

CRUISING THE VINYL:
HOT TIPS AND HAND JOBS

by Adam Block

There's a party Friday night, and it's gonna be wild.
All dudes are welcome; no fucking girls allowed.
Come on over and jack off with me.
Whores cost money but friends are for free.

—"Circle Jerk," Impotent Sea Snakes

Roll over, Cole Porter. That inspirational lyric came back to me while I was reading Paul McCartney's recent interview in *Rolling Stone*. The 44-year-old former Beatle and father of a brood was rambling on. Asked about the Parents Music Resource Center's (PMRC) attempts to have rock lyrics rated, he allowed that if some group had a smash hit album that was turning people to Satanism, "you'd have to do something! Wouldn't you?" Paulie's mind slipped from the threat of Lucifer to something even more clearly troubling—a TV show he'd seen recently. "It made me start to wonder if people were going slightly far out," he recalled. "It was a gay thing, and a couple of guys were really getting to it. Now I have no objection to guys getting their rocks off in any way they want, but maybe public telly isn't the forum for it. . . . I'm getting to be an old fruit, you know, but how far might they let that go?"

How far indeed? A boy kissing a boy in public? Next thing you know, you'll have the **Impotent Sea Snakes** on prime time. Fat chance—you'd be damn lucky to even catch this group on the radio. I chanced on to a demented jock on a college station owned by Jesuits dropping on a cut from an advance pressing, in the wee wee hours. My jaw dropped. Consider their poignant rant to a girlfriend in "I Wanna Fuck Your Dad": "Keep your tits and keep your cunt./Your fucking dad is all I want." Or their boggling boast "I Caught AIDS from a Dead Man's Ass-hole": "To each his own, that's what I say./Sex with the dead is the only way./Don't mind the smell. Don't mind the flies./I can't wait until my grandpa dies."

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I.R.S.



What was that Paul said about "slightly far out?" I wonder what he'd want to do with these five all-American boys who perform in drag and play in a garage band?

The Snakes, out of Tampa, Fla., are a PMRC nightmare crafted somewhere between John Waters and Joe Bob Briggs. Their debut LP, *Too Cool for Rock & Roll* (Pravda) is just out; the lads take on (and impersonate) racists, rednecks and Pro-Lifers on 12 ferocious cuts that I'm sure some sorry souls will take at face value. Poor Tipper Gore. So if things have been getting a tad bland around your turntable (between Madonna, Sade and Whitney), now's your chance to scare and amaze your friends. Send a check or money order for \$7 to: Pravda Records, P.O. Box 268043, Chicago, IL 60626.

Cruising Vinyl

If you've been halfway keeping-up this summer, you've probably already gotten over **Simply Red**, gotten through the new **Gabriel**, and made your own peace with **Madonna**. Those who can tolerate the *grande gay/celibate* **Morrissey** undoubtedly treasure *God Save The Queen*. So what now? What's new, overlooked or upcoming?

My 23-year-old friend Brion once laughed, "It used to be so easy to know what I wanted; if I saw a guy that I liked, I'd get a boner. Not now." I sympathize. Records seldom give me that instant hard-on; the best often take their time about it. Some you just have to get in the right mood for. My friendly tips:

1) *Life's Rich Pageant*, **R.E.M.** (IRS): OK. The six-shooter exception: I'm a sucker for these guys. Just call this the best LP to date by America's best young band. Michael Stipe's voice is all woodsmoke, frayed denim, intent mischief, the poignance and glory of whiskey, and a thunder of buffalo hooves. For the plangent, sexual glory of "Fall on Me," the aching utopias woven from memory in "Cayahoga," the gattling swell of "Hyena"—even the psychedelic/bubble-gum cover, "Superman," (with Mike Mills singing)—shucks guys, go buy it.

2) *Giant*, **Woodentops** (Rough Trade/Col.): These five are getting the hype as the best new group in the UK—but for how many weeks? Their folk roots, grand percussion, fat pop harmonies—all weaned off the lyrical craft of early Lou Reed (see "Good Thing")—make for some sturdy limey champions of the New Sincerity. The disc is instantly appealing: gutsy, ebullient and unsettlingly flimsy.

3) *Peter Case*, **Peter Case** (Geffen): Case burned out on L.A.'s power-pop scene after scoring a small hit with "A Million Miles Away" which he wrote and sang with the **Plimsouls**. Now he has re-emerged with a dusty-boots song cycle that he claims is about "sin and Salvation in America." Nebraska calling? Yeah, it's a touch much, but there is real craft in his work, and the warring echoes of Marshall Crenshaw, **Elvis Costello** and **Michael Stipe** in Case's singing charm the hell out of a fan of all three.

4) *Back in the Highlife*, **Steve Winwood** (Warner Bros): The Anglican altar-boy with the R&B soul—who was singing "I'm a Man" with **Spencer Davis** when he was 16—has weathered his years with **Traffic**, **Blind Faith** and the "Arc of the Diver" comeback. After heroin detox and divorce, he delivers the angst: high gloss and crisply set, all Dolby noise reduction units on high. **Chaka Kahn** lends a vocal assist on "Higher Love" and **James Taylor** does the same on the title cut. With ragged edges tucked, the singing is still true, the playing impeccable enough to win over fans of **Collins**, **U2** and **Weather Report**. Adult contemporary with a purchase on bliss.

5) *Knocked Out Loaded*, **Bob Dylan** (CBS): These unlikely collaborations, covers and slap-dash recordings find Dylan sounding more warm and ram-bunctious than he has for a decade, but the record doesn't cohere—or try to. There are blasts of brilliance, and it's fun to hear him dick around, but his gospel back-up singers are slapped senselessly on everything. "Brownsville Girl," the 11-minute opus (written with **Sam Shepard**) shines, but ultimately the album is a haphazard batch of experiments.

Upcoming: Look for **Tina Turner** to try to match her comeback triumph. **John Fogerty** will try to best his; his "Eye of the Zombie" single is a wicked swampy roar, aimed square at a spot on a Miami Vice track, I'd wager. **Cyndi Lauper** will try to reclaim her crown with *True Colors*. **Paul Simon** has *Graceland* working with South African and Zydeco musicians. **Talking Heads** will issue the quirky *Songs from True Stories*, which is leader David Byrne's movie—also due. Also look for debut discs cut in the states from **Communards** and **Until December**, and long-awaited new LPs from **UB40** and the **Psychadelic Furs**. Then, of course, the new one from **Paul McCartney**—back on Capitol, the Beatles' old label. Paul? Why don't I feel a boner coming on?