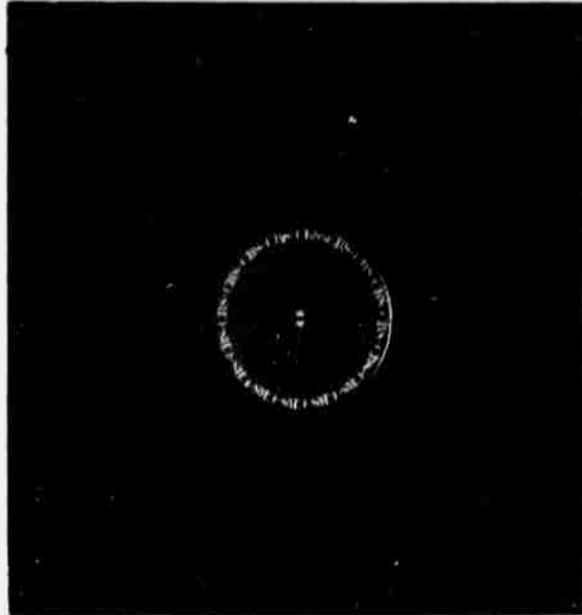


Arts & Entertainment

'Glassworks': Violins and hoagies



By Bob Crisler

Philip Glass/Glassworks/CBS

As one whose idea of culture is a bottle of Foster's Lager over a table lit by the sweet ambience of a Fourth of July sparkler, with a Tee-Vee Records Tchaikovsky collection spinning softly in the background, I was amazed that I actually liked Philip Glass's latest album, *Glassworks*.

Violins, woodwinds, and other instruments of the symphony I usually associate with highbrow efforts, out of touch with reality. High art is high art,



but the great majority of symphonic compositions written nowadays amount to nothing more than elaborate musical masturbation.

Not so with Philip Glass. He is aloof from the stuffy modern-day conventions, yet not so far out in left field that Carnegie Hall doesn't book him occasionally. Far out enough, though, that he is a major draw at chic Manhattan venues such as the Peppermint Lounge.

Philip Glass is not preoccupied with what has been done before. Instead of regurgitating old ideas and themes, Philip Glass creates art that is distinctly his and his alone.

The Julliard grad and consummate artist (he has also composed a pair of operas, *Einstein on the Beach* and *Satyagraha*) was quoted in a *Life* magazine interview as saying "I'm not worried about immortality. Let other people worry about such things. Some composers are always concerned about where they rank next to Beethoven and Brahms. I have other things on my mind, like putting my kids through school and paying the taxes."

Philip Glass has his feet on the ground, and from there his musical spirit roams free. His compositions begin simplistically, repeating a harmony or progression over and over until he has the notes dancing in the air, echoing off the glass-and-steel walls of Manhattan, where he lives.

Too often "serious" composers become caught up in the world of their high-society following. According to the *Life* account, a Wednesday afternoon found Glass hanging out on the Lower East Side, in T-shirt and jeans, eating a hoagie. Ya gotta love 'im.

Glass reflects the starkness of urban America in his works and through them carries the pulse of the big city to anyone who might want to listen.

Listening alone is not enough. *Glassworks* involves; it hypnotizes. Repetition is not often considered an attribute, but Glass takes simple harmonies, bends them, pokes at them, until they are finally metamorphosed into something on a much grander scale than their humble beginnings.

Glass is often called a minimalist, and for good reason. His productions are spare and introspective — engaging not for their rhythms, but rather for their simple beauty.

To promote the new LP, Glass began a *Glassworks* tour in February, and according to the presskit, will make an appearance in Lawrence, Kan., Saturday.



Philip Glass

Photo courtesy of CBS Records

'Nick the Knife' sure to contain Top-10 hit songs



By Pat Higgins

Nick Lowe/Nick The Knife/Columbia

Nick Lowe is Avis to Paul McCartney's Hertz. Lowe tries harder. *Nick the Knife* is the latest in pleasant, listenable solo records by Lowe, who may well be the best pop craftsman around.

It could be that the mass success of Lowe's hit last year, "Cruel to be Kind," (it was even on KFOR) has been the chief inspiration for *Nick the Knife*. Potential pop hits are all over the album. About the only drawback is that Lowe has lost his sense of humor and irony, which used to be his forte. Conventional pop songs with a twisted sense of humor are fun.

Lowe has had great taste in associates over the last five years. He produces Elvis Costello and does a superb job of it. Rockpile, his previous group, was the great mainstream hope for championship status in rock 'n' roll. Unfortunately, they fell apart due to the usual personality conflicts.

His wife, Carlene Carter, is a descendant of the Carter family and stepdaughter of Johnny Cash. Lowe also produces her records.

Wife sings backup

The basic band on *Nick the Knife* includes Carter on backing vocals and ex-Rockpilers Terry Williams on drum and Billy Bremner on guitar. Elvis Costello's Attraction Steve Nieve is on keyboards and Marty Belmont of Graham Parker and Garland Jeffrey's Rumour is on guitar.

As could be expected from Lowe's prowess as a producer, the overall sound is crisp and clear. The redeeming rocking value is chiefly provided by the drums of Terry Williams, which consistently boom out during even the most cloying pop songs.

If AM radio programmers have any brains, which of course is debatable, most of the songs could be monster hits as they combine wholesome "Moon-June" type of lyrics with Lowe's sincere vocals. Personally, I miss him singing "Crest Motel . . . on drugs," but that isn't the way to get Top-10 exposure.

Wholesome approach

Two songs have the word "heart" and two have the word "kiss" in the titles, a complete indication of Lowe's wholesome approach. "Heart" is a remake of the Rockpile song and is done in a pseudo-reggae manner. The only drawback is that Nick enunciates too well for reggae. "Zulu Kiss" is a fast and loud tale of tribal lust with appropriate jungle moans.

"Stick It Where the Sun Don't Shine" is the most straightforward rocker on *Nick the Knife*. It has a sing-along chorus concerning gossip and innuendo. Lowe rocks so well that he should do it more often.

This is a good, well-polished record. Perhaps Lowe should try for some more spontaneity and rough edges — but that is only a quibble. In the record jacket it says to file *Nick the Knife* under "popular vocalist," and that is absolutely on target.

'Slow Children' sounds derivative despite freshness



By David Wood

Slow Children/Slow Children/Ensign

The album *Slow Children* should have come out at the time its songs were being written, two and three years ago. It would have been better to have heard it at a time when *Slow Children* would have sounded contemporary with the same bands of which they now seem derivative.

For they are not latter generation New Wave eclectics, the slow children of the style. They have a good sound, an excellent sound even, when you keep in mind the copyrights.

The music has a character of its own, yet is in much the same spirit as early Talking Heads or XTC. You can sense the members are artist types, as indeed they are.

Pal Shazar was doing illustration in Los Angeles and Andrew Chinich, a New Yorker, was an assistant to a Polish film director when the duo met in 1976. When Shazar later realized she liked Chinich's song-writing and taste in literature, the *Slow Children* team was created.

In 1978 they had a single out in Britain, in 1980 an album. Jules Shear and Stephen Hague, formerly of Jules and the Polar Bears, produced the discs and, together with ex-Polar Bears drummer David Beebe, provided much of the music for the songs written and sung by Shazar and Chinich.

But in this world, when the time is right, new inventions often arise simultaneously from unrelated sources. The happy, dissected music of Talking Heads and others had opened new expanses to be explored.

Slow Children toyed with longer melody lines, more Devo-esque electronics and girl-boy harmonies a la the B-52s. Yet on the other side of the globe, pursuing similar things, were the Plastics, Japan's top new music act which one day, last year, would appear at Lincoln's own Drumstick.

Some of *Slow Children's* glory was lost in its late release. At times the music sounds like the Plastics might if they could speak English better. Regardless, many of the album's songs can stand on their own enervated feet. Cuts like "Staring at the Ceiling," "Brazilian Magazines," "President Am I" and "Too Weak at Eat" remain catchy and fresh.

Others, because some of their catchiness is borrowed, lose a little freshness in the deal. The chorus of "Talk About Horses" includes a few cords taken from the Cars, and the opening of "She's Like America" is lifted straight from Patti Smith.

The American release is only slightly different from its British predecessor. Two songs were dropped, all were remixed. At the time RCA decided to distribute the album, *Slow Children* were working on a second album. A song from that session is included on *Slow Children*. "Spring in Fialta" is fast, fun and reminiscent of Lene Lovich.

"Kicked out of school seventeen/They say that I have got a plagiaristic tendency," Shazar sings on another song. "The professor is wrong/I got a good mind/I got a good mind," the chorus argues. In the end, that seems a fair assessment.