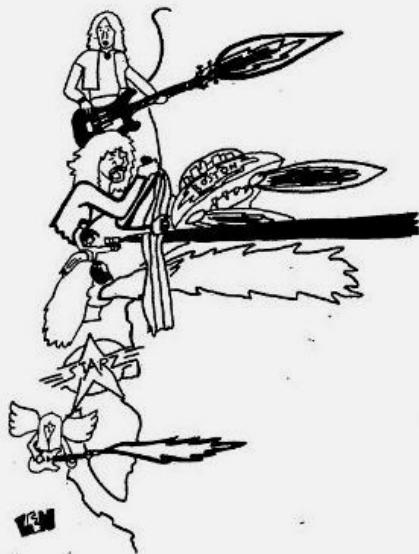


Music

Hard rock - the sun sets on the British empire

by Len Senecal



East coast bands (up-down) Rush, Aerosmith, Boston, Kiss, Starz, and Angel fire out against English foes.

Traditionally, when one thought of hard rock, Great Britain came to mind. The land across the ocean has always been the home of the kings of heavy metal, right? Wrong. In recent years the base of rock music has been travelling in a Mayflower route, settling on the East Coast of the United States in the same way our ancestors did many years ago.

Just like the early settlers surpassed the mother country in industry and production, American bands have caught and surpassed their English cousins on the battlefield of heavy rock. The past five years have seen the demise and even distinction of former British monsters like Deep Purple, Uriah Heep, Black Sabbath, and David Bowie, while American groups like Aerosmith, Kiss, Blue Oyster Cult, Boston, and Canada's Rush have skyrocketed into superstar status.

Only Led Zepplin has been able to weather the onslaught of American talent, and even their foothold on stardom is loose. It has been a long time since Zepplin released a "Stairway to Heaven" or "Whole Lotta Love", and the criticism has begun to heap concerning their albums, 'Presence' and 'The Song Remains the Same'. With Kiss and Blue Oyster both scheduled to embark on their first worldwide tours, it may only be a matter of time until Englishmen Plant and Page are cast to the side like fellow limeys Blackmore, Osbourne, and Hensley.

Deep Purple's seemingly invincible hold on Japan has also been destroyed by Yankees Kiss and Angel. The fire breathing demons of rock, Kiss are preparing

for their first venture into Japan later this year, to fulfill their number one rating, a crown Purple held for over five years. Angel is ranked number three in Japan, even though they have never set foot in the oriental country.

The energetic young Americans have managed to slay their lazy English counterparts time and time again by giving the crowd more than good music. Former headliners like Black Sabbath and Uriah Heep, who were once considered to be showy bands, have been humbled in concert and are now often reduced to the role of back up band.

The only English band that has been increasing in popularity is Queen, but their heavy metal status is in doubt considering the smooth, vocally oriented style of their albums 'A Day at the Races', and 'A Night at the Opera'. Their recent U.S. tour helped reaffirm their stature as a prominent band, but also succeeded in destroying the huge image another United Kingdom band, Thin Lizzy had achieved.

Their failures on the road, coupled with their disappointing 'Johnny the Fox' album have given Thin Lizzy a questionable future, especially when compared to Aerosmith's latest album 'Rocks', and Rush's highly successful live set 'All the Worlds a Stage'. The enormous popularity of Boston is another example of the quality of bands the East Coast is producing. Besides it's namesake group the city of Boston has also produced the J. Giels Band, and Aerosmith, the hard hitting kings of the beantown.

Featuring the U.S.'s answer to Mick Jagger, Steven Tyler, Aerosmith has gained a worldwide following by releasing hit albums and utilizing a truly powerful stage show. Never to be outdone, New York City has given us such big name show bands as Kiss, Blue Oyster Cult, and Starz.

The Cult have introduced 21st century science to the rock arena by combining laser beams with their heavy brand of music. Kiss are world renowned for their almost fantasy-like characters, who explode the moment the stage lights go on, while Starz contains New York's answer to Steven Tyler, in Michael Lee Smith.

As the Traditional English bands continue to bite the dust, the supply of classy new groups from the U.K. has been decreasing almost to a nill. Only the grossly overrated Bad Company has been able to dent the American scene in the past three years, and their fame consists mostly of magazine articles that present the band as a supergroup. Supposed English rockers like Slade and recently Natural Gas were greeted with boos and jeers when they attempted to blitz American audiences with their style of music. East coast bands like Angel and Boston have had no trouble in pushing themselves to the public as Boston's debut album went double platinum, a feat not even the Beatles accomplished.

These two talented bands were picked as 1976's top new bands in Circus and Creem magazine polls respectively, and appear headed for a profitable future, just like their other east coast counterparts.

200 years after beating them on the battlefield, Americans have succumbed the British in the studios and in the concert halls. Other American bands are good, but the key to this assault lies in the East, like it did in 1776. The Midwest has its Nugents and Segers, and the West may have its Runaways, but if you want to find the real capitol of heavy metal music, head east young man. (or west if you're British)