

Sit down, Sharona . . .

Knack LP gives new meaning to the word tasteless

By Kitty O'Steen
City News Editor
"Doug Fieger is right. Us little girls do understand, all too well. If those Knack boys had it in their pants, they wouldn't have to keep shooting it out their mouths . . ."
Diane Hawkey
In a letter to "Rolling Stone"

If you're a woman, The Knack is a composite of all the men your mother ever warned you about.

You know the kind. Your older brother's can't-keep-his-hands-to-himself friend.

The lecherous park flasher.

Or, horror of horrors, the all-time dreaded sinister evil man who pulls up along side you in his car and asks, "Want some candy, little girl?"

Creeps undetectable

Only, exasperatingly enough, your mother would never detect these creeps—so clever are they at disguising their 24-hour-a-day, all-compelling, all-consuming desire for a quick screw behind innocent boyish faces and seemingly harmless, catchy pop tunes.

No one seems to know how old the four Knack members—Doug Fieger, Berton Averre, Prescott Niles and Bruce Gary—are, but they're certainly not still in their teens, and are, in fact, probably way past that. So, except for a plea of terminal licentiousness, there's no excuse for the non-stop "Gotta get it up, don't you want it?" type of lyrics these degenerates produce and then commemorate to vinyl.

Jerk-off fare found

Yet, this is exactly the kind of jerk-off fare one can expect to find on . . . but the little girls understand." The Knack's latest delve into latent lust.

Coming on the heels of "Get The Knack," last year's popular debut

album, this new Capitol release is not as musically sound as its predecessor.

But, like "Get The Knack," the group's second offering purports an underlying, two-fold central message.

If you're a guy, it says: It's okay (and, in fact, even encouraged) to promise a girl anything for an easy lay.

And, if you're a girl, it says: If you don't come across with the goods to satisfy normal, manly desires, you're either a tease or a bitch—or worse.

Knack knows little

On . . . but the little girls understand." The Knack would have its

customers. "She don't look so bad in the dark."

"Can't Put A Price On Love," features Fieger crooning the tender words, "When push comes to shove, ooh, baby, you gave me enough. And I'll pay when the price is right, but you can't put a price on love."

His voice is so insincere on the final eight words that you can almost hear him fumbling for change.

But, my vote for "MOC" has to go to Kinks Ray Davies' song, "The Hard Way," which, by taking the tough guy approach ("I'm tired of being patient/I've got to be cruel to be kind"), is either condoning or suggesting rape as an alternative for

cohorts doing the hurting, you'll either want to kick him in his notorious smirk (Does he sleep with it on?) or run for a toilet.

Personally, I haven't wanted to puke so bad since drinking beer my well-intentioned friends had put unshelled peanuts in.

Let's face it. These are the type of guys who'd ask, "Was it good for you, too?" not really caring, just so long as they'd gotten off.

Lyrics suck

Okay, so the lyrics suck. But what about the music? Isn't it catchy enough to allow one to overlook the words accompanying it?

While it is true that Knack music tends to make you start the tapping of a foot, it is, for the most part, so highly-derivative as to offend most musical sensibilities.

Lack of originality is a . . . but the little girls understand" trademark. The group may call its Buddy Holly, Letterman, Beatles imitations paying homage. I call it robbery.

"Baby Talks Dirty" is nothing but a slightly inferior "My Sharona" clone. And there's no defense imaginable for The Knack's theft of the central guitar figure in The Rolling Stones "Beast Of Burden," which the group renamed "Can't Put A Price On Love."

Song illegitimate

This is one illegitimate bastard Mick shouldn't be forced to support.

Besides perpetrating stupid lyrics and unoriginal music, The Knack, despite its best effort to look like The Beatles through dress, music and packaging, is about as exciting on stage as four wind-up dolls. At the group's March 30 Forum appearance, even the most zealous Knack fan could find very little to cheer about.

. . . but the little girls understand," as well as singles from the LP, have failed to secure a strong niche on the charts. This is a hopeful sign, because the nefarious Knack, like any sexual pervert, shouldn't be encouraged.

I just hope that the next time Sharona sits on Fieger's face, she has the good sense to stay put.

Spin offs

highly-vulnerable, primarily pubescent audience believe that making love (something, which they seem to know very little about) consists of tumbling from out of one bed into another—hopefully, without any strings attached.

The Knack has always been cited for misogynist (Somebody'd better hand Dougie a dictionary) lyrics, but this time out, thanks to songwriters Fieger and Averre, the foursome has outdone itself.

Thus, the "Most Offending Cut" (MOC) category on this LP is as jammed with as many potential winners as this year's Academy Awards "Best Actor" race.

Narrator a pimp

"Mr. Handleman," a catchy calypso, is narrated by a guy pimping for his wife. He tells prospective

the guy whose girl isn't willing to "pick the easy way" (ie. go to bed with him).

Knack ego-maniacs

The Knack lyrics are also representative of greedy, possessive ego-maniacs. Never do these guys ask what they might do for you. They're too busy demanding reassurances of your love ("I Want Ya" "Hold On Tight And Don't Let Go" "It's You"), plea-bargaining ("Tell Me You're Mine") and reeling with conceited amazement when rejected ("The Feeling I Get" "How Can Love Hurt So Much").

The latter tune is a bitter, ironic twist placed at the end of Side 2. When you hear the insidious Fieger wimpoidly whining, "How can love hurt so much?" after the 11 previous songs in which it was him and his

showcases of good rock music.

The lyrics, although basically unprofound, are intelligent and the music, characterized by dueling guitar riffs, is as musically sound as a Beatles medley.

Petty's powerful vocals, which are sometimes unfortunately too garbled for comprehension (Tom, take the rocks out of your mouth), are supported well from a musicianship standpoint.

Lending their aid are: Petty on 12 and six-string guitars and the harmonica, Tench on the piano and harmonium, Lynch on drums and Campbell on six and 12-string guitars and the slide.

Side 1 of "Torpedos!" is easily the best. With one rocker following on the heels of the one before it, Petty and company take you through a maze of love ("Here Comes My Girl"), love gone astray ("Even The Losers") and utopia ("Century City").

Side 2 less exciting

Side 2 doesn't offer quite the excitement of its predecessor, but "What Are You Doin' In My Life?" is a worthy descendant of Side 1's best cut, "Shadow Of A Doubt (A Complex Kid)."

Both are highly-invigorating tunes, although the former has a rather bitter observation to make ("What are ya doin' in my life/I didn't ask for you").

But that's the way it is with Petty and The Heartbreakers. The band isn't afraid to say what needs to be said.

And, as far as Petty fans are concerned, "Damn The Torpedos!" is only a sell-out at the music store.

—Kitty O'Steen

Petty LP a rockin' shout of victory

It was a no-win situation.

In 1978, entangled in lawsuits over contract hassles, Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers appeared to be washed-up even before they could set sail. Petty, himself, was on the verge of bankruptcy.

But, somehow, whether through luck or, more likely, sheer fortitude, the group stayed together and Petty came out in the black.

Result victorious

The victorious result—a settlement with MCA's Backstreet label for a reported \$3 million—can be heard on Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers third album, "Damn The Torpedos!"

This LP, containing songs written by Petty and guitarist Mike Campbell during the band's darker days, is a chronicle of the disappointment, discouragement and disillusionment the five-member group suffered.

Yet, although the hurt is there, so is the triumph, as evidenced by the album's optimistically take-charge title, which leaves

unspoken a command of "Full speed ahead."

Group seems down

On "Here Comes My Girl," a tender rock ballad, Petty and henchmen—Campbell, Benmont Tench, Stan Lynch and Ron Blair—appear to be down and out ("It just seems so useless to have to work so hard and nothing ever really seems to come from it").

But, moments later the group quickly changes gears with "Even The Losers," a song featuring Petty and The Heartbreakers basic hang-in-there attitude ("Even the losers/Keep a little bit of pride/They get lucky sometime").

This sense of eventually overcoming the odds, no matter how adverse they might be, is the most vital part of "Torpedos!" and probably the reason why this LP has fared better than the group's previous two, "Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers" and "You're Gonna Get It."

Words relatable

Almost anybody can relate to the words of "Refugee"—even if they've never gone through contract litigations.

"Who knows, maybe you were kidnapped, tied-up, taken away and held for ransom, Honey, it don't really matter to me, Baby, everybody's had to fight to be free, Said, 'You don't have to live like a refugee.'"

Although, this "Torpedos!" you-and-me-against-the-world theme gets a little too repetitive at times, when it gets right down to it, this album is one of the finest



Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers are, from left to right, Stan Lynch, Mike Campbell, Ron Blair, Tom Petty and Benmont Tench.



Warren Zevon

Zevon hits paydirt with 'Bad Luck'

By Valerie Hood
Executive Editor

The first thing to strike you about the music of Warren Zevon are the lyrics to his songs.

They are intelligent, ironic, witty, even poetical. The previous hit, "Werewolves of London", brought him into the limelight with such lyrical qualities.

I saw a werewolf drinking a Pina Colada at Trader's Vic's And his hair was perfect.

It's difficult to imagine a Zevon album that isn't full of his witty observations of life, and his latest, "Bad Luck Streak in Dancing School" is no disappointment.

Thematic songs abound

The songs are thematic and powerful. "Jungle Work," a harsh look at mercenary soldiers and "Gorilla, You're A Desparado," a comical look at the jet-set lifestyle, are typical of the Zevon approach to music.

In "Gorilla" Zevon sings, "Then the ape grew very depressed/Went through Transactional Analysis/He plays racketball in the rain/Still he's shackled to a platinum chain."

"Streak" gives us a dried-out, emotionally secure Zevon. It also gives us a songwriter who can blend classical string arrangements with throbbing rock riffs to produce a unique and pleasurable sound.

On "Play It All Night Long" this blend is at its best. The song is about country life ("There ain't much to this country living/Sweat, piss, jizz and blood") liberally spiced with references to Lynryd Skynryd ("Sweet Home Alabama/Play that dead band's song").

Perhaps the most striking work on the album is "Jeannie Needs a Shooter," written by Zevon and Bruce Springsteen.

Here, Zevon's keen sense of the macabre melds with Springsteen's "Born to Run" principles. The final verse tells it all:

The night was cold and rainy down by the borderline I was riding hard to meet her when a shot rang out behind As I lay there in the darkness with a pistol by my side Jeannie and her father rode off into the night.

Zevon is helped out on "Streak" by pals Jackson Browne, Eagles Don Henley, Don Felder and Glenn Frey, Linda Rondstat and Waddy Watchel, among others.

The weakest cut on the album surprisingly, is the single, "A Certain Girl," written by N. Neville.

Song seems trite

It seems trite and out-of-place on an album of heavies. "Girl" is the kind of tune that goes in one ear and right out the other without leaving any impression. It's cute, but it is atypical of Zevon.

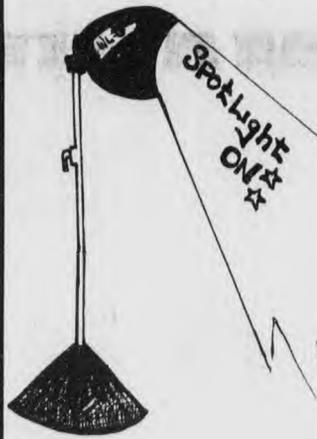
Perhaps he included it as a hook to lure record-buyers to the cash register or maybe he just felt silly.

Whatever his reasons, "Girl" is the single flaw on an otherwise excellent tour-de-force by Zevon. And, as if to let you know that his state of sobriety and marital bliss haven't changed him, he leaves his unique calling card.

On the back cover of the album there are a pair of delicate, pink ballet shoes on a wooden dance floor.

And in the middle of the shoes is a loaded automatic gun.

—Valerie Hood



'Get happy?' No way!

You unwrap the cellophane around the jacket, rip the album out, dash over to your turntable and turn it on.

Suddenly, the room is filled with music. Elvis Costello music to be more precise.

Quickly you realize that the title, "Get Happy," is incredibly misleading. Get happy?

No way. Get angry or get depressed maybe, but happiness does not flow from this album.

First of all, the songs are much too short. Sure, music is getting away from complicated numbers like "Stairway to Heaven" or "Freebird," but a scant two-three minutes simply isn't enough to whet the appetite for more.

There are 21 tracks jammed on "Happy." Producer Nick Lower claims that there will be no loss of sound quality due to "groove cramming" as the needle nears the end of each side.

This is what happens on those K'Tel specials. So many songs are put on each side that distortions in sound occur.

Wonderful information for those whose main concerns lie with such technical nonsense.

But, what about the rest of us who expect a little more from an album? Or, to be even more precise, who expect a little more from Costello?

Is this the same talented songwriter who gave us sensitive songs like "Alison" or clever ditties like "Watching the Detectives"?

This man has been replaced by a clone who subjects us to bland songs sung in an equally bland, flat voice.

The titles give no indication of the spice-free diet Costello feeds us: "B

Movie," "Clowntime is Over," "Five Gears in Reverse."

Sounds like pretty hot stuff, right? Wrong! We are fed cliché-filled dribble like, "I'm going to step on the brake to get out of her clutches."

Okay for others, but Costello has demonstrated a talent for insightful, original and clever lyrics.

Even his back-up band, the Attractions, sounds out of place on this sorry excuse for a musical recording.

One song, "High Fidelity," comes close to the Elvis of old. But, perhaps that's because it sounds so much like "Senior Service" from his attractive "Armed Forces" lp.

Maybe Costello is trying to chart a new course for music with "Happy." Or, maybe he's just gotten lazy; resting on the laurels of past triumphs.

Whatever the case, those who purchase "Get Happy," won't.

—Valerie Hood

Journey 'departs'

A few years ago, I attended one of those all-day rock and roll extravaganzas that generally leave me wishing I'd spent my \$15 on fertilizer for my plants.

This one was at Anaheim Stadium and was headlined by ELO. As my friends sat mesmerized by the slick, flashy and almost too-perfect performance of ELO, my mind was back with the group that had preceded them.

It was a five-man band called Journey whose main claim to fame was a philosophical look at life called, "The Wheel in the Sky."

"Oh, the wheel in the sky keeps on turnin' . . ." the chorus blared through the amplifiers surrounding the stage.

I was impressed by the vibrancy and feeling the band exuded.

This first impression is not dulled by their latest Columbia release, "Departure."

The songs alternate from the sophisticated rock of the single, "Any Way You Want It" and "Line of Fire" to the pseudo-blues/jazz of "Walks Like A Lady."

Lead vocalist Steve Perry gives the album's ballads an honest touch and drives the rockers with rawness and defiance.

Backing his vocals are musicians Gregg Rolie on keyboards; Neal Schon, guitars (both of whom were once with Santana); Steve Smith on drums and bassist Ross Valory.

Journey plays a brand of rock that melds the sophistication of ELO or Queen with the ballsy sound of Van Halen and Cheap Trick.

The songs on "Departure" have lyrics worth hearing. They aren't out to impress anyone with high decible levels or to out-gross Johnny Rotten.

On the sensitive "Good Morning Girl," Perry coos, "I sing it girl from the heart/I sing it girl from the start."

The album sleeve has the quote: "As a seed is planted so the tree shall grow."

As far as I'm concerned, the seed was planted that warm summer night in Anaheim and has grown through their preceding albums to maturity with "Departure."

—Valerie Hood