

Arts & Entertainment

Album Reviews

greg
kihnsspiracy
band



'Kihnsspiracy': Kihn can rock

Kihnsspiracy
Greg Kihn Band
Beserkley

The end of 1982 saw the popular music scene begin to take on three distinct faces.

One of those faces was worn by the new British influence of bands like ABC, the Psychedelic Furs and Culture Club. The middle image came in the form of the more mainstream bands like Journey, Foreigner, and REO Speedwagon. The other extreme was presented by bands like Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers, John Cougar and The Zone and The Greg Kihn Band.

Kihn has done his part this year already to pay homage to the basics of rock 'n' roll with his newest album *Kihnsspiracy*.

Kihn and his peers in the "bar band" type music have one thing in common with groups like ABC, et al. The common denominator is danceable music.

If one hears Kihn's single, *Jeopardy*, from the new album and doesn't immediately start tapping a toe to the heavy beat, the listener is either paralyzed, deaf or six-months dead.

The San Francisco band puts together a combination of tight guitar licks, prominent drums and keyboards to produce tough, raw sound that makes people take notice.

*Don't let go while I'm hangin' on
I been hangin' on so long
It's so hard to be all alone
I know you're not that strong
Our love's in jeopardy*

This is no-nonsense rock 'n' roll at its very finest.

Songs like "Fascination," "Can't Love Them All," and "Curious" are all evidence that music from 20 years ago doesn't have to be as light as that of Stray Cats to be popular today.

Kihnsspiracy is also proof that dance music need not be recorded in multi-track form to be upbeat and danceable. It also proves that 14 different synthesizers aren't a prerequisite to be "cool." Kihn puts together two guitarists, one drum, one bass and one set of keyboards and leaves it at that. No short cuts, no complications, no frills, just music.

On the second side of *Kihnsspiracy*, Kihn covers an old Eddie Cochran tune called "I Fall To Pieces." If you listen to the song with no other knowledge except that of who's doing it, you would never know the tune is more than 20 years old. It was written by Cochran and Patsy Cline made it a hit. That has to say something for Kihn and his style.

It should also say something for his ability to take something that old and pull it off without a hitch.

Kihnsspiracy should mark the band's movement from the shadows of the likes of Petty, Springsteen and Cougar. It has no noticeable weaknesses at the first couple listens. The only problem could be with a follow-up to "Jeopardy." No other song on the album has quite the feeling of solidness to back it up.

Nevertheless, *Kihnsspiracy* by the Greg Kihn Band is one of the best albums of the young year.

—Randy Wymore

Do not heed the Call

Modern Romans
The Call
Polygram

Thank gosh I'm getting paid for this. A complete critique of this album could be accomplished in just one word and an abbreviation: pretentious b.s. But that would elicit a scowl and glare from my esteemed editor, so I may as well go ahead and explain why I would rather listen to a Cristy Lane version of "Sister Morphine" than this loathsome tripe.

If you've ever heard of the Cure or Orchestral Manuevers in the Dark, you might have some idea of this group's basic approach. But I don't want to press that comparison — to do so would insult two fine bands. Both the Cure and OMD are creative and likeable. The Call is neither.

Anyhow, the Call obviously has heard of both. The Cure and OMD are responsible for some of the most euphoric sounds of recent vintage — soaring vocals over rhythmic, icy synthesizers. The Call's rhythmic synthesizer rates a big OK. But to call vocalist Michael Been's sermonizations "singing" is like equating "charity" with Ronald Reagan. Rather, Been (one name you'll never be quizzed on) etches out his lyrics with the same mindlessness you might expect of a pig lolling in barnyard mud. Phlegm on the sonic landscape.

Digest these lyrics, the Pepto-Bismol's above the sink.

*Faithful servants, counting the years.
Say lead 'em to heaven.
They've no home here.*

Or...

*Untamed passions of primal rage
The child of hatred comes of age*



There are a few passable melodic ideas, but anything even vaguely interesting gets stretched into a five-minute magnum opus. Maybe with the nine songs on this record, a person might be able to synthesize one good pop song — if only you didn't have to listen to the singer. Rather than attempt to carry a tune, he either talks the song along, modulates the volume of his ravings, or, in a particularly amusing breakdown, goes into the kind of spastic yodels that have put David Byrne's name on the tongue of every mortal from sea to shining sea, including even the famous 'rassler, Vern Gagne.

I don't really enjoy listening to these guys. You might not, either — they're probably a tad too "new wave" for Quarterflash fans and way too Quarterflash for "new wave" fans. As for me, I'd rather vacation in Cozad.

—Bob Crisler

Orrall mini-LP a nice surprise

Special Pain
Robert Ellis Orrall
RCA

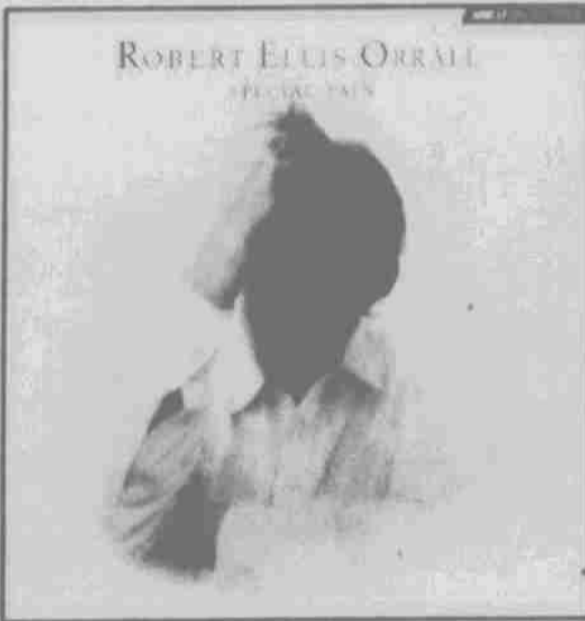
Special thanks are due to Mark Messer-

smith for my hearing this special album by the little-known Robert Ellis Orrall.

Orrall's album was a free promotion gift from RCA which arrived at the Daily Nebraskan offices sometime in mid-January. But, since none of our alleged reviewers had ever heard of the guy, nobody bothered to take the thing home and play it. That is, until Messersmith, during an evening broadcasting class, played a cut called "Facts and Figures," the first single off the Orrall album.

It only takes the song a few notes to establish its authenticity as dance music, mixed carefully with the techno-pop field and soul. *Special Pain*, the five-song mini-set which closes with the arresting number, is just as catchy.

If you believe the theory that all the energy and excitement in today's music is coming from England, then you'll probably mistake Orrall for an Englishman right



away. Close. Orrall hails from New England — the Boston area to be exact. He used his own money to produce his debut album, *Sweet Nothings*, and followed that with *Big 12-inch Single and Fixation* in 1981.

Those albums gained him comparison to Joe Jackson, Elvis Costello and Stevie Winwood (whom Orrall's voice sounds similar to). With *Special Pain*, Orrall appears to be more set on carving his own niche. No song is a remake, nor do any remind you of something else by the aforementioned Englishmen.

One thing Orrall does have going for him in a big way are songs that say something, such as in "Senseless," and the set's only slow song, "You've Had Too Much to Think," which concerns a woman's fixation with pleasing society.

The album's best song is the duet with punk star Carlene Carter, "I Couldn't Say No," which includes a country-like melody among the synthesizers.

"Tell Me if it Hurts" is a typical song from the English motifs, while "Facts and Figures," except for Orrall's voice, could fit into any progressive rock or soul format.

Overall, *Special Pain* does a consistent and successful job of taking the music above the English style. The result is a surprising and refreshing album that crosses sounds like ideal cross-over material.

—Ward W. Triplett III

Aurra's sound 'likeable' soul

Live and Let Live
Aurra
Salsoul

Curt Jones and Starlena Young don't get a lot of mention when people discuss recent soul duos, but Jones and Young, known as Aurra, have been the only such mix to consistently score on the black charts in every album appearance.

That usually doesn't mean a lot, given the low quality of music that generally gets airplay. But Aurra is slightly different. As a duo, they don't preoccupy themselves with

self-boasts to each other (the "I'm all you need"-type songs) or, when that gets tired, a meaningless, more-often-than-not uninspired dance groove. As far as creative black music goes, they have yet to break any new ground, but seem to have the best idea of what people are going to like for more than a week.

Live and Let Live is a song-and-dance album, of course, but as in the duo's first two efforts, there is something distinctive running through the eight tracks. "Such A



Feeling," the first single, is an example of the fine tuning Jones, Young and bassist-producer-writer Steve Washington are known for. While it doesn't have the lyrical meaning of "Are You Single?", it has already scored in both the black and pop charts nationwide.

Other than "Such A Feeling," little on the album comes out and demands attention. But none of them are annoying, repetitive retreads of someone else's already overdone material, either. Among the subtle, likeable things going on are the vocal stylings in "Baby Love" (not the Supremes' hit, but a Washington-Jones collaboration), where Jones does a credible early Lionel Ritchie take-off, followed by a chorus from Parliament's "Swing Down, Sweet Chariot" rhyme from the Mother'ship Connection.

Young isn't given as much spotlight as Jones and is apparently comfortable joining in for two-part harmonies on the choruses. When she does venture out, as in "Positive," she proves herself capable of competing with the best of the black female singers working the popular dance circuit today, despite not having a particularly strong approach or voice.

Live and Let Live is an above-average album that I think will do well on both the important charts, which will hopefully add depth to the confidence Aurra displays on the album. There are a few picky things you could criticize here and there or find mildly disinteresting, but when it works, Aurra is definitely one of your better buys.

—Ward W. Triplett III

Vocals conjure on Voodoo LP

Call of the West
Wall of Voodoo
IRS

Some things in life are pretty hard to describe, much less explain. In this case, the problem lies in trying to describe, explain, and get this—criticize. I doubt that many of the people reading this have heard of Wall of Voodoo. Therein lies the problem.

Wall of Voodoo is a group of four individuals who produce music drawing heavily upon the use of synthesizers, matched with their own personal guitar features. Added to this is a vocal technique not usually heard with bands trapped in the new wave genre. The lead vocalist in this band is a man by the name of Stanard Ridgway. The group seems to center around him and his lyrics. This is no mistake, as he carries the listener along the course of the album with an original flair that proves to be very enjoyable.

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