the press and the fans had underestimated Numan's independence and sense of professional direction. Despite

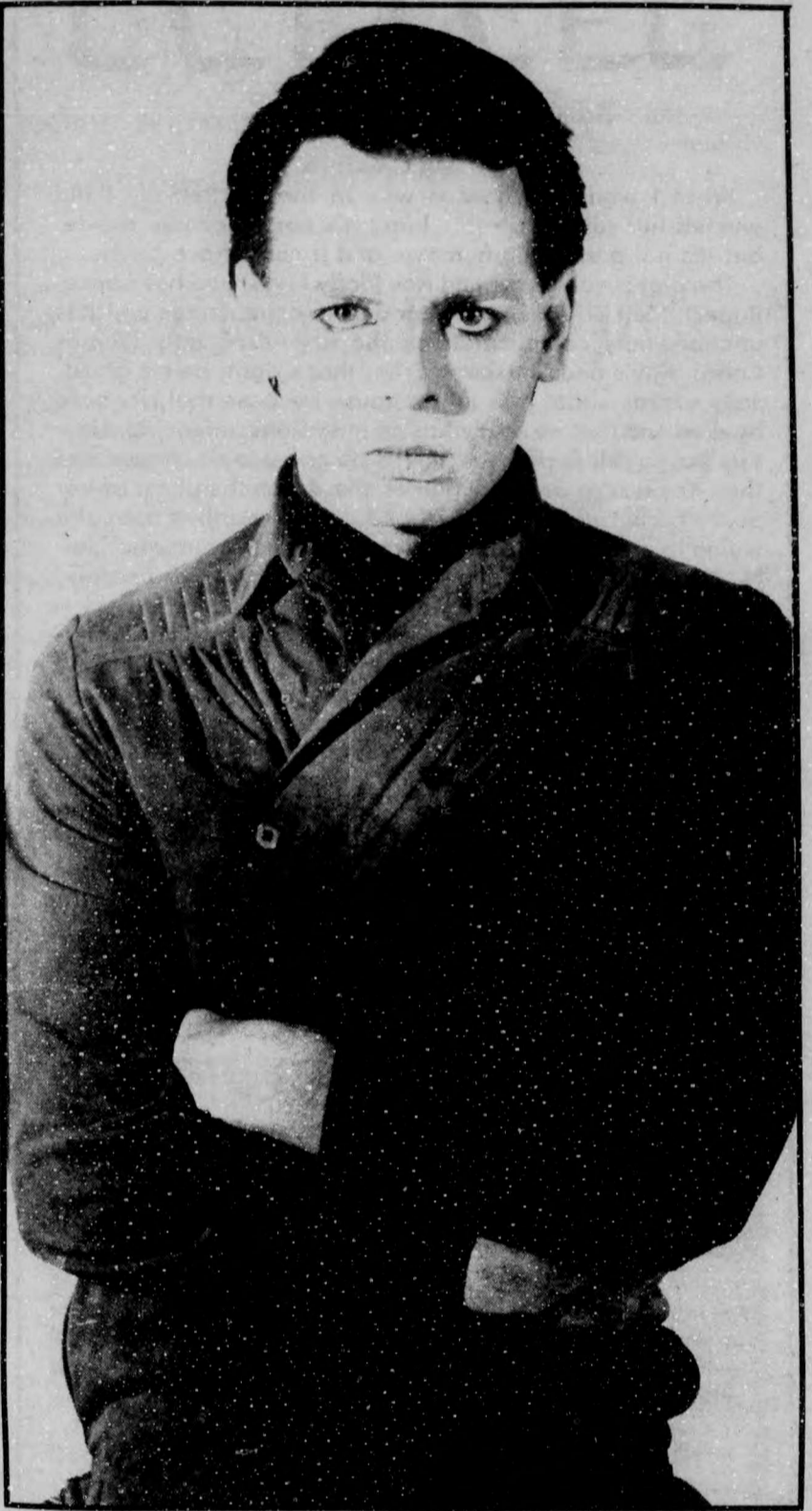
two number one albums and a string of hit singles, enough to tempt any artist to replicate the formula to perpetuate success, Numan was already disillusioned with fame, was dissatisfied with his own writing, and eager to develop his creative potential through other approaches.

The album "Telekon" marked a move away from the stark, clinical production of the "Pleasure Principle" and even a reintroduction of the guitar, although the critics were hesitant to recognize this. The themes used in the songs on the album were however largely the same as before, much to the delight of the press who felt that this proved how shallow Numan's musical abili-

ty was. There were ten songs on the album, only one of which was released as a single ('This Wreckage'); on the Canadian version of "Telekon" however, the single 'I Die; You Die' also appears instead of 'Sleep by Windows'. The songs concentrated again on depressing ideas and themes which were vaguely futuristic and faintly suicidal. The album and the autobiographical 'This Wreckage' were of course instant hits, as were the two previous singles 'We Are Glass' (an excellent fast obvious pop song reminiscent of 'We Are So Fragile'), and 'I Die; You Die' - a classic, beautiful and sad song dedicated to the press.

In so far as Numan was still writing about gloom: in a gripping, claustrophobic style which combined cynicism, helplessness and paranoia, his music was developing laterally rather than upwards. Not only did this suit and reflect Numan's growing sense of personal helplessness and instability, it also facilitated further perfection of his beloved electronic music. Thus, whilst the meaning and direction of his songs and his development were significantly confused on "Telekon", the power and atmosphere of the material increased even more. The predictable, cynical songs are represented on the album by 'The Aircrash Bureau', 'Remember I Was Vapour', and 'Remind me To Smile', whilst distinctly lighter songs are 'I'm an Agent', 'I Dream of Wires', and the attractive but alienating 'Sleep by Windows'. Whilst the band consisting of Chris Payne, Cedric Sharpley, Russell Bell, and Denis Haines demonstrated a maturing of their playing ability into a compact, precise and skillful style, the album retained an inescapable sense of confusion.

The Teletour was a sellout and Numan went into 1981 promising only three final farewell concerts at the hallowed Wembley Arena. It was round about this time that Numan beat Blondie in the race to produce the first commercially available videocassette, this being an offering of 12 live songs and a promotional sequence from the 'Cars' single. This, along with a special single released with the first 30,000 copies of "Telekon" containing 'Remember I Was Vapour' (Live) and a version of the classic cabaret song 'On Broadway' became immediate collector's items. By this time, the new image accompanying the "Telekon" album consisting of an allblack "Action Man" type suit with two parallel red stripes round the waist and up one side of the body, had per-



vaded the fashion shops along with the other hardware - glass tubes and glass chairs/cages.

1981 was a quieter year for the fans and the press as Numan retreated into his threatened voluntary isolation. Beggar's Banquet in mid-year released a limited edition two-album live product which was boxed and entitled 'Living Ornaments '79 and Living Ornaments '80', aimed at providing the fans with a memory of the live concerts. This special album, which immediately followed his sellout and spectacular farewell concerts was an immediate sellout itself. Numan returned to the studio to begin work on the first of his studio albums under his new contract; meanwhile his band went solo and released an excellent first album on Attic records called 'For Future Reference'. Numan increasingly concentrated on developing his own independence and sense of self-worth and he used his recently acquired pilot's license to form his own air company Numanair and proceeded to fly around the

world.

As if in response to the press' criticisms over the three-year period, Numan was lying low and thinking of new ideas - films, stories, and other media. Now safe and almost beyond the reach of the critics, Numan seemed to be echoing the words of his songs from "Telekon": "Now I'm behind glass, I'll talk to you; the telephone line's blind, you have defaced my face; I bet you laughed at me, you bright young things; but now I need no-one, I love you so - please push no more.....please push no more". Then, in the fall of 1981, when the press were thinking that perhaps the Polymoogs had gone to sleep forever, Numan and Beggar's Banquet released the finished studio album called "Dance" which Numan had been working on during the earlier part of the year, together with a single "She's Got Claws". The press and the fans were totally unprepared.

African play featured

By LUMUMBA LIPENGA

If you come to Africa Night this Saturday, February 5, you will, some time during the evening, find yourself in New Brighton, South Africa. You will see two slightly tipsy men stumble across a body lying on the side of the road. The more frightened of the two will reluctantly dig into the trouser-pockets of the dead man, and from one pocket he will bring out the dead man's "pass book," which he will then proceed to examine very keenly with his companion. Later, the other man will agonize over whether he should go ahead and exchange identities with the dead man (name, background and all), in order to make his own "pass book" valid and his stay in New Brighton legal.

What you will be watching is a performance of *Sizwe Bansi is Dead*, a famous play by Athol Fugard, a South African playwright. Every year the African Students' Union in Fredericton presents a play as one of the items on Africa Night. In 1981, for example, Africa Night included a performance of *The Banana Tree*, a play from Malawi. Last year's play, *Bjoran*, was from Nigeria. Our general aim is to entertain and help familiarize our audience with African culture, but this year we are trying to go a little further than that. We have chosen a play which we hope will help raise people's awareness of the injustice in South Africa. What you will be seeing on stage this Saturday is only a small part of what it means to be a black man in the land of apartheid.

South Africa's oppressive political system.

Sizwe Bansi is a simple man in search of a livelihood. He ventures into one of South Africa's "white-areas" in the hope of getting a job. Unfortunately his "pass book" is not valid for stay in a "white area," and so he has been "endorsed out." If the police get hold of him he will be in real trouble. Possible salvation comes in the form of the dead man whose "pass book" is valid. All Sizwe has to do is take the man's name, and let Sizwe Bansi die. Part with one's name! To Sizwe the very idea is shocking. Dignity and survival are pitted against each other, and it has to be one or the other. There is really not much of a choice, for in the quest for survival, it seems some lofty notions have to be sacrificed.

Counterbalancing the grim side of the play is the photographer Styles, whose studio is "a strong room of dreams." Styles is the self-appointed recorder and protector of his people's dreams and hopes. When a poor man like Sizwe comes into his studio wearing a Steison and carrying a pipe, or even wearing two neck-ties, Styles knows what it is all about, and cherishes the moment like a connoisseur.

Sizwe Bansi is Dead is, of course, only one of the presentations on Africa Night. There will be many other items, and they are all designed to give you an interesting and enjoyable evening. So, do come and join us as we get together to share some warmth and put up a common front against the cold weather.