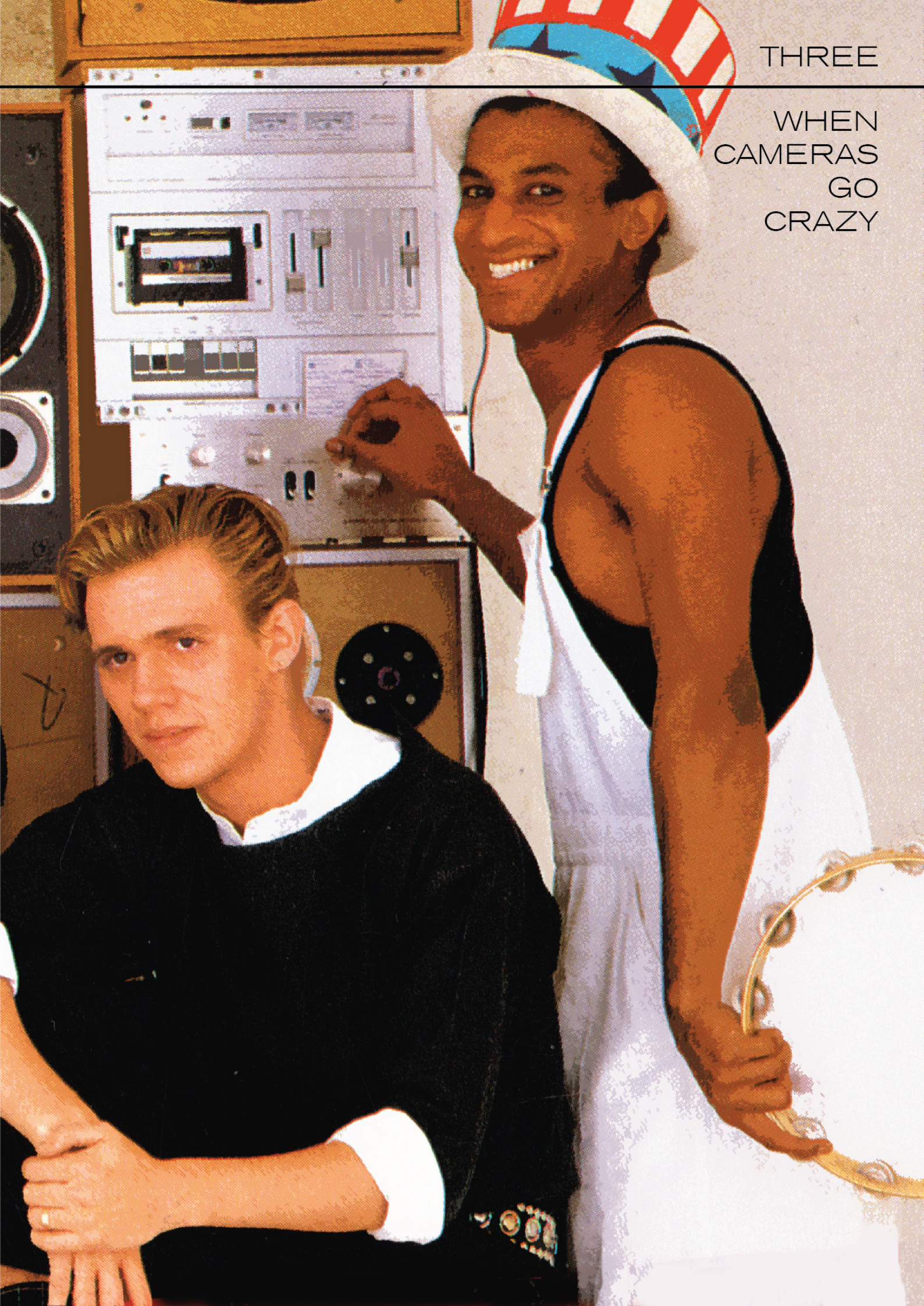




THREE

WHEN
CAMERAS
GO
CRAZY







CONFUSION IS HIS FORTE

BOY GEORGE, outrageous lead singer of chart-topping English group Culture Club, delights in the confusion that surrounds him.

There's no question about his group's popularity — their single *Do You Want To Hurt Me* is a smash hit in Britain, America and Australia and their debut album, *Kissing To Be Clever*, is selling like there's no tomorrow.

The real mystery remains Boy George, the androgynous frontman.

The plucked eyebrows, make-up and crazy clothes have thrown fans into a spin, raising all sorts of questions about George's real identity.

In a phone call to TV WEEK from London, George was adamant his image was no gimmick.

"I've been dressing up for years, long before the band started," he said.

"I don't deliberately try to look like a woman . . . and I don't deliberately try not to look like a woman. I just don't care. I think the important thing is that we write good songs.

"The rest of it is just to poke people in the eye.

"Before I was a 'pop star', I used to go out looking like this and people would laugh at me. Now, they think they understand me, which is stupid because I've always done it.

"I'm not trying to be Adam Ant or something. I do it because I think I look great. I like the way I look, and that's it.

"It's not that I thought, 'Hey, this would be a great image for a band and

BOY GEORGE HAS THEM ALL GUESSING

I'm going to make loads of money out of it'."

But George doesn't mind admitting he exploits the way he looks.

"I don't think there's anything wrong with exploiting it as long as you know what you're doing. It's a personal thing; it's up to you how you treat it."

George left school when he was 15, or at least when he was asked to leave.

'THE REST IS JUST TO POKE PEOPLE IN THE EYE'

"I wanted to be thrown out, so it wasn't against my will. I just got bored with school. I learned to read and write and I didn't want to do anything else. I just wanted to enjoy myself.

"When I left, they told me: 'You'll never get anywhere, never do nothing', and all I've got to say to them is . . . (George let out a big raspberry)."

But, admittedly, it took George a while to find his niche.

He worked as a window-dresser, make-up artist and model before finding his way into music.

"I don't really have any musical

• **BOY GEORGE (left) and Culture Club may visit Australia next year.**

background. I don't play anything. But I like singing, and I think I can sing — I wouldn't be in a band if I couldn't.

"Music is just the best thing; there's nothing else worth doing. There's no other jobs I'd like to do."

George accepts that many might see him as an eccentric.

"I don't think I am, but everyone keeps telling me I am, so I must be.

"But I think I'm perfectly normal — but what's normal for me might not be normal for everyone else. I'm not eccentric in my manners or the way I act, just in the way I look. I'm quite a sane person.

"I don't lead an eccentric life. I lead a quiet life. I don't go out to nightclubs anymore, because I can't be bothered. People just hassle me."

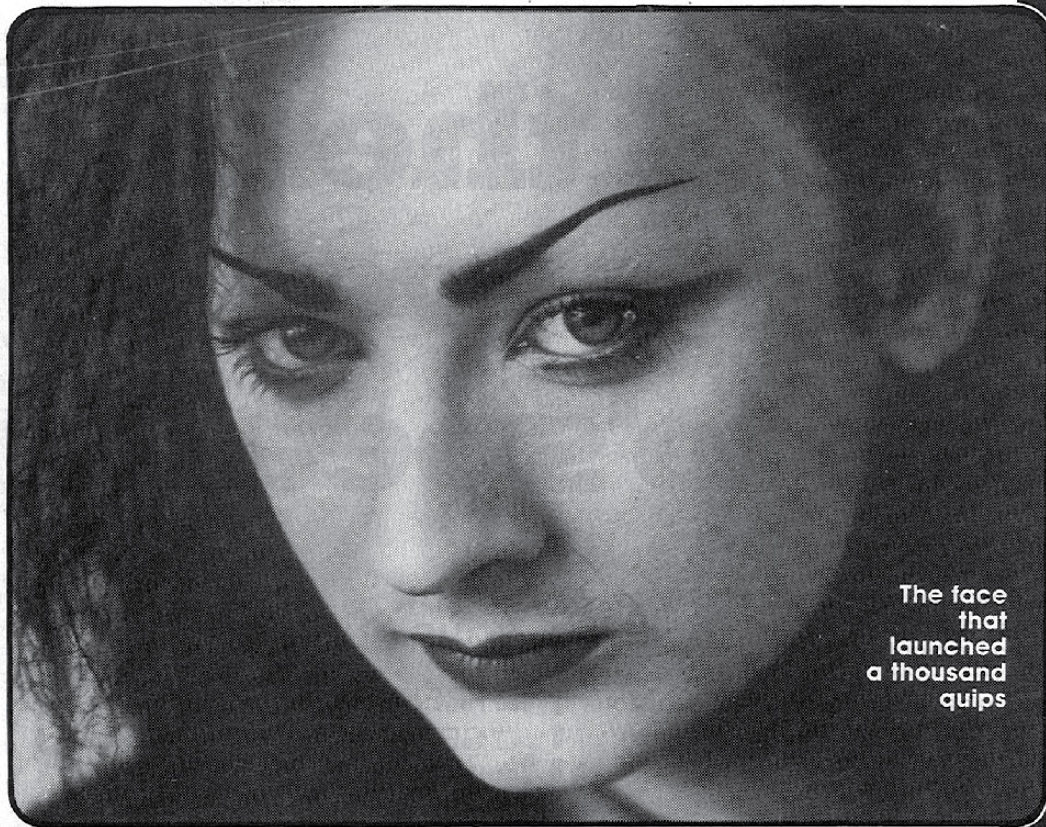
So what does he do instead?

"I watch a lot of tele. My favorite show is *Coronation Street* . . . it's brilliant. And I love *Minder*. I like pop programs, too, although I don't really like bands — I like songs."

Boy George, who declines to reveal his real name, except to say that it is George and he grew up in Kent, hopes to visit Australia next year.

"We'll be touring Europe and America in 1983 and we'll be coming to Australia and New Zealand, but I don't know exactly when."

— ALLAN WEBSTER



The face
that
launched
a thousand
quips

WHO'S A PRETTY BOY, THEN?

George is orthodox in the ring — but outside the ropes he pulls his punches on love, fame and sex



George is the prize of them all.

12 people

IN the unfamiliar surroundings of a boxing ring, singing superstar Boy George anxiously cocks a plucked, pencilled eyebrow and fends off a haymaker from his father.

"Do you really want to hurt me?" George may be wondering.

His father, boxing coach Jerry O'Dowdy, would answer "No" now — but there was a time when George and Jerry used to be more like Tom and Jerry.

There was a lot of violence between them and George, 22-year-old Culture Club pop idol, says these conflicts played a crucial part in shaping the entertainment personality that now drives many to admiring frenzy and others to incoherent fury.

Jerry, who learned his boxing in the army, now coaches youngsters in the noble art.

"He was very violent," says George. "But basically he's very lovely. I do love him now, but he just didn't know when to stop."

George says of himself that he was an unpleasant little fellow, who tormented and abused his mother, and got little affection in return.

At school George won neither friends nor prizes — just the bruising attention of playground bullies.

At 15 he began to wear make-up and outlandish clothes. It was the first public expression of the colourful and sexually ambiguous image that has brought him fame.

He experimented sexually while living in a flat in London's seamy Soho district and finally broke the news to his father that he was in love with another boy.

It was the turning point of their relationship, his dad says now. George feared his father's fury — and possibly another paternal pasting.

Instead of giving him a hiding, Jerry showed him understanding and told George how he, too, had felt deep affection for other men.

The rift was healed, though George now appears to have lost his taste for sex. He says he would "rather have a cup of tea and a good conversation."

His own conversation is increasingly of love for his parents. He no longer rebels — apart from in his garish garb.





Boxing will make a man out of you, they say, but George looks doubtful. He just wants to defend his ambiguity.

It is completely at odds with the conventional style of his four brothers and his sister. One of them, 19-year-old Gerald, is an outstanding sportsman, the winner of 24 boxing trophies, three for marathon running and two more for football.

George has his own trophy to boast about — a commemorative disc to mark the seven-million sales of Culture Club's first hit, *Do You Really Want to Hurt Me?*

He lives in a modest top-floor flat in North London. His bedroom is crowded with Teddy bears and other soft, cuddly toys, most of them gifts from female fans.

Reflecting on his popularity with girls, George says he doesn't consider himself sexy and is certainly not "macho masculine".

But he observes: "Most people would rather sleep with a Teddy bear than go to bed with an Action Man."

That is the gentle philosophy of Boy George, the unloved and unlovable little boy who set out to shock the world, but won the adoration of millions.

And most importantly, he won the love of his parents.



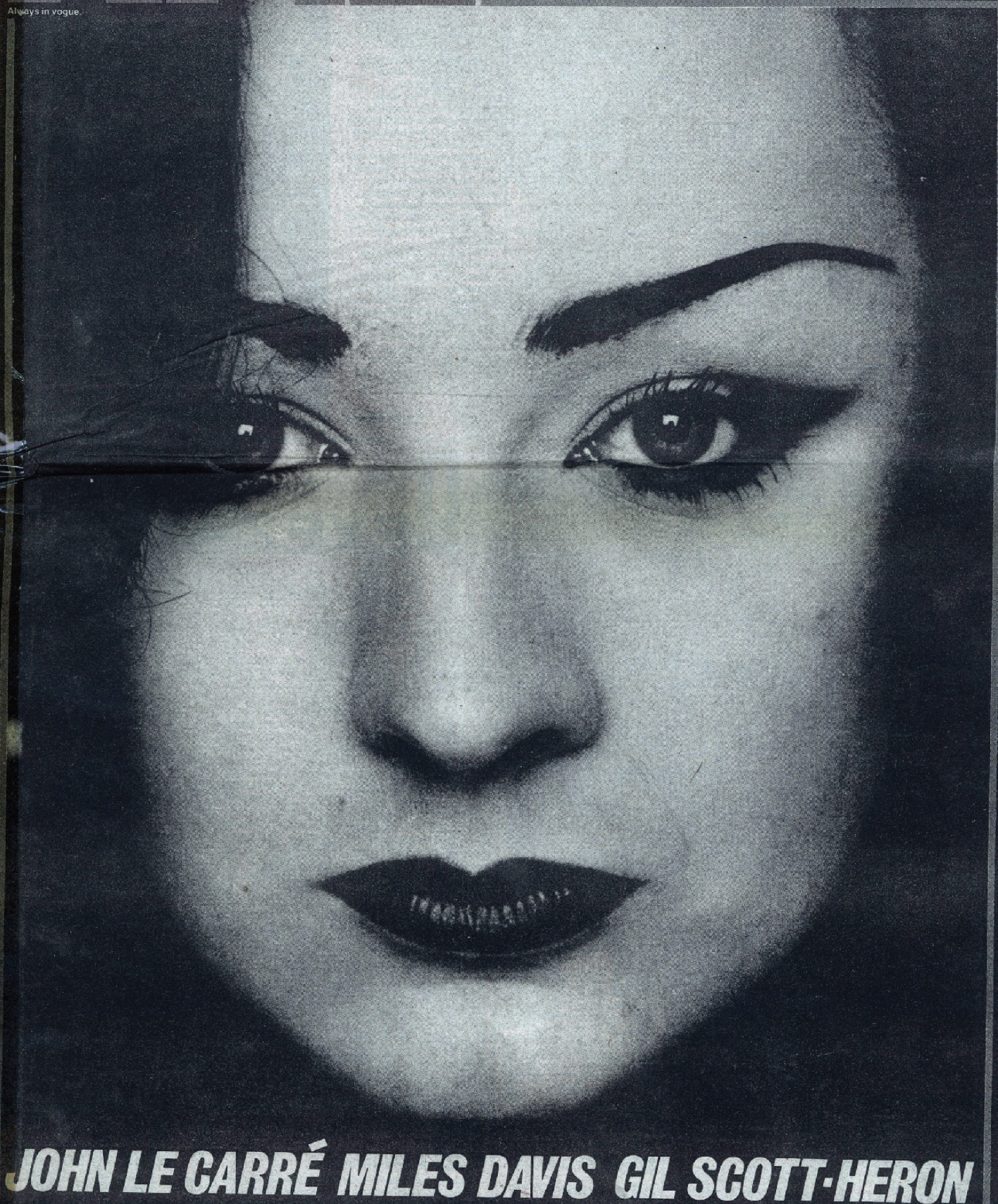
If happiness is a cuddly toy, George must be delirious.

NEW **NME** MUSICAL EXPRESS

**WOULD YOU SLEEP WITH
A BOY LIKE THIS?**

Boy George Interview by Gavin Martin

Always in vogue.



JOHN LE CARRÉ MILES DAVIS GIL SCOTT-HERON







CULTURE CLUB

GEORGE'S BOYS are currently riding high with a top five single and top 20 album. The Yanks, t'would appear, are as bemused by George's sexuality as the good folk of Wolverhampton.

"Is George bisexual?" they noisily enquire.

"Yeah," replies the boy. "When I want sex I have to buy it." Aw come on man, tell us guys about your sleeping habits.

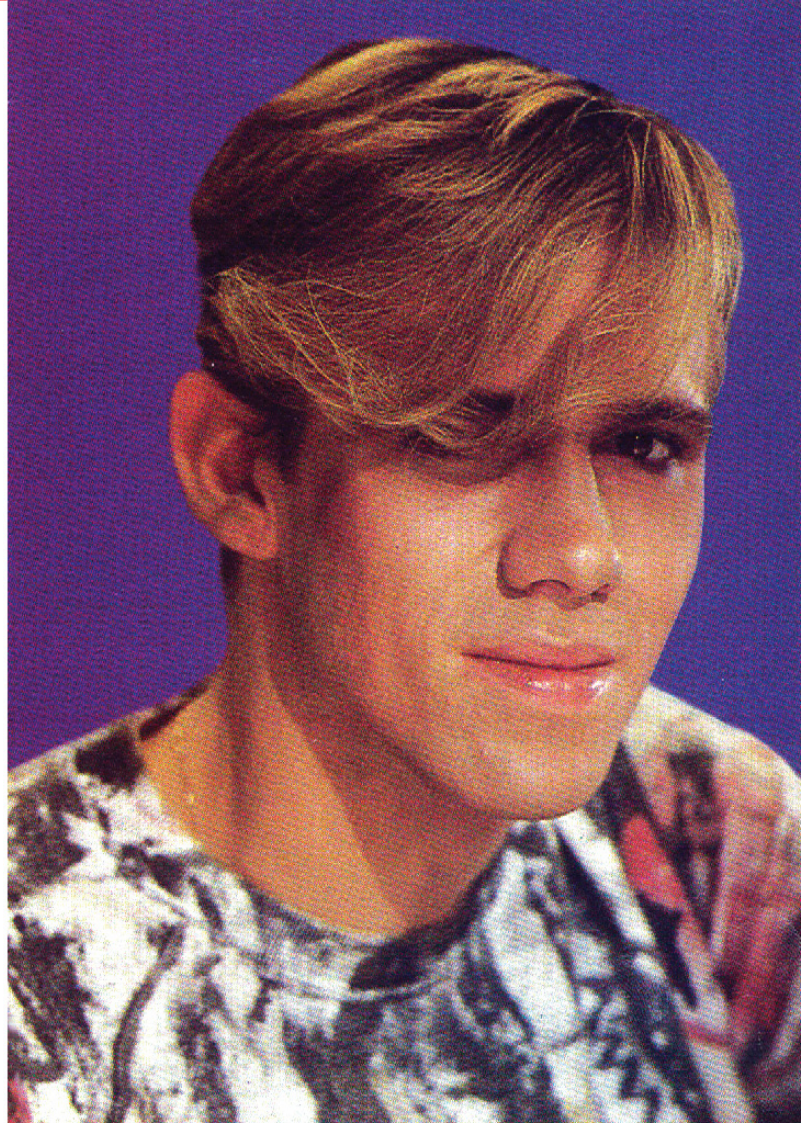
"I haven't slept with anyone for two years. I never sleep when I

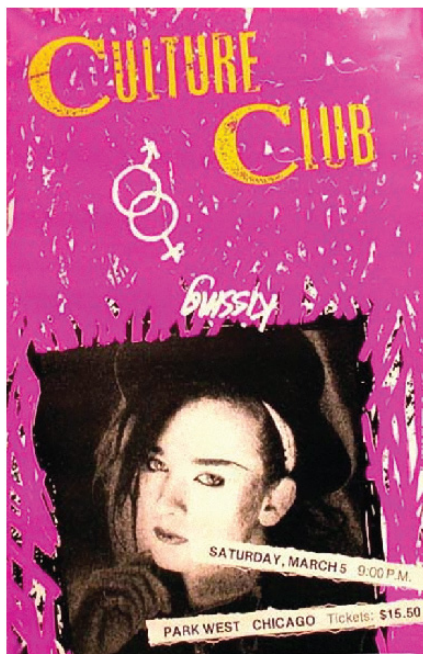
have sex. I usually try to stay awake!"

That's telling them, Georgie.

It seems our colonial cousins are finding it a bit hard to 'relate' to Culture Club. Drummer Jon Moss makes things easy for them: "The idea of Culture Club originally was to write pop music. Pop music is an international language. People expect us to be new wave — we're not. We're Culture Club."

Well Mac, they sure as hell ain't Meat Loaf.





CULTURE CLUB/SWINGING LAURELS Manchester

IT WOULD have been hard for any group to kick off the show tonight. Three and a half thousand screaming infants were in no mood to watch anything bar their beloved George.

But the Swinging Laurels staggered onto the stage dressed to the nine and determined to succeed. Like an anarchic ballet, they moved with grace and agility and received rapturous applause. New songs alongside old faves simply underlined their top pop status and with front man Gary Birtles gyrating like a crazed helicopter, they were a magnetic revelation.

There are no half measures with the Laurels; it's straight-down-the-line accessible and endearing pop. The crowd lapped it up but it was Culture Club's night and, as the lights dimmed for their entrance, Culturemania broke out in no uncertain terms.

If Freud could have analysed the meteoric rise of Culture Club, he would surely have had some explanation as to why hordes of pubescent girls go ape over a man dressed as a woman. It was scream and scream again and by the second number 'I'll Tumble For You', they were eating out of his hand.

Bodies collapsed into a sea of outstretched hands as George goaded his disciples to stand up. A chorus of eisteddfod proportions rattled through 'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me' and red roses rained in onto the stage.

Two well-planned encores and they were off in their limo, leaving tear-drenched and bedraggled females strewn around the hall. You couldn't hear the music for the reception but what you could pick up was inevitably tight and well delivered although mass hysteria had replaced any regard for what was actually going on. Culture Club have had big hits but the majority of the songs are pretty ordinary, reasonable pop but never too adventurous.

George is like a seasoned veteran with all the stage antics off pat. His voice is stronger than ever and, by the response he got, he's going to be around for a long time. To me, it didn't really work though. Culture Club are nothing to do with music but merely a consumer-orientated commodity which comes in a rather larger than life size.

Escapism at its most effective, they'll undoubtedly erect a statue to him in Piccadilly Circus. Then thousands of Smash Hits readers can scream until they're blue in the face every night.

DAVE HENDERSON







Boy George caused a storm in a top London shop last week.

The enraged singer strode into the Oxford Street branch of Miss Selfridge to complain about copies of Culture Club clothes being sold by the chain store.

"The staff freaked," he said. "They all came running over to see what the matter was."

The copies first came to George's notice when he met a fan who was wearing a skirt bought at Miss Selfridge.

It has a print that is very similar to the Sue Clowes designs on Culture Club's album 'Kissing To Be Clever' and the single sleeve of 'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me' (see pic.)

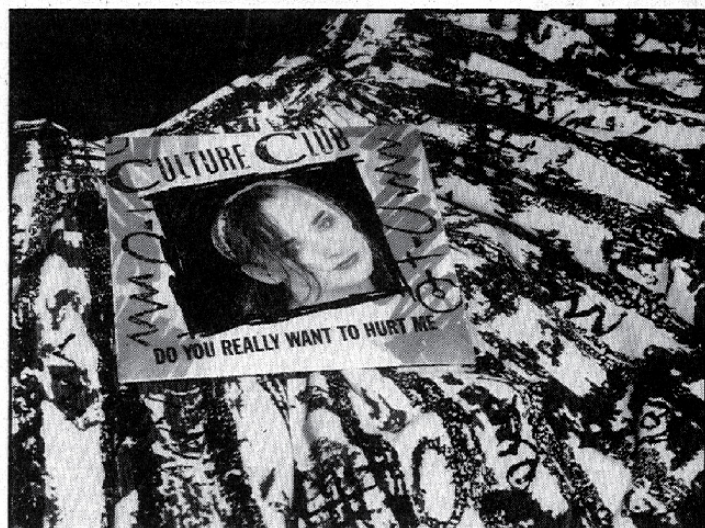
"The print is a total, absolute copy," George claimed. "It's such a cheek. Especially when they're selling them to your fans."

Sue Clowes herself had a complaint from the mother of a Culture Club fan and went to the store to check.

"I nearly dropped when I saw the clothes," she said. "Especially as they were selling loads of them."

A spokeswoman for the shop

GEORGE IN OXFORD STREET SHOWDOWN



The skirt Boy George bought at Miss Selfridge and the single sleeve of 'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me.' Pic: Mike Merrett

said that the clothes — which have the Miss Selfridge label — were bought from an independent manufacturer who designed and made them.

"It's absolutely nothing to do with us," she claimed.

"They may look similar but they're certainly not an exact copy. If every designer took this attitude the whole fashion industry would grind to a halt."

Sue Clowes has now reached an out of court settlement with the manufacturer of the clothes.

But Boy George is still seething. "It's my look and it's something I brought to the fore," he said.

"People rip off all sorts of bits and pieces and I feel they should be more honest about it."

"At the end of the day they're selling them off my back."





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STYLE

HEY! ELASTICA pic by Joe Baugoy

CULTURE CLUB pic by Adrian Boot

CULTURE CLUB

Words by Betty Page

Pics by Adrian Boot



Boy George: Is it a bird or is it a plane?

DIDN'T HE do well? Just fancy that... George, almost at Number One in the American charts? George, with a single that's sold around six million copies worldwide and an album that's done three? That George? This is still the sort of question you hear echoing around the London scene that the Boy once inhabited: grown men shaking their heads, trying desperately to analyse why he did and they haven't.

But what I was anxious to discover was whether this wild success had gone to his head. At first, the signs were worrying: no pictures of George on his own, Culture Club pictures only if you'd signed a contract not to flog them to poster mags, George having whims every other second and getting everyone running round in circles.

But he's no Adam Ant. In Liverpool, after suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fan worship onstage, he still spent at least half an hour kissing the girls, having snapshots taken with them, making sure he met Jane's mum, spending every spare moment signing autographs. He's just as

quixotic and whimsical as ever, but still retains his garrulous, cuddly quality that makes us girls smile.

It wasn't so much an interview, more 'An Audience With'. I was the tape operator and felt rather superfluous. It was all Jon Moss could do to get a couple of his own (highly pertinent) points through the wall of sound. George pre-empted most of my questions, and gave all the answers. I managed to kick off by asking how he felt about his newly-acquired trappings of teen mania. And then:

George: "We had a bit before we left, and in certain places in America, but the thing is none of us can take it seriously. I think one of the good things about this band is that we really don't know what we are. We consider ourselves to be very serious musicians, but... There's a ritual bands seem to follow, where you start off with an image, become successful, then you shop at Antony Price, the Bowie/Ferry thing which a lot of people are really into — make-up, then a suit — and I s'pose people expect that from us now. A lot of bands forget what they are, that they're a product, another supermarket. Obviously, there's more to it than that, you really have to put a lot of care and consideration into it, but you are

just another supermarket, and your product has to be as good as the next.

"When we got to number one, it was such a slog, waiting for the record to be played on the radio, trying to find out how many had sold... we haven't really had time to take it in, it's been hard work since then, so we haven't sat down and said 'aren't we successful'. We do our own business, everything for ourselves, so we're a lot more in touch with our destiny, if you want, and I think that's probably a good thing.

"I have the attitude where if I go on telly, I don't go on and be rude, I go on because it's promotion. I don't say 'f--- off, shit, aren't I clever, I know why I'm on there, I know that there's music and then there's character and personality. I don't want to be a sex symbol, I want to be a character in the same way that Bette Davis is a character. I don't want to be a freak or a clown, I want to be a little bit more interesting. I don't want people to say oh yeah, Boy George, everyone screams at him, isn't he outrageous, there's more to life than that. I want to be involved in the machinery, I want to know what makes this band work, where the taxman comes in. It's difficult to know everything, but it's nice to

be in control of yourself."

(Rare RM interjection) But business surely shouldn't come between you and the people that buy your records?

"You are only as good as your next record. And with Culture Club, every record's been different, from 'White Boy' to the new one, we've made a conscious effort to make that internal feeling exciting, it's not just a product, we're not going to have another 'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me', that's too easy. (To Jon, who's just entered) Don't you think so?"

Jon: "Yes."

George: "I'm saying we don't want to get mixed up in all this youth culture shit."

Jon: "The only thing about that is there's no point to it."

George: "I want mothers to be able to come to the gigs and enjoy themselves."

Jon: "It's much better to be in a situation where you can move forward, instead of saying what you are, then all you've got to do is go out and prove it all the time. We change, the singles aren't any particular kind of music, we can do anything."

George: "When we first started this band, and Jon came along, it was ridiculous, there was no structure, no songs, nothing, no

CULTURE CLUB

ideas. We played him this song called 'Mask', and he just laughed and said it was the worst song he'd ever heard, it was like an art school poem, 'cos I used to write lyrics ten miles long, and Jon said where's the middle bit, where's the thumping beat, it was a real dinge. So we've never had any basic pattern to work with, nor wanted to.

"I think a lot of bands don't really like music, they just want to be superstars, they want to fulfil their egos, and obviously everyone in this band has an ego, we want to be acclaimed, but you've got to realise why you're going to be successful. Obviously a lot of critics will look at Culture Club, the screaming, and say they're just a pop band, but it is a lot more serious with us."

Jon: "If you just want to be famous, you get famous and think what am I doing it for — OK, you want the money, so you make the money, but it's still like nothing, so you have to keep setting yourself new goals. We are a teeny pop band at the moment, simply by the audience we've got, but because of the way we are, the fact that we can all play, we could put out a really weird album full of jazz songs if we wanted, we could do anything, and I think after 'Church' people are beginning to realise exactly what it's like."

George: "You get turncoats, kids who say 'I don't like it any more' 'cos it's not like the first one', which is great, let them go and scream at someone else, I want to sell music."

Jon: "In America it was wonderful, people were really listening, they were all looking at George, but they liked him because he's a great singer, they completely ignored the way he looked, they only talked about that afterwards."

George: "Everyone said it'd be really hard for us in America — it wasn't hard, people don't care, entertainment has always been dressed up in a certain way. People can detect a sense of humour with me — I've got a lot more in common with Norman Wisdom than I have with Simon Le Bon, I'd rather be funny. I don't want to be serious, I've always been a bit awkward as a person, in the sense of behaving like other people, I've always had that mentality, which in a way works with this band. I don't think people really grow up, there's a very naive attitude in this band that helps us to be what we are, when we're writing songs. The only person that has any musical knowledge is Jon, 'cos he's been in bands for a long time. Me and Roy know what we like, but the lucky thing for Jon is that he's been in some really peculiar bands but hasn't been bogged by it."

Jon: "I'm lucky 'cos I was a failure for so long, I had enough time to go a full circle and realise it was all rubbish, and then decided that you should always keep an open mind."

George: "I like my part of the band, I enjoy it, I just get on with it



and I feel what's natural. My singing style is very black in the sense that it's not the usual orang-utang-let's-be-David-Bowie, I want a bit of sincerity, if I write words I have to feel the song, but the whole thing is built up as a team. I don't know why we're like we are, we just are, and thank God we don't know. There are so many bands around that really try to analyse themselves . . ."

Jon: "But if you can pin down the appeal it's not good any more."

George: "A lot of people try to understand something that doesn't need to be understood, and with me, this image . . . you look at TOTP on Thursdays, and how many people are dressed like me — there's hundreds, and you can go into Fiorucci and they've ripped off

everything I've done, everybody copies, but in the first place I never turned round and said look, I'm really original. There's a feeling in the air and certain people pick it out, bring it up to the surface — some people burst the spot and I'm one of those people at the moment."

"Everything has been done before now, there's nothing new, no new music. Every time I write a song I think oh my God, it sounds like 'Sentimental Friend' by Herman's Hermits, or like the GoGos, but who cares? When I first started the band I'd say God, this sounds like Led Zeppelin, and everyone would say so bloody what."

Jon: "Pop music can't ever be original 'cos it's just modern folk music, it's not supposed to be

original, it's like a newspaper, reflecting the times."

George: "I would love to get behind a piano with about 50 people and just sit there and have a good old sing song, that's really in my nature, I'd much rather be like old Auntie Mavis at the wedding than be the sort of serious young man. I like looking at paintings, but I don't like pretentious art, I like things you can touch, I like reality, old women with Dr Spock eyebrows. I like character — that's art."

Jon: "This American guy said George is like performance art, 'cos he lives it."

George: "One of the nicest things said to me in America was, this great big heavy metal guy who came prancing up and said 'you're a

CULTURE CLUB

teddy bear, you're the teddy bear that rock n' roll's needed for years, you're a f***ing goddamn teddy bear and I love you', and he kissed me on the face and sort of trudged off dragging his chains and revving up his motorbike, this really disgusting, filthy bloke. It was great, I just said oh yeah, I collect teddy bears! I think I've got a sense of humour, and that's what it boils down to. I am funny, I am a blob.

"I never realised why girls liked me at school, but it was because I made them laugh, it wasn't because I was hunk of the month or best footballer, it was because I made jokes and I suppose women can relate to me in that way, girls like to have a laugh. I don't want to draw the line as regards sexual personality, I don't want to be a he-man or a simpering poof, they're equally as disgusting and unappealing. I want people to say 'is it a bird or is it a plane', and I don't want them to say 'it is a plane, yeah we know what you are'. I want to keep shuffling my cards. People know, but they don't, that's the glamour. At the moment everyone's trying to dig up old pictures of Boy George without his make-up, or with a hanky on his head on the beach at Margate, or Boy George and Auntie Rita..."

Jon: "You know why people like Culture Club? It's because there

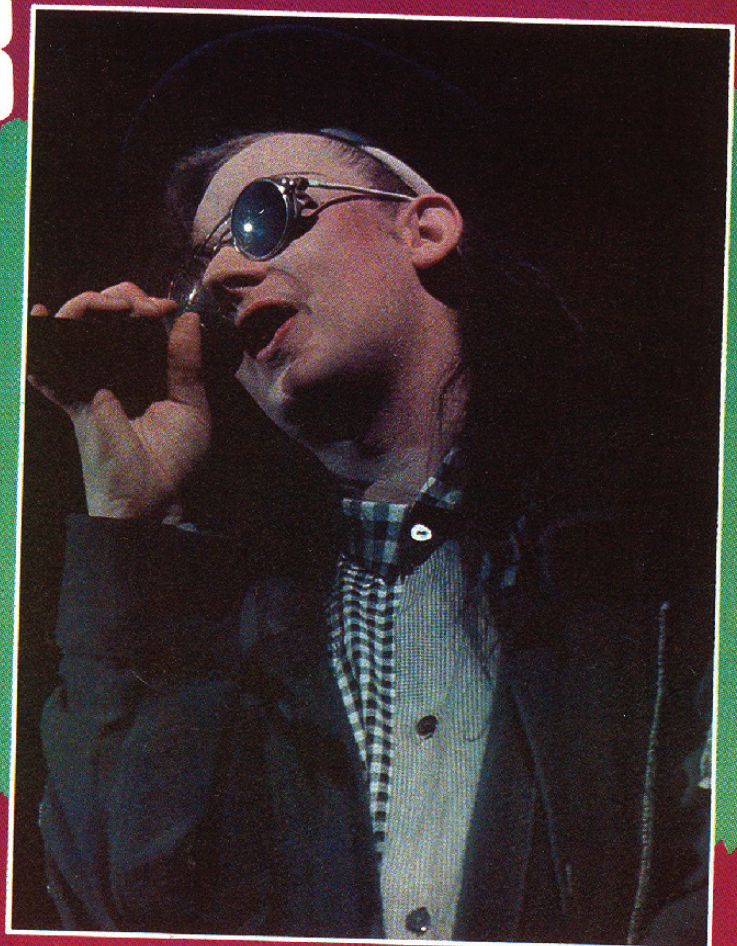
isn't a haircut or a type of clothes, it isn't tip your jeans and you'll be OK this week, it's not your physical being or your make-up, it's a different mentality."

George: "When Modern Romance came about, they were the biggest punch in the eye to the scene, cos they sneaked up behind people's backs and took all the ideas and made it into pop, they turned the whole fad thing round on everybody that was taking it seriously, and I think maybe I've done that as well, in that I'm more concerned with pop than alternativeness. I'm not saying it's mine, I'm saying it's yours, take it. There's a lot of peasants around in this business who think they're hitting goldmines, with the hired girlfriend look, the sugar and veneer. With me, it's reality — I could have dirty fingernails and I probably do pick my nose..."

Jon: "You do."

George: "So do you... But I don't want to do videos making out that I'm really expensive and luscious and girls swoon over me."

"Some people obviously have a completely professional attitude towards a band — I haven't really, but I'm as much of a professional as I can be. I don't really know a lot, but I have enough to keep me going, and that's all that matters."



CULTURE CLUB

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12" CONTAINS
EXTRA TRACK
"MYSTERY BOY"

Church of the Poison Mind +

Church Of The Poison Mind

*Desolate love set in your
eyes
You used an' made my life
so sweet
Step out like a god found
child
I saw your eyes across the
street*

*Who would be the fool to
take you
Be more than just kind
Step into a life of maybe
Love is hard to find*

*In the church of the
poison mind
In the church of the
poison mind
In the church of the
poison mind*

*Watch me clinging to the
beat
I had to fight to make it
mine
That religion you could
sink it neat
Just move your feet an'
you'll feel fine*

*Who would be the fool to
maybe
Trick a kiss in time
Who am I to say that's
crazy
Love will make you blind*

*In the church of the
poison mind
In the church of the
poison mind
In the church of the
poison mind*

*(Repeat first verse and
chorus
fade out)*

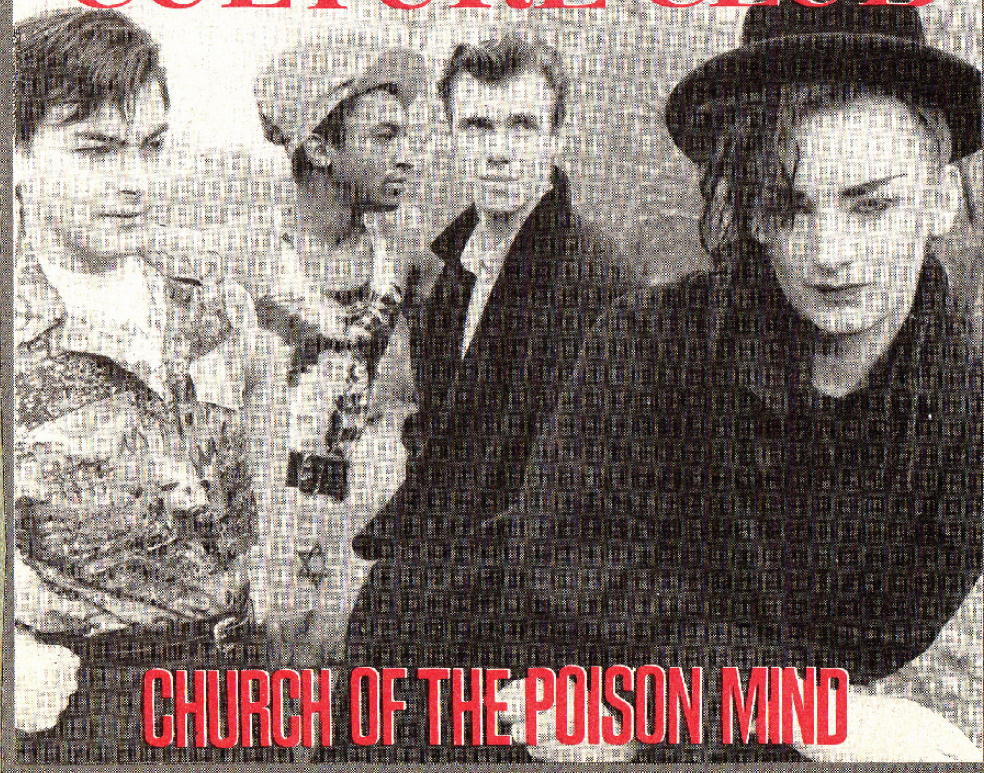
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Words and Music by Culture Club
On Virgin Records

Culture Club





CULTURE CLUB



CHURCH OF THE POISON MIND

DESOLATE LOVING IN YOUR EYES
YOU USED AN' MADE MY LIFE SO SWEET
STEP OUT LIKE A GOD-FOUND CHILD
I SAW YOUR EYES ACROSS THE STREET

WHO WOULD BE THE FOOL TO TAKE YOU
BE MORE THAN JUST KIND
STEP INTO A LIFE OF MAYBE
LOVE IS HARD TO FIND

CHORUS
IN THE CHURCH OF THE POISON MIND
(IN THE CHURCH OF THE POISON MIND)
IN THE CHURCH OF THE POISON MIND
(IN THE CHURCH OF THE POISON MIND)
(IN THE CHURCH OF THE POISON MIND)
(IN THE CHURCH OF THE POISON MIND)

WATCH ME CLINGING TO THE BEAT
I HAD TO FIGHT TO MAKE IT MINE
THAT RELIGION YOU COULD SINK IT NEAT
JUST MOVE YOUR FEET AND YOU'LL FEEL FINE

WHO WOULD BE THE FOOL TO MAYBE
TRICK A KISS IN TIME
WHO AM I TO SAY THAT'S CRAZY
LOVE WILL MAKE YOU BLIND

REPEAT CHORUS

DESOLATE LOVING IN YOUR EYES
YOU USED AN' MADE MY LIFE SO SWEET
STEP OUT LIKE A GOD-FOUND CHILD
I SAW YOUR EYES ACROSS THE STREET

WHO WOULD BE THE FOOL TO TAKE YOU
BE MORE THAN JUST KIND
STEP INTO A LIFE OF MAYBE
LOVE IS HARD TO FIND

REPEAT CHORUS TO FADE

CULTURE CLUB

'Church Of The Poisoned Mind' (Virgin)

There are so many records that are good to hear on the radio but that have so little excitement once they are in the home.

All of Culture Club's singles have been like that; okay to hum at the bus-stop, okay to splash around in the bath to, okay but not very exciting.

Surprisingly, just when you expect them to make fools of themselves, Culture Club have salvaged a song out of a mixture of sixties, pastiche and eighties soul that has more verve to it.

Still not a song that is worth flinging open the windows and shouting into the street about, but 'Church of...' does possess a certain amount of charm and ingenuity, a less self-obsessed record.



CULTURE CLUB: Church Of The Poison Mind (Virgin)

An astute, ear-pricking harmonica intro, George doing his best Stevie Wonder impression and a backing singer whose voice you can feel in the pit of your stomach make for a solid chunk of soul that you may not even recognise as being Culture Club. Don't be put off. There's enough modern trimmings here to separate it from the recent swarm of Tamla Motown soundalikes — not least a good tune. For best results, dance and sing at the same time.



CULTURE C

You sent them. We opened them and sorted out the best. The mail sacks were

BOY GEORGE

Q: When you're in a poster or picture, why do you never smile?
(Mandi Ah-Tow, Liverpool)

A: Because I've got a Pierrot complex. I think I look better if I don't smile. I'd come across like a clown if I did.

Q: What do your mum and dad think about the way you dress and act?

(Stella Buckland, Potters Bar)
A: Well my mother and my father are really democratic, they're very intelligent people. Basically they don't judge people by their appearance. They love me, and I love them.

Q: I've read that once you dressed up as Boadicea in a huge hat and stood outside Buckingham Palace during the trooping of the colour and everyone cheered and waved. Is this true?

(Cath Fetkiew, Leeds)
A: Yes it is. I had a huge Boadicea hat, a Union Jack shield, a fork, white stilettos — the whole lot. I'd really gone to town. It was two or three years ago, and yes, everyone was cheering. Incidentally, I also used to go out dressed as a nun and as Carmen Miranda. I've got loads of costumes.

Q: Paul Weller has expressed his admiration for you. Is the feeling mutual?

(Ann Wilson, Billingham)
A: I think Paul Weller's a really serious boy, but he's also very pretty. I doubt I'd get together with him and make a record, but I like him and I am interested in what he does.

Q: What did you think of Kenny Everett's take-off of you?
(Rona McIntosh, Essex)

A: Well, I didn't actually see it, but Jon and my parents all saw it and they all said it was absolutely brilliant. Roy and Mikey found it really offensive, but they haven't got much of a sense of humour. But I'm really flattered by it. I like it when people mimic me.

Q: What is a "Church Of The Poison Mind"?
(Carole Davey, Birmingham)

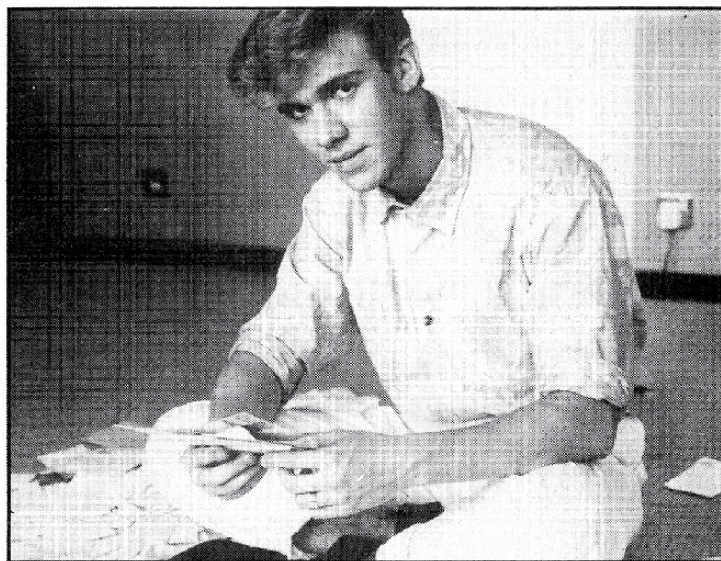
A: It's based on the Japanese idea that your brain is the temple of your body. It's basically a love song, about how people get trapped by their own emotions. I'm saying that every relationship is a new experience, and you should take everything as it comes and not be trapped "In The Church Of The Poison Mind".

Q: Does your dad still run a boxing class?

(Pauline Ritchie, Glasgow)
A: He doesn't do it anymore, although he did for years. I never actually boxed but I used to do the training — skipping and things like that. I've never really been interested in competitive sports. I used to be in the cross country running team at school though. I was quite a good legger.

Q: Do you find people's curiosity about your sexuality and private life embarrassing?

(Steve M. Brown, Kent)
A: No, because I think basically I'm a very moral person, and I have very traditional ideas about sexuality and love. I've never done anything which I've been ashamed of, and everyone I've ever loved I'll love until I die. I don't mind answering questions about it: I love a debate.



ROY HAY

Q: You seem to come across as being very shy. Are you?

(Mrs K. Johnston, Clitheroe, Lancs.)
A: I am a bit. I don't go out of my way to talk to people. I like to get to know them a bit before I come out of myself.

Q: What time do you get up on Sundays, and what do you do?
(Jane Holloway, Gosport)

A: If I've got a free day, Alison normally gets up about 10 and makes the breakfast, then I go out and get the newspapers. We'll lie around until about three, then go out for a meal, or go and see her mum or my mum. It's not very often that we have a free Sunday though.

Q: Do you ever resent George getting all the limelight?

(Susan Stojilkovic, Manchester)
A: Not really. He is the singer and the centrepiece, always will be, and I've always known that since we started the band. We all know how important we are to each other behind the scenes.

Q: Having read that you were a hairdresser, I'd like to know if you had anything to do with George's hairstyle?

(Orla Dwane, Cork, Ireland)
A: No, he does all his own. I used to cut Jon's, and I did the mohican that Mikey used to have. But George created his own. He asked me to do things for it, but I was too scared that I might muck it up (laughs)!

Q: How did you propose to Alison and where?

(Bettina Castle, Welwyn)

A: I don't think I ever actually did propose. We just developed a relationship over two years or so and knew that we were going to get married. The only question was when. There was no down-on-the-knees business.

Q: What did George, Jon and Mikey get you and Alison for wedding presents?

(Kirsty Stone, Maidenhead)
A: Mikey got us a set of very expensive saucepans. Jon and George chipped in together and got us a food mixer. George also got me an outrageous teapot in the style of a rockabilly with a blond quiff. That was the most original one.

Q: In pictures you and George are wearing the same checked boots. Is this because you only have one pair between you?

(Caroline, Reading)
A: No, it's because we like them — Spiderman boots. Me, Jon and George have all got them.

Q: If George started dressing like Kevin Rowland, how would you feel?

(Paul Stott, Wilmslow)
A: (Laughs) I don't think I'd be very impressed. I'd probably leave the band.

Q: Which band member irritates you most?

(Liza, Ramsgate)
A: Mikey. I share with him when we tour and he can never get up. I have to spend about an hour coaxing him out of bed in the mornings. It's really annoying.



LUB: READERS' Q&A

ferried round to the band's London hotel. Dave Rimmer did the questioning ...

MIKEY CRAIG

Q: How often do you go to the dentist's

(Fiona Reid, York)

A: I'm very scared of the dentist and until recently I hadn't been for about three or four years. But when we were touring America, I had this really bad tooth and I had to go and have it out in Toronto. It was a real pliers job — nothing to put you to sleep. That's why I get scared.

Q: When you shaved your hair, what made you grow it back?

(Natalie Odell, Essex)

A: I felt it was very unoriginal. I did it about a year ago, and it's taken me that long to grow it back. I'm going to have something done with it soon, maybe have it straightened. Not like Jeffrey Daniel — he's a good friend of mine and I wouldn't do that to him (laughs).

Q: What do your kids think of Culture Club?

(Julie Mynett, Stonehouse, Glos.)

A: They like Culture Club very much. There's Keita, who's six, and Amber who's three. The first time they saw George they were a bit stunned though.

Q: Whose is the tape on the Smash Hits poster (March 17) and what does it have on it?

(I. Franzen, Wigan)

A: It was mine: a compilation of disco records. We were actually dancing to them, then stopping for the photographer. When he was changing the film and things we were really freaking out and dancing.

Q: Was Captain Crucial originally a friend of the group, or did you

engage him specially?

(J. Hailson, Woking, Surrey)

A: He's actually the brother of Cleo — the mother of my children. Ever since he was very young I introduced him to reggae and everything, and he became a rasta. I called him along because I knew he could do all that Jamaican toasting.

Q: On the album it says you play bass and "heavy culture". What is "heavy culture"?

(Mikey's sheepish grin, London)

A: That beats me. You should ask George, he's the one who wrote it (laughs). He means an alternative to English culture I suppose. He often asks me for the Jamaican equivalent to something, which is quite difficult because I was brought up in London.

Q: Do you ever get racialist comments thrown at you because you're the only black person in the band?

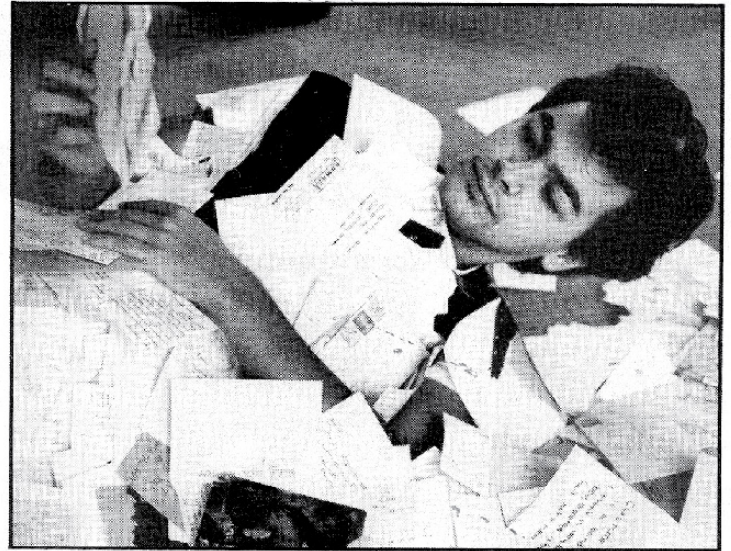
(Marc Almond's Lipstick, Lancs.)

A: Not really, although sometimes people jibe a bit. Most people are great. I had expected a lot of barracking. In Germany the other week, though, our coach got attacked by about a hundred skinheads. Nothing like that has ever happened in Britain.

Q: What did you think of George when you first met him?

(Julie, Hertford)

A: A very interesting character. When you meet someone like that you want to get to know them, and find out more about them. I met him in a club about two years ago. I never expected him to be so big.



JON MOSS

Q: Is it true that your father owns Moss Bros?

(Joanna Everett, Kent)

A: No, there's no connection, although our families are both Jewish. My father did use to run a menswear shop called Alkit, but he's sold the business now and retired.

Q: In all the pictures I've seen of you, you seem to know something we don't. Is this true?

(Rachel Suter, Bourne End, Bucks.)

A: Yes (laughs). But I'm not telling you what. No, people often say this to me, but I don't. It's just the look of experience (laughs).

Q: Did you have any childhood heroes?

(Lindsay Sime, Glasgow)

A: I never had pop star heroes, but I really admired scientists and doctors. I particularly like Barnes Wallis, the inventor of the "Dambusters" bouncing bomb.

Q: Who's the person on the Culture Club logo?

(Jon Moss's Pink Milk, London)

A: The little black girl? We don't know. We took it from a picture because we thought she looked really sweet.

Q: Are you a good photographer?

(Devoted fan, Cardiff)

A: I like photography, but I'm not very good at the technology of it. I'm not very good at things like car engines either. I like snapping people, but I don't go out with millions of lenses or anything like that. I just like to capture the moment.

Q: Our English teacher, Ms Erica

Stones, said she met you on holiday one year before Culture Club was formed. Is this true? She's in a group called The Posh Monkeys.

(Michelle Willis, Gateshead)

A: Yes, I do know her. She was very nice. I met her in Greece and we got on really well. Then I met her in the same place two years later. Send her my love.

Q: How did you get the scar on the right side of your face?

(Elaine Mallatratt, Nuneaton)

A: Well, when I was young I was very wild. I used to do boxing and a lot of sport. I got the long scar by running through this plate glass window, I just didn't see it. The others are from when I was in a car crash.

Q: Is it true that you turned down a place at Cambridge, and what subject would you have studied?

(Rachel Crawford, Harrogate)

A: I was told that I was capable of doing it, and that if I worked hard enough I would have got in, but I didn't want to go to University. I would have studied Greek.

Q: If your life depended on it, which Toyah record would you do a cover of?

(Anthony Lavery, Glasgow)

A: That's weird, because I was asked to do an album with Toyah. I'm so popular! "Thunder In The Mountains", I like that one.

Q: Have you got any phobias?

(Michelle Brooks, Newcastle)

A: I don't like fish or deep water. When I was five I nearly drowned. I fell off a pier and nearly got sucked under by the propellers on my dad's boat.











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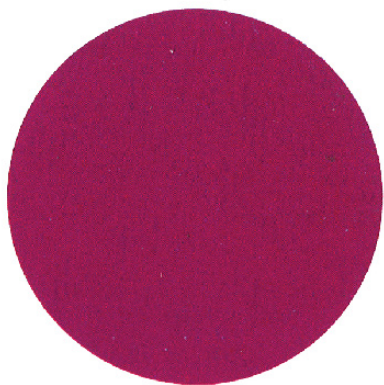
Hey fella ... you wanna step outside and say that?

Boy George and
Culture Club aren't
what they seem.

BY GEOFFREY HIMES

"I think people think of me as very feminine," muses Boy George of Culture Club, "but I'm very masculine. I can throw a good punch. I'm taller and bigger than people expect me to be; I'm sure they expect a little fairy wearing dandelions. When we went to L.A., all these women were saying, 'My God, you're so big,' as if they expected this midget to get out of the car."

George *is* big, with large bones and an athletic build. He's not the least bit coy or soft-spoken; he pounces on people and subjects them to his loud, machine-gun fire of ideas and opinions, punctuated by raucous laughing. Still, one might not be blamed for wondering: in his room at Manhattan's Plaza Hotel, George is decked out in pale blue and pink eyeliner and thick red lipstick over his white powdered face. His dark braids





spill out of his high, Hasidic bowler and fall over his shoulders. He is wearing an enormous, Mondrian-like print black shirt that comes down to his knees, resembling nothing so much as...well, a dress.

"I'm constantly being asked," George confesses, "if my image fits in with the traditional forms of music we play—we sell to hamburger queens and truckers' sons all over the West? Yet the way I look at it is very obviously contradictory to that. I think this is very good; I like contradictions. There's a line from 'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me?' that says, 'Everything's not what you see,' which is basically what I believe. It's kind of boring when things are just what they are, don't you think?"

"George is a great lover of contradictions," chuckles guitarist Roy Hay, lounging back in his armchair sipping Burgundy.

DEBORAH FEINGOLD



*"I like to change
people's opinions
about me. It's
boring preaching
to the converted."*

"That's his thing. I like nice chords, he likes contradictions." Hay has the Anglo-aristocratic look of an extra from *Brideshead Revisited*, his tan hair neatly combed back.

"George likes to confuse sometimes," adds bassist Mikey Craig. "He also likes to argue. Not necessarily with us, although he does that, too, but with anyone. He likes positive arguing about the things that are important to him." Craig, Culture Club's black member, sports a combed-out Afro restrained by a black headband. Playing on black/white symbolism, he also wears black and white quilted pants and a buckled white bib as he sprawls on a bed.

Culture Club aggravates contradictions by using many similar symbols, including crosses, Stars of David, gender signs, lightning, Oriental calligraphy, etc. "It's a good way of presenting symbols without meaning anything specific," explains drummer Jon Moss, his thick dark eyebrows pointing down at his nose, reinforcing the intensity of his stare. "In Culture Club, we use *everything*. We're saying, 'These things are interesting, and you should take what's good about them, but don't take just one symbol and let that represent you. That's a fascist thing to do.' So we use all sorts."

"The thing is," summarizes George, "you *can* break down all that crap and prejudice. I do it all the time. I like to chat at shows, because I like people to look at me and say, 'I don't know about him,' and then change their opinions. It's boring preaching to the converted all the time."

Just as they play on contradiction and confusion, so is Culture Club's sound built on an astute mix of musical influences. Mikey Craig supplies the Caribbean "heavy culture": the reggae beat on "Love Twist"; the calypso rhythm on "I'll Tumble 4 Ya." Boy George brings his love of Philadelphia soul to nearly every vocal as he purrs romantically on "Time" or gives a gospel shout on "Man Shake." His enthusiasm for catchy pop pays off in the hummable melodies he invents for the band. Roy Hay's longtime passion for Steely Dan has generated jazzy chords and multi-layered arrangements. Jon Moss' time served in punk bands lends a hard push to the band; his jazz-rock and soul tastes reinforce the groove.

"Jon and Roy listen more to the rock side of things," says Craig, "while I listen more on the ethnic side: reggae, calypso

and other Caribbean musics. They fuse together in a nice way. The melodies usually come from George, and there's a lot of R&B and contemporary black sounds going through him. It comes out in the way he phrases lines, the way his voice sounds. George is a white soul singer basically."

The band's diverse influences mesh so well because the band doesn't believe there are any important differences between black and white musics. "The differences don't exist to me," Hay asserts, "because they nick each other's ideas so much. There's so much similarity between classic rock songs and classic R&B songs that it's pathetic to say a white man can't do soul or a black man can't do rock. The barriers are breaking down slowly, and I'm proud that Culture Club has contributed to that, because that's what we're about."

Boy George was baptized George O'Dowd twenty-two years ago. He grew up in a large Irish Catholic family in the London suburbs, but soon left home after being kicked out of school at fifteen. While working as a model for the trendy Foundry boutique and as a make-up artist for the Royal Shakespeare Company, he experimented with his own look and soon became a notable face in the London nightclub scene.

"Before I started Culture Club," he explains, "I didn't have any money whatsoever, so I thought, 'Well, I'll have to become very well known so that I can chat my way into everything for free.' So I went out of my way to be the most outrageous person in the world. I'm quite tame now compared to what I used to be like. I used to go out with fruit on my head; I used to be really loony. It's a pretty good thing; it's gotten me this far."

"You see, in England, it's quite different. You can be a celebrity there and have nothing to sell. You have a lot of minor celebrities there who don't really do anything; they just have weird haircuts and nice clothes, and people put them in magazines. In America, it's based more on how much money you have and what kind of car you drive. In England, young people up from the gutter can become famous. I used to get in everywhere for free."

Boy George's modeling agent was the girlfriend of Bow Wow Wow's Mathew Ashman. At the end of 1980, Ashman told Boy George that Annabella Lwin was leaving Bow Wow Wow and he should audition for the lead singer job. He got the job, but it turned out that Lwin wasn't really fired; she was just being tested by manager Malcolm McLaren.

"I didn't know it at the time or I never would have gone along with it," George recalls, "but they basically got me into it to frighten Annabella and buck her up. Malcolm had this idea that she would be the sexy little Lolita of the 80s, but she was very young and very naive. She wasn't really committed to singing; she had visions of being an air hostess or a waitress in a delicatessen. So they got me in to frighten her, and it worked, though I only found that out later."

"My first-ever appearance onstage was in front of 3,000 people at London's Rainbow Theatre. I just walked out and sang 'Cast Iron Arm,' a rockabilly song by Peanuts Wilson. It went down very well." Svengali McLaren then decided to turn Bow Wow Wow into a kind of Motown revue band backing up both Lwin and George, whom Malcolm dubbed Lieutenant Lush. After weeks of rehearsal though, McLaren got cold feet and set his sights on putting together a whole new band for Lieutenant Lush. George naturally grew suspicious at this point: "I said, 'This is bulls---! I'm leaving.' After Malcolm rode me out of Bow Wow Wow, I visited him on several occasions and he hid behind a curtain and wouldn't answer the door. He's pathetic in a lot of ways."

"I think Malcolm found he couldn't twist George the way he could the others," ventures Mikey Craig. At this point in George's dramatic career, Craig became a major player. "I read about him in the music press," recalls the twenty-three-year-old Craig, "and decided to meet him." Though Craig had learned bass at age sixteen and jammed with friends, he had never been in a band: "I wanted to be, but I wanted it to be something interesting. I saw a picture of George, and he



DEBORAH FEINGOLD

Speaking in tongues: bassist Mikey Craig, drummer Jon Moss, crooner George O'Dowd and guitarist/keysperson Roy Hay.

looked quite interesting.

"You get to know George quickly. Initially, there's this: 'GOOD GOD!' Then there's this: 'Hmm, must find out more.' Then you talk to him, and he talks real fast and you figure it's okay. So I said to George, 'You and I could probably get it together ourselves.' There was another guitarist involved at first, but most of the ideas were coming from George and myself. It was very difficult for us, because neither of us had played in a band before. Then Jon came along. He'd been in a lot of bands, and he started to stabilize things and give direction to us. Things started to happen from there."

Moss, now twenty-five, was indeed an old pro. He'd gotten into his first band when he answered a blind ad in 1976: "This

like his stance. It's one thing to be political and to be really into it, but it seemed like empty sloganeering to me, and I just ended up arguing with them.

"So I joined the Damned in 1978, and it was much the same thing: beer in your face and screw you. I took a lot of speed and drank a lot and had a terrible car crash. The Damned were good fun, but you'd get into the mini-bus at nine o'clock in the morning with a crate of lager, and by ten o'clock, everyone's drunk out of their minds. It was very rock 'n' roll and let's-all-kill-ourselves-before-we're-too-old. We smashed up this restaurant once, smashed the whole thing to bits, and when we came out, I thought, 'Why did I do that? Is that what I'm here to do? I don't want to do this anymore.' Plus I had the car crash and no one came to see me. So I left."

After the Damned, Moss and Lou Edmunds formed the Edge in 1979, which became the house band at Stiff Records. Unfortunately, they became so much of a session band, Moss says, that they lost track of their own career. When Adam Ant decided to experiment with two drummers, he asked Moss, who played on "Kicks" and "Car Trouble" on *Dirk Wears White Socks*, though he never got credit. "I thought he and Marco Pirroni were really talented," Moss concedes, "but I didn't want to get into another situation where I was in a band just as a drummer." He turned down an invitation to join the Ramones for the same reason.

"So I got out of the business for a while," Moss recalls. "I'd been in a lot of bands, and I hadn't made much headway. I found that most people in bands didn't really want to do anything. They just wanted to get laid, get pissed and take a lot of drugs. After three or four years, you get bored with that." Boy George, who knew of Moss through a mutual friend, asked him down to a rehearsal. "It was awful," Moss recalls. "There was nothing happening at all. Yet there was something about it; it was such a crazy scene. I thought, 'This is just what I'm looking for.' They obviously had no experience and wanted to do something. They needed me, and I needed them. Plus they weren't cynical; they could work and have fun too."



"I knew when I met George that we might not be successful, but we'd get noticed."

guy had this really dirty Clash T-shirt on, and he said, 'We're a really big band, but I'm not going to tell you who we are.' I said, 'You're the Clash, aren't you?' He said, 'How'd you know?' Anyway I played with them for three months before they made any singles or did any shows. I did a little art film with them and a bit of recording that never came out. I loved the music; I thought it was great. But I didn't get on with Mick Jones; I didn't

The band's line-up was completed in July, 1981, when Roy Hay, now twenty-one, was added on guitar (he now plays piano as well). Like Craig, Hay's first band was Culture Club. "I knew when I met George," Hay notes, "that we might not be successful, but we would get *noticed*." He and Craig laugh loudly. "George and the whole set-up of Culture Club seemed a bit special. It was obvious that we all wanted the same thing musically and were prepared to work very hard to get it. We didn't gig for six months."

"Our music was a backlash. We thought the synth thing had been overdone. Jon's a very traditional drummer; he likes to play good beats. Mikey likes the bass; I like the guitar. It was also a backlash against those post-punk bands who had this ethic of trying to not learn too much about the music, because it might take the feel away. We didn't buy that punk rubbish that knowledge is bad. You don't have to be naïve to write great pop songs. We all want to learn more about our instruments so we can get more out of them. Even George now realizes that his voice is an instrument like my guitar is an instrument. He's going to singing lessons."

"I didn't want to be another Bryan Ferry or Bowie," studious George insists. "I didn't want to be another great white hope with an angular voice going, 'Ooh-woo-wool' in a really affected way. I'm not interested in that crap. They may be good entertainers, but they're not good singers, and being a good singer is really my main thing. I wanted to be more like Rod Stewart or Marvin Gaye or Smokey Robinson, or even like Sting. All those people have distinctive voices, and they're the people that you remember."

"None of us knew how to write songs, so we really learned together. The band is a democracy; the songs are credited to all of us. When we write, we fight. We call each other useless; we tell each other how awful we are; a lot of abuse flies. But at the end of the day, I think we all want the same thing, so we really work well together. Everyone makes the same amount of money, regardless of what they do."

George onstage modeling the latest in men's shirts.



When they first got together, the band played a lot of favorite songs: disco, reggae, Philadelphia soul, hard rock, top forty pop. Having picked these songs apart, they began to put their own songs together, but the sources were still evident: "I think Culture Club is the most honest form of modern plagiarism in music," Boy boasts. "We just take things. Plagiarism is



"My main thing is being a good singer. I didn't want to be angular and affected."

acknowledging the similarity between 'Church Of The Poison Mind,' and, (he clicks his fingers and sings in a falsetto) 'Baby, everything is all right. Uptight!' A lot of musicians claim they're very original, which I think is very boring. You're not born with a stock of information, so you are what you pick up. Bowie has always, always avoided the subject of where he gets his ideas. But I say, 'Yes, we take from other people.'

"'Do You Really Want To Hurt Me' began with George's lyrics and this semi-melody he had for them," Hay explains as an example. "We said, 'Yeah, George, let's do it as lover's rock,' a light reggae thing. We got this rhythm box and started to play around with different tempos and chords. The melody was originally just a G-major progression right through, but you have to embellish what he gives you. We made an arrangement, so it goes up to the C and then to the A-minor. Once we got the melody down, Mikey put down his crucial bass line, and I added guitar afterwards. We all argued a lot and then blended it together. It's a vibe."

"'Time' was written from a totally different approach. That song came from me and Mikey getting some music together, and George getting excited and putting lyrics to it. At first, it was horrible, really bland. Then Mikey had this idea to use a staggered beat. I said, 'Yeah, let's do it with the Moog.' So we did that, got the great snare sound and it came together."

"'I'll Tumble 4 Ya,' the third American single, was a complete lyric and melody idea of George's," Hay acknowledges. "We just wrote the backing for it. Jon got that calypso beat; I worked out the chords; Mikey put the bass down, and it came together." "Lyrically," adds Craig, "it's dealing with the fact that there were so many bands around at that time that were obeying what the record companies told them. We didn't want to be one of those bands. George was the man who was going to lead us away from all that. If you listen to the lyrics, he's saying, 'I'll be your baby. / I'll run the gun for you / And so much more.' In other words, he'll lead us into the promised land."

The band credits producer Steve Levine, a CBS studio engineer for years, with introducing them to a lot of modern technology, such as the LinnDrum and the Fairlight. "At first he was a big influence," concedes Craig, "because he knew all of the technical aspects, and we were learning. Now, on the second album, he's more like an ambassador. He directs things in the studio to make sure that people don't clash and things run smoothly. He's quite good at that actually. Apart from the good sound he gets, he doesn't really interfere very much now with anything else."

When Culture Club first came to America last spring, the quartet brought along four support musicians: singer Helen Terry, keyboardist Phil Pickett, saxophonist Steve Grainger

and trumpeter Terry Bailey, all of whom had guested on the records. All of them will be on the fall American tour and on the second album, *Colour By Numbers*, that should be out in October. Pickett co-wrote a couple of tunes on the new album, but he more often plays keyboard parts onstage which Hay has already worked out in the studio. The band credits Terry, though, as an important influence. Terry, who sang the "Doot-doot-de-doot!" on Lou Reed's "Walk On The Wild Side," has years of studio experience with Heatwave, Mott the Hoople and more recently, Thunderthighs and Church.

"The second album is far more digestible," Craig suggests. "The first album was young and raw; it was full of ideas and energy. Those ideas are better executed on the second album. It might open another audience to us, perhaps an older audience. It's still pop, but it's a lot easier to take in."

"One of the tracks on the new album," continues George, "is very country-sounding. I want to write songs that apply to everyone. That's really hard to do. One of the things I hated about punk rock was that it was all young people with problems, locking themselves in their bedrooms with tennis rackets. We've had airplay on black stations in America. We sold to so many housewives in England that I was voted the housewives' 'Personality of the Year' in front of Lady Di. I'm quite proud of that, because Lady Di is the housewives' bread-and-butter."

"We haven't got one particular sound," Jon Moss emphasizes. "We're not a new romantic band or an acid-rock band. When we were forming the band, George, Mikey and I were talking about how London is full of different cultures. You can't avoid being assaulted by twenty different cultures as you walk down a main street. I'm Jewish; George is Catholic; Mikey's black, so I thought Culture Club would be a good name."

Such paeans to pluralism are underscored by the Club's fundamental scorn for "white boys," a symbol of the universal

dullness of the common WASP. "The whole concept of 'white boy' is based on that kind of empty-headed person," explains George. "White to me means transparent. White is a milkshake. White is someone who's thick, who's like a bottle of milk, someone who is born, gets fat, has lots of kids, dies, and his sons are like him. It happens with a lot of people."

"The song 'White Boys Can't Control It' sums up that feeling: society is like a conveyor belt. It says, 'You hold out on thinking. You beat people's heads in, drink a lot of Budweiser, piss on people and are just a real asshole.' Basically, those are the people I hate."

"White boy isn't actually about white boys and rednecks as such," adds Mikey Craig. "A white boy can be a black boy with a thick attitude. A white boy is any person who's not colorful."

Cultural Clubs

Mikey Craig: I have two Music Man basses: a fretted and a fretless. I like them because the tone is quite wide. I might have a custom bass made by a company called J&B, because my fingers are a bit short and the Music Man neck is very wide, which makes it difficult to play very fast.

Jon Moss: I've always used Gretsch drums, because I find they're the best drums; they're the Rolls Royce of drum kits. They have a really unique sound. I also use a Simmons electric kit. In the studio, I program the LinnDrum, and we use a tape of it onstage.

Roy Hay: I used to play an Ibanez guitar, but I just bought this new Stratocaster. Onstage we use a Prophet 5 and a Roland Juno; they're very cheap but we get great sounds from them. In the studio we use an OBA, a Minimoog and a Fairlight floppy disc computer keyboard with pressure sensitive keys. It's incredible the things that the Fairlight can do; it's frightening actually. We also use the Fender Rhodes and acoustic piano a lot. ☐

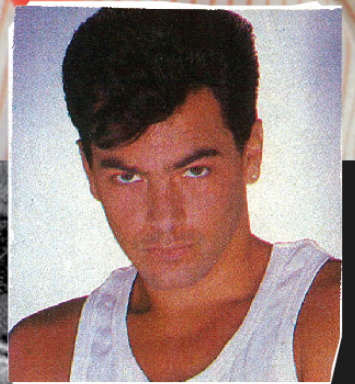


Boy George looking his usual dignified self with a face full of banana on stage in Canada. Note the interesting variation on the 'hairbrush as microphone' theme snapped for posterity by Debbie Hoare of Manchester.











**"I don't like men
or women who
have nothing but
their sexuality; I
think you've got to
have a bit of guts
and character."**



With his androgynous good looks, Boy George, lead singer of the very fashionable Culture Club, has had more people discussing his sexuality than the music he creates with his band.

"Do You Really Want To Hurt Me" was one of the most popular singles of 1982 and Culture Club's debut album, *Kissing To Be Clever*, had equally impressive sales figures; not to mention the band's single "Time (Clock Of The Heart)" which sailed into the Australian Top 10.

But the smooth, white soul with distinctive melodies and memorable hook lines were only part of their appeal. The sleeve photos of Boy George and all the publicity snaps really did have people wondering — is the Boy really a girl?

As he told me in a recent interview, there's been a lot of trouble over the cover of Culture Club's album.

"Besides England, all the other countries are really frightened about the LP cover because a lot of people just think I'm a girl," he said.

"Of course I enjoy that. I love it! It's great because I've got a certain female element to my character. But I'm not a poof. I'm effeminate in the way I look but I'm not an effeminate person. I don't like effeminate people.

"It's like when you meet gay people and they say, 'Oh, hello'. That is put on, because I've done it, put on a very campy voice. You do

need gay clubs, because if you're gay and you walk up to someone in a club and they're not gay, they're going to punch you in the teeth, aren't they? But I don't believe in the gay identity, that you have to be noted and recognised as a gay.

"On the album there's a lot of references to gender. When we first started I wasn't aware of it but when we did our first single, "White Boy", everyone was saying, 'Who's that girl?' That's why I called myself Boy George."

Throughout our interview Boy George kept returning to the subject of sexuality. It's obviously very important to him, to the point where he finds it very difficult to talk about much else.

The Boy is now 21 years old, comes from an Irish family and has five brothers and one sister. His father used to run a boxing club and, when Boy George was younger, he was known to have a go at the punching bag but soon decided that he wasn't cut out for boxing.

"I suppose it's a bit odd that I come from a boxing family but they accept me," he said.

"We're a very democratic family but I don't wear a lot of make-up when I go home.

"I didn't get on very well at school. I'm one of those people who picks things up and then drops them. The sort of suburban school I went to tried to take away my identity. I wanted to just do English and art but I had to do

►94

Question:

**When is a boy
that looks like he
could be a girl
not a girl?**

**Answer: When his
name is Boy George.**



BI-GEORGE

it's a boy!

all the other stuff as well.

"Things were so bad they brought the local child psychiatrist around. I used to sit in a room with him and we were entertained by a little Irish girl who smashed up the furniture.

"When I started experimenting with clothes my mother tried to keep me indoors but now we talk about things. My family are pretty orthodox — they've got a picture of the Pope in the hall.

"I think the Pope's great, he's like Gary Glitter used to be, with people screaming for him and all that sort of thing."

Boy George eventually found home life stifling and moved out to stay with friends in Birmingham.

After this Boy George lived with a girl in London and became a make-up artist for the Royal Shakespeare Company, besides doing some modelling and appearing in a string of advertisements.

His musical career started with a band called In Praise Of Lemmings and then our hero became associated with Bow Wow Wow, the band put together by Malcolm McLaren, the Sex Pistols' mentor. After a brief stint with them Boy George decided to form his own band and Culture Club had arrived.

Within months they were among the most popular bands in England.

A mention of the effect of pop stardom on his emotional life starts Boy George off again.

"I've slept with girls and blokes but I'm not sleeping with anyone at the moment because I can't be bothered to work up the energy to find someone," is his matter of fact comment on his present situation.

Boy George does, however, let on that when he falls for someone he falls in a big, big way.

"I have long relationships," he said. "It takes me about three months to get to know someone and fall in love but when I do, it's like forever!

"I never hurt anyone either and if someone hurts me they never get a chance to do it again. Just recently someone did a real dirty on me and I'll never forgive that person."

As someone who's sold millions of copies of a single that asks "Do You Really Want To Hurt Me", it's interesting to know whether Boy George *does* get hurt often.

"I think I hurt myself more than other people hurt me but that's a weakness of character I'm quite prepared to accept," he said.

And what sort of people does Boy George dislike?

"I don't like men or women who have nothing but their sexuality; I think you've got to have a bit of guts and character.

"I like people I can sit down with and talk with and trust."

With those feelings Boy George can't

have many people in the fickle, insincere, music industry that he likes.

"Of course, you meet a lot of creeps in this business but it doesn't matter what they can do for you, they're not worth tuppence," Boy George said.

"It's the kids who buy the records and support you that are important because you don't exist without those people."

Boy George has, however, been on the receiving end of some nasty letters since his rise to fame but he's taken the necessary precautions to safeguard himself from these.

"I've had some pretty vile letters," he said. "I kept one to remind me how nasty people can be. It was quite obscene, made up of newspaper cuttings saying things like 'You're queer, you're going to die' and it came to my home address which not many people know about.

"So, I've got myself a dog, it's a really nice Doberman!"

Like most other things to do with Boy George, the title of Culture Club's album, *Kissing To Be Clever*, is all tied up with the Boy's attitudes to love and sexuality.

"The whole of that album is like a cynical love song," he said. "It's all about the new boy gender. The songs are very personal but they can apply to other people. Everybody falls in love and everybody wants somebody to love at the end of the day.

"I've been in love with somebody for about a year but it's a bit on the rocks now.

"I'm into relationships rather than sexual encounters. Also I'd never sleep with fans. None of the band would do that. I don't believe in abusing the position we have."

But back to the effect success has had on Boy George. He claims that what's happened in the past year hasn't sunk in yet.

"When we got to number one, it was such a slog, waiting for the record to be played on the radio, trying to find out how many had sold... we haven't really had time to take it in. It's been hard work since then so we haven't sat down and said, 'Aren't we successful'."

Boy George and Culture Club are obviously enjoying their time as one of the hippest, most fashionable bands in England, watching as scores of kids dress like them and imitate their tastes but the Boy believes that isn't why people like Culture Club.

"You want to know why people like Culture Club?" he asked. "It's because we are not just a haircut or a type of clothes, it's not our physical being or our make-up — it's because we have a different mentality."

You can buy the clothes but who will sell you a different mentality?

Stuart Coupe



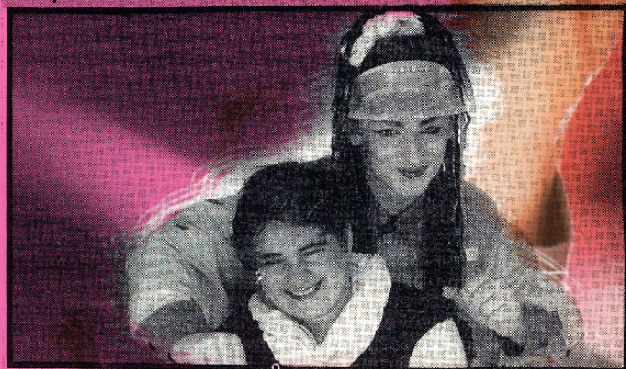


And then there were five. Helen Terry, here facing an apparently amusing photographer with Boy George, has just joined Culture Club "on a permanent basis". George, when we spoke to him, was wildly enthusiastic. "She's going to be the big voice of next year," he gushed, and announced that they hoped to do a duet together sometime. Ms Terry will be recording some solo stuff soon (should be out early next year) and is "featured heavily" on the forthcoming "Colour By Numbers" LP. Meanwhile, September 5 sees the release of the next Culture Club single, "Karma Chameleon", which is backed by an American re-mix of "I'll Tumble 4 Ya".



CULTURE CLUB

CULTURE CLUB announce that Helen Terry, the girl singer featured prominently on the group's recent hit 'Church Of The Poisoned Mind', has become a permanent member of the line-up. She will be showcased strongly on the band's upcoming Virgin album 'Colour By Numbers' for release in October, and she will subsequently record some songs as a solo performer for the New Year.



Commented Boy George: "Originally we used a number of session singers and toasters, like Captain Crucial and so on. It's part of our attempt to delegate ideas and make our musical situation a bit more diverse. After all, we found our sax player working behind a desk at a Social Security office. Real talent does come from the gutter, you know".

The band are currently enjoying their third US hit with a drastically remixed version of 'I'll Tumble 4 Ya' which will be on the B-side of their 12-inch, due for release here in September.



CULTURE CLUB are being lined up for a UK tour in early autumn, NME learned this week.

They begin a schedule of Stateside concerts on August 27, then launch into their British outing as soon as they return to this country. It's understood they'll be playing ten or 12 dates in late September and the beginning of October – and, although it's a relatively brief tour, it will still cover most parts of the country.

Details of dates and venues will be announced in the next two weeks, but they are not expected to include any London appearances. This is because the band are apparently preparing "something special" for the capital around Christmas time.

They'll have a new single issued by Virgin in mid-September, and their next album – titled 'Colour By Numbers' – is at present scheduled for October 7 release, though this date is still subject to confirmation.



CULTURE CLUB'S new single 'Karma Chameleon' will be out on September 5, taken from the band's forthcoming album 'Colour By Numbers'. The flipside of the seven inch version features 'That's The Way', while a 12 inch version of the single features the full extended US remix of 'I'll Tumble 4 Ya'.

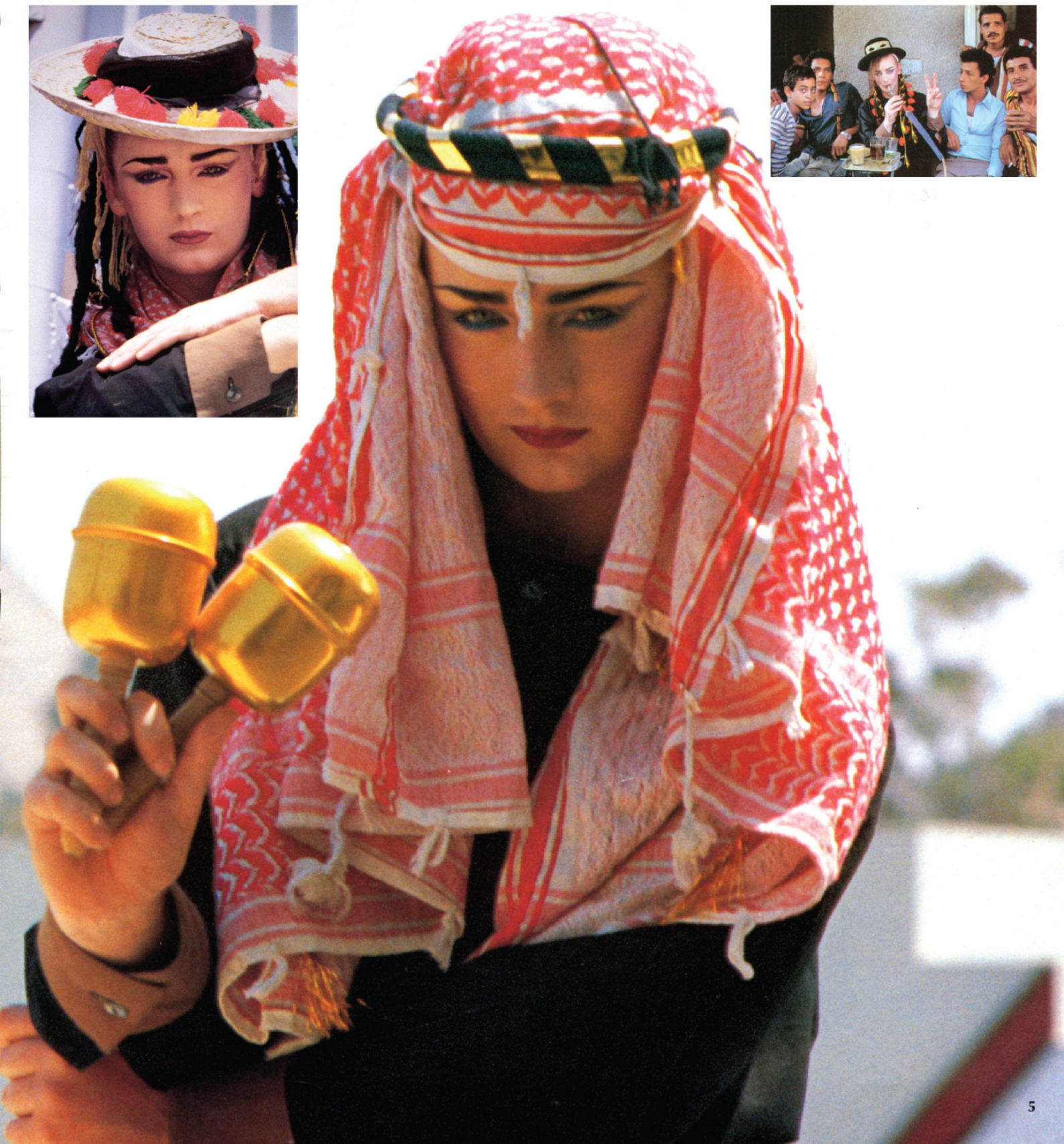
'I'll Tumble 4 Ya' entered the American top ten this week, and Culture Club claim that they are the first act in 20 years to have three top ten American hits lifted from their debut album.





Nº1

BOY GEORGE



ボーイ・ジョージ15歳

every culture in this club!

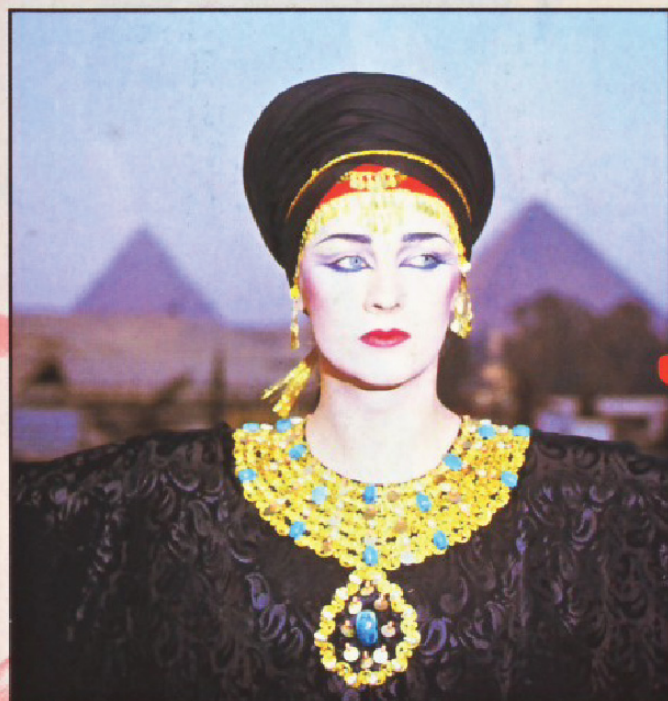
ボーイがカメレオン●エジプトが好き!?

Boy “egyptian” George

pix:andre csillag



▶なりきってしまったら、怖いものなし、でございます。クレオパトラか、はたまたツタンカーメンか？ エジプトは静かに夜を迎えます。



News Club ①
▶イタリアのサンレモ音楽祭に参加するカルチャー・クラブ、3月からはアメリカン・ツアーに出るぞ!

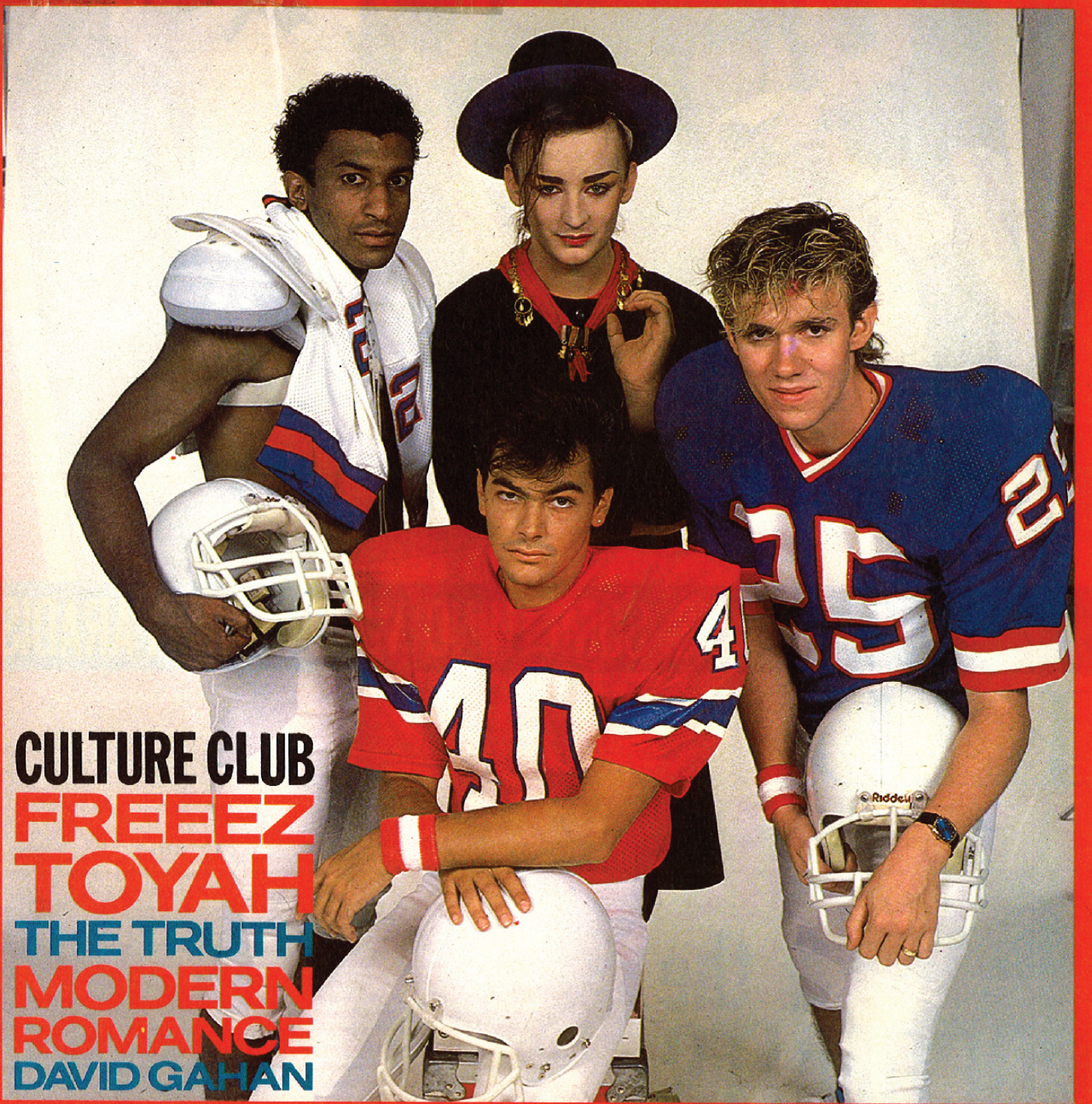


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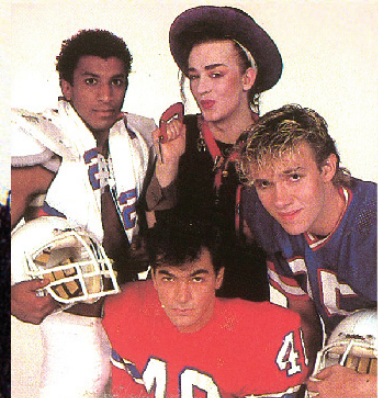
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Smash HITS



**CULTURE CLUB
FREEEZ
TOYAH
THE TRUTH
MODERN
ROMANCE
DAVID GAHAN**

HIT SONGS BY KID CREOLE, BUCKS FIZZ, MICHAEL JACKSON, PIL & LOTS MORE



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MEDIUM

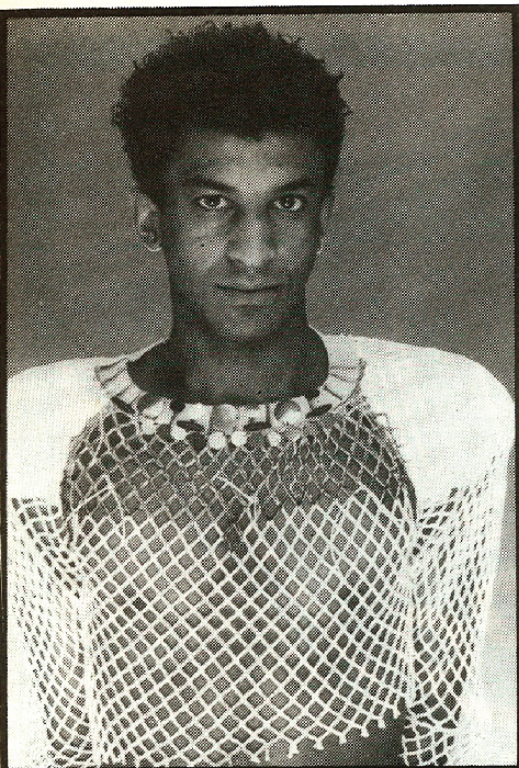




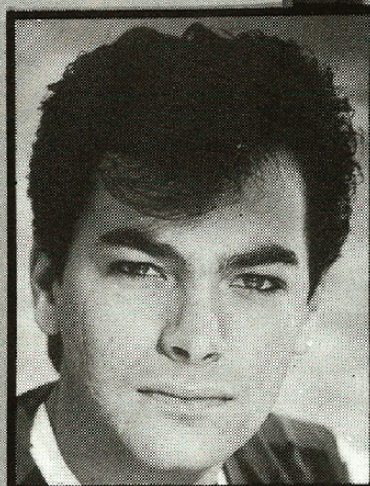
• Karma-Chameleon •

◆ CULTURE ♦ CLUB ◆

7" KARMA CHAMELEON / THAT'S THE WAY 12" KARMA CHAMELEON / I'LL TUMBLE 4 YA · AMERICAN MIX · PRODUCED BY STEVE LEVINE



CULTURE CLUB



KARMA CHAMELEON

DESERT LOVING IN YOUR EYES ALL THE WAY
IF I LISTEN TO YOUR LIES WOULD YOU SAY
I'M A MAN (A MAN) WITHOUT CONVICTION
I'M A MAN (A MAN) WHO DOESN'T KNOW
HOW TO SELL (TO SELL) A CONTRADICTION
YOU COME AND GO, YOU COME AND GO

CHORUS

KARMA, KARMA, KARMA,
KARMA, KARMA CHAMELEON
YOU COME AND GO, YOU COME AND GO
LOVING WOULD BE EASY IF YOUR COLOURS
WERE LIKE MY DREAM
RED, GOLD AND GREEN, RED, GOLD AND GREEN

DIDN'T HEAR YOUR WICKED WORDS EVERY DAY
AND YOU USED TO BE SO SWEET I HEARD YOU SAY
THAT MY LOVE (MY LOVE) WAS AN ADDICTION
WHEN WE CLING (WE CLING) OUR LOVE IS STRONG

WHEN YOU GO (YOU GO) YOU'RE GONE FOREVER
YOU STRING ALONG, YOU STRING ALONG

REPEAT CHORUS

EVERY DAY IS LIKE SURVIVAL (SURVIVAL)
YOU'RE MY LOVER (MY LOVER) NOT MY RIVAL
EVERY DAY IS LIKE SURVIVAL (SURVIVAL)
YOU'RE MY LOVER (MY LOVER) NOT MY RIVAL

I'M A MAN (A MAN) WITHOUT CONVICTION
I'M A MAN (A MAN) WHO DOESN'T KNOW
HOW TO SELL (TO SELL) A CONTRADICTION
YOU COME AND GO, YOU COME AND GO

REPEAT CHORUS TO FADE

WORDS AND MUSIC CULTURE CLUB
REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION VIRGIN PUBLISHING
ON VIRGIN RECORDS

SINGLE OF THE WEEK

CULTURE CLUB: Karma Chameleon (Virgin) Karma: quite literally, any act that appears in consecutive singles columns with the same author. Chameleon: a thin sneaky lizard that absorbs its current background and grins a lot (though slap one on a piece of kilt and they cry like babies). And Culture Club chameleons the West Coast. Lying long in the sun they become as the sound of the surf. It's 'Marakesh Express' and Todd Rundgren and The Eagles and the opening beats of 'You're So Good To Me' by Beach Boys. It's peace and love, team; perky, free and easy, clever and crafty and this country's very next number one hit single. I love it pretty much to pieces and seem to play it all the time. Ha! So it wasn't a mystical man-dress after all George. You've been wearing a kaftan, you silk-voiced foul mouthed old she-wolf.



CULTURE CLUB 'Karma Chameleon' (Virgin) Club calypso! Unrecognisable as Culture Club, only distinguished by the harmonica and George's voice and quite unlike anything they've done before. Surprisingly tame, but so disarmingly 'up' and bouncy that they have to be excused. New recruit Helen Terry doesn't seem to do much on it, which is a shame.



When bassist Mikey Craig was nineteen, he was already the father of two children. Now he has left his past behind and concentrates on creating solid basslines.

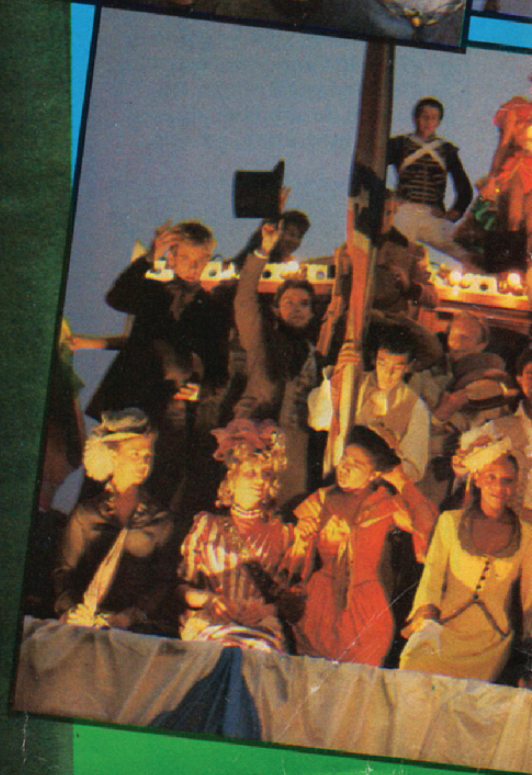
CULTURE CLUB: Karma Chameleon (Virgin) Three minor problems as regards this one. 1) The tempo is much speedier than our Boy is used to: being almost as bad a dancer as Jay of Bucks Fizz, how's he going to cope when he does it on the telly? 2) The mouth organ player (on the run from countless Western soundtracks) seems to be getting in the way rather a lot. And 3) The use of "karma" in title; the last popular singer to use this word was "The Beatles' George Harrison who turned "odd" soon afterwards.

Tom Hibbert (September 1 1983)

Filmed at Sunbury-On-Thames, the new Culture Club video is set on a paddle-steamer.

Supposedly the only such vessel in Britain, the ship was renamed 'Chameleon' for this

Tales from



VIDEO

mega-production movie.

Written by Zelda Barron, the script editor of *Reds* and *Coalminer's Daughter*, the video is supposed to be set in Mississippi and tips more than a wink to Mark Twain's

Huckleberry Finn.

Boy George plays the part of commentator relating a tale of rags and riches.

We see a mixture of rich folk and ragamuffins on the shore, a pick-pocket amongst them.

The thief boards the ship and is soon playing cards with the other members of the Club. He cleans them out, falls under suspicion and is tossed overboard. Everybody else lives happily ever after.

The video features some sumptuous costumes, a cast perfectly balanced between black and white and Boy George as himself. Who else could he have played? Tom Sawyer's mum?

from the riverbank

Photos by Andre Csillag



KARMA CHAMELEON

Desert loving in your eyes all the way
If I listen to your lies would you say
I'm a man without conviction
I'm a man who doesn't know
How to sell a contradiction
You come and go
You come and go

Chorus

Karma Karma Karma Karma Karma Chameleon
You come and go
You come and go
Loving would be easy if your colours were like my dream
Red, gold and green
Red, gold and green

Didn't hear your wicked words every day
And you used to be so sweet I heard you say
That my love was an addiction
When we cling our love is strong
When you go you're gone forever
You string along
You string along

Repeat chorus

Every day is like a survival
You're my lover not my rival
Every day is like a survival
You're my lover not my rival

I'm a man without conviction
I'm a man who doesn't know
How to sell a contradiction
You come and go
You come and go

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Words and music by Culture Club

Ein neuer

Hit – und sein erstes Buch:

George im Streß

Für die Fans opferte Boy George sogar den Urlaub. Im Sommer machte er die neue LP fertig und stellte das erste Culture-Club-Buch zusammen.

Drummer John Moss ist Georges rechte Hand. Er leitet die Bandproben und gibt auf der Bühne ganz unauffällig die Musikeinsätze.

Trotz heiligster Vesperechen hat Boy George beim Europateil seiner derzeit laufenden Welttournee keinen Österreichertermin eingeplant.



Helen Terry, die Culture Club zuletzt als Backgroundsängerin auf den Tourneen begleitete, ist jetzt fixes Mitglied bei Culture Club.

Es ist bestimmt mein bisher ungewöhnlichster Song“, lacht Boy George über seinen neuen Hit „Karma Chameleon“. „Ich hab' ihn schon in meiner Schulzeit – also vor fast 10 Jahren – geschrieben. Damals bin ich noch irrsinnig auf Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young gestanden!“ Nicht nur der ungewöhnliche Country-Stil verwirrt die Culture-Club-Fans beim neuen Hit, auch der Titel scheint unverständlich. Was meint der „Boy“ mit „Karma“? „Das kommt aus dem Buddhismus und bedeutet soviel wie ‚Mach's gut, Chamäleon!‘. Es ist ein Liebeslied an ein Mädchen, das ohne feste Überzeugung blitzschnell – eben wie ein Chamäleon – seine Meinung ändert und jeden Tag neue Lügen erzählt, nur weil es sich davon Vorteile verspricht.“ Boy Georges im Country-Rock gehaltene Hit „Karma

Chameleon“ ist der erste Vorgeschmack auf die neue Culture-Club-LP „Coloured By Numbers“, die Mitte Oktober auf den Markt kommen soll. Zwei Monate später als ursprünglich geplant, weil die Band die Aufnahmen im Londoner Red-Bus-Studio immer wieder unterbrechen mußte. Seit seinem ersten Hit „Do You Really Wanna

Hurt Me“ ist Boy George nämlich permanent im Streß. Zuerst kam Mitte April eine Amerika-Tournee dazwischen, dann wurden plötzlich auch die Japaner Culture-Club-Verrückt und die Band mußte schnell eine Fernost-Tournee von Tokio bis Hongkong einschieben. Schließlich wurde George auch noch durch ein drittes Projekt immer wieder von den Plattenaufnahmen abgehalten:

SEIN ERSTES BUCH MIT PRIVATEN FOTOS!

Für alle seine Fans stellte er höchstpersönlich das erste Culture-Club-Buch zusammen. Für das Taschenbuch mit dem bezeichnenden Titel „When Cameras Go Crazy“ hat Boy George tatsächlich die verrücktesten Fotos von sich und seiner Band aufgetrieben

und – extra für die Farbseiten – zum ersten Mal seine ganz private Photosammlung, die er sonst wie einen kostbaren Schatz hütet, freigeben. So werden in „When Cameras Go Crazy“ nicht nur all die verrücktesten Frisuren, die der Culture-Club-Leader von seiner Schulzeit bis heute gehabt hat, genau dokumentiert, sondern auch jede einzelne seiner Schminktechniken genau beschrieben. Beinahe hätte Boy George, um dieses „Meisterwerk“ für seine Fans rechtzeitig zu vollenden, auch noch seinen wohlverdienten Urlaub opfern müssen. Er verbrachte ihn schließlich in Ägypten zwischen Mumien, Pyramiden und Goldschätzen. Mit den neuen Songs von „Coloured By Numbers“ sind Culture Club mittlerweile auf Welttournee. Im Oktober kommen sie auch nach Europa, doch Österreich steht trotz Boy-George-Versprechungen wieder einmal nicht auf dem Reiseplan. So wird man bei uns leider kaum den neuen Culture-Club-Look bewundern können, den „Boy“ für diese Tour entworfen hat:



フランスのマスコミもセンセーショナルに報じたカルチャー・クラブのライブ・パフォーマンス。ボーイ・ジョージの名前は'80年代に登場した数少ないスーパースターの1人として、その歴史に永遠に刻まれることだろう。

左より、ロイ・ヘイ(g)、マイケル・クレイグ(b)、ボーイ・ジョージ(vo)