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We'll be right back after this WRPD station break...

Waldo by Kevin Thomas

Siouxsie and the Banshees, 70s British punk survivors

By Chuck Lovejoy
Staff Writer

In the late 1970s, England's punk movement caused a musical revolution. The movement called attention to many artists who otherwise would have been ignored or dismissed as hooligans.

Review

Punk groups such as the Sex Pistols and Siouxsie and the Banshees blasted a hole in the music industry on both sides of the Atlantic. The excessive attention lavished on these underground groups, with their anti-social songs and unusual looks, eventually helped lead to the demise of disco. If bands such as these hadn't surfaced, the Bee Gees still might be topping the charts today.

The only notable punk band left is Siouxsie and the Banshees. After more than a decade of albums, "Peepshow," their latest Geffen Records release, again proves them to be survivors, if not more.

On the surface, "Peepshow" appears to signal Siouxsie and the Banshees' move into mainstream music. One gets the feeling the band has the turn signal on, but hasn't yet changed lanes.

This is especially true after hearing the album's first single, "Peek-a-Boo," their most Top-40 single to date.

A closer look at the album reveals this to be mainly untrue.

A big clue that the band still has a cynical outlook is the album's cover. On it, Siouxsie Sioux, vocalist for the band, appears to glow as though she has been irradiated by nuclear fallout.

Another indication is the band's musical subject matter. "Peepshow" contains songs ranging from the melancholy to the macabre. This proves the band hasn't yet stepped over the pop-punk borderline.

The album also marks a level of song-writing the band never reached in their previous works.

The tracks on "Peepshow" are the most coherent songs they have recorded, although for the most part they still cannot be deciphered into one complete story. The band deals mainly with larger concepts, giving the listener general descriptions rather than detailed ones.

Despite their cryptic descriptions, the songs capture and hold emotions brilliantly. The band creates a mood with a song's lyrics and effectively conveys that feeling with music.

"Carousel" is a perfect example of this mood conveyance. The song describes the horrors of a carnival through a child's eyes. Especially scary to the song-child are the house of mirrors and the merry-go-round: "A hen that's fierce/And painted blue/With red eyes/Wants to swallow you." Computer sampled carousel music and infant cries in the song's background complete the effect.

Two other songs, "Scarecrow" and "Ornaments of Gold," tell stories of despair and misfortune. These tracks have an "epic" feel reminiscent of Iron Maiden's "Flight of Icarus." Driving guitar rhythms and wailing vocals conjure up images of flying over the countryside under a cloudy sky.

The most bizarre song on the album, both in mood and name, is "Rawhead and Bloodybones." The track's sparse synthesizer accompaniment to Siouxsie's crackling voice sounds like the music used along with nightmare scenes in low-budget horror movies.

In addition to the mood-making songs, the band also addresses Soviet oppression in "Rhapsody," written by Banshee bassist Steve Severin, the only remaining original Banshee other than Siouxsie. The song's lyrics express hope. Severin writes, "And if we can never see the sun/There's still light with you." The song ends with the lament, "We can't see what we want to."

The album's somber mood is shown by such titles as "The Jar," "Turn to Stone," and "Beat of My Heart."

Not every song on the album is depressing, though. The album begins with "The Beginning and the End" on the first side.

The first track, "Peek-a-Boo," is a slick, upbeat study of sadomasochism. Siouxsie sings, "She has me under a sweet submission/She'll do what you want her to do/Whip deadpan on cue." The single reached number one on Rolling Stone's single chart for the past four weeks.

"Burn-Up," at the end of the album, is a deviation from style for the band. The song has a country-western feel, progressing steadily in tempo from a jitterbug to a slow polka. The lyrics are scorching. If the band were to go under a pseudonym, say "The Scorchers and the Boys," and send it to the radio, it would almost surely be a hit, if not even become a big hit.

Granted, that probably wouldn't be funny if it were true.

One of the band's most enjoyable songs isn't even on the album. "Walk" is a peppy number on which Siouxsie purrs and meows. The song is on the B-side of the "Peek-a-Boo" single.

Overall, "Peepshow" is an excellent and enjoyable album. Even though the most part it doesn't make you get up and dance in your underwear, Tom Cruise in "Risky Business" doesn't put you to sleep, either.

Besides, considering the subject matter, even if you were to fall asleep, it certainly wouldn't be a bad one.

Making living as 'freak of nature' doesn't bother Lobster Man at all

DALLAS (AP) — On the midway, one door down from Pork Chops the fat man, sits Grady Stiles the Lobster Man, who calls himself "one of the last legitimate freaks of nature on the road" worth paying a dollar to see.

And that is how Stiles makes a living, sitting under a tent and allowing people to look at him for a dollar in Dallas, a little more in New England, where the economy is better.

He doesn't get to keep all of that dollar — many times less than half of it. The rest goes to the fair or someone responsible for contracting the midway operators, Stiles said.

"I make a living," he said. "But I've never been able to make enough money to quit. I've told myself I would several times but never have."

But Stiles said he's not an actor. He does not feel as if he has taken advantage of because of his "freak of nature," he said, "missing any notion that this is a cruel one, where show managers take unjust profits from actors they know the actors would be money any other way."

Stiles said if he wanted to find another living.

Record number of exhibitors turn out for Texas oil show

ODESSA (AP) — An all-time high number of 602 exhibitors at the Permian Basin Oil Show is proof that the oil and gas service industry is still alive and kicking, said industry representatives on the show's opening day Wednesday.

The biannual show on the grounds of the Ector County Coliseum is expected to draw 200,000 visitors from across the United States and several foreign countries, according to the event's organizers.

Billed as the world's largest inland oil show, the event showcases manufacturing, supply and service companies from about 50 Texas cities and a dozen other states.

On display were items from transport trucks to working pumpjacks to solar-powered flow computers to drill bits to sucker rods, all touted as the latest technology and service.

In addition to standard oilfield equipment, other exhibitors offered a range of auxiliary services. The Lafayette, La., company that makes drug and psychological testing and gas company employees, and the famous Boots & Clogs shoe store, and well blowout equipment.

The service and supply industry weathered the oil price collapse with difficulty, and companies that they feel lucky.

Oil prices dropped to a low of \$15 a barrel in late summer. Recently, West Texas Intermediate, the benchmark crude, have recovered to \$15.