

arts/entertainment

Roxy Music albums are changing with the times

By Casey McCabe

Flesh and Blood is not the type of album that inspires critical analysis the way Roxy Music albums of the past decade used to.

Well times have changed, and apparently so has Roxy Music. The experimental "art-rock" quality of their past efforts probably wouldn't make many waves if released today, since hordes of new bands are trying new twists on the grounds broken by other artists. And out of all this, little ever surfaces to reach the public's attention.

album review

Flesh and Blood is Roxy Music's first album for the 80's. While the band still retains an enigmatic British quality about them, they have become progressively sleeker, better contrived and easier to listen to for those outside their cult following.

Disbanded in 1977

This is the second l.p. for the group since reuniting after a short disbanding in 1977. Back in place are lead vocalist Bryan Ferry, guitarist Phil Manzanera and Andy Mackay on sax.

Again Roxy Music comes off as less of a band and more of a vehicle for Ferry, whose emotive, crooning voice sets a standard for any fast mellowing, slightly eccentric, romantic ex-rocker. This is a label that admittedly covers few in the music business (though Paul McCartney could certainly fit the bill).

Because Ferry/Roxy Music have a talent for creating a certain musical mystique, they can get away with songs that hover perilously close to a middle of the road format.

Roxy's hits have been relatively few in America, while they enjoy almost a reverence back home in England. Their "hits" here in the states have progressed from "Love is a Drag" off *Siren*, a pulsating string a double entendres, to "Dance Away" from *Manifesto*, a grandiose ballad of lost love.

Well-produced song

Taking a gradiose step further is "Oh Yeah," the single offering from *Flesh and Blood*. A lush, well-produced song, it features Ferry drawing out the melancholy high-school lyrics for all they're worth. It seems to be a song about itself (the chorus goes "they're playing 'oh yeah' on the radio) and follows a formula that Ferry seems fond of; falling in love in the first stanza, getting more intense in the second stanza, then getting burned and reminiscing about it for a grand finale.

Ferry wrote the eight original tunes on the album and they all deal with jaded, one-sided love affairs. Lines like "...if only dreams came true/ I could even pretend/ That I'll fall in love again" or "your sweet lips tell me there's no chance/ no more romance-over you" permeate the album. Only Ferry's effectively haunting voice,

creative instrumentals and rhythms keep such songs from collapsing under their own weight.

Ethereal feel

Ferry's keyboards have a consistently ethereal feel throughout the album, adding that progressive art-rock flavor to otherwise tame arrangements. Phil Manzanera, an excellent guitarist, is in a supportive role more often than in the spotlight on *Flesh and Blood*. Yet when he

is allowed to get into the rhythmic interchanges with the keyboards on the title track and "My Only Love," it makes for some of the best moments.

On "Over You," Manzanera's guitar takes on the Byrds' mid-sixties "twang" sound. All the more interesting, considering the following is a cover of the Byrds' classic "Eight Miles High," which sounds nothing like the Byrds and perhaps more like Roxy Music than some of Ferry's composition.



'Flesh and Blood' the latest effort from Roxy Music
Album cover courtesy Atlantic Recording Corp.

Paintings' deceptive simplicity laments destruction

By Penelope Smith

Art professor Gail Butt's exhibition of paintings demands more than a casual glance. It requires a relationship. The viewer must allow himself to be multisensorily permeated with atmospheres of coolness and of heat, impressions of dampness clinging to a March wind and dry summer breezes.

art review

The works require an examination of form and technique and seem at first to be purely simple and spontaneous. If one sits and looks, one sees the turbulence of paint and raised lavender lip that is a storm cloud. Beneath the cloud are soft undulating washes of sunlight, their fineness accentuated with indistinct pencil pattern.

These paintings seem to stress order and the beauty of cyclic rejuvenation in the universe. But in addition in the paintings the viewer must deal with Butt's canzone or songs of "Lamentation" for what he sees as the destructive drive of 20th century America.

Butt spoke of the motivation and the meaning behind his paintings and poems.

Artistic motivation

A great deal of his artistic motivation and what he calls "the emotional stand-

ing support" in his life he owes to music and his awareness and perception of natural forces, whether in his garden or watching the skyline.

Butt said he thinks that one of the more important sets of paintings in the exhibition is the series of five "massa" or masses, that were inspired by musical Baroque masses.

"I've been working on the 'mass' or 'massa' series of five works on and off for about 30 years now," explained Butt. "I've come to believe that some of the best music has been put into masses. Partly because of religious motivation, partly because people such as Hadyn did not feel compelled to please secular audiences.

"I began to concentrate on Hadyn's last three masses for my paintings. In the early '50s I could only get two or three of the five basic movements painted; I could never visualize or complete the entire thing."

'Ideas of color and life'

Butt said depression helped stimulate the completion of the masses by helping him to search for meaning beyond the "obliteration" and "void" he mentions in the canzone.

"Life goes on in whatever gusty or peculiar way, but there is a parallel support mechanism, whether God or cultural," he said. "This is the first time I've gotten all five completed. They are light

chromatica, ideas of color and of life."

For his series of seasonal "Skies" Butt decided to get his feet "off the earth" and move into "color and joy."

"When you move to the Great Plains the first things you notice are our skies. They're the most beautiful part. For example, October with its purple and azure blues and creamy clouds..."

The "skies" paintings use abstract impressionism which Butt describes as softer than expressionism, and his own Western interpretations of calligraphy utilizing color and bold decisive brush strokes to create a sense of atmospheric force.

These sky paintings are often in three horizontal layers. Butt said that the horizon is a major theme of Midwestern artists. He has created his own horizontal quality with the space above the clouds, the storm clouds and the wind and rain below.

Butt said he does not agree that reality is in the "edges" of a work. This is exemplified in the calligraphic form of the paintings, wherein a cloud is not in the form of a cloud per se, but it possesses the essence of a cloud.

Symbolic meaning

"A painting is very much internal. It has how and when and why and where, but it also has symbolic meaning.

What makes a storm or the sun is light and color," said Butt. "To make the sun a circular compass line is idiotic and meaningless."

"When I first came here I ran into a quotation from Francis Bacon that put me onto this.

He said, 'I don't enquire the form of a lion or an oak, enquire the form of cold and hot.' "When we define form as edges or recognizable shapes we ignore the true meaning of form."

Butt said form originally comes from the Sanskrit word "dharma" and means "law" or "order."

"Form only exists in our minds. If you pour concrete and take the form away you still have the steps," he said.

The anzone accompanying the paintings are a result of the sympathetic and empathetic feelings Butt has for people around him. There are many superficial things that bother him, he said, such as a decline in workmanship and service, but what concerns him the most is the disintegration of society.

Butt, an oriental art historian, spent some time in Japan and the difference in the two cultures helped him to understand our own culture.

"In the Orient I learned the belief that every individual lives three simultaneous existences; the personal, the family or peer group, and the state or cultural. There is a feeling of strong collapse in our country, and we are experiencing the progressive degeneration of the family."

Butt's work is now showing at the Sheldon Art Gallery.