

Morrissey takes a tortured delight in being different.

BY ADAM BLOCK



Morrissey is back. *Kill Uncle* (Sire), his second solo disc (after his collection of singles, *Bona Drag*), is a queen's soft-shoe with stiletto heels, a set of poignant, wounded sketches that echo Bertolt Brecht, Jacques Brel, and Noël Coward.

Producers Langer and Winstanley mount sparse, lush settings, and Morrissey delivers his soliloquies with his trademark extravagance, wicked wit, and wry warmth. He refuses to call himself gay, still swears he is chaste, and remains the queerest voice in pop.

Morrissey is queer in the traditional sense: odd and peculiar as well as a pillow-biting sister. He doesn't plead for gay assimilation but takes a tortured delight in being different—ever the too-sensitive outsider.

The disc's opening cut could be his rejoinder to the understandably angry demands of activists that he join in candid solidarity with his queer comrades: "Your frank and open conversations/They get me nowhere. . . /So get me a drink and make it quick/Or else I'm going to be sick all over/Your frankly vulgar red pullover." Morrissey can hardly get past the sweatshirt, let alone breach his self-absorption.

Morrissey cuts his isolation (even redeems it) with mordant wit. He offers pained portraits of lust-inspiring losers: a wistful lament for an Asian boy mugger on drugs plus "Tony the Pony," his rambunctious celebration of a damaged hustler now celebrated as a sexual amusement-park ride. He dresses up pain in the ball gowns of pathos in the cheeky camp vitriol of "King Leer" (the title a pun on Irish slang for queer) and, shadowing the obvious object of desire hovering behind, "Driving Your Boyfriend Home." On the wicked lament "I'm the Last of the Family Line," Morrissey croons, "Fifteen generations all

honoring Nature, until I arrived (with incredible style)." OK. He cracks me up.

On the LP's penultimate cut, "There Is a Place in Hell for Me and My Friends," Morrissey makes it clear that he doesn't expect his community of outcasts to be embraced, even in the afterlife. Thus, he insists winsomely, "Our only hope, when we go,/Is that our skin, blood, and bones/Don't get in your way—making you ill—/The way they did when we lived." It's an apology that cuts like an indictment—the wry elegy exacting a calm measure of the costs of homophobia and AIDS. Kill Uncle. Save Auntie. Don't write off Morrissey.

The original uncut video of *Red, Hot & Blue* (Arista) is finally in the stores, and producer John Carlin notes, "I wanted them to market it as 'too hot for network TV.' To me, the ABC broadcast was, frankly, an embarrassment. Now people can see the AIDS information show we made and broadcast to the rest of the world."

The video restores six clips (Jimmy Somerville, Aztec Camera, the Jungle Brothers, Tom Waits, Les Negresses Vertes, and Salif Keta) plus the uncensored Erasure video; art

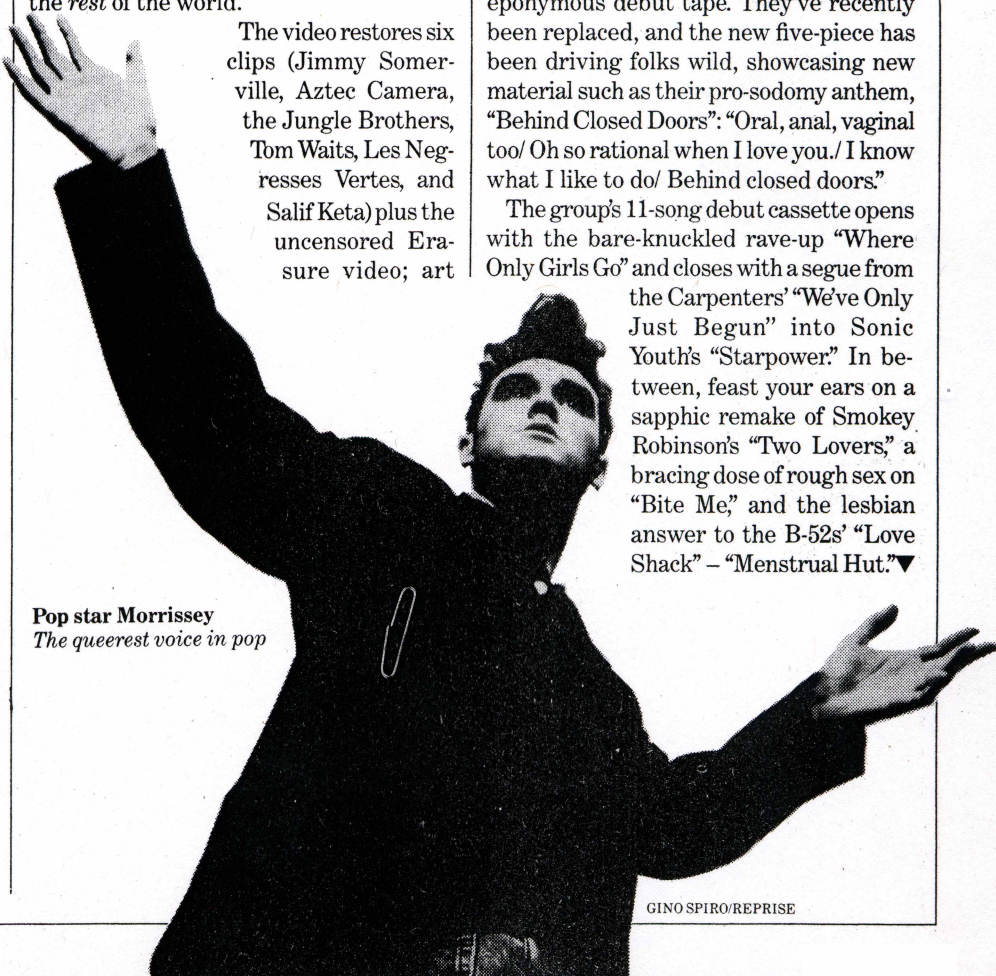
pieces by Keith Haring, Sue Coe, and David Wojnarowicz; and skits starring Bill Irwin. The tape is a cheap treasure. If purchased through the ACT UP catalog, it helps finance those activists as well as the charity.

Two Nice Girls are hoping to find out what's too hot for MTV. They filmed their first video, "Let's Go Bonding," in San Francisco recently with a mixed-gender motley of queers and friends. Their label, Rough Trade, suggested they cut a few shots—those of boys kissing and a scene of singer Cathy Korloff bussing first a high-heel shoe, then a combat boot. The label OK'd drag queens playing feather-boia saxophones and a man kissing the naked belly of a pregnant lady (in a bikini). Soon it'll be MTV's call.

Girls in the Nose, fronted by Austinite Kay Turner, originally included Two Nice Girls' Gretchen Phillips and Pam Barger—both of whom appear on the group's eponymous debut tape. They've recently been replaced, and the new five-piece has been driving folks wild, showcasing new material such as their pro-sodomy anthem, "Behind Closed Doors": "Oral, anal, vaginal too/ Oh so rational when I love you./ I know what I like to do/ Behind closed doors."

The group's 11-song debut cassette opens with the bare-knuckled rave-up "Where Only Girls Go" and closes with a segue from the Carpenters' "We've Only Just Begun" into Sonic Youth's "Starpower." In between, feast your ears on a sapphic remake of Smokey Robinson's "Two Lovers," a bracing dose of rough sex on "Bite Me," and the lesbian answer to the B-52s' "Love Shack"—"Menstrual Hut." ▼

Pop star Morrissey
The queerest voice in pop



GINO SPIRO/REPRISE