

MINNEAPOLIS MAINLINE; MUSICAL ANTIDOTES FOR THE DAY AFTER

As a special Christmas gift, we present this deathless moment in the arts: **Bruce Springsteen**, the sexiest man in rock, joining his saxophone player, **Clarence Clemmons**, in a public gesture of rapture. For the literal-minded: No, that doesn't mean that he's gay; just that he didn't let the fact that he's *not* stop him.

If that doesn't turn things around for you ... if you still had a miserable Christmas, **Prince** has been waiting for you. The fact is that he has been unavoidable — and not just because of *Purple Rain*. The man wrote "Ice Cream Castles" and "Jungle Love" with **The Time**; he wrote "This Glamorous Life" for **Sheila E.**, and he gave **Chaka Khan** her smash "I Feel for You." Now we've got him howling salaciously, "Every Christmas now I drink banana daiquiris 'til I'm blind," sounding like the most desperate old queen on his outlandish, bluesy "Another Lonely Christmas" (Warner Bros.). He knows you're out there. The question is: Doesn't the man ever sleep?

The fact that Prince is a lifelong resident of Minneapolis always seemed strange. I mean — Minneapolis? What is that? And it gets weirder, because two of my three favorite hardcore/independent records for 1984 are by groups based in that city. We're talking records you didn't get for Christmas — too risky. But, trust me, worth the risk. *Let It Be* by **The Replacements** (send \$12.50 to Twin/Tone, 445 Olive Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55405) echoes the Beatles, the Byrds and The Clash but with original wit. The band are soul-cousins to REM, whose lead guitarist even played on one of their plangent, poignant love songs ("I Hate Your) Answering Machine," their sparse, acoustic anthem "Androgynous," and then, in rampaging contrast, "Gary's Got a Boner." Irresistible.

For a more gone take, try the Minneapolis trio **Hüsker Dü** on their stunning double album *Zen Arcade* (send \$12 to SST, Box 1, Lawndale, CA 90260). In 1982 they released a cover of **Donovan's** "Sunshine Superman." This year it was a terrific blowtorch ride through the Byrds' "Eight Miles High." The 23 originals on this album are romantic, even psychedelic, but delivered with wit, warmth and a startling immediacy (partly because they are *all* first takes), from the acoustic ballad "Never Talking to You Again" to the pummeling thrash of "Indecision Time." Wicked adventure.

Finally, **The Minutemen** have packed 45 songs on their stunning double LP, *Double Nickel on a Dime* (SST, same as Hüsker Dü). In astonishingly compact songs, this trio from San Pedro, Calif., makes its points and moves on. They can play it personal and acoustic, as in the autobiographical "History Lesson Pt. 2," or pound down a fractured funk critique like "Maybe Partying Will Help." Their sharp, subtle lyrics are well worth watch-

ing and, luckily, are printed on the record jacket. As one friend said, "They're real smart, but they don't make a big deal out of it." These are also the only records I know whose sides never end. And if you want to make sense of that, you'll have to get them.

Live LPs seem to come with the holidays and generally wear out their wel-



Springsteen puckers up

come on the old turntable in a hurry. The **Talking Heads' *Stop Making Sense*** (Warner Bros.) may be the exception, but **Bob Dylan's *Real Live*** (CBS) proves the rule. *Sense* is the edited soundtrack from a crisply made concert film that captured the band in fine form. Its best feature is that it sounds *alive* — as in *vivid*. The alacrity of the production and arrangements and the taut ebullience of David Byrne's singing open spaces and ignite suspense in familiar songs — as if they'd leapt suddenly into 3-D.

On the other hand *Real Live* (which now makes it 14 sides of live material that Dylan has released over the last decade) sounds churlish and arch. These are still live tracks by Dylan that I'd love to own: his solo piano renditions of "Let's Keep It Between Us" and Dave Mason's "We Just Disagree"; or, say, his recent duet with Van Morrison on "Tupelo Honey," or even — for comic relief — his recent duet with Bono Hewson on "Blowing in the Wind." What we get here are pinched readings of two numbers from his last LP and eight old tunes. He sounds like a crank with a terminal sinus condition who has done too much helium. The ostensible "jewel" of the album is a version of "Tangled Up in Blue" with new lyrics, except he seems to be making them up as he goes along. Clever Bob, but they're *no* improvement on the originals. In fact, nothing on this album is. It won't even do much for fans of ex-Rolling Stones guitarist Mick Taylor, who can be heard squeezing off spidery blues lines in the ramshackle backup band. Dylan doesn't seem to notice.

Elvis — A Golden Celebration (RCA) might well be considered a live album: Nine of its 12 sides were recorded live, at either stage or television shows, and two more were banged out around home. Seven of the 12 sides were recorded in 1956 alone. Fanatics have been bugging RCA to release this stuff for years, and I'm afraid it's recommended only to that hard-

core. There are 73 cuts here but only 43 songs, which means, for instance, that there are seven renditions of "Hound Dog," some of which were recorded only hours apart. And the sound is often execrable. Unless you're a historian, I'd recommend the remastered mono anthology, *Rocker* (RCA). It's not live, but it kicks.

It might help to be a fanatic in springing for **Laurie Anderson's** 5-LP set, *United States Live* (Warner Bros.); then again, it might make a fanatic of you. The records document the four-part, five-hour performance-epic of 64 songs and narratives that Anderson performed last year. The most famous fragment, "O Superman," was an "art song" that became a surprise "hit" in 1981.

Anderson's multimedia presentations can be breathtaking. The record — even in conjunction with the illustrated libretto, *United States* (Random House, \$19.95) — can't duplicate the performance; body language, animation and sight gags are lost. Considering that, it's astonishing how well the records work — better, in fact, than her two "pop" LPs. The work is by turns hilarious and haunting: quip and quandary. But unlike the live shows, here listeners can pursue the work at their own chosen speed. Anderson's subject is life in a high-tech society, following the themes of transportation, politics, money and, finally, love. She doesn't preach but sets things in counterpoint, leaving her listeners to make what they will of them. The result is possibly the most challenging, unusual and delightful "pop record" ever made.

So, you reckon you'd still like to dance? Well, me too. So, amid the ungodly glut, here are some sterling, recent 12-inch singles.

1) "Love Resurrection," **Alison Moyet** (CBS-import): Astonishing production and a stunning, sheet-tearing vocal by a woman who could stare down Annie Lennox.

2) "Tenderness," **General Public** (IRS): A bass line copped from Motown and a group spun off from the English Beat collide in an antimacho celebration that stands with the best of either.

3) "Slippery People," **The Staples** (Atlantic): the Talking Heads' tune reworked as gospel by past masters of the genre.

4) "Big in Japan" **Alphaville** (Atlantic): a warped, catchy plaint that insists that everything will be all right when you're big in Japan. Artistic optimism.

5) "Beep-a-Freak," **Gap Band**, (RCA): On-target funk-novelty ode to electronic pagers by the recently defunct team who "dropped a bomb on you."

Finally, an inspired observation from **Tom Carson**. Writing about Culture Club in the *Village Voice*, he notes "a very strange phenomenon — the emergence of flagrant oddballism as the last refuge of authenticity — all over the pop mainstream ... Performers as diverse as **Michael Jackson**, **Prince**, **Boy George** and **Cyndi Lauper** share in common a denial that the flakiest and most childish eccentricity in any way voids their claim on sincerity, adult commitment or old-fashioned sentiment. In fact, they behave themselves as if their claim's the only legitimate one left: Camp has become the opposite of irony."

Welcome to 1985. — Adam Block