

It's been a dark and ugly season for pop music. The closet is stacked to the rafters, and the failure of most rock acts to join the fight against AIDS has the unmistakable stench of homophobia—a homophobia that many of music's current crop of "rebels" have actually begun to flaunt.

Black rappers—the voices of the inner-city underclass—have been depressingly quick to laugh at and lambaste the fags. For example, fat, fez-headed Heavy D., on his current LP *Big Time*, boasts that listeners can be "happy like a faggot in jail." Then he offers the non sequitur "I'm extremely intellectual—not bisexual!" Elsewhere, on "Big Daddy Thing," you can check out Big Daddy Kane chanting, "The Big Daddy law is antifaggot. That means no homosexuality!" And Chuck D, who's touted as one of rap's most "visionary" voices, recently told *Melody Maker* that homosexuals are "sticking things in places that they don't belong. They don't know what they're fucking with."

White rock rebels have proven equally execrable. For instance, the upstarts in Skid Road showed their "sensitivity" when lead singer Sebastian Bach sported a T-shirt reading, AIDS: KILLS FAGGOTS DEAD, to a photo shoot. Bach later apologized, saying he "doesn't understand or sympathize with homosexuality in any way, shape, form, or size."

Bach was following in the steel-toed footsteps of megastars Guns N' Roses, whose lead singer, Axl Rose, shared these insights on the song "One in a Million": "Immigrants and faggots, they make no sense to me/They come to our country and think they'll do as they please/Like start some mini-Iran or spread some fucking disease." And where exactly, pray tell, did we come from?

The ugly fact is that homophobia continues to sell, even as its lethal consequences have become painfully apparent. In the world of commercial music, gay pride has become an increasingly tough ticket to sell. All of which makes this *ADVOCATE* New Music section—and its subjects—a cause for some wonder and celebration.

No one before Jimmy Somerville (not Sylvester, Tom Robinson, Marc Almond, or Boy George) has ever been as brazenly gay and politically outspoken while ruling both the dance floor and the charts. While Somerville doesn't sell nearly as many records as Erasure, that group's lead singer, Andy Bell, might not be the openly gay hero he is today if Somerville hadn't paved

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Pop Wonders in an Ugly Season

the way. (Bell was profiled in *The ADVOCATE*'s last pop music special section, Issue 514.) Somerville's first two singles, "Smalltown Boy" and "Why?" (as lead singer with Bronski Beat), remain landmark achievements.

Somerville is a savage singer, a piss-poor careerist, and an unrelenting activist. In a series of interviews, conducted over a year and a half in London, Spain, and New York, Somerville proved himself as frank and ferocious today as he was when first he burst upon the scene six years ago.

Gay activist-journalist Jim Fouratt tracked down young disco hunk Paul Lekakis in Manhattan on the eve of the release of his debut LP, *Tattoo It on Me*.

Meanwhile in London, I hooked up with

another new act, Kitchens of Distinction—the best-kept secret in British pop music. The band's story is remarkable: Patrick Fitzgerald, the openly gay lead singer, gave up a medical career to found the courageous trio with two straight sidekicks. Equally remarkable is their music, which is nothing short of stupendous—some of the most subtly seductive and intriguing sides to emerge from the United Kingdom since the Smiths.

These voices may not ring as loud as those of the boors and bigots, but against that chill, bleak landscape, each of them flames in the face of heavy odds. And, most important, these scintillating, sweet, and strong voices may very well remind you of your own.

—Adam Block