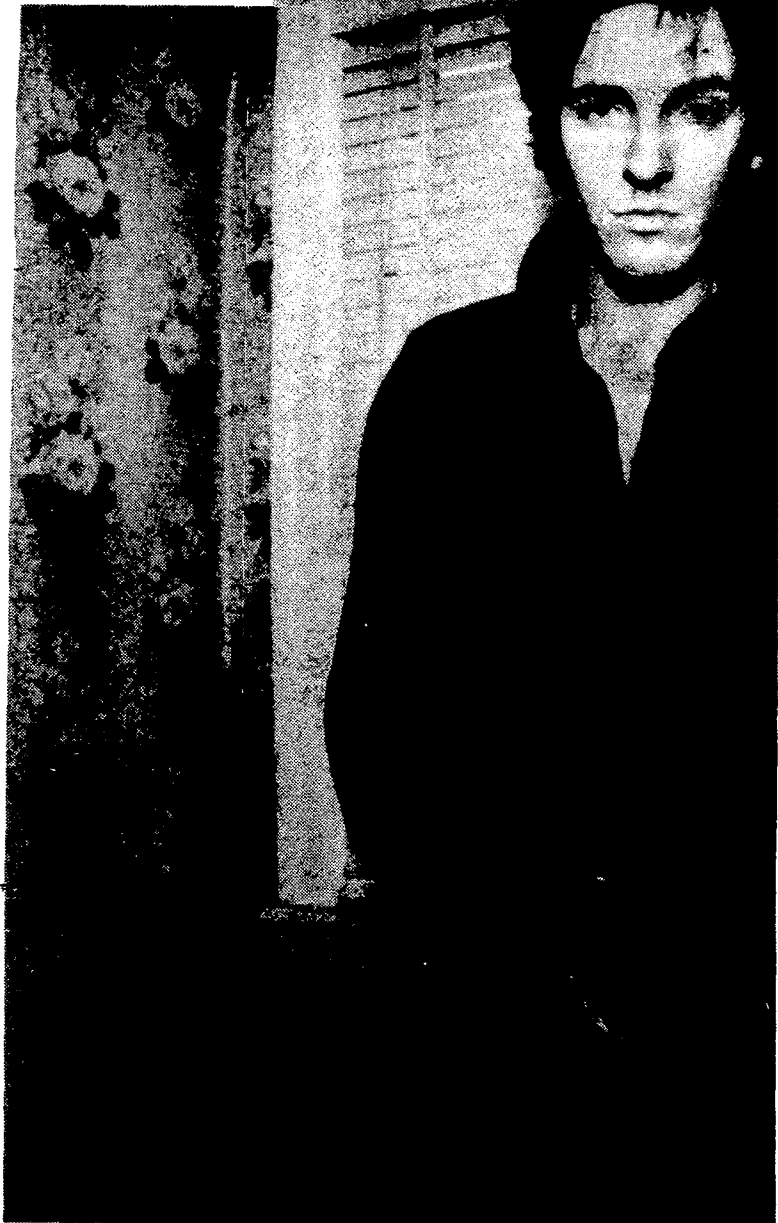


Records



DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF TOWN

Bruce Springsteen
(Columbia Records)

When Bruce Springsteen burst upon the rock scene in the early '70s, he was hailed as the successor to Bob Dylan. In rapid succession he released three critically

acclaimed albums and played countless concerts.

Almost overnight, he became a household word, appeared simultaneously on the covers of *Time* and *Newsweek*, became a media event.

But success took its toll. It has been over two years since his last (and best) record, *Born to Run*.

His new album, *Darkness on the Edge of Town* is timed to coincide with a national tour. Springsteen is making news again.

At first glance, he looks tired. On the cover photographs he leans against the bare wall of an undecorated room, looking like a burnt-out James Dean. His skin is pallid, his hair disheveled, and his white T-shirt contrasts starkly with his black leather jacket.

But appearances are often deceptive. *Darkness* is a vibrant and insightful record that interweaves a series of powerful themes into a unified musical statement: a vision of growing up in an urban working class family, full of energy and hope, finally breaking away only to find himself cruising the same streets at night.

He is at his best capturing the hopes and disappointments of urban life. "The Promised Land," "Badlands," and "Prove It All Night" are classic Springsteen rockers: bright, vibrant, driving, evocative lyrics delivered with strength. ("Prove It All Night," the album's single, is currently climbing the AM charts.) "Factory" is an elegant ballad that depicts his blue collar father's hard work.

Coming to terms with his past on "Adam Raised a Cain," a gutsy rock-blues tune featuring his tight guitar solo, Springsteen sings:

*"You're born into this life
paying,
for the sins of somebody else's
past,
Daddy worked his whole life,
for nothing but the pain..."*

Perhaps the most revealing cut on the record is "Racing in the Street." In the guise of a hymn about racing his car, Springsteen reveals some of the frustration of working class culture. "Summer's here and the time is right/For racing in the street."

Summer is here, all right. And Bruce Springsteen's *Darkness on the Edge of Town* is like steamy city summer nights: tough, gritty

and stripped of all pretense. It is perhaps the record of the summer of 1978. —Michael S. Kimmel
Michael S. Kimmel is a free-lance music critic in Berkeley.



LIFE DANCE OF IS Oliver Lake (Arista/Novus Records)

Novus means new, and *Life Dance of Is*, the latest album by alto saxophonist Oliver Lake, is among the first releases on this just-initiated subsidiary of Arista records.

It has been difficult for experimental musicians to get regular club dates or recording sessions. So, with the help of organizations like St. Louis' Black Artists' Group (of which Lake was a founder), Chicago's Association of Creative Music (started in part by Arista/Novus artists Richard Muhal Abrams and Anthony Braxton) and New York's Collective of Black Artists, they've produced their own concerts and recorded for small (often musician-run) labels. Novus aims to make them available to a larger audience.

Oliver Lake, like Braxton and Roscoe Mitchell of Chicago's Art Ensemble, explores spaces of pause, hesitation and disconnection. His sax breaks short and intense, bursts up and down the scale, skipping notes, leaving the ear or mind to fill the missing

spaces. The piano intervenes like a crosswise color line, Lake returns, reaching out with the sax. Moving against and through constraint, the music is a desire for something different. The directions pursued meld intellect and body heat intensity.

Disjunctive as Lake can be, he also carries that rooted, earth based sensuality which has always defined the best of blues, rock and soul. He once played behind people like Rufus Thomas and Solomon Burke. His swing connotes honkey tonk R&B with hard, tangibly erotic strength.

On *Change One* he uses an African rhythm base, and the harmonica of guitarist Michael Gregory Jackson sounds like Sonny Boy Williamson fused with a sax, halfway between pre-disco Stanley Turrentine and an Arabic call.

The strains weave throughout, and just as you're drained into exhaustion or jarred into lapsed attention, the back beat resumes, a reminder of always-held strength—a base from which flight and exploration can move.

There's a lot of polite jazz these days. Despite the abundance of synthesized space sounds, most is as genuinely funky as the discreet tap of a foot. Exponents like George Benson once played a much tougher sound that earned them little survival money. Their creation is now safe, linear, and, as the radio puts it, "movin' easy music," complete with hummable melodies and well wrapped up loose ends.

Lake's music resists this trend, as does that of his compatriots from the cooperative associations. In his check-backs and breaks there is no safe and settled ground, only aspiration, restless hope and a demand for room to move. One has to work to experience the album's full import. It reflects with richness on a complicated world and its depth makes it worth all necessary effort.

—Paul Loeb

Paul Loeb is a free-lance writer in New York City.

CLASSIFIED

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THE PHILIPPINE RESISTANCE—Vivid analysis of urban and rural resistance; how the United Front achieves its unity; the first publication of the National Democratic Front's Ten Point Program. \$1-Southeast Asia Chronicle, Dept. F, P.O. Box 4000-D, Berkeley, CA 94704. Subscription \$8/year. Free catalogue.

MANNING MARABLE, ITT columnist and Chair of Tuskegee's Political Science Dept., will speak on "Black Nationalism Today," Monday, July 24th, 8 p.m., 3244 N. Clark, Chicago. Sponsored by NAM's Second City Socialist School.

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JULY/AUGUST JEWISH CURRENTS, 2 editorials: "Begin—Make Peace or Make Room!" and "The Soviet Jewish Situation;" "Israel's Missed Opportunities" by Maj.-Gen. (Ret.) Mattityahu Peled. "Martin Buber's Social Vision" by Louis Harap, "Reply to Rabbi Goldberg" by Elsie Levitan. Poems, Reviews. Single Copy 60c. Subscription \$7.50 yearly USA. Jewish Currents, Dept. T, 22 East 17 St., NYC 10003. New pamphlet by Schappes "Irving Howe's 'The World of Our Fathers' A Critical Analysis." Send 60c. Special—just published—A TEN YEAR HARVEST, Third Jewish Currents Reader, 1966-1976, 300 pp. paperback, \$3.75.

National radio production seminar. **ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE: ALTERNATIVES IN RADIO JOURNALISM AND CREATIVE CULTURE** Aug. 4-7, WYSO, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, OH, will examine programming as related to minorities, women and the labor movement, exploring the role of community-oriented radio in social change. Through presentations and workshops, news, public affairs and cultural producers will offer background content information and specific skills training. Tuition, \$100. Limited scholarships available. For registration and information: Sherry Novick 513/767-1722.

SOCIALISTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC Party? Seattle ITT Associates presents Clara Fraser (Radical Women), Rick Hull (Exec. Committee, 32nd District Demo. Party), George Thornton (New American Movement), Thursday, July 27, 7:30 pm at American Friends Service Center, 814 N.E. 40th St. Childcare provided.

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AFSC, a Quaker service organization that conducts programs with peace education and social change directions, is seeking candidates for the position of Executive Secretary of the North Central Region, based in Des Moines, Iowa. The person sought should have administrative experience, an understanding of Quaker principles, the ability to write clearly, and the ability to speak effectively in public, through media. An ability to supervise and work together with a variety of people on a vast number of issues is also vital. The job demands an extensive amount of travel in a region that covers eight states in the Midwest. A complete job description is available upon request. Applications can be obtained and should be returned to Hank Wellnitz, interim Executive Secretary, American Friends Service Committee, 4211 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50312. Recruitment will end Aug. 18, 1978.

THE CITIZEN/LABOR ENERGY Coalition, a national coalition of labor, citizen action, and public interest organizations, is looking for experienced people to do the following jobs: minority and church recruitment and liaison; fundraiser and regional organizer. Experience in direct action community organizations and/or labor organizations preferable. Salary negotiable. Send resume to: Citizen/Labor Energy Coalition, 600 West Fullerton, Chicago, IL 60614.

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MUSIC

T. Robinson's straight talk on being gay

"Actually, I'm not a guy who knows anything about politics much. My qualification is I know how to play the guitar, and I write songs about just anything I feel," said Tom Robinson in a recent interview given in San Francisco.

For someone who claims to know little about politics Robinson is remarkably able to express the social, economic and political frustrations of England's youth. His gay activism and social awareness, peppered with Johnny Rotten-style anger, has captured and held the imagination of England's rock press for nearly a year.

The most controversial band to emerge since the Sex Pistols, TRB, as they liked to be called, hit the top of the English and the Swedish charts with their first single, "2-4-6-8 Motorway," a song about "a gay truckdriver fancying this motorcyclist as he goes along." The follow-up, "Glad to Be Gay" also hit the top of the charts.

Though Robinson attempts to downplay the activist nature of his band, it is his tirades against oppression of all kinds and his call for solidarity of oppressed people—be they gay, women, third world, punks, or whatever—that makes his band and their records stand out.

Robinson is anything but shy about admitting his sexual preference. But he is quick to emphasize that the other three members of the band—Danny Kustow (lead guitar/vocals), Brian "Dolphin" Taylor (drums/vocals) and Nick Plytas (keyboards/vocals)—are heterosexual.

"Being gay myself," he told San Francisco journalists, "I'm concerned with gay liberation. But I see that as part of an overall and much, much larger picture. You can't demand freedom for gay people without freedom for women, and you can't demand freedom for women without freedom for people of all colors and skins. No way! It isn't possible!"

The son of middle-class English parents, Robinson's empathy for the poor and downtrodden was probably forged during a six-year stay in a British reform school. Freed at 23, he spent a year working as a clerk. ("I wanted to prove to myself that I could work a straight job from nine to five for a full year and support myself.")

Robinson then formed Cafe Society, a group he describes as "a nice inoffensive band that was making music for people to listen to. And they'd say 'That's jolly nice,' and pat you on the back." His developing political consciousness ultimately came into conflict with Cafe Society's lightweight lyrical and musical approach.

"I woke up one day and wrote, 'Fuck this! Fuck discretion and caution!'" He quit the group and by January 1977 he had formed the TRB.

Robinson has been criticized for signing with EMI (England's largest record company) and Capitol Records in the U.S.—a multinational corporation that issues sexist record covers, reinforces

stereotypical male/female roles in its country music releases and has an arms division.

His comment: "Are you kidding or what? If we were on Chiswick Records we might be like a hip thing for some kind of power elite who were able to buy import records. But we wouldn't have reached people in Sweden, or Australia if it wasn't for one of those capitalistic multinational

Stonewall protests in NYC in 1969), "Up Against the Wall" (dedicated to Ann Arbor's activist band, the MC5) and "Right on Sister," with tension relievers like "Grey Cortina" (an ode to his dream car), Robinson and TRB were as comfortable playing English pub songs as in stripped-down Motor-City-style rock'n'roll.

Although Robinson hopes to be successful in the U.S., he is aware of problems that often accompany fame and fortune. "I can't say what the effects of a number one song in the U.S. would do to me. I hope I wouldn't sell out. But I'm not so dumb as to say I never will.

"However, the achievements up to the point where one sells out remain. If we can keep a few kids from joining the National Front, or keep a kid from being beaten up, we've achieved something."

—Michael Goldberg
Michael Goldberg is a free-lance writer in San Francisco.

Fears, passions and calls to arms

POWER IN DARKNESS
Tom Robinson Band
(Harvest Records)

This album is such a perfect mixture of rock, poetry and politics that it makes the music of rock'n'roll millionaires like Peter Frampton or the Eagles look tame, as if they've never heard of Presley or Buddy Holly. It's no accident that Tom Robinson refers in "Long Hot Summer," which closes the first side, to the Who. They also mixed politics and rock in a way that moved thousands of people.

Robinson is a gay revolutionary. His band (TRB) is big in England where they have played a number of concerts for the Rock Against Racism cause and at the Carnival against the Nazis held in London recently.

They do one song, "Winter of '79" about the rise of fascism in England that really makes it sound possible.

*That was the year Nan Harris died,
and Charlie Jones committed suicide.
The world we knew busted open wide
in the winter of '79....
All the gay geezers were put inside
and the colored kids were getting crucified.
Some folks fought and some folks died
in the winter of '79.*

The politics alternate between subtle ("Martin," a song about his brother, who sticks by him)

and blunt ("Left is right, and right is wrong/Better decide which side you're on.") The cover design is a large fist, and the notes on the back give the address of Rock Against Racism, "Music that knows who the real enemy is."

One of the live tracks is "Right On, Sister," which uses the old feminist slogan: "She's a right on sister/and she knows what she likes/She needs me and you, man/like a fish needs a bike." "Glad To Be Gay," a hit in England, asks male gays if they think it's time to fight back and concludes that you should "sing if you're glad to be gay" and confront anti-gay prejudices and laws.

Capitol Records is worried that the album is too political for the U.S. market—meaning too political for radio stations and record stores. But the album has been put on general releases and sales so far look good.

It isn't all slogans and calls to arms. Robinson sings about fears and passions and falling in love, in a way that is realistic, doesn't dump on people or put other people down. And there is such a good mix of the personal and political, music and lyrics, ideas and rock'n'roll, that *Power in Darkness* transcends the topical setting, transcends 1978.

It's destined to become one of the finest examples of political rock'n'roll. Tell everyone you know.

—Kent Worcester
Kent Worcester is a member of the International Kent Worcester Socialist Organization.

corporations putting the music over.

"I'll be straight with you. We got turned down by the small independent record companies in Britain. Stiff didn't want to know. Island didn't want to know. Virgin didn't want to know. And the reason they didn't..."

"Is because Tom is gay," said TRB drummer, Brian Taylor.

"And they didn't want to know," said Robinson.

"Now you can't get any more sexist than that," said Taylor.

On a whirlwind tour that brought him to San Francisco (as well as Los Angeles and New York), Robinson roused a mixed audience of gays and straights to join in on a music hall/barroom sing-along of "Glad to Be Gay." His reference to "unlucky 13" drew the crowd together like survivors on a life raft. Alternating tough and pointed songs like "Long Hot Summer" (about the



Photo/Michael Goldberg