

'FERRY' FROM PAGE 18

Three years is long enough for many a quickie pop sensation to be manufactured, exploited and cast out on the slagheap, but Ferry's absence from the scene only made the hearts of his European fans grow fonder. *Boys and Girls* went straight to the top of the charts there, something Ferry modestly attributes to his being "very lucky."

What's luck got to do with it, Bry? Fact is, *Boys and Girls* is another near-flawless example of Ferry's elegantly extravagant modern pop. It may have been recorded at as many studios (six) with as many engineers (seven) and backing musicians (30) as your average Top 10 chart, but the many joins are rendered invisible courtesy of Ferry's characteristically melancholic, soulful vocals.

The voice that fuelled a million candle-lit dinners and satin-sheet seductions is still in fine form, seemingly untainted by all those cigarettes. It is framed by a superb supporting cast drawn from the jazz and soul as well as rock fields, including such formidable names as Mark Knopfler, David Gilmour, Tony Levin, Marcus Miller, Omar Hakim (Weather Report) and David Sanborn.

Comparisons with *Avalon* have inevitably flowed: "I tried to make it stronger rhythmically, that was my only real objective," claims Ferry. "Probably it sounded closer to *Avalon* at the end of the day than I'd originally have liked. I was after something much harder, but you can't fight



Roxy Music, Auckland nightclub, 1975. From left: Bryan, Eddie Jobson, Paul Thompson, Phil Manzanera, Andy McKay.

nature too much!

"Nowadays I tend to see the voice as just part of the music. I try not to get in the way of the music, I just want to highlight the mood and atmosphere by the words. Many of the songs could actually be instrumentals."

The omniscient Nile Rodgers is present, this time as a guitarist, not a producer. Consider his contribution part payment of a strong stylistic debt to Ferry and Roxy Music.

"Nile told me that he was living in London when he saw us do 'Love Is the Drug' (1975), with the girl singers in the uniforms and so on. And he and Bernard (Edwards) said 'Let's see what we can do'. He did a great job; Chic made some great records."

And of course we all know just how much British pop in the 80s owes to both the Roxy sound and the Ferry lounge lizard persona. ABC, Spandau Ballet, Simple Minds, Duran Duran, Icehouse,



Roxy Music, Sweetwaters, 1981.

the Associates, Human League ... the list is endless.

"I met John Taylor (Duran Duran, Power Station) recently. He said he got my autograph outside the Holiday Inn in Birmingham once and that he became a musician because of me. It's a daunting thing.

"Yes, I guess I could reel off 50 names," laughs Ferry. "Of course you have to look at it that way (imitation being a source of flattery). Sometimes it is worrying, however. You think, that area is being covered, where will I move next?"

"I believe that one of the reasons for it is that with all the records I made I suggested a lot of things. I don't feel I just created one particular sound, the way the Who or the Stones had a sound. I think it was a matter of opening up different avenues that I never really completely exhausted, there's always something else to do there.

"That sort of competition is good in that it makes me want to go more and more into myself, to become unique. You fear increasingly as you get older that you can't just trade on a haircut or on selling the latest pair of shoes the way a new teenage band would. Your music has to be good."

Nudging 40 the Ferryman may be, but he could still teach those upstarts half his age a few volumes on style. For the interview, he dresses casually in blue denim, white shirt and black boots, that characteristic glossy black forelock threatening to halve his vision, but you soon realise why he is so beloved of fashion photographers. This guy would look menthol-cool even if he'd just run a marathon through Death Valley.

One aspect of his career that still irks Bryan Ferry is the reluctance of the US to accord him the approval he's elicited everywhere else:

"I could moan on for hours about reasons for that," he chuckles. "I think it is partly that American radio has always been too tightly formatted for my music. Roxy Music never slotted into any of the existing formats and I don't think I quite do now either. At least there's this thing called MTV now and if you get on that, information will travel more quickly.

"The only people who found out about my music were those who seek things out for themselves. That's a great audience to have, of course, because you know they're genuinely interested, and not just having music fed to them like hamburgers.

"I think the conceit of every artist is that he wants to have a larger and larger audience all the time, so I'm still plugging away. In a back-handed way, I think there's a chance that many of the young ones with a similar attitude to mine may make the music I make seem much less strange in North America."

The title of Bryan Ferry's latest *meisterwerk* is perhaps an ironic reference to the dominance matters of the heart have always held in his songs. While the likes of Sting feel they have something wonderfully meaningful to convey on such topics as coal mining and the cold war, Ferry sticks to what he knows best.

"No, I don't feel much of an expert on those other themes. There's a certain sensuality about the music I make, I think, and I don't see the point of forcing things that don't really fit. I don't feel any moral compulsion to do it either. My heart is in songs of a more personal nature, rather than a preaching to the masses type thing that someone like Bob Dylan can do so well."

One last subject remained to be broached and it was not an easy one to inflict upon the sensitive songsmith.

Prior to snagging Mick Jagger, Texan model Jerry Hall was heavily involved with Ferry (that's her alluring form on the cover of Roxy's *Siren* LP). She has just released her memoirs of life amongst the jet-set, *Tall Tales*, (don't buy it!) and Ferry figures prominently and none too favourably. Naturally, the English gutter press lapped this up. When the topic was raised gingerly, Ferry's pain was palpable:

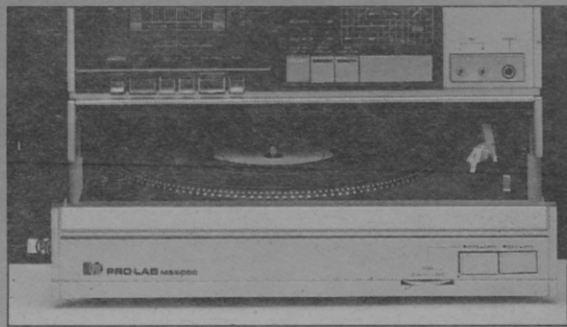
"It's a nightmare," he confesses. "It's just terrible for someone with as private and vaguely secretive a personality as mine. When you lose control of certain things, they become legend, whether they're true or not. They get slipped into newspaper files, then come out later, and you have to say 'Oh, that was never true anyway'.

"It makes you really irritated. You try not to think about that side of it at all. You just say 'that's another person who they invented.'"

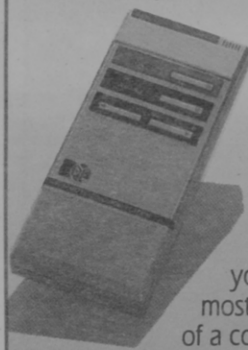
Kerry Doole

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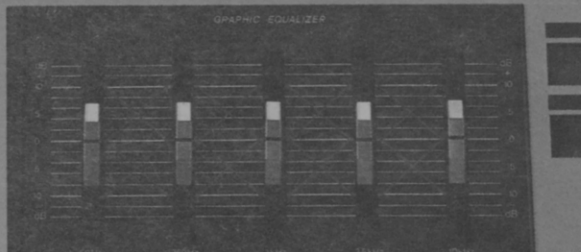
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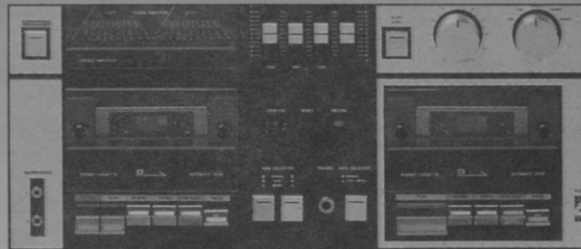
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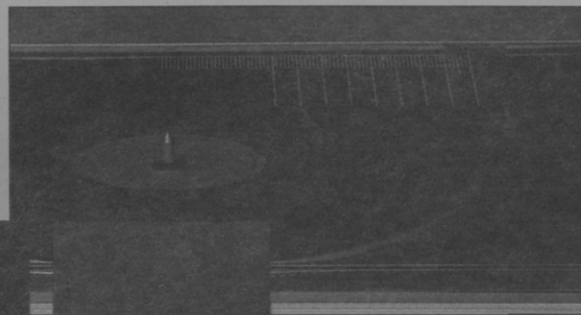
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