

"The Queer Song" is an anthem to scare any radio programmer.

BY ADAM BLOCK



Boy George was supposed to be a goner: crippled by drug addiction and revelations about his sex life, shattered after overexposure. His rocky solo debut seemed to confirm the judgment. George had wanted to call it *Nervous Tension*

Headache. It proved about as popular.

After that debacle, George began writing songs under the name Angela Dust and releasing them as Jesus Loves You on his own More Protein label. He printed T-shirts with the band's name on the front; on the back they read, But the Rest of Us Think You're an Asshole. So much for the sanctimonious souls anxious to welcome the chastened crooner back in sackcloth.

George's 12-inch singles, released under the ironic moniker, found him writing and singing with a newfound maturity and assurance. His new LP, *The Martyr Mantras* (Virgin), puts his own name back on the work. It collects three tracks ("After the Love," "Generations of Love," and "One on One") that canny deejays have been snatching out of import bins and adds Gabriel Pascal's ferocious acid mix of "No Clause 28," which was bumped from U.S. pressings of his debut disc by nervous souls at his record label. It is great to hear George railing against homophobic legislation—drawing with angry delight, "Won't you be elated/to tamper with our pride?/They say to celebrate it/is social suicide."

The new LP's title and cover celebrate those who called time on George's 15 minutes of fame. The cover features George's face in lipstick and with a safety pin through his nose superimposed on a cross—the twin faces of punk and glam, crucified. Around his neck rests an ornate necklace studded with blue scarabs—the musician martyr surrounded by the Sanskrit symbol for Hare Krishna. His gaze is calm, clear, and distant. This is Boy George, homo and

Hindu, finding friendly salvation in rhythm and music.

There are six new tracks on the disc, each clocking in at over six minutes. "Love's Gonna Let You Down" sets gospel lines against a bubbling bass, with George singing grittily and androgynously, "I used to be a boy/Now it seems I'm a man." "Love Hurts" proves an insinuating piece of silky Philly disco, and on "Too Much Love," George waxes deliciously queer, crooning, "Oooh, my life has changed/Since you put your love in me." Even the disclosing Krishna folk anthem "Bow Down Mister" proves ebullient and unsanctimonious. George offers inspirational photos of Andy Warhol and of a Krishna acolyte (matching emblems of instant celebrity and of eternal salvation) on the inner sleeve. He dedicates the album to his lover, Michael. On *The Martyr Mantras*, Boy George sounds less like a goner than a comer.

Two Nice Girls, Austin's heroic dyke quartet, have just released their second LP (the first with their current lineup), *chloe liked olivia* (Rough Trade). It is a remarkable record, but one so polished and eclectic, it occasionally trips over its own variety and ambitions.

The opening cut, "Let's Go Bonding," a comically politically correct love song, takes a stab at a Stax-Volt disco setting but is as wiggly as the B-52s. "Eleven" follows, a pre-teen feminist reverie, with chords out of Joni Mitchell. "The Inaugural" is a pithy assault on George Bush's macho policies, which poses the musical question "Don't we all deserve more than a kinder, gentler fuck?" before shuddering into a dub blitz: sampling sexual growling and groveling, Bush homilies, and falling bombs. "Princess of Passion" is a slight Sapphic celebration of cartoon superheroine She-Ra, blasted by Joan Jett power chords. Unfortunately, it is also Rough Trade's prime contender for a college radio single and video. It is followed by a better bet—Meg Hentches's near-perfect Fleetwood Mac-inflected love song, "Throw It All Away."

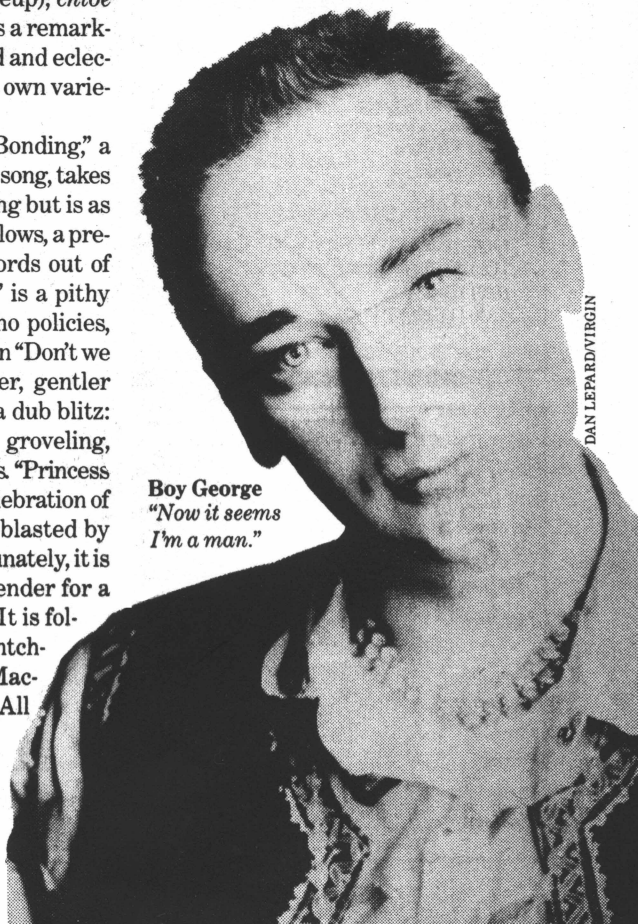
But my vote for the single goes hands down to "The Queer Song." The cut opens

with Gretchen Phillips chanting over the rhythm track to Buddy Holly's "Not Fade Away," "I'm gonna tell you how it's gonna be:/Soon you're gonna be fucking me!" Soon, all four are chorusing, "I'm gonna take you to queer bars./I'm gonna drive you in queer cars./You're gonna meet all our queer friends./Our queer fun, it never ends"

It is an anthem to scare any radio programmer and a cut that deserves to be heard live—the recorded version sacrificing some of its rambunctious fury.

The band will embark on a national tour following the Olivia Records Love Boat Cruise. Catch them, and hope for one cut written too late for this LP, "Manlove"—a canny celebration of making it with men that takes wicked aim at the lesbian block wardens who calibrate the politically correct. Phillips promises wryly, "I can't wait to do this one at Michigan."

Coming soon: new LPs from Morrissey, Kitchens of Distinction, R.E.M., and Phranc. Till then—keep queer. ▼



Boy George
"Now it seems
I'm a man."