

# ROCK

By Roy Trakin

## S H O R T T A K E S

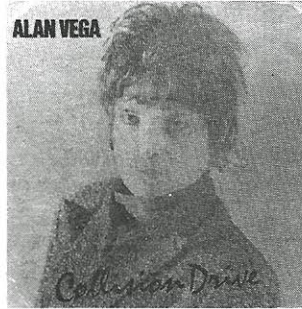
Adam & the Ants  
ADAM AND THE ANTS



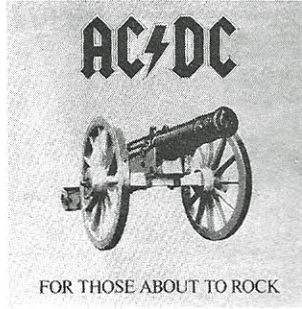
Bush Tetras



Alan Vega



AC/DC



**Adam & The Ants** — *Prince Charming* (Epic) You gotta hand it to the Man They Call Ant — he refuses to rest on last year's quite unexpected epidemic of Antmania. Shedding his trademarked buccaneer uniform for eyeliner and nail polish, Adam threatens to gross out his teeny-bopper following altogether with his new Flamenco wimp sound and oh-so-fey demeanor. Beneath *Charming's* camp veneer, though, is a moralist who takes his responsibility as a pubescent role model in an oddly serious manner. Shot through with puritanical advice and cheesy samba rhythms, this LP is bound to get ridiculed for its brave, if foolhardy, departure from a successful formula.

**Polyrock** — *Changing Hearts* (RCA) And then there are the albums you put on late at night to help you get to sleep. Maddeningly even-handed, undeniably clever, these downtown Noo Yawkers sound like they wanna rock out, but avant producer Philip Glass just won't let them. Sharp and subtle, but, like Gene Hackman says about French director Eric Rohmer's films in *Night Moves*, "It's like watching paint dry."

**Glen Branca** — *The Ascension* (99 Records) Like listening to paint dry, except magnified a few thousand times. A soaring sonic wall-of-bombast essayed by the new darling of the downtown N.Y. avant-garde, with the apparently monolithic slabs of sound giving way to textures that are stunningly orchestral and even classical in scope. Heavy metal for intellectuals or avant-garde for cretins — however you slice it, guitarist Glen Branca is onto something.

**Bush Tetras** — *Rituals* (Stiff Records EP) These lovable Butch darlings of the N.Y. underground proved their no-wave funk mettle with last year's dance-floor

hit, "Too Many Creeps." This time around, producer Topper Headon (the Clash's feisty drummer) has lightened the Bush T's bottom, though nothing could erase these gals' undeniable white soul. Quirky and chic, this three-girl-and-one-guy outfit has carved its very own trademarked sound, with one side of this EP marked rhythm, the other paranoia. Modern urban bloozepeople, the start of a new race.

**Joan Jett** — *I Love Rock 'n' Roll* (Boardwalk) When she's not strutting her mock macho, heavy-metal poses, this erstwhile Runaway represents all that's right with El Lay pop-rock. On her second solo outing, Joan doesn't quite come up with the savvy choice of cover material which made her debut such a startling and pleasant surprise. While that self-titled LP correctly revved up Gary Glitter, this one tries to trashify Dave Clark and Tommy James, a hopeless redundancy. Still vulnerable after all these years, though.

**Alan Vega** — *Collision Drive* (Ze) Suicide's leather-lunged vocalist once again pays tribute to the King with a be-boppin', finger-snappin' echo chamber of hiccup cool. "Be Bop A Lula" artfully meshes Gene Vincent and Peter Gunn while "Viet Vet" is a wrenching "Frankie Teardrop"-style saga of the sort that no one else in pop would dare attempt. As beautiful as it is unlikely, Vega's second LP shows how delving into rock's past can still enlighten the present.

**Romeo Void** — *Never Say Never* (415 Records EP) Much of what made this S.F.-based quintet interesting and unique has been eliminated on the title track, where the group's jazzy, tele-scopic approach has been hardened

into yet another pseudo-funk variation on the successful Bush Tetras cum Gang of Four angular rhythms. Singer Deborah Iyall is still as smokily evocative as ever, though, and producer Ric Ocasek does finally manage to provide the band with the aural canvas which allows them to stretch to their impressive instrumental capabilities. Romeo Void's strength has been the fact that they don't sound like anybody else. Forcing them to follow trends may be commercially advantageous, but it certainly does a disservice to the band's undeniable link to its nonconformist beatnik past.

**AC/DC** — *For Those About To Rock* (We Salute You) (Atlantic) Absolutely the most uncompromising, raucous, hell-bent rock 'n' roll that ever stormed its way to the top of the charts. These vulgar Aussies bang heads with the best of 'em, reeling off one thunderous riff after another, pausing not one split second for reflection or self-consciousness. In by-passing literary devices like metaphors to directly link sex and war in one savage power chord of a double-entendre, AC/DC lubricate their heavy metal narrative with Barthesian gusto. Cannons as cocks. Explosions as orgasms. Creation as destruction. Never has a band worked so hard to provide a well-deserved catharsis for its audience as AC/DC has.

**Bob & Doug McKenzie** — *Great White North* (Mercury/PolyGram) SC-TV's Rick Moranis and Dave Thomas don their toques, light up a smoke, crack open a bottle of Molson's and fire up the Coleman burner for some back bacon, eh?, in this send-up of a mythical Canadian talk-show starring two dim-witted brothers. If you're familiar with the late-

night TV program, where this bit got its start, you know what I'm talking about when I call this the funniest comedy album of the year. If you're not, like, where've you been, hoser? Features Geddy Lee of Rush on the hit single, "Take Off."

**Germ**s — *What We Do Is Secret* (Slash EP) Outtakes and tidbits from L.A.'s most lovable hard-core losers, featuring the late Darby Crash self-destructing before your very ears. Savage, terrifying, sad, heartfelt. If you think this is fake punk-rock or a pale imitation of something else, guess again.

**Black Flag** — *Damaged* (Unicorn/SST) Carries a marvelous disclaimer from the MCA executive who quashed its release on that label: "As a parent... I found it an anti-parent record...." Only if *Rebel Without A Cause* or *The Wild Ones* were anti-parent movies. This is the apogee of the L.A. punk point of view. At once a searing, teeth-gnashing denial of being ("Spray Paint," "Thirsty And Miserable," "Police Story") and a gut-wrenching, courageous affirmation of life-in-the-suburban-void ("Rise Above," "Life Of Pain"). The most apocalyptic rock since Iggy's *Raw Power*, with guitarist Gregg Ginn making James Williamson sound like he's playing acoustic.

**Kiss** — *Music From "The Elder"* (Casablanca/PolyGram) In which our masked heroes find themselves on a steady decline of popularity, forced to drop ten yards and punt a concept album down-

field. The once-reigning comic book kings of the heavy metal hierarchy go the progressive route, lamely approaching the mendacious mundaneness of the Moody Blues or Styx. Where once partying all night was Kiss' sole preoccupation, the boys desperately grope for the rock-opera solution to their commercial doldrums. Sure, this is a bold stroke to enter the hallowed halls of mass appeal, but wouldn't it have been just as easy to remove the Max Factor from their faces? Better leave it on at that. It'll help hide the egg that's bound to follow. **M**