

Of Grammys, Godheads, And Dry Dreams

"The Grammys? About as much fun as passing a gallstone," I muttered to my friend Bobo. "That one-man do-wop dork took Best Song, and the lady of the hour — the courageous 'new conscience of pop' — says less about her gender preference than Morrissey does!"

"Dude, I didn't see **George Michael**, **Michael Jackson**, **Boy George**, or **Little Richard**. The only glimmer of glory was **Sinead O'Connor** stomping around in ripped Levi's, with a Celtic anus tattooed to the side of her head!"

"Wait!" Bobo demanded. "Fuck the Grammys. This week, you saw the *godhead*."

Bobo is a homo rock critic; he talks that way. See, he was referring to a grunge-rock band, **Soundgarden**, from Seattle. More specifically, he was invoking the image of their lead singer: a lanky, long-maned looker whose shirtless slouch reminded Bobo why God made rock and roll. Bobo is living proof that it's not just the "little girls" who understand.

Bobo had a point. I had seen Soundgarden a few days earlier, with Barry, another homo-critic friend. Bobo had given both of us this "Chris Cornell is *sex*" rap. Barry's taste runs more to the samovars in *Ivan the Terrible* than to a lissome youth who trades off Jim Morrison's glower with Robert Plant's shrieks and shakes, but by the end of the set, he was gasping and screaming, "I love them!" with a giddy giggle. It wasn't just their thunderous, taut attack or their imaginative covers of Sly Stone and Cheech and Chong. Barry shook his head and whispered, "He is *really* sexy."

I wasn't arguing. I was glad our critical concerns had ascended to such a salient level. I'm with Bobo: Forget about the Grammys. Look for Soundgarden's *Ultra Mega OK LP* on SST. Track down the *Sub Pop 200* anthology on Sub Pop (the premier indie-anthology box ever, which includes a poster of Cornell in action). Watch for their debut disc on A&M and a gig in your town. Let me know if he gives you the fine shudders.

Lively happenings over in England: Gay blade **Andy Bell's Erasure** took top honors in the BPI Awards (the British Grammys), while tattooed love boy **Marc Almond** scored a number one hit with his duet with **Gene Pitney** on "Something's Got a Hold of My Heart." And **Holly Johnson** — formerly with Frankie Goes to Hollywood, now managed by his lover, Wolfgang — made *Top of the Pops* with his solo single "Love Train." Virgin Records is finally preparing to release an American version of the **Boy George** solo LP, trading in the title of *Tense, Nervous Headache* for the marginal improvement of *High Hat*. On the first single, "Don't Take My Mind on a Trip," George sounds like Michael Jackson with laryngitis — which isn't bad.

Meanwhile, **Jimmy Somerville** is headed into the studio to record his first solo LP. Somerville's original band, **Bronski Beat**, has resurfaced as a duo featuring original keyboard player **Steve Bronski** and now-gay vocalist **Jonathan Hellyer**, whom a *Los Angeles Times* reporter rated "campily charismatic" and "an exceptional singer." All this may mean little to the extravagant **Morrissey**, who, when asked by the *New Musical Express*, "Are there any contemporary acts that you feel at one with?" confessed, "Not a living sausage." Later, he announced, "Sex is humor to me." Here's to more comedy discs.

Stateside, some significant rock and pop AIDS benefits are in the works. **Clive Davis**, **David Geffen**, and **Jann Wenner** have lent their names to a show at Radio City Music Hall, "Rock and a Hard Place," slated for June 8. **Dionne Warwick** is due to headline a series of benefit shows at New York's Avery Fisher Hall, June 8-11. And probably getting the leap on both, **Bill Graham** is helping Bay-area local **Tim McQuaid** organize a series of small shows (salsa, country, folk, jazz, metal, cabaret, and thrash) for late May, climaxing with a stadium date headlined by the **Grateful Dead** and **Huey Lewis and The News**. A local telethon, edited from *all* the shows, is slated to follow.

The late, great **Sylvester** has been honored at two recent benefits. **Patti LaBelle** devoted the last night of her stint at the Circle Star Theatre to her fallen friend (proceeds went to the Shanti Project). She handed out her eyelashes to spectators, sang her tune "You Are My Friend," which Syl had covered, introduced **Gladys Knight** in the audience, and announced that the two hope to join Warwick for a tour to raise still more money.

And singers **Jeanie Tracy** and **Jo Carol Block** teamed up with Syl's original **Two Tons of Fun** in a bittersweet, sometimes-somber celebration at San Francisco's Galleria. Syl's old costumes hung about the hall, and a slide show documented his career triumphs. The ladies joined forces on a medley of "You Are My Friend," "Dance (Disco Heat)," and "You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)." One longtime fan and disco habitué confessed, "It really felt like the end of an era. It even seemed kind of appropriate that only the day before, the federal government finally banned the sale of poppers."

My favorite benefit-of-the-month was an all-ages event at San Francisco's small Deaf Club (a lounge actually run by — and generally for — the deaf). It was a celebration of the publication of the fourth issue of the radical shoestring 'zine *Homocore*. This one features a poster of a gun-toting shirtless boy in a field, under the cribbed headline, "Getting fucked while I shoot off always drives me nuts!" (To order issues, send \$1 to P.O. Box 7731, San Francisco, CA 94107.)

This show's stars were thrash masters **MDC**, following **The Popstitutes**. Before the crowd erupted bare-chested into a slam pit for the headliners, the Popstitutes poleaxed the lot with their deadpan, beyond-drag numbers. The highlight was a Western ode called "Trigger," delivered with plenty of beat-box crackling. The trio was joined by a humpy Hispanic in black Levi's, tank top, cowboy boots, and hat, who trotted and bobbed his fist around a gargantuan plastic cock and balls that hung from his waist.

As the lead singer blankly chanted, "He's swell/He's coarse/And hung like a horse," the sax player fell to his knees, lapping his tongue toward the enormous appendage. The cowpoke pumped his tool, squirting the hungry mouth full of aerosol whipped cream. The crowd of Mohawked teens and aging rowdies roared with delight and disbelief. While the popper palace was hosting a wake, this friendly horde was cheering a celebration and satire of salacious sex — with savage hollers.

Don't worry; be angry. And keep your godhead covered.

—Adam Block