

Arts & Entertainment

Album Review

Bow Wow Wow on the warpath



When The Going Gets Tough
The Tough Get Going
Bow Wow Wow
RCA

At least two groups of people out there know who Bow Wow Wow is. One, MTV viewers, unless they're deaf or devoid of all savvy, can hardly have missed noticing that "I Want Candy" is one seductive little tune. Two, record bin browsers, especially males who lust in their mind, can hardly have missed noticing that Annabelle Lwin is one seductive little lead singer.

For the rest of you hecks, let me give a brief bio. Bow Wow Wow is the band Malcom McLaren built. McLaren was the original designer of the seminal Sex Pistols and is considered by some to be a Calvin Klein of the new-music business. He discovered a 16-year-old wood nymph named Lwin, put her together with some of Adam's former swashbuckling Ants, dressed them like they were the halfbreed orphans of the French and Indian Wars, wrote them some fast, catchy tunes and had a sensation on his hands. In the last two years, Bow Wow Wow has put out some videos, two LPs, two EPs, a live double album and accrued success with each release.

Though this may seem like heavy production, it's actually heavy promotion. Several songs are repeated in the assorted vinyl. But, as is only decent, the subset of songs found on the studio LPs don't overlap in a chainlink Venn diagram of Bow Wow Wow's music. *When The Going Gets Tough The Tough Get Going* is the third such album.

Let's get one thing said from the start. There's no song on the album as instantly infectious as "I Want Candy." That said, let's move on to a second point. *The Tough Get Going* may be the band's most encouraging work to date.

Here's how I figure it. McLaren's gone. Mike Chapman is producing and the credit for all 12 of the album's songs is given to "Ashman/Barbarossa/Gorman/Lwin," an alphabetic list of Bow Wow Wow's four members. The music's good. McLaren isn't missed much.

Ergo, Bow Wow Wow isn't some producer's package, like the Monkees. Then again, maybe it was. But it isn't now. The band can stand on its own eight feet.

So there's no "I Want Candy." The song's hand-jive beat, as toe-tapping as it was, was stolen. So the band sounded more diverse on the album *I Want Candy*. So it could be favorably compared to Blondie or Tom Tom Club on songs. Everywhere on *The Tough Get Going*, Bow Wow Wow sounds like Bow Wow Wow, a fine sound that has always been distinctively its own.

The strength of Bow Wow Wow's music is the musical strength of each of Bow Wow Wow's members. The music's a tribal orgy of rollicking drums, hulaing bass lines, ecstatic crooning and a pyre of guitarwork. The songs all pertain to mating instincts, but none are any shallower than anything McLaren ever wrote for them.

Besides the musical integrity, there's

another sign of integrity I spotted right off the cover. Unlike previous LPs, Lwin's got clothes on. Her mohawk's grown out on top, but overall *The Tough Get Going* shuns gimmicks and relies on its songs.

From the careening, slightly distonal "Roustabout" (*I saw my honey, he looked so funny/Wearing a uniform and attached to a ball and chain*) to the airy, wafting song, complete with 12-string and viola, "Man Mountain" (*He don't weep, he don't sleep/He don't even wash his feet*), it's a mixed bag of ballad and rocker, not so much between songs as within songs.

Warpath whooping and galloping drums matched against noble-savage imagery in "Quiver" (*Smoking my peace pipe and thinking/Why is my bearskin so freezing*) make for another catchy tune, one that best illustrates that Bow Wow Wow hasn't lost its wit or flair for double entendre.

Though the first song, "Aphrodisiac" (*Don't do nothing just relax/Take your clothes off this is a hijack*), is maybe too contrived and manneristic and sounds like it might as well have been on an earlier album, by the end of side two, the band's maturity is unmistakable and Bow Wow Wow is totally at home in its element. The last song and a half, "Tommy Tucker" (*The Lord made Tommy famous/Now he sings for everyone*) and "Love, Peace and Harmony," are so natural and exuberant that their lyrics dissolve into chants that're tough not to join in with.

For a band whose four musical contributors are so distinct and distinguishable, it's wonderfully astounding how effectively their contributions come together in a unique, versatile style that's so compatible with its new-wave John Fennimore Cooper image. MTV viewers, record bin browsers and hecks, keep your ears to this trail.

— David Wood

'Showman' marks Nick's Lowe point



The Abominable Showman
Nick Lowe
Columbia

This sort of thing happens in every artist's career. The Rolling Stones had their *Emotional Rescue*, the Beatles their *Magical Mystery Tour* and Styx every album they ever made. And now, Nick Lowe, the self-acclaimed Jesus of Cool, the man who couldn't make a bad record, has his *Abominable Showman*.

Not that this is that bad of an album when compared with most of the tripe passing as pop music these days. However, ever since Nick Lowe burst on the American scene, first with the Brinsley Schwarz group, then with his occasional solo career, we've come to expect more from him.

He usually delivers, too. His Columbia releases (*Pure Pop For Now People*, *Labour of Lust*, Rockpile's *Seconds of Pleasure* and last year's *Nick the Knife*) were sparkling examples of how popular music could be both thoughtful and melodic. Lowe pulled this off with some expert production (besides his own efforts, Lowe has made a name for himself producing Elvis Costello and Paul Carrack),

expertise musicianship (Rockpile featured guitar maestro Dave Edmunds; Lowe's latest ensemble, Noise to Go, features Carrack, Graham Parker alumnus Martin Belmont and vocalist Carlene Carter, Lowe's wife) and excellent songwriting.

The writing, more than anything else, is what sets Lowe apart from the rest of the crowd. Lowe's use of the English language is brilliant. His puns are subtle, his use of metaphor is satirical, yet on the surface, his songs sound just like a pop selection.

There are moments on *Abominable Showman* when Lowe prominently displays this virtue. In "Raging Eyes," he uses the romantic phrase "Her eyes are as green as an M-16." "We Want Action" starts off like a protest song, and quickly shifts gear, Lowe at one point proclaiming, "We want some action, a bit of feminine distraction."

Lowe also satirizes parenthetical song titles with his "(For Every Woman Who Ever Made a Fool of a Man There's a Woman Made a) Man of a Fool." Lowe's songwriting also shines on "Time Wounds All Heals" and the Rockpile-esque "Cool Reaction."

Except for these brief moments, Lowe's wit, for the most part, fails him on *The Abominable Showman*. Too often, he sounds as if he is trying to imitate the sound made famous by Squeeze. Chris Difford and Glenn Tillbrook have received a great deal of praise for their songwriting abilities (whereas Lowe's talents go largely ignored), and Lowe seems to be consciously imitating their style. "How Do You Talk to an Angel," "Wish You Were Here" and "Chicken and Feathers" all sound like *East Side Story* out-takes.

Lowe has also introduced orchestral accompaniment (another Squeeze device) into his music, unfortunately, not with a great deal of success. In addition, Lowe's voice, which on past efforts sounded spunky and likeable, now sounds smug and restrained. It's almost as if he wasn't really trying.

Knowing Nick Lowe's dry sense of humor, *The Abominable Showman* may be intentionally bad. However, that is purely speculative, which doesn't make this album any more excusable. But, given his past track record, he'll undoubtedly do better the next time. Enough said.

— Mike Frost

David Bowie back and at his best



Let's Dance (Advance Tracks)
David Bowie
EMI America

No, no, no, don't get hot and sweaty yet. The new Bowie album is not out. This is just a "sneak peak" at what the new record has to offer.

Let's Dance marks Bowie's debut with EMI America — the home of such names as the J. Geils Band, the Michael Stanley Band, George Thorogood and the Destroyers, Kim Wilde and Stray Cats — a move which could be profitable for all concerned.

The tracks on this promo piece include the title cut and a remake of the theme from the movie "Cat People" on one side,

and a long version of "Let's Dance" on the other.

If radio stations finally break out of their image of Bowie as Ziggy Stardust or a Young American, this album could be one of the hottest of the year. "Let's Dance" fits in very well with the current radio trend in British dance music. It even sounds better.

And "Cat People" could certainly be a giant smash with the right air support. It features Nile Rodgers both as producer and guitarist. It's Rodgers' musical contribution and Bowie's vocals that make this song hauntingly infectious.

If this record doesn't get a lot of air time, it will still be one of the best works that 1983 has, can or will offer.

When the album hits the stores April 14th, run — I repeat — run to the nearest outlet and grab it.

— Randy Wymore

'Adventure' a must for Faithfull fans



A Child's Adventure
Marianne Faithfull
Island Records

Marianne Faithfull is tired. She is tired of many things in her life, but somewhere from this fatigue comes the energy to perform at an acceptable level. Acceptable to whom may be the question, but her newest release, *A Child's Adventure*, is not a tired attempt at making music. It is, however, a heartfelt attempt to tell a few stories and make a few evaluations on being tired.

A Child's Adventure is, in more ways than one, Faithfull's opinion of life. Her life hasn't been the most pleasant of all in history, and a lot of the material obviously draws from her experiences and opinions they have formulated. One of the most notable things about this album is the references to substance abuse. Faithfull's past can unfortunately vouch for her knowledge of the subject.

Faithfull started her singing career at the age of 15 back in 1964. I can't say I remember her popular British success that set her up with a personal and professional relationship with the Rolling Stones. She was soon enjoying a high degree of commercial success that let her express her political viewpoints, as many performers were in those days. Faithfull's popularity waned in 1967, but her continuing relations with Mick Jagger kept her in good hands. With the years going by, Faithfull's singing career led to acting jobs. By the beginning of the '70s, she had traded in Jagger for her problems with alcohol and drugs. Few people heard from Marianne Faithfull until 1979.

The album *Broken English* was released then, and Faithfull had definitely done good. Her original approach captured the ears of many who had never enjoyed her music before. The next release came in 1981 with *Dangerous Acquaintances*, and now Faithfull has produced the newest work with guitarist Barry Reynolds.

As stated before, this album draws heavily on the theme of some of the more unfortunate things in life, like various substance abuse.

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