

Arts & Entertainment

Album Reviews

Squeeze finale a fitting tribute



Singles — 45's and Under
Squeeze
A & M Records

Once upon a time in bloody old England a young man by the name of Glenn Tilbrook met up with a guy named Chris Difford, and they decided to create a new sound together. The result of this song-writing duo was a band christened UK Squeeze. Many critics at the time thought of the two talents as the next Lennon-McCartney. The years proved them to be a reasonable facsimile.

Tilbrook and Difford were joined by Gilson Lavis on drums, Harry Kakoulli on bass (who was later replaced by John Bentley) and Jools Holland playing keyboards. Holland's original combination of jumping keyboard strains, set to the driving rhythm from Lavis' drums, gave the band the basic sound that Tilbrook and Difford had sought in the beginning. This was the sound of UK Squeeze.

In 1978 the band signed with A & M Records and produced their first album, which gave birth to their first single "Take Me, I'm Yours." Their only previous work had been club dates and a limited-edition EP that they had financed themselves.

Immediately following the EP, the group shortened their name to Squeeze, because of the addition of the group UK on the music circuit. With a new feel for its career, Squeeze set out to take on all of Britain and, eventually, the United States.

The only member to leave the band at this time had been Kakoulli, who had taken time off periodically and eventually was officially replaced by Bentley. 1980 brought on new problems with the exit of Holland, who began to work on a solo career.

This may have been a blessing in disguise for the band when Paul Carrack signed as chief of the keyboards. The multi-talented Carrack only pushed the band to further success with his captivating vocals on the 1981 single "Tempted," which featured Elvis Costello as producer and cameo vocalist.

Costello helped produce and, again, appeared on vinyl the next year when Squeeze released its sixth album *Sweets From A Stranger*. This album was the final phase of Squeeze's evolution and many tracks on the record served as reinforcement of the Squeeze sound. By this time the band had a style that was nothing but its own.

Their group's foundation in the world music scene came too late, however, because soon after the release of *Sweets From A Stranger*, the group announced a breakup, signaling the end of the octet that had broken so many boundaries in progressive music. Squeeze's final appearance in the United States was a late-night offering on "Saturday Night Live."

The final release from Squeeze as we knew them is the *Singles-45's and Under* album that highlights the career of the band. Starting with their first single "Take Me, I'm Yours," the album is a musical document of this band and its career. Each and every musical highlight

is included in the album, and the final cut is a previously unreleased single titled "Annie, Get Your Gun."

This album is not only a treat for Squeeze fans, but is also a special introduction to the band for anyone who seeks the agreeably melodic, easy-moving ballads that can be found here.

Those who once termed the band a "clean pop group" were only half right. They were entertaining, too. Squeeze is definitely one band that many will miss in the years to come. With that feeling, this album serves as the final tribute to a band that actually had fun changing the course of progressive music.

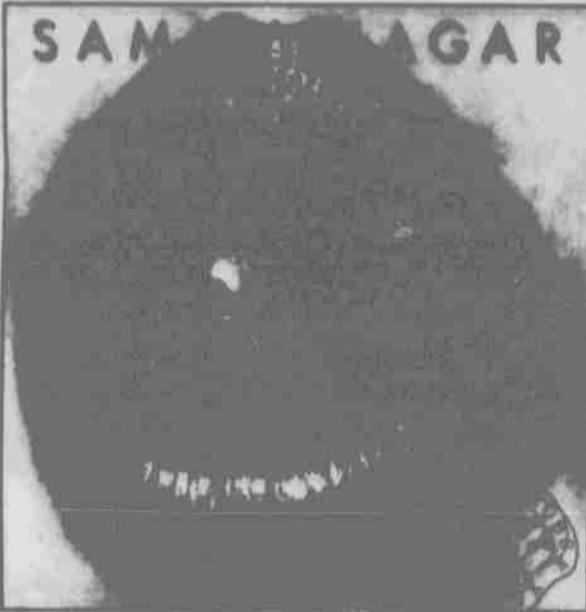
Todd R. Tystad

Hagar album disappoints fan

Three Lock Box
Sammy Hagar
Geffen Records

Sammy Hagar disappointed me. After last year's *Standing Hampton* album, I anxiously awaited his next effort. But after listening to *Three Lock Box*, Hagar's latest, I felt scorned. Gone are the catchy lyrics and intricate fret board antics. All that's left are hollow words and primitive guitar licks.

Songs such as "The Room" and "I Don't Need Love" are insults to the mature music lover. They both use run-down rock'n'roll themes, and then use them with



no sense of creativity. If he's going to play variations on themes, the least he could do is to be original.

The only redeeming track on the album is "Your Love Is Driving Me Crazy." It brings back the ingredients of word and sound that made *Standing Hampton* Hagar's first real commercial success. Unfortunately, he didn't have enough material left over from his last record.

The musicianship of *Three Lock Box* is by no means on the level of microsurgery. Most of the time, it sounds as though someone is experimenting with the use of their feet as a way of playing the guitar — all of this, while the rest of the band drops a three/four time "One, two, three-stroke" on the remaining instruments.

It's too bad that so much potential is wasted in what sounds like a rushed effort to complete a recording contract. Hagar doesn't have the commercial popularity of Journey, Led Zeppelin or Fleetwood Mac, so he can't afford to take the extra time to do it right. It's possible that the only thing lacking is a good producer. A veteran of the recording booths may have been able to salvage *Three Lock Box*. But somehow, I doubt it.

Unless you're 13 years old, scratch Sammy off your list.

—Randy Wymore

Cars' leader takes solo spin

Beatitude
Ric Ocasek
Geffen Records

Singer-songwriter-producer-guitar-playing virtuoso Ric Ocasek has released his

debut album as a solo project away from the security of his airplay-guaranteed group The Cars. How can a presence like Ric Ocasek draw himself away from a group like The Cars and still come up with a satisfying album that sets up a decent enough contrast with the band? My first thoughts were that I would find the album a follow-up to *Shake I Up*, but a quick listen to the sound of The Cars, as opposed to the sound of solo Ocasek, showed a professional artist at work. On *Beatitude*, we find raw Ocasek at work.

Not to call Ric Ocasek raw, but this new collection makes me wonder what he might have sounded like back in 1975, when he performed in Boston in pre-Cars groups. His striking originality in performing led to his meeting Ben Orr, who eventually became The Cars' bass player. The pair added three other musicians to the lineup and officially started The Cars' career (not to forget the start of Ocasek's career as a producer).

Top on the list of activities for the group was the output of a demo tape for prospective record companies. The tape received quite a bit of airplay on Boston radio waves. That airplay, along with widespread hometown support, led to the group's signing on Elektra. Ocasek was now a producer. He wrote and produced all of the material on the debut album and let the three hit singles off the record tell the story of his talent.

That talent kept right on working after the completion of The Cars' first tour of the United States and Europe. Ocasek began to produce for the best of Boston's underground groups, the members of which now appear as the backup musicians on his solo album. And just what can we expect from this stab at individuality?

First of all, the listener must realize that Ocasek has lost the vocal variations he had with all the members of The Cars around. This leaves a concentration on just one voice.

Ocasek carries nearly the entire album with a style I've never heard on a Cars release before. He gives the listener a detectable chill with a sound like Lou Reed meeting the keyboards. Could Ocasek have been imitating that rock 'n' roll master in his depression-filled look at the world's youth in the cut "Jimmy, Jimmy"? If not, we have a snappy statement about the future of the world in that song.

The album isn't without optimism, though. Another song on the bouncy first side implies the feeling a funky Pink Floyd. The "Prove" cut also features a sax solo by Deric Dyer (from a band called the New Reflectors) that almost threatens the release of the song as a single. My interest in Ocasek's vocals waned a bit near the end of the second side when he droned the plea for human understanding in the politically tainted "Time Bomb."

With all this about Ocasek's vocal relation to other singers, how can the album succeed on its own as an example of the many talents of Ocasek and the unknown musicians who back him up on the solo album? The answer is simple enough. Rick Ocasek is a multi-talented performer who now can say what he wants on his own album, and does just that when an audiophile such as yourself turns on *Beatitude*. Cars fans is in for a special treat when they find out what Rick Ocasek really thinks on this solo effort.

Todd R. Tystad



Rundgren band on 'Network 9'

Network 9
Utopia
Elektra/Asylum Records

Todd Rundgren makes music. He really doesn't sound like anyone else. Other people sound like he does. Listening closely to Rundgren's band Utopia and its new album, a critical ear can detect the sound many bands are always trying for. The give-away factor is more of an influence than an actual traceable sound. At any rate, Rundgren and Utopia are back at work with a new release.

Rundgren seems to be the artist that many can only wish to be. Without being transformed into a commercial art machine, he cranks out his music and video art as fast as it is conceived.

The latest offering is a hefty collection dubbed *Network 9*. In addition to the regular-sized package, we find a bonus album that includes an extra five tracks. Were they really necessary? I think so. At this point in a career like Rundgren's, everything you do just isn't a bouquet of roses for the world.

Some of Utopia's vocals escaped Rundgren's talents as an engineer. The vocals problem seems to be the one thing that brings *Network 9* down again and again.

At points, the album is almost too much to be considered a 1982 release. Some would say that the mark of a "timeless" contemporary artist is his attempt to break with the trendy trash through his timeless vocal ability. This doesn't work here for Rundgren or the band. Rundgren's vocals shine above the sloppy harmonizing of his backup, and in some places they cause the song to just follow his strains of pulling the harmony along.

I think that Utopia's success as a band rests entirely on Rundgren's talents as the songwriter, session man and producer-engineer. The sound of *Network 9* suggests that the band is pulling the lead underwater. A great musician's band does no good unless it acts as a compliment to the central figure, rather than keep him in a constant state of retaliation. Utopia does come close to the former, but I'm disappointed in the overall feeling of the album.

That overall feeling is quelled when Rundgren cuts loose on a couple of the tracks. The old style many are familiar with reappears in the cut "Burn, Burn, Burn," where everything comes together for a great performance. It's almost as though Rundgren is fulfilling a promise to jump right through the speakers and dance the song out for you. This feeling comes through a few more times on the album, too. Some of the slower songs on the side containing "Burn, Burn, Burn" serve as an excellent mode for the real Rundgren to shine through.

The vocals I've mentioned as being sloppy don't ruin the entire album, but do put a crimp in the mood I looked forward to in the new material. Utopia's style is still apparent, and the album is a must for Rundgren/Utopia fans. It's just now something you would give as a new wave gift. It does, however, serve as an excellent example of the classic style of the gifted Todd Rundgren.

—Todd R. Tystad