

throughout the suite. Then Mr Le Bon strolls through from the bedroom, not smiling, tall, tanned and terrific looking in a hot pink lycra Nike singlet, tight black cycling shorts and socks.

Simon sits on the sofa, polite, reserved and speaking precise middle class English. We're joined by the new Duran Duran guitarist, Warren Cuccurullo. Warren, who is American, used to play in Frank Zappa's band. Clad in the international rock star uniform of torso baring leather jacket, jeans and not-yet-worn-outdoors biker boots, Warren has the perfect skin and biceps of the American male health nut. Inevitably, my attention strays back to Simon.

How is the new Duran Duran different to the old?

"More funky, more happy, more music," says Simon, "The musical climate of the world is warming up, nobody could write 'Girls On Film' now, nobody's writing perfect pop at the moment, it's not in vogue."

Simon thinks America is where it's at now too. He listens to Faith No More and Jane's Addiction but he treats the funk-metal hybrid craze with caution. "We've already been a music fashion. We've got our own identity and audience now."

The interview ebbs and flows. Warren informs me he listens to Prince, David Bowie, Led Zeppelin, Brazilian music, Talking Heads and Iggy. You can't help wondering why they're bothering to stage a comeback, although Simon argues that Duran Duran have never been away. I guess once basked in, it's hard to give up the limelight, your place in the front row of the rich and famous. Simon says it's more a matter of power.

"We're not interested in rewriting old history. We want to play the occasional 100,000 sports stadium but we also want to play clubs. We want to have that power over the public consciousness that you get when you're in a group. The power to affect people's lives. That's the real cherry. It's not the adulation, it's megalomania, it's the power."

It can't be money. Simon must be a millionaire.

Simon looks at Warren. "Am I a millionaire? Yeah, I guess I'm a millionaire. In some currency. In lire."

The interview is growing languid. Simon and Warren have been out on a boat all afternoon so perhaps they're suffering from heat exhaustion. Then Warren actually gets up and leaves without saying an official goodbye. Now that we're alone (!) I take the opportunity to tell Simon he looks obscenely healthy. He reveals that he gave up drinking and lost 15 kilos. Then, throwing intellectual credibility to the wind, I ask him what star sign he is.

"Scorpio," he replies, looking up at me with his big blue eyes, "why... do you fancy me?"

I don't particularly, but I ask him if he'll show me his clothes (seeing as how he's a bit of a fashion plate) and at this he gets quite animated, leaping up from the sofa and beckoning me to follow him into the bedroom. I perch on the edge of the bed while he pulls various thousand dollar garments out of the wardrobe. One pair of slim, richly embroidered black pants by Jean Paul Gaultier ("a very clever boy"), one pair of tight white bermuda shorts which make Simon "stick out in all the right places." Then he asks me if I'd like to see photographs of his baby daughter, and out comes the polaroid snapshots of one year old Amber Rose in the bath and one of wife Yasmin sitting up in bed in their flat in London.

As I leave, we start talking about hair and I compliment thirty-two year old Simon on the fact that his is holding its own. With no receding hair line in sight his continued pop career is assured. He agrees, and tells me he likes to keep it short. "Feel this," he says, bending his head.

I do as I'm told. Very nice.

"Imagine what it feels like between your legs," says the pop star, ever the lad and then—realising too late the indiscretion—"Don't print that!"

I assure him I will.

Simon scratches his head, looking peeved.

"I never learn," he mutters as he closes the door behind me.

DONNA YUZWALK

## Old Snake Lips Is Back ROBERT PALMER

What Phil Spector did for sound Robert Palmer did for babes, for it is he who immortalised the Wall of Bimbos technique in his mid-80s videos for 'Addicted to Love' and 'Simply Irresistible.' You remember, the models playing air guitar in spray-on dresses, slicked back hair and whipped lips. Women as ice-cream, women as deaf mutes in bathing suits who gyrate soundlessly through the video fantasies of a million men. Thanks Bob.

But what is this? The man on the other end of the line with the faint Midlands accent and oh-so-serious manner feigns incomprehension when I coyly ask if he is still afflicted with an insatiable appetite for women.

Judging by the lyrics in his new songs on his new album *Don't Explain*, the happily married crooner now resident in Italy still gets thunderstruck by the chance arrangement of skin and bone in a young woman's face. At forty-something, doesn't singing about naked lust for a nubile seem a teeny bit, how shall we put it, *deja-vu*?

"I'm sorry, I don't know what you're getting at, I don't understand the question."

Hmmm. What I mean is, you're forever identified with those

sensational mid-80s videos. Do you have another visual trick up your sleeve that will redefine your image for the '90s?

"Well, let's hope somebody does because I have no input at all into the videos that I do and the phenomenon those videos created was, in retrospect, fine with me but it was nothing to do with me either. So what's a little strange about it is that I ended up representing this look and this mood that bewilders me as much as it does the public. I really don't know anything about it. Essentially, when I did those things the guy put the whole thing together and I showed up and there was an X taped on the floor and I sang into the camera, close up, long shot, took about twenty minutes and I left. Next thing I know it's like a big thing. So I don't know, how do we get around



that?"

One way is by talking humbly to female journalists at the other end of the world about the songs on the new album, all eighteen of them. From the testosterone laden vocals and groin guitar breaks of the originals on Side One to the cover versions on Side Two, a tribute to the music he loved when he was growing up, like Billy Holiday's 'Don't Explain' and Roger and Hammerstein's 'People Will Say We're In Love'.

Explains Robert: "The last seven songs are a giveaway because I didn't want to impose that kind of music on an unsuspecting public so I figured if I just gave them away, if people didn't like them they could turn it off. It's kind of unfashionable, and yet it's music that I grew up with so I just hope that some people will like it and I won't be charging them extra for it."

This is Robert Palmer gentleman smoothie talking, a genuine sort of guy, confused and bemused by the woman eating image thrust upon him by his own notorious videos. Is he, in fact, blissing out, indulging in his own upmarket brasserie version of the current love and peace fixation of the younger generation? Could we hurl that dirtiest of all rock insults at him... is Robert Palmer getting mellow?

"You could hardly say that if you're listening to the first five songs," the

singer retorts, "I've never recorded songs as shriekingly aggressive as those five tunes. Gosh, I don't know how to put it exactly, it's a matter of wanting to create a broader perspective. During a show, since I'm not theatrical in my presentation, I'm always looking for how to achieve a broad and distinct set of musical moods so that I can change the atmosphere radically with music rather than setting off fireworks or doing vulgar things or whatever. So that's another reason I presented the record that way. For me they're distinct musical moods, different moods for different occasions."

Robert Palmer finished mastering *Don't Explain* just five weeks ago. He's also just finished filming an hour long made-for-television movie, an extended video clip designed to showcase those elusive moods in a romantic setting rather than the psychedelic meat market of a night club.

"I just think if the music's seen to be in an environment and performed and have a package it might be better accepted rather than being viewed as me being on a nostalgia trip or anything like that."

Sorry guys, but it sounds like Robert Palmer's Wall of Babes technique has bitten the dust along with all those German bricks.

DONNA YUZWALK



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