

EMIGRE

Ivo Watts-Russell

(THIS MORTAL COIL)

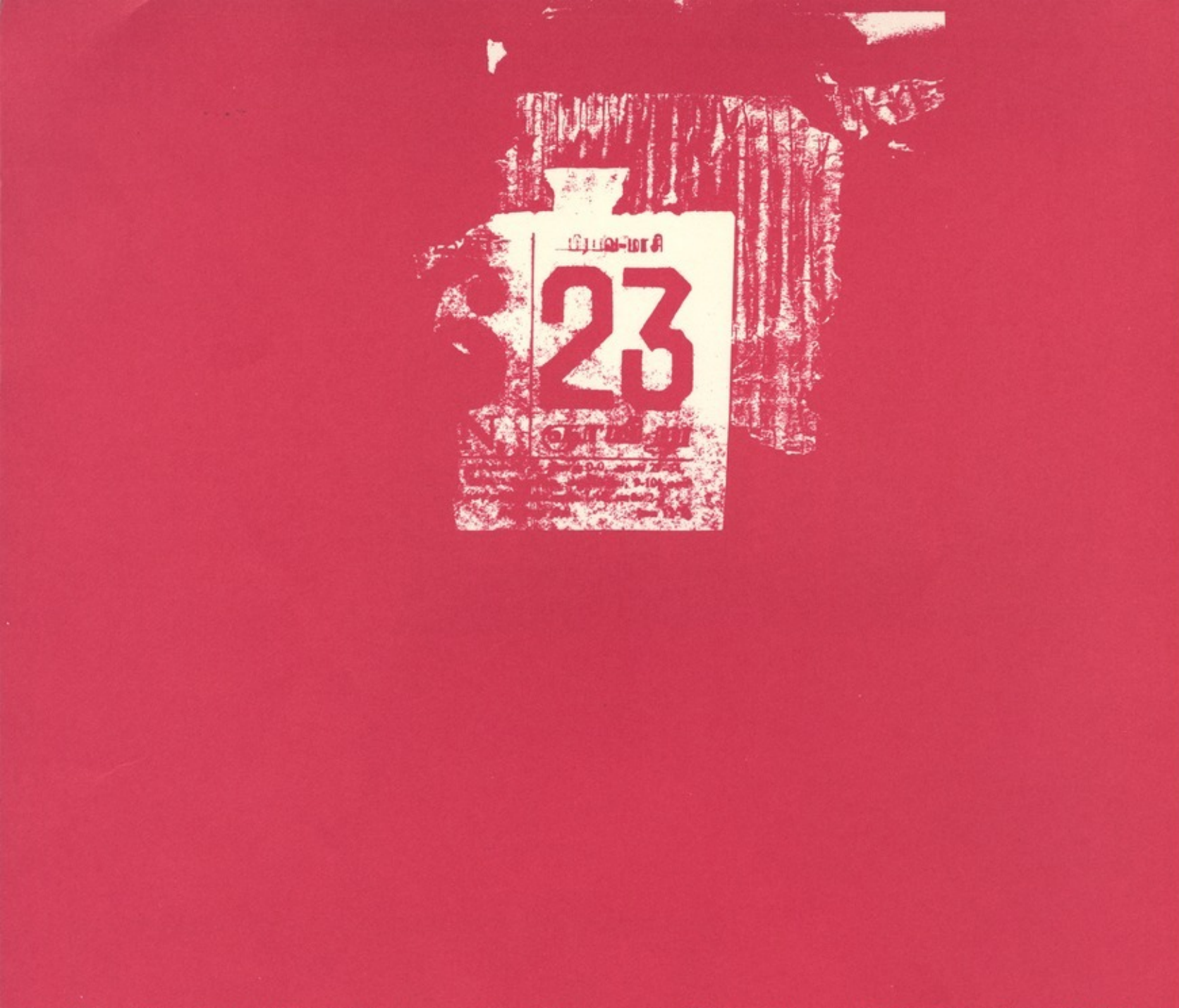
4AD

Cocteau Twins
Throwing Muses
Vaughan Oliver
Nigel Griereson

THE ART OF

23 envelope

THE
MAGAZINE
THAT
IGNORES
BOUNDARIES
PRICE:
\$6.95



One alternative
side of the coin
About that
only after the
it's every where
which is the

EMIGRE



The text on the right is an excerpt from a letter written in 1981 by Ivo Watts-Russell, the person behind the success of London-based 4AD records. The

letter was written to The Offense, a small music magazine in Columbus, Ohio. The Offense is single handedly written and produced by 4AD aficionado Tim Anstaett in quantities of 900 copies per issue and is probably one of America's finest music fanzines.

Spontaneously written, insightful and dedicated to what is referred to as "alternative" music, The Offense covers more than 4AD related topics. But no other music magazine has singled out and recognized the significance of the 4AD records more than The Offense.

Long before Emigre approached 4AD with the idea to devote an entire issue to the people behind this remarkable record label, The Offense had already published numerous interviews with some of the label's first musicians, as well as a lengthy interview with Ivo. (Excerpts and quotes from this interview are reprinted in this issue of Emigre alongside a series of recent interviews conducted by Emigre).

However, as excited as we are at Emigre magazine about the music from 4AD, we could not think of a more suitable person to write the introduction to this issue than Tim Anstaett. So we wrote him a letter and asked if he had time. Although apologetic and non-committal at first, (he has a job at an insurance agency, he is promoting and organizing concerts, writing and publishing his newsletter and raising a kid), he graciously followed up with a piece from the heart.

O, yes, please write to him if you would like to read up on what is really "happening" in the world of modern music. Send any requests for issues or information about The Offense to: P.O. Box 12614, Columbus, Ohio 43212.

Design and production

Rudy VanderLans

Type design:

Zuzana Licko

Editorial consultant:

Alice Polesky

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"4AD HAS EXISTED FOR 1-1/2 YEARS NOW, ORIGINALLY
STARTED BY PETER KENT AND MYSELF WITH THE BASIC AIM TO
RELEASE WHAT WE CONSIDERED TO BE THE MOST EXCITING
AND ORIGINAL MUSIC OF THAT TIME. THE LABEL DEVELOPED
VERY NATURALLY - I THINK ONCE WE RELEASED THE REMA REMA
12" OUR STANDARDS WERE SET, AND I LIKE TO THINK (WITH
MAYBE ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS) THAT THOSE STANDARDS
HAVE BEEN MAINTAINED.

PETER LEFT IN OCTOBER 1980 TO MANAGE BAUHAUS FOR A
WHILE, AFTER WHICH HE CONCENTRATED ON STARTING THE
SITUATION 2 LABEL AND SIGNING BANDS TO BEGGARS
BANQUET. I THINK WE'VE BOTH FOUND IT EASIER TO WORK
SEPARATELY; IT ALLOWS US THE INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM TO
INDULGE OUR DIFFERENT MUSICAL TASTES.

THE FIRST YEAR FOR 4AD WAS EXTREMELY GRATIFYING AND
FAR MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN I'D EVER IMAGINED. THE
SECOND HAS BEEN HARDER IN AS MUCH AS A CHANGE OF
DIRECTION HAS NOT COME ABOUT AS QUICKLY AS I HAD
HOPED. I'M IMMENSELY EXCITED BY DIF JUZ; THEY'RE
CHANGING AND DEVELOPING SO FAST, AND MATT JOHNSON'S
LP IS SOMETHING I ENJOYED WORKING ON. BUT MY HOPES TO
MOVE FURTHER AWAY FROM ROCK MUSIC, EVEN IN ITS
BROADEST SENSE, ARE STILL UNFULFILLED. THIS IS DUE TO
THE STUNNING NUMBER OF NEW GROUPS CONTENT TO IMITATE
RATHER THAN PIONEER. THOUGHTS OF LICENSING RELEASES
FROM ABROAD, SUCH AS ABORIGINAL CHANTS, HAVE BEEN
FRUITLESS DUE TO THE APPALLING SOUND QUALITY RATHER
THAN CONTENT.

WITH A NUCLEUS OF THE BIRTHDAY PARTY, MODERN ENGLISH,
DIF JUZ, AND COLIN NEWMAN, AND THE OCCASIONAL
OFFERINGS FROM MASS, LEWIS / GILBERT, MATT JOHNSON,
ETC. I'M CONFIDENT OF CHANGE AND A VERY VALID AND
VARIED OUTPUT - BUT MY SEARCH FOR SOMETHING FAR
REMOVED FROM ANYTHING I'VE EVER DONE WILL CONTINUE."



By Tim Anstaett

My earliest memory of anything related to 4AD Records isn't of a particular release or group, but rather the sight of the most beautiful label I had ever seen, glued onto a record spinning majestically around on a shop's turntable. Like a warm winter's blanket it pulled itself up over the disc's mid-section and gave me a cozy feeling as well -- indeed, a classic case of love at first sight -- and even though the needle's interpretation of the grooves surrounding this luscious focal point tried its best to break the spell (The The's "Controversial Subject," *not* one of my favorite singles of all time), I bought the thing anyway and gave it a scathing review in issue '4 of *The Offense*, a fanzine I had started a few months earlier in April, 1980. Not long after that, I spotted the same patterned quilt pulled partially over another 7-incher, so I provided it with the added warmth of my chest and racing heart as I held it close under my coat while sprinting home through the autumn rain, and as fate would have it, Bauhaus' "Terror Couple Kill Colonel" hit the critical jackpot, becoming the number five "Single of the Issue!" And a mere three issues later, Dance Chapter's "Anonymity" received the same honorary designation! I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to tell whoever ran 4AD how I felt about him. Bauhaus, Dance Chapter, Rema-Rema, The Birthday Party, In Camera, Modern English, Mass, all had released records during the label's debut year; and it was all too obvious to me from their vast collective richness that what these records represented was nothing less than the greatest music of their time. I felt incredibly fortunate to have been able to cross paths with the work of the one person left in the whole lousy world who wasn't about to be taken in by any of the gimmicks going "round at the time, but rather was content to simply (and yet so eloquently!) release what he recognized as music that deserved to be shared with others.

I sent off a few back issues not really expecting a response. I had done the same thing before with other overseas labels that I wasn't half as crazy about (maybe the people running these labels were able to discern my somewhat limited enthusiasm and thought "To hell with this American!"), but amazingly Ivo *did* write back, providing a 15-year-old boy (okay 25) with as big a thrill as he could possibly stand. The slow but steady release of further records did nothing but add fuel to the fire, eventually getting me to the point where I am today -- of not really caring whether any other labels ever put *anything* else out! All right, a slight exaggeration there perhaps, but still it seems quite clear to me that since its inception 4AD records has been in a league by itself, and what's been the most aggravating thing over the eight years I've been publishing is that for some strange reason, the rest of the record-buying public has not yet unanimously agreed with me on this point. Perhaps this issue of *Emigre* will rectify the situation.

Independence

R. It's nice, I can just dial your number, ask for Ivo and get you on the phone immediately. 4AD is a small but very successful independent record company. I was afraid it was going to be impossible to reach you.

I. We're still totally accessible.

R. Can everybody just call you?

I. Yes, pretty much. We're not hiding away!

R. Let me start with the most obvious question. When and why did you start 4AD?

I. It gets harder to analyze that each time... The preparations were made during the last few months of 1979. At that point it was myself and a guy named Peter Kent. We were both working for Beggars Banquet at that time on the retail side of things. I wanted to figure out the mechanics of the independent industry. Simultaneously, Beggars Banquet approached us and suggested we start an independent label under their wing. Peter was running the Beggars Banquet office above one of their record shops. He also ran the shop, and I was kind of an overseer, general manager or whatever, of five or six different record shops. When people came to Beggars Banquet (people such as Gary Numan, at that time) to bring by their demos, they would tend to see either me or Peter. We were always the first to hear all the demos that were brought in. For a while, we would take some of these demos upstairs to the Beggars office and tell the people 'We think this is really good, you should get involved with this.' And I think as a result of that, because Beggars didn't have time or whatever, they suggested that we start a label that was within the Beggars Banquet format, an independent label that would function as a steppingstone to move bands onto their own label. They had major distribution and everything at that time. They respected our ears. They wanted to carry on the daily running of their label, and we were effectively their A&R men. That was the original concept of it. So this offer

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Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "MODERN ENGLISH WERE A GROUP THAT HAD BROUGHT DEMOS INTO BEGGARS BANQUET IN '79 AND WERE ONE OF THE GROUPS THAT WERE PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE LABEL STARTING. THE FIRST DEMO WAS BRILLIANT - REALLY, REALLY GOOD. IT WAS ONE WE KEPT THRUSTING TOWARDS BEGGARS, SAYING, 'YOU SHOULD DO SOMETHING WITH THIS!' BUT THEY EITHER DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME OR WEREN'T INTERESTED. SO MODERN ENGLISH WENT OFF AND RECORDED A SINGLE ON THEIR OWN LABEL IN COLCHESTER, AND THEN CAME BACK AFTER THEY'D DONE A SECOND SET OF DEMOS WHICH INCLUDED "SWANS ON GLASS" AND "INCIDENT." BY THAT TIME, THROUGH SALES OF OUR FIRST THREE SINGLES WE HAD A COUPLE HUNDRED QUID AVAILABLE, WHICH WE USED TO PUT MODERN ENGLISH INTO A STUDIO TO DO THE "SWANS ON GLASS" SINGLE." (The Offense Newsletter)



VICTORIALAND Cocteau Twins (Oliver Oliver)

All album covers reproduced in this issue were art directed and designed by Vaughan Oliver. All album cover photography is by Nigel Grierson unless otherwise stated.

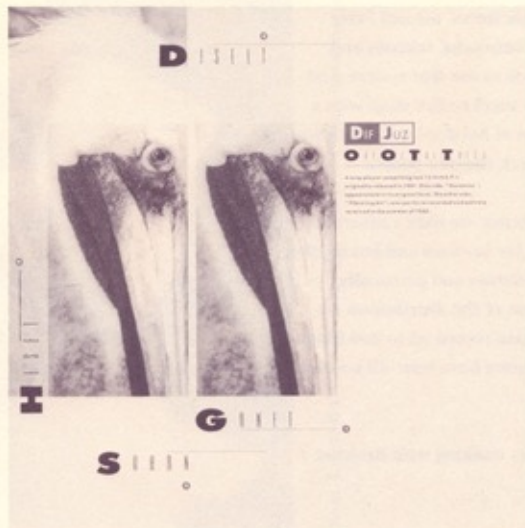


Ivo Watts-Russell

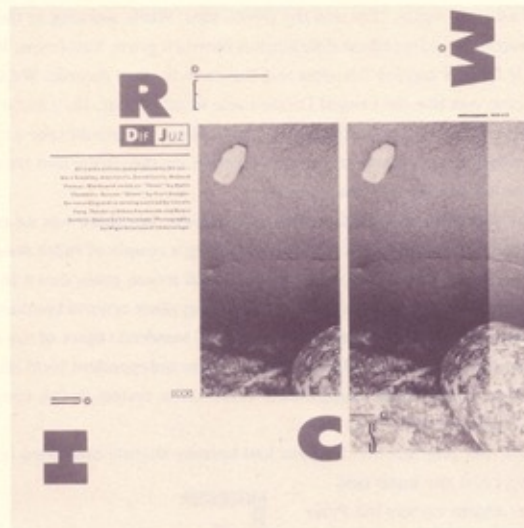
Interview with Ivo Watts-Russell (I) by Rudy VanderLans (R) |



AFTER THE SNOW Modern English (Outer sleeve)



OUT OF THE TREES Dif Juz (Outer sleeve, front and back)



Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "WIRE WAS THE FIRST GROUP THAT I FELT WAS REALLY, REALLY IMPORTANT. IT SEEMED THAT THEY COULD DO ANYTHING, WHEREAS THE OTHERS DIDN'T EVEN SEEM LIKE THEY WANTED TO DO ANYTHING. THE FIRST TIME I SAW THEM, THEY WERE SO BAD, REALLY AWFUL, BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING SO BAD ABOUT THEM THAT I KNEW I'D BE SEEING THEM AGAIN. AND I DID. A VERY SPECIAL GROUP, THE ONLY GROUP WHO CONTINUED WHAT THEY SET OUT TO DO AND JUST PROGRESSED THROUGH THOSE THREE LPS. YES, A VERY SPECIAL, SPECIAL GROUP." (The Offense Newsletter)

coincided perfectly with my decision of trying and doing it myself. I didn't have any money, but they gave us a couple of thousand pounds to start the label. R. What was the first record you released?

I. We decided we wanted to release four singles. Of these four singles, two were already finished. The demo takes that were brought in were sort of finished masters and we released them as they were. Actually, two and a half were finished, with one we recorded the B side and with another we recorded the A and B side. We released all four records the first working day of 1980, on a label called Axis. The day we received finished records in our office we had a phone call from another company called Axis, who had read a press release saying that we were

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starting a new label called Axis. They were good about it, they said all we had to do was sell off our stocks! So we changed our name to 4AD.

R. Who were those bands?

I. Three of them were, and still are, completely unknown. They were Bearz, who made a kind of strange pop-psychedelic single, one was Shox, who did a fairly commercial sort of an electronic dance single, and another was The Fast Set. Their single was the only one we paid for. This was a guy called David Knight, who now works with Danielle Dax. The fourth single was by Bauhaus, who had their own record out on Small Wonder called "Bela Lugosi's Dead," and we released their next single, "Dark Entries."

R. How did you set up promotion and distribution for these first singles?

I. Distribution was a matter of manufacturing some records and calling around all of the different independent wholesale offices and export companies in England saying, 'We're putting out these records, do you want to buy any?' It was a question of driving around London and dropping them off.

R. As simple as that?

I. Yes, get in the car and try to get a check, you know, COD basis.

R. You couldn't use Beggars Banquet's distribution channels?

I. Didn't want to, really. That was the whole idea. While working in the music stores, me and Peter would watch the independent distribution network grow. You know, from Buzzcocks' releases and Stiff Little Fingers and Joy Division and the early Factory records. We wanted to use that system. And Rough Trade was like the central London arm of all of that. They had a very small record shop with a distribution system set up in the back of their shop. We would take a couple of hundred records down there and sell them to them and they would get on the phone and try to flock them to people.

R. Did you break even on those singles?

I. Actually we did. And you asked about promotion, but there was no promotion, we didn't advertize any of them. Promotion revolved around getting a couple of radio sessions for Bauhaus and getting the records played on late night English radio, which meant going down to the station and personally pushing them. It was all very localized, all taking place around London. Some of the distribution we got outside London. We would send a couple of hundred copies of the Bauhaus record up to Red Rhino in York and out to other local distributors. These independent local distributors have now all become the branches of the Rough Trade Cartel distribution system in this country.

R. What happened with Peter Kent?

I. After the first year, his involvement had become slightly one-sided towards working with Bauhaus. I didn't feel I had any input into their lives and/or careers but Peter did. And they moved on to Beggars Banquet.

The reason 4AD had been set up in the first place was to function as a springboard to Beggars Banquet, so it was an appropriate move for Bauhaus to take. I felt it was relevant for that move to happen, and the group did too, because it got them a longterm contract with money. So they made that move, and they were the first and last 4AD group to do that. Peter and I at that time had parted ways in terms of musical interest. 4AD had become its own limited company by then. This was in the beginning of 1981. What he did was actually set up his own independent company within the same format called Situation Two.

R. Is 4AD independent from Beggars

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Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL "THE NEXT THING THAT HAPPENED WAS REMA-
REMA WALKING IN, WHICH WAS JUST UNBELIEVABLE. I MEAN,
TO REALIZE THAT WE COULD RELEASE SOMETHING BY THEM
SUDDENLY MADE ME SEE THAT WHAT WE WERE DOING WAS
SOMETHING SERIOUS. SO IN ADDITION TO FINANCING THE
FIRST FOUR RECORDS, BEGGARS' LOAN WAS ALSO USED TO
BUY SOME RECORDINGS OF THIS FIFTH GROUP THAT HAD BEEN
FINANCED BY THE CHARISMA LABEL"

(The Offense Newsletter)

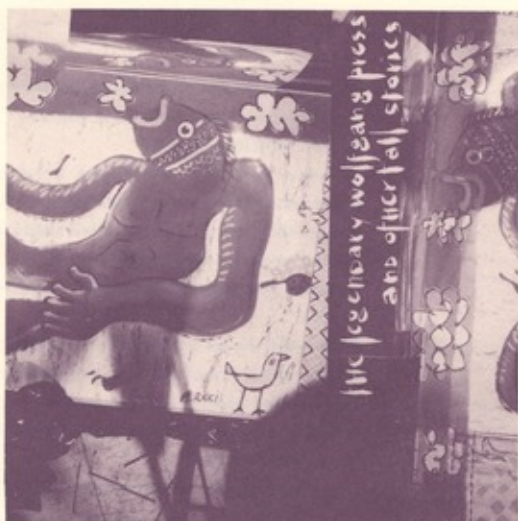
MARK COX, The Wolfgang Press:

"WE'VE ALWAYS FELT THAT THERE'S GENERALLY MORE WORTH IN MUSIC THAT DOES TAKE A LITTLE MORE TIME TO APPRECIATE. ONE WAY TO PRE-
SERVE THE 'QUALITY' OF 'STANDING UP STRAIGHT' WAS TO PRODUCE A DIFFERENT ACCOUNT OF WHAT IS GOING ON. THE LYRIC SHEET GIVES A NEW
PRESENTATION OF THE MUSIC, YOU CAN READ AS YOU LISTEN...OR AT ANY OTHER TIME. UNLIKE SOME CHART SONGS THAT ARE PICKED UP AND LIKED
INSTANTLY, WE FELT THE LP SHOULD NOT RELY ON THAT EASY ACCESSIBILITY. WE BELIEVE THE SONGS ARE LASTING
ENOUGH TO BE PICKED UP FIVE YEARS LATER." (Arrows)

MARK COX, The Wolfgang Press:

"I'VE BEEN REALLY DISILLUSIONED WITH THE PRESS. I'M FED UP WITH SEEING THEM SET PEOPLE UP LIKE THE BEST THING SINCE AIR THAT WE BREATHE,
AND THEN ABOUT HALF A WEEK LATER CALLING THEM THE BIGGEST BUNCH OF CUNTS UNDER THE SUN. WHEN WE WERE MASS WE GOT A LOT OF BAD
PRESS AND THAT KIND OF HURT AT THE TIME. PEOPLE REALLY MISUNDERSTOOD MASS ALTOGETHER. IT WORRIED ME, BUT IT'S THEIR LOSS, IT DOESN'T
BOTHER ME ANYMORE." (Abstract)

THE LEGENDARY WOLFGANG PRESS AND OTHER TALL STORIES The Wolfgang Press (Outer sleeve)



Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL "IN 1976 I WAS WORKING IN A BEGGARS RECORD SHOP. I'D BEEN WORKING IN RECORD SHOPS FOR FOUR YEARS, ALL I WAS REALLY INTERESTED IN WAS MUSIC. SUDDENLY ALL THESE INDEPENDENT RECORDS EMERGED AND IT BECAME VERY, VERY EXCITING TO WORK IN A RECORD SHOP. WHAT I REALLY ENJOYED, THOUGH, WAS THE SECOND WAVE OF PUNK IN 1979, YOU KNOW WHEN WIRE DEVELOPED INTO JOY DIVISION..."

(Melody Maker)

Banquet?

I. Yes. 4AD is owned by myself and Martin Mills, one of the directors of Beggars Banquet. But 4AD has creative and financial independence.

R. How did 4AD as a record label become so successful within such a short period of time? Do you have a success formula for 4AD?

I. I don't have a formula. All I ever wanted to do is make available records that have something unique to offer and make them available through our label. The music that we release should feel right on our label, and wouldn't feel right elsewhere. That was the only direction I've ever had, and somehow it remained stable financially. Also, I think I was in the right place at the right time when I started 4AD.

R. The name of 4AD often seems more prominent than the bands that are recording on 4AD. Is that something that is done on purpose?

I. There certainly was a period when, musically, a lot of the groups could be pigeonholed into an independent category. Not necessarily with a 4AD identity, but in what we used to call a 'Raincoat Brigade' category, a sort of gloomy guitar-based music. That created an identity for the label which was a very temporary one, but which hasn't gone away. Also we developed a relationship with Vaughan Oliver from 23 Envelope and Nigel Grierson (the in-house designer and photographer at 4AD), who are responsible for creating a visual identity that has become respected and recognizable.

R. However, I feel that in a certain way, their sleeve designs have contributed to a visual identity more representative of 4AD than the bands. Is that done on purpose, to downplay the cult status of the bands?

I. No not at all. If the bands wanted their photos on the record sleeves, that would have happened. But if you meet somebody like Vaughan or Nigel, especially after you have seen the quality of work they have done and worked with them or through them, you learn to respect them and to automatically follow their guidance. If a band feels the human image of the group is important, we will have their photos on the sleeves. I don't really know how it works, but it seems that somehow, whenever we are drawn to the music of some of the artists, it almost goes without saying that they will be presented in

a certain way.

R. Is it your personal taste that prevails when you pick the bands for your label, or are there others involved?

I. It is my personal taste that prevails, but in the last three years there have been other people to take into consideration when picking the bands. In the beginning of 4AD, of course, there were Peter and myself. After he left, in 1981-1982, it was just me running the label. Then in 1983, Vaughan was around, so obviously it was important that he enjoy things, and then Debbie started working with us... You know, it comes from me and will continue to come from me, but now there are three other people involved. I still make the final decision, but it is important that they can see the value and enjoy what we are doing.

R. What is the decisive criteria for you to sign a band?

I. It's not really tangible. It's been a really, really long time since I heard something or saw somebody and made a decision, thinking instantly, yes, I want to do a record. Mainly because we've been working with a number of artists and I've not actively been looking to get involved with other people, feeling there is a lot more we can do for the people we have been working with. So that prohibits us from active A&R. The last four or five groups that we produced had demo tapes that I responded to and enjoyed immediately. Gradually

over the next three, four or six months, I became seduced to the point that I really felt it was important for us to get involved.

R. Can you elaborate on what happens after you are "seduced" and you decide to sign a band?

I. There are many different ways we go about signing bands, but you can whittle it down to three. The way we work at the moment is simply to say to someone, 'Let's make a record' and then we issue a brief contract, dictating the amount that 4AD will spend on recording, and stating that we will pay for the recordings, which will be recoupable from the royalties that are payable to the group. Beyond that there is a middle stage which includes the possibility of doing two or three singles; after which they have an option on an album



Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL "WHEN THEY SENT ME THEIR FIRST TAPE, IT WAS A

VERY ROUGH REHEARSAL RECORDING. VERY POWERFUL -

INCREDIBLY POWERFUL. I VIVIDLY REMEMBER HEARING IT FOR

THE FIRST TIME. I'D BEEN AT CAMBRIDGE AT THE STUDIO

WHERE DANCE CHAPTER HAD BEEN RECORDING THEIR 12" EP.

THINGS WEREN'T GOING WELL, AND I'D DRIVEN AWAY SLIGHTLY

DEPRESSED. SLIGHTLY DEPRESSED? PRETTY PISSED OFF! GOT

IN THE CAR AND HAD SOME DEMOS WITH ME THAT I HAD TAKEN,

AND SORT OF POPPED THIS THING INTO MY CAR'S CASSETTE

PLAYER. IT WAS A WONDERFUL FEELING TO HEAR THAT SO

INSTANTLY. BUT FUNNILY ENOUGH, ON THAT TAPE YOU COULD

BARELY HEAR LIZ'S VOICE. SO AFTER I HAD CONTACTED THEM

AND THEY CAME DOWN FROM SCOTLAND AND I MET THEM, WE

WENT INTO THE STUDIO. WE WERE GOING TO RECORD A SINGLE,

"SPEAK NO EVIL" AND "PERHAPS SOME OTHER AEON," SO IT

WAS QUITE A REVELATION FOR ME, WITH THE POWER OF THE

GROUP, WHEN LIZ ACTUALLY OPENED HER MOUTH AND SANG,

BECAUSE I HAD NO IDEA THAT SHE WAS GOING TO BE ABLE TO

SING AS INTERESTINGLY AS SHE DID. I HAD ASKED THE

COCTEAUS TO COME DOWN AND RECORD PRETTY MUCH ON THE

BASIS OF THEIR INSTRUMENTAL CAPABILITIES, SO LIZ WAS

JUST LIKE THIS INCREDIBLE BONUS AT THE TIME. IT WAS A

GOOD, GOOD DAY." (The Offense Newsletter)



Twins

THE COCTEAU

By John Oomkes

The Scottish trio may be the most fragile that pop music has brought forth during the past eight years. Yet their ethereal sound is appreciated everywhere and even tears on stage generate only sympathy. John Oomkes visited Liz, Robin, and Simon in London, shortly before they were to start recording their next album. Will the Cocteau Twins be able to resist the lure of gold?

Translated from the Dutch by Marc Susan

With a London cabbie I tour the neighborhood near Edgeware Road in the heart of the British capital. Although "Northwick House" sounds like a stately country house, the name is likely to be more impressive than the actual place. The wind sweeps past low-hanging clouds and, with Christmas fast approaching, people are as frantic as ever in their search for cosiness. Although I try to fight it, a feeling of overwhelming undecidedness comes over me, accompanied by an equally inescapable silly mood. Ah, adventure! Ah, a treasure hunt! As darkness settles, I find Northwick House, temporary home of the Cocteau Twins.

I'm as much embarrassed about listening to the Cocteau Twins' records as about the early productions of Pink Floyd. The Cocteau Twins are often on the turntable while I do mundane chores like washing dishes and cleaning the cat's box. I hum along with "Treasure" or other favorites of mine like "Pearly Dewdrops" or "Sunburst And Snowblind," and let my thoughts drift off into a nondescript place and time. The usual range of categories, comparisons and associations are insufficient. My embarrassment is the result of an inability. Although the Cocteau Twins make music with the beauty of a Swan Lake or a Giselle, I'm unable to define, other than by abstract notions, why it pleases me. Robin opens the door. He is the kind of prematurely aged house-husband turned out wrong. Cowboy boots with Cuban heels. Because he begins to excuse himself right away -- Liz and Simon aren't there yet -- it flashes through my mind that consummate, naive beauty needs no explanation. The



PUMP UP THE VOLUME Marrs (Outer sleeve)

interview will probably be plagued by the same kind of clumsiness that other ones with Robin, Liz and Simon invariably have had, vague friendly formalities spoken with a cordiality that doesn't fit the clichés. Inspired rhetoric. Making music doesn't imply that you can explain it, too.

Real People

Robin makes tea, but when he can't find the necessary ingredients in the rented apartment, it becomes coffee. "Just sugar, right?" he queries. Am I mistaken, or is there a hint of relief in his voice? In the den we sip coffee from the kind of large mugs that prepare the average British youngster for the pint. Sporadically we exchange information. Together with a technician friend, Robin has been working the past few hours on transforming the living room into a recording studio. The mixing table lies flat on a stack of loose crates, like a blotto conscript in a field-hospital. With a sigh, Robin positions the only piece of equipment that features special effects above the other ones in a rack. "This is all I've been able to afford so far. You collect things here and there. It's better to own it yourself. Recording time is much too expensive, you see?" I see. "Isn't it a problem to record in a regular neighborhood? Nuisance for the neighbors or unwanted noise?" I ask, trying not to offend. "Mmm, no, everything is plugged in directly. We don't use mikes. Liz's singing is only added in the last phase and that's the usual studio work."

That's probably how it goes in daily life, I imagine. No ego-tripping, no inflated self-importance, a tad out of this world and being into oneself. Regular people after all: the ideal lies inside the enclosed milieu. None of that rock-and-roll, big money, and high-brow thematic stuff. When Liz and Simon show up we move into the back room. They all sit down on the couch in front of me - three unpretentious, real human beings. They savor and ponder every question in the manner of retirement-home residents. Those who haven't joined the rat-race follow a different set of norms. One of those norms is that the Cocteau Twins decide for themselves how the tour is to be arranged. A Dutch or Belgian promoter who thinks he can finally cash in on the growing popularity of these Scots by booking them in a bigger place the next time around will be disappointed. Nothing is taken for granted; a dance hall in a



V I V A Xmal Deutschland (Outer sleeve: Not a 4AD release)

LIZ Frazer, Cocteau Twins: "I JUST WISH PEOPLE WOULD STOP COMPARING THE LIVE SHOWS TO THE RECORDS."

ROBIN Guthrie: "THEY DO THAT BECAUSE IT'S NOT A WHOLLY LIVE THING - WE USE A TAPE. NOBODY IS EVER SURE HOW MUCH IS ON THE TAPE.

IT COULD ALL BE ON THE TAPE AS FAR AS SOME ARE CONCERNED. ACTUALLY, TO TELL THE TRUTH, WE'RE PLAYING A GIG TONIGHT. WE JUST SWITCHED ON THE MACHINE AND DIDN'T BOTHER TO SHOW UP. I WONDER WHETHER ANYONE WOULD NOTICE?" (*Melody Maker*)

Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "THE COCTEAU TWINS AND COLOURBOX ARE

LICENSED TO VIRGIN RECORDS IN THE REST OF THE WORLD,

EXCLUDING NORTH AMERICA. IT'S A THREE-YEAR

ARRANGEMENT. THE REST OF THE GROUPS ARE OCCASIONALLY

RELEASED ABROAD, BUT I TEND TO WORK WITH INDEPENDENT

LICENSEES, WHEREBY I SELL THEM FINISHED RECORDS. I GOT

FED UP WITH HAVING LICENSEES ALL OVER THE PLACE WHO DID

VERY LITTLE FOR THE GROUPS AND EVEN FUCKED UP THE

COVERS. I QUITE PREFER WORKING WITH SMALLER

INDEPENDENTS WHO AT LEAST DISTRIBUTE TWO OR THREE

THOUSAND GOOD-QUALITY RECORDS IN THEIR OWN

TERRITORIES, WITH THE PACKAGING EXACTLY AS IT SHOULD

BE." (*The Offense Newsletter*)

and beyond that, an option on four of five more albums. Or there is the mainstream contract for, let's say, a five-year deal.

R. Has 4AD signed any groups for a longer period of time?

I. Yes, there are two groups that we work with who are on longterm contracts, the Cocteau Twins and Colourbox.

R. What made you sign them for a longer period of time?

I. It just became essential to do it. I'd worked with the Cocteau Twins for about a year before we entered into a longterm contract. I thought it was important that they have a certain standard of living. Plus I desperately wanted to work with them forever, or as long as it is appropriate. And if you are representing people on an international basis, (and this doesn't necessarily apply to

America so much but to the rest of the world), if you are licensing individual artists to other companies, or if you are doing a label deal, you have to have those groups under contract.

R. Why is America singled out?

I. For instance, we just finished recording three tracks with a new group called Frazier Chorus. Say I sent a copy of this record to every A&R man in America, and people came back to me wanting to license it in America. They would insist, if it were an LP, on having four or five options for further albums. For me to sign a piece of paper like that, licensing this product to them, I would have to have a contract with the artists myself for the same number of records. So what I am saying is that doing serious licensing deals in America affects the way that I contractually have to work with artists here. There have been record companies in the States that were interested, but never in the right way. For the last two years, I've been spending time picking up the pieces of the previous five years and getting what I feel are the "right" label deals around the world, but America remains a territory where it's proving very hard to find a suitable licensing label deal. And yes, I do believe it won't be difficult to license the next Cocteau Twins album in America, or even the next Colourbox album, but I do think it will be harder through that same system to license a Dead Can Dance or Dif Juz record. I understand the size of the United States and the size of the corporations that need to be kept going and simply to put all the

TINY DYNAMINE Cocteau Twins (Outer sleeve)



mechanics into operation costs a lot of money. And unless one has a group that is prepared to play the game, they are unlikely to achieve anything. Major record companies need to make money and in order to do so they need to sell records and in order to do that the material obviously has to be appropriate for radio, to go beyond college stations, where we initially get our air play. This entails having regularly touring groups and videos and all of that stuff, which most of our groups aren't particularly keen on doing. At least not to the extent that is expected in the United States.

R. Can you become successful in the States with 4AD without an American licensing deal?

I. No, not in a real sense. Maybe we can. The feedback, telephone calls, mail, whatever, that we get from America is probably the most intense in the world, but it is isolated. The intensity is probably partially due to the lack of availability. If there is something that you recognize as a stamp or a logo or a label that you know is probably going to be interesting, and if you have to make some effort to get hold of it, it heightens your enjoyment. So, yes, we have a profile and a following in the States, but it's really just the tip of the iceberg of what I feel it should be.

R. So you really think there is a potential audience in the United States for 4AD?

I. Well I am not talking in millions, selling platinum or anything. Most people who hear 4AD will hear it through what I call the "underground." This is the kind of exposure that our records will get, and the people who hear our music on the

radio have to go out to try and find it. They have to go to import record stores. Now if these people could just go to any record store with the possibility of finding our records there, that would make a big difference in sales.

R. You can go to any big chain record store here in San Francisco and you'll be able to find a pretty good selection of 4AD records. They're expensive, but they do carry your records.

I. There are two things there. One, as you are saying, they are very expensive and they shouldn't be because we give good enough prices to the exporters, and two, you are talking about San Francisco, a major city. There have been people from all over the States who have been drawn to the label for one reason or another. They repeatedly



Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "YOU CAN NEVER KNOW OR PREDICT WHEN PEOPLE

WILL NO LONGER SUPPORT YOU OR TURN AGAINST YOU, BUT I

DON'T REALLY FEEL THAT WE'RE DOING THINGS THAT WILL

REQUIRE THAT. THERE'S EITHER A PUBLIC THAT IS INTERESTED

IN SOMETHING GENUINE OR THERE ISN'T, AND I JUST DON'T

SEE THAT THE PUBLIC IS GOING TO GO AWAY. SO I FEEL

CONFIDENT THAT WE'LL CONTINUE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER

OF PEOPLE WHO ARE AWARE OF WHAT WE'RE DOING, AND AS

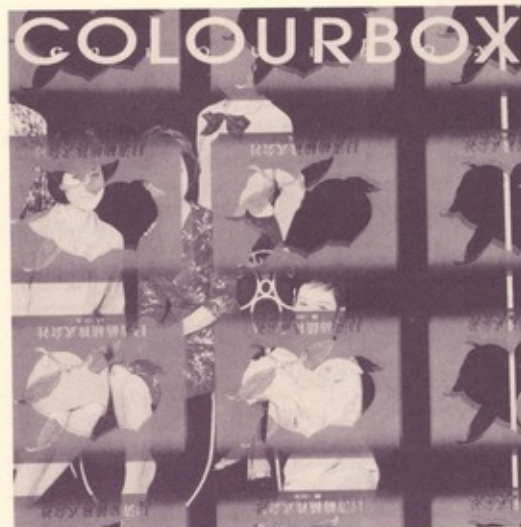
LONG AS WE'RE DOING THAT, THEN THERE'S A POINT IN US

BEING HERE. IF THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO REQUIRE SOMETHING

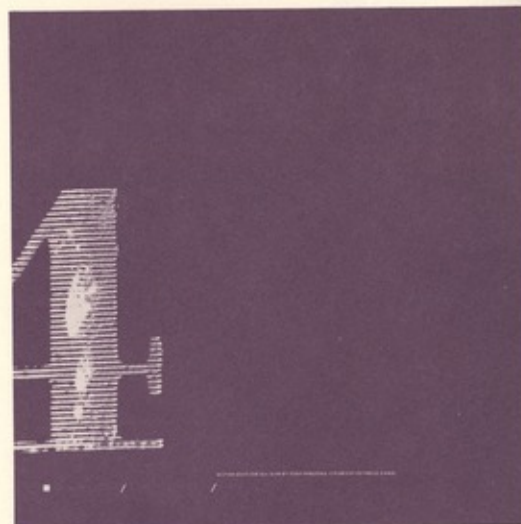
FROM MUSIC, THEN I THINK WE HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER."

(The Offense Newsletter)

COLOURBOX Colourbox (Outer sleeve)



COLOURBOX Colourbox (Inner sleeve)



small town has as much chance of being selected as a happening, big-city nightclub. But, what's the logic behind it?
Liz: "What's he talking about?"
Robin: "He's talking about Holland, it's all about rice, small clubs that we know well because we've been there several times. We would've liked to visit more of the places where we've performed before, but that wasn't allowed. They told us that many more people would come than they could accommodate. That's why we do only three clubs, two sets each. In locales, though, that we feel good about and where you meet nice people."

And, you reward nice people by returning the favor?

Robin: "No, it has nothing to do with that - we just feel comfortable in these clubs."

However you look at it, it's a career. Eventually most other bands go on to another circuit.

Robin: "Mmm, they move on yes, to the bigger halls, but those aren't nearly as much fun as the smaller clubs. Not so intimate. We know that because we've played in huge halls here in England."

Like Sadler's Wells, for example, here in London?

Robin: "That isn't even the largest hall we've been booked for. But it's substantial. Fifteen hundred people, three nights in a row."

Simon: "It would've been fine if we hadn't been so far removed from the audience. A lot of the concerts we recently did were in old theaters with round stages. We were kind of dwarfed by the surroundings, and also we had to stand way in the back. Quite often you even have to bridge the orchestra pit to make contact with the audience. You're literally standing in front of a gap, and it's difficult to create a good atmosphere because your audience already has the idea you're miles away from them."

Self-Confidence

Each time I've seen the Cocteau Twins perform, I've been very aware of how considerable a risk concerts are for you. Whether it's Simon Raymonde or Will Heggie on bass doesn't matter. It has nothing to do with a formula that's being repeated night after night, contrary to what an unsuspecting spectator would readily assume when he finds that a tape recorder functions as a fourth band member. It can get out of hand from time to time.

Robin: "There's an element in it of... You could indeed easily think that because we use tapes, we do the same thing every night. But that's never the case. We play the way we feel, also because, for various reasons, the equipment can never be programmed to do exactly the same thing. Liz usually sings well, provided she can hear herself well. Sometimes that causes big problems for her - you know what I mean? It happens now and then, when the acoustics are bad, that she has to shout at the top of her lungs just to hear herself. So every night is different. That's true for Simon and myself too. It's not like the rock-and-roll method of 'let's plug in a guitar and fool around on the drums a bit'... because we know exactly what we need to hear in order to play well."

I get the feeling that there are other factors at work besides possible technical problems.

Robin: "Oh, yes! We're nervous and scared and we don't have self-confidence. I mean, it requires a lot of self-confidence to walk on stage with the air of 'everything will be cool.' We aren't even sure if people like what we play. We don't take applause for granted. Not in the least."

At your performances I always have the rare feeling that I'm being allowed to assess where

Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "MOST MUSIC IS CONTRIVED AND AIMED AT A PARTICULAR MARKET: IT'S NOT HEARTFELT IN ANY WAY. IT'S JUST CALCULATED - A NUMBER OF GROUPS CALCULATE WHAT THEY'RE DOING. I THINK THAT THERE ARE ENOUGH FRUSTRATED PEOPLE OUT THERE, PEOPLE FRUSTRATED BY WHAT THEY'RE GIVEN ON A DAILY BASIS, WHO ACTIVELY LOOK FOR BETTER MUSIC. AND CERTAINLY THE INVOLVEMENT OF 23 ENVELOPE OVER THE PAST THREE YEARS HAS HELPED FOCUS THE PRESENTATION OF OUR RELEASES, AND HAS SHOWN THAT ALL OF US CARE ABOUT WHAT WE'RE DOING. WE CARE THAT MUSIC IS SPECIAL, CAN BE AN IMPORTANT PART OF ONE'S LIFE, AND THAT IT DESERVES TO BE PACKAGED AND PUT TOGETHER IN A SERIOUS, ARTISTIC, AND PROFESSIONAL WAY."

(The Offense Newsletter)

write to us saying how hard it is to find certain items.

R. In order for 4AD to grow, is it necessary to become successful or at least more available in America?

I. Obviously I don't think like that. But I don't think like that for any territory. We represent artists/musicians and I hope we do it sympathetically and accurately. And if you make music, you have a desire, in varying degrees, for that music to be heard and to take that music to people in certain situations. I am isolating America because of its size, not because it is this wonderful marketplace that we have to crack. I think we release valid records and I like to think that they could be available in as many record shops as possible all over the world, but under the right circumstances.

R. Your attitude is very ideological.

I. Well it's logical, isn't it?

R. Maybe for you, but for some people not. To not give in to the American marketplace I think is very... courageous.

I. Maybe that illustrates my problems with major record companies all over the place. Because they don't understand it. They think that if there is a marketable potential, it has to be milked to the sacrifice of a human being's humanity and integrity. But having said that, I do think it is possible to find a sympathetic major outlet for one or two of the groups we represent. But I am nervous about doing that now in America, because virtually everywhere else in the world, through gradual growth and patience, we've developed relationships with outlets in various countries. And I have started thinking like that for America. One could go through the independent system in America, but it really isn't adequate.

I have licensed stuff to major companies and I have licensed stuff through independent companies. The conclusion I have drawn from that is, to really effectively maximize on distribution and such, beyond what we can do on an import basis, it is vital for us to go through a major company. But for it to go through a major company you gotta be in a position of strength for a Cocteau Twins record to take preference over a Bon Jovi record.

R. I recently heard the new 4AD release by Frazier Chorus. How important is it to bring in new bands as opposed to putting more time and energy into working with the bands you already work with?

I. The two go hand in hand. It became interesting for all of us here to do something new after releasing the compilation album. I can't really explain why. New blood, new involvements, it just felt necessary. When we venture into these arrangements they are seen as "one off" commitments. Just one record to feel each other out, see if we are traveling along the same path. Certainly, the most important thing is what I've been doing for the last three years, which is believing we should concentrate all of our energies on fewer things because there is so much more to achieve for everybody. But within that you have to recognize that, for instance, Colourbox's last album was in 1985, since then they released two more EPs, about a year and a half ago, Dif Juz made one album in 1985, Dead Can Dance spent a year or a year and a half on each LP. The first six months of 1987 we released two EPs, one by the Throwing Muses and one by the Wolfgang Press. You can't maintain a momentum this way, and just in terms of cash flow, you have to release some records.

R. Do you demand from bands such as the Cocteau Twins that they put out a certain number of records? You said you have them under a longterm contract. Doesn't that include that they do some records?

I. It includes that we have rights to more albums but I don't insist on a certain time period, it would be pointless.

R. What contemporary bands outside of 4AD do you truly admire?

I. I always have to stop and think about that one. I enjoy Breathless. Dominic Appleton, who sings on "Filigree & Shadow" - that's his group. I still like Echo and the Bunnymen and I like aspects of what Jesus and the Mary Chain do. I used to like Felt a lot but they have been repeating themselves too much in recent years.

R. Have there been bands that you would love to sign but are not interested in 4AD?

I. I don't think so. How would I know anyway?

R. Do you go out to the clubs and search for new talent, or do the

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Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "THE SONGS ARE ALL PRETTY DESPERATE, MELANCHOLY... I HATE TO SAY IT BECAUSE I HAVEN'T ACHIEVED THE SAME EFFECT BUT THE RECORD THAT'S ALWAYS EXISTED AS UNIQUE FOR ME IN TERMS OF ATMOSPHERE AND EFFECT IS LOU REED'S "BERLIN." THAT REALLY IS A DESPERATE RECORD BUT SOMEHOW, WHEN YOU'RE DEPRESSED, AND LISTEN TO IT AND IT SOUNDS RIGHT, IT ALMOST HELPS IF THAT'S POSSIBLE." (*Melody Maker*)



STANDING UP STRAIGHT The Wolfgang Press (Lyrics sheet)

you're at at that specific moment. Most artists mask that in a professional way.

Robin: "There's no way you can conceal that on a podium, can you? If you're goddamn drunk out of your mind, how do you think you can mask the fact that you're likely to fall over any moment?"

What are your thoughts about this, Liz?

Liz: "I think that a lot of people have the idea that the podium offers them an opportunity to act."

Robin: "Right."

Liz: "Well now, that's not a matter of course. They just adapt their behavior, change their act. I'm not saying that they don't do that already in their daily lives. But we can't do that. We're just being ourselves and that comes across."

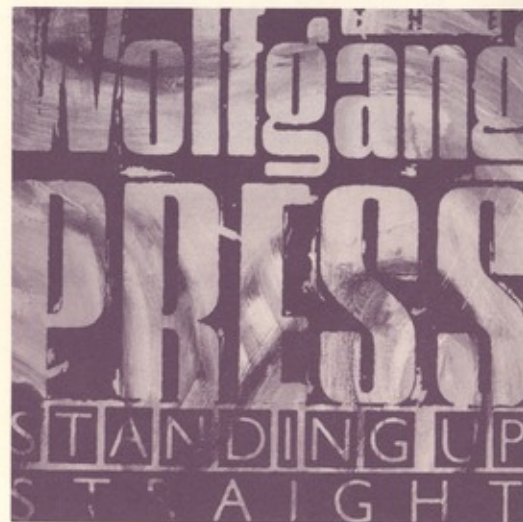
Do you adhere to certain morals as a band? Do you think you owe the public a kind of attitude that is fair to them?

Robin: "If you aren't honest in making records and performing, how can you expect your audience to be honest with you? For a lot of groups it's clearly an act: they'd like you to believe they're a group and that they stand for a certain cause. 'Look at us!' they say, 'We only want to perform and express our music.'"

In at least two cases I have seen you flee to the dressing room after a performance, totally unsatisfied with yourselves, weeping even... In Western culture crying is all too readily interpreted as a sign of weakness.

Liz: "Uhuh, it's a sign of weakness alright. I am weak."

STANDING UP STRAIGHT The Wolfgang Press (Outer Sleeve)



MARK COX, The Wolfgang Press:

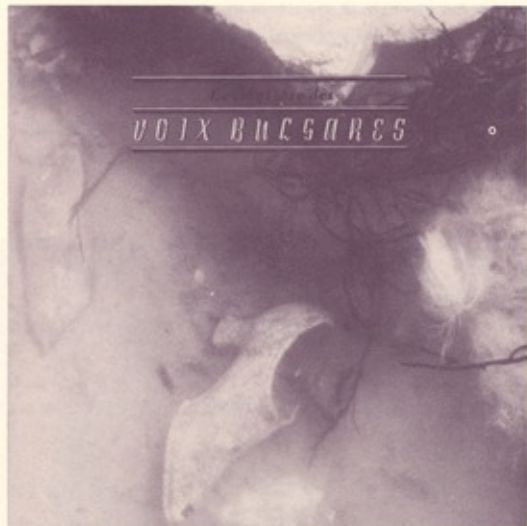
"OUR MUSIC IS BOLD, IT'S NOT PARTICULARLY SUBTLE; THE RECORDS HAVE BRIGHTLY COLOURED SLEEVES AND YOU CAN DANCE TO THEM. IN A WAY IT IS THE RHYTHM THAT IS ALL IMPORTANT. WE TRY TO MAKE THE LYRICS AND PERCUSSION MERGE TO THE EXTENT THAT IT DOESN'T MATTER THAT YOU CAN'T HEAR EXACTLY WHAT'S BEING SAID. AS LONG AS SOME OF THE MEANING STICKS WITH YOU. WE NEVER WANT TO GET INTO THE POSITION WHEN WE START TO DEFINE OURSELVES THAT BLATANTLY." (Arrows)

When I'm weak, I cry.
Robbin: "You don't think that she..."
Liz: "I feel defeated. Because after you played, after it is over, you feel so disappointed, because...because things went wrong that you could do nothing about, because my voice broke, for instance. Or because I couldn't hear myself well...such things ruin a performance. When you know you haven't given it your all...or you have, but you weren't able to reach the level you're capable of...you get disillusioned then, because you know you can do better. The people around you know it too...Oh, I can't explain it. You understand what I'm talking about, don't you?"
Oh yes
Liz: "It's a horrible feeling."
Robbin: "You feel like shit because you..."
Liz: "...because you've disappointed people - you haven't fulfilled their expectations..."
Robbin: "Right! You didn't pull it off and it's all your fault. You know what I mean? We recently played in Brighton and my guitar was off key all night, as far as I could hear. I was really pissed. I came off stage and threw beer cans around, screaming like mad. I felt that I had let down these two people here, not to mention the people who had shelled out the money to see us. The strange thing was that people came up to us saying 'What are you talking about? Your guitar sounded right on.' Haha!"
Liz: "One of our friends happened to be there..."
Robbin: "...Nevertheless, if it was off key, I was responsible for that."

accept.
Liz: "It's frustration. It's a terrible feeling. Horrible! I think I'd prefer to hide it if I could. Because if you think about it...Oh, I'd almost say that if you think about it, it doesn't look professional...haha...I wish I hadn't said that. I mean...oh, God!...if you suddenly start crying during a concert, you might alienate people. It's almost the same as with concealing. It's just as bad. Isn't it?"
Is crying then also a way of concealing?
Robbin: "It's just another way of not dealing with yourself."
Liz: "Right, the same kind of an escape. When it comes down to it, yes. There are people who are fed up with my sobbing fits. But if I didn't cry and instead projected that I was in control - while in fact I was screwing things up - that would antagonize the public too."
Robbin: "I know of less good reasons, that make you cry..."
Nevertheless, I'd rather see you cry.

Crying
It's a show business rule that you have to cover up any lack in quality.
Robbin: "Why cover things up? If it's off key, I want the whole world to hear it. It's not my mistake - I can't play an instrument and tune it at the same time. Haha."
Simon: "If it's painful to you, then you can't just ignore it. That would be a facade. If you were an actor, yes. Many bands consist of actors and build up a show...yes, it'd be easy then to pretend. For us, it would be too painful all too soon."
I think one of the unique qualities the Cocteau Twins has is that, even if it's an off-day for the band, I don't feel let down. And I actually have been to a couple of bad performances. Maybe it's because I can see for myself what went wrong. The band is as grouchy about it as I am. That makes it easier to

Treasure
Your last album was titled TREASURE. That's of course a word that indicates there's something there you value.
Robbin: "Well, Elisabeth had written the word treasure in her little book of words. She has this little book you know. All made-up words and disconnected ideas. Little fantasies. Words that she considers interesting. My attention was drawn to it because of the spelling. She'd had written it down in a very odd way."
Liz: "Haha, I can't even spell properly. But wait a minute! That's not it! You said you had a dream..."
Robbin: "Yes, that's true."
Liz: "Was that after you..."
Simon: "After you saw her book?"
Robbin: "No, before that."
Liz: "Yes, I thought that it had to do with some kind of scene that seemed to go together well with your dream."
Robbin: "Nevertheless..."
Tell me...
Robbin: "Someone told us that he dreamed we'd bring out a compact disc. A couple of days later I had a similar dream and I could even read the title: Treasure. Shortly thereafter I stumbled upon that same word in Liz's book. But the record hasn't been released on a compact yet."
Is he allowed to look in your book?
Robbin: "No, I did it without her permission."



LE MYSTERE DES VOIX BULGARES (outer sleeve)

Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "THE VERY FACT THAT I REALIZED IT WAS

POSSIBLE TO RELEASE RECORDS BY YOURSELF SHOWS WHAT AN
EXCITING TIME IT WAS. FOR THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF THE
EIGHTIES, VIRTUALLY ANYTHING COULD GET RELEASED. THIS
DEGENERATED INTO SELF-INDULGENCE, OF COURSE, BUT THAT
WAS THE PRICE FOR REAL GAINS. TO THIS DAY, I THINK
THERE'S A LARGER PROPORTION OF PEOPLE IN THE INDIE SCENE
WHO ARE MOTIVATED BY MORE THAN FINANCIAL CONCERNS."

(Melody Maker)

bands always approach you first with demos?
I. I listen to demos. That's how it's been now for a long time. In the earlier years when there was a lot more going on in London, I'd actually go out and see a lot more live music. But I haven't been out looking for a group or just been out and seen a group that I really enjoyed and wanted to get involved with. And equally, I've never been out and seen a group I wanted to get involved with that didn't want to be signed by us. It's weird, because quite often major record company A&R people say they never sign anybody from just listening to a demo tape. Most bands I signed have come from that source.
R. How important is the media for 4AD?
I. Currently we've had a lot of very, very good press and media



responses which have been great to achieve. But the English press doesn't sell any records. Perhaps good press works as an advertisement to get your name around. But you still need air play. For instance, if you have a college radio system such as in America, the degree of media exposure that we get would be valid, but we don't, because radio exposure is very hard to achieve in England.
R. How about the negative media coverage, the pigeonholing etc.?
I. The pigeonholing will always go on. But at least I prefer to be pigeonholed among ourselves or among something that we created ourselves, rather than with something someone else has done. That has been a gradual achievement, which can work as positively as it can negatively.
R. The Cocteau Twins do not like to do interviews. Does that affect their popularity, and do you think you can promote a label successfully without the help of the media?
I. I think it is much harder to achieve that now than it was a few years ago. Although the Cocteau Twins might not have received the same kind of press support as when they first started, they played live a lot more and did things on the radio, such as the John Peel Sessions, which got them exposure and got them an audience very quickly. I mean, they are exceptionally good, so people got to hear them and it grew from that. If we didn't have that, it would be much harder for us to get records across to a number of people.

R. What has changed most significantly since you first started 4AD?

I. O god, so much... I think what has most significantly changed is the recent obsession with charts-based material.

R. The audience's obsession?

I. And musicians! From the demos and tapes, we receive there is very little originality or identity and experimentation going on. You get the feeling that people are sending tapes to 4AD that have gone first to CBS, EMI, everywhere. And if you called them up and said 'Okay you'll get this deal, you'll go into this studio with this producer,' They'd be happy. There are very few people who are themselves, where you hear the music and can know the people. And equally, there are less and less situations where people can actually get to a certain stage without the need of a record company. There is far less opportunity for people to play live in this country than there used to be. There is far less "fringe" radio support.

R. Why do you think that's so?

I. It's part of a larger decline of things. It's part of the economic recession that went on in the early part of the 80's, and the development of video and high gloss. People are losing faith in their idols from the mid-seventies, who, by the beginning of the 1980's, were all releasing free singles of an album with B sides, as a throwaway. A lot of those ideals of the seventies vanished very quickly, and it didn't take long before people started entering this industry just to make money, rather than because it was the only way they could make their music available.



Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL. "I'VE GOT A PAIR OF EARS AND A BRAIN AND AN

OPINION. THAT'S ALL I'VE GOT. I DON'T HAVE ANY

ENGINEERING SKILLS. JOHN FRYER IS THE ENGINEER AT

BLACKWING STUDIOS, AND I ENJOY WORKING WITH HIM. I LIKE

HIS APPROACH: HE'S NOT CLOSETED LIKE A LOT OF ENGINEERS

AND HE HAS TAUGHT HIMSELF AS I HAVE, SO HE'LL TRY

ANYTHING. HE UNDERSTANDS MY PITIFUL LANGUAGE IN TERMS

OF DESCRIBING WHAT I WANT AND TRIES TO ACHIEVE THAT.

HE'S PREPARED TO GET SIDETRACKED AND TO TRY ANYTHING.

HE'S ALSO FULL OF IDEAS HIMSELF, SO WE PROGRESS

TOGETHER IN TERMS OF HOW THINGS WILL SOUND. IT'S A VERY

OPEN WORKING RELATIONSHIP. I DON'T SEE MYSELF AS A

PRODUCER; I MEAN, YES, I'VE INFLUENCED THE SOUND AND

THE DIRECTION OF THINGS THAT I'VE WORKED ON, BUT IN A

LOT OF CASES I'VE JUST BEEN THE PERSON TO TELL PEOPLE

WHEN TO START AND STOP. I SEE THIS MORTAL

COIL AS BEING THE ONLY TRUE PRODUCTION ROLE THAT I'VE

DONE. I'M IN CONTROL OF THINGS YET VERY OPEN OR

INDECISIVE, I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS CORRECT, AT THE

RECORDING STAGE. I ENJOY PLAYING WITH SOUND ONCE IT'S

RECORDED, JUST TAKING THINGS AWAY AND WORKING WITH

THE ELEMENTS OF WHAT IS ON TAPE THAT I FIND INTERESTING A

FEW MONTHS AFTER WE'VE ACTUALLY RECORDED IT. I DON'T

HAVE THE PROBLEM OF WORRYING ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF A

GROUP." (The Offense Newsletter)

This Mortal Coil.

R. When did you first come up with the idea to do a record yourself, and what was the initial response from the artists you invited?

I. From the very early days of the label's existence, I've always gone into the studio with the bands. I just wanted to be there and I wanted to experience as much as they did. Soon I began to see that especially with young... well actually it applies to more

How long have you kept doing a book like that?

Liz: "Oh, I don't have it anymore - I don't use it anymore. I used to keep up on it. It started with a few pages in a notebook and later on it expanded. But I don't need those volumes anymore. You used these notebooks to write lyrics?"

Robin: "It seemed a neat method for inspiring yourself."

Liz: "Mmm..."

Robin told me earlier that you use the studio environment as an instrument to write songs.

Robin: "Oh, that's how we recorded 'Treasure,' and 'Pearly Dewdrops.' Simon and I just start playing something. Meanwhile Elisabeth is in an adjacent room, writing her lyrics. After a while she comes in to listen to the tunes we wrote, and then she finds the words to go with them. Next, she sings them and it's taped."

Liz: "That's how it's done." Just like that, straight off the bat?

Robin: "It sounds somewhat too painless and too easy, I think..."

Liz: "...Yes..."

No Difference

Robin: "Sometimes it goes real fast, sometimes she has to hear the music tape more often. It's frequently frustrating for her. She will walk around for hours, shouting 'I'm stuck! I'm stuck!' Generally Simon and I work somewhat faster, and it usually takes a while before Elisabeth has thought out some of her perfect lyrics again."

Is Simon a kind of catalyst in the band? Someone who contributes to your ability to create?

Simon: "No! No-o-o-o..."

Robin: "You mean that he scares me...no, haha. No, it differs. Sometimes he comes up with an idea, and other times I do. Elisabeth only contributes in a much later phase."

What happens when you join them and sing your lyrics? The guys are never rebellious?

Robin: "Naaah..."

Liz: "No, at least not directly to my face."

So everything you create is all right, Liz?

Simon: "More than that, more than that."

Robin: "I think her work is

MARK COX, The Wolfgang Press:

"WE WANTED TO MAKE MUSIC THAT WOULD INTEREST US AND WASN'T BEING MADE BY ANYONE ELSE AT THE TIME. DEALING IN MOODS AND ATMOSPHERES AND TRYING TO PUT GENUINE AND HONEST FEELINGS INTO PIECES OF MUSIC. AND THEREBY COMMUNICATING AND SHARING FEELINGS AND EXPERIENCES WITH PEOPLE. WHICH IS BASICALLY WHAT WE'VE WANTED TO DO ALL ALONG." (Abstract)

MARTYN Young, Colourbox:

"WHAT WE WRITE VERY MUCH DEPENDS ON WHAT WE'RE INTO AT THAT PARTICULAR TIME. WE'RE FANS AS WELL - WE LISTEN TO LOTS OF DIFFERENT STYLES OF MUSIC. IT'S TECHNICAL REALLY, THE SONGS ARE MUSICAL EXERCISES. AS FAR AS THE LYRICS GO, THEY DON'T MEAN ANYTHING AT ALL. THEY'RE THE LAST THING TO GET DONE AND, TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I FUCKING HATE WRITING LYRICS, IT'S THE WORST THING IN THE WORLD AND ONE OF THE HARDEST BUT ONE WAY OF GETTING ROUND THAT IS TO DO IT IN A SORT OF CODE SO IT MEANS SOMETHING TO YOU BUT, TO OTHER PEOPLE, IT'S REALLY JUMBLED UP, GARBAGED UP." (Melody Maker)

good. We never work something out completely and then re-think it later. If it's junk, it's junk from the start. Our first records were made differently, we played it safe. More rehearsing and preparation. Oh, a recording studio, what's that? We know better now. We know how to get things done our way now. We know ourselves.
The strange thing with a band that is slowly rising.
Robin: "I like that. Slowly rising. It means that we haven't gotten much pressure from the outside so far..."
But there's no denying that you have achieved a certain level of success and credibility that you can build on.
Robin: "That depends on what you mean by success. We want to reach as many people as possible, but without the obligation to do it in the traditional businesslike rock-and-roll method of selling yourself. Hi, I'm Robin from the Cocteau Twins. I'll tell you all about me, me, me!!" You know, getting your picture on the cover of Smash Hits. Top of the Tops. Those are things that I find deceptive and humiliating. I think of that as success. Success! We're not in a hurry - we just want to play. Everybody is in a hurry nowadays. A quick hit. Become famous! Musical progression doesn't interest me either. Everything you do will take you one step further. Looking back, I don't see any growth in our music, none.
So I conclude that there is little difference between your consecutive albums.
Robin: "I agree. The musicians are the same each time, right? Everything we make will sound like us because of Elisabeth's voice, because of the way Simon plays the bass, and because I like to tinker with sound. But it's not a formula."



IT'LL END IN TEARS This Mortal Coil (Inner sleeve)

IT'LL END IN TEARS This Mortal Coil (Outer sleeve)

Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL, "I FIND IT A FASCINATING CONCEPT TO TAKE A SONG BY, SAY, AN AMERICAN SONGWRITER OF THE EARLY SEVENTIES OR LATE SIXTIES AND GET THREE PEOPLE WHO'VE NEVER MET INTO A STUDIO AND MAKE IT LIVE AGAIN. AND THEN PLACE THAT SONG NEXT TO ANOTHER COVER VERSION FROM A WHOLLY DISPARATE SOURCE OR NEXT TO A PIECE OF AMBIENT MUSIC." (Melody Maker)

experienced people as well, that sometimes it can be quite useful if there is an outside party present, having, hopefully, a valid opinion of their music, and try to prevent the often predictable bickering that can go on between members of groups. So I would just be in the studio and recognize whether the end result was valid or not. I like to make comments that affect the music for better or for worse. I enjoy that experience. I am not a producer, and I will never see myself being a producer *per se*. I didn't necessarily enjoy working on what I saw as other people's material and careers. Yet I really enjoyed the experience of being in control of the way the recordings were going. So that's where it all stems from. The idea of This Mortal Coil, before the name existed, to record using people from different

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bands, came from being with Modern English in America. During the tour they did an encore, running two of their songs together, "Sixteen Days" and "Gathering Dust." I told them I thought it might be a good idea if we recorded those two songs and combine them the way they did it live. They said at that point that they weren't particularly interested in doing it, because it meant going back for them. They were more interested in doing new material. So I asked if they would mind if I tried recording it with different people. That's where the idea came from. I have a hard time listening to it now, but recording those two pieces of music, making them one piece of music, and the experiment of working in that way, gave me a taste to continue. And "Song To The Siren" gave me the confidence to continue. Actually "Song To The Siren" was recorded just because I needed another side. I needed a track for the other side of "Sixteen Days" and "Gathering Dust." That whole experience, the recording of "Song To The Siren" and the end result, was fantastic and really, really rewarding to me, and as I said, it gave me the confidence to continue with the This Mortal Coil project and make an LP.
R. Which resulted into "It'll End In Tears."
I. That's right. On that album, the majority of people contributing were fairly close at hand. They were either members of groups that I was already working with or friends or people that were suggested by friends. The whole thing came together fairly spontaneously, although it did take quite a long time to

finish the entire album.

R. Did you have the tracks written out before you went into the studio?

I. I just had a tape with a lot of existing songs that I wanted to try and interpret. And there were two original pieces by Lisa Gerrard. I knew she had some pieces of music that she could perform at any time, that existed outside of Dead Can Dance. Those pieces dictated the atmosphere of the original music on the album.

R. You are not a musician yourself. How did the songs you picked, the existing songs, evolve? Do you write down arrangements? Can you actually write music?

I. Well, the way I do it is changing, but the bulk of the new arrangements of older material for that LP was started by Simon Raymonde of the Cocteau Twins. I gave him a tape of perhaps three songs. He worked out the chords into a very basic structure. And as soon as you have that, the new basis of a song, then it just progresses... With "Kangaroo" for instance -- and I don't know if you've heard the original Big Star version of that song, which is incredibly shambolic, totally spontaneous, as if it were live, instead of being recorded in the studio, which would have been impossible to recreate -- Simon just extracted the stricter, more regimented, elements of it with a bass line.

R. After you had the structure, then what?

I. Simon was in the studio on his own for about a week and put it all on tape and told me 'I know what all the chords are,' and that was enough. Again, with "Kangaroo," Simon played me the basic chords on bass guitar which we recorded. Originally, I wanted to do the entire song using basses; electric and upright bass guitar. But once we recorded the first electric bass, I started thinking about cello and violin. That's how I ended up meeting Martin McGarrick and Gini Ball, who play cello and violin. I met this guy Bill who played acoustic bass with Marc Almond in Marc and the Mambos. I told him about the song we were working on and asked him if he could play the cello as well as the acoustic bass, but he couldn't. So he introduced me to Martin, who also played in the Mambos and is a cello player. I

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Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "HE LISTENED TO THE BASS GUITAR, I GAVE HIM

THE WORDS, HE RAN THROUGH IT AND SUDDENLY IT TOOK

SHAPE. THAT TERRIFIED ME BECAUSE IT WAS COMPLETELY

DIFFERENT TO THE ORIGINAL, IT WAS SOMETHING OF OUR OWN.

YOU KNOW, I THINK THE ONLY REASON GORDON AGREED TO

SING THE SONG WAS BECAUSE OF THE LAST LINES - 'I WANT

YOU LIKE A KANGAROO.' I THINK HE FOUND THAT QUITE

PERVERSE." (*Melody Maker*)

MICK *Allen*, The Wolfgang Press:

"NEVER, EVER HAVE I THOUGHT OF OUR MUSIC AS WEIRD. WE DO CONSCIOUSLY SET OUT TO CREATE SOMETHING NEW, BUT NOT SOMETHING DETACHED

FROM WHAT'S HAPPENING, FROM HOW WE FEEL. IT'S *STRONG* AND IT DEALS WITH EMOTIONS WHICH PERHAPS NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE DEAL WITH." (*Sounds*)

MARK *Cox*, The Wolfgang Press:

"TO ME DURAN DURAN, SAY, ARE WEIRD. I DON'T KNOW HOW ANYONE CAN LIKE ANY OF THOSE PEOPLE." (*Sounds*)



Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL. "I HOPE THAT SOMEWHERE, IN THE BACK OF HER

MIND, LIZ (FRAZER) WILL REALIZE THE RESPONSE AND

RESPECT THAT IT'S GRADUALLY EARNED AND THAT IT WILL

COME TO MEAN SOMETHING TO HER, EVEN THOUGH SHE'S

CRITICAL OF HER OWN PERFORMANCE, SHE MUST BE PROUD

THAT A LOT OF PEOPLE ENJOY HER MUSIC.

STANDARD OF QUALITY WHICH ONE COULDN'T REALLY FALL

THAT FAR BELOW FOR ANYTHING TO BE WORTHWHILE."

(Melody Maker)

called him and he came down and we started talking about stringplayers and he mentioned Gini Ball. That's how I was led from one person to another.

R. Were the artists ever in the studio together, or did you record each track separately?

I. There was occasional crossover. It was all going on spontaneously.

While recording, a certain part would work and suggest something else, so I would get on the phone with someone. For instance, after doing the original bass and putting the cello onto "Kangaroo," I thought of Gordon Sharp singing it. So I got on the phone with him and said we're doing this song would you like to come down and sing it. And he said no. And I said please and he said well... what is it. So I read him the words and he really liked the last line, and finally

agreed to do it. And I am glad he finally did it, because he has an incredible voice. With Cindytalk he uses his voice as a weapon really, but he can sing beautifully.

R. Why did he say no initially?

I. I don't think he ever thought about doing anything outside of his own project, Cindytalk.

R. You have a distinct preference for a few artists when it comes to doing cover versions. There are three Tim Buckley songs you did.

I. Tim Buckley, throughout his career, and I don't know how many records he made, eight or nine, went through so many different phases and forms of music and, to me personally, achieved so much. And his voice... well anybody would recognize that I enjoy the human voice, and I find Tim Buckley's quite exceptional. And "Song To The Siren," which I ended up doing on "It'll End In Tears," is probably the most beautiful song ever written by anybody.

R. Yes, and the cover version is not bad either. Elizabeth Frazer does a great job singing it.

I. Yes, but she hates it, you know.

R. When you interpret other people's songs, David Byrne's "Drugs" for instance, the interpretations are so far removed from the originals that they become something entirely new. Why do covers at all?

I. Well, I have to say that I am busking it totally whenever I go into the studio...

R. You're what?

I. Busking...improvising. But "Drugs" is really an interesting and strange example. I got this sort of official Warner Brothers live bootleg album of the Talking Heads with "Drugs" on it, which was originally called "Electricity." It was a live recording of the song before they released it on the "Fear Of Music" album. I wanted to do an arrangement of it exactly the same as the way they did it live. So on tape, what we recorded was a version of "Drugs" using electric guitars, many electric guitars actually, bass and drums. I was happy with the musical arrangement that we got, and it was close to the original live recording, but I had a real problem approaching it vocally. I asked somebody to do it and to be perfectly honest it was very hard to get away from David Byrne. And what happened was that I had to scrap the song. Alison Limerick had come and she'd sung some kind of a backup. But I just couldn't make the lead work. What I ended up doing, which is something I enjoy doing with drums anyway, was getting the drums up and sticking on a lot of counted delays. This way you create a completely new and complicated rhythm out of a very simple drum pattern. So I did that for a little linking section. We were doing that all the time, just sticking stuff down on tape and mixing down linking sections. I really liked those drums and started to reintroduce, after first scrapping "Drugs," elements of the music back onto the drums and sorted out the bits I felt did work. Then I did a mix of the pieces of music I wanted to use, and had Alison Limerick come back in and sing live on top of that mix. So that's how that version ended up coming out totally different from what I first intended it to be; an exact copy of the original.

R. As a whole, I feel that your second This Mortal Coil album "Filigree & Shadow" is a much more complete album than your first, "It'll End In Tears." On "It'll End In Tears" the songs seem to be quite diverse in mood and character, almost as if it was a compilation album. Although you use various artists and arrangements on both albums, "Filigree & Shadow" has a more homogenized and consistent sound to it. Can you elaborate on this.

I. It's experience. With the first album, I had thought about linking the tracks and creating a more

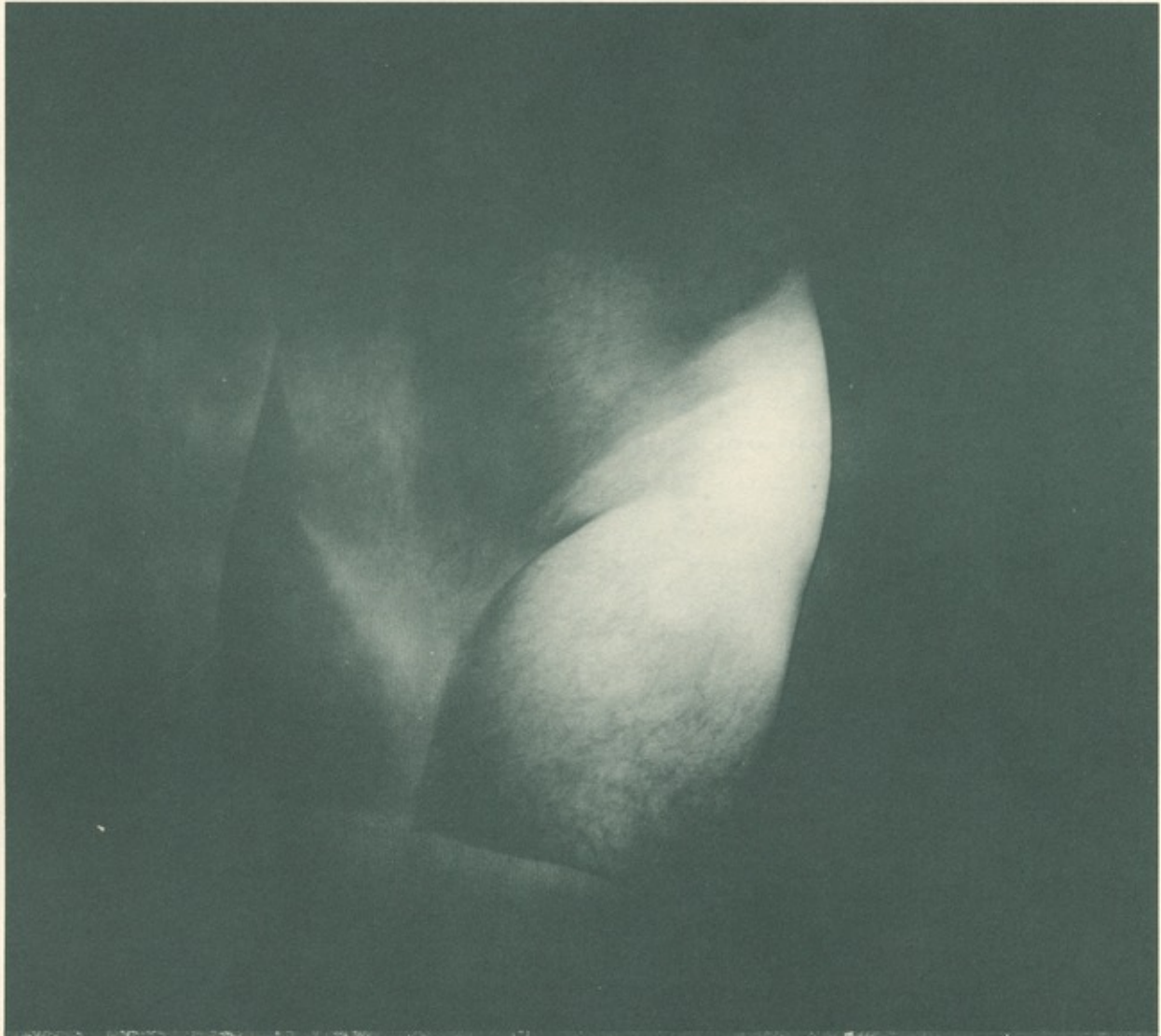
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Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "TIM BUCKLEY'S "STARSAILOR" IS ONE OF THE MOST UNCOMFORTABLE RECORDS I'VE EVER HEARD. I STILL FIND IT A DIFFICULT EXPERIENCE LISTENING TO IT AND, AT THE END OF SIDE ONE, THERE'S THIS BEAUTIFUL SONG, "SONG TO THE SIREN", AND HIS VOICE IS FUCKING STUNNING. IT'S PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT SONG EVER TO ME, IT'S MOVED ME MORE THAN ANYTHING." (*Melody Maker*)

Continued on page 17



The following eight pages were specially designed for Emigre magazine by 23 Envelope, the in-house design team at 4AD records. Vaughan Oliver designed two spreads; the "XY" project, and "Surfer Rosa" which uses artwork and photographs that are featured on the recent Pixies sleeve. All photographs are by Simon Larbalestier. Chris Bigg, the latest addition to 23 Envelope, designed two pages that are inspired by 4AD productions. "I'm Coming Home (Mama)" is a Wolfgang Press song from "The Legendary Wolfgang Press..." album, and "Finally II" is a Pieter Nooten track from "Sleeps With The Fishes."



ART DIRECTION & DESIGN : RAUGHAN OLIVER AT 25 ENVELOPE TOKIO PHOTOGRAPHY : SIMON TAKALESTIER

CATALOGUE: APRIL 1988

A. R. KANE

LOLLITABAD 704 12EP

DANIEL ASH

TONES ON TAILBAD 203 12EP

BAUHAUS

DARK ENTRIESAD 3 7

TERROR COUPLE KILL COLONELAD 7 7

IN THE FLAT FIELDCAD 13/CAD C 13 LP CAS

TELEGRAM SAM/CROWDSAD 17 7

TELEGRAM SAM/CROWDS/ROSEGARDEN FUNERAL OF SORESAD 17T 12EP

4.A.D. (compilation)BAD 312 12EP

IN THE FLATFIELD (plus 8 extra tracks from singles).....CAD 13 CD

BEARZ

SHE'S MY GIRLAXIS 2 7

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

FRIEND CATCHERAD 12 7

PRAYERS ON FIRECAD 104/CAD 104 CD LP CD

RELEASE THE BATS/BLAST OFFAD 111 7

MR. CLARINETAD 114 7

DRUNK ON THE POPE'S BLOODJAD 202 12EP

JUNKYARDCAD 207/CAD 207 CD LP CD

THE BAD SEEDBAD 301 12EP

Compilation of 7" releasesBAD 307 12EP

BUDD/FRASER/GUTHRIE/RAYMONDE

THE MOON AND THE MELODIESCAD 611/CAD C 611/CAD 611 CD LP CAS CD

BULGARIAN VOICES

LE MYSTERE DES VOIX BULGARESCAD 603/CAD C 603/CAD 603 CD LP CAS CD

LE MYSTERE DES VOIX BULGARES: VOLUME 2CAD 801/CAD C 801/CAD 801 CD LP CAS CD

CLAN OF XYMOX

CLAN OF XYMOXCAD 503 LP CD

A DAY/STRANGERBAD 504 12

MEDUSACAD 613/CAD 613 CD LP CD

BLIND HEARTSBAD 711 12EP

COCTEAU TWINS

GARLANDSCAD C 211 LP

LULLABIESBAD 213 12EP

PEPPERMINT PIGAD/BAD 303 7 12EP

HEAD OVER HEELSCAD 313 LP

SUNBURST & SNOWBLINDBAD 314 12EP

GARLANDS c/w JOHN PEEL SESSION (Jan '83)CAD C 211/CAD 211 CD CAS CD

HEAD OVER HEELS c/w SUNBURST & SNOWBLINDCAD C 313/CAD 313 CD CAS CD

PEARLY-DEWDROPS' DROPSAD/BAD 405 7 12EP

TREASURECAD 412/CAD C 412/CAD 412 CD LP CAS CD

AIKEA-GUINEAAD/BAD 501 7 12EP

TINY DYNAMINEBAD 510 12EP

ECHOES IN A SHALLOW BAYBAD 511 12EP

TINY DYNAMINE c/w ECHOES IN A SHALLOW BAYBAD 510 / 511 CD CD

THE PINK OPAQUECAD 513 CD CD

VICTORIALANDCAD 602/CAD C 602/CAD 602 CD LP CAS CD

LOVE'S EASY YEARSAD/BAD 610 7 12EP

COMPILATIONS

PRESAGE(S)BAD 11 12EP

NATURE MORTES - STILL LIVESCAD 117 LP

LONELY IS AN EYESORECAD 703/CAD C 703/CAD 703 CD LP CAS CD

LONELY IS AN EYESORE (Limited Edition)CAD D 703 LP

LONELY IS AN EYESORE (Deluxe Limited Edition of 100)CAD X 703

LONELY IS AN EYESORE (Video)VAD 703

COLOURBOX

BREAKDOWN (First Version)AD/BAD 215 7 12

BREAKDOWN (Second Version)AD/BAD 304 7 12

COLOURBOX (Mini L.P.)MAD 315 LP

SAY YOUAD/BAD 403 7 12

PUNCHAD/BAD 406 7 12

THE MOON IS BLUEAD/BAD 507 7 12

COLOURBOXCAD 508/CAD C 508/CAD 508 CD LP CAS CD

COLOURBOX (free L.P. with first 10,000 CAD 508)MAD 509 LP

BABY I LOVE YOU SOAD/BAD 604 7 12

THE OFFICIAL COLOURBOX WORLD CUP THEMEAD/BAD 605 7 12

COLOURBOX (Compilation inc. BAD 304/604/605 & MAD 315)MAD 315 CD CD

CUPOL

LIKE THIS FOR AGESBAD 9 12EP

DANCE CHAPTER

ANONYMITY/NEW DANCEAD 18 7

CHAPTER IIBAD 115 12EP

DEAD CAN DANCE

DEAD CAN DANCECAD 404 LP

GARDEN OF THE ARCAN DELIGHTSBAD 408 12EP

DEAD CAN DANCE (c/w BAD 408)CAD 404 CD CD

SPLEEN AND IDEALCAD 512/CAD C 512/CAD 512 CD LP CAS CD

WITHIN THE REALM OF A DYING SUNCAD 705/CAD C 705/CAD 705 CD LP CAS CD

DIF JUZ

HUREMICSBAD 109 12EP

VIBRATING AIRBAD 116 12EP

EXTRACTIONSCAD 505 LP

EXTRACTIONS (c/w 4 tracks from MAD 612)CAD 505 CD CD

OUT OF THE TREES (Compilation of BAD 109/116)MAD 612 LP

THE FAST SET

JUNCTION ONEAXIS 1 7

FRAZIER CHORUS

SLOPPY HEARTBAD 708 12EP

B. C. GILBERT/G. LEWIS

3R4CAD 16 LP

ENDS WITH THE SEAAD 106 7

B TIME (Compilation of CAD 16/AD 106 & BAD 9)CAD 16 CD CD

RENE HALKETT/DAVID JAY

NOTHINGAD 112 7

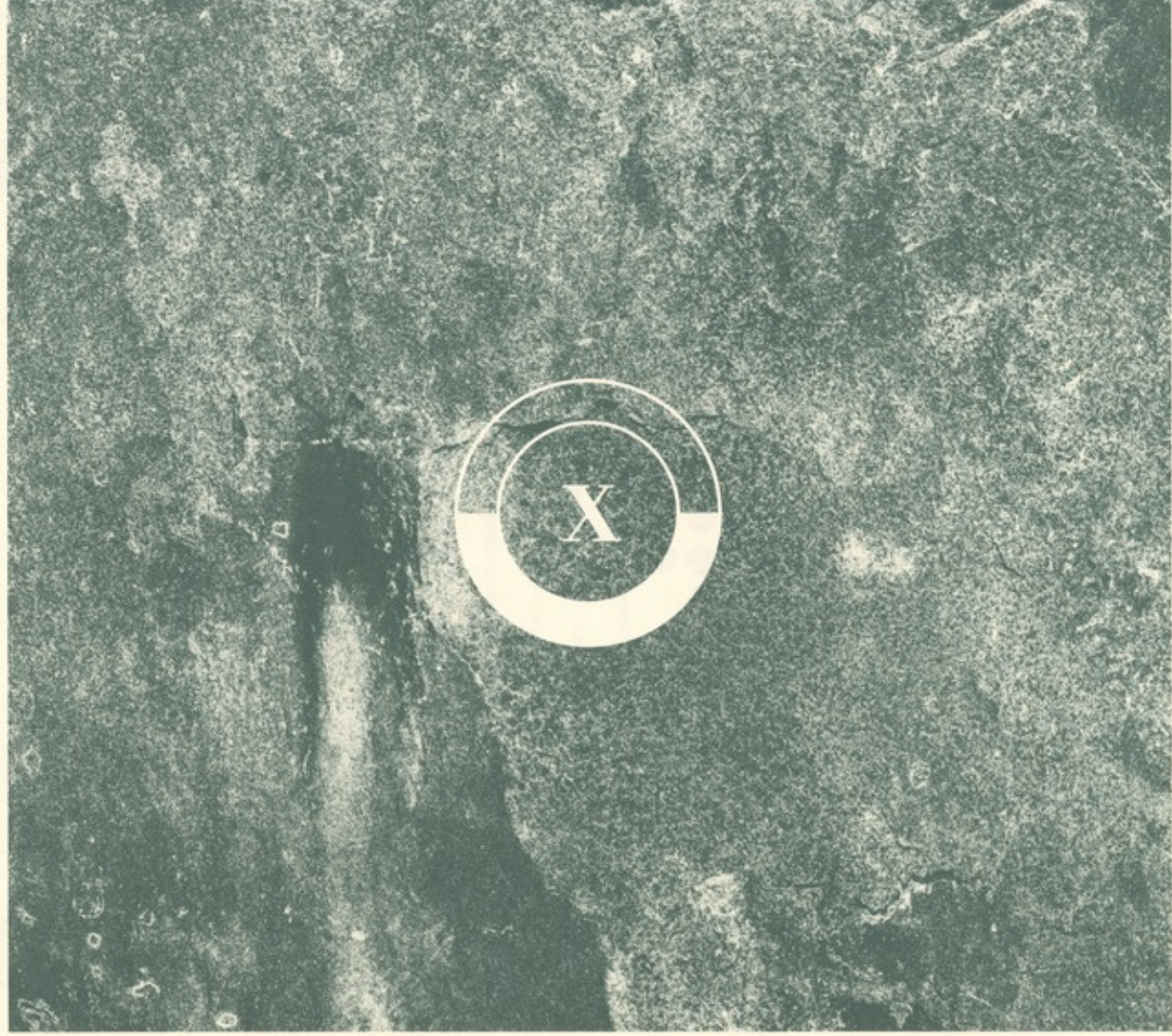
ROWLANDS, HOWARD/LYDIA LUNCH

SOME VELVET MORNINGBAD 210 12EP

THE HAPPY FAMILY

PURITANSAD 204 7

THE MAN ON YOUR STREETCAD 214 LP



ART DIRECTION & DESIGN : YAUDRAN OLIVIER AT 33 ENVELOPE TOKIO PHOTOGRAPHY . SIMON LABALETTE

IN CAMERA	
FINAL ACHIEVEMENT.....AD 8	7
IV SONGS.....BAD 19	12LP
FIN.....BAD 205	12LP
MATT JOHNSON	
BURNING BLUE SOUL.....CAD 113	LP
LYDIA LUNCH	
THE AGONY IS THE ECSTASY c/w THE BIRTHDAY PARTY (live) POPE'S BLOOD.....JAD 202	12LP
MIA/IRIS	
PUMP UP THE VOLUME/ANITINA.....AD/BAD 707	7 12
PUMP UP THE VOLUME/ANITINA (Re-mix).....BAD 707 R/BAD 707 CD	12 CD
MASS	
YOU AND I/CABBAGE.....AD 14	7
LABOUR OF LOVE.....CAD 107	LP
MODERN ENGLISH	
SWANS ON GLASS.....AD 6	7
GATHERING DUST.....AD 15	7
MESH & LACE.....CAD 105	LP
SMILES AND LAUGHTER/MESH & LACE.....AD 110	7
AFTER THE SNOW.....CAD 206/CAD C 206	LP CAS
LIFE IN THE GLADHOUSE.....BAD 208	12LP
I MELT WITH YOU.....AD 212	7
GATHERING DUST (Compilation).....BAD 306	12LP
SOMEONE'S CALLING.....AD/BAD 309	7 12
CHAPTER 12.....AD/BAD 401	7 12LP
RICOCHET DAYS.....CAD 402/CAD C 402	LP CAS
MY CAPTAINS	
FOUR TRACK EP.....AD 103	7
COLIN NEWMAN	
PROVISIONALLY ENTITLED THE SINGING FISH.....CAD 108	LP
NOTTO.....CAD 201	LP
WE MEANS WE STARTS.....AD 209	7
PROVISIONALLY ENTITLED THE SINGING FISH c/w NOTTO (plus free C.D. single - first 3,000).....CAD 108/201 CD	CD
PIETER NOOTEN/MICHAEL BROOK	
SLEEPS WITH THE FISHES.....CAD 710/CAD 710 CD	LP CD
PIXIES	
COME ON PILGRIM (Mini-LP).....MAD 709	LP
SURFER ROSA.....CAD 803/CAD C 803	LP CAS
SURFER ROSA (plus Come on Pilgrim).....CAD 803 CD	CD
THE PAST 7 DAYS	
RAINDANCE.....AD 102	7
REMA-REMA	
WHEEL IN THE ROSES.....BAD 5	12LP
RICHENEL	
L'ESCLAVE ENDORMI.....BAD 601	12
SHOX	
NO TURNING BACK.....AXIS 4	7
SORT SOL	
MARBLE STATION.....AD 101	7
THE THE	
BLACK AND WHITE/CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECT.....AD 10	7

THIS MORTAL COIL	
SONG TO THE SIREN.....AD 310	7
SIXTEEN DAYS - GATHERING DUST/SONG TO THE SIREN.....BAD 310	12LP
KANGAROO.....AD 410	7
IT'LL END IN TEARS.....CAD 411/CAD C 411/CAD 411 CD	LP CAS CD
DRUGS/COME HERE MY LOVE (Limited Edition 10").....BAD 608	10
FILIGREE & SHADOW (Double L.P.).....DAD 609/DAD C 609/DAD 609 CD	LP CAS CD
THROWING MUSES	
THROWING MUSES.....CAD 607/CAD C 607/CAD 607 CD	LP CAS CD
CHAINS CHANGED.....BAD 701/BAD C 701	12LP CAS
THE FAT SKIER (Mini-LP).....MAD 706/MAD C 706	LP CAS
HOUSE TORNADO.....CAD 802/CAD C 802	LP CAS
HOUSE TORNADO (plus 6 tracks from MAD 706).....CAD 802 CD	CD
23 ENVELOPE	
POSTERS (Set of 15 16" x 11" Designs).....WAD 23	
POSTCARDS (Series of 12).....PAD 23	
THE WOLFGANG PRESS	
THE BURDEN OF MULES.....CAD 308	LP
SCARECROW.....BAD 409	12LP
WATER.....BAD 502	12LP
SWEATBOX.....BAD 506	12LP
THE LEGENDARY WOLFGANG PRESS AND OTHER TALL STORIES.....CAD 514/CAD 514 CD	LP CD
STANDING UP STRAIGHT.....CAD 606/CAD 606 CD	LP CD
BIG SEX.....BAD 702/BAD C 702	12LP CAS
XMAL DEUTSCHLAND	
FETISCH.....CAD 302	LP
QUAL.....BAD 305	12LP
FETISCH (c/w QUAL).....CAD 302 CD	CD
INCUBUS SUCCUBUS II/VITO.....AD/BAD 311	7 12
TOCSIN.....CAD 407	LP
TOCSIN (c/w INCUBUS SUCCUBUS II/VITO).....CAD 407 CD	CD
DELETED	

wash the flags i
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im coming home
m coming home s
ave your head in
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a place im comin
g home shave yo
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COMING HOME

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e packed my bag
im coming home i
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coming home save
a place im comin
g home shave yo
r head im coming
home save a plac
e im coming home
im coming home i
m coming home ma
ma raise the dea
d im coming home
hold your breath
im coming home s
ave your flags i
m coming home if

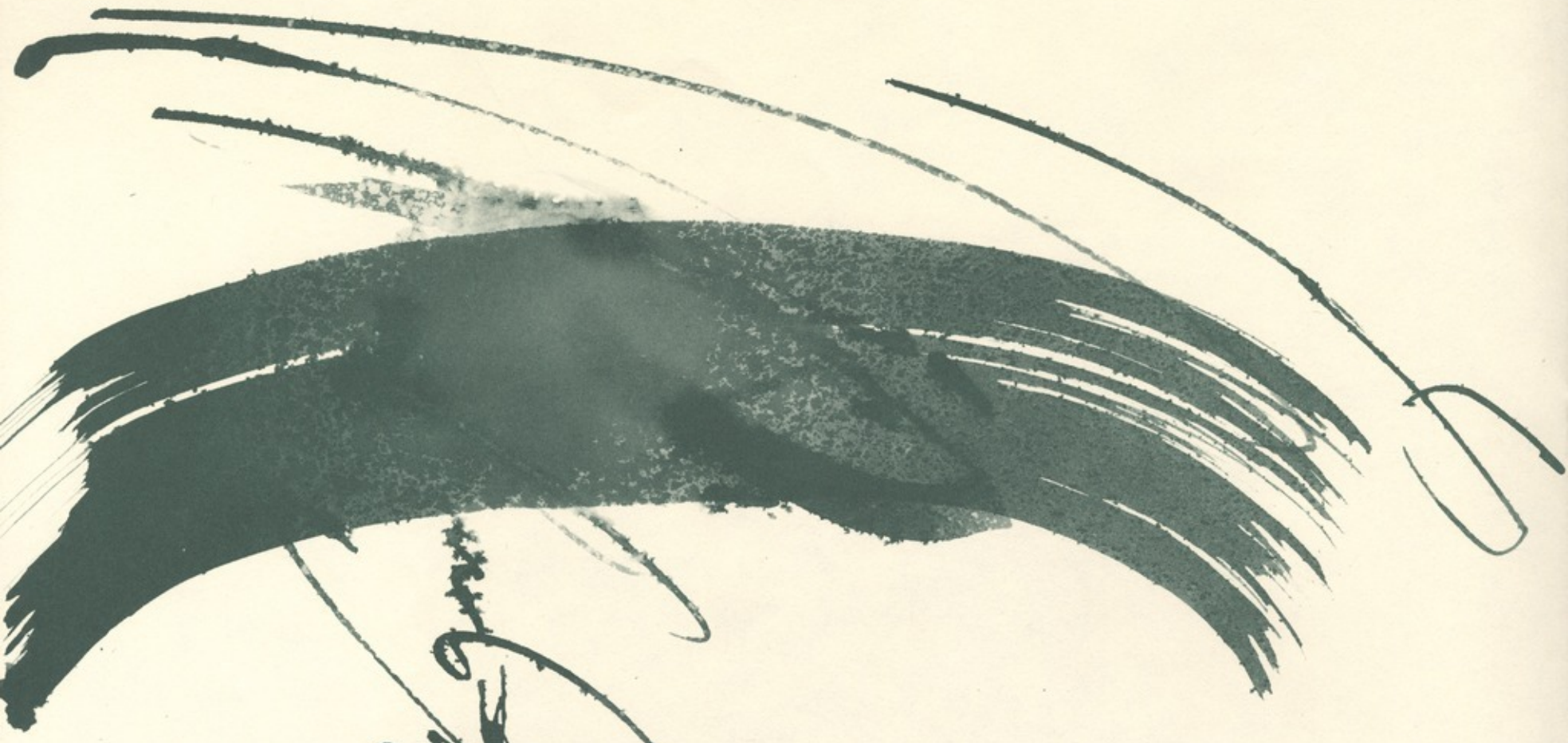


Armani

PHOTOGRAPH BY STACCA BARRELLI



Pixies SURFER ROSA



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From LONELY IS AN EYESORE 4AD Compilation (Video still)



BRENDAN *Perry*, *Dead Can Dance*:

"WE'RE REALLY DISAPPOINTED WITH THE FIRST ALBUM IN TERMS OF THE POTENTIAL OF THE MUSIC, THE RECORDING PROCESS IS TRYING TO, IN MATERIAL TERMS, COME AS CLOSE TO THE POTENTIAL OF THE IDEAL THAT YOU ARRIVE AT IN THE CREATIVE VISIONARY PROCESS. AND IT FELL FAR SHORT OF OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. OUR INEXPERIENCE IN THE STUDIO. WE WERE DETERMINED ON PRODUCING IT OURSELVES, BECAUSE WE FELT WE WERE IN THE BEST POSITION TO PRODUCE OUR MUSIC, HAVING CREATED IT. AND ALSO WE FELT IT WOULD BE A VERY EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN ITSELF. WE DIDN'T GET ON WITH THE ENGINEER AT ALL. SO IT WAS A STRAINED ENVIRONMENT WITHIN WHICH TO WORK. AND I DON'T THINK THE STUDIO WAS VERY GOOD FOR OUR PURPOSES; IT WAS BASICALLY BUILT OUT OF THE SUCCESS OF THE EARLY *MUTE* GROUPS, *YAZOO* AND *DEPECHE MODE*. IT WAS RIGHT FOR THEM BECAUSE ALL THEIR MUSIC WAS PRACTICALLY ON LINE, IT WAS ALL SYNTHESIZER. OUR MUSIC DEMANDED A NATURAL, LIVE ACOUSTICAL SOUND, BECAUSE WE WERE USING PREDOMINANTLY ACOUSTICAL INSTRUMENTS, AND WE WERE RHYTHM ORIENTED."

(Option)

continuous sound. But it didn't work. While we were completing the songs, recording them and mixing them, we were postponing the decision of linking. When it came to the final assembling, we tried to extract elements to create the linking sections, and it sounded very false to me. There are parts where it is continuous, and where I felt it worked. In some cases I recognized I was trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. From having had that experience, which in a sense was a disappointment, I really wanted to have what would be continuous music on the second album. So I started to create these linking points as the tracks were being recorded. I started to plan it. You have to try and map it out as you go along and that's why it worked better on the second album.

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There are still some points I am less

comfortable with and there were some incredible failures. I would decide that certain songs would blend and by hook or by crook I was going to make them work. But ultimately I had to step back and say, 'Look, you don't have to make them into one, just do something else.'

R. Will there be another *This Mortal Coil* album?

I. I hope so. I started working on it in February or March '87. I had four days in the studio. I went in on my own and I was pleased that for the first time I managed to play and do arrangements of existing songs and then from that wrote a piece of music which could be the springboard for ideas. This is the first time I actually worked out an arrangement for existing songs and played them myself. Again I was pleased that I didn't hate what I had done. So yes, I am sure there will be another *This Mortal Coil* album eventually. It's vital that I can apply the same degree of quality control to things that I do myself as I do to other people's work. And it's difficult, because alongside these projects I have to run the business of 4AD.

R. Do you prefer studio music over live music? You mentioned that most of the bands you sign come from you listening to their demos and you also said you were rarely going out to the clubs anymore to listen to live music. Are you a studio music person?

I. I suppose so. I still really enjoy seeing good bands playing live. There are fewer places for people to

play in London. There are quite a few reasonable places to play that have 2000 or more seats, or there are some pretty bad tiny places. However, the middle ground is very difficult. There aren't many places where there is a lot "happening," so I don't actively go out to see things that often, but I still enjoy it. It's different. I don't think that groups should be overly concerned about recreating their live music in the studio. I think you can do a lot more in the studio. Equally, I don't think that in a live situation you have to emulate exactly what you have done in a studio. Studio and live music should be considered as two different animals.

R. Live shows do give the audience an honest look at the bands and function as great promotion. How do you feel about the lack of live performances by some of the 4AD bands?

I. I can totally sympathize with people who aren't interested in spending a three or four month period on the road. You go crazy. I do get frustrated sometimes when the opportunity arises for a tour. When a group or artist has reached a certain level when they *can* play a lot everywhere and they don't, I get frustrated sometimes by what I see as a missed opportunity.

R. Earlier you mentioned that the kind of music you like is the music that gives you a feeling for the people behind it. I think the best way for getting that across is by performing live.

I. Don't get hung up on that point because it's twofold. The Wolfgang Press, who recently went to the U.S. for a ten day tour, really enjoy playing live. However, it's not as easy for them to get live gigs all over the world as it would be for the Cocteau Twins, for instance. For Dead Can Dance, which is now a thirteen-piece group, it is financially difficult to tour. So there are certain obstacles. Either a lack of popularity, or too many people, or just the reluctance to tour, which is true of the Cocteau Twins.

R. I read this interview with Brian Eno, I forgot where, and he talked about musicologists who have said that everything pop musicians are doing was really known by about 1820. Eno said this might be correct in terms of compositions written down on paper, but they ignore where the true innovation is taking place, which is in dealing with textures in music that's being done

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Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "I LIKE THE COMPACT DISC FORMAT. IT'S NOT GOING TO GO AWAY, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO IT ACTUALLY BEING A SERIOUS ALTERNATIVE TO VINYL. VINYL IS RESTRICTIVE, OBVIOUSLY IN TERMS OF QUALITY, BUT ALSO IN ITS LITERAL LENGTH. COMPACT DISC, IF IT DOES BECOME AN ACCEPTED NORM, WILL MEAN THAT ALBUMS WILL NO LONGER BE FORTY MINUTES LONG BUT CLOSER TO SEVENTY MINUTES, WHICH IS GOOD." (*The Offense Newsletter*)



Throwing Muses

By Atto Squisito

"When love grows diseased, the best we can do, **you** can do, is to endure the torture of a lingering and consumptive passion. That's if you've got the balls. Trivial people and weak people think there's something brave in putting it to a violent death..."

Kristin, how old are you?

"Twenty."

I thought for a moment. How the fuck does someone get to think like that when they're 20, especially an apple-cheeked student from Rhode Island. It's ridiculous. It's too fantastic.

"You see I believe in the ultimate indecency of things. You'd never understand that. If you even had an inkling of that you'd never have asked that question. It's not God that's dead, it's decency and, frankly, I doubt it ever lived. You should be grateful that in me you discover indecency to be such a gorgeous, perfect thing."

She grinned broadly and I was left wondering what had happened to decency. Someone must have killed it, judging by the television and the newspapers. You only have to walk down the street or eavesdrop on a conversation to realise decency is dead. It's possible that before they murdered it there was no fear, no fear of the dark, no fear of the water, no fear of other people.

"You're so innocent. You're almost soulless."

So what are you, you and your friends? Commonplace. Mundanely so. One of you's a baker, one's unemployed and one used to play in a punk band.

"I find it amazing that very superficial people always have to have layers of deliberate oddness slapped onto things in order to make believe they're odd. You're no better than a reporter, you want theories and truths. Why should I hang a price-tag on myself just so you can value me? Great music isn't rational, it's mad, mad with its own loveliness."

The boy by her side, squatting in the mud by the river and tapping disinterestedly on a tiny tin drum, was David Narcizo. He, like Kristin, was just 20 and he felt the same. "Kristin enjoys torture," he taunted.

What?

"Tortured minds," giggled Tanya.

"We all do," added Leslie. Now there were four voices throwing muses.

"We take tortured minds, you see."

Like who's?

"Like yours. Like anyone's."

KRISTIN *Hersh*, Throwing Muses:

"THE FIRST TIME I HEARD MY OWN VOICE? WE WERE RECORDING IN A MOBILE UNIT IN THIS STREET, BECAUSE I'D BROKEN MY LEG. THE SONG WAS

PRETTY AND HARSH. THEN THEY PLAYED IT OVER THESE BIG SPEAKERS, AND THE DOORS OF THE VAN WERE OPEN, SO MY SONG WAS BOOMING OUT

INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD. AND I REALIZED THAT WHEN YOU RECORD A SONG IT'S NOT YOURS ANYMORE. IT HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN. AND SUDDENLY

HEARING SOMETHING THAT IS PART OF YOUR BODY, OUT THERE, BEYOND YOUR CONTROL, ENTERING OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES - IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR

ME, I JUST COLLAPSED. CRYING, EVERYONE HAD TO HOLD ME UP..." (*Melody Maker*)

And show them as they ought to be. There's a special romance to a crumbling personality and, as such, one should never show it as it is. Madness, neurosis, can be anything but never dull." Is that really what you're talking about?

"He's learning. Maybe, maybe not."

The river laughed. We pretend for nature. We endow it with suitable reactions. We're poor animals.

"I suppose I should be surprised that some of the self-pitying crackpots I play with can entertain such inhuman ideas. But they do. The most human of us, the victims of intellect and guilt, are the least animal, the most inhuman. I knew that when I was twelve."

If Kristin has a rule then it's barbarism, the barbarism of life described with barbarous experiment, barbarous pentameter and barbarous hexameter. Savage thoughts rear savage lines. Or should that be the other way around?

"One or the other or both. It's hardly important. You're missing the point."

"We write lovesongs," snapped David.

"But, unlike others who pretend to do the same, we don't peddle hopeless passions," said Tanya, her smile vanished. "We document them."

Hopeless passions?
"Yes. There's an illusion that love can be free. It's a necessary fiction because where it ends love begins. Love loses its charm when it's not free and whether it's chained by traditions and law or simply by infatuation the effect's the same - it becomes worthless and, in my opinion, even abhorrent. Like the caresses of a maniac."

But you're married, you have a child...

"Pain forces even the innocent to lie... sometimes..."

Is this a confession?

"Maybe, maybe not. Though I must confess I'm still a little in love with my sins."

What are your sins?

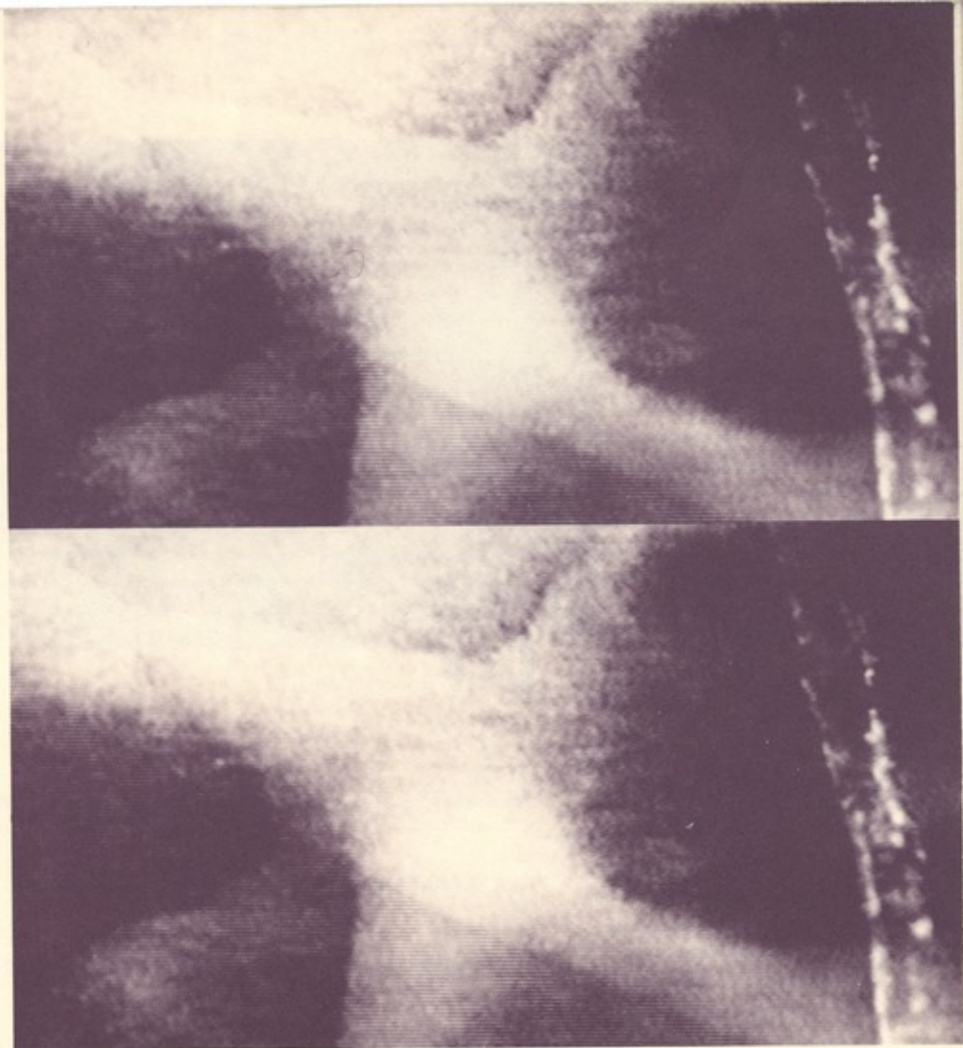
"Nothing. I have none. I have nothing to do with this, this is **your** invention."

Why should I invent?

"Because you philosophers, critics and biographers are all the same, you're nothing compared to what you discuss. You lack erotic fury and that's your sad, ugly debilitating truth."

(Originally written for Throwing Muses and 4AD by The Stud Brothers)

From LONELY IS AN EYESORE 4AD Compilation (Video still)



Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "JUST RECENTLY "VICTORIALAND" WENT TO #10 IN

THE NATIONAL CHARTS HERE IN ITS FIRST WEEK, WHICH WAS A

VERY GOOD ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE INDEPENDENT INDUSTRY

AND A VERY GOOD ADVERTISEMENT FOR 4AD AND THE COCTEAU

TWINS. YOU CAN DO THAT WITHOUT HAVING TO SUCCUMB AND

WITHOUT HAVING TO HYPE. JUST GENUINE SALES CAN GET YOU

THERE, AND IT'S A GOOD FINGERS - UP TO THE REST OF THE

INDUSTRY THAT DOESN'T BELIEVE IT'S POSSIBLE WITHOUT

THEIR WAY OF DOING IT." (The Offense Newsletter)

in studios today. Do you feel that what you are doing is innovative?

I. Yes, but even apart from the innovation Eno is talking about, within the context of popular music, a lot can still be expressed, just through individuality. I am talking about a more traditional structure of a group. Through your own individuality or naivete, or excitement or talent, you can produce something totally valid and even innovative.

R. Earlier we talked about the media pigeonholing certain bands as making 4AD music. I think this means that 4AD has enriched our vocabulary for describing music. With new forms of music appearing, how do you think our concept of music is changing?

I. Very slowly. I am amazed at the complacency of the average member of the public. Today's

music is so repetitive and nonprogressive. And music is no longer as important to people on its own. It is absorbed and experienced in so many different ways now, with cable television, with the infatuation for a punchy little film soundtrack for every major film. It's not just music anymore. People just aren't getting excited by a group and the way they develop. It's coming at you from all sides. It's hard for young people to differentiate and recognize what the music is for. Is it the video, is it the film, is it the single? Music just seems part of the machinery of an industry; it's about making money.

R. Well, it is. Over the years, quite a few people have come to depend on music as an industry. And I think you will never be able to turn that around.

I. There's no need for that, but I would hope that the people who are making music themselves, even alongside the desire of making money, would have a desire to record something that is completely their own. In the Sixties, groups would record an album every six months and each album would be radically different from the previous one. Now it takes four years to record an album and they will still be releasing singles from the same LP four years down the line. It's so uninspiring.

R. In a review of "Filigree & Shadow" in Vinyl magazine, the reviewer wrote: 'Enjoy this record little by little. If you listen to this all at once you will overdose on too much beauty.' I do agree that "Filigree & Shadow" is a very beautiful album. If you consider what you are doing as a form of art, does it bother

you that this is the praise you are getting?

I. No. If the music evokes a response, that's great. If you ask me if its wrong in 1987 to be exploring the potential emotions that can be triggered through that record, I don't think so. I think there is a place for it. Certainly there's a place for it in my heart. That's all I can be inspired by.

R. When you are in a position to release your own records, as you are doing, picking your own musicians, arrangements, etc., don't you make things too easy on yourself by letting out one ingredient, which is a certain amount of criticism? Most bands do have to deal with this when they want to have their music released. The word "self-indulgence" has sprung up quite a few times in reviews of your work.

I. I can't deny self-indulgence. Of course it is. It has to be. It keeps me inspired enough to remain in this business. I am surrounded by people who I personally find incredibly inspiring as artists, whether they are graphic designers, photographers, musicians or engineers. I am surrounded by people whose talents I admire. I feel I have to try and contribute to some kind of creativity myself to keep myself inspired. It's also an outlet, it enables me to deal and carry on with a lot of the business bullshit. But it isn't that easy. And I've been criticized for creating an incestuous atmosphere. On "Filigree & Shadow," you read names such as Mark Cox, Andrew Gray and Dave Curtis; they are all in groups that I work with. But the amount of time they spent in the studio was less than an hour each.

Simon Raymonde's work, which appears all over the record, was all done in three days, right at the beginning of the record. From there on I made a conscious effort to work with people whom I didn't know, apart from Martin McGarrick.

It wasn't that easy. A lot of that is my pride as well, wanting to show that This Mortal Coil wasn't the 4AD house band. There was a strange kind of resentment with the partial success of the first album with some of the people who played on that album. I also didn't want to live with that. I didn't want to feel that because I was working with people who were my friends, I was using them. I wanted it to be more of a one time thing kind of a session.

R. What would be the biggest

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Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL "SOMETHING I ALWAYS TRY TO HANG ONTO IS THE

FEELING THAT I USED TO GET WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, THE

FEELING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF RECORDS, OF MUSIC, THE

EXCITEMENT I USED TO FEEL WHEN I WOULD BUY A RECORD

AND, YOU KNOW, GETTING HOME, THE ANTICIPATION OF

LISTENING TO IT. THE THING OF ACTUALLY SPENDING A LOT OF

MONEY ON BUYING A RECORD, THE FEELING THAT THERE'S

SOMETHING BEYOND JUST THAT VINYL, THAT THERE'S A FEELING

OF THE SINCERITY AND PASSION COMING THROUGH FROM EVERY

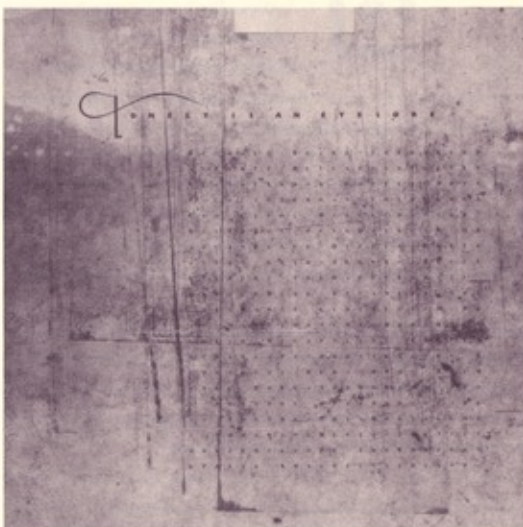
PART OF THAT THING THAT YOU SPENT ALL YOUR MONEY ON,

THAT IT'S SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT TO HANG ONTO.

ULTIMATELY, THAT IS STILL ALL THAT I REMAIN - A FAN OF THE

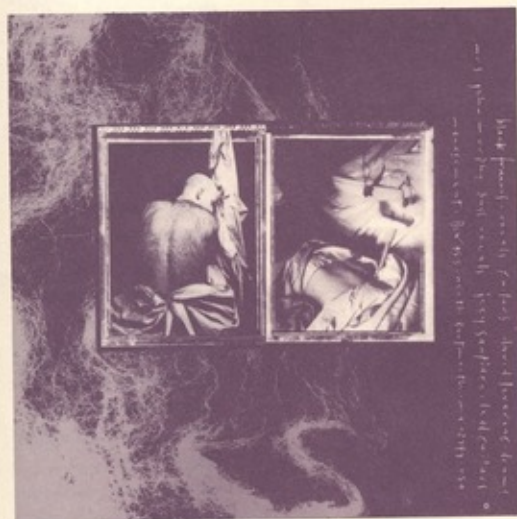
THINGS THAT WE DO." (The Offense Newsletter)

LONELY IS AN EYESORE 4AD Compilation (Catalogue)





LONELY IS AN EYESORE 4AD Compilation (Inner sleeve)



COME ON PILGRIM Piles (Outer sleeve, front and back, photography by Simon Lamberton)

Ivo WATTS-RUSSELL: "IT REALLY WOULD BE WISHFUL TO THINK THAT EVERYTHING THAT WE RELEASED WOULD HAVE THE LONGEVITY THAT VELVET UNDERGROUND OR THE DOORS OR WHOEVER HAVE, BUT I'M DAMN SURE, THAT A NUMBER OF OUR RELEASES REALLY DO HAVE THAT SPECIAL QUALITY TO THEM, THAT TIMELESS QUALITY TO THEM. THEY ARE IRRELEVANT OF THE TIME AND THE INFLUENCES AND THE TECHNOLOGY THAT WAS AVAILABLE AT THE TIME, AND THEY STAND AS WORKS THAT MIGHT OFFER DIFFERENT THINGS IN THE FUTURE BUT WILL ALWAYS OFFER SOMETHING TO THE LISTENER IN THE YEARS TO COME."

(The Offense Newsletter)

compliment I could give you regarding the two This Mortal Coil albums?

I. Nothing too grand. That they were very special and significant recordings to you whether you had five or five thousand records, and that you were fond of them. Does that make sense?

R. Yes, because they are very special to me right now. What would be the biggest insult?

I. I don't know. I guess if you thought they were totally self-indulgent and not valid outside the self-indulgence. But still that wouldn't be an insult. It would just be a shame that I wasted my time for you and everybody who would say that.

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Sleeve design

R. How did you get in touch with Vaughan Oliver and what was the first sleeve he designed?

I. When we started the label and released the first Modern English single "Songs Of Glass," we had a guy named Mark design the sleeve. I forgot his last name. When we released their second single, "Gathering Dust," I contacted Mark who was unavailable. So he put me in touch with somebody else who happened to be going to America and he in turn put me in touch with this chap called Vaughan Oliver. I called Vaughan, who at the time was working for a design company called Michael Peters and Partners, and he came to see me. The idea that the group had, which they had already done themselves on a T-Shirt, was to work around a Diane Arbus photograph of a nude couple sitting in a room in a nudist colony with a poodle in the background. And on their T-shirt, they had replaced the poodle with a television with Modern English scratched into it. Funny enough, within Vaughan's portfolio was a version of this very same photograph by Diane Arbus, that he too had done something to. I can't remember what he had done to it, but it was a very bizarre coincidence. So that was the first single he did and from then on we kept in touch and he did the first and second Modern English LP covers and one or two Modern English singles and that was about it, until he came to work for us fulltime in 1983. By then we had built up a friendship and a lot of sympathy for what he was doing.

R. For a small, independent label such as 4AD, it seems quite a luxury to have a graphic designer on

staff. How important is sleeve design for you?

I. Terribly important! In the context of starting an independent label, independent stands for artistic freedom. And it was Vaughan who educated me to recognize that this could be applied to graphic design and photography as well. Sleeve design has become an important outlet for his work, and I am proud that this is so. I like him to pioneer and develop what he is doing with sleeves just as much as I like musicians to experiment and pioneer with their music.

R. Is Nigel Grierson on staff as well?

I. Until about two years ago, he was attending the Royal College of Art here in London doing a course in film and photography. After completing his first film, which is called "Maelstrom," he left college and we did employ him for a year and a half to work on the "Lonely Is An Eyesore" project and to shoot related sleeves that were done at that time. But since that project is finished, he is working freelance again.

R. It must take a pretty decent bite out of your record publishing budget to produce the type of sleeves you do. What is your budget for the sleeves?

I. We don't sit down and work out a specific budget for each record. Vaughan's contribution to what I consider the strength of what we are doing as a label has certainly equaled that of any one individual or group that we are working with.

So in the same way as I would expand and progress working with a group, assuming that their creativity was guaranteed or continuous, 23 Envelope has developed and its budgets have expanded. It affects things across the board. I mean the budgets are huge. I just saw last year's figures. Our turnover had doubled, but our production costs had tripled.

R. But you still see the money spent on sleeves as a valuable thing to do?

I. Yes. From time to time I talk to Vaughan about this and perhaps warn him that if the bubble bursts and we really are under extreme financial pressure, he is going to feel it more than anybody else. He'll have to do with using less than four color, you know, more restrictions.

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Vaughan Oliver handles all art direction and design for 4AD under the name of 23 Envelope. He studied graphic design at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Polytechnic under Terry Dowling between 1976 and 1979 and began collaborating on record sleeves in 1981 as 4AD was producing its first releases. The following interview with Vaughan Oliver (V.) was conducted by Rudy VanderLans (R.).

R. You went to school at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Polytechnic and studied under Terry Dowling. How influential was he on your work?

V. Terry Dowling has been quite influential in terms of attitude. We didn't learn any particular skills there, but more a sort of general approach to things. He taught us to utilize mistakes, to change route along the way and not just stick to one idea. He has a very idiosyncratic approach to type and design and illustration. He always collected these bits and pieces on his travels, chocolate wrappers, photographs of shop fronts that he worked with. He was very influential on a whole school of illustrators in England about ten or fifteen years ago, people such as Russell Mills, Sue Coe, Ian Pollock and Robert Mason. They didn't study under Terry but they all knew and admired his work and they were strongly influenced by him. All of these people at one point or another came to Newcastle to teach. The Quay brothers too, taught classes there and were also influenced by Terry.

R. So there wasn't any real classic typography taught.

V. If there was, I didn't notice it.

R. Some of your typographic work seems quite classical, though.

V. I think I was very ignorant in college of the potential of type. I wouldn't necessarily blame it on the tutors, but maybe on my own narrowmindedness. I used to concentrate mainly on illustration, even though it was a graphic design course, and I came out of school with an illustration portfolio.

R. That had a lot to do with Terry Dowling?

V. Yes, I mean, he would try and push us more towards design and try and tell us about type and packaging. But I preferred to be more self-indulgent, I suppose. However, it's the same energy that went into the illustrations then and is now diverted to typography. I don't do any illustration anymore.

R. Do you miss doing illustration?

V. Not really, because I hadn't realized the potential of type.

R. I think it's your use of type that makes your work recognizable. Do you consider yourself a typographer?

V. Maybe, but not a very well-versed one. I am not well-versed in the rules, the classical rules of typography. There's no real foundation. If I realize anything, it is the potential of type to be an illustration and not information. I think that is how I tend to use type. I use it in a very intuitive way. There is not always a great deal of logic behind it. I use type to evoke an atmosphere or general feeling for something, or sometimes I am just being self-indulgent. And why not, if it actually communicates at the same time?

R. How do you think sleeves should communicate? Are you actually trying to bring a clear and immediate message to the buyers, or are you, on a more subtle level, trying to appeal to people's tastes?

V. I hope I appeal on a more immediate level. Most of the records we released, especially in previous years, didn't



Nigel Grierson is a freelance photographer and filmmaker who has been involved with the photography for 4AD sleeves since the label's first releases. He studied graphic design at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Polytechnic under Terry Dowling between 1975 and 1979. He then attended the Royal College of Art, where he completed the post-graduate photography course and scripted, directed and produced his first film "Maelstrom." He was involved full-time with the 4AD compilation video "Lonely Is An Eyesore," and is currently at work on a long format video for David Sylvian. The following interview with Nigel Grierson (N.) was conducted by Rudy VanderLans (R.).

R. What is your involvement with 4AD currently?
N. I am not employed by 4AD at the moment; I was during the shooting of the videos. My photography is mostly used for the Cocteau Twins and This Mortal Coil projects. There isn't a sufficient demand for my kind of photography, except for occasional projects such as Dif Juz, the Bulgarian Voices, or Richenel, where my aesthetic can be employed, but not everybody wants that approach. And I would rather maintain my own personal style, anyway. I prefer to work with people who have a certain empathy and where there are certain parallels between my work and their music. That's the only way to work, really. Otherwise you just become a tool. Vaughan can be employed on a fulltime basis just for the sleeves and things such as stationery, etc., because he can adapt his designs to the particular circumstances, he's good at that. Whereas with photography, I believe that people should employ you for your particular vision. If someone wants something specific, they should use the right person.

R. How about the compilation

23 ENVELOPE

VAUGHAN OLIVER (left) AND NIGEL GRIERSON (right) of 23 Envelope (Photograph by Nigel Grierson of 23 Envelope)



video? Was it difficult to work on a project that shows a variety of bands?

N. When we sat down and talked about the compilation video, it seemed like an opportunity to really present a unified feel over the whole film. Especially with the long format video, I thought it would be more interesting to give it a sort of filmic style throughout rather than do individual videos. But because of each group's individuality, every video had to look totally different and original. To a degree, I've always found that a problem, having to work for all these groups under the same label. On the one hand, you want to give the label an identity and on the other hand, you try to give each group its own.

R. I would like to talk about that some more later. First, how did you get involved with video?

N. I studied film at the Royal College of Art in London and made a film there called "Maelstrom" which Ivo saw. He really liked it and liked the relationship between music and images that I used. As a natural extension of doing both record sleeves and film work, I started doing videos. Originally we talked about a long format video for just the Cocteau Twins. But that never really happened. R. So this idea was being diverted to doing the compilation video "Lonely Is An Eyesore."

N. Ivo was talking about doing a compilation album, because he thought it was time for another review of what 4AD was about and what direction we were going in. Instead of me doing a film with the Cocteau Twins, he thought it be a great opportunity to do one featuring all the bands, and it just grew from there.

R. What do you think about the result?

N. I am pleased with it in many ways. To be honest, often while shooting I wasn't totally inspired. I have a problem. Often while I am working on something, I tend to be thinking I should be doing something else. And while doing the videos I often thought I wanted to go back to still photography.

R. Why?

N. I think it was partly because of all the responsibilities. It was quite a commitment, having all of this ahead of me. When we do sleeves, we tend to take it from sleeve to sleeve, whereas with the video it was



FILLIGREE & SHADOW This Mortal Coil (Outer sleeve)



FILLIGREE & SHADOW This Mortal Coil (Inner sleeves)



get discovered until they were in the record shops. 4AD doesn't get much air play and people are not aware of 4AD releasing a record until they see the records on the racks. So I am aware of the importance of the sleeve designs in that situation. But I think also that the sort of people who are looking for those records are probably a bit more discerning and consider things they haven't seen before. They are a bit more open to being seduced by a little mystery. However, I don't know why something can't be immediate even if it's not immediately understandable. You don't necessarily have to read what it is. The overall shape and feel of it can be seductive. I think, or I hope anyway, that with record sleeves, there is a potential to do something that won't be fully understood or appreciated until you've had it for a few months. There is even the potential that you will see something different in it again and again.

R. How did you end up working for 4AD?

V. By chance really. It coincided with the beginning of 4AD. I was working for a packaging design studio and somebody there was supposed to do a sleeve for Ivo but was going away and he said 'I can't do it, go meet this fellow Ivo. He just started a new record company called 4AD and take your work in.' Ivo liked the portfolio. I don't think he had actually seen many design students' portfolios. Anyway, thereafter we started bumping into each other at clubs at the same gigs, seeing the same bands. So there was a natural sympathy in terms of musical tastes. I suppose over the months I was able to persuade him through a few drunken conversations to get involved with the logo for 4AD, a corporate identity if you like. I continued working for the design studio for about three years after I first came to London and worked for Ivo on a freelance basis. And then, in the beginning of 1983, 4AD moved premises and had a bit more room for a design desk. One day Ivo came to see me and said 'We are moving premises and there's space for you. Why don't you come and work for me here?' At that point, it was only Ivo and myself working for 4AD. Initially, I was supposed to do more than just design. I was supposed to get involved with promotion of the label, until Ivo realized how long it actually took to put a sleeve together and how much effort it required. Especially since I do everything myself, from thumbnails to finished artwork.

R. It's amazing that a small independent label such as 4AD put so much importance on sleeve design and actually hired a fulltime graphic designer. Was there an idea with both of you from the beginning that sleeve design was going to become a very significant part of 4AD?

V. No, not at all. There was no initial plan. There was excitement shared about the potential, but it just grew sleeve by sleeve and I think after a while Ivo started to appreciate the effect of consistency in approach. It evolved very slowly. And he was only going to release 12 or 13 records a year. He was prepared to build slowly and naturally, and there was no manifesto in the beginning.

R. How long does it take to design a sleeve?

R. In the designs of the sleeves are you looking for an identity for your label or for the bands?

I. The bands, definitely. But with Vaughan involved in all the designs, the company's image comes through as well. And I have complete faith in what he does. There are sleeves that I am not overenamoured of, but it's very easy when you are working in a situation to become blasé about the degree of creativity and originality that is going on within sleeve design. Vaughan and Nigel together have assisted in developing a label identity. But there is a breadth in what they do. They have made 4AD recognizable. And there are certainly elements that link certain sleeves together. Yet I am not looking to create a label that dominates the artists and is more important than the artists on it. The label is supposed to be a

sympathetic home and outlet for artists that I find stimulating.

R. How much input do you have in the designs of the albums? Is it all up to Vaughan and the bands, and how much conversation or discussion goes on during the design process?

I. There is some conversation going on, but I don't think Vaughan really ever listens to me. I trust him to recognize his own errors, errors that may be very different from my own. I have an opinion about the music that people record for us. I have an opinion about the sleeves and I will express that opinion, and whether it is positive or negative is up to the individuals.

R. Does he present you with very tight sketches for sleeves he is designing?

I. No, Vaughan gets on with his work. I encourage him to present ideas to the artist within a week and that they should do a shoot within the next two weeks, and I go up and look over his shoulder maybe four times a day to see what he is doing and express interest, disgust, amusement or any of those things, but he is totally in control of it.

R. What is your favorite sleeve he has done?

I. It has to be the compilation, the limited edition version of the compilation "Lonely Is An Eyesore." It is an exorcism of so many ideas he has developed and hinted at over the years and it is just like this massive feat to be able to encompass everything in one package as he did there. Outside of that, I still

really like the entire packaging for the "Ricochet Days" album cover for Modern English. I think as a package of an album, outer and inner jacket, label, related twelve inch sleeve and poster, that was the broadest and most complete kind of work he has done; it was quite remarkable.

R. Which cover(s) have you been unpleasantly surprised by, if there are any?

I. Yes, the Cocteau Twins' "Victorialand" has always felt incomplete to me. However, it's always really hard because you get used to things. "Aikea-Guinea" I was never too pleased with either. But I balance those with something like the new Pieter Nooten cover for "Sleeps With The Fishes" which I think is the best cover he has done in a long time. You can't be brilliant every time.

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V. It's all determined by the preset release dates. It can take anywhere from four weeks to four days. Obviously I prefer four weeks. Certainly when you do every aspect from thumbnail to photography to paste-up and advertizing and all related ephemera, it adds up to quite some work.

R. Do you do thumbnail sketches?

V. Yes, but mostly for my own sake. Occasionally, there will be full-size visuals drawn up, but more often not. We're given a quite open brief and we'll describe something to a band. Maybe describe what materials will be used and the situation it will be used in, but not necessarily a finished picture. This gives us room to manoeuvre. We're not always able to give a definite finished visual.

R. Just before the sleeve gets printed, what will Ivo or the band see as a last stage?

V. A proof.

R. At that point they can't really make any changes, can they?

V. Well, it's taken a while to tell them that. But we describe things all along and we often do have a visual made up with a print from the shot that Nigel has taken and an overlay of graphics just to give them the general feel. The bands still often like to make changes at the proof stage, though.

R. Most 4AD LPs have both outside sleeves and inside jackets designed, the center labels are designed differently each time and there is additional promotional material and often a few EPs or singles from any one LP. Most of it is full color. Is there an unlimited budget?

V. Well, we rarely stretch the printer with the printing budgets. We'll never use any special cardboard that might be more expensive. Our print cost is usually quite steady. We usually use four colors. People do tend to go beyond that and use special card stocks and do dye cuts. We feel that that's too gimmicky.

R. Doing album covers must be one of the more exciting disciplines within graphic design. Especially when you work for a label such as 4AD, where you enjoy a lot of freedom; you mentioned the briefs you get are quite open. Is it ever intimidating or stifling working with so much freedom?

V. It took a while to get used to the freedom at first, after having worked in a design studio. I know a lot of the designers I was working with would say: 'When you start working at 4AD, pass on any work to us if you can't handle all of it.' And on two occasions I did, and they didn't know where to start with an open brief. You have to tie yourself down. I suppose it was a personal and emotional response to what they were doing. With anything like this, you need motivation from your own obsession. And if those designers didn't have that, then they found it particularly difficult to start. But I am sure you have it too, that you store ideas. If something doesn't work on one project, the idea gets stored and will come out on the next project. And it's not always difficult starting from a personal point of view, but then to persuade the band...

R. When I asked Ivo which cover he liked best, he said 'It must be "Lonely Is An Eyesore." This cover is an exorcism of so many ideas that Vaughan had developed and hinted at over the years, it's a massive feat to

THE MOON AND THE MELODIES
Harold Budd / Elizabeth Fraser / Robin Guthrie / Simon Raymonde (Outer sleeve)



BLACK Francis, Pixies:

(BLACK FRANCIS ABOUT "ED IS DEAD") "THERE WAS THIS HIDEOUS WEIRD GIRL AT MY HIGH SCHOOL WHO WORE A BURLAP SACK, CORDS, AND RUBBER SHOES. I'D TALK TO HER, BUT NO-ONE ELSE WOULD. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS WRONG WITH HER, THEN LATER I FOUND OUT SHE'D BEEN MENTALLY AFFECTED AFTER A CAR ACCIDENT. FIVE YEARS LATER I WENT BACK AND SAW HER RIDING A BIKE AROUND, EXACTLY THE SAME AS SHE EVER WAS. EXCEPT... SHE WAS REALLY SUNBURNED." (*Melody Maker*)



SLEEPS WITH THE FISHES Pieter Nooten / Michael Brook (Outer sleeve)

this one big project. Another problem I had was that I don't actually enjoy working with other people as much as working on my own. There were so many head trips, so many problems involved when you start working with so many people. And then if somebody isn't doing something the way you want it done, you have to explain things over and over again while trying to be as diplomatic as possible. It's a whole thing outside of the actual art, it's like running a business or something. There wasn't quite as much freedom with the video as there generally is with the sleeves.

R. How was doing this video different from your first film "Maelstrom"? Didn't that require a similar amount of organization?

N. Yes, and actually after doing "Maelstrom" I told myself I would never do another video again. But time heals wounds I guess, and a few months later I said 'yes' to Ivo. There was actually a point, halfway through, that I really wanted to try and do something else, leave the whole thing. But I didn't want to let the people down, especially Ivo, so I carried on.

R. You mentioned in an earlier conversation that after the release of "Lonely Is An Eyesore" you were approached by various major record companies to do videos for them. What happened with all the offers?

N. I've turned them all down so far.
R. Can you afford turning down all these jobs?
N. No, not really. But with most offers that I've turned down I didn't like the music sufficiently. A lot of pop videos are really terrible. I like videos to be more specifically about the relationship between music and film, and I like long format film. I would love to do a video for Brian Eno's music or for Harold Budd. I see something like that as a great possibility, something completely new. That area has not been explored at all. I just don't find the area of pop video an interesting art form, if you can call it that.
R. Maybe it hasn't been explored properly.
N. Yes, but that's partly because pop videos are always done for a single. The videos are there to actually promote that single. And singles are always the most

commercial aspect of any musician's output. They always pick the most catchy songs. Therefore pop videos never get to be anything other than that. People don't make pop promos about non-commercial music.

R. 4AD does.

N. Yes, and it's a shame that some of the bigger companies won't experiment, because they have the money to do that properly. That was also a problem with the compilation video, it was done with a very low budget. Low budgets never really affect the look of record sleeves, but with videos they really restrict creativity. There are some budget restrictions for the sleeves. I mean, I don't get paid as much by 4AD as I would by a major record company, and we do a whole photo session in my back bedroom, instead of using a studio. But with film you can only cut so many corners. You do actually need a lot of money just to make film if you want to do it well.

R. Are you more satisfied with the results of your photographs?

N. I am reasonably happy with the results. But I have certain ideas about the kind of look I would like to push. Something possibly less abstract than what I've been doing on record sleeves. The degree of abstraction has come about through the kind of music it's done for. I would like to do some more portrait work, things like that. Not straight portrait work, but bringing in more human elements, which is what I used to do. I've started to do more personal work along these lines.

R. What are your plans for that?

N. It's mostly self-exploration. When I look at a cross-section of my work, I can pick out maybe one or two pictures that really do something for me and the rest is only halfway towards anything. These images still inspire me and push me to do more of the kind of work they represent.

R. Did any of these particular images ever end up on a sleeve?

N. Possibly the This Mortal Coil sleeve for "It'll End In Tears" and also the poster for "Filigree & Shadow." The picture we used for the poster I still like a lot, the one with the hand over the eye. The photograph on "It'll End In Tears" is a little more dreamy

encompass.' Now, if working with full color and reasonable budgets and having a very fair amount of freedom is not intimidating, how do you approach a job such as "Lonely Is An Eyesore"? As a compilation piece, both graphically and musically, it should reflect the company at its best. Did you approach it as just another album cover?

V. I approach every album cover thinking it has to be better than the last one. There has to be progression, although "Eyesore" was not so much a progression as a consummation of ideas. That was a good quote from Ivo, it was certainly an exorcism of ideas. It shows what I mentioned earlier, that you *do* store ideas, the textures I'd been collecting and certain ways of doing things. In a sense the job was to reflect the label as a whole. It couldn't necessarily concentrate too much on one band. And because of that I didn't think it called for an individual photograph or one image. It needed more of an overall textural approach, more of a packaging feel.

R. Are the textures you use on "Lonely Is An Eyesore," found imagery or are they done specifically for "Lonely Is An Eyesore"?

V. They all come out of this catalogue I keep, in which I store textures I've produced at one time or another in between jobs.

R. So you just keep them around, waiting for the right time to use them?

V. Yes.

R. When you work for a record label, you more or less have to deal with two clients. In your case they are Ivo and the band. Does that ever complicate the design process, and does the sleeve ever end up as a compromise of respective tastes?

V. The only compromise would be between 23 Envelope and the bands. Ivo will usually step down. If he doesn't like the design but the band and we do, then he'll say go ahead. He is really good in that respect and he's good also in that maybe three months later, he'll say 'I actually now see what you were talking about, it has grown on me.'

R. In an interview with you in Ipso Facto magazine, you were quoted as saying that you don't mind that your artwork is being mass-produced as record sleeves and you said that's one of the great things about graphic design...

V. That was in response to a question whether the work we do is art, but that's something that is open to the viewer. The sleeves wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for the music and for the commission, in which case it becomes commercial art. I think that it's better that it does reach a lot more homes than it could on a gallery wall.

R. I agree, but how do you feel about the fact that no matter how successful a piece of graphic design becomes, and no matter how many people see it, the designer will in most cases remain anonymous to the audience? Do you admire artists and the attention they receive for their work, and would you want your work to be considered in the context of art?

V. I suppose so, because we do enjoy having exhibitions, showing our work on a gallery wall is fun, but at the same time that would take it away from the music. And I much rather see it in conjunction with the music. If it does complement the music, if it is successful in reflecting the atmosphere of the music, I am happier than if it were just a piece on a wall. I do definitely see us working within the arena of commercial art and hopefully being appreciated within that arena, and maybe occasionally considered outside of that in a more artistic vein, but it doesn't really frustrate me if it's not considered art. We are working with commercial briefs and commercial restraint. If I really aspired to a more artistic vein, I would be working in etching or print-making.

R. But in print-making or etching, the chance of being noticed and actually communicating through your work is almost nonexistent. That's why I feel graphic design as an art form is not receiving the recognition it should get. Good graphic design communicates, not only because it is produced in multiples, and can have a real impact upon its viewers. And communication is the bottom line for all visual arts, including design.

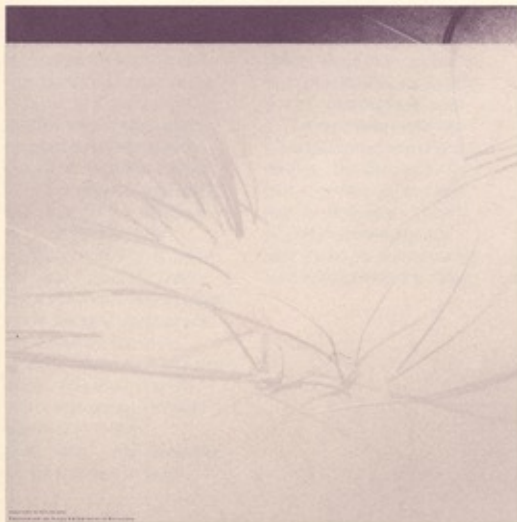
V. It boils down to the message you are communicating. No matter how well something is communicated, it all depends on the value of the message. Maybe a lot of designers are communicating the messages perfectly, but was the message worthwhile in the first place? And that's true for artists as well.

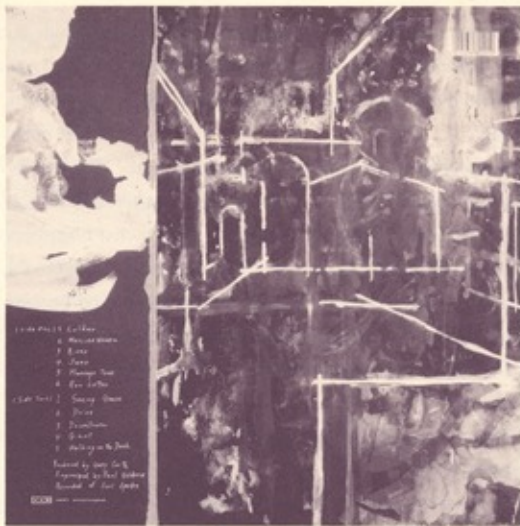
R. Who are your design heroes?

V. In terms of design there isn't anybody, really. That's again probably due to my ignorance of design history. I have in the past been more motivated by painting, film and literature. It's only recently that I have started to hunt around for books on the Bauhaus and looking at Cassandra. I mentioned earlier the Quai twins, they were a big inspiration. There is one poster they did for one of their films. I didn't manage to get a copy of it, but I still got a picture of it in the back of my head. They used various typefaces which I haven't been able to find anywhere. They also use a lot of hand-drawn typefaces. There is one album cover they did for Duet Emmo that is a great example of their illustration and typography work. You should try to get a hold of it, it's fantastic.

R. It's interesting that your inspiration comes from a different direction than graphic design. Most designers I know will pick up last year's design annuals for inspiration.

V. Yes, I couldn't believe that. At my first job, there were these senior designers, who after being briefed would do exactly that, look at last year's answers. Inspiration should come from other sources. We were talking earlier about having the same aesthetics as a musician. You might be working in different disciplines but you have similar





inspirations and ideas, really. I think I took a lot of inspiration from music. At college for instance, I always liked Brian Eno's music, right back to his early albums when he was singing. I loved his lyrics. And then I discovered that Russell Mills had started working on illustrations inspired by him. I already enjoyed Russell's work outside of that and then to see those two people collaborate on the "More Dark Than Shark" book! And then to find that Russell did book jackets for Samuel Beckett, who is one of my favorite authors.

R. You worked with Russell Mills on a series of book jackets, didn't you?

V. Yes, for a chap called Ian McEwan.

R. How did you get in touch with Russell Mills?

V. Well, I've never been good at telling people that I like them for fear of sounding too flattering or whatever. But when I came down to London, I went to this exhibition of Russell Mill's work and enjoyed it so much that I wrote my first fan letter. I mentioned Ian McEwan, (this is about six or seven years ago), and he wrote back and said a few nice things and suggested I read this or that, read a bit of Marcel Duchamp etc. But the correspondence went no further. Then a couple of years ago, when we released the first This Mortal Coil album, Russell actually rang up when he saw the album, and spoke to Ivo and said 'I love the music, it's renewed my faith in the music business, and the packaging is superb' and Ivo asked him to come down and meet the people who did it. And we got on fine, we chatted about Samuel Beckett and such, and about a year later the Ian McEwan project came up. I embarrassedly reminded him of the fan letter I'd written and talked to him about how it was a nice completion of the circle.

R. Let's return to the sleeves. The only critique I have on your work is that I can recognize it as 4AD design. I feel that with sleeve designs, you have to create an identity for a band or/and their music. Most 4AD records I recognize as 4AD/Oliver/Grierson products first, and later I recognize them as a record by a particular band. Is that fair to the band?

V. I think what we try to do is give every band its own identity, but since the ideas come from one desk, there is also an overall identity for the label. I suppose because of the personal freedom that we are given, there are obviously elements of Vaughan Oliver in there, but the inspiration does spring from the music and from having to create something that shows that it is from 4AD. So hopefully, Vaughan Oliver doesn't get in the way too much. But personally, I feel there is enough diversity in the designs.

R. Do you feel you have reached the point as a graphic designer that you know exactly how each job will end up looking?

V. Not yet. I think that would happen if formula came into it. There is still an element of risk involved in each job I do. The evening before every proof comes in, I have nightmares about it. It can turn out completely different from what I intended. But I do get a lot of ideas from the nightmares. I am still worried enough to keep up a healthy interest, even into my sleeping hours.

R. So chance plays a big role in the success or failure of the designs?

V. Yes, and that's what makes you want to do the next one.

R. Last night I was looking at your sleeve designs quite intensely, and there are some that I can't recognize as Vaughan Oliver sleeves. "Treasure" and "Voix Bulgares," for instance, are typographically not as strong as some of the others. The type almost seems an afterthought.

V. "Treasure" was done quite a while ago and I wasn't so happy with it myself, although I still do like the script logo and the idea of putting the track titles on the front. But "Voix Bulgares" I like a lot! I love the title type.

R. There your use of three dimensional borders seems awkward. On most of your sleeves the type is used very flat, in harmony with the imagery. "Pump Up The Volume" is a good example. Here you truly acknowledge the flatness of the sleeve and make perfect use of overprinting offset colors in order to create transparency; you are using type as illustration. The "Voix Bulgares" type seems contrived and not in harmony with the image.

V. With "Voix Bulgares" I wanted to actually create a mood that reflected the tackiness of what might have been the original Bulgarian sleeves. I only saw the cover of the original Bulgarian sleeve, and I tried to use something that was evocative of what could have possibly been a 1950's typeface that was used in Bulgaria. But it was off the top of my head, I made it up. I don't think that the box the type was in was totally successful. I would have liked that to be a more photographic reproduction of a wooden box.

R. A real favorite of mine is the Colourbox album with the Japanese textile print on it. I guess this sleeve, with the use of found imagery and collage, shows the influence of Terri Dowling?

V. I think it was the best opportunity to use found imagery because Colourbox is stealing all the time in terms of the music. They take clips from television commercials and films and from other people's records. They take them out of the original context and put them into their own context, making it something new or different. For this album, I used a printer's waste sheet. The entire image as you see it on the sleeve was ready made. I didn't do anything to it. A friend of mine had brought it back from Japan. He worked there in the 1950s. It was originally a textile catalogue. Some of the sheets had been overlaid by the printer with these peach labels. I thought the coincidence of the imagery, the peach labels and the complexion of these beautiful Japanese women was just so nice. And imagine, something that was thrown away! It was on the printer's floor or in his wastebasket and picked up and looked at in a different way. That seemed to match so well with the way Colourbox work. It was probably one of the easiest sleeves we've put together. Again, it was something that had been around for a long time and I

than what I would like to do now. I would like to do something that has slightly more to do with portrait. The "Filigree & Shadow" portrait has a more mysterious and human element to it, using the eye to communicate with the viewer, apart from the textures of the picture.

R. The inner sleeves of "Filigree & Shadow" are probably my favorite designs overall. The typography and photography seem to be in perfect balance, the subtle use of colors, too, is very striking. How do you feel about the manipulations of your photographs here, the silver and black duotones and the screen that cuts the photo in half?

N. I am not sure who thought of the actual idea of printing a silver duotone, but I think it worked well. There are certain effects which I can do in a photograph that would require that the photograph be reproduced in full color, which might not actually look as good as when you use certain offset printing tricks, such as silver paper or black and silver duotones. Both Vaughan and myself are quite aware of that. Some photographers come from a purely photographic background and they will be worried when a designer would suggest something like that, but I am somewhat aware of the possibilities of printing.

R. There are generally two ways Vaughan combines type and photography. On the inner sleeves of "Filigree & Shadow," for instance, he blends the two together by overprinting and through strong composition. On "Victorland," on the other hand, there is a very strict separation of the two. The image is presented as if it was hanging on a gallery wall. I find that in most of his sleeves the first method works best, resulting in the most striking covers, with type and photography enhancing each other because of the merge.

N. I agree. On reflection I don't think that the image on the outside sleeve of "Victorland" is strong enough. The inner sleeve image is much stronger. But I think it is interesting within a record sleeve context to present a photograph in that particular way. Generally, if you did have a picture presented in that way, it would usually be a bolder or stronger image. This sleeve is

saying 'Look at this' but then you get lost in a little painted texture. I liked how that worked. I think it was also a reaction to most Cocteau Twins sleeves we had done. We usually use a textural photograph going completely across the cover. R. What is the usual process for a Cocteau Twins sleeve design?

N. They usually play us a tape before the record is actually cut. Their guidelines tend to be rather thin. The main thing is that they don't like anything literal and they don't like to see objects which are easily recognizable and present certain connotations of the music. All objects have associations and they will turn around and say 'What's that object got to do with our music?' They have very little "intellectual" arguments about what each song is about. Whatever it is they have to say is said in the piece of music and they don't want to interpret that into anything else afterwards. That's how we ended up doing such abstract sleeves for the Cocteau Twins. With This Mortal Coil, on the other hand, we ended up using more literal imagery because the songs are more literal or audible. And there is a parallel to that in the images. The images are more figurative and not purely abstract. Also the male voices on the This Mortal Coil albums are very feminine. That's how we decided to use the girl as female figurative element. The voices also are synthesized a lot and they blend into the music as a texture, which gave us the idea to blend the pictures of the girl together with a textural background.

R. How much of this does the viewer actually experience?

N. I think people feel it unconsciously. The sleeves are illustrative in the true sense of the word. The images actually develop from the music that is there in the first place. A different product would dictate a totally different image. Again, I think there are parallels, and the viewer will eventually recognize that. R. Explain to me then why you use a photograph of a pelican on the Dif Juz album "Out Of The Trees." Here you use a very explicit and literal image for a band that plays purely instrumental music.

about the way it came out. I thought it came out quite good. It is important to consider the relationship between imagery when you move from an outer to an inner sleeve. It can be too much if you have imagery all over the sleeves. So what we often do is print the inside image as a tint to make it much lighter. It will give you a little bit of air. Sometimes it works to just have type on a plain white background, for the sake of space. And I think that worked very well on "The Moon And The Melodies," the way Vaughan had used the tint, etc.

R. Let's return to what you earlier referred to as a dilemma. Having to give an identity to both a label and its bands is difficult. Certainly 4AD has been criticized for overshadowing the bands. N. There is always a lot of criticism. Bands sometimes think that it can be limiting having to employ 23 Envelope for every sleeve. They would argue that it's pushing a style too much. And they might not want to be part of this overall label identity. But the truth is that they all are allowed to have their own identity and we always try to cater to it as much as possible. And I don't think we try to push a style. I don't feel that we are trying to do the same picture on each sleeve, and I don't think that when you put any two 4AD sleeves together that they look similar. It's when you put all of them together that the style emerges.

R. Does the criticism bother you?

N. That criticism only bothers me in a situation where I feel it is true. And the only time that it is possibly true is when the package is overelaborate with too many images or whatever, and subsequently would work around the music in a sense. I think that the music is still the most important thing. Once you got your record on the turntable it obviously is anyway. But in terms of this kind of remark, I think what you gain on the roundabout you lose on the swings. If the same groups worked for another independent record company they wouldn't have the overall quality that they receive at 4AD.

R. Are the bands usually happy with the sleeves?

N. It tends to vary. People always tend to be most happy with something that hasn't got anything to do with them. A band will look at a sleeve or a video of one of the other groups and will say "O yes, that's perfect for their music." But when it comes to their own, since they are so close to it, they will never be perfectly happy. And it's not that they are always not happy or critical of it, it's also the fact that they'll never be perfectly happy with any kind of visual presentation of their own work.

R. What approach has worked best for you when you design a sleeve?

N. The way we've managed to please everybody in the past is by trying to maintain a truth in relation to the music. We try to bring out certain aspects that are already there in the music without imposing something that has nothing to do with it. That is probably what our work has been praised for in the past. The Cocteau Twins fans in particular have said that the sleeves are often a perfect representation of their music. So one becomes synonymous with the other.

N. Often, when I do the photography for a sleeve, it tends to become the most dominant element. At that time we had done quite a few sleeves where the photography was rather dominant. So we decided for this sleeve that it might be nice if it was more about the graphics, with the photography used within that context being subservient. I went to the zoo and took the photographs and I was looking for something textural picked out of birds. The idea was that it had to work with the type; it didn't have to be an intriguing image by itself.

R. Let's return to the design process for the Cocteau Twins albums. It's a very open brief that you get from them?

N. Yes, Robin will say something like "I really like orange at the moment." That's all. And it's difficult, because where do you start without doing something that looks exactly like the last thing you did?

R. Tell me how the last Cocteau Twins album went, the collaboration with Harold Budd "The Moon And The Melodies."

N. I had been taking photographs of thicket for myself. I was photographing these bramble bushes and looking into these leafless branches. After a while it really started to almost move, like a Jackson Pollock painting. And if you looked long enough, it had an almost hallucinatory effect on you. I really found the entanglement of this weblike texture very interesting in relation to the music. I had just gone out and done these photographs after I had listened to their music. Afterwards, instead of arranging a big meeting with the group to present the photograph, we just left them laying around on the desk where we were working and let Robin walk in. In passing the desk, he said "O, what's this?" So I asked "Why, do you like them?" and he said "Yes I really do," so I said "Good, because that's your next record sleeve." It was quite an effective way of doing it, actually. Robin was very pleased and he isn't always that pleased.

R. How did you get the spinning effect?

N. I twisted the base board when I was printing it in the enlarger, so it's basically a double image. I was hoping the photograph would have that effect itself, but it didn't have that sense of movement that I thought it would have. So I took the liberty of experimenting with it. I shot the inner bag on the same day and we discussed whether to use the sand image or use the thicket on the cover. From that point on it was just a discussion about how the design was going to work in relationship to the photographs. I don't think the Cocteau Twins were too happy



LOVE'S EASY TEARS Cocteau Twins (Outer sleeve)

was just waiting for the appropriate moment to use it.

R. There were no problems with copyrights?

V. They haven't been able to use the same sleeve in Japan. The lady in the red dress was a singing star in her own right in the 1950s and is now married to a Japanese member of parliament. All of them were part of an opera group. And I think the Japanese record company that released the record was able to trace all but one of the women and got permission from them, and got permission from the peach label company. It came down to getting permission from the last woman whom they couldn't trace. So they weren't able to use the design.

R. If that sleeve was the easiest to produce, which was the most difficult?

V. Usually the Cocteau Twins projects are the more difficult, because they are very good at telling us what they don't want but rarely give us a direction for what they do want. It always appears to be a very free brief that we get from them. They will say "This is the music, we've done this, what do you think," and maybe, "Use a little bit of red and a little bit of green, and some warm tints here," and they try to describe atmospheres like that, but there is never any hint at subject matter. In fact, they don't like subject matter. So it's up to us to try and create color studies by whatever means.

R. How do you go about that?

V. Lately we've been doing it with paints in water. We create layered effects using layers of glass between the camera and a tank of water with color in it. We then put different colors in between layers of glass combined with stuff like glycerine.

R. We? You mean Nigel Grierson and yourself?

V. Yes, when it comes to Cocteau Twins and This Mortal Coil, I often work with Nigel.

R. With the Cocteau Twins and This Mortal Coil sleeves you have created a truly personal style and they are among some of your best pieces. Are they your personal favorites in terms of music?

V. The Cocteau Twins and This Mortal Coil are probably closest to our own aesthetic, so we already have ideas or a vocabulary and visual ways of presenting the music. We might be doing photos for ourselves that end up fitting the mood of a This Mortal Coil album perfectly.

R. I recently bought two Wolfgang Press albums, "Standing Up Straight" and "The Legendary Wolfgang Press And Other Tall Stories." Are they very specific about what they want?

V. Yes, they are actually the only band that will come to us with specific subject matter that they like to use. They are a band that I would like some more personal freedom with. I love what they are doing musically, and I think that more personal freedom would allow another dimension to our work. In a sense, it did with the lyric sheet of "Standing Up Straight." I mean we weren't really allowed enough time with that one, we produced the entire thing within three days.

R. But with those two sleeves you would have wanted more personal freedom?

V. Yes, definitely. The Wolfgang Press would come to us with a paintings that to me didn't reflect the music. Their attitude of awkwardness in approach could be reflected in a different way. I would love to have the opportunity to reflect with typography or a different sort of imagery the awkwardness and power that comes across in their music. I guess that is one of the problems when you are working in-house and have a reputation for doing sleeves that might be construed as being quite subtle and moody. I guess they don't see the potential in me to do something that will fit their work as well. But that's a problem we have to learn to deal with. When you are recognized for a certain type of work, it can put people off approaching you. That is the danger of getting pigeonholed.

ROBIN Guthrie, Cocteau Twins:

"THE SLEEVES ARE FOR PUTTING RECORDS IN. I WOULDN'T WANT PEOPLE TO BUY OUR RECORDS BECAUSE THEY SAW A PICTURE OF US. I MEAN THEY WOULDN'T ANYWAY." (*O Magazine*)

By Daniel Kapelian / Translated from the French by Michael Axinn

I don't know when it stopped raining, nor do I know how many days the electricity's been out. I'm all alone, it's starting to get too long now. The Sun remains in perpetual eclipse. It's getting colder and colder. I've already burned all the wood, the chairs, the table, the furnishings, the paintings. Tonight I'm going for the library. I'll throw the books onto the fire one after another, clap my hands together and dance around the flames like a huge pagan rite, cheeks aglow, eyes ashine, all by myself.

Garlands of words go up, ink evaporates, pages writhe painfully in the teeth of the blaze, the empty shells of coals collapse, the beautiful phrases crumble, little by little ignorance and bliss make themselves felt.

I had a good time, still I want more. I saved a single page from Verlaine, the poet of wicked airs, who coveted "music above all else." Good, tonight I burn the records.

I try the stereo one last time. Nothing. The dials unlit, the headphones a silent breath between my ears. I try to remember, a few scattered licks, a vague beat and some stupid lyrics come back then float off into oblivion, it's useless to insist. I start with the record covers. In a moment, the designs are reduced to ashes, a real straw fire. Discs twist under the heat, the vinyl a boiling liquid which flows in torrents like raging lava. I'm crying, the tears burn. I keep dancing but have less and less space, for the spirits of all the dead have invaded the room to dance with me. I see myself in the glass. I am not yet turned into an invisible ghost, it won't be long. I've never been so pale, traces of soot mixed with sweat mark my face like primitive war paint.

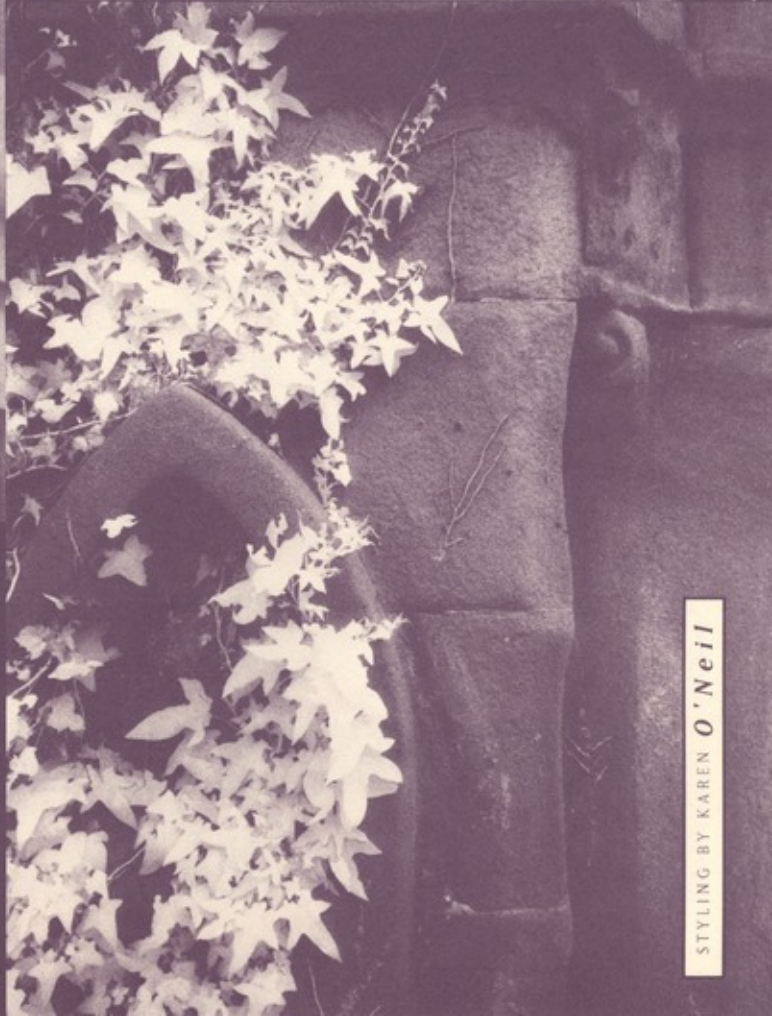
I'm stretched out on the ground in a puddle of gasoline, I cannot fall any further. My last candle burns between my feet. When it goes, the gas will catch fire and I who dream of heat will fall to a tranquil sleep on a grand bed of flames as I read with clear voice the message I found the morning you left.

"I wanted to tell you, we'll never have another chance to meet like we just did. It only happens once. The best thing for you to do is forget me, even if I stay with you until the end. You mustn't be afraid of me anymore, I won't go away or move faster than you. Without me you're nothing, I'm the only one who's faithful to you. So turn back around and take a look at what's in front of you, find the Sun with your eyes and stare it in the face. Do it for me. You who forever prevent me from doing the same."

TTT



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PHOTOGRAPHY (415) 989-4318

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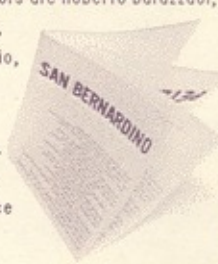
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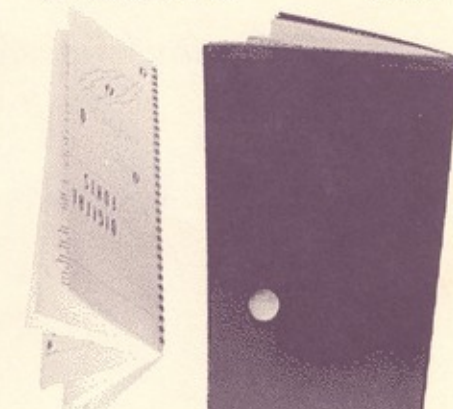
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