

Records

Style Council Introducing the Style Council Polydor

Circumstance (and personal inclination) have seen Paul Weller growing up in public over the last six years. Each progression; from Toryism to 'Trans-Global Express', from 'In the City' to 'Beat Surrender' and from that early, unlikely, fascination with mod styles, through a period of dourness to — bringing us up to date — the studied sharpness of the Style Council.

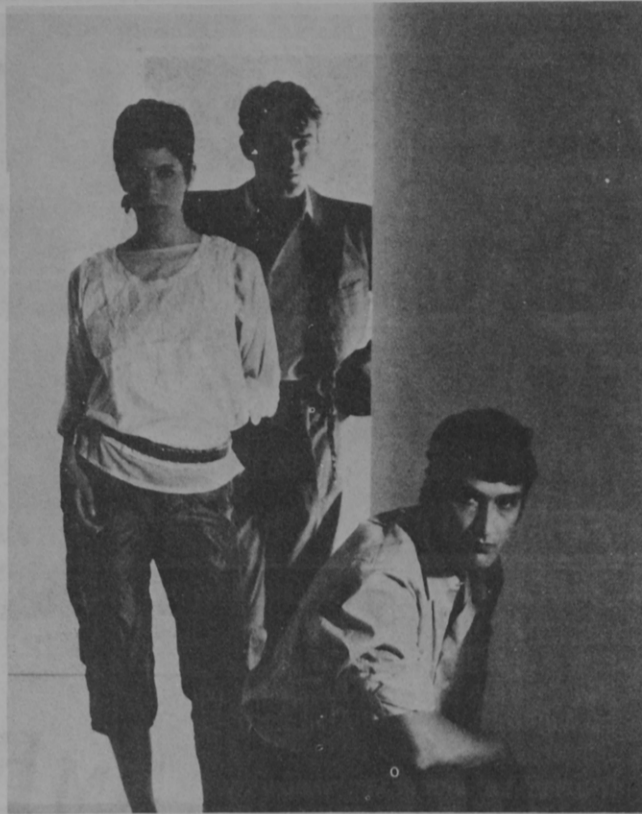
Style Council. It's a very youthful, naive thing. Reaching out for the best pieces, synthesising them into a *Style*. It's a much truer extension of Mod than simply, obviously, taking up the scooter/parka/union jack package.

Musically, this has meant taking sweet soul music, applying it in today's ways and tying it up with belief: "a promoted culture of sex, staged rebellion that stays, not 'settling down', replenishing ideals and moving upwards," as the sleeve says.

This mini-album bears the seductive single 'Long Hot Summer' (and a heavy-handed club mix of the same), a bare, happy acoustic little tune called 'Headstart for Happiness', the exuberant 'Speak Like A Child', the elegantly written 'Paris Match', keyboardist Mick Talbot's entertaining workout, 'Mick's Up' and a remixed 'Money Go Round'. This last manages to make very strong, very direct political statements while keeping a sense of humour — something the Jam were never strong on. It also fair hustles along.

All of which would be fine were it not for a slight feeling that Weller is toying with other people's cultures and styles, taking only the style and not the substance. To his credit, he does it as a fan not a dilettante, unlike, say Bowie. *Style* is a wonderful thing, but Paul Weller must remember that *Style Is Not Content*.

The Style Council have yet to make a truly great record but there's time.
Russell Brown



Gang of Four

Hunters and Collectors The Fireman's Curse White Label

Imagine the setting. Jagged lightning rips open the sky, thunder bellows out roar on roar like some maddened beast. Ghostly flashes, crags and trees leap out of the murk on the harsh clarity of nightmare or fever. Cavorting shapes of weird noises emerge as if caught in some ritual of chant and grotesque dance. It is *Hunters and Collectors'* new album and it is called *The Fireman's Curse*. Let's roll this thunder.

Side One opens with 'Sway'; coyly, suggestively, the distinctive bass line begins to bite. Horns pour down, a curious but exquisite organ penetrates the spurring pell-mell. Other-worldly noises and viscid bass populate 'Eggheart', interminglings of a lovely, wandering trumpet and organ accompany it. So far these two show off their panoply of talents

nicely so we'll carefully turn to Side Two.

The powerful and riveting 'Curse' flows into the trill beginning of 'Fish Roar' to dissolve into ... nothing really. 'Blind Snake Sundaes' offers a soothing, disquieting relief but 'Mr Right' is charmless. What is left is a delicate little piece of whimsy simply entitled 'Epilogue'. The needle clicked off. The skies were clear.

Impressions? Sometimes words rise above the thunderous brawling, either wailing or weaving to a stop or restarting in a completely opposite direction. Rhythm often dissolves into a tinkering stupor, so much so that at times I wonder why they don't shrivel up and become ammonites (a fossil) or something. Me, I suspect this white man's Aboriginal ethnic thingy but you may not. It's just that at times I find *Hunters and Collectors* are completely ridiculous.

S.J. Townshend

Various Artists Hits and Myths 83 XSF

Various Artists Barking Up the Right Tree Jayrem

As I recall, it was the first *Hits and Myths* that began the succession of retrospective NZ compilations. That record, containing the unavailable-for-ages 'Saturday Night Stay At Home', managed to stir some excitement. The third in the series is nothing to get excited about. It has been compiled, without much imagination, from the country's "name" bands. Best tracks are the Blams' 'Learning to Like Ourselves Again', the Crocodiles' 'Tears and Dance Exponents' 'Victoria'. Bands like the Swingers and Hello Sailor are represented by tracks that certainly weren't their best.

Jayrem's record casts its net a little wider and is the better for it. It shares three songs with *Hits and Myths* but it also includes Herbs' superb 'French Letter', the Hulamens' inimitable 'Barking Up the Wrong Tree' and the uncompromising 'Unrestful Movements with 'Anti Trend'. Some of the songs chosen to represent groups are better too: 'Marsha' rather than 'Learning To ...' for the Blams, 'Stars in My Eyes' rather than 'Days of Heaven' for the Meemes. It certainly has its letdowns, but on the whole a fair compilation. No Flying Nun of course.

My only concern about these records is that they may act as a disincentive to buy the original singles. And that, in this country, is the last thing we need.

Russell Brown

Gang Of Four Hard EMI

White funksters continue to take much flak from those who would accuse them of being pretenders. Wham and the Higsons have been prime targets and many also looked askance at the Gang of Four's initial venture into the genre, *Songs of the Free*. Personally, I was knocked out. *Songs of the Free* was a bold, admittedly often harsh and harrowing work, which broke some important new ground.

Hard extends further into funk territory, being recorded in

Canada and mixed in New York, under the auspices of Ron and Howard Albert. Drummer Hugo Burnham has been ditched and no fulltime drum credit is given on the album. The band now tours with ex Rumour man Steve Goulding.

The sound is less aggressive this time, compared with the abrasive, metallic edge of *Songs of the Free*. String arrangements, a la Norman Whitfield, are often used, and Jon King's vocals are less strident, more refined. But, as the title implies, the band has far from gone soft.

The emphasis is more on the rhythm section, with shining bass work from Sara Lee and Jon Astrop, who also contributes to the songwriting. The funk beat snaps and pulsates, rather than bumps and grinds. Sophisticated, yes. But steamy as well.

Lyrically, the songs are less worldly, more introverted. Insecurity in relationships, sexual politics, male/female arrogance and downright lies are all dissected. For one of the year's great lines, how about:

A man with a good car needs no justification

Fate is in my hands and in the transmission.

'A Man With A Good Car' and 'Woman Town' would make a wonderful 12-inch.

Black backup singers (including Chic's Alfa Anderson) give this band's sound another new complexion.

Gang of Four are no pallid imitators. They may be a million miles from their roots now, but this doesn't make their sound any less valid.
Duncan Campbell

Phil Judd Private Lives Mushroom

I once knew this young lady who claimed Phil Judd was her second cousin. She never proved it but I kept telling her how superb his band, the Swingers, was. Would she listen? No.

Along came 'Counting the Beat' and everyone (even Australians) listened. Not before time. Around this stage my mother warned me: "Life is full of disappointments." Regardless, I still eagerly awaited the Swingers' triumphant return. Phew! World domination seemed miles away. An album that

sounded only occasionally like the band and a live show that rarely raised a sweat.

Private Lives began shortly afterwards. Judd broke up the Swingers but continued working in various studios with session musicians and a Swinger or two. A long silence, but worth the wait? Yes!

Eventually everyone will hear the snappy, summery single 'Dream'n' Away'. One of three tracks recorded at Hollywood's Sunset Sound Factory it's an escape route from all seriousness.

Sun is high
I'm lyin' low

Sure glad I'm not an Eskimo.

While I wasn't immediately convinced with the rest of the album, repeated listenings highlight Judd's unappreciated talents. When one considers the faceless nobodies who continue to breeze in and out of our lives, surely the verve and bounce of Judd's songs don't deserve to be ignored. Even though 'Colouring In' sounds suspiciously like a remake of 'Punch and Judy', it contains some home truths:

No one seems to care
Where's the atmosphere?

Still life everywhere
So stark, so dark, so very black

Surrounded by grotesque
I want picturesque

Clean up this dreary mess
With my be bop be bop

Be bop bop
This album smiles, widely and wildly.

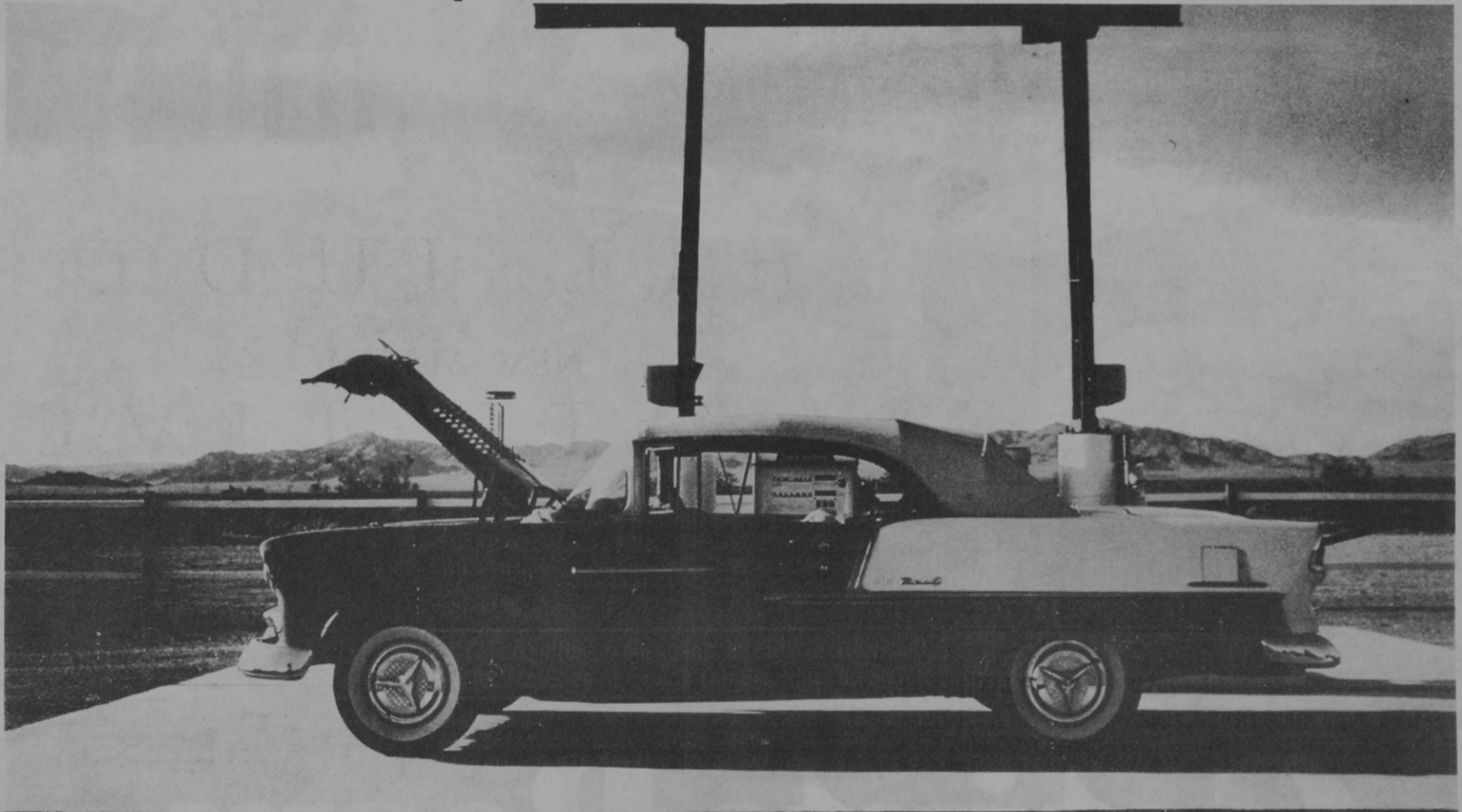
Alister Cain

The Narcs and Coconut Rough Whistle While You Work CBS

Live albums are oft liable to fall flat on their faces; but with the exuberance of the Narcs and the polished skill of Coconut Rough this one (third in the *RWP Presents ...*) is a pleasant exception.

Anyone who's seen the Narcs over the last 12 months will be familiar with the material here and with Reid Snell's crisp production their side is a fine live souvenir of a simple but effective band. The addition of keyboards has given the Narcs more depth and makes possible the variety here. The five songs include their FM hit 'Stay Away', Tony Waine's slower 'Girl Next Door' (with some lovely keyboard embellishments from guest

robert plant



the principle of moments

wea

