

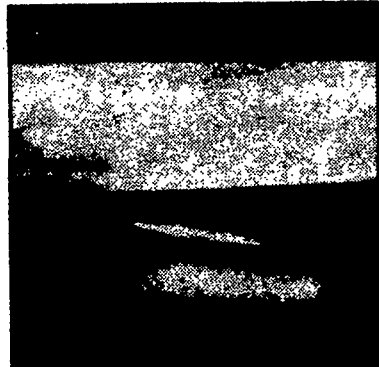
Rock '82: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

BY ALISON POWER

On New Year's Eve some years ago, the highlight of the night for those too young to hit the bars was turning to WABC radio to listen to Cousin Bruce count down the top songs of the year that was ticking by.

Things, needless to say, have changed. WABC is all talk now, the top 10 of the year doesn't feature the likes of the Beatles, the Supremes, the Doors, or Creedence Clearwater, and the entire AM-oriented music business no longer exists. But the music goes on, and that year end review may not be done in the same way but it's just as important to those who find rock and roll important.

If 1982 brought anything to this listener, it might have been the feeling that the big bang



NEBRASKA

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

theory for music (as evidenced by the Beatles appearance in the 60's) may not hold up to testing — if there are changes being wrought in the genre, those changes may in fact be subtle ones rather than explosions.

In the midst of the money-makers and the recessive work being put out, there are some strange groups doing some interesting things, there are some more familiar artists who are expanding their horizons, there are some technological changes that might in fact be the factor that makes or breaks popular music as we've known it for some three decades. Until the future becomes more clear, the best we can do is keep searching for those hidden singles, those surprise albums that still provide that excitement that rock is all about.

What follows is a very personal assessment of what 1982 provided in the way of that excitement — and where it fell short.

The Good

Rock and roll video — What new vistas could the music industry find? Your living room, that's what, and with the expansion of the likes of M-TV (Music Television) into even the hinterlands of the U.S. in 1982, the music moguls are making sure that while you eat your mashed potatoes you can



LONG AFTER DARK

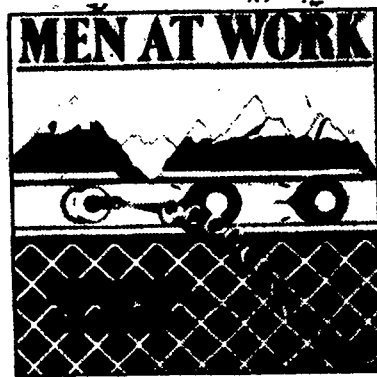
TOM PETTY AND THE HEARTBREAKERS

Backstreet

see Rod Stewart do the mashed potato in some video treatment

of his latest hit. We were sorely tempted to put rock video on the thumbs down list, but we have to admit that M-TV is the station we love to hate. With its idiotic video jocks, and its pandering to groups that shouldn't be allowed on the street let alone on my TV, this 24-hour hypnotic channel can be dangerous. But it definitely bears watching, if only because it has the potential to drastically change the focus of the listener. Years from now that favorite song from the summer of 1982 may not spark memories of the gang at the beach, it might automatically conjure up the video of the hit: it's not just our ears that are being assaulted now, it's our eyes, too. Will our imaginations — and the music's — be deadened? A lot could fall by the wayside, and it will be interesting to see if the change will produce something substantial or just sound the death knell for the whole thing. Stay tuned.

Bruce Springsteen — With some of the reaching that was painfully apparent on "The River," even some of Springsteen's most loyal fans worried if this vision of "rock and roll future" was in fact a mirage. But with 1982's "Nebraska," Springsteen has proved that he still has, and probably will have for some time, the ability to write songs that are maybe too good for the idiom. This isn't an album to slap on during a party, unless you want people



BUSINESS AS USUAL

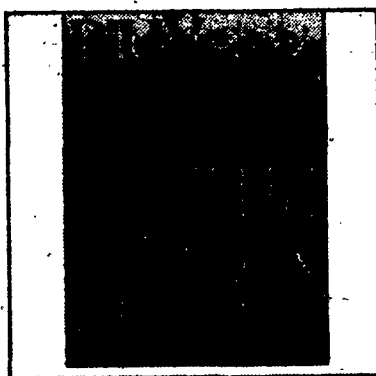
MEN AT WORK

Columbia

to leave, but with simple arrangements it tells, better than others, purely American tales of lost souls and lost moments. Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers — The "Dragnet" band of rock and roll — just the facts, ma'am, just the facts. But they're presented well, and with 1982's "Long After Dark," this band has again provided me with an album that I can actually play through on both sides. Petty's music is not fancy, but it's good, basic, straight ahead rock and roll. I love these guys.

Roxy Music — If Tom Petty and crew provide good, clean rock and roll, Roxy Music epitomizes good, kinky rock and roll. Somewhat altered state music is melded with altered state lyrics to come up with what used to be called "art rock," and vocalist Bryan Ferry's ability to make the phone book sound sensual sells it. Their 1982 effort, "Avalon," practically melted onto my turntable due to repeated listenings. This is music to dream by, although you might not want to repeat the images it conjures up.

Nick Lowe — With former Rockpile cohort Dave Edmunds, Lowe is one of the best examples of how the British can take good old American rock and roll and make it live again, without having it come



THE NYLON CURTAIN

BILLY JOEL

Columbia

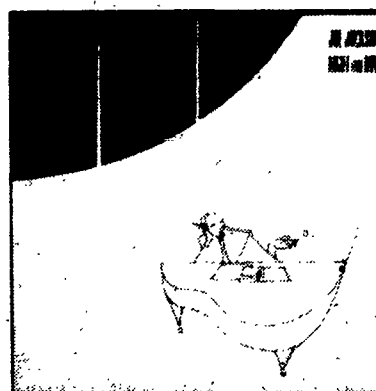
out like a town-hall dance revival. "Nick the Knife," his 1982 solo album, has good dance songs, good love songs, and most importantly a sense of humor. He's funny and he sounds good.

Phil Collins and Peter Gabriel — It's probably not fair to lump these two together, but they used to be cohorts in the band Genesis (of which Collins is still a member), and they both released singles this year that were just swell. Gabriel's "Shock the Monkey" is mighty strange and mighty catchy. Collins' remake of the Supremes' "You Can't Hurry Love" is both surprising and surprisingly well done. If he likes the Supremes, I like him.

Joe Jackson — Is there intelligence on radio today? Yes, and it's Joe Jackson who with his single "Stepping Out" has done his small part toward quality control on the airwaves. Nice piano, nice imagery, nice step past Van Halen. The album "Night and Day" promises to be more of the same, and when I get my tax return I'm planning to buy it.

The Rolling Stones — The Stones made this list primarily because one of them didn't die in 1982. And the 1981 release of "Tattoo You" held over to provide some good listening in 1982, although their release this year of a live album didn't thrill me too much. But the Stones do deserve credit for their video spots; Jagger looks like a Gumby doll on acid, Keith Richards and Ron Wood look like corpses, and Charlie Watts and Bill Wyman look like bemused accountants. They crack me up, and they're all laughing too, on the way to the bank. You've got to love 'em.

The Police — "Ghost In The



NIGHT AND DAY

JOE JACKSON

A&M

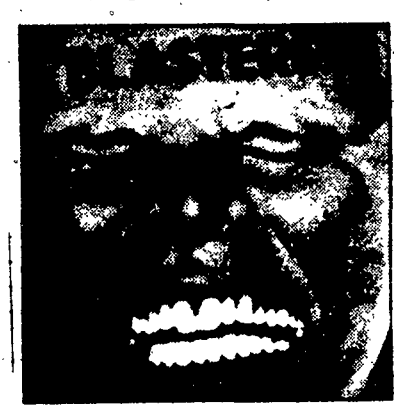
Machine" was released in 1981, but according to one poll it was the fifth top selling album of 1982. It also was one of the most-played albums on my turntable this year. And as this band shows that a group can be popular and progressive at the same time, member Sting is on his way to becoming the quintessential rock star: he can sing, he can play, he can write, he can get roles in films, and he's so goodlooking it's almost

frightening.

Good Singles — I like those weirdos from Australia, Men at Work, if only for their homage to paranoia, "Who Can It Be Now?" I like A Flock of Seagulls, if only because I got to hear one deejay announce "I Ran" by a Flock of Seagulls, which had overtones of Hitchcock's film "The Birds." And I like the J. Geils Band, for hanging around for the past 1,000 years and finally becoming popular, while giving AM radio some kick with things like "Freeze Frame."

The Bad

The Who — This hurts me a lot more than it does them. But let's look at the facts. They had to top the Stones tour last



THE BLASTERS

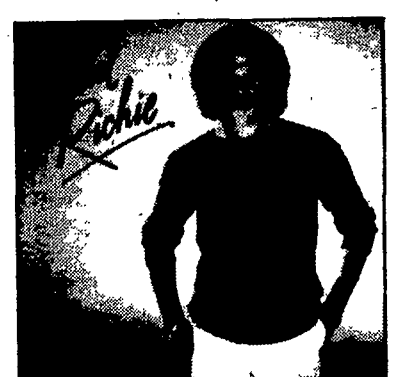
Slash

year, so they announced that their 1982 junket would be the last — I'll believe it when I see it. They were even more blatantly marketed than the Stones, and I don't like Schlitz beer. And I wasted good money on two albums, the group's "It's Hard," which didn't exactly rivet me to the speakers, and Peter Townshend's album "All The Best Cowboys Have Chinese Eyes," which painfully details all of his problems without the panache or subtlety that in his past efforts has touched and comforted the insecurities in all of us. "Let me tell you some more about myself," Townshend sings in one of his new songs; sorry, Pete, I just don't care anymore.

Ozzy Osbourne — Biting heads off animals in concert, putting out classically bad music that harkens back to a classically bad band (Black Sabbath), Ozzy would have made the "ugly" list were it not for a video he has out. In it, he beckons to the crowd to join in some heavy metal dirge. The audience reacts with the enthusiasm of a bed of kelp. It's pitiful, and I can't kick a man too hard, when he's that down.

Lionel Richie — Lionel, I'm glad that you're making a lot of money and that you're truly in love with someone. But if you put out one more sappy, orchestrated top 10 hit, we're going to get mean.

Neil Diamond — I can only hope that someday E.T. will return to Earth, so that when



LIONEL RICHE

Motown



IT'S HARD

THE WHO

Warner Bros.

he leaves again he can drop this King of Schlock off on the planet Boredom and continue on through the cosmos.

Asia — Okay, they sold the most albums in 1982. But they're not fooling me — culled from the likes of Yes and Emerson, Lake, and Palmer, these players know the ropes and they wanted the bucks badly, so they put out basically listenable but totally uninspiring stuff like "Heat of the Moment." Many others are worse, but none of them so blatantly reaped the benefits of mediocrity.

The Ugly

"I've Never Been To Me," "Nobody:" — These two singles, by women who only have one name (Charlene, and Sylvia, I think), are not only bad, they're insulting. The former details the trauma of a female who has sipped champagne with kings on yachts, or something along those lines that in fact sounds pretty good — but she's apparently yearning for the comforts of hearth, home, husband, and children. Sexist, stupid, and you certainly can't dance to it.



ASIA

"Nobody" is more of the same, but the theme is the old husband-is-fooling-around-with-other-woman scenario. The single consists of the wife trying her last shot at getting the rogue back — if he's smart, he'll go out for cigarettes and never come back.

Paul McCartney — From the man who used to be a Beatle came, in 1982, two revolting efforts that called in two usually snappy guys — Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson — to be partners in the crimes. The only redeeming factor in "Ebony and Ivory" was Stevie Wonder's voice, which unfortunately served to underscore the fact that McCartney sounds like he gargles with glucose. "The Girl Is Mine," with Michael Jackson, plumbs new depths of MOR (middle of the road) — in significance by featuring a talking duet between the two that could prod me to violence. It all just proves that the late John Lennon's acerbic nature did a great service to mankind during the Beatle years, by keeping McCartney in check.