

'The Avengers' strike back via syndication



Mrs. Emma Peel (Diana Rigg) joined John Steed (Patrick Macnee) to form "The Avengers" from 1965-67.

The name John Steed not only struck terror into the hearts of evildoers galore, it also struck a welcome chord with audiences throughout the United Kingdom and the United States during the 1960's.

Now he's back. "The Avengers" has found new fans again via the immortalizing powers of syndication. The Arts and Entertainment Network, CableVision channel 34, broadcasts episodes at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays.

The first incarnation of "The Avengers" took shape in the fall of 1960. London's Managing Head of ABC, Howard Thomas, wanted a program like Alfred Hitchcock Presents or Ian Fleming's James Bond novels, with a pinch of humor.

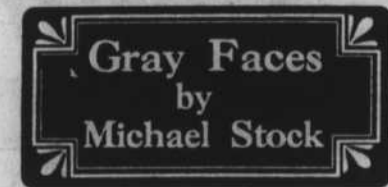
Doctor/detective, Dr. David Keel, played by Ian Hendry, was to be joined by a shady British Secret Service undercover-type named John Steed.

Newman remembered working with Patrick Macnee in Canada and gave him a call. Macnee had just finished a television documentary, "The Valiant Years," chronicling the life of Winston Churchill.

Macnee found that he couldn't

refuse the offer. Armed with a bowler and an umbrella, the stage was set. Literally.

The first three seasons of "The Avengers," spanning from Jan. 1, 1961,



to March 21, 1964, were shot on videotape, and almost entirely on a stage. "The Avengers" used outdoor film footage only for car scenes or some tricky bit of espionage.

There is some question whether several of the 26 episodes from the first season were taped at all.

"The Avengers" didn't draw an immediate audience. Hendry made his exit to pursue a film career, and producers decided to give John Steed a female counterpart. That counterpart was to take "The Avengers" in a new direction.

Honor Blackman was enlisted for the role of Mrs. Catherine Gale, a widowed academic anthropologist. The

straight, strong, leather-clad, feminist character of Mrs. Gale was to offset the suave and cad-ish black sheep Steed.

After two seasons of making "The Avengers" a growing success, Blackman left the show for a film career, being cast as Pussy Galore in the 1965 James Bond classic "Goldfinger."

Steed took a new leading lady by the name of Mrs. Emma Peel, played by Diana Rigg. Audiences loved the beautiful and dangerous new Avenger. The United States' ABC picked up the show for the first time.

Americans loved it. Before leaving the series for film, Rigg's character was featured in 56 episodes spanning two seasons, one in black and white and one in color.

The final season of 1968-69 featured Linda Thorson's character, Tara King.

But she was no Emma Peel.

Of the nearly 10 years that "The Avengers" originally aired, the episodes with Macnee and Rigg are the best.

They're the definitive Avengers. Stock is a junior English major and a Daily Nebraskan arts and entertainment reporter and columnist.

Pulverizing pleasure

Last Crack releasing honest, fresh driller

By Michael Deeds
Senior Editor

Last Crack
"Burning Time"
Road Racer Records

The most appealing aspect of Last Crack's second LP, "Burning Time," is the obvious honesty involved. Vocalist Buddo is, admittedly, one of those artsy, Perry Farrell freakazoids. But there is no bull here.

Instead, this eccentric leads a searing hard rock onslaught filled with imagery of absolutes — of love and

hate, life and death.

Hailing from the liberal haven of Madison, Wis., Last Crack manages to conjure a wispy wall of thought and power, avoiding all the cliches drifting rampant in the world of rock and metaldom.

"Burning Time" attacks with a good chunk of diversity, ranging from whispering ballads to raging metal and psycho-art rock. Knob whiz Dave Jerden adds tinges of Alice in Chains and Jane's Addiction to the sound, but it's tough to decide whether it's his production or Last Crack's talent that rings similar.

"Burning Time" is a truly exciting

work from the very first notes of "Wicked Sandbox" to the fading paean



to love, "Oooh." Guitarists Pablo Schluter and Don Bakken have an obvious progressive metal background but carve out a stinging masterpiece of innovative angst. Chuck the fret masturbation — the speed monger

leads are few and far between. Instead, the duo prefers to twist each solo into a torrid wave of passion picking, bending notes in a visionary exercise in harmonic dissonance.

Metalheads and college radio fans alike should be pulverized with pleasure by "Burning Time," because there's a lot of both in this band. Buddo is similar to Bono in more than one way. His vocals stretch the imagination, and his moans do resemble those of U2's frontman at several times. But it's the Jane's Addiction sort of fan that will swallow Last Crack immediately.

Tunes like "Blue Fly Fish Sky"

and "Mini Toboggan" epitomize Last Crack's theme of rich guitar and day-by-day lyrics. Love doesn't have to be sappy, so Last Crack doesn't sing about "Cherry Pie." Neither does philosophy, so Buddo tackles it from a personal point of view, rather than the omniscient yet pretentious "professor hypocrisy" angle.

But the ingeniousness of "Burning Time" doesn't lie in the intelligent lyrics. It lies in the band's sound. Every song is a driller, and the freshness can't be denied. This is perhaps the best independent hard rock alternative to hit the shelves so far this year. Watch for it in mid-June.

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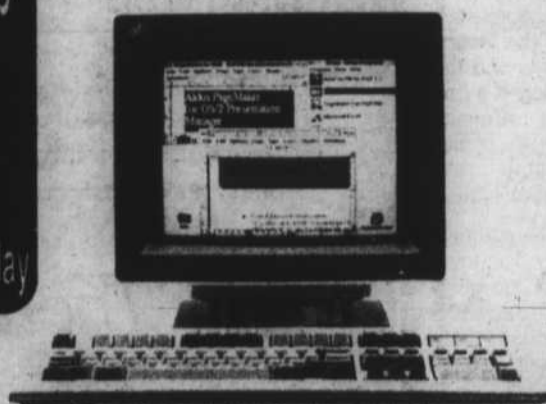
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Last Crack Courtesy of Road Racer Records

Singer: Band only plays own tunes

By Robert Richardson
Senior Reporter

After finally getting fed up with the alternative music scene in Texas, Buddo went home to Madison, Wis., and almost back to college to finish up his philosophy major. But he decided he had too much left to say to the world.

That's when the lead singer of Last Crack left his name on a billboard at a music store — because he "just wanted to jam."

"It's really pretty wild the way that this band has come to be, it really is," Buddo said. "It's just like a bunch of either coincidental things or the hand of fate."

Currently promoting the band's latest release, "Burning Time," the newest member of Last Crack explained that when the band first formed in March, 1987, the group kind of got lucky.

A woman who believed in the band gave the members \$500 to make a demo tape and after a year, the tape fell into the right hands. Last Crack wound up signing a contract with Road Racer Records.

But the road to success and a complete band hasn't always been smooth for Last Crack. Band members had trouble deciding if they wanted to play covers or perform their own music.

"Actually we had quite a few fights about that," Buddo said, "because I think the rest of

the guys came from like a traditional type of commercial hard rock background. In Wisconsin, you have to play covers if you want to play the clubs, really."

But the decision was made for the band while performing at a club. Buddo was singing a Robert Plant cover, and his voice cracked.

"I go, 'We are Last Crack and we're going to play our own shit from now on.' That was pretty funny," Buddo said.

But now Last Crack seems to be more established, more professional, more productive and much more focused. Buddo explained that there really isn't any leader in the band and that works out just fine.

"It's more alive, it's human," Buddo said. "It's not mechanized. There's a lot of room for error, but then there's a lot of room for freedom and expression."

Buddo said a nice generic term for Last Crack's music is "progressive hard rock." But for a band influenced by hard rock of the '70s, Last Crack's biggest influences lie closest to home.

"I'd have to say the biggest influences for the band right now are each member, the way we influence each other," he said. "I think we've just grown so diversely that the challenge now is having all five of us writing this material, and what we have to agree on comes from five different worlds."