

ROCK 'N' ROAD SOUVENIRS

London Notes and Halloween Monsters

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It's the week before Halloween, and the number one single here in London is a cut that folks in the States have never heard and probably never will, "We Call It ACIEED," by D. Mob. The song is a flimsy disco-rap novelty that the group insists is not celebrating drugs but rather "acid-house parties," the latest rage in limey club land.

What are they? Well, they're parties that feature tranced-out '60s light shows, pumped-up '70s disco music, and cut-up '80s hairdos. The events' logos (ubiquitous on invites, buttons, and T-shirts) are variations on those horrible "Have a nice day" faces, with the muted smiles variously rendered — crazed, tweaked, sneering, or overhung by a drooling red tongue.

Dark suspicions abound regarding these dance clubs. Gutter-press exposés have insisted that the revelers are wrecked on LSD and Ecstasy. How else could they possibly carry on with such perverse and silly abandon under Maggie Thatcher's no-nonsense reign?

I'd say some of those psychedelics could prove quite salutary to the scene; these tea bags seem so hopelessly stiff. At my first acid party here (on a Thursday at Propaganda), the only drugs evident were booze and poppers. Really — poppers! And I have to admit that watching pale kids with

hair extensions dancing these rubber-robot shuffles under dreamy light shows while passing vials of amyl and dancing to the Village People's "Macho Man" is, well, a tad boggling.

Thursday at The Bell, London's relatively venerable gay pub for the young, hip, and poor, the deejay tells me, "We don't play acid-house. It's too boring." A young mixed crowd is stomping to Erasure's "Chains of Love," currently at number 4 on the charts. Vocalist **Andy Bell** is just hanging out, sipping beer, and socializing a bit sheepishly as his hit spins. When "Love Truth and Honesty" comes on, Levi's-clad men are heard shrieking toward the dance floor. Bell grins, "**Bananarama** always brings out the queen in even the hardest boy."

Saturday night I'm at Paradise. This relatively new club is crowded, queer, and friendly. In the jammed back lounge, a lady singer is in mid set, her energetic moves all lifted from Tina Turner. She looks stunning. The crowd loves her.

At the bar, I run into **Communards** vocalist **Jimmy Somerville**. He looks shorter than Prince as he orders a glass of beer as tall as his head. I ask him about his musical plans, and he bubbles in a near-impenetrable brogue, "I'm doing a drag number. You must come see. After 28 years as a man, I'm dead tired of it. I'm enjoying dressing up."

Tuesday night at The Daisy Chain in Brixton, the light show is stunning: There are video monitors, floating reflective discs, and a scrim across a stage flanked by caged teams of go-go boys. Quotes

from Jean Genet appear over the main screen's collage, with an image of a family dinner projected next to it. Superimposed over the family is a loop of a boy tearing open his jeans and a card reading, "Nuke 'Em," followed by a flash of a mushroom cloud.

Near 1 a.m., Somerville and his live combo appear, shrouded in clouds of dry ice. Jimmy is sporting an awesome Marie Antoinette wig and six-inch heels and stomps shamelessly through the Eurythmics' "I Need a Man." With the **Communards**, Somerville always dressed plain as dirt and sang in outrageous falsetto. In mad drag, he belts this song in his natural lower register. It's inspired — the performer is a gender-fuck classic coming and going.

Goddess bless him.

On Wednesday evening, a friend offers to play me **Sinead O'Connor**'s new 12-inch of her song "Jump in the River" (Chrysalis/U.K.). It is a collaboration with New York performance artist **Karen Finley**, whose records are banned in the United Kingdom. Upon hearing Finley's recent single "Sushi Party" (Pow Wow) in New York, O'Connor asked Finley to join her. On the disc, O'Connor sings against howls sampled from *The Exorcist*. Finley snarls, recalls, and boasts, "Mother: Have you got a prick? After she washed me/ I asked Mother to masturbate me/ I don't smile when I come. Ain't got no dick/ But I've got a pump/ Never knew how to walk/ So, I gotta jump."

My friend marveled, "Radio over here is never going to touch it." *Nor in the States*, I thought. O'Connor knows that. Still, there is a seven-inch, without Finley, that they will play.



Gender benders: singers Andy Bell (left) and Jimmy Somerville in drag during a recent benefit performance for gay charities in London

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"But the next single after this," she told the British press, "The Value of Ignorance,' won't get played either." (That one choruses, "All those nights/ With my arse in your face/ And your words in my dreams/ Now I know what the value of ignorance means.") "But I don't care," O'Connor insisted, "because it's a fucking good song, so I want it released."

Finley has a new LP of her own, *The Truth Is Hard To Swallow* (Pow Wow), featuring four songs on one side and a long monologue on the other. Back in the United States, Finley's discs show up at Tower Records, if not at K mart. In England, the search could be more arduous. These are ferocious voices, full of wonder and worth tracking down.

The Scariest Monster of Halloween

Back in the States in time for the sacred holiday, I make the mistake of flipping on MTV. The veejay announces that at midnight they'll unveil the video for a new cover of The Troggs' raunch classic "Wild Thing." The backup band will include metal heroes from **Aerosmith**, **Bon Jovi**, **Guns and Roses**, **Poison**, **Ratt**, **Van Halen**, **Whitesnake**, and even (geez!) **Billy Idol**. But then there is the vocalist — a sack of puss in shoes — **Sam Kinison**. I actually shuddered.

This single stands to gain a massive young audience for the screaming weasel's new LP, *Have You Seen Me Lately?*, which records a performance so despicable that employees at Warner Bros. Records lobbied (unsuccessfully) to have the human goiter tossed off the label.

Kinison is a fat bully, a cheerleader for wife beating, whose brand of "humor" aims bile at any beleaguered folks who make him nervous: women, gay men — hell, even starving Africans. This LP's verbal fag bashing and its ridicule of condom use for "real men" are not only despicable but dangerous.

As a strict advocate of free speech, I'd like to see Sam Kinison hit by a truck.

Look for a positive antidote to Kinison's unconscionable poison in **Whoopi Goldberg**'s inspired comic monologue *Fontaine: Why Am I Straight?* (MCA). The album is a call for compassion and commitment that pierces bigotry rather than encouraging it. Goldberg walks a thin line in asking her listeners to question their values and in leading them toward difficult truths. She calls on reserves of wit, intelligence, and heart that few comics or musicians today possess. On *Why Am I Straight?*, Goldberg is upsetting for all the right reasons. Listen in.

—Adam Block