

will happen during the course of next year. Otherwise I'll be here making another one of these blinking strange records. We shall see."

Malcolm McLaren is sounding a little slurred. It is three o'clock in the morning in London. Despite the frustration of not securing a film deal, McLaren has squeezed off another shot at culture, another dilettante dum-dum. His new album is *Waltz Darling* and is to waltzes what its predecessor, *Fans* was to opera. The idea behind it is outlandish—R&B meets Strauss, with Jeff Beck on guitar and lyrics taken from Victorian parlour books. Whereas his earlier albums have cast wide for ideas (*Duck Rock's* blend of rap and fashion, *Fans* blend of opera and funk), *Waltz Darling* casts even wider—this is conceptual drift-net fishing. Some of it should be thrown back. A bit of it should be treasured.

"You cast around for ideas; you settle on six," he chuckles. "But there are great moments on *Waltz Darling*. My favourite is 'Call A Wave'. I like that the most because it's such a clear beautiful rendition of marrying Barry White with the *Merry Widow* waltz with Jeff Beck's surfing guitar and some 19th century poetic phrasing about a little girl, a siren who would bring men to their death, who ends up living in the surf, calling up a perfect wave. It's a 19th century surfing record."

I could see you writing scripts for Hollywood, since both *Fans* and *Waltz Darling* have quite scripted ideas behind them ...

"Believe me, I don't bother to set out with a plan. The way I make records is like the way directors make movies—I *direct* records, and it tends to be going that way. The next record might be *more* obviously scripted.

"I've developed a style. First I'm accused of being a svengali pirate, and then the next record I make I'm pirating Puccini, and the next record's with Strauss waltzes—but they can't say I'm a pirate again because it's getting too boring. Now people think: 'Maybe it's a good idea, maybe there's nothing wrong with him using Strauss.' People are getting used to me, they're getting used to the style.

"People used to be very anti the style. Music critics, being very coarse, don't appreciate all those new ways of making records, they don't appreciate that you can make a record even though you can't play the guitar or keyboards, even though you can't sing or tell the difference between f-flat and D-major. They can't appreciate that, they can't stretch their imagination.

"They're also very xenophobic, they live in their own world, and you're joining the club without the right credentials. They're saying, 'What the fuck are you doing on the golf course, you can't handle a club! You're a danger—you may hurt somebody! You're making a mess of the pitch! You're abusing the system!' That's what the musical establishment has been like towards me. But that seems to be changing because somehow or other I've created a style through not having a style. I've created a musical format for making records without understanding the prerequisite of what this music is supposed to be. Rock n' roll has a certain set of rules, I seem to have broken them."

Despite your misgivings, it must be hard to argue with a record like *Fans*, which was brilliant.

"*Fans* nobody brought, it was a tremendous word of mouth record, it still is, it's appreciated for its ideas and feeling and playfulness. *Waltz Darling* is kind of similar, it's probably better-crafted. It hasn't got the drama that *Fans* had, but then again I haven't got opera to work with. *Waltz Darling* is a little bit more playful, more adolescent; but it hasn't got the suicide quotient, it hasn't got the big tragedy in there.

"What *Waltz Darling* does have is a marvellous opulence, and the

dreamlike quality that goes with that. I like the fact that it's very mannered, it has a very old-fashioned air about it. It's kinda kitsch, not in an obvious way. The next record I make will be A HUNDRED PERCENT MANNERED, and will be literally about manners. I wanna make a dance record that is eight lessons in deportment, a guide to modern manners. That's where I was almost heading with *Waltz Darling* but I never quite reached it. The next record will be far more focussed.

*Waltz Darling* is indeed far more crafted than *Fans* and perhaps that's where it loses out. The songs on *Fans* were so simple that they had to work; *Waltz Darling* is a real piece of Victorian kitsch, soft and cluttered. Malcolm nominates 'Call A Wave' as his favourite track.

"I love the high fidelity of it, the sound of it. It's got a lovely sound and I think it sounds better than Barry White's records. It's copied from that Barry White song 'I'm Gonna Love You Just A Little Bit More Babe', or something, what's it called? It's the same groove, anyway.

"The other track I like the most is the one I sang on—I Like You In

**"Musicians will pick up on my record and make it into hits because they've got good faces—Paul Simon, Neneh Cherry, Herbie Hancock, Peter Gabriel, and so on. It gets a little bit frustrating."**

*Velvet*—a real 19th century Victorian parlour book lyric by the way, I didn't write it. I thought, I'm taking music from these sources so I might as well take lyrics as well. It was written about 1895."

It's a strange bit of verse. "I haven't changed a single line.

*Waltz Darling* seems to be harking back to the 17th century idea of artifice as a virtue; the more mannered something is, the more art

a croakish Oscar Wilde or something. My third favourite is 'Waltz Darling', I like all the mannered, poncey etiquette bits at the end. I like the mix of the George Harrison - Beatles Arabic riff, mixed with Tchaikowskys' *Waltz of the Flowers*, mixed with the sequencing. A great melting pot. So three songs that I'm really happy with; the others I sorta half like, I'm not committed to them either way."

**"I'm an actor in reality! It's like the reality doesn't exist. I'm constantly posing in the real world!"**

it is.

"Exactly. It's extremely mannered but that's what I loved about it, and I loved doing it and trying to sound like

Other song subjects came from less esoteric sources. 'Something's Jumping In Your Shirt' is a homage to "a girl called Lisa Marie, who had

gigantic tits, and was not able to be a ballet dancer because of her being so fully cantilevered. She told me this story about how kids used to take the mickey out of her by telling her that something's jumping in her shirt. It was such a cute idea. She was so fabulous to look at I said, look, I'm gonna write this song for you and put it on my record. It was a diversion—I managed to put in a little orchestration, from the *Emperor's Waltz* by Strauss, put my voice in there like some Godfather-character giving her advice, and that was it. It's got a Roy Orbison like chorus, Caribbean rhythms ..."

The opening track on *Waltz Darling* is 'The Blue Danube' which swipes from the most famous waltz of all. The opening bars swell up in the speakers and suddenly you're 10 years old again, watching Kubrick's *2001* on the 70mm at the Queen Street Cinerama. I could practically feel the jaffas melting in my palm, that old Pan Am shuttle gliding towards the space wheel ... Later on in the song Bootsy Collins crashes in with a funk rhythm and the joyful reminiscence is destroyed, along

with the symphony and the song. But the record company liked McLaren's 'Blue Danube', choosing it as an opener.

"They decided they didn't like my 'I Like You In Velvet' song at all so it ended up at the end of the record. I said, I want this out as a single and they said, [shouting] you must be MAD you'll RUIN THE ALBUM MALCOLM, WE DON'T WANT YOU OUT AS A SINGLE!! And I said well that's very nice, I'm supposed to be the artist and you hate my singing already."

So you're not going to take up singing anymore?

"Well, the thing is I was thinking that the next album I did, I could sing all over it, but as soon as I mentioned it CBS looked at me with their mouths open in disbelief as if I was going to commit the worst crime possible. The most ironic thing is if you sign to a record label as an artist the minute you want to BE an artist there's this wave of disbelief—"don't do that, you'll ruin us!"

So you want to be an artist now?

"I dunno. I just thought that after three albums I must be approaching the possibility at least. I mean how

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