

### Fun Boy Three...

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For hicks' further musicological information, ska isn't all that much like reggae. It's got that back-beat syncopation, but is more primitive, festive, a goof. It's restless, not resigned. You can dance and dress to it like a thrift-shop square, a member of the masses, not some laid-back, beachside utopian.

It's quotable lyrics and punchy punctuation make ska and FB3 ideal for Byrne to refine to an essence. The song "The Pressure of Life (Takes Weight Off the Body)" shows a Bowie-like purity, while "Things We Do" and "Well Fancy That!", with their moving cello and piano bridges, are as good an Anglic ballad as the Jam's or the Boomtown Rats'. But, always, the palpating pulse and the rabble-raising spirit are lifeblood ska.

FB3 wrote nine of *Waiting's* 10 fine songs. The 10th is no less interesting — the Go-Gos' "Our Lips Are Sealed," slowed *woaaay* down and syncopated, the original licks translated to piano, Byrne's strumming sub-surface tension, the backing vocals pressed to chants. The initial effect is humor — especially when they loiter through the impassioned passages. But the later effect of the masterly dissection is appreciation for the ditty's persistent vitality. You'll just have to hear it.

— David Wood

### Pre-Cat Rockats make mini-'Move'



Make That Move  
The Rockats  
RCA

On the surface, this group may appear to be nothing more than another Stray (Copy)Cat. However, in reality, they have been around longer than the Stray Cats. In fact, their last album, *Live at the Ritz*, was released months before the Cats' first British LP came out. But, since the Stray Cats were the first one on the charts, they are seen as the prototype, and thus, everyone else imitates.

Which is a shame because, despite their similarities to the other group, the Rockats are unique ensemble with quite a bit to offer. Their newest effort, *Make That Move*, a mini-LP featuring six selections, bears this fact out.

Side one is an attempt to bring rockabilly into the '80s. A synthesizer, electric bass and full drum set can be heard here, something considered taboo by most modern rockabilly groups. Additionally, the songs are quite

wordy, rather than the usual repetitive, instrumental-dominated rockabilly fare. Also, there is gratefully not one shout of "Go, cat, go" here.

The second side is more in the mainstream of rockabilly music. It kicks off with the group's up-tempo anthem, "Go Cat Wild" (which also preceded the Stray Cats' "Strut" by a few years) and the ensuing songs maintain the frantic pace. However, even these songs sound different than most music in this genre. The Rockats have chosen to do what previously few of their contemporaries have even dreamed of — taking the concept of rockabilly music one step further. This, then, is what makes this group exciting to listen to.

This might be an appropriate moment to speak to the question of the mini-LP, which is becoming more and more common in record stores these days. Most artists don't know how to approach this medium. Mini-LPs are too long to merely be passed off as singles, yet too short for a full-blown album. The proper way to approach this format would seem to be to view it as a sampler, a chance for new developing groups to get the vital feedback gained only by a commercial release, without the same commitment implicit in releasing a full-length album.

The Rockats seem perfectly suited for this shorter format. While they are not new, they are still in the process of developing. Their past efforts have lacked the pizzazz to sustain two entire sides, but here they seem to have the freedom to do the number of songs they are able to — no more, no less.

—Mike Frost

### Bananarama album ideal for summer cruisin'

Deep Sea Skiving  
Bananarama  
London (Polygram)

Just in time for summer cruisin' with the top down, Bananarama's debut album has a great chance to become this year's *Beauty and the Beat*. They deserve it. They are better than the Go-Go's.

Bananarama is comprised of three female vocalists (Sarah Dallin, Siobhan Fahey and Keren Woodward) who use various studio musicians for a backup band. Paul Cook (ex-Sex Pistol) "discovered" them in 1982 after hearing their harmonies sift through his rehearsal studio ceiling. He co-produced their first single, a swahili chant called "Aie A Mwana" that caught the British press' fancy and the attention of the Fun Boy Three. After a profitable symbiotic period with FB3 and the Jam's Paul Weller, Bananarama had sufficiently ripened for *Deep Sea Skiving*, their first long playing effort.

Bananarama has no fear of doing cover material. Their first single contained the 1965 Velvelettes hit "Really Sayin' Something" (also present on *Skiving*) and their appearance on the *Party Party* soundtrack was a cheery remake of the Sex Pistol's "No Future." On *Deep Sea Skiving* they also re-do the Steam hit "Na Na Hey Hey Kiss Him Goodbye."

My favorite cuts on the album are "Shy Boy," with it's shoobee-doo-bee-do-wop feel (common on *Skiving*), "Hey Young London," a Bo Diddley riff-alike, and sync/discopated "Doctor Love."

*Deep Sea Skiving* is strictly out for fun. Overall, the album may not be as immediately accessible as (their most obvious comparison) the Go-Go's, but it holds

more staying power. The use of African rhythms behind the female chorus is Bananarama's trademark. This move reduces the potential for overt "cuteness" that a song like "Our Lips Are Sealed" might have. *Deep Sea Skiving's* 10 tunes are catchy, sexy and easy on the ears and brain.



Don't look for a deeper meaning in a Bananarama lyric. As they put it, the trio took their fruity moniker because "we just wanted a silly name that expressed enjoyment and lightheartedness."

Dedicated antiseriousness is just the ticket for a summertime hit. Unless the sadly missed Tom Tom Club resurfaces soon, Bananarama could be the pop dance group you remember most from the summer of '83. If it ever stops snowing, put the top down and crank 'em up.

— Billy Shaffer

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