



Husker Dü: jet streams of glory contributing to the fight against AIDS

POP MUSIC

THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY, AND THEN SOME

by Adam Block

Good news is *always* welcome. As my friend Memphis Mark, master of teen-age bolo-bondage, puts it, "Why spit on a sneaker when you could be licking a boot?" The Pop Music Desk responds: Exackamously!

If there's one team whose muddy Minneapolis boots deserve a spit and polish it's the three-man thunder machine **Husker Dü**. This spring they asked that all royalties from their contribution to *Giorno Poetry Systems' A Diamond Hidden in the Mouth of a Corpse* be contributed to the fight against AIDS. They were soon joined by fellow contributors — **William Burroughs**, **Laurie Anderson**, **Keith Haring**, **David Johanson**, **Diamanda Galas**, **Coil**, **Philip Glass**, **Meredith Monk**, and **Allen Ginsberg**. Poet *Giorno* picked the People With AIDS Coalition and the Society for Tibetan Medicine as recipients of the artists' largesse. He has challenged fans to contribute \$8.98 — the price of an LP — by sending tax-deductible checks to: *AIDS Treatment Project, Giorno Poetry Inc., 222 Bowery, New York, NY 10012*. A fine idea.

Husker's new double LP *Warehouse* (Warner Bros.) overreaches for material, and idles when you'd expect it to open into a full-throated roar, but I still expect brash anthems like "These Important Years," and "Turn It Around" to rake poignant jet streams of glory in concert. I'll be there. For some traditional Husker-style psychedelic yawp, find the young outrages **Squirrel Bait** (Homestead) on their debut, *Skag Heaven*.

More good news comes from Limeyland, where the tea bags of pop have beat their stateside cronies off the dime with a week of AIDS benefits. The leadoff was an all-day show Apr. 1 at Wembley Arena. **Aswad** backed up **Sandie Shaw** on "Anyone Who Had a Heart." **Tom Robinson** (who has just released his tenth LP, *Midnight at the Fringe* (Dojo), documenting a live set from 1983), reworked the lyric to "Glad to Be Gay," singing: "Brothers and sisters/ I'm begging you please/ Just lay off the patients/ And fight the disease." **The Communards** powered through "Don't Leave Me This Way" and "Never Can Say Goodbye." **Kim Wilde**, with her dad and brother, offered Elton's "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word." An all-star band featuring **Jon Entwistle**, **Andy Summers**, **Steve Nieve** and Ringo's son **Zak Starkey** backed up solo turns.

Elton John (who has been suffering a barrage of attacks from the gutter press accusing him of having once "married" a man and of having bought call boys with cocaine), cracked, "I could do with some publicity" and offered an inspired cover of "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?" **Holly Johnson** of **Frankie Goes to Hollywood** growled a timely "Power of Love." **Boy George** took the mike for his UK chart-topper "Everything I Own," followed by **Bobby Womack**, and then ex-**Wham** lad **George Michael**, who crooned Stevie Wonder's fervent "Love's in Need of Love Today." The obligatory **Bob Geldof** was present, and there was a set by **Meatloaf**. The finale was an all-hands hoedown to "Lean on Me."

The week continued with countrywide club dates. Among the stand-outs: **Bronski Beat** (reunited with **Jimmy Somerville** for the night, and joined by **Dead or Alive's Pete Burns** for a camp-rant duet on "I Feel Love"), **New Order**, **That Petrol Emotion**, **The Waterboys**, **The Blommonkeys**, and **Marc Almond and the Willing Sinners**.

Marc Almond, the voice behind Soft Cell's "Tainted Love," has honed his Jacques Brel-in-Fassbinder-Hell act to a keening wonder, best represented on his new LP *Mother Fist and Her Five Daughters* (Virgin/UK). The title cut is a cracked cabaret celebration of masturbation and self-determination, the title taken from a Truman Capote story. On "Saint Judy," about his self-destructive Garland persona, Marc croons, "And if I die before I wake up/ I pray the Lord don't smudge my makeup," and wails wickedly, "Sometimes I feel like a moral-less child./ Sometimes I feel that I've gone too wild." Too wild, apparently, for the BBC, which won't play his disks. "There's no two doubts about it. I'm a raving fag," Almond told one reporter. "And it's me, not the material, that the BBC feel threatened by. Maybe I present some unacceptable face of homosexuality." He is a haunting, harrowing, courageous chronicler of the seamy side of heartbreak, an original bitch-mystic, who I hope will bring his drama-queen show stateside.

And, of course, there is some bad news. For starters, Virgin Records has dropped Almond, but hopefully a more courageous crew will adopt the troublemaker soon. More irksome has been the lack of any major U.S. rock event to fight AIDS. AmFAR was promising to do one last year — first announcing a fall date at the Hollywood Bowl, then rescheduling to Madison Square Garden on Dec. 11, only to have that show fall through as well.

Sally Morrison, AmFAR's special projects manager, claimed that the only major acts they could secure firm commitments from were **Rod Stewart**, **Madonna** and **Patti Labelle** — and scheduling problems did in the two earlier-planned dates. AmFAR is vowing to put it together this year, and Michael Courtney, a prime mover in the London shows, has come over to give some apparently much-needed advice.

In a news flash of mixed blessings, **Adam Sherburne**, the Clockwork Orange megahunk front man, along with two new members, has seceded from **Until December**. **Until December** will revert to being a trio, with a new lead singer, **Jim Kaufman**, relocating from Houston to San Francisco. They promise a hard, commercial attack. The three are already lobbying for a spot on any AmFAR benefit bill. Adam will be working with two members of **Specimen** in an as yet nameless combo. Adam's farewell to the group comes with a single release of "Free Again," rerecorded to feature a duet with Sylvester. Count it an admirable sendoff.

On an ugly note, we've got a witless outbreak of Eddie Murphy's Disease from the slapstick-nihilist **Beastie Boys**,

gurus to the adolescent barf-is-cool school, the novelty sensations of the decade. The odiferous exchange came in a *New Music Exchange* interview. **Adam Horovitz**, talking about Greenwich Village, volunteered, "I've grown up here all my life and I hate faggots." Fellow **Beastie Adam Yauch** then leapt into the fray, saying, "We do not need to go into that. What Adam's talking about — I'll give you this, he definitely hates gay people — but the reason for that is, in this neighborhood, when you're five years old walking down the street a lot of disgusting faggots — not like normal gay people — see kids and walk up to them and say, 'Hey kid, I'll give you five bucks if you suck my dick.' Sure bucko, kind of like the 'disgusting niggers' — not like normal black people — who try to pinch your lunch money in third grade. A great argument in favor of racism. Horovitz's father, Israel, who penned the mod-liberal *Author Author*, says that he thinks his son speaks eloquently to and for the minds and views of contemporary 17-year-olds. Heaven help us all. Perhaps it's not so ironic that the interview was published in tandem with street rumors circulating that some of the group may be gay. Wonder if they plan to play that AmFAR benefit?

Finally — some recent LPs worth owning:

(1) *The Joshua Tree*, **U2** (Island): American highways and Eno's lush atmospherics set the Irish lads spinning songs of plangent faith in the midst of blight and blasted hopes. Stunning work after a four-year gestation.

(2) *Chris Isaak*, **Chris Isaak** (Warner Bros.): The ghost of John Lennon met the specter of Roy Orbison in the Heartbreak Hotel, and this stately work of wracked romance emerged. Isaak sings like he's got a big dick but can't get it to work for him. Bruce Weber's back cover is worth the price of the LP.

(3) *Sign 'O' the Times*, **Prince** (Paisley Park): Devil or angel, his mini-purpleness fired his band and goes it alone: modeling pink leather mini-skirts and see-through monks' garb on a double LP with enough killer tracks to have made a one-disk triumph. Consider the rest souvenirs of too-gone genius.

(4) *Ocean Front Property*, **George Strait** (MCA): Memphis Mark has been dying to buff Dwight Yoakum's cowboy boots with his soft skin, but until the young comer's second disk arrives, he has settled on this old-timer; he says he'd take George's, "All My Ex's Live in Texas," over Prince's, "If I Was Your Girlfriend," any day. So might you. Gruff lust.