

Records



MORE SONGS ABOUT BUILDINGS AND FOOD

The Talking Heads
(Sire Records)

When the Talking Heads burst upon the musical scene last year, they were hailed as "the Beatles of the new wave." Clean-cut and bright-eyed, they were as acceptable as preppies. Their debut album, *Talking Heads '77*, was a collection of brisk tunes that explored the emptiness of the American Dream.

Their much anticipated follow-up release, *More Songs About Buildings and Food*, adds a fullness to their sound that was previously lacking.

The Talking Heads construct their songs from tightly controlled rhythmic patterns to which lead singer and lyricist David Byrne adds complex and clever words delivered in a sharp, almost crackling, staccato style. On *More Songs* these quick-jab vocals are complemented by the electronic wizardry of Brian Eno as co-pro-

ducer. Eno adds a layer of electronic sounds and balances the group's overall sound, which results in a more melodic album without sacrificing any of its punch.

The album opens with the driving beat of "Thank You for Sending Me an Angel" and its frenetic pace does not subside until the side's end. "The Good Thing," the album's single, is a poke at those who live as though the elements of "the good life" can be itemized like a grocery list. "Girls Want to Be With the Girls" (reminiscent of "Tentative Decisions" from the earlier record) is a brilliant satire of men's discomfort with women's control over their own lives.

"Found a Job" and "Artists Only" show the Talking Heads deflating the self-important posturing of many artists. Former art students themselves (all but one went to the Rhode Island School of Design), they see through the veneer sharply yet compassionately. Byrne celebrates

that "I'm painting again!" but later pouts, "I don't have to prove that I am creative."

The most impressive cut on the record, however, is the last. "The Big Country" begins with a seemingly affectionate observation of middle America from an airplane window ("I see the shapes, I remember from maps") but ends with a firm statement, "I wouldn't live there if you paid me to."

Throughout *More Songs* the band is controlled and energetic. Chris Frantz (drums) and Tina Weymouth (bass) hold down the charging rhythm, while Jerry Harrison (keyboards) and Byrne's guitar provide short leads that complement Byrne's vocals.

Most "new wave" bands hark back to rock'n'roll primitivism: overly loud and undercompetent. The Talking Heads, however, continue to ride the crest of the new wave with a fresh and exciting sound. —Michael S. Kimmel
Michael S. Kimmel follows popular music from Berkeley, Calif.

Directors

Continued from page 21.

subjects important to my people."

But it remains questionable whether he will be able to do so. The impact of financial considerations upon the choice of subjects cannot be overestimated. As Claude Jutra said, "There are films I haven't made because of financing. If I were a writer, I would have other subjects."

Government censorship.

United by a common desire to express themselves freely, the directors faced obstacles which were not only financial and economic, but political. In democratic countries as well as in dictatorships, certain subjects were considered taboo.

Agnes Varda described how a film she had made ten years ago on the Greek putsch was confiscated by the French government. Cacoyannis told how he had made a film financed by 20th Century Fox on nuclear arms control. When he presented them with the completed work, they refused to distribute it, claiming that it was "anti-American."

As Arau suggested, in Mexico it would not have been possible to make such a film in the first place: "We live in a totally different world. It's really a miracle to live in Latin America, to be alive, not to be in jail, and to make a film. The Mexican film is almost totally government controlled. The authorities can decide to put a film in the drawer and no one will ever see it."

"If the state is powerful, you have more freedom. I agree a film by itself is not revolutionary and is not going to change society. But people in government think so. If the people in government were stronger, they would not think so. I prefer to express myself through humor because in that way people in power will be less afraid of my films."

UNESCO's limits.

Third World directors face similar challenges. Sembene and Chahine have also made films that were not exhibited in their native lands, and Brazil's Pereira dos Santos, one of the founders of the *cinema novo* movement, was unable to make movies for

four years.

It was appropriate that he was the one to spark the final afternoon's discussion in which the directors challenged the UNESCO representatives to take a stand on the issue of disappearing films and silenced filmmakers. After five sessions, Dos Santos broke the almost total silence when he asked what UNESCO proposed to do about exiled filmmakers and censorship.

One UNESCO organizer said that as an intergovernmental agency UNESCO does not have the power to deal with problems of individual freedom "...We cannot adopt resolutions...but there are a number of informal ways...[UNESCO's] director general has done a lot by direct contacts with heads of states to ameliorate conditions."

Not satisfied with this answer, Cacoyannis bluntly asked whether UNESCO had *any* power. When the representative gave a vague answer, Sembene spoke up: "We don't think that UNESCO can resolve the problem of liberty."

Nevertheless, he cited two instances when the director general interceded to have two banned films by Sembene and Chahine shown at UNESCO's Paris headquarters. In both cases the governments complied and Chahine's film was eventually released. Sembene summarized his view of UNESCO in the following manner: "As artists we should understand that all governments are conservative for the artist... We have to see how to get UNESCO to ask for films, musicians, etc. We are always ready to collaborate with UNESCO but we know its limits."

This discussion prompted the filmmakers to make a series of concrete recommendations: that an international Directors' Guild be established to protest in the event that directors were jailed, that UNESCO work to end destructive rivalry among film archives, and that it help to preserve what Sembene called our "good little films."

Thus the directors attempted to focus UNESCO's attention on films rather than cinema. If the organization begins to move in the directions indicated, then this first symposium will have been a resounding success.

Katherine Singer Kovacs is a Los Angeles film critic.

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EVENTS

CHICAGO READERS! Diana Johnstone, ITT Paris correspondent, will speak on "The Future of Europe: Capitalism or Socialism?" Tues., Oct. 3, 8 p.m., at Resurrection Lutheran Church, 3309 N. Seminary (enter School St.). Johnstone has recently reported on the Moro killing and the French elections, and has won high praise for her insights into European affairs. Co-sponsored by In These Times and Second City Socialist School.

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Mime goes American-style

By David Ahrens and
Viki Dello Joio

The first national festival of American mime was held in the Milwaukee, Wisc., Aug. 21-26.

Though the participants in the six-day Festival of American Mime (FOAM) were from seven nations and 35 states, the vast majority were American. Most of the mimes were not from the two centers normally associated with the art—New York and San Francisco—but from small towns and cities throughout the U.S. Their performing spaces normally range from public schools and universities to community centers and theaters, as well as the traditional mime stage—the street.

Mime art in the U.S. until recently associated for the most part with Marcel Marceau—has grown enormously in the past decade, not only in the number of its artists but also in the diversity of the art form itself. While most people still think of mime as a white-faced and silent individual performing illusions on the street or stage, that is no longer the case for the majority of mime artists.

American themes.

The growth of American mime has led the art away from its European orientation and to an exploration of new forms and of new subject matter. In addition to using language—at one time inconceivable in "the silent art"—performers now also use costumes and props, music and sound effects, as well as new forms of movement.

Many troupes are now producing full-length plays as opposed to single-trick skits based on such illusions as pulling an imaginary rope, climbing a ladder or walking in place. Because of this, mime need no longer be relegated to "the side-show" but

At their first national festival, U.S. mimes said goodbye to their European models.

can now gain a central place in the American theater.

American mimes are increasingly turning to the American experience. In one of the festival's highlights, Bob Berky, director of the Rochester-based Mimeworks, performed a piece entitled *Rock'n'Roll*, in which a rock group in the manner of The Who, slowly self-destructs.

Similarly, in *Mime Is Not an Object: The Reproduction of a Working Day*, the United Mime Workers of Champaign, Ill., successfully parodied the effects of American corporate capitalism on people's lives.

Asked to describe their work, Deborah Langerman of the Mime Workers said, "We take an everyday situation that people find themselves in, put it on stage and perform certain operations on it. [In this way] we change the relationship of the different elements of people's lives."

Sexism and mime.

But the mime profession also inadvertently reflects the U.S. in its continuation of American sexist practices. Early in the festival a panel was convened to discuss the role of women in the profession. Although women suffer discrimination in many areas of the field—from the roles they are expected to play to who will hire them to perform—the discussion leaned toward blaming the victims. The conclusion was that if women will only work harder they will be successful in their profession.

But a questionnaire to assess the condition of women in mime was distributed and there was discussion of the possibility of creating a Women in Mime organization.

Among the 450 whites there were less than a half-dozen black participants and only two black performers, and no discussion of racial bias in the profession. Though there has been real growth in its popularity, mime remains a subject of interest almost exclusively for educated whites.

On the last day of the festival a protest demonstration was held against the imprisonment of three Spanish mimes (See *ITT*, Jan. 25). Jailed since Dec. 15, 1977, ostensibly for their satirical portrayal of a corrupt military tribunal, the three members of the troupe Els Joglars have been sentenced unconstitutionally by that same military tribunal for up to six years.

Vicki Dello Joio has worked with the Great Atlantic Radio Conspiracy and is a feminist mime. David Ahrens is a free-lance writer.

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