

# ROCK

The Damned come alive, Abba lights up, and Pylon gyrates. Darryl Rhoades records some songs from '76 and Stiff Little Fingers capture the Spirit of '77.

By David Fricke

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

### Human Sexual Response



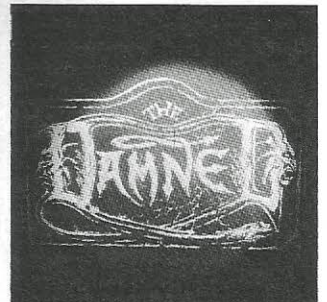
### Whitesnake



### Any Trouble



### The Damned



**The Damned** — (I.R.S.) A good Damned album. Hard as it may be to believe, the cool ghouls of British bondage-era punk are back at the head of the class with a surprisingly sophisticated entry that could be their *Hades Calling*. Among the strange yet somehow appealing bedfellows to be heard here are Captain Sensible's wall-of-sound guitars, resonant Beach Boy-o harmonies ("Billy Kid Games"), crash'n-burn rockers, playful psychedelia like "13th Floor Vendetta," and the toe-tapping bombast of the modestly titled "History of the World Part I." Where the Damned used to be funny, now they're just plain fun. Who would have thought they had it in them?

**Any Trouble** — *Where Are All The Nice Girls?* (Stiff America) A damned good album, accusations of Costello cloning to the contrary. The closest this Manchester foursome actually come to ripping off the Bespectacled One is the unabashed simplicity of their sound — a seamless pub-rock mesh of ringing Rockpile-like guitars, crackerjack drumming, and singer-songwriter Clive Gregson's poignant warble. Gregson's aim is indeed true, although it is really somewhere between the versions here of Bruce Springsteen's "Growing Up" (studio) and Abba's "Name of the Game" (live). Gregson's impeccably crafted songhooks reel you right in to his three-minute dramas of loves won and adolescence lost like "Turning Up the Heat," "The Hurt," and his heart-tugging rewrite of Costello's "Alison," here titled "Nice Girls." With songs like these, Any Trouble's debut LP could be the 1981 answer to the age-old musical question — where are all the hit singles?

**Pylon** — Gyrate (DB) The South rises yet again. Like the B-52s, Pylon hail

from arty Athens, Georgia. Unlike the comparatively frivolous bouffant bombers, Pylon make terrifyingly stark, brutally physical dance music, like Gang of Four with a drawl. While guitarist Randy Bewley strides the no-man's land between David Byrne's amateur six-string scratchings and the radical new harmonic equations of PiL's Keith Levene, the tribal stomp rhythm section of Michael Lachowski and Curtis Crowe underlines Vanessa Ellison's tortured Yoko-cum-Siouxie vocalese with curiously melodic menace. Turn it up to ten and dance *this* mess around.

**The Monochrome Set** — *Strange Boutique* (DinDisc/Virgin International) When they're not being terminally pretentious ("Ici Les Enfants," "The Lighter Side of Dating") or transparently smarmy (the punk muzak of "Espresso"), the Monochrome Set can make intriguing music, which on *Strange Boutique* isn't very often. No matter how tough or tight they play — note the weird network of guitars in "The Etcetera Stroll" and the fractured Farfisa jive of the title track — the Set smell of art school B.S., particularly in songtitles, Bob Sargeant's paper-thin production, and lead singer Bid's tiresomely droll crooning. The only thing stocked in this boutique seems to be the emperor's new clothes.

**Whitesnake** — *Live...In The Heart of The City* (Mirage) Timeless stuff, this. For all the noise made about the Deep Purple connection here, ex-DP singer David Coverdale and his breast-beating macho mob stand waist-deep in the Anglo-electric blues-rock tradition that gave us Free, Spooky Tooth, Humble Pie, and most recently Bad Company. Jon Lord and Ian Paice add that extra shot of Purple passion on the high-speed "Take Me With You." But Cover-

dale sounds more like Paul Rodgers than HM screamer Ian Gillian and when Micky Moody and Bernie Marsden peel out on the respective axes, they bring back fond memories of Paul Kossoff. And it's got live, like headbangers want **Human Sexual Response** — *Figure 14* (Eat/Passport) Where Rhoades gives you a good case of the guffaws, Boston's HSR are more likely to coax a knowing smile with punky hijinx like "(I Want to be) Jackie Onassis" and their application of Rich Gilbert's PiL-like guitar work to kindergarten rhyme in "Dick and Jane." With their clever lyric wordplays and intricate vocal arrangements, HSR come closest in concept and execution to another Beantown band, the late lamented Orchestra Luna. But HSR brandish a double-edged sword that is sharpest in the chilling "Anne Frank Story." With songs like that, who needs another version of "Cool Jerk"?

**Fleshtones** — *Up-Front* (I.R.S.) The only problem with this record is there isn't enough of it — five songs playing at 45 RPM. But this feisty New York pop'n-punk quartet makes the most of their thirteen minutes here with the manic Bo Diddley bopper "Feel the Heat," a fusion of urban surf music and Yardbirds bluesbusting on "The Girls From Baltimore," another rousing original "Cold, Cold Shoes," the Stones' "Play With Fire" done as jungle boogie, and a pastiche of garage-band riffing called "The Theme from 'The Victicators.'" If someone compiles another *Nuggets* album ten years from now, the Fleshtones deserve to be on it.

**Queen** — *Flash Gordon* (Elektra) In which Mercury the Merciless and his three cohorts threaten to conquer the universe with more of the Bohemian balcony. Can no one stop them?