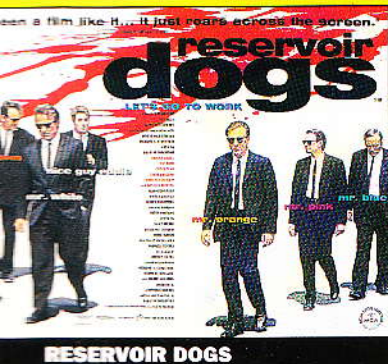


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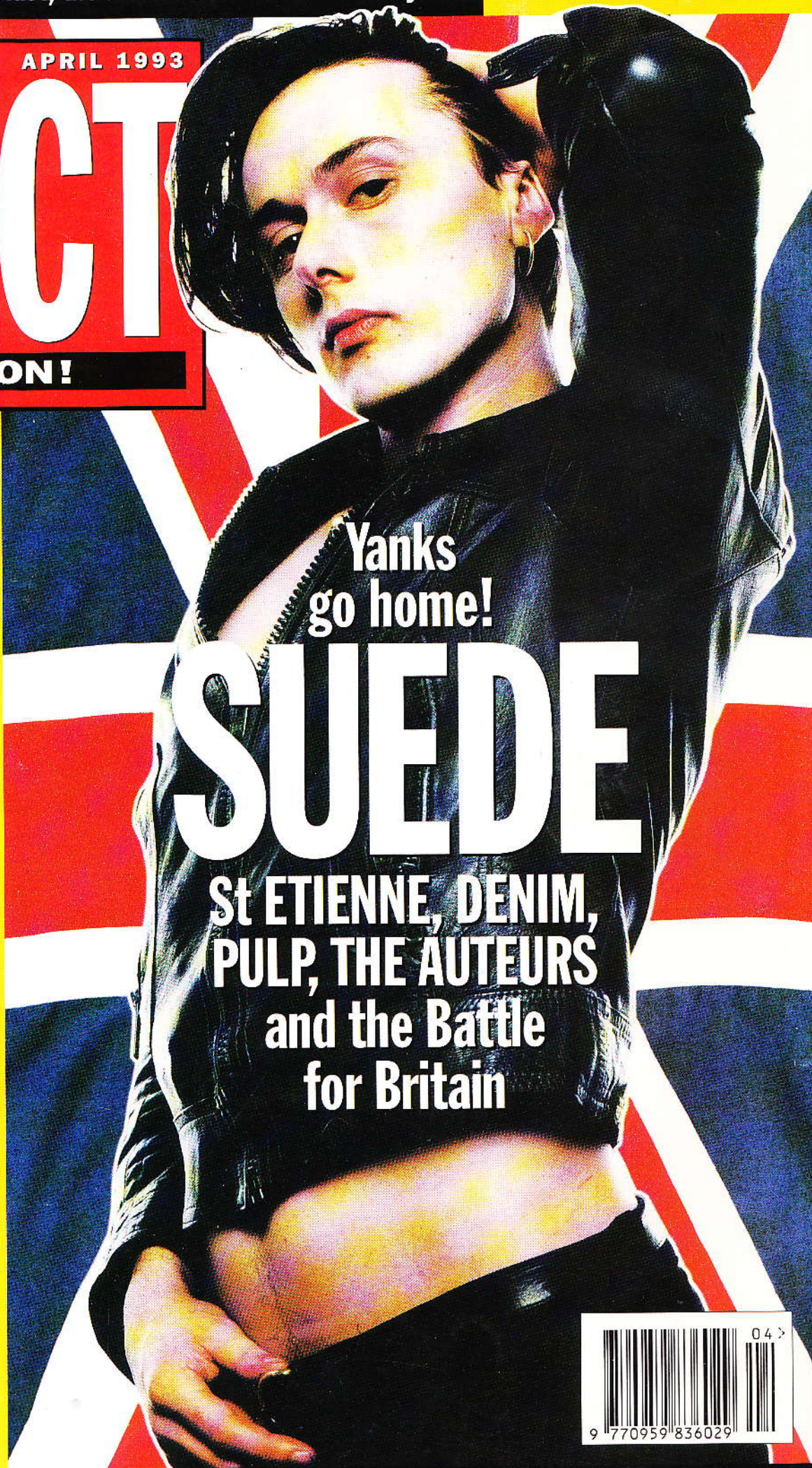
APRIL 1993

# SELECT

POP BABYLON!



**REE**  
massive (3ft x 2ft)  
POSTERS



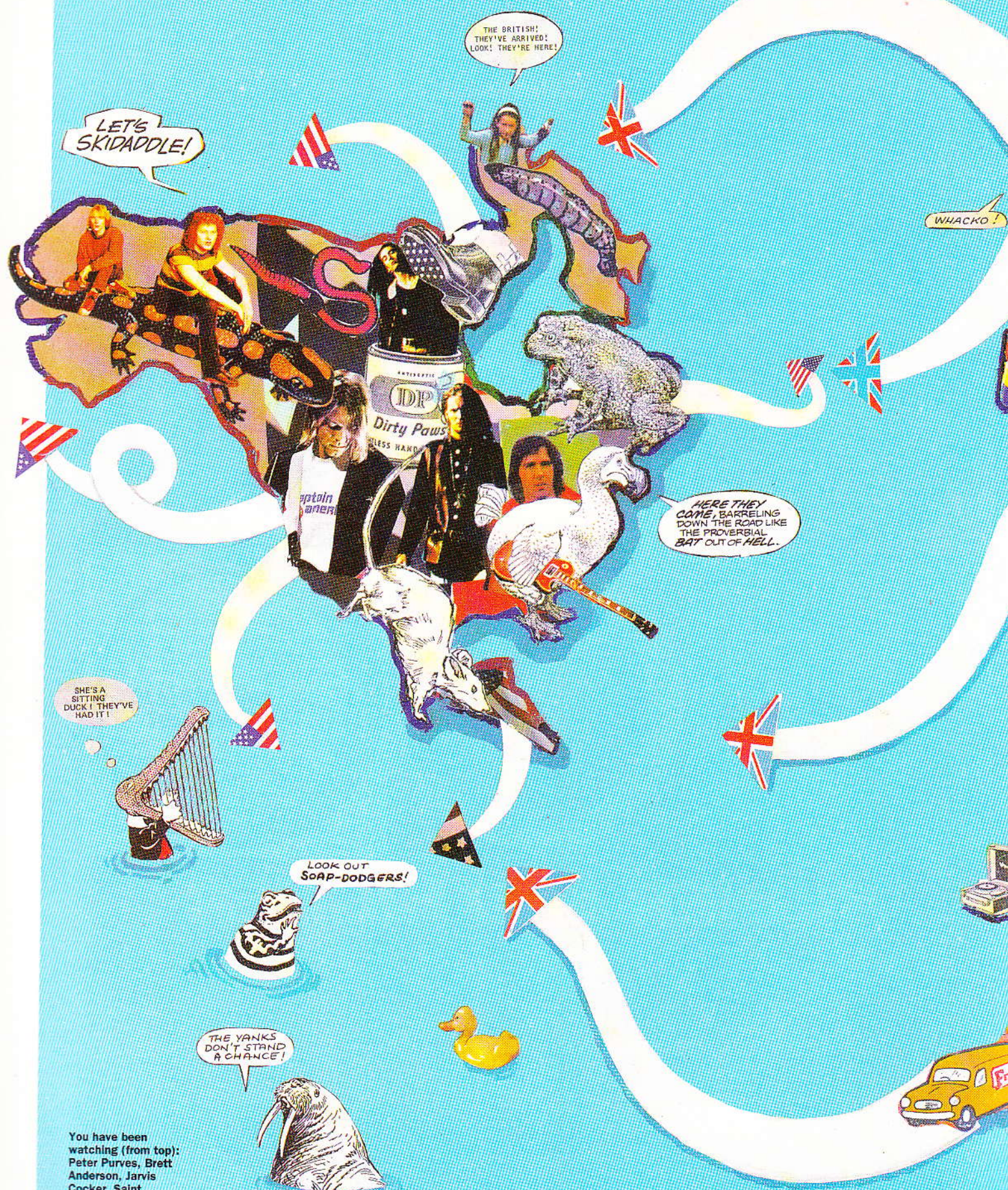
Yanks go home!

# SUEDE

St ETIENNE, DENIM, PULP, THE AUTEURS and the Battle for Britain



PLUS FRANK BLACK / WENDY JAMES / HOTEL DESTRUCTION SPECIAL



LET'S SKIDADDLE!

THE BRITISH! THEY'VE ARRIVED! LOOK! THEY'RE HERE!

WHACKO!

HERE THEY COME, BARRELING DOWN THE ROAD LIKE THE PROVERBIAL BAT OUT OF HELL.

SHE'S A SITTING DUCK! THEY'VE HAD IT!

LOOK OUT SOAP-DODGERS!

THE YANKS DON'T STAND A CHANCE!

You have been watching (from top): Peter Purves, Brett Anderson, Jarvis Cocker, Saint Etienne, Lawrence from Denim, and a load of useless Americans



# WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE KIDDING, MR COBAIN?

Enough is enough! Yanks go home! And take your miserable grungewear and your self-obsessed slacker bands with you. You're already twice as cheesy as baggyism, and at least baggy was British.

We don't want plaid. We want crimplene, glamour, wit and irony. We want people who never say 'dude' or 'sidewalk' or 'Can I get a beer?' If 1992 was the American year (overweight, over-rated and over here) then it's time to bring on the Home Guard. These, Kurt, are the boys who will stop your little game: Suede, Saint Etienne, Pulp, Denim and The Auteurs. Bands with pride!

Over the page, *Select* salutes the new Best Of British, Cud name the ultimate Crimplenist soundtrack, and we save the Union Jack from the Nazis...

story by STUART MACONIE

photos by NEIL COOPER

illustration by MICHAEL GILLETTE

**W**E'RE A TOLERANT BUNCH IN BLIGHTY. Not prone to flying-off the handle. None of your Latin temperamentalism, none of your Gallic moodiness. Yes, we're a pretty steady lot...but this is the last straw. When an Englishman can't go out for a quiet pint without having to endure some nutcase in a loin cloth lifting up heavy weights by a cable attached to his...well, you know, his *thing*, it's a black day. And when not only are we expected to watch some dangerous freak from Mud Flatts, Indiana regurgitating his own bile in the name of entertainment, but also to enjoy the sight of other people drinking it, egged on by a hall full of English students whooping and hollering like an *Arsenio Hall* audience on amyl nitrate...well, as Edward VII said, something must be done.

Confronted with the spectacle of The Jim Rose Circus last August, normally staid folk of my acquaintance began to fulminate and yell "Yankee Go Home". Enough was enough. We had endured Loyd Grossman, stupid mis-spellings like 'color' and 'thru', local radio DJs with crappy transatlantic accents, the painful, cumulative, un-fun-ness of people in bus queues saying "Not!" at the end of every sentence. Now we were being given a latterday PT Barnum with some grunge credibility. He was right, there's one born every minute. Particularly in England.

Let's be perfectly clear. It is no one's intention to badmouth, sorry, insult America or Americans. America is, whether you like it or not, an admirable, young, strong, free democracy that the world should be thankful for. If the Gulf War had been left in the hands of Euro-MPs, Saddam Hussein would be knocking at the door of Chelmsford town hall by now. Americans are brave, resourceful, funny, hard-working, courteous people. Contrary to the sneers of cynics, it is actually a pleasure to be told to "have a nice day" in American stores and supermarkets after years of having been treated as a minor inconvenience by slow-witted ingrates posing as shop assistants in Britain. America has got beautiful landscapes, great literature and any number of enjoyably confusing field sports, but unfortunately for the last two or three years America's biggest export to Britain has been in the field of rock culture. And it's been really beneficial and exciting...not!

Here's just some of the great things we ought to thank the US of A for: PJ O'Rourke, Bill Hicks, John Madden's American Football 92 (Megadrive version), Steely Dan, Public Enemy, Aaron Copland, Barbecue Bacon Double Cheese from BK (You got it!), Jodie Foster, *The World According To Garp*, the Residents, *Roseanne*, Jack Daniel's, Motown, Kurt Vonnegut, Pepsi, Dennis Hopper, Edward Hopper and Television (the group). These are the things we ought to have learned from. ▶



# RADIO CRIMPLENE

CUD CHOOSE THE GREAT BRITISH SOUNDTRACK

**FOX**  
**Only You Can (1974)**  
**Carl Puttnam:** "Records like this were made lo-fi, for trannies and TV, which is why '70s *Top Of The Pops* was so much better."  
**Steve Goodwin:** "They weren't bothered about the musical shit."  
**Mike Dunphy:** "I like the fact that you can dance to white '70s pop. You can't dance to today's stuff."  
**William Potter:** "Now it's all fists-in-the-air. Simply Red..."

**T-REX**  
**New York City (1975)**  
**S:** "There's loads we could've picked that you've heard too many times at teeny discos."  
**W:** "Bolan was a really good pop star with his own TV show."  
**M:** "He had punk bands on, singing about living in the city and that, and this song's about some bird coming out of New York City with a frog in her hand. His days were numbered."

**CILLA BLACK S**  
**Yourself With Sorri**  
**C:** "Cilla before she w  
**W:** "Before she knock  
people's doors and s  
them. Cilla and Cliff b  
own pop shows as we  
star now is charisma  
carry a pop show?"  
**M:** "I mean, Slade m  
a genre that doesn't  
more. It's sad, Didn't  
do a programme?"



# SAINT ETIENNE

## PUTTING ON THE GLITZ

**Croydon pals Bob 'n' Pete make bedroom tapes and write for music press during late '80s. Early singles flirt with Balearic house and indie cuteness. Recruit Sarah Cracknell as permanent vocalist and emerge as glossy dancefloor boffins with mild attitude, Dusty Springfield penchant and cafe cool...**



### What's so great about Britain and in particular Great British pop?

**Pete:** "GB = pie and mash, pubs, fashion, TV, school uniform, accents, countryside, architecture, milkmen, beer, chips, party. GB pop = Billy Fury, Dusty Springfield, The Beatles, Stones/Who/Pistols/Clash, Mott The Hoople, Lieutenant Pigeon, Dexys, Adam And The Ants, The Smiths, The Stone Roses, Bizarre Inc."

**Sarah:** "The best thing about British pop is that Americans don't understand it and often miss the joke."

**Bob:** "I prefer France, myself."

### What are your thoughts on the American invasion of 1992?

**S:** "Too much, too late."

**P:** "It was a war. I was killed."

**B:** "Some of the most desperate journalism I've ever read."

### What's wrong with being patriotic?

**P:** "It's OK to love your country but the word patriotism has been confused with nationalism, racism and xenophobia, which are not OK."

**S:** "Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone - Edith Cavell, 1915."

### What does the Union Jack mean to you and did Morrissey do it a disservice last year?

**S:** "Morrissey? Wasn't he in one of those jingly jangly guitar groups in the early '80s?"

**P:** "As the Union Jack has become associated so heavily with the skinhead/fascist movement - even overseas - I would not go around waving one. Morrissey didn't do the flag a disservice, the skinheads did. He didn't do himself any favours, though."

**B:** "Calling the LP 'Your Arsenal', I think Morrissey was deliberately setting himself up to be shot down. The brouhaha over the flag probably makes him chuckle. He's walking on thin ice, mind you."

### Who's the greatest living Briton?

**B:** "Inspector Morse."

**P:** "Bobby George."

**S:** "The greatest living Englishwoman is my Grandmother, Winifred Olive Foyle."

### Was the '70s the last great British decade?

**B:** "The '90s will be the best decade of the century."

**S:** "The '80s just didn't contain enough trash and glamour."

**P:** "People were miserable in the '70s. The '70s revival is based on the ten minutes of fun people had."

### Is there a future for British pop?

**All:** "Yes; '93 and '94 will be brilliant years."

### Which Americanisms would you like to see banned?

**B:** "Oil wars."

**P:** "All words used by psychologists and sociologists."

**S:** "Hey, we invented punk rock. Richard Hell was wearing a ripped T-shirt in '74."

### What makes you ashamed to be British?

**S:** "The monarchy, the House of Lords, the Conservative Party and the aristocracy."

**B:** "Letting in less than one per cent of the number of Yugoslavian refugees who have been let into Germany."

**P:** "The government, the press, The Cure."

### THE VERNONS GIRLS You

**What I Mean (1962)**  
They were a Merseybeat band. There were loads of them, and they had backing singers to The Sound of the Music, who backed The Beatles. They started this group when some of them joined The Beatles, who did all the backing vocals for *Top Of The Pops*.  
**W:** "Great. *Coronation Street* record! The girls really Vera Duckworth. It's like a cee-ment mixer!"

### THE HUMAN LEAGUE The

**Sound Of The Crowd (1981)**  
**W:** "You can't sell records from this era of synth-pop to second-hand shops. They just can't flog them! The Human League showed great appreciation of pop when they segued together covers of Gary Glitter and Iggy Pop."  
**C:** "When these first synth records came out, you used to buy them for the weird sounds on them, but they're great songs."

### ADAM AND THE ANTS

**Prince Charming (1981)**  
**M:** "Maybe he went too far with the crimplene factor, but it's truly British pop. It just couldn't be American."  
**C:** "It goes 'Ridicule is nothing to be scared of'. That's comforting if you were worried about being different from your mates."

### TOP OF THE POPS

**Death Disco (1979)**  
**W:** "All through my childhood, I didn't even know the songs on *Top Of The Pops* LPs weren't originals."  
**M:** "This is 'Death Disco' by Public Image done *Top Of The Pops* stylee. It's probably a bunch of 50 year old session musicians reading off sheet music."

### RUSS SAINTY & THE FIRST IMPRESSION

**Swingin' London (1972)**  
**All:** "I woke up on a Sunday mo-o-orning..."  
**C:** "There's a really good track, 'Young Man Seeks Interesting Job'. They do Beatles covers, and one called 'Piccadilly Sunshine' - instead of 'Waterloo Sunset'!"



# DENIM

## KITSCH IN SYNC

**Lawrence bangs head against wall as Felt for years. Reborn as '70s nouveau fabric deity, recruits Siobhan for '90s Peters & Lee effect...**



"Stand clear of The Doors, please!" Lawrence and Siobhan ride the Retro Specific Express

**What's so great about Britain and in particular Great British pop?** "The climate. It's great to live in a country where when you wake up in the morning you know you're not going to find a lizard on your forehead."

**What are your thoughts on the 1992 American invasion?** "I don't like the sloppy Crazy Horse drums on those records. I'm into robot drumming. The US college bands look like the kids in school who couldn't be bothered to look good and wore sandals and you pushed them down the stairs."

**What's wrong with being patriotic?** "I come from Birmingham and I do

nothing but slag it off. And I haven't lived there for four years! I just don't foresee any situation occurring in which I would want or need to be patriotic. What's the point? It's too restricting. It's a big world out there."

**What does the Union Jack mean to you?** "It's just a flag like any other flag, a piece of cloth you hoist up a pole when you've won a war."

**Was the '70s the last great British decade?** "For pop singles, definitely. It would be a tragedy if the single died out. When you look at a chart from 1973, you can whistle all the tunes. I'd buy those records today. Plus the

atmosphere was less pressurised. People were given several albums to develop. If Elton John was starting off now, he'd be about to get dropped."

**Is there a future for British pop?** "Yes, but I don't know what it will be like. I don't buy pop singles, I mainly buy electronic instrumental music. I know people say that's because I'm getting old but I don't think it is. I could still get excited. I should still be buying five singles a week."

**Which Americanisms would you like to see banned?** "None, I like them. I do it myself. I went through a period of being against it when I was a Subway

Sect fan, Vic Godard had this thing about never using Americanisms in his songs. But really I don't mind. *Gladiators*, the World Wrestling Federation, you can moan about them but if people didn't want them they'd go off, wouldn't they?"

**What makes you ashamed to be British?** "Nothing really. I've always had lots to draw on from my experiences of growing up in a particular part of England, probably more so than if I'd grown up in the heart of London. I just consider myself fortunate not to have been born in Sweden. It could have been a problem writing rock 'n' roll lyrics there."

Unfortunately, here's what we actually learned from: *Blind Date*, WWF, Oprah Winfrey, health nuts, He-Man, She-Ra, Diet Pepsi, Budweiser, Mike Tyson, self-help psychotherapy workshops, Mickey Rourke, Mickey Mouse and Television (the medium). And there's worse.

Here's some more names you can add to that list: Alice In Chains, Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Smashing Pumpkins, Screaming Trees, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, Helmet...it goes on and on. There is a simple truth staring us in the face here. One that would have been unthinkable unfashionable just a few months ago but is gaining credence wherever the hip young and the hip young-at-heart gather and discuss these things. Bad grunge is killing British music.

Maybe, just maybe, the British pop scene needed a shot of something as nasty and virulent as grunge to kill off the fag-end of the baggy boom and the more insipid strains of English indie-pop. Nirvana are an important rock group and 'Nevermind' is a ground-breaking record. If we could have stopped it there, with The Clash or The Stone Roses of grunge, maybe everyone would have been happy. But sadly we didn't. We bought

in bulk, doomed to receive America's Lurkers and Chelseas, their Paris Angels and Ocean Colour Scenes. And the influence of these mumbling, spoiled, talentless, witless no-marks has been a debilitating one. English pop, the best pop music in the world, has made itself sick on a diet of Chicken Pick 'Em Ups and Hostess Twinkies.

Grunge as a musical form has a pedigree that

## We could've handled The Clash or Stone Roses of grunge. But we bought in bulk, doomed to receive America's Paris Angels

makes the average mongrel look like a Crufts best of breed, for the most part bog-standard blue-collar HM beloved of the English Midlands, except without the innate sense of its own hilarity. You want to bang your head hard and repeatedly against walls and against the heads of your peers? Fine. Try Black Sabbath or Judas Priest or Deep Purple. At least they sang about Pan and goblins and

robots. Somewhere at its greasy heart, this music knew it was funny. Now listen to Soundgarden or Alice In Chains. It still lumbers along like an old Iron Maiden B-side in deep sea diver's boots. But this music fancies itself. This music is trying to tell us that modern bourgeois society is a hollow sham...even if it does come out like, "Aw heck, do I have to take out the trash now, Mom. Janie hasn't done it in weeks".

Ultimately it's the personalities (or lack of them) behind the new American rock that make you pine for Mark E Smith and Shaun Ryder, Marc Bolan or Mozzer in his prime. Just look at them. Eddie Vedder of Pearl Jam's sole function in interviews seems to be making you realise you were a little hard on Dermo from Northside. Mike Patton of Faith No More ("Should I express my feelings in song or a poem. Hey, no! What say I drink some piss from a boot instead?") Even, arguably, the best of them, Kurt and Courtney make you realise what a crap idea couples in rock are. At least you can have a laugh about Paul and Linda. And at least Sid and Nancy fulfilled some moral criteria, namely, if you don't revise for those GCSEs, this could happen to you! Plus they had ▶

**DAVID BOWIE**  
*Boys Keep Swinging* (1979)  
C: "Here's another record you can't seem to get rid of!"  
M: "Lodger" is the closest Bowie LP to Tin Machine."  
W: "He dressed up as a woman in the video. He did it on *The Kenny Everett Video Show*, too. This was the one before 'Scary Monsters'. He's just squashed under a pane of glass wearing a crap suit!"

**MANDINGO Black Rite** (1973)  
C: "This is off another of those LPs that you don't get anymore - the sound-sampler stereo-experience LP."  
M: "Because you've got 'Now That's What I Call Music'. I've got one similar to this called 'The Savage And Sensuous Sound Of Bongos', and there're 72 different percussion instruments on it."  
W: (*Reading sleeve*) "Wow! So much for the four-piece band!"

**ROXY MUSIC**  
*Pyjamarama* (1976)  
M: "They were really stylish. They're where half of the '70s glam image came from."  
C: "The thing about British music is it's *knowing*. It's the British art school thing. Because the best art bands actually went to art school they *understate* the artiness - unlike all the 4AD bands who're just full of bullshit. (*Grins*) In fact, most bands flunked art college."



**BRIAN ENO**  
*The Paw Negro Blowtorch* (1973)  
C: "You see! Brian Eno didn't

really know bugger-all about music, but he'd been *trained* creatively. He's dead weird. I like this one because it's got really good noises on it. (*Waits for sound of soft toy being stamped on*) Hurray!"

**THE RUTLES**  
*It's Looking Good* (1978)  
M: "Where other bands watch *This Is Spinal Tap* on the tour bus, we watch *The Rutles: All You Need Is Cash*."  
W: "It's like being into The Beatles without the embarrassment of the Paul McCartney element, without always being reminded of Wings and 'Mull Of Kintyre'.  
S: "It was groovy that they had an Asian playing George Harrison!"



Jarvis from Pulp: Would you swap two of your dreary US grunge bands for this? (Clue: YES!)

inside the hood and wear his hood inside out to display it.  
 "I felt sorry for Morrissey at first but he's been so dismissive of the allegations that I lost patience with him. If he's reclaiming the flag for the country from the fascists, great – but he should clarify his position, otherwise he's being irresponsible."

**Who's the greatest living Briton?**  
 "Arthur Scargill. He's been mocked as a figure of fun and a prophet of doom but events have proved him absolutely right. He tried to save the British coal industry. If anything, the situation's worse than he said. To endure the defeat that he did and still fight for those communities is admirable."

**Was the '70s the last great British decade?** "I suppose it was, although nowadays it's sort of in vogue to say that. For me, the attraction of the '70s is that it was a bit off, a bit eccentric, a bit wrong. The people looked ridiculous and yet they looked good at the same time. Music and fashion and culture became stupidly exaggerated and then eventually imploded. But for all the silliness it was the last decade in which people did try and improve society. The '80s were a nightmare from that point of view."

**Is there a future for British pop?**  
 "Well, I hope so. I get depressed when I watch *Top Of The Pop*. It's sad to see something that once occupied such a place in the nation's consciousness come to this."

**Which Americanisms would you most like to see banned?** "I hate it when they say, Don't you? instead of, Haven't you? – You've already got sugar in your coffee, don't you? It doesn't make sense. And, I'll write you. You mean, I'll write to you. I quite like the daft phrases that are meant to be cool. I use them myself – 'blowing chunks', and 'excell-unt!' It's just the corruptions of the Queen's language and grammar I don't like."

**What makes you ashamed to be British?** "Hooligans; leftovers from the days of the Empire. People who believe that we really do still rule the world or ought to. People who go to other countries and think it's OK to be rude to the people there. British people who go to foreign countries and then moan that the food's shit and spend all their time hunting for chips."

# PULP

## COCKER CONSPIRACY

Ten years as Sheffield never-rans with faint cult cred, Pulp crystallise amateur dramatics torch-song approach and classic pop tack at turn of '90s. Reborn as leading lights of crimplene renaissance with unlikely sex god Jarvis at helm

**What's so great about Britain and in particular Great British pop?** "Chips, the Peak District, Scotland, cul-de-sacs and the things that happen in them. When British pop is great it's great because of the personality behind the music. The sense of the romantic in the everyday. Ray Davies finding the poetic in watching the sun go down over Waterloo station. You don't get that in much American rock. The British have a real feel for pop."

**What are your thoughts on the American invasion of 1992?** "All that grungy stuff. I can't say I'm very keen. I prefer pop to rock, and all the good new British groups that have been mentioned are pop rather than rock... although Suede are quite rockish at times. American rock, in fact *most* rock, takes itself so seriously. And it's received as if it's written on tablets of stone. What I've seen of MTV in Radio

Rentals' window I don't like. I have met Americans who are alright. The tourists are sad, but I suppose the ones who have the money to come here *would* be like that."

**What's wrong with being patriotic?** "Nothing as long as it doesn't become jingoism. I feel proud and vaguely patriotic about some things. The World Service, the BBC. I think there should only be *one* TV channel. The BBC, society wouldn't be as fragmented."

**What does the Union Jack mean to you, and did Morrissey do it a disservice last year?** "There was a kid at our school who thought he was a mod and he tormented his mother to get him a fish-tail parka. When he got it he wanted to sew a Union Jack on the back and she said, I've not spent £25 on a parka for you to sew things on the back. So he had to sew it

**THE ASSOCIATES Party Fears Two (1982)**  
**C:** "Nice trousers on this sleeve. They had a different image every time – the Polish peasant look, the New Romantic bit, boys in the swimming pool, the sweaty athletes style..."  
**W:** "Recently, Billy Mackenzie's just been pretending not to be bald."

**NIRVANA Rainbow Chaser (1969)**  
**C:** "These two guys are suing the Nirvana for ripping them off. I think the Alex in *this* Nirvana is Magic Alex, who was the guy who conned John Lennon for millions with some weird theory. He was definitely the cool Beatle, John Lennon. He'd believe any old bollocks!"  
**W:** "This is much catchier than 'Smells Like Teen Whatsit!'"

**JONATHAN KING Let It All Hang Out (1969)**  
**W:** "There's another one on here called 'Bubble Rock Is Here To Stay' which is just like 'Back In Denim' but less dated!"  
**M:** "This is the track Definition Of Sound used for 'Moira Jane's Cafe'. Jonathan King was like The KLF of the '70s."

**SAILOR Glass Of Champagne (1975)**  
**S:** "This one went to number two, then 'One Drink Too Many', got to 38. After that, they were over!"  
**C:** "I've got some Sailor pictures in *Supersonic* annuals, and each member had a really exaggerated look – a toff, a geography teacher, a tennis tutor..."

**SLIK Forever And Ever (1976)**  
**C:** "One of them was called Oil Slik, with a massive chain round his neck with 'OIL' on it."  
**W:** "Rusty Egan was in them. He could've had a big 'R'. R Slik!"  
**C:** "All of Slik went on to become punks in Rich Kids. Imagine if John Lydon had been in Kenny!"



Brighton fog: Luke Haines takes the bracing sea air

# THE AUTEURS

## A BIT OF THE AUTHOR

**Stranded after eighties indie boom, ex-Servant Luke Haines embraces raffish Lloyd Cole bookishness, Oxfam wardrobe and literate English pop, declaring himself a genius as The Auteurs...**

Gang Of Four. You don't get bands like The Gang Of Four any more. Singing dancing Marxists from Leeds."

### Is there a future for British pop?

"Oh, yes. Things are very optimistic. I haven't liked any English pop groups in years and now there're several. Suede have opened up a door and people like Pulp are coming through. It remains to be seen how big these bands will become. But at least there are people who are trying to break the monopoly of that sort of music that people just throw themselves against walls to."

### Which Americanisms would you like to see banned?

"None really. Just the influence of American rock groups. People singing like J Mascis. I like Burger King, I like McDonald's. I like supermarkets. I like a bit of subliminal mind control."

### What makes you ashamed to be British?

"Plenty of things. Racism. All that despicable British Movement crap. Our tendency to keep harking back to VE Day. I dislike the small towniness. The sense of bigotry. The fact that there are pubs in towns 30 miles outside London that a black person can't go into. I'm sure I could quite handle living in a big American city actually."

### What's so great about Britain and in particular Great British Pop?

"I don't think there's anything great about Britain as such. I don't have any great feelings of love towards this country. And I particularly hate all this kitsch retrospective stuff about *Carry On* films and the like, which were definitely not great. What makes British pop great is that there is some sense of wryness and dryness. I suppose what you'd have to call irony. As seen probably in the best of The Kinks or whatever. It's something American music completely lacks. Denim might say that they were a punk rock group, but the point is that Guns N'Roses say it and they mean it. I've no idea how they'll take our album title ('New Wave')."

### Who's the greatest living Briton?

"As a glib answer I'd say Ray Davies. And perhaps Una Baines, the great lost keyboard player of the early Fall. She was a big influence."

### What are your thoughts on the American invasion of 1992?

"Well, I think it was a pernicious influence on the whole. I'm often quoted as having something against US rock but in fact it's the influence it seems to have on British bands that I object to. Teenage Fanclub and Eugenius seem to be taking it at its most crass level. And there's no onus

to be different. All these bands just affecting that straggly look, apeing old Neil Young records. Do we have to go through all that again?"

### What does the Union Jack mean to you and did Morrissey do it a disservice last year?

"The Union Jack doesn't mean anything to me. But I definitely didn't approve of Morrissey's actions last year. He has young and impressionable fans, and to play around with that kind of imagery in times like these is just dangerous in the extreme. It's extremely dubious. But I've never been a big fan of his. Or of his harking back to Charles Hawtrey. He seems to have hit rock bottom at the moment."

### What's wrong with being patriotic?

"Quite a lot really. There's not a lot to be patriotic about in a country that's put up with the Tories for 14 years. I haven't seen much to be proud of in my lifetime. I'm not a great flag waver, politically at least. I've wanted to leave Britain on several occasions. Maybe I will soon. I don't think there's much I'd pine for. I hate Ye Olde-ness. Traditional pubs? Pull them down."

### Was the '70s the last great British decade?

"No. We often get this '70s thing thrown at us and I don't see it myself. For me the early '80s were better as far as pop's concerned. I was very into that early Rough Trade scene when I was at school. The early Fall and The



the decency to fulfil their self-destruction chic.

Not content with coating British pop landscape with a murky, choking slick of mediocre hard rock, the Yanks are trying to foist some spurious grunge culture on us. *Singles* purports to be about this new youth culture, yet it's just *thirtysomething* in Seattle. *Wayne's World* and *Bill And Ted* were at least funny – at least until the entire British media declared that you *had* to find it funny. 'Dude-ism' was supposed to be a parody of vacuous US youth, not a role model for every pony-tailed record plugger in London. And there's *Slackers* – the cheapo art-house movie and the youth tribe...

MUCH HAS BEEN MADE OF THE SLACKER PHENOMENON and, let's be fair, the idea of an American generation who don't want to do management training courses is a revolutionary concept. But Britain has had slackers for 15 years. Except we call 'em 'dolites'. And dolites *do* things. They write fanzines about football, they make great techno records, they sell draw down the pub, they form The La's. Slackers don't do anything except get *Hello*-style features written about them in the music press and mumble on Mark Goodier's *Evening Session*.

Most ludicrous of all, *The Clothes Show Magazine* and the British quality Sundays have now latched on to Grunge Fashion. It's a contradiction in terms, isn't it? Grunge fashion seems to consist of wearing a Big Black T-shirt and, wait for it, *jeans* (apparently, they're all the rage in America). Oh, and those German Army surplus parkas with the flag on the arm. Grunge Fashion has, at a stroke, made The Levellers look like the Pet Shop Boys. And what kind of fashion statement is it when, compared to you, your dad looks like a riot of peacockish dandyism and sexual threat when he goes out to wash the car?

If you're mad enough to try something a little more irreversible, how about body piercing? How have you lived so long without a bolt through your penis? Pierces often remark that their attachments make them more sexy, but does Sarah Cracknell have any metal through her tongue? Do Suede come clanking on to the stage? There is something weird about people who want SEGAs and CD-I but also want rings through their noses. Their evolutionary stages are a little confused.

The English groups featured in this issue, the Crimpenlens if you like, are at least trying to turn back the tide of American sartorial pollutants. Oxfam shop chic is one thing – intelligent scavenging – but dressing like you don't care is antithetical to the very spirit of pop. As Lawrence from Denim so rightly points out, "If you can't be bothered to look good, you probably can't be bothered to make good records either". So let's cherish Loz and his eccentric foppishness, Pulp's carnival of Bri-Nylon sexiness *a la* Abigail's Party, Cud's wry take on rock 'n' roll chic, The Auteurs' cool Euro-art-house vogue, Saint Etienne's casual '90s mod glamour and, of course, Suede's threadbare dandyism.

There's no mystery in the new American rock. There's no mystery about Kurt Cobain, except whether he's wearing those glasses for a bet. British pop thrives on a sense of the enigmatic. Brett Anderson...is he or isn't he? Lawrence from Denim...what is he like? I want to know more about The Auteurs. I want to forget everything I've ever learned about the Toiling Midgets.

When the English writer and humourist (yes, there's two 'U's in humourist) GK Chesterton

made his first trip to America, US Immigration control asked him "Is the purpose of your visit the subversion of the American constitution and the overthrow of the government?" Chesterton replied, "Not sole purpose of visit", and found himself locked up for the best part of a day. He had forgotten that Americans don't understand irony. They don't 'do' irony. Yet British pop loves the wry, the quirky and the tongue in cheek.

Pop doesn't have to be two-faced and superficial, but the best always remembers that we're dealing in artifice and pose. The new English pop groups are as passionate as any amount of chest-beating rockers. Suede, Saint Etienne, The Auteurs are all in the business of making the greatest music they can muster. Even the more light-hearted of the gang, Pulp and Denim, are still truly, madly, deeply in love with the communicative force of brilliant pop. What none of them are is earnest, petulant, self-serving or dull.

But there is a serious point to this good-natured baiting. The slavish acceptance of all things American in the last two years has damaged the way we see our own culture. Our grandparents were hooked on chocolate bars, silk stockings and Glenn Miller. We're hooked on Wayne, Garth, Bart, Kurt et al. But our motives are the same. We can't help finding America *sooo* sexy. Nothing wrong with that. Not at least until it

## I want to know more about The Auteurs. I want to forget everything I've ever learned about the Toiling Midgets...

so distorts our responses that anyone who celebrates his country and his quirky, lovable culture is seen as "a little Englander" or worse, "a fascist". Morrissey behaved very badly in 1992, but isn't it odd that he is pretty much hailed to Nuremberg for his regrettable ambivalence while the loathsome and provocative racism and sexism of Ice Cube is championed by white male rock journalists? As Orwell said: "The British intelligentsia will accept anyone's jingoism except their own."

But, hey, let's lighten up. As Suede's Mat Osman so memorably remarked, "Los Angeles is the least interesting place in the world. All it is is sunny." You just know that these bands wouldn't make such wonderful music if their heads weren't full of libraries in London suburbs, rainy holidays in the Lake District, wet bus shelters in Doncaster and the Bull Ring market on a Saturday morning.

Is the celebrated 'crimpenism' a movement? Take a look at the bands that this issue is championing as the best of British, the home guard: they don't really represent a united front, but they all have things in common. It may be no more than the way they sing or what they wear but that's important. None of them will ever say, "*Can I get an Orangina?*". None of them will ever go out in beachwear or grow a goatee beard. They will *never* say 'Get A Life', the call sign of the chronically sad.

So, finally, here's an extract from The Queen's next Christmas speech that has come into our hands by means we cannot disclose. We hope you don't mind, ma'am. "Al Jourgensen, Eddie Vedder, Chris Novoselic, Mike Patton. The British are coming. Get a life. Deal with it. Huh?" **S**

## WE'D RATHER JACK

Time to reclaim the Union Jack



So when exactly did the Union Jack turn into a swastika? Who drenched our national flag shame and handed it over to semi-evolved bigots who abused it and – by extension – us?

No other nation in the world is as neurotic about its

national emblem as the British. When Axl Rose cavorts about in cycle shorts bearing the Stars and Stripes (a flag with its own stains) it's rock 'n' roll theatre. Bruce Springsteen uses the Stripes to shame Reagan's America. Yet Morrissey waves the Union Jack in a hamfisted bid to question the sterile consensus on the flag, and suddenly he's a Nazi.

It's not healthy. A flag should represent the best in a country, for all of its people, but the Jack is so poisoned by the pond-life attached to it that no serious political party, no matter how nationalist dare touch it – never mind a rock band. Who wants to associate with a sick mess of nostalgia, redundancy and fear?

Yet at its best, the Union Jack used to represent all that Suede, Denim, Saint Etienne and the other bands in this issue embody: tolerance, pride without hatred, humour, openness, tenacity, decency, optimism, invention and above all community spirit – a sense of your history. A combination of dogma, short-sighted philistinism and cowardice has prised Union Jack away from those values, leaving nothing but the bad stuff and the guilt.

Dogma from the gurus of right-on – they never could understand that you can be proud to be British without wanting a return to the days of the Raj. And they hated the fact that the working classes remained stubbornly patriotic. Philistinism? Ask the Thatcherite androids – they tore down pride in your people, they mocked the idea of community and they threw up the global bingo-hall instead.

And cowardice – well, cowardice from pretty much all of the rest of us. No-one wants to break ranks. Morrissey's summer offensive was hysterically tactless, but he knew there was a void at the centre of pop in 1992. It no longer talked about life in Britain, like The Smiths once did. Now, at last, there are people like Wiggs and Stanley who want to do it again.

Can we love the Union Jack again? We *should*. It should stand for the best of things that happen here and nowhere else: Sid James, proper football, Pulp, the BBC, The Kinks, The Jam, a decent bus service, bhanganamuffin, chips in curry sauce, pubs serving real beer, *One Foot In The Grave*, raving, the National Health, black cabs, John Shuttleworth...

The British are tired of being ashamed of themselves and of any feeling for their country. They want the best notions of Britishness rescuing from the idiot stormtroopers, and in their own tiny way, the bands in this issue will do some of that. Each one of them could wave a Union Jack and do nothing but good, and maybe they should. Because if good people won't try to give Britain its culture back, there are plenty of evil people who will.

ANDREW HARRISON



Suede (what else?) in front of their complete press cuttings so far. (Left to right) Simon Gilbert, Brett Anderson, Bernard Butler, Mat Osman



# SUEDE

## GENTLEMEN TIME, PLEASE!

Never mind The Smiths, here's...yep, you've guessed it. Suede are so hot you could fry an egg on them, but they're far more than just a foppish pop cavalry, they spearhead a burgeoning British movement that turns up its nose at witless slacker culturecide and waggles its arse at Uncle Sam. Brace yourselves, we're going over the top...

TONY PARSONS HAS FORGOTTEN MORE about rock journalism than most of us will ever know. But when, in expansive mood and trying to convey the impact of Suede to the readers of his posh newspaper column recently, he said that their imminent first LP would be "the most long-awaited debut album since 'Never Mind The Bollocks'". Boy, did he get it wrong.

By the time the Pistols got around to making an album hadn't everyone twigged that they were The Grumbleweeds of punk? Didn't everyone realise that you were going to get 'Anarchy In The UK' fed 12 times through a dodgy photocopier and a rude title if you were lucky? What Tony meant to say was "the most eagerly awaited debut album since 'The Smiths'," a comparison that makes much more sense: two bands whose early singles, dripping with wayward sexuality, grandeur and the eternal loser's clear, cracking sincerity have rescued English pop from the doldrums. Sorry for the gratuitous Smiths scene so early on, but it really was vital to the plot.

Some people will say. The Sex Pistols comparison holds water. The Pistols were pop tarts surfing a wave of innuendo, contrivance and manipulation. They hid a non-existent talent behind a cynically engineered image. They were con-men who could only pull their little stunts with the conspiratorial backing of the music press, eyes always peeled for a passing bandwagon. These same people probably think Tina Turner is a 'sexee ladee' and that Noel Edmonds is a great entertainer.

Perhaps Suede are a little like the Sex Pistols. London gutter-snipes intent on revenge on a culture too sluggish to care. But they are even more like The Smiths in that they are making records of such passion, such bravura, such

flair that they make us see that we have lived on milk and water for two years while English guitar pop has become a watchword for mediocrity.

They are still more like King Arthur's knights, awoken from their slumbers beneath the land by news that England is imperilled. They have come to save you.

THE MEN WHO HAVE COME TO SAVE POP music are draped around the reading room of a gentlemen's club in London. It is a queer room, half-lit by the watery sunlight of a Soho afternoon. There are rocking chairs, chaises longues, tea trays and, on the walls, lurid over-priced pastel drawings of Auberon Waugh and various assorted nob. It's shabby genteel, weird and secret and very English, and somehow funny. Perfect.

Perfect because the men who have come to save pop are using as their weaponry certain qualities, certain characteristics of English culture that have lain dormant since the heyday of The Smiths. Some of Suede's portfolio may appear trivial - the blousy image, the hair oil and fringes, the hipster jeans and brocade shirts - but it underlines the aspects of Suede that are anything but superficial, the things that make them a salvation. English guitar pop, a brief and glorious post-war tradition that has produced as much great art as any other cultural sphere, was ailing. The Madchester scene had congealed into something called baggy; a suspicious catch-all term for lots of young and not-so-young men who had nothing to say but had been given substantial amounts of money by desperate major labels to say it.

We had been offered shoe-gazing, a so-called movement that elevated mediocrity into an art, pseudo-ambient drug blather for▶

wets. And at least New Age music has a philosophy, however gormless. Add to that *The Word*, the complete enfeebling of chart pop, the *Top Of The Pops* presenters and the idiotic bounciness of most indie-pop, and it looked like English pop could really die out. After all, music hall had been the great working class art form of the last century, and it had disappeared without a trace. Couldn't it happen to pop groups? Maybe Jim Bob And Fruitbat would go the same way as Marie Lloyd and the india rubber man.

But now a new scenario is just possible. One in which English pop is redeemed from ignominy by The Auteurs and Saint Etienne, etc. And, of course, Suede; now hailed on every street corner and every wine bar for what once seemed to be a solitary and Canute-like stand against senility and Americanisation. These days they must feel invincible.

"Yes, I do feel invincible," says Brett, sipping at his tea in the freezing cold basement of a veggie cafe in Carnaby Street. "I know that's a silly and rash thing to say and I'm just asking to be shot in the ankle, but I do. I think some of our new songs are the best things we've ever done. I'm very confident and that's good because I can start to play silly mental games with myself. Thinking that if I change my hair or my guitar strings we'll never write another good song."

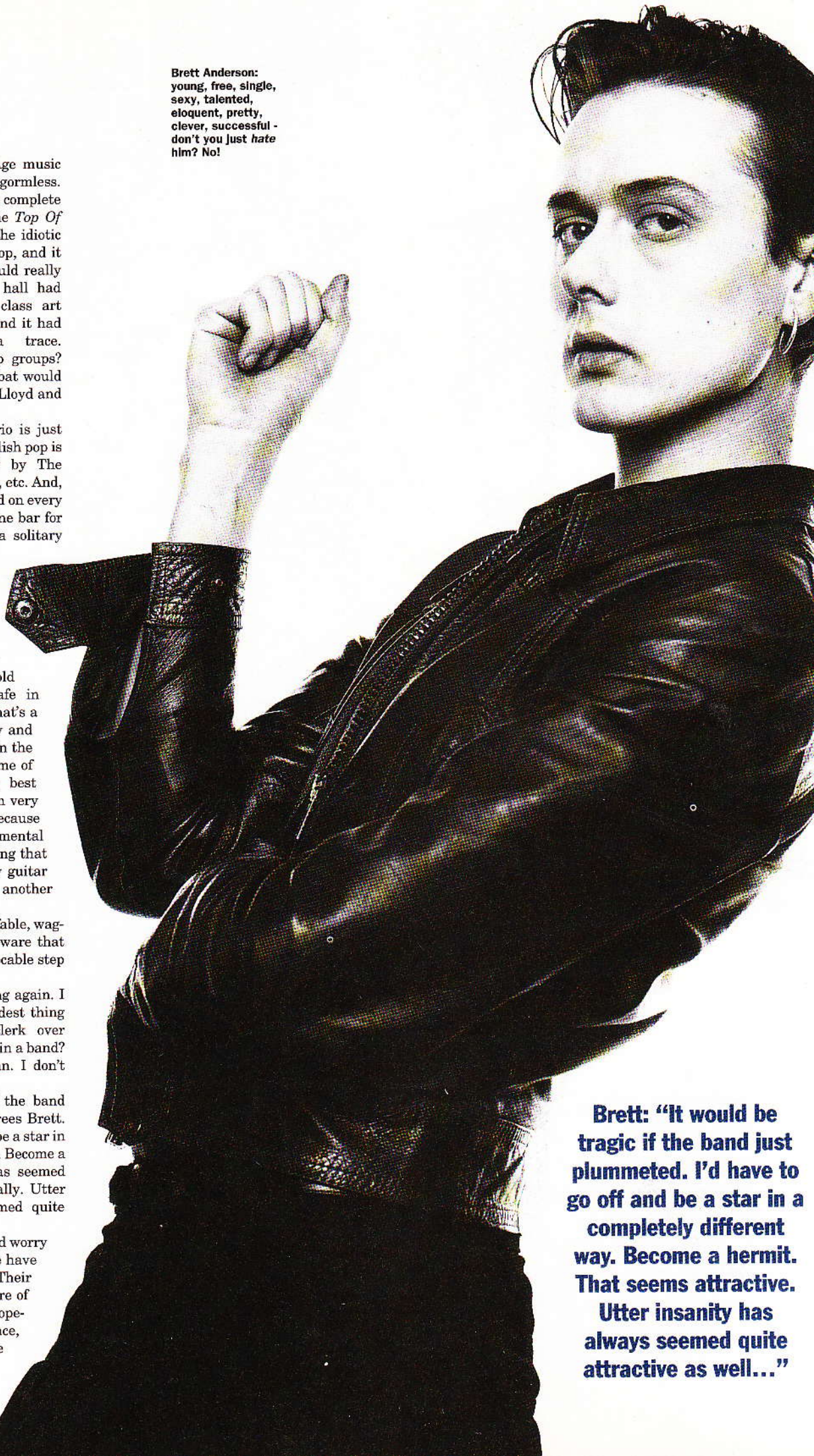
Mat Osman, Suede's affable, waggish bass player is fully aware that his life has taken an irrevocable step now.

"I can't imagine working again. I think it would be the saddest thing imaginable. 'Ere, that clerk over there. Didn't he used to be in a band? Or becoming an A&R man. I don't want to think about it."

"It would be tragic if the band suddenly plummeted," agrees Brett. "I'd have to just go off and be a star in a completely different way. Become a complete hermit. That has seemed attractive, still does actually. Utter insanity has always seemed quite attractive as well."

None of the options need worry him at the moment. Suede have the world at their feet. Their debut album will have more of a bearing on guitar pop, hopefully, than anything since, yes, since 'Never Mind The Bollocks' or 'The Sm\*ths' or 'The Stone Roses', by the great lost hopes who threatened to

**Brett Anderson:**  
young, free, single,  
sexy, talented,  
eloquent, pretty,  
clever, successful -  
don't you just hate  
him? No!



**Brett: "It would be tragic if the band just plummeted. I'd have to go off and be a star in a completely different way. Become a hermit. That seems attractive. Utter insanity has always seemed quite attractive as well..."**

**Brett: "Getting recognised is a beautiful thing. Enjoy it. It's not as if you're famous for being a rapist or something."**

revamp our dying national art and then forgot that they had to make records to achieve this. The Suede album should have an immediate effect on a generation. Legions of imitators called Chamois and Chintz will follow and we will hate them all. And Suede will become rich and cosseted and their records will be rubbish. Brett?

"Well, we're very wary of this. The backlash will start when we start to make rubbish, and we don't intend that to happen. You can get away with murder if you've got good songs," he adds with a twinkle.

"But we're wary of letting go of our lives and ending up on building sites like Sigue Sigue Sputnik. The songs will change and that's good. We don't want to end up like the Stones, never developing their style at all. As our lifestyles change so will our songs.

"I'm looking forward to the highs and lows. In fact, they're changing already. A song like 'Big Time' couldn't have been written at the start. It's musically quite immature but very emotional about the nature of fame.

"But we don't want our songs to only apply on that definite a level, we're not going to write songs about the lack of vegetarian food on the plane...all those Mott The Hoople songs about the pain of being a rock 'n' roll star. 'Big Time' isn't that specific. It's about being left behind. Life passing by with nothing achieved. Something I feel very strongly. Every year I'd think, Another birthday and I still haven't been on *Top Of The Pops*. But it could be about our parents. My dad rotting away in his house; 51 years old and having never had a bank balance of more than £1,000."

This sense of kinship with the ordinary and the neglected is characteristic of Suede. Mat speaks passionately of wanting to appeal to people "with no sense of rock history. People who just listen to the radio. You emasculate music when you think you understand it. So I don't want our music to be just enjoyed by people who are looking to spot the references. I want it to be loved by people who don't give a damn what we talk about."

Although, as Brett points out, "It's very flattering to be analysed so much."

SUEDE ARE SET TO BE ANALYSED TO death. On *South Bank Show* specials, in GCSE projects, in fanzines and in colour supplements. It's started already. The New Year edition of the *Telegraph Magazine* carried a rather odd, supercilious appreciation of

them as being among the "faces of the year". It was clear that they really didn't understand. But when the self-designated quality papers feel the need to "appreciate", then clearly something has galvanised the media. Suede certainly have.

But this is no hype. Suede have achieved this by virtue of producing those three singles, a tiny, precious body of work. If Johnny Rotten was the anti-Christ, Suede are the anti-Madonna. The antithesis of her neurotic exhibitionism, her lurid in-your-face sexuality, her crap records, her Americanism.

"I do think," says Brett, "that some aspects of our Englishness have been cartoonised. We are incredibly English, but it's just one facet of what we're about."

"...He says, pushing his tea-cup away," chides Mat. "We're not painstakingly English. We don't refer to Morris Minors...although we do mention Worthing."

"It's more of a quality," muses Brett. "Some convoluted sense of paranoia and claustrophobia. Growing up in small-town England where you had to be a skin or a punk or a headbanger or a nobody."

Are you still baffled by America?

"Completely," asserts Brett with a smile. "I still don't understand why people dress like that. Why English bands persist in Americanising themselves. I don't understand why American music has to be so military and aggressive. Look at Henry Rollins; he's like a Sergeant Major or something."

"It's not as much Americanisation that worries me as globalisation," says Mat. "I was in Vienna recently and really I could have been anywhere. I'm the only one who eats in McDonald's and it bothers me the most. How everything has to become uniform and bland."

"Hence Guns N'Roses are the biggest group in the world..." agrees Brett sadly.

Suede's music, thankfully, is in no danger of become homogenised and bland. It's still incandescent with sadness for wasted time, with the rage of the underdog.

"We're still quite a bitter band," agrees Mat. "There's an element of revenge in everything we do. We're quite loved now but we still treat ourselves as if everyone hates us. You can't go through a childhood and adolescence like I did and lose it completely. So we do feel in touch

with our fans who are perhaps experiencing the disappointments of ordinary life.

"That's what makes me really angry when that guy from Tears For Fears says he wishes he was a plumber. He *can* be: take the exams, get some spanners. Unless he really means it, he shouldn't say it. Cos it's unfair on all the people listening who don't have his choices.

"If you don't like being recognised in the street, then don't do photo-sessions. It's as simple as that. You can't have your picture on magazine covers and then complain about being famous. You can't have your cake and eat it," he concludes, with genuine anger.

"Getting recognised is a beautiful thing. Enjoy it. It's not as if you're famous for being a rapist or something," concurs Brett.

Mat is loath to sound like a "singing social worker" but he does believe that Suede may have empowered people. "We get lots of letters - normal letters, not just those unhealthy, obsessive ones - and people often say we have given them some hope. There's nothing lonelier than small-town England. At school I thought there was no one in the world like me. It's a frightening thought. By liking Suede, some people feel part of a community. They know there're other people like them out there and it stops them thinking they're a mutation or a spy in the midst of the human race. You can find some beauty in a sense of deviance or unhappiness. And that's a feeling in our songs that just isn't represented in contemporary music."

MAT BELIEVES THAT BANDS WHO WAFFLE on in interviews about how good they are and then don't deliver the goods deserve to be beaten up in the street. This will not happen to Suede. They stand revealed as the heirs to a lineage that includes The Beatles, The Kinks, the Buzzcocks, The Fall and The Smiths. Their debut album (due out next month, and presently under the working title 'Suede') will feed appetites in you that you'd forgotten you had; for English music that reflects brilliantly the joy, viciousness and melancholy of life on these shores.

"I hope people are counting the days," says Mat. "I hope they've set their alarms already and are going to queue outside the record shops. It's an important record for all of us. It's a distillation of 25 years of being on Earth. So the next one's going to be much, much worse.

"Or much, much shorter anyway!"

Never mind the bollocks. Here's Suede. **S**

**EAT OUR SHORTS**

**Whitney Houston or Watney's Red Barrel? Here is conclusive evidence that Britain is ace and America is shite...**



**Gladiators: crass** **Hawtrey: manly**

The **Gladiators** are body fascists, but **Charles Hawtrey** is a real man.



**Bill: hippy czar** **Harold: top chap**

**Bill Clinton's sax** is so gauche. But **Harold Wilson's pipe** was cool.



**Yanks: vulgar** **Brits: cerebral**

The twerphood of **US game shows** will never oust our **Mastermind**.



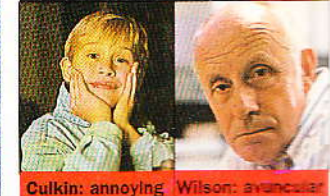
**Bud: fizzy pop** **Bitter: healthy**

Who could refuse an honest **British bitter** for some **Yank horse-pee**?



**Ugly Kid Joe: gits** **The Farm: nice**

Our bands are decent and reliable, like **The Farm**. But theirs are **twats**.



**Culkin: annoying** **Wilson: avuncular**

Our actors embody real values: wisdom, sagacity and being **natty**.

REV. SJ. BEK. RETNA