

RUSH
Hemispheres (Mercury)
ART BEARS
Hopes And Fears (Re Records)
FUNKADELIC
One Nation Under A Groove
(Warner Brothers)

One or two or three records which, each in its own way, beg the same analysis of the aims and abuses of any language which seeks to introduce a personal idea of Order into public currency.

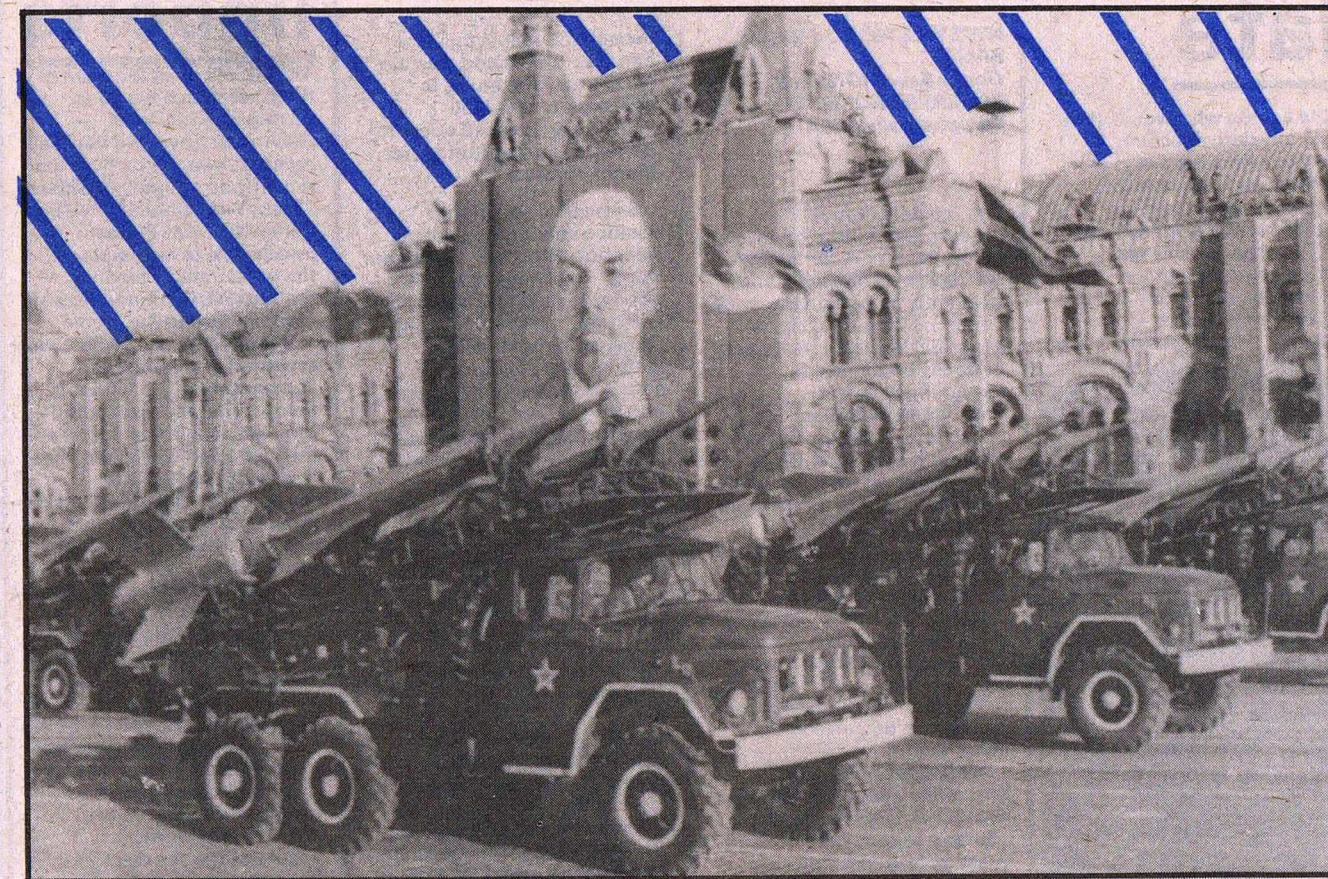
Each one of these musics is immersed within a sticky language the implications of which are fundamentally 'political' — more forwardly and, in Rush's case, more frighteningly so than anyone from The Clash to Eric Clapton.

Rock music in the hands of such as Rush suggests that aspects of it assume a disturbing potential, a disturbing shift in the standing of the music's subject matter. Locating an audience's unconscious inertia and dissatisfaction, its impotency and fertile dissidence, and flirting with them — this is no joke, and if you think it is then you probably think the same about right-wing fanatics locating and flirting with ley lines . . .

The Great Sublime Subliminal Chord. Striking a discord was always a cute pose, but there's no longer any uncertainty about this, Rush's pure-noise-induced suggestion of omnipotence and idealistic alliance. The Galvanic Heavy Metal Intercourse: *coitus intoxicating, coitus interstellar*.

There are many Plain Chaps on the great frozen plane of Forbidden Knowledge, but only one mushroom. Let us gobble it up. Let us go forward. Let us go forward. Let us go forward. . .

"We can build a world of wonder/I can make you all aware . . . You can live in



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Systems of resonance

grace and comfort/In the world that you transform."

("Cygnus X-1 Book II Hemispheres"). And meanwhile our moral sensibility is "armed with sense and liberty/With the Heart and Mind united/In a single perfect sphere." ("The Sphere A Kind Of Dream").

Rush hold up a mirror to the world, and it shows Rush holding up a mirror to the

world. They are radiant, their capes wondrous to behold, their wisdom satisfies the common appetite, their album cover points toward their lyrics, their lyrics point toward Rush, Rush hold up a mirror to the world. . .

"So the Maples formed a Union / and demanded equal rights / The Oaks are just too greedy / We will make them give us light' / Now there's no

more Oak oppression / For they passed a noble law / And the trees are all kept equal / By hatchet, / Axe, / And saw . . ." ("The Trees").

And do their audiences see themselves in it? Rush achieve the alignment through a trite use of allegory and aggressive musical resonance. They use pictures of brains. People who use pictures of brains are

Civilised. They have pictures of everything. Their brains are full of pretty pictures.

Pictures of marching men and you. Right-wing paranoia — it's in the white of the egg . . . or the heart of the beast? Art Bears are either the step after or the step which terminated Henry Cow. "Hopes And Fears" features Lindsay Cooper, Tim Hodgkinson and Georgie

Born, but only Fred Frith, Dagmar Krause and Chris Cutler "are" Art Bears.

If it is true, as Foucault has said, that "It is only in the blank spaces . . . that order manifests itself in depth," then Art Bears are probably the missing link between Peter Hammill and Jilted John — between a naive and tortured Brechtian portrayal of involuntary and loveless solipsism, and a naive and tortured Brechtian portrayal of involuntary and loveless solipsism. A public lineage?

"Hopes And Fears" is, very simply stated, a marriage of ideals — the 'humanity' of Slapp Happy with the heretic utopianism of Henry Cow. Mirthful Marxism? Um.

There is a hang-over of academic over-purposefulness, but the balance between precision and celebration is graphic and immediately grasped. The settings and stylings here express a freer, clearer improvisation, only toppling into a feeling of laborious application when the language overtaxes the idea it is supposed to illustrate. Po-faced.

Then, and only then, the line between art and artifice thins, and the ceremonies and order of all things Rush seems only a little way removed. As, of course, is often the case with polar opposites: on the one hand, the capitalist-fascist attitude, gregarious, rejoicing in large numbers and participation in a superior race or nation, which corresponds to the clinical picture of paranoia; on the other, the revolutionary attitude, which is that of an isolated, voluntary outcast and of a withdrawal which might represent schizophrenia.

If the revolutionary develops his aggression and unites with like-minded others, then schizophrenia has itself become paranoia, and the revolutionary attitude

is merely the reverse side of the medal which has fascism as its obverse.

"Hopes And Fears" is a maze, and an analysis of the different approaches and inroads it offers: how far ideas and ideals can go within a given framework. There is little or no 'self-indulgence' — and although the album has a playing time of 48 minutes plus, many of the 13 (two instrumental) pieces are brief.

It's a mostly cheering example of a music with a clear and refreshed perspective, coming to terms with the terms from which it set out this or that message or messages: 'hopes and fears'.

Ironic that such an unfashionable (huh!) set-up should be working on in this way, a way very much promoted but seldom practiced by those presently enjoying favour (bar laudable exceptions such as ATV).

And it's just occurred to me that Dagmar's rendering of Brecht's "On Suicide" puts me very much in mind of Siouxsie. Do you refuse to recognize such a thing? Are you afraid of understanding?

"The fear", as George Clinton has it, "of being eaten by a sandwich"?

Perhaps not. Um. If anything, Funkadelic exemplify the profound identity of all political attitudes based on the primacy of emotion over reason and their inevitable resort to violently existential action, in direct opposition to, as Clinton has it, "psychologically speaking . . . a state of verbal diarrhoea talkin' shit a mile a minute . . .".

Or, put another way: "Fried ice-cream is a reality!". The Funkadelic maze is no less complex, or 'political' than that of the Art Bears, no more 'accessible', but a bit easier to dance to.

Characters,
character-clones,

cross-references and cartoon speech bubbles ripple to the surface, and the surface sinks deeper.

A Theatre of hardcore Jollity? Clinton's perpetual vision would suggest as much — a raw, jelly-laser beam of hard, physical onomatopoeia, a sly 'political' motion which is anarchic, democratic (don't quibble), auto-suggestive and laundromatic. An aural cartoon strip comprising backward bumblebee guitars, purring, sluttish bass, oozy, melting Isley harmonies, and ghostly handclaps.

The rhythms' business is "to rid you of moral diarrhoea, social bullshit . . ." — not so much attacking institutions as putting you in a frame of mind to do so.

It is a thin line between this cheering activism and cabaret, and Funkadelic do step over it occasionally. The rhythm and logic is entirely their own, an internal participatory join-the-dots. There are no superficial messages. There may be no 'messages' at all. A sublime gesture or two. Pointing at things. How absurd!

The order is yours. How responsible a method is this? How responsible are you?

This is outside the fridge. There's even a free live Funkadelic 12" record.

As Clinton has it: "There is no such thing as a free lunch, heh, heh — the lunch that prepared itself, heh heh . . ."

Ian Penman