



UP, UP AND AWAY The Sundays get lucky

The Sundays are the gentle face of rock. Quiet achievers in an industry full of idle boasts and empty promises. The English media seized on the unassuming band from Bristol and, in a welter of overwrought hyperbole, sought to elevate the Sundays to the sort of exalted position once occupied by the Smiths.

A wearisome burden for such a young group. But where a lesser act might have buckled under the weight of expectation the Sundays have chosen to ignore all the hype.

Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, their debut LP, has been met with ecstatic notices but truth to tell the album's what's known as a grower. Its charms are subtle, successive and

eventually all-persuasive. It's an antidote to the in-your-face haughtiness of so much current rock. It's evident the Sundays are resolved to being around for sometime and if you think their commitment to producing work of durability seems shamelessly old fashioned, well, so what.

I spoke to co-writer, guitarist and

mouthpiece David Gavurin who is articulate, forthcoming, low on bullshit and maybe slightly bevvied.

The Sundays came together in time honoured fashion when Gavin and co-writer, vocalist and real life partner Harriet Wheeler left their native Bristol for the bright lights of London.

"I got serious by degrees. Harriet and I both had belief in the songs we were writing. The move to the big smoke was a logical step and we were lucky to find Paul (Brindley, bass) and Patrick (Hannon, drums) who seemed pretty in synch with what we were about."

If their beginnings were unexceptional their sudden ascension into the limelight was extraordinary. "People always say everything's happened so fast for you and to a degree it obviously has. But contrary to what a lot of people imagine it's never seemed we're out of control. The pace we've set has largely been our own."

"This is a first time experience for us all. We have no precedent. We did the Throwing Muses tour and the

next minute we were being offered front covers of music papers."

The kind of overnight success that makes some observers suspicious.

"Yeah, sure there's always the jealous muso syndrome. Like, 'those bastards haven't paid any dues so they must be crap'. But I mean there's no way we went out of our way to solicit this kind of attention and even when some of the press was getting a wee bit embarrassing we never got to the stage where we thought we could walk on water. Christ, we're all too level headed for that."

Why did you vanish after the rapturous response to your first single 'Can't Be Sure'?

"It was time to take stock, really, and prepare for the album. We wanted to concentrate all our energies on making as good a record as we possibly could."

And you were being tailed by every major record label in the country.

"I reckon we must have spoken to every A&R man in London and they all talk about these ridiculous amounts of money. In the end it didn't really come down to the money. We just thought sod it, Rough Trade offered us the most freedom so we went with them."

Which reinforced the resolutely indie ethos which has surrounded the Sundays since their inception.

"Well, independent means different things to different people and for us it's a guarantee we're not going to be trapped on the single, album, tour treadmill which is something all the major labels expect without exception."

Harriet is the focus of a lot of attention, which is fairly predictable when you've got an attractive vocalist with a very distinctive style. How does she handle it?

"Well, Harriet's here now, actually, but she doesn't like talking on the phone. (laughs). Of course having a girl singer is always going to be a selling point but no way is Harriet into being merchandised the way, say, Wendy James is. Harriet to my mind is

an exceptionally gifted singer and it's this as much as anything which has drawn people to our music."

Reading, Writing and Arithmetic was released in January. How do you feel about it now?

"All false modesty aside, I think it's a really good first album. There's not much on it I'd change even given the chance. It's a pretty fair opening statement of what the Sundays are about. Sales-wise, it's been brilliant, exceeded our wildest expectations totally, especially with so little

airplay." Rock music seems increasingly factionalised. As we enter the nervous nineties where do the Sundays fit in the great scheme of things?

"I'm not sure we fit in anywhere really. Basically I suppose we're out to create a body of work which we can be proud of and hopefully that people will still be interested in listening to in, say, ten years."

GARTH SEEAR

Piercing Looks

I'm going to get my nipple pierced. It's a primal thing, the urge to alter the body, re-make, re-model. The desire to go "outside", to enter the forbidden, is very strong. The laws against such things are in the Bible, the Book of Leviticus, where the body is as God made it, to mark it is to defile a work of God. However, in pre-Christian societies the so called Primitive treated the body in a different way. It was to be adorned and ritualised, to mark the body with tattoos or piercings was a rite of passage.

A movement is going on to return to the primitive, back to the romance and ritual of the body. It's exciting.

Those of you with tattoos know that feeling. Remember the first time you entered that place with all those images on the walls, with the whine of the needle in the background, and that wierd feeling, that need to have some totem placed on your skin. It's addictive, that sensation of pain and pleasure, just watching that wasted space, that void, get filled with whatever strange thing that is going to remain forever.

I like the permanence of a tattoo, you are forever staring in distaste at people saying "Well, you're stuck with that now, it's never going to come off."

It's an act of rebellion to mark your body, but it's more than that, it's taking control over it, taking it to its limits.

That's why body piercing is so interesting, it's such an extreme act of taking control. Re-Search Publications latest work is a fascinating look at the subject. Called *Modern Primitives*, it

presents various aspects of body modifications and tattoos with a great interview with genius Ed Hardy and Leo Zulueta, S&M practitioners like Sheree Rose and an introduction to the work of Fakir Musafar, a Sun Valley advertising man who has been transforming himself since the 50s, not just tattoos and piercings but the whole gamut of body play, constrictions, weights and rituals. Like re-creating the famous O-Kee-Pa Indian sun dance, being suspended by hooks through the skin and just hanging for hours. For Musafar it's a magical act, it takes him outside of himself. He's a wild guy and if you're lucky enough to find the video *Dances Sacred and Profane* just have a look and be amazed.

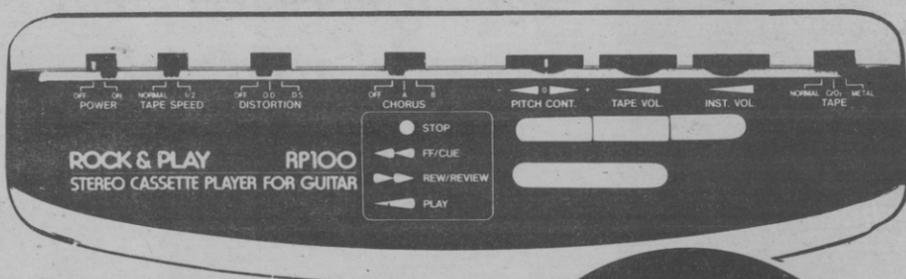
There's interviews with Jim Ward, editor of a magazine called *Piercing Fans International Quarterly* which should open a few eyes. As will the talk with Genesis and Paula P-orriddo who have embraced the "new" ideology with open hands, an interesting couple to say the least.

What I like about all this is the loud scream of "No!" As the so-called "New Age" dawns, sucking us into its warm and safe cocoon, there is a need for the alternative. To go against the grain of the current embourgeoisment of culture, to regain control.

The state in its wisdom has decided that activities like piercing are obscene and dangerous knowledge. So copies of *Piercing Fans International* and *Modern Primitives* are banned in this country. It's your right to know about such things and make your own mind up.

Whatever, I still want to do this weird thing. Who knows where it will end. KERRY BUCHANAN

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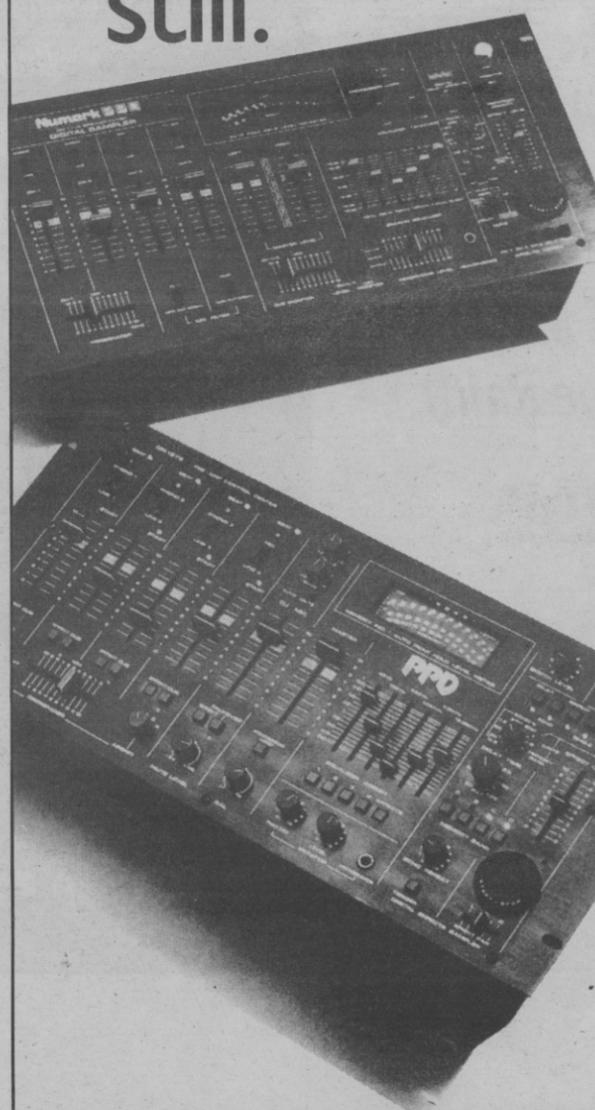
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