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THE FIRST FOUR YEARS OF THE FAB FIVE NEIL GAIMAN

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Earth President: Your mission then. Find Duran Duran,
and use all of your incomparable talents to preserve the
security of the stars!

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THE FIRST FOUR YEARS OF THE FAB FIVE/NEIL GAIMAN

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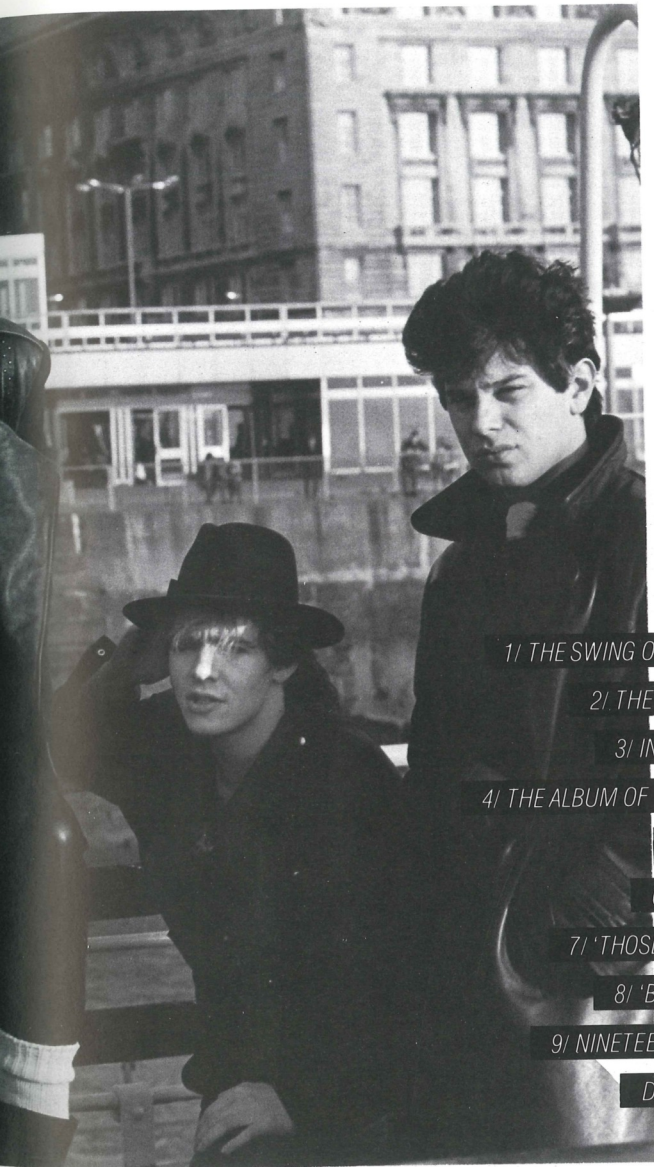
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CONTENTS

1/ THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM **6**

2/ THE YOUNG DURANS **12**

3/ IN THE BEGINNING **28**

4/ THE ALBUM OF THE SAME NAME **38**

5/ RIO GRANDE **50**

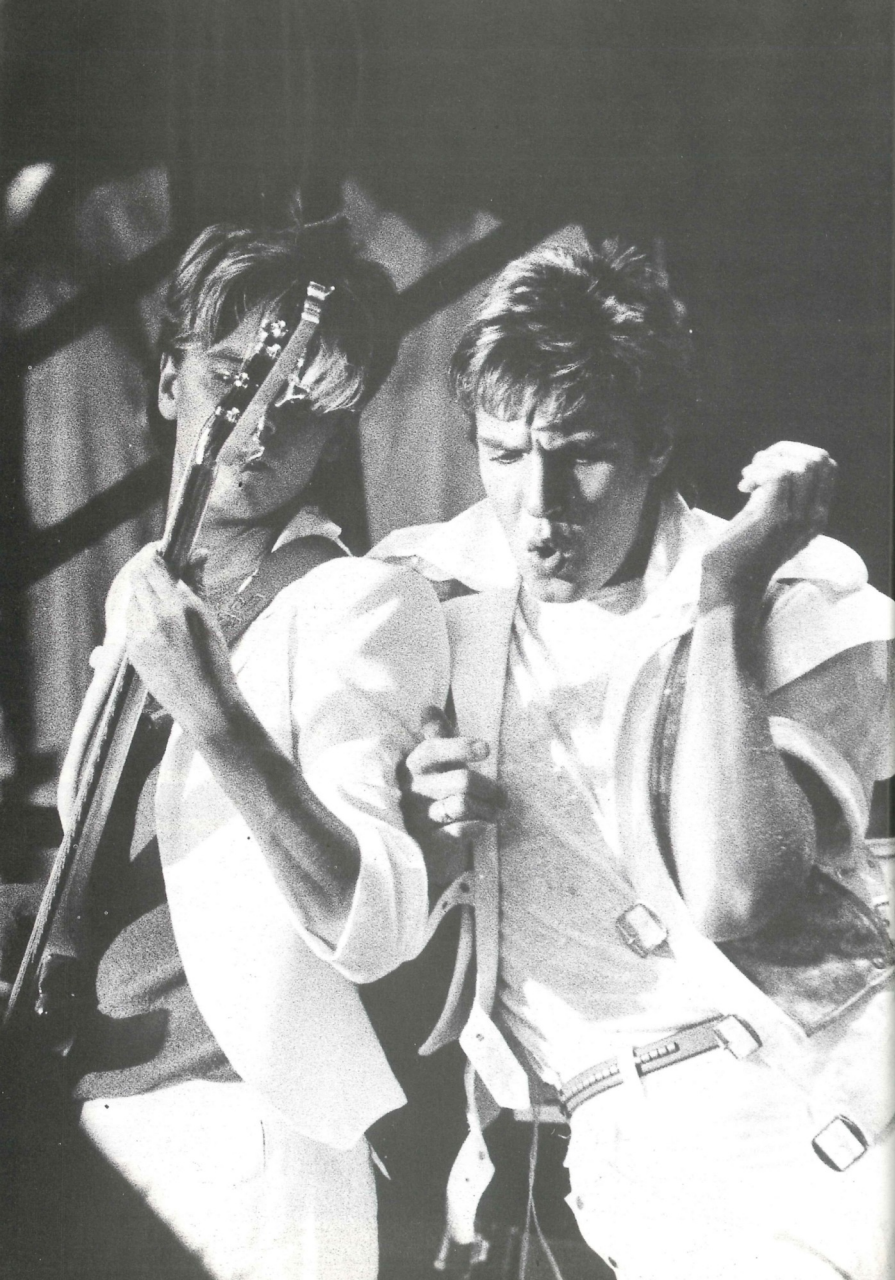
6/ BOYS ON FILM **70**

7/ 'THOSE AT CANNES...' **88**

8/ 'BURNING BRIGHT' **94**

9/ NINETEENEIGHTY FOUR **102**

DURANOGRAPHY **124**



It isn't a wholly original observation that life, and music, and art, and fashion - and almost everything else, for that matter - move in a series of pendulum swings. For every movement *this way* there is a movement *that way*, immediately after. Nothing stays the same for long; there is a continual ebb and flow, boom and bust, to and fro, flux and reflux.

To understand Duran Duran one must understand the scenes and the pendulum swings in the Britain from which they emerged.

By the mid-Seventies rock music had become - as far as the kids on the streets were concerned - stagnant. It had become the province of the bland, and of the so-called supergroups: artists who had been around for years, bands like The Who, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones. All of them fabulously rich, their concerts and tours infrequent, expensive, and hard to get to. They had lost touch with the kids who were buying the records. They were bored and blasé; so were the kids.

It was time for the pendulum to swing.

Punk rock.

A term first coined in America to cover the numerous

1

THE SWING OF THE PENDULUM



bands that sprang up between 1965-68 (essentially high-school garage bands), it re-emerged in 1976-77 to describe the shift in music and fashion to - what? Ripped leather bondage suits covered with ubiquitous zips and chains, crazy-coloured shocks of spiky hair; with pale faces and strange names, the punks had arrived.

The media had a field day. They lost no opportunity to goad, decry, and give massive exposure to these strange young creatures, who avowedly believed in nothing, and the band that seemed to sum up what punk was all about: The Sex Pistols. They were the complete opposite of the old order; obnoxious not compliant; proud of their lack of talent. They played raucous and discordant rock 'n' roll loudly and badly, when they played at all (which wasn't often). They spawned a host of imitators.

Suddenly, everyone was starting a band, playing in a band, gigging at pubs, clubs, parties; releasing independent singles, starting record labels, trying to make it, trying to shock, to outrage, to succeed, and most of all to play.

With names like Raped, Destroyed, The Damned, Belsen Babies, the important thing was not - as the music papers, the rest of the media, and perhaps even the kids believed - the anarchy, the revolt, the desecration, the studded leather dog-collars, safety-pinned noses and badly-bleached hair. Most of the bands sank without trace. Even the majority of those that did have hit singles were 'one-hit wonders', like The Adverts, or X-Ray Spex. On the whole, the artists who did come out of the new wave whole and fairly intact, bands like The Police, The Clash, The Jam or Blondie, singers like Elvis Costello, would have made it anyway, simply because they had the talent. And in a couple of years the wave had crested and broken. Sid Vicious' death in New York was a fitting epilogue for the movement that had started in Chelsea's Kings Road boutiques.

That is not to say that punk had no effects, or that it had nothing going for it (although it could be argued that a good part of its charm was that it *didn't* have anything going for it). Punk had energy and vitality. There was a feeling that anything - absolutely anything - could happen. It returned The Dream to Rock 'n' Roll.

The Dream? That *anybody* could be a star, just by looking scruffy and picking up a microphone or guitar. Or just by looking wild enough to be shown on television, or in the papers. You didn't really even need talent. Whoever you were, whoever you are, *you* could be famous.

But while thousands of teenagers were revelling in the joys of dressing down and looking as tattily degenerate as possible, another movement started, rising from the ashes of punk to become next month's thing. A movement whose only linking factor was the desire to look pretty, to dress up, to pose, to be admired. Here were the boys (and sometimes the girls) whose only ambitions were to appear as lovely and striking as possible, living mannequins who idolised Bowie and Bryan Ferry, rather than Johnny Rotten or Iggy Pop.

In some ways both of these movements can be seen as symptoms, or products, of Great Britain's economic malaise. Different reactions to the same thing: punks with no hopes, no dreams and no future, are really the same bunch of kids (or their younger brothers and sisters) who figure that since there isn't anything attractive about the outside world, and no future but a dole queue, then they might as well look good and have fun. On the 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow will be just as drab as today' principle.

Besides, everybody loves dressing up.



Earth President: Have you heard of a young scientist named Duran Duran?

Barbarella: Yes.

President: Recently, while on a trip to the North Star, he vanished into the uncharted regions of Tau Ceti.

Barbarella: Why is that a secret?

President: Because Duran Duran is the inventor of the Positronic Ray. It's a weapon.

(From the film Barbarella).

Duran Duran took their name from the missing scientist in *Barbarella*, and movies, film and TV have played a big part in their story. Perhaps not surprising, when you consider that its two founder-members, John Taylor and Nick Rhodes, grew up as Hollywood kids.

Not Hollywood, Los Angeles...Hollywood, Birmingham. Birmingham is the second biggest city in England situated in a once busy industrial region which, for the last decade, has been plagued by high unemployment and closing factories. Unlike the far richer south of England, Birmingham is considered relatively drab, poor and boring. It is, if a generalisation can be made about a city covering over eighty square miles, a primarily working class region. In England it is famous only for the flat Birmingham ('Brummie') accent, its complex of motorways (the famed 'Spaghetti Junction'), and its rather ghastly blue and cream coloured double decker buses.

Birmingham has a high youth population (mostly unemployed) and is something of a cultural melting pot; it has in it an incredible diversity of types of music, people, and experiences; something for almost every taste. Amongst its population of one million were three names which would become known around the world, Nicholas Bates, Nigel Taylor and Roger Taylor.

Birmingham is not a glamorous place. Nor for that matter is Pinner in Middlesex, just outside London. It's just another dormitory town, the inhabitants of which commute daily to work in London. Simon Le Bon was born here, and some of his family still live here.

Whitley Bay is in the county of Northumbria, on the North-East coast of England. It has been described as 'a Northumbrian Brighton' (a South Coast seaside resort); golden sands, and huddles of bed-and-breakfast boarding houses. It was from Whitley Bay that Andy Taylor came, via the Tyneside conurbation of Newcastle.

Three places. Five boys.

Duran Duran are a phenomenon of the 1980s. Each generation has had its heroes, its idols, the stars who captured the hearts of fans (especially girls) the world over; from Rudolph Valentino to Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley to The Rolling Stones. In the field of popular music some of these went, like The Beatles, beyond the mobs of screaming fans to lasting fame and critical acclaim. Others, like The Osmonds, The Monkees and The Bay City Rollers had their brief moments of fame and fortune, their names scratched on a thousand teenage desks, only to be scratched out and replaced with that of the next transient heart-throb by the desk's subsequent occupant.

And Duran Duran?

In less than five years, since they were formed, they have sold over ten million records. They have had



Left: The old unromantics. Right: Barbarella, on the trail of Duran Duran



Top: Simon Le Bon and brother Jonathan
Right: The Next Big Thing... The New
Romantics

Number One records in most record-buying countries (in Portugal they have outsold the Beatles). They have played the major world venues, from Madison Square Garden to Wembley Stadium. Their faces adorn thousands of bedroom walls. One can buy, if one wishes, Duran Duran calculator-clock-radios, Duran Duran towels and pillowcases, Duran Duran pens, bags, lunch-boxes, clothes, dolls - even Duran Duran telephones (decorated with the band's logo and a photograph).

But what are they? Five pretty boys, with a fun-loving, clean-cut image, currently teenage idols and soon-to-be has-beens? Or something more - first rate musicians with staying power? Does anything lie beneath the glamour, the mystique and the magic?

The statistics are pretty impressive. Over a million people have seen them live. Many hundred times that number have seen them perform on television or video. Their records sell and sell - *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*, their third LP, and the first to be released after they cracked the American market, went platinum (over a million copies sold) in its first couple of weeks on sale in the US alone. The readers of *Melody Maker* voted *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* the best album of 1983 and Duran Duran best band and best live act. (Then again, in the same poll the readers voted the same album the worst album of the year).

The band themselves strenuously deny being a teenybopper band - that is to say, a band whose sole appeal is to a teenybopper audience. As John Taylor explained, on Channel Four's *Ear Say* program: 'You maintain it (success) by saying you're not a teenybopper band, and I don't think we ever have been. I don't think we make teenybop albums, and I don't think we put on a teenybop live show. There's a certain element of a teenybop audience, and people who buy records, but I don't think Duran Duran are a teenybop band.'

Certainly they don't sing about teenybop subjects, and, unlike many of the pretty-boy bands of earlier years, they can play their instruments - and play well. They write their own songs. They know where they are going. They've changed in order to survive and succeed. The new romantic bandwagon - all frilly shirts, fancy haircuts, mascara, lip-gloss and shoulder-sashes - gave them their initial start.

When the bandwagon had taken them where they wanted to go they jumped off, and continued under their own steam.

Some of the elements that have made up their success are obvious, others are much harder to see. But as John Taylor once said, summing up in a much-quoted comparison:

'We've always been like a box of Quality Street; everyone is someone's favourite.'

(Quality Street, for the benefit of the uninitiated, are an English boxed chocolate-and-toffee assortment, in a variety of brightly-coloured silver-foil wrappings.)

A band with five flavours:

Simon Le Bon. Good-looking vocalist, lyricist and frequent frontman. Blond hair, blue eyes, an energetic and enthusiastic singer and dancer, able to create audience hysteria with a wave of his hand. Offstage he is reputedly distant and withdrawn. Nicknamed 'Charley' within the group (although they used to call him 'Lardo', and he's still very sensitive about his weight and appearance).

John Taylor. Outspoken, volatile co-founder of the band. Engaging, attractive, witty and amusing, he's the glamorous one, fascinated by the tinsel and glitter of the

high life. James Bond fan, avid video watcher, and excellent bass player.

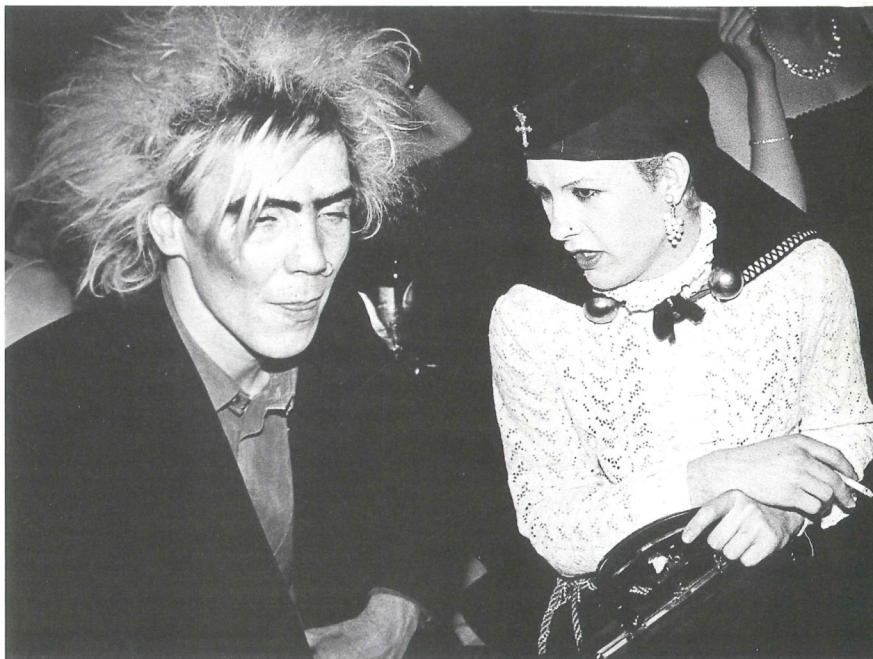
Nick Rhodes. Artistic and androgynous synthesiser and keyboards person. The youngest member of the band, who enjoys being and working in a studio, and taking photographs.

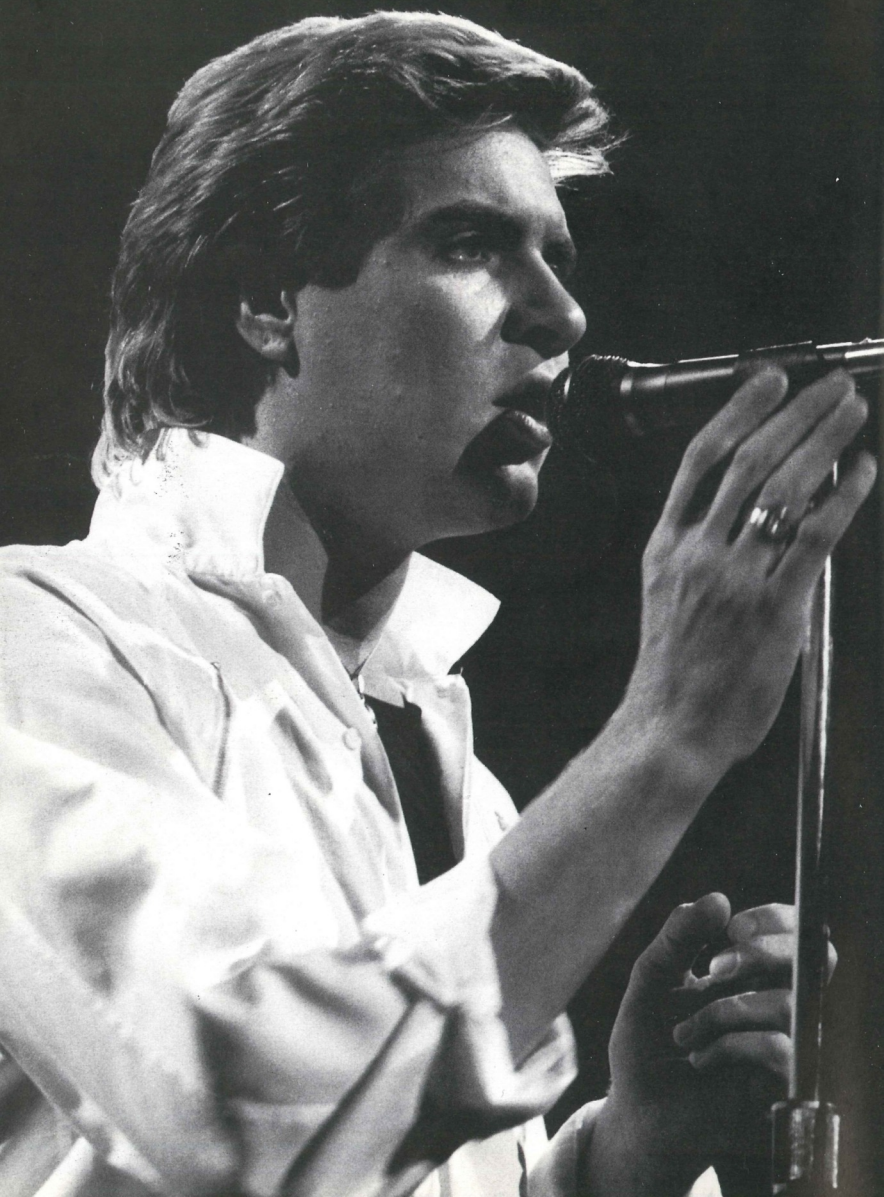
Andy Taylor. The rough-hewn hardened gigger, a musician from the age of five. Fierce rock 'n' roller, and the first member of the band to be married. His early nickname within the band was 'Sniffer', for reasons we can only guess at.

Roger Taylor. Dark drummer. Quiet, unostentatious, the most down-to-earth member of the band. Even the Sun newspaper, in its tawdry 'exposé' of the band described him as the only normal, feet-on-the-ground member of the group. 'He's never dabbled with drugs and he's never bothered with any of the groupies,' it said, under its headline 'Spoilt Little Rich Kids!'

And in the background there are the two other members of the band, their managers, Birmingham businessmen Paul and Michael Berrow. The Berrows were instrumental in shaping and creating the band, in grooming them for success and in looking after them.

The band's road to the top has so far been trouble free. They present an image, collectively and individually that their legions of fans can love, admire, envy or dream of. And they are well on the way to becoming the first true supergroup of the 1980s.





John Taylor.

John Taylor was born Nigel John Taylor at Sorento Maternity Hospital, Solihull on June 20th, 1960. Like Nick Rhodes he is a Gemini. He was the only child of Jean and Jack Taylor (she was a part-time teacher, he worked in a car components factory). His education took him to Our Lady of the Wayside Junior School, Abbey High, Redditch, and finally, despite having failed his 'A' levels, on the strength of his portfolios, he was accepted into Birmingham Polytechnic to study art. His first end-of-term display gained top marks for his year; his final presentation, which consisted of the first Duran Duran demo tape, was not quite as popular.

As a child he was fairly quiet - his sole passion in life was collecting toy soldiers and model cars. It was at the age of eleven that he met and became friends with a younger boy, who lived about five hundred yards down the road. A boy named Nicholas Bates. Together they bought records, tried on make-up, and together they signed on for 'the dole' over half a decade later, having formed the first incarnation of Duran Duran.

It was not John's first band; he'd already played in groups with names like Dada, 262, and Shock Treatment. At this time he was playing lead guitar, but on discovering Chic, and realising the possibilities inherent in a good rhythm section, he switched to bass, enjoying playing with Roger Taylor. He has never had any illusions about his abilities as a bass player, regarding it as the foot-tapping part of a band.

John is six foot-one, and the member of the band most fascinated with the high life, stardom and fame. His fascination with James Bond borders on obsession - he possesses a complete set of Bond videos, which he watches and re-watches, drives an Aston Martin (gold, DB5), the car that Sean Connery drove in *Goldfinger*. His current long-term girlfriend, Janine Andrews, appeared in the Bond film *Octopussy*. He has confessed to a desire to play Bond.

Second to James Bond comes his fondness for Sixties TV detective shows like *The Saint* (starring Roger Moore) and *Charlie's Angels* - he has often regretted that he became famous too late to date a Charlie's Angel.

His sexual tastes are much-talked about, and he has tended to play the playboy - his London flat is decorated in Playboy chic: mirrors, exotic prints and all.

He has an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of pop music (he's appeared on BBC's *Pop Quiz* three times), and shares with Simon the ability to come out with eminently quotable, slightly mocking statements. It is John who explained that 'Basically we're really a bunch of rock 'n' roll clichés who just wanna get drunk and have a good time.'

He does both.

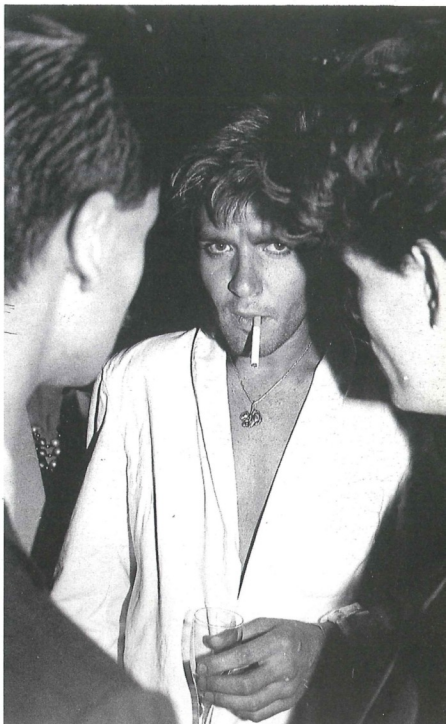
Roger Taylor.

"I suppose I'm pretty ordinary..." **Roger Taylor.**

Roger Taylor is something of an enigma. He was once described in an early interview as 'Possibly a cardboard cutout (showing) no signs of life' - unfair, perhaps, but he does seem to loath interviews and is quite content to keep quiet unless he has something to say.

Roger Taylor was born in Castle Bromwich on April 26, 1960.

His family nicknamed him Roger The Dodger, due to his shyness. As his mother, Jean, explained to one newspaper, 'The only time he got up on stage for the



Left: Simon Le Bon - the tanned, slick, 1984 model

2

THE YOUNG DURANS





school open day he found the tallest boy in the school and stood behind him throughout the show.'

He keeps fairly quiet about his early days; his father worked in a factory all his life, and on leaving school Roger went to work in a factory, spending his evenings playing with a number of forgotten punk bands. The only names that have come down to us are Crucified Toad and the Scent Organs (often mistakenly called the Sex Organs by journalists who misheard him).

His early, pre-Duran style of playing, was very much a thud and bash affair, but he soon linked up with John Taylor to form the rhythm section's driving disco beat that the band were to make famous.

He was introduced to the band by one-time vocalist Andy Wickett at a party, and joined them the following day.

His nickname is Froggy Barnacle, or the Frog, within the group - a name bestowed by John, due to his penchant for underwater swimming, snorkelling, water sports and generally messing about in boats.

Through the changing images that Duran Duran have presented to the public, Roger has remained fairly stable, with a Tony Curtis haircut, and smouldering Brando/James Dean looks. He is not tall, with a muscular physique: the strong silent type.

It has been said that it is almost impossible to get into an argument with him - he's too placid and easy-going. It is ironic, then, that Roger was involved in the worst bit of trouble of any member of the band, when he was attacked by a gang in a Munich disco, and wound up in

Andy and John



hospital with stitches and concussion.

While he is unlikely ever to host his own chat show, Roger Taylor seems to be doing just fine. And as a counterbalance to the exuberance of the other four he fills his part admirably.

Nick Rhodes.

He describes himself as 'a Gemini - I guess that says it all.'

Born in Birmingham on June 8 1962, Nicholas James Bates is the youngest member of Duran Duran. His nickname within the group is Ringo. No one seems to know why. His schooldays were unspectacular - he gives the impression of having been totally uninterested - and he left as soon as he was sixteen, shedding the surname Bates in the process, and replacing it with Rhodes.

His first action was to sign onto the dole, upsetting his parents and neighbours. He had told the man at the social security that he wanted to be a rock star. He spent his abundant free time learning to play keyboards. His long-time close friend John Taylor left art college and followed him onto the dole. They looked divine and formed the nucleus of Duran Duran.

Nick was always the one most into details and intensive future planning; together with Berrows he came up with the initial image and packaging concepts of the band.

He is an entirely self-taught keyboards player, and a self-proclaimed workaholic. Still the most image-conscious member of Duran Duran, Nick tends to wear make-up, silk shirts, a pale complexion, all topped by a colourful array of haircuts.

An observer of life, rather than a participant, he is fond of strawberries and champagne for breakfast, and he is releasing a book of abstract photographs called *Interference*.

He and John Taylor have shared a number of preferences and tastes, including a fondness for the company of other people. (Apparently in their earlier days they would have competitions to see how many new people they could meet in an evening.)

Any queries there might have been about his sexual preferences were stifled by the arrival on the scene of his steady girlfriend, Juliana Freedman - a young Bianca Jagger lookalike - from Des Moines, USA.

He's a night-bird, a 'non-sun worshipper', happiest messing about in studios. He is often considered to be the brains or the ideas man behind Duran Duran - keen on ensuring that their songs have strong hook-lines, and sound slick and polished.

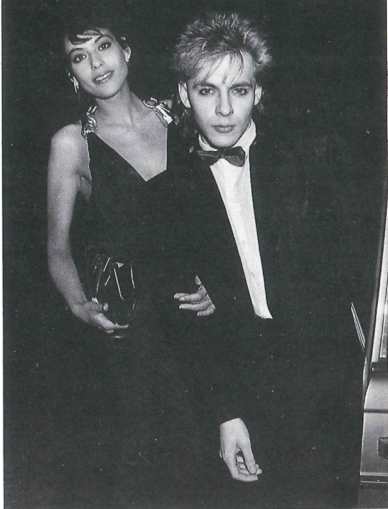
He is adored for his androgynous almost feminine good-looks, his aloofness - often shattered by the famous grin -, and, above all, his sense of style.

After all, a Rhodes by any other name...

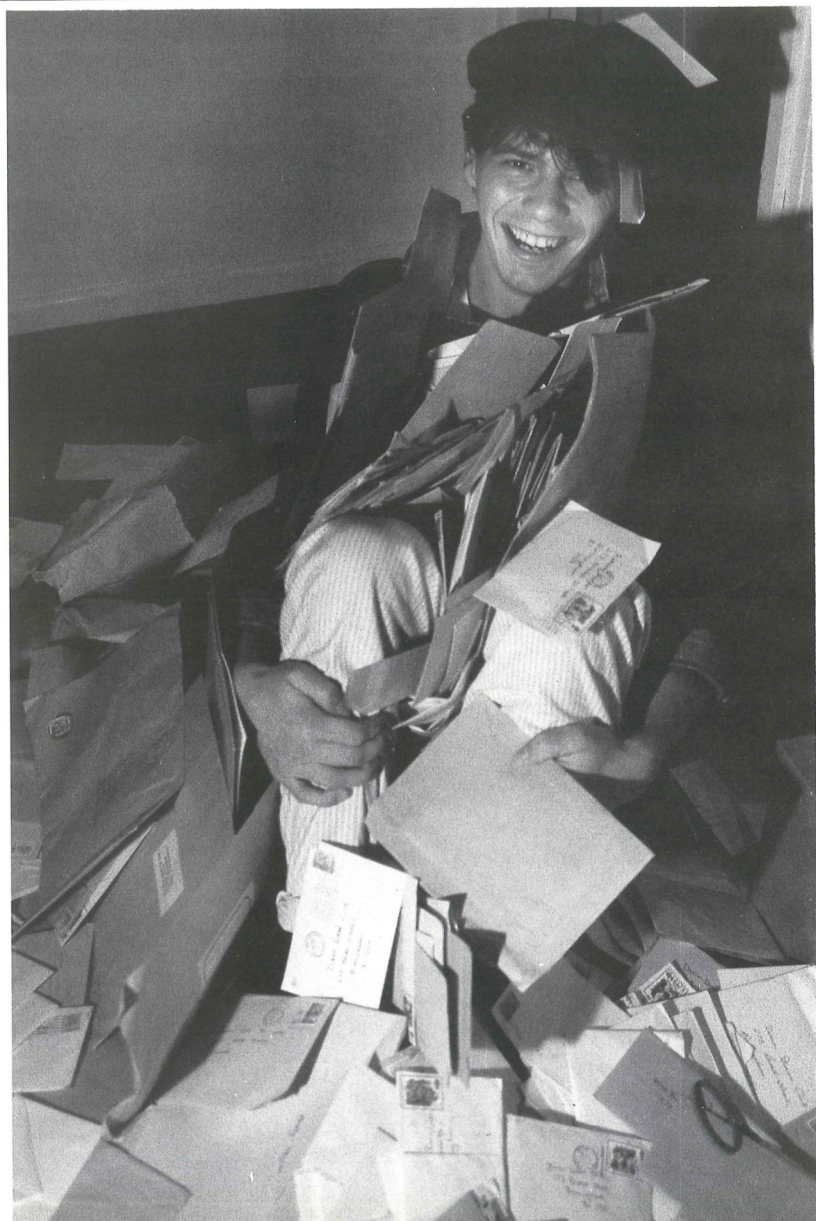
Andy Taylor.

'It's difficult to decide what is reality now - is it being on the road with the kids screaming after you, or is it as things were?'

Andy Taylor is the only member of Duran Duran who would ask that question. John, Nick and Simon take the glamorous life as part and parcel of their existence, the only reason for being a rock star in the first place; Roger Taylor is a self-contained unit, and his views on reality are his own. But Andy became a rock musician as a way



Nick Rhodes and wife-to-be Julie Anne Friedman



of earning a living.

He was born on February 16, 1961, the eldest of two sons, in Tynemouth Royal Infirmary, near Newcastle. He came from a Cullercoats fishing family, although a decline in the business caused his father to become a carpenter. The family were poor (an outside toilet and a tin bath have been mentioned), and his mother left when he was eleven.

He began playing guitar when he was five, but began to play in earnest when he was eleven, and his father bought him an electric guitar for Christmas. He took lessons from a man across the road, called Dave Black, at a pound a lesson, and by the time he was thirteen he was playing professionally.

He lost interest in school, played truant, grew his hair. All he wanted to do was play guitar; he ignored the well-meaning attempts of teachers to persuade him to take up a sensible career like bricklaying or plumbing. Long before he was legally old enough he left school to play in bands.

Lots of them. From Northern working mens' clubs to European strip clubs and air bases... by the time he joined Duran Duran he had played over six hundred gigs, all over Europe, travelling hundreds of miles a day in cars and vans.

It was on his arrival back in England that he saw the ad for a 'live-wire guitarist'. He spent his last money on the train to Birmingham. Nick wasn't too impressed by his bedemimed image, but as a guitar player he was everything they had wanted, able to do both the heavy rock lines and the pseudo-chic funk. And when he mentioned that his favourite guitarist was Gary Moore - Gary Moore's album *Back On The Streets* was John's then-favourite album - the 'noisy sod with the big mouth' (a Nick Rhodes description) was a member of Duran Duran.

They told him that the singer was on holiday.

Andy is by far the most experienced member of the band - comfortable in a far wider range of musical styles than many of Duran's detractors ever realise. He considers himself the 'balls of the band', although he has described his guitar-playing as 'not predominant at all. It just adds flavour and energy.'

He met his wife-to-be, Tracey Wilson, at her family hairdressers (Wilson Wilson & Wilson) in Wolverhampton, when she styled the band's hair. He stayed to talk to her and that was it. From being the wild man of the band he settled down a great deal, and on his twenty-first birthday he proposed marriage. She accepted.

Having called off the wedding three times because of band commitments, when faced with a fourth cancellation (due to being offered the Blondie support tour in summer of 1982, for more of which see Chapter Six) he flew her out to Los Angeles, and they married in the grounds of Hollywood's Chateau Marmount Hotel. John Taylor was a terrified best man.

He then added a Wilson to his name, and she added a Taylor, to hers, and they became the Wilson-Taylors.

It didn't take him long to settle down. He's bought property, opened the Rio wine bar in Whitley Bay (which he is seeking to turn into a pub), and has become an almost-vegetarian, explaining 'My wife and father-in-law run a charity to save animals from slaughter. We have a few lambs at our place and I couldn't bear the thought of eating them.'

One seems to get the impression that he is consolidating his life and his finances to ensure that he'll never find himself back in the same situation he

experienced as a child. That fatherhood will domesticate him even further is a strong probability. But meanwhile, more than the others, he seems always slightly conscious that 'It could all be over tomorrow.'

Simon Le Bon.

President: Here is the only photograph of Duran Duran in existence. Age twenty-six. Hazel eyes. A rather handsome fellow.

Barbarella: I don't think I'm going to be able to recognise him, sir.

From Barbarella.

Simon Le Bon: I always wanted to be a pop singer. And I'm getting paid for it. And I'm surrounded by people I love. I feel strong and alive and I love life. I wouldn't want to change a thing. It's everybody's dream.

Simon Le Bon: Actually I've given up looking for true art. I'm happy now doing what I'm doing. And I believe in it. If I was rich and I wasn't doing this I'd pay to do it! Just to get up on stage and having all those people looking at you... and some even listening to you!

Simon John Charles Le Bon was born at Bushey Maternity Hospital, near Watford in Hertfordshire, on the twenty-seventh of October, 1958, coincidentally the day of his father's birthday. He's a Scorpio, traditionally the most passionate, sexual, intense, and secretive sign of the zodiac.

His parents are Ann and John Le Bon, his two younger brothers David and Jonathan. His mother, Ann, is currently separated from her husband and lives in Florida, where she runs an antique business. It was her family in which the showbiz strain ran. Her grandmother had been one of the original Tiller girls, her aunt had danced before the Queen in the celebrated Ziegfeld Follies. Ann Le Bon herself had given up acting for her marriage, and it has been suggested that she sublimated her own theatrical ambitions through Simon.

At an early age he took acting lessons. He began modelling as a child at the age of four, and by the time he was five he had made his television debut, as the 'dirty shirt' in a soap-powder commercial, followed by pepsi and coffee ads. He was also to be seen modelling knitting patterns in the women's magazine *Woman's Realm*. Simon's father, John Le Bon, works for the London Water Board, and is (trivia freaks take note) a keen pigeon racer.

Simon was educated at West Lodge Junior School, Pinner, than at Pinner Grammar School. He appeared in a number of amateur musical productions (such as *The King And I*) and also began singing with the local church choir. He still lists Mr Turvey, the choirmaster at St John's Church, as one of his chief musical influences. It was with Mr Turvey that Simon cut his first record, a piping treble recording of *He Shall Feed His Flock*. Apparently it was never released.

He won a number of awards as a child for singing and drama, and appeared in his local papers (something he found very embarrassing, he said later, as he was kidded

Right: Simon in 1982. Below: The famous grin









by his schoolfriends). His first professional dramatic role was in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, a musical in London's West End. In a Harrow Post article at the time young Simon, a chubby-cheeked lad, lists his hobbies as painting, music, writing poetry and the study of heraldry. His mother was his singing teacher, but when his voice began to break she stopped him singing, with an eye to the future, afraid that if he sang while his voice was breaking he might not have a voice left.

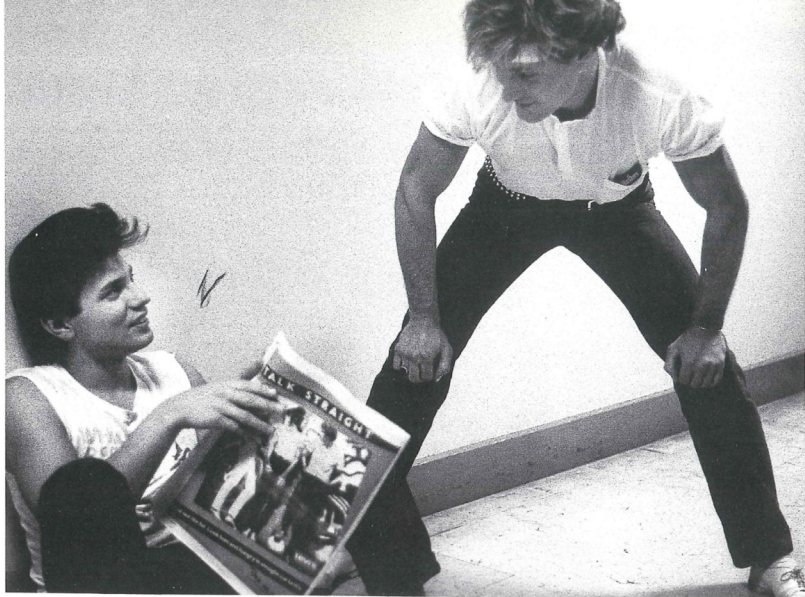
A dreamer at school, he was fascinated by girls even then - in a newspaper interview in 1981 he said, 'Women intrigue me. They had ever since I was a kid. At school I nearly got expelled for an incident behind the bike sheds with one of the girls from class.' What the incident was we can only imagine. Leaving school he went briefly to Harrow Art School, then swotted to get into university, while working in the evenings as a hospital porter - something that he described as having a 'profound effect on me. I saw severed limbs, dead bodies, people badly hurt. But there was a good atmosphere. It was the will to survive. The tenacity of people took me by surprise.' He also spent some time on an Israeli kibbutz, (driving a tractor, lumberjacking, orange picking and looking after children), one of his favourite jobs.

Like all the other members of Duran Duran (however briefly) he was caught up by the punk movement in 1977, and sang in a punk band called *Dog Days*, bottoming the bill at the Harrow Tech end-of-term party in Summer of 1978. As he said later in an interview, 'I decided when I was young that I wanted lots of attention. Being a show-off got me involved in drama and the pop group business and that then got me nice girlfriends. So I thought, I'll stick at it.'

Having failed his entry exams to the Royal Academy Of Dramatic Art, and the Bristol Old Vic Drama school he wound up studying Drama at Birmingham University. And it was here, in 1980, that he went out with a girl named Fiona Kemp, a barmaid at the Rum Runner, and in mid-July 1980 she mentioned to him that Duran Duran were looking for a singer, and she suggested that he should audition. He phoned the club, and arranged to meet Nick and Roger socially, which he did. He made a good enough impression to be invited along to meet the rest of the band next night and listen to a few numbers.

The initial meeting of Simon Le Bon and the four members of Duran Duran has passed into Rock Mythology. He arrived in leopard-skin pink trousers, so tight they appeared to have been sprayed on, wearing sunglasses, boots, and a suede Sixties jacket, clutching his exercise book. 'I thought anyone who looks that stupid and writes RovOstrov on the front of his exercise book is positively the one,' Nick Rhodes has said of that initial meeting. 'He said his name was Le Bon and I thought No! He can't be called Le Bon! (*Le Bon* is *Simon's real name* - his family claim it is of Huguenot origin. The Huguenots were French Protestants of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, many of whom fled from France to England to escape persecution. End of brief history lesson.) Simon was just what the band had been looking for. Pin-up style looks, and that special something - he clicked. He had it. He fitted.

Duran Duran had found their singer. Although, as Nick Rhodes said, 'He sounded awful - like a choirboy,' and elsewhere 'A lot of people weren't sure if we were doing the right thing by asking him to join us, because he didn't have a brilliant voice.'



Roger and Simon 'Besch' (Duran's bodyguard
—assistant) kill time at the BBC

'But a guy has either got that special *it* or he hasn't... Mick Jagger hasn't a brilliant voice, but he's got *it*. So we stuck with him through all the rubbish that was thrown at him. And I honestly believe his voice has developed into something really special.'

John was ever more outspoken. 'It was a personal thing. He'd joined before we'd even heard his voice.' Among those unsure of Simon's singing ability were the Berrow brothers. They suggested he take singing lessons — a suggestion the rest of the band did not initially take too kindly to.

Despite his previous experience, Simon was very nervous; on their first demo tapes he was so shy that he didn't want anyone looking at him while he sang, and he insisted on hiding behind screens while he laid down the vocals. He was not to stay shy for long. His good looks, and the tendency of the press to take the lead singer of a band as the frontman soon catapulted him into the limelight. Something the rest of the band weren't entirely happy with.

As John Taylor was to say, in a television interview: 'We went through a whole year of not speaking to one another, and I sort of resented the fact that, you know, "What do you want to interview him for — I started the band!" and he'd be thinking "What do they want to interview him for — I'm the singer, you know!" and neither of us would admit it until we got really drunk one night and we both admitted that we hadn't really spoken to each other for six months. We couldn't look each other in the eye, and it was really weird, and there was a wall between us. But now we get on better, there's a real bond between us, we get on incredibly, better than before.'

Simon was interviewed and quoted in most of the major popular newspapers, often about sex and romance. Whether he was sticking up for the English as lovers ('We're much better than all those dusky Romeos from

places like Italy'), proclaiming the joys of sexual experimentation ('I like to make love in water'), or talking about his sexual prowess ('I've slept with millions of women. Well... thousands. Alright then hundreds anyway. Certainly hundreds'), he guaranteed good copy.

More than any other member of Duran Duran, Simon is a romantic. But a pragmatic romantic. One of his ex-girlfriends told me, 'He was always talking about marriage. I'd tell him I didn't want to get married and he'd ignore it. He'd ask me things like what kind of a wedding we should have - just ignoring what I'd said. He was very sweet.'

His parents separated in 1982. His father stayed in Pinner, his mother went to Florida, where she initially ran a motel. As Simon said: 'She married very young and now feels she wants to live a bit.' He felt that his parents had only stayed together for his sake, and that of his younger brothers. When they did split he felt that the 'tremendously strong unit' of the three boys helped them to get through it.

From a scared, shy teenager, slightly podgy, he has become a six-foot-two, brown-haired sex symbol of the Eighties. He has a number of childhood toys he still hangs onto, including Shockermoler, a teddy bear he was given when he was fifteen, and who is still his 'best friend' (according to one interview he gave, Shockermoler scared away all the demons and devils Simon was scared of as a youth).

Sexually, his views seemed to have changed over the years. In early interviews he would often mention that there was nothing wrong with one-night stands ('It's very much a man's point of view. But with this sort of job it is sometimes the only relationship you can have. You can't go through the year without any kind of sexual or loving relationship at all, so you have to find happiness in things like that') he moved on, to proclaim that 'You can't survive on one-night stands, they're meaningless. What you need is one person who loves you.' From there it was one short step to the announcement of his engagement to Clare Stansfield, a relationship that was to last two years.

He is the band's lyricist, since he found himself unhappy singing other people's words. He feels his songs are all very personal, but that he's no longer a poet or philosopher. His lyrics are 'radial rather than linear' - encapsulating moods, feelings, images, rather than telling straightforward stories. Often even he doesn't know what they are about (the second verse of *Rio* is a case in point); but they are songs that people can bring their own feelings and experiences to, and read into them what they will.

He has mentioned in interviews that he believes in fairies, goblins and 'the magic of Nature. I know there's a lot more to it than anybody dreams of.' (As he told the *Sunday Mirror* paper, in an article they headlined *Secrets Of Sexy Simon*, accompanied by a photo of Simon bared to the torso and brooding magnificently.) His lyrics to *The Reflex* are apparently about a 'little friend'.

He is nicknamed Charley by the rest of the band. Like the others he has filled in endless trivia sheets - proclaiming his favourite flowers to be rhododendrons, and his favourite TV show to be *The Munsters* (or whatever it happens to be at that time). His fave authors are writers like Ayn Rand (a Russian-born American writer, proponent of 'objectivist' philosophy, and believer in self-interest and libertarianism) whose best-known book, and Simon's all-time tops is the lengthy *Atlas Shrugged*; Mervyn Peake (a British writer and illustrator

'Fedora'd Brummie'



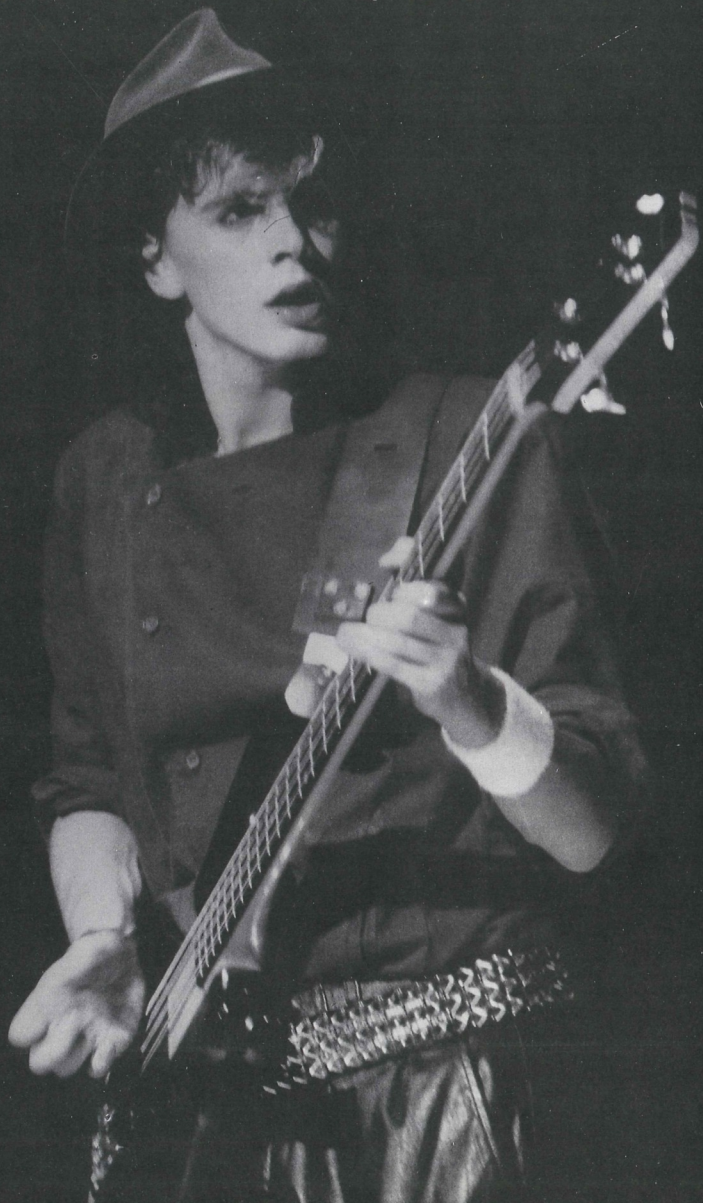


Roger Taylor and Giovanna Candone at the Rum Runner, 1982

who died in 1668) and his trilogy of Gormenghast novels, the bizarre and richly-detailed story of the birth and arrival to manhood of a boy, Titus Groan, in the enormous and isolated castle of Gormenghast. Simon has also been very keen on Shakespeare since he was young.

He went through his periods of overuse of drugs and alcohol, using speed to keep his weight down, and other drugs, although he stated in an interview, 'We don't do drugs or drink much because it does tend to make life rather difficult when you have to go on stage the next night and you feel like a bag of old potatoes. It's no good at all. You have to keep fit because this is a very physical kind of business to be in.'

The oldest member of the band, he has matured a good deal in the last four years. And although Duran Duran are a five piece band in which no one person is in charge, or takes the limelight to the exclusion of the others, to many people Duran Duran means Simon Le Bon.



John Taylor: The last thing we're ever going to sing about is bad times. There are already too many bands doing that. We want to be the band that's playing when the Titanic goes down.

Simon Le Bon: We want to be the band to dance to when The Bomb drops. (*Sounds*, December 13, 1980.)

Duran Duran, the name thought up by John Taylor over a lunchtime drink with Nick Rhodes, went through a number of incarnations. They began in 1978, as John Taylor (a self-proclaimed dreadful lead guitar), Nick Rhodes (wasp synth and rhythm unit), Steve Duffy - these days better known as Tin Tin - (vocals and bass) and a clarinetist named Simon Colley.

Their debut gig was at Birmingham's Barbarellas, supporting a local band called Fashion. People who saw them back then say they were awful. Nick Rhodes has said 'The original Duran Duran wasn't so much a group as a series of get-togethers... an evening of pretence with Duran Duran just about sums it up.' John has been equally dismissive of the early years. 'We were really on a bit of an art school trip at the time,' he told one journalist. And later, 'We tried all sorts of line-ups in the early days. In fact we were something of a joke in Birmingham.'

Steve and Simon Colley left, and Andy Wickett came in. It was he who discovered Roger Taylor at a party. Roger joined Duran Duran, and left the Scent Organs. Together with John, who had switched to bass guitar, they began to incorporate a certain disco sound into their music; it was at this time that the first Duran Duran demo tape was recorded, with John on lead and bass guitar.

Andy Wickett left to be replaced by Jeff Thomas (ex-Scent Organs vocalist) and London boy Alan Curtis on lead guitar. They began to practise in a squat in Cheapside. Meanwhile...

Michael and Paul Berrow, two Birmingham businessmen, had just returned from New York, where they had been examining the US Disco scene centered on the notorious Studio 54. They had a club of their own, the Rum Runner, a late-night burger bar and disco, for which they had plans. Part of the plans included a resident band - something between Genesis and Chic.

They tarted up the club, started Bowie nights, Roxy nights and jazz/funk nights... and then, one day, Nick and John walked into the Rum Runner with a tape of four tracks, including an embryonic *Girls On Film*. The Berrows offered the boys somewhere to play and rehearse, and, a few months later, worked out a management deal, to include financial support.

An advertisement was placed in *Melody Maker* for a 'live wire guitarist'. Curtis and Thomas had now left, and Duran Duran had a very clear idea of what and who they needed in the band, image-wise. They were recruiting in earnest. It wasn't easy. The people who could play the good rock lines could not play the Chic-style rhythm as well - and vice versa. Eventually Andy Taylor turned up ('They said "We're posers. We want a good-looking poser band." I said "Good, because I like dressing up and I love wearing make-up."')

However, while practising they still needed money. Roger kept his daytime factory job; John waited on tables; Andy repainted the Rum Runner and did odd-jobs, while







Nick - ever the observer - was the Rum Runner's disc jockey.

Hundreds of singers were auditioned, until Fiona Kemp, a barmaid, suggested an ex-boyfriend of hers, one Simon Le Bon. They didn't care that he couldn't sing. He'd joined before they ever heard his voice. Simon had doubts about whether or not to join Duran full-time, or continue with his drama studies, but after a few initial gigs he threw in his lot with Duran Duran completely. The band was complete. They didn't look back.

The Influences.

To understand Duran Duran one must understand the band's influences. Although they themselves have cited a number of bands and individuals who have meant a lot to them, there are two individuals/bands who have obviously affected them - their look, their music - more than any other.

It has been said that the Golden age of Rock and Roll was between the ages of twelve and sixteen. It's a time at which everything seems fresh and new, and styles, fashions, music and sex are all tied into the great melting pot of adolescence.

Thus, most of Duran Duran's influences were not the bands that the previous generation grew up with - the Beatles, the Rolling Stones (who in their turn were influenced by the black rhythm and blues artists of the American 1950s) - but the stars of England in the early Seventies. Stars - bands and individuals - who were glamorous; who produced accessible hit records that were still taken seriously by journalists and musicians. Stars to whom image was as important as sound.

The first, and still important today, was David Bowie. The chameleon of rock, Bowie has been reincarnating himself in a variety of personae since 1969. The most important of which, for our purposes, was that of Ziggy Stardust, the role he played from 1972-74. With his spiky orange hair, 'glam' make-up and outrageous clothes, this androgynous self-proclaimed 'bisexual' (something he has since denied) shocked parents and entranced the kids. (Nick Rhodes and John Taylor were the first kids on their respective streets to own copies of *The Rise And Fall Of Ziggy Stardust*.) He was the first to make it popularly acceptable for males to be pretty, to wear make-up, to pose. Legions jumped on the 'glam' bandwagon, but its messiah was Bowie.

The band have performed Bowie numbers from time to time, in their early days using the Bowie/Lennon number *Fame* and Bowie's *Sulfragette City* as their encore numbers.

The other great influence on Duran Duran were the band that were to epitomise art school camp chic: Roxy Music, and their charismatic singer, Bryan Ferry. Musically and lyrically Roxy's combination of arty camp and an amalgam of styles were more influential on the band than Bowie. Concerned with how they looked (normally chic, sleek and striking) they made complex, ambiguous music. Bryan Ferry's unique vocal style, mannered and oblique, was also used to excellent effect on his own solo work. Although Roxy Music have split and reformed a number of times, often with varying line-ups, there has always been one thing consistent through the years, from their first album in 1971 onwards: beautiful (and often scantily clad, or indeed, unclad) girls decorating the covers of their albums.

A third influence on the band - himself much affected by Bowie and Roxy Music, even down to vocal style - was Steve Harley, who with his band, Cockney Rebel,



had a number of hits in 1974 to 1976 with such songs as *Judy Teen* and (*Come Up and See Me*) *Make Me Smile*, a song he has since performed live with Duran Duran, and which Duran have consistently covered. (On the live version of *Make Me Smile* on the B side of the *Reflex* single, Simon Le Bon manages to sound more like Steve Harley than Steve Harley himself.)

These were not Duran Duran's only influences by far. (They have mentioned such pop bands as Sparks, The New York Dolls, and singers like Sinatra and Bing Crosby.) But the three main influences and especially Bowie and Roxy/Ferry - proved tht glamour and style had a place in popular music. They were also the first stars since the Sixties to attract both a 'serious' following and a teenybop audience. From now on having one's sock-size and favourite colour reported in *Jackie* need not be an automatic bar to one's musical credibility - something Duran Duran have been pointing out, not necessarily to very much effect, ever since they started.

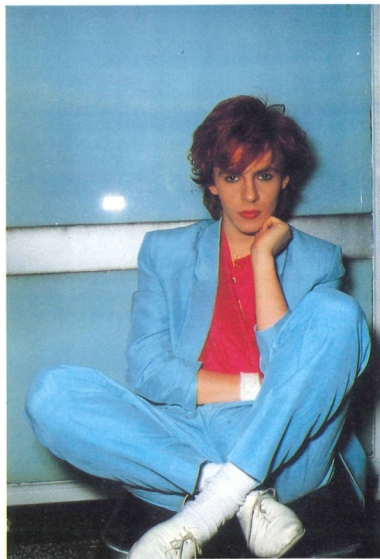
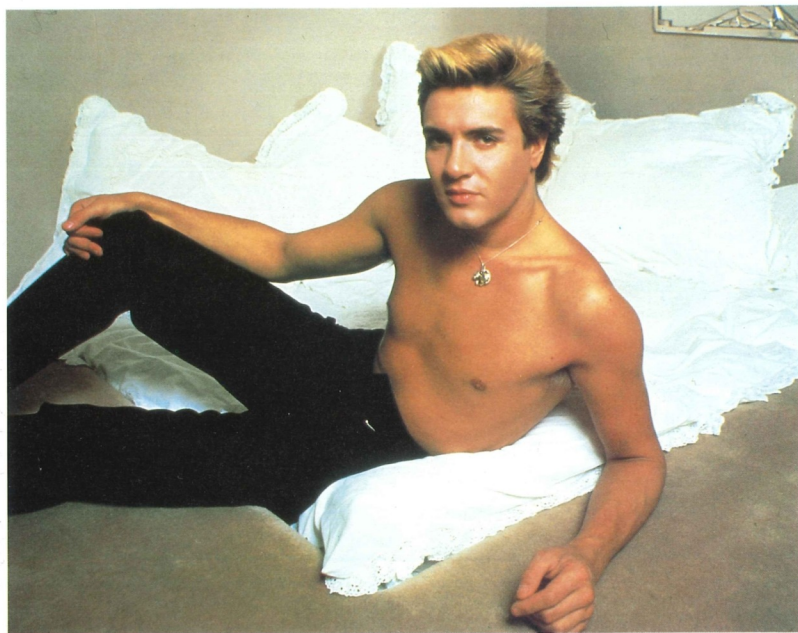
The Famous Five Go Adventuring.

President: When you wish to test for the presence of Duran Duran, simply press this contact. The light will glow and the alarm will sound.

(From *Barbarella*)

After the event all fashions look slightly silly. Actually many of them look slightly silly at the time, but nobody likes to be the first to say so - it is the Emperor's New Clothes Syndrome. A trend ends, and from every quarter

Glad to be glam! Top left: Steve Harley
Bottom left: David Bowie Above: Roxy Music





come sighs of 'Thank God that's over. Now we can take off these twelve-inch heels (or whatever)'. And in retrospect the new romantic movement look was more than a little odd. Those *clothes...that hair!*

Down in London bands like Spandau Ballet, Japan and The Human League were being The Next Big Thing. In Birmingham, after an intensive period of songwriting and rehearsal, the five members of Duran Duran did their first concerts. They knew exactly what they were doing, they understood their image and their audience, and they just knew where they wanted to go. The first step was to get the initial experience, playing at Birmingham's Cedar Club, the Holy City Zoo, and of course The Rum Runner.

Their initial reception was not exactly overwhelming. An early review of one of their first Holy City Zoo concerts, by Birmingham writer Mike Davies stated that their appearance was 'immaculately fresh from the latest designs', the lighting 'exquisite and frequently mesmerising' the sound 'superbly meshed and clear', however he felt it to be 'all surface gloss with precious little substance' - an accusation that has been levelled at the band many times since. According to Mr Davies, 'The weakest link is vocalist Simon Le Bon, who has a remarkably average voice, without either the confident depth or control needed to inject the essential command the aggressive numbers demand nor the range to explore



'their more ethereal sensitive work.'

They played a couple of London concerts, one at the Marquee (standing in for the Associates) and one at the Lyceum, supporting lanky Mancunian poet John Cooper Clarke and the Invisible Girls - a show that got them described some months later in Record Mirror as 'One of the most entertaining and professional support bands that I had seen in a long time.'

There was a certain amount of record company interest in Duran Duran at this time, but nothing very solid, and the band and the Berrows decided it was time for them to make a move. They had played a total of ten live concerts; they needed more live experience. They needed to play different audiences. And they had no intention of going into a recording studio before they were quite ready. It was common practise in England for bands to release initial singles on private or independent record labels. Duran knew that wasn't for them.

As Nick Rhodes explained later: 'We could have made an independent single early on - which would probably have done our credibility with the rock press a lot of good - but we always knew the sound we wanted required a big studio and a good producer, so rather than go off at halfcock we decided to wait until the time was right.'

The obvious band for them to go on tour with would have been a fellow new romantic band. Instead they chose a tour that would emphasise their differences from the main act while still pulling big crowds. The result was a tour with British girl singer Hazel O'Connor, who had just had a hit single and album from the fairly successful film *Breaking Glass* - the story of a young girl punk singer's experiences on the way to the top in the music world.

There was a drawback. They needed at least twelve thousand pounds to buy their way in on the tour, to obtain equipment, and to live while on the tour. The money was obtained when manager Michael Berrow mortgaged his Birmingham flat for fifteen thousand pounds, in what he described as 'The best £15,000 I've ever spent!'

The tour itself was a great success - the band found themselves playing to audiences of all shapes and styles; hippy, skinhead, punk, and many more. They learned how to play live. They lived in a camping bus while touring. 'There are rumours going round that we already have a quarter of a million pounds in backing. This is nonsense. We live on ten pounds a week each until we sign a record contract,' John Taylor told a Birmingham paper. The record contract wasn't far away.

By the end of the tour five major record companies were competing to sign the band up. Even at this time the band knew the kind of record company they wanted, and the gap in the market they were aiming to fill. John Taylor again: 'I think (we) can pick up on the teenybop market; we had somebody from *Jackie* come round - that's great - I think it's a really underrated market, there's nothing wrong with it at all.' Andy continued, 'There's a gap for teen heroes in England, America and Japan, and we've already been thinking about those markets.'

They had planned out the sound of their first album and their first world tour before they had even signed an honest-to-goodness record contract. Needless to say, there was a good deal of speculation about them at the time: what were they? An arrogant bunch of elitists? A quintet of posers? Soon-to-be megastars? By the end of the Hazel O'Connor tour the music press sometimes even ignored the headlining act to review solely Duran Duran's performance. Dave Ambrose of EMI was the man who finally signed Duran Duran, at the end of 1980.

EMI was (and is) a large record label, known for such acts as Queen, and their backlist of such luminaries as The Beatles and The Rolling Stones. In the late Seventies EMI were stung rather badly by the Sex Pistols, who signed with EMI, but after an abortive attempt to release their first single, *Anarchy In The UK* (which precipitated a strike by the ladies in the pressing factory, who objected to the lyrics and the band) a concatenation of events left the Pistols without a record company and EMI with egg on its corporate face. (When the Sex Pistols did finally settle down, on Virgin Records by way of A&M, they dedicated a song to EMI. Not a very flattering song.) Duran Duran were a somewhat safer bet.

The deal with EMI gave the band power of choice over their studios and producer, their own record label and publishing company (Tritec – also the Berrow's management company), £42,000 advance for their first album and headline tour, and the princely sum of £50 a week for each of the band to live on. They had already begun recording a single and parts of their first album (at London's Red Bus Studios, with Colin Thurston producing) before the deal with EMI was announced at the beginning of 1981.

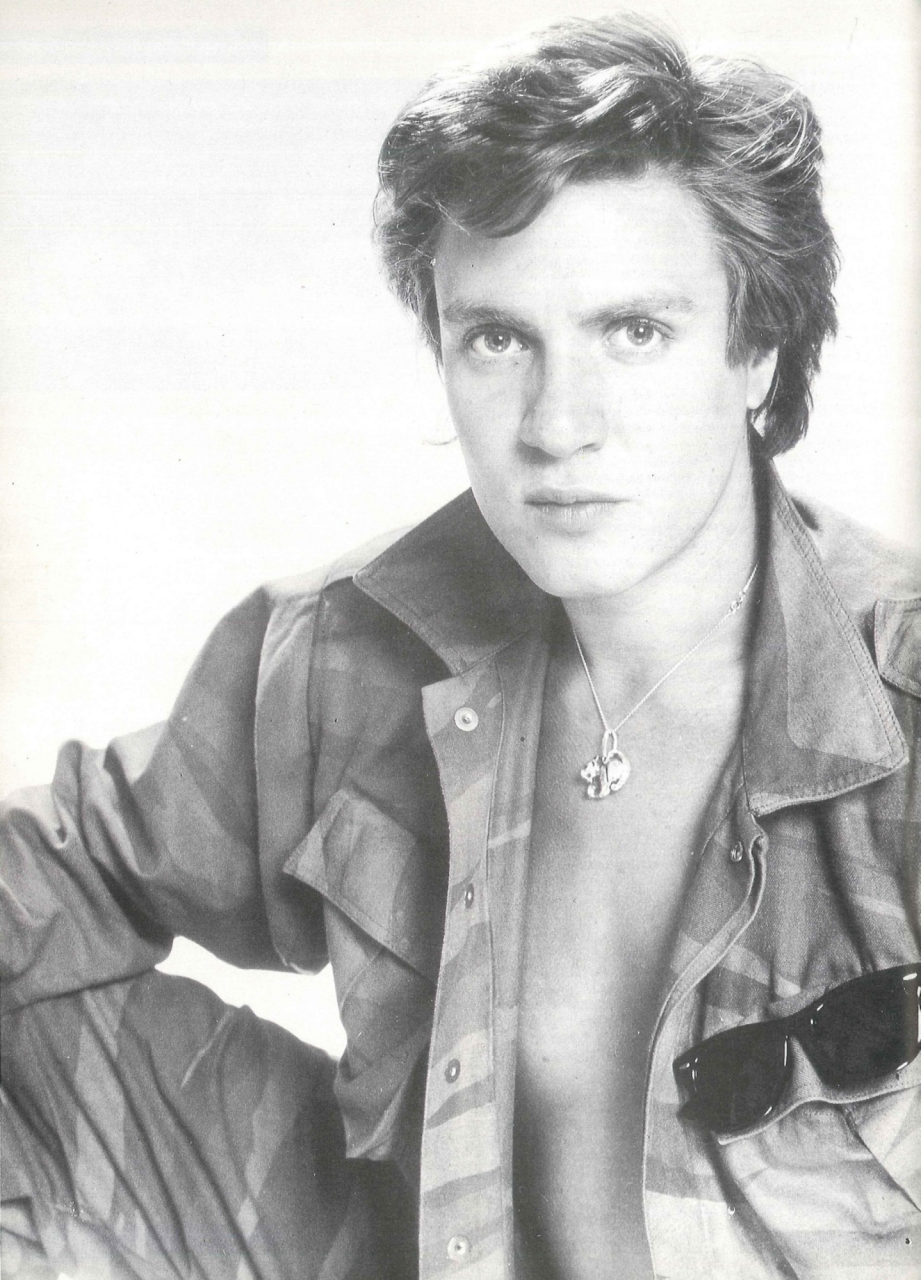
Photographs of the band at this time show a very different picture to the chic, sleek bunch we see today. Simon is dark haired, heavily mascared and looks uncomfortable; John Taylor looks like a sheepdog, with a heavy eye-obscuring fringe; Nick Rhodes looks like John, only shorter and mop-headed, his frilly shirts weird growth on his chest; Andy Taylor looks like a blonde terrier; only Roger Taylor looks exactly the same as he does today.

At this time the main question in the minds of the press was quite what to call this new movement. They had a choice of labels – from new romantic (coined by Perry Haines, and loathed by most bands, although Duran Duran briefly embraced it wholeheartedly), 'Blitz Kids'; (from the London disco of the same name, masterminded by ex-Rich Kid Rusty Egan^f (see Footnote) and Visage frontman Steve Strange) 'futurists', and, because most of them insisted that they were individual groups doing their respective things, and not part of any movement, 'The Cult With No Name'. Perhaps the silliest attempt at labelling was from a Birmingham paper which described Duran Duran as part of the 'Blow Wave'.

As 1980 ended Duran Duran had been together for less than five months, and already the speculation about their future was intense. The next step on their well-planned route to total world domination was to release a hit single. The single was *Planet Earth*.

^fAs an aside: the Rich Kids, founded by ex-Sex Pistol Glen Matlock (on bass) and consisting of Glen, Rusty Egan (drums) Steve New (Lead guitar) and Midge Ure – once of Bay City Roller-clone band, Slik, now the linchpin of Ultravox (guitar and vocals) – were a band formed in late 1977. They made one album, *Ghosts Of Princes In Towers*, produced by ex-Bowie sideman Mick Ronson. The Rich Kids were ahead of their time – a fashionable, good-looking band with dancy pop tunes, when what was wanted was a flailing, spitting punk band.

When Duran Duran were first forming in 1980 many attempts were made to get in touch with Steve New, in order to recruit him. When their cards, letters and phone calls failed to locate him or elicit a reply, they decided that he could not have been the man they wanted. An example of being in the right place, with the right music, at the right time.



1981, like the years that followed it, was a period of intensive work for Duran Duran. It had, in miniature, most of the ingredients of the following years: constant comparisons with other bands, a minor scandal, tours, hits, a minor flop, screaming, even some US dates.

Planet Earth was released on the second of February 1981. There was already a strong undercurrent of interest in Duran Duran, following their Hazel O'Connor tour and a Radio One session on the Peter Powell Show. *Planet Earth* went straight onto the radio playlists around the country, soon rising to Number Twelve in the UK charts.

Duran made the first of what was to be a string of appearances on the British television show *Top Of The Pops* (a show in which bands mime awkwardly in the studio to their songs, while a studio audience dance around and wave at the cameras, intercut with occasional videos). They also made their first video with Russell Mulcahey, an Australian director who got his start editing network news in his native Australia, and who made the video for the Buggles song *Video Killed The Radio Star* – a self-fulfilling prophecy. It was to be the start of a long and mutually rewarding relationship.

In February and March Duran Duran did their first headline tour of England – to generally rave reviews, such as Steve Sutherland's in *Melody Maker*, which amongst other things said: 'What a show! A short, sweet set of memorable, unpretentious pop songs that pack real punch live and will sound so great on the radio that they'll put the rest of their chosen contemporaries to shame. Where a Spandau song insists you meet it halfway and expects you to make allowances for its brittle shoddiness, a Duran Duran tune... gate crashes your head, and invites your whole body to a party.'

The reference to fellow new romantic band (and then-current brand leaders) Spandau Ballet is not unusual; in fact almost every article, interview or review of the band in 1981 mentioned Spandau somewhere. When Duran Duran's first album, called simply *Duran Duran* was released on the eight of June 1981, they had already sold over a quarter of a million singles and done a headlining UK tour. However, the album was to do much to establish their credibility as 'more than just a bunch of new romantic poseurs'. It was a punchy little pop album, composed mainly of songs written over the preceding three years by various combinations of the group, and honed in front of live audiences.

The photograph on the front cover shows the band, dressed in the black, white and red they were to keep as a motif through the *Rio* album, standing in front of the bonnet of a sports car. The space on the back cover occupied by the photo on the front is filled by an arrangement of violet, grey and blue (as on the *Rio* inner sleeve), and a close-up photo of the car engine directly below Simon Le Bon's crotch. The symbolism is excruciatingly obvious, and rather tacky.

('I couldn't believe they'd used that photo,' he was to say later. 'Of course I'm not going to deny that I *am* well endowed...')

Side One: The catchy, poppy, party side.

1). *Girls On Film*. Perhaps an archetypal pop song. Nick or John wrote the chorus, and the lyrics were written and rewritten by a succession of vocalists until the final Simon Le Bon version. The song is bright, snappy, and was one of the first songs they wrote, with its catchy, insistent three word chorus. 'Smile and you've just made a million,' sings Simon, with an intuitive grasp of the future.

4

DURAN
DURAN


2) **Planet Earth.** Their first single, *Planet Earth* reached Number Twelve in the UK, and Number One in Australia. A devastatingly simple song, again catchy, commercial, and enjoyable. Simon says the lyrics concern the impressions received by an alien visitor to the world, and they touch on themes Duran were to explore further on later songs: barrenness and desolation. *This is planet Earth...*

3) **Anyone Out There?** A swirling synthesiser beginning introduces this poignant and melodic song of lost love and loneliness. Simon's vocals shine, but the overall effect is drab and forgettable.

4) **To The Shore.** Doing a rather good Bryan Ferry imitation, Simon attempts a rather opaque and pretentious set of lyrics, while the percussion and synth do a very credible crashing ocean/waves effect. A musical success, although lines like 'gorging your sanhedralites' make it heavy going.

5) **Careless Memories.** Another single (released 21 April 1981), and the last track on side one. Harder-edged than much of their recorded work since: a menacing, echoing guitar creeps over a thudding drumtrack, and over it all the vocal line, with a cutting quality rarely displayed elsewhere, sings of death, gunsmoke, and empty summer days of lost love.

Side Two.

6) **Nightboat.** The beat and the feel is oriental and atmospheric. 'Am I alone or is the river alive?' asked Simon, waiting for the nightboat. The exotic texture of the song is well established by the swirling synthesiser at the start, into which the beat and melody gradually intrude, building up a sensation of impending doom in an intro that continues long enough to almost convince one that the song will be instrumental.

7) **Sound Of Thunder.** Waiting is a recurrent Duran Duran image. Waiting for nightboats. For the sound of thunder. For enlightenment. *Sound Of Thunder* was the first song Simon wrote with the band - the lyrics were written the day after his first audition. Nearer to the sound of their later work than much of the album, *Sound* is a song about the nature of success.

8) **Friends Of Mine.** Probably the most successful track on the album, and, in terms of pure pop, one of their most successful ever. The song is a homage to - or at the least, an acknowledgement of - the bands that came before them. The classically simple chorus (contrasting with the staccato and almost atonal verse) of 'Georgie Davies is coming out/No more heroes we twist and shout/Oh no not me I'm not too late/And I know that I'm not waiting anymore', tips its hat to such bands as The Stranglers, Bowie, The Kinks, and The Beatles. Simon asks 'Why don't they drop the bomb?' a question as unfashionable as the later *faux-pas*, 'You're about as easy as a nuclear war'.

9) **Tel Aviv.** An instrumental portrait of a city: experimental, although tuneful. Dreamy guitar, arabian bells, strange synth, Middle Eastern cries and wails, combine with a repetitive melody line carried by orchestral strings. Pleasant and intelligent.

Duran Duran was a first album, and a good one. The band showed that they were more than just five pretty faces in frilly shirts and lip-gloss. At its best the album is clean, powerful, energetic and memorable pop music: easily accessible, and well-constructed, with melodic and often almost hypnotically catchy hook-lines. At its worst it was either pretentious or overambitious, depending on your viewpoint. This positioned them in the public eye as a Birmingham bunch of Spandau clones, and their early interviews were spent denying they were influenced by Spandau ('How can you be influenced by a band that's only released two singles?', asked Nick Rhodes), denying that they had copied Spandau's clothes or image, slagging off Spandau, praising Spandau, making fun of journalists who mentioned Spandau, making fun of journalists who seemed as if they were about to mention Spandau...

In May 1981 Duran Duran paid the first of what was to be a great number of visits to the United States of America, playing very minor venues and a few support

New Romantics







dates. They were still smarting from the relative failure of *Careless Memories*, released at the end of April, and which reached Number Thirty-Seven in the UK charts, making it Duran's all-time worst selling UK single.

To accompany the album, they played their second UK tour in late June and early July - garnering still more media coverage - including a review in prestigious British newspaper *The Guardian*.

'...they played with quite remarkable confidence and attack, sounding far less delicate than they do on record.

'Like Spandau Ballet they start with an electronic disco style with thumping percussion and swirling keyboards and synthesiser, but over this they sung bouncy, highly melodic songs that, at their best, might otherwise be classed as high quality unashamed pop.

'...This band should survive, regardless of any fads they may or may not follow.' (Robin Denselow, *Guardian* 11 July 81).

(Did you spot the Spandau comparison?)

Although the screaming had not yet reached the peaks it was to attain a little later, it had begun. The shows were attended by multitudes far more exotically dressed than the band, who had started slightly to back-pedal in things.

On July 13, *Girls On Film* was released, and reached Number Five in the UK charts, proving that the chart failure of *Careless Memories* was just a one-off.

Things were really looking up for the band: they had been in existence for a year, and already had had three UK hits (well, two and a half...), and were becoming popular across the world. Australia, Portugal and Sweden were three countries in which *Planet Earth* had reached Number One. Thus the series of European festival dates in July was a wise move.

By August the debut album was riding high in the charts, and the band had begun to disassociate themselves from the New Romantic movement. As Simon explained to the *Daily Mirror*: 'We don't intend to fade away when the fashion is finished. In fact the New Romantic thing is dead as far as we're concerned. We don't dress in those exotic kind of clothes anymore'. He also told a story to *The Sun* that doesn't seem to have been repeated elsewhere - that he had joined Duran Duran because of a broken romance with a girl he'd met at Birmingham University. 'She said I'd never make it in music, so I did it just to spite her. It was sweet revenge, somehow.'

Early September brought Duran's first minor scandal. *Girls On Film* had been made into a video with Godley and Creme directing, and a plenitude of unclad models doing rude things. It was instantly banned (or more correctly, not shown) by most television stations (except Dutch television, for some reason). It was the band having prurient fun, while trying to appeal to a more male audience than they had heretofore. This was not to be the last time that the fur was to fly over that particular video.

The band were accused of sexism by the popular rock press, an accusation which they never particularly tried to deny. Their viewpoint on the matter seemed to be that men were men and women were women, with fairly clearly defined roles. As Andy put it, after his marriage: 'My wife's a better cook than I am - but she doesn't play very good guitar. Gentlemen should be bold and open doors for women. I wouldn't want a lady opening a door for me. If every man looked after one woman everything would be fine.' Nick Rhodes went a little further: 'The thought of something like a woman fireman is very silly. I believe women should be paid the same for doing the



New Romantic antics

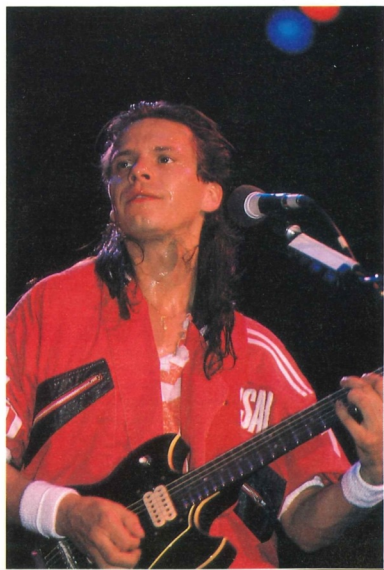
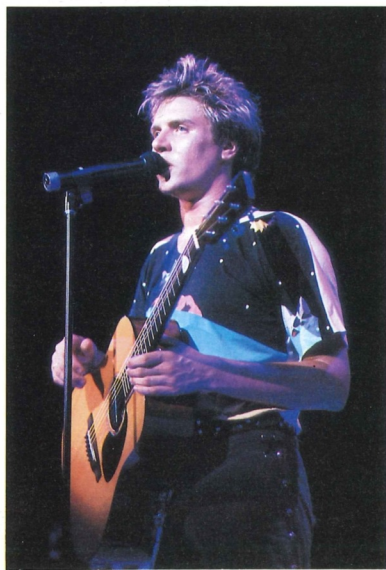
same jobs as men, but there again, I'd still much rather women be feminine.' Sexual politics aside, the *Girls On Film* video has done nothing to damage the band's success, and is generally regarded as a piece of harmless fun.

A second US visit followed, then a show at the Captain Video club in Paris at which EMI were rumoured to have spent over eleven thousand pounds on ferrying out Duran Duran followers from Birmingham and providing a champagne buffet.

My Own Way was released in November (reaching Number Fourteen in the UK charts), and was followed by a third UK headline tour, kicked off by a 'For old times sake' concert at the Rum Runner in early December for five hundred lucky fans, and finishing with three concerts at the Birmingham Odeon just before Christmas. 'The band have made tremendous advances just in the few short months since they last appeared in Birmingham,' said the Birmingham Post's reviewer, singling out Simon for special praise for 'Bags of new energy and confidence.'

February and March of the New Year were taken up with the band's first tour of Australia and Japan, both places for which the band have a great deal of time. It was in Australia that they had their first Number One, and it was in Japan that they first found themselves being treated as superstars - with caravans of taxis following them down streets, and stores in which they were shopping bursting at the seams with thousands of excited fans, to the point where the police had to close down one department store and escort them back to their hotel.

But no band could survive on the strength of just one album, and it was to be their second record that was to really show the world that Duran Duran wasn't just a flash in the pan. A one word title. Three letters. *Rio*.











Rio: (Spanish). A river. A metaphorical river (as 'a river of blood'). A torrent.

Rio Grande: (Literally, *Big River*.) The river that marks the border between Texas and Mexico, 1,885 miles long.

Rio: Short for Rio de Janeiro, (Portuguese: literally 'River of January'), Capital city of Brazil. Population: 5,093,232.

Rio: (Colloquial) A cup of coffee.

Rio: (Variant of Ryo.) A unit of money. (Japanese).

While the first album was undeniably popular, it was to be *Rio*, the second album, that was to establish the band as a supergroup. Slicker and more polished than the first album, it was written (of necessity) in a different style. Instead of songs constructed and reworked live over a three year period, Duran Duran were forced to write the nine songs of *Rio* from scratch in a limited period of time. However, this allowed them to create a more cohesive work; if not a 'concept album' as such, then a more subtle pop album, in which almost every song was intentionally commercial and slick.

Brussels, September 1981

5

RIO GRANDE

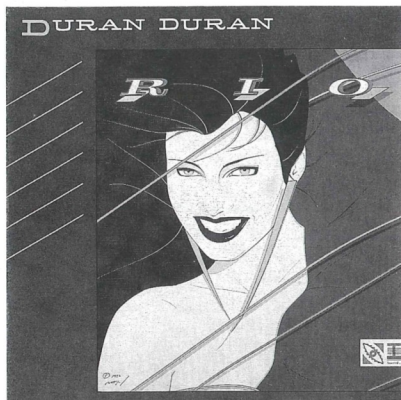












At the time of its release the band were to laud it as a radical departure from their previous work. Later Simon was to remark that with *Rio* they actually didn't go far enough, sticking to the same formula as that of the first album, as they were too scared of losing their initial audience if it was too different. However, it was obvious that the band was developing and maturing.

From the cover illustration, of a cosmetic-ad slickly drawn green-eyed, dark-haired latin beauty (in the everpresent black, white and red), to the glossy photos of the band and a blurred city nightlife, and the lyrics on the inner sleeve, it was obvious that this was to be a far more lavish album than the first.

The band had shed the New Romantic tag, and the sound had become sophisticated. The band's self-created image, soon to be reinforced by their videos, was one of a group of young jet-setters and playboys, basking in the high life. Yet the image, as the boys knew, was a fake; they were by no means rich at this point. Not yet.

Rio. The Album.

Side One. The 'dance' side.

- 1) **Rio.** The 'Rio' of the title is neither a cup of coffee, nor a unit of Japanese money, but America, or perhaps an exotic dancer (like the girl on the cover). Sliding from an eerie intro to a jazz/disco beat, it tells of Rio, 'the bird of paradise'. The video and catchy hook-line chorus have made it one of the band's most successful and popular songs - so much so that when Andy Taylor opened a restaurant in his home town of Whitley Bay, he called it *Rio*.
- 2) **My Own Way.** Released as a single November 16 1981, this was the band's fourth UK hit. A pleasant pop song, quite punchy with a pleasant hook but lyrically fairly bland.
- 3) **Lonely In Your Nightmare.** A melodic and wistful song. The images are of infertility, bleakness, barrenness. A colourless winter; stone, nightmare and graveyard. A song about bringing colour to an otherwise drab and monochrome life - something the band were to highlight on the video, and explore further as a theme in their later work.
- 4) **Hungry Like The Wolf.** At first glance an uptempo disco song - but listen more closely. From the initial laugh onwards the atmosphere is one of menace. The lover as werewolf, love as a hunt, the loved one as victim, the taste of the chase. The Hammer-horror feel is reinforced by the instrumental 'baying' of the middle eight.
Released as a UK single on May 4, 1982, it gave the band their first US hit single in late Autumn 1982.
- 5) **Hold Back The Rain.** A stuttering synthesiser segues into a ballsy guitar intro, and Simon Le Bon sings a love song. Will she come back and help him to hold back the rain? The song is dated 19 March 1982; was this a specific incident? A specific person?

Side Two. Although ostensibly the slower and more thoughtful side, it still produced a Number One hit single, *Save A Prayer (Till The Morning After)*.

6) **New Religion.** Dateline 27 August 1980. Subtitled 'A dialogue between the ego and the alter ego'. A complex and ambitious song, if a mite pretentious. Lyrically it displays *Le Bon* at his most impenetrable - what is the new religion? Whatever it is, it's a pleasant song.

7) **Last Chance On The Stairway.** Lyrics written exactly a year later - 27 August 1981. ('There's lots of little noises on that one. It starts off with a cigarette being lit and a voice going "cheers" and clinking glasses and party noises.' Simon *Le Bon*.) A song of love and *l'esprit d'escalier* - the spirit of the stairway: the things you think of later you wish you'd said at the time. A series of glittering and unreal images, a world of movies, parties, theatre. An excellent bass line contributes to the pleasantly poppy effect of the melody.

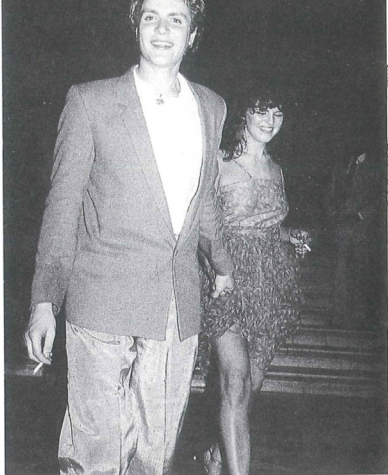
8) **Save A Prayer (Till The Morning After).** An immediate UK hit on the week of its release, March 14th, 1983. A tuneful and melodic song, the whining eastern synthesiser and oddly hollow drums giving it a pleasantly different feel. However, lyrically it embodies both the best and worst of Duran Duran. 'Some people call it a one-night stand but I call it paradise,' sings Simon.

9) **The Chauffeur.** Originally a poem written by Simon in 1978, two years before he'd ever heard of Duran Duran. The most sophisticated song on the album, staccato and spare, showing the band at their most Roxy Music, Simon's vocals slipping from Ferry to Bowie. Melodically shimmering, including a whole panoply of strange background noises (apparently the whirring at the end was taken from a record of insect noises - it's a cricket chirping). Drifting dustmotes and sunlight and sliding shadows, while the chauffeur drives his lady through the country, in what is perhaps the best, most sustained, song on the album.

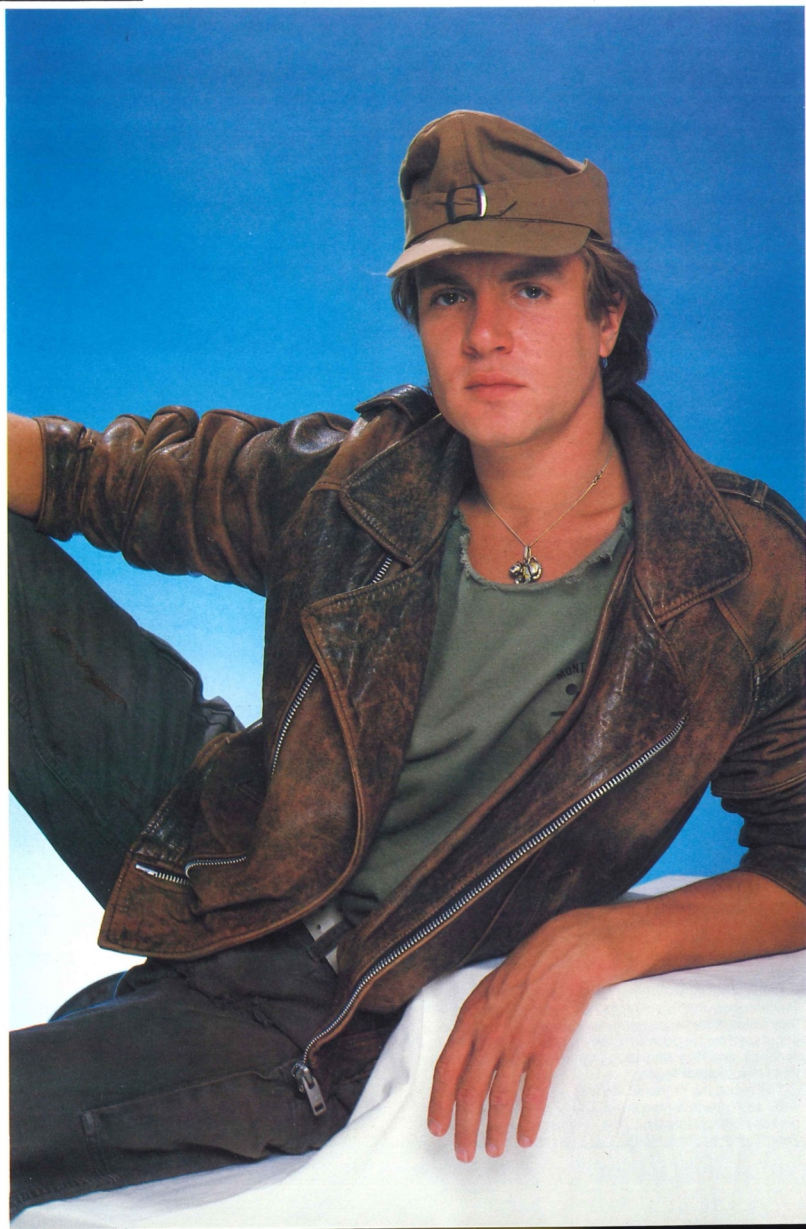
Although *Rio* was a far more sophisticated album than *Duran Duran*, the band were never quite satisfied with it. (Indeed, Capitol Records in the US allowed them to remix some of it *after* its American release, as a result of which four of the five songs on the first side are noticeably different on current American copies to those on the US first pressing and all non-American copies.) The cover artwork was done by New York graphic artist John Nagel, described as the 'Warhol of the Eighties'. His work is well-known for its style and elegance, and he tends to concentrate on portraits-from-photos of celebrities, such as 'superbitch' Joan Collins. His sophisticated, flat designs have been described as 'High Fashion rather than High Art', and the *Rio* commission really set the seal on this. In the same way that Warhol was fascinated by such people as Marilyn Monroe as ikons of Americana, Nagel's fascination has been for celebrities, whom he described as *not* real people. There was originally a plan to give away a free silk-screen print with every copy of the album, but this was to prove too expensive, and was abandoned.

Rio, according to Simon, was a celebration of America. The title was John's, and they had had it for ages before they actually came up with a song to fit. They were impressed by the optimism, the candour and the colour of America, and they wanted to create a song and an album that reflected that feeling.

The recording of the album was a period of intensive work and growth for the band. There were a number of personality conflicts while it was being recorded, conflicts John Taylor ascribed to the fact that the band were



At the party after the 'Captain Video' gig





'growing up so much. We probably aged about five years in the last two.' At the time of recording the band were very happy with the album – or at least felt it to be a great deal better than their first album, describing it as the first *real* Duran Duran album. It was widely regarded as having been constructed to appeal to the American market.

Although this must have been a consideration in the album's creation, John Taylor stated in May 82, in an interview with *Sounds*' Betty Page, that 'In January we were going through a very paranoid sort of a period, and thinking that we should write an album for the people who bought the first album, or maybe one for America – it was absolute madness. We ended up going back to basics, as if we'd never done the first album.'

Nick continued, 'The way I viewed it was that we should just make a record to please ourselves first, which is the way we usually work and what we ended up doing, cos if you think about things to please other people you end up doing something highly disastereous...If you don't have any faith in it, no-one else will.'

All the band (except, for some never-explained reason, Roger Taylor) felt the album was far more commercial than its predecessor. It went to Number Two on its release in the UK, and remained in the charts for over a year.

On completion of *Rio*, the band flew out to Sri Lanka (once Ceylon) to film videos. Sri Lanka was chosen after one of their managers had been there for a holiday, and felt it would make a good location for a video. The money was advanced to them from EMI, to be repaid from record royalties. With an initial fifty thousand pounds they set off, with a twenty-five man entourage and crew, for the town of Kandy. They settled down in the Queens Hotel, along with what John Taylor described as 'the whole MGM number' of make-up people, video crew,

The first night of Duran's first major British tour, Brighton Dome, June 1981



wardrobe people, models and so forth. In the various locations they found on the island, they filmed the videos for *Hungry Like The Wolf*, *Save A Prayer* and part of *Lonely In Your Nightmare* before they ran out of time.

EMI had plans for the videos produced to be part of the soon-to-be-produced EMI videodisc catalogue, in fact probably to launch the line. There was a lot of press about it, but in the end the EMI videodisc was not released, which may well be a good thing for a world that already has too many incompatible video systems.

The New Romantic movement was finished, and Duran Duran were not going to be caught in something that was in any way liable to render them last year's thing. They made a conscious decision to shake off any remnants of the image, which they now considered passé. As John Taylor put it: 'We seemed to be getting stuck with this New Romantic nancy-boy image, so we decided it was time to get back to nature.'

It was over one hundred degrees in the shade in Sri Lanka (a great deal hotter than Birmingham at that time of year, or any other time of the year) and the band shared a number of bizarre experiences, many of them concerning elephants. Such as John's: 'We were shooting one video in a region infested with malaria and this morning I had the privilege of an elephant pissing all over me.' (More on that malaria a little later.) Roger Taylor's experience was even worse. 'My elephant,' he was quoted as saying, 'smelt another which was on heat and went charging off down river. I managed to jump off just before he mounted the other elephant - it was the most frightening experience of my life!'

The incident was chronicled by rock-journalist Mike Nicholls, who discovered the band somewhat the worse for drink in a hotel lobby while on his honeymoon. They were sitting around drinking champagne at three hundred pounds a case - not bad for working boys.

Nick and Andy reached Sri Lanka after the rest. They had remained behind completing the mix of *Rio* and the live version of *Careless Memories* that was to be the B-side of *Hungry Like The Wolf*, and they flew straight out as soon as it was finished, just in time to start shooting.

Sri Lanka can be seen in all its glory on the three videos; lovely beaches, Buddhist temples, mountainsides, rivers, steaming jungles, rope-ladders across treacherous ravines - all very Indiana Jones (and was it merely coincidence that the sequel to *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*, was shot in Sri Lanka - one very famous scene actually being shot on a rickety rope bridge. Must have been...) Add to this the marketplace, cobras - which scared John Taylor silly - and the many extras (who were paid the princely sum of a ball-point pen each) in their native costumes, and something very exotic begins to emerge. They were a long way from the real world.

From Sri Lanka they flew to Australia for five dates, and it was at the end of this tour that Andy Taylor collapsed on stage, and was unable to return for the encore. He recovered enough to do the Japanese tour immediately following (from April through to May 25), but he collapsed once more on his return to England, this time more seriously.

The collapse was variously diagnosed as malaria, pyrexia (a fancy term for jungle fever) or - according to the Sun newspaper - overindulgence in cocaine (also blamed for Andy's second collapse, in August 1982). Whatever the cause, it meant that the planned tour of Europe had to be postponed while he recovered. After a month of rest and recuperation the band set out for





Simon hams around at the party celebrating Duran's triumphant headlining gig at the Hammersmith Odeon, July 1981

Antigua, in Leeward Islands, where the final couple of the exotic quintet of videos were to be filmed.

These were *Nightboat* - featuring an attack by zombies long before John Landis ever got them to step out with Michael Jackson - and the archetypal Duran Duran video for the boys on the yacht, *Rio*.

Rio (and all the other Duran Duran videos) are covered at greater length elsewhere in this book. However, one brief comment on a form of strange immortality achieved by this video: Ferguson videos are advertised in England by classical music personality Andre Previn, ex-conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra. In the commercial for Ferguson Television and videos he is seen watching a video of Duran Duran's, *Rio*. (However, it can probably be assumed that this is less due to Andre Previn's fondness for Duran Duran than it is to the commercial relationship between Ferguson and Thorn - EMI, the parent company, which has a reason for promoting the group's interests.)

The single of *Hungry Like A Wolf* was released in England in early May, followed by *Rio*, the album, on May - originally slated to tie in with the European Tour, but released without a backup promotional tour when Andy Taylor fell ill. The Antigua filming continued from the 1 June through to June 14.

In June Duran Duran started a thirty-four date tour of North America, crossing from the US to Canada and back. The last twelve concerts were done with new wave pop band, Blondie, who had invited the boys to be their support group. Duran Duran were pleased; no longer did they have to pay to support a larger band. As John Taylor put it: 'It wasn't one of those business things of seeing how much we'd pay them.'

The high point of the Blondie tour was the Toronto show, at the CNE Stadium, when Duran Duran 'blew Blondie offstage in front of twenty thousand people.' As Deborah Harry said at the time, 'Duran Duran gave me a hard act to follow.'

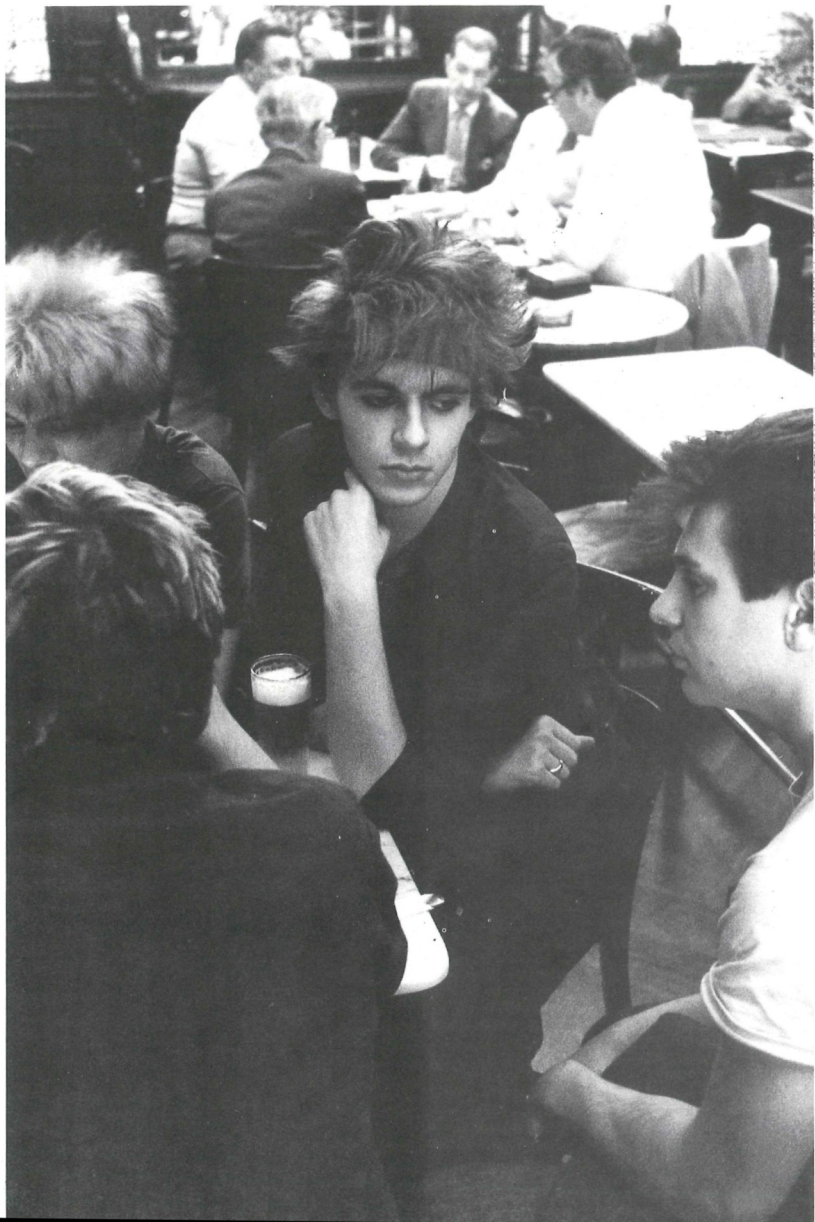
Initially the band were more than a little scared - for the first time in two years they were playing to people who hadn't come specifically to see them, and they were also playing to audiences much larger than those they were used to. Duran really profited by it, if not financially













Not a Duran T-shirt in sight!

then in learning how to work crowds. As Simon explained, 'There are lots of little tricks you can use to get them to respond, until you've built up to a whipping big orgasm and everybody loves you and rushes out to buy your album the next day.'

It was on this tour that they conquered many American rock journalists, and gained a great deal of musical credibility. However they failed to make the all-important US breakthrough, and *Rio* made no significant impact on the US charts. Not at that time, anyway.

Save A Prayer was released in the UK on the Ninth of August, and went to Number Two, as had *Hungry Like the Wolf*. Still no English Number One, which was a source of irritation to the band.

From late September to mid-October Duran Duran played the delayed European Tour, put off from earlier in the year due to Andy's illness, then returned to the UK for their fourth British headline tour. They played a total of five concerts at London's Hammersmith Odeon - very unusual for a British band, as usually only visiting foreign artists are able to fill the halls for what length of time. Three of the concerts were filmed for the Duran Duran Live video, and it was on one of these concerts that Steve Harley joined the band to sing with Simon his song *Come Up And See Me (Make Me Smile)*, the number with which he himself had had a British Number One hit seven years earlier, in 1975.

It was less than a month earlier that Duran Duran had got the news that Simon Le Bon described as 'Amazing...like the biggest birthday present I've ever had!' The single, *Hungry Like The Wolf* and the album, *Rio*, had made it into the American charts. Duran Duran had finally made it, not because of the many concerts they'd done in the US, the old fashioned way. They had made it from a far more recent development.

Music Television.

Video had unleashed the torrent.



"Only the Black Queen could know the whereabouts of Duran Duran, and she has but one vulnerable moment - when she's in her Chamber of Dreams..." **Dildano**, in *Barbarella*.

"Video is fantasy, where you can do anything. For us, it's the third medium with recording and live shows. It's a very demanding medium - we approach it as an artform." - **Simon Le Bon**

Perhaps the biggest innovation of the Eighties, at least as far as rock music is concerned, is the widespread use of videos. Videos to entertain, to inform, to titillate, and to promote. Currently, almost every individual or band releasing a single will have a promotional video made to accompany it. The video increases their chances of getting television time; it allows the artist control over image and presentation, and often allows the band or singer to play at being a director or a star.

Promotional videos range from the poor, unmemorable - sometimes downright embarrassing - to the very good indeed. Sometimes the video is actually better than the song it is meant to promote (thus giving rise to the 'Nice video, shame about the song' crack).

For once, the late Seventies and early Eighties found British bands ahead of their transatlantic rivals - an important factor in the success of such bands as Duran Duran, Culture Club and the Eurythmics. American television stations - especially the round-the-clock cable TV stations, like MTV - needed good music videos. The British had them, the Americans didn't. The British bands got the airplay. For the first time ever, songs which were getting *no* radio exposure whatever began to sell well in record shops and even to chart, purely because their videos were being played.

Duran Duran's videos did all these things: they indulged the band's fantasies; they allowed the band to play at being directors and stars; they were to create a popular public image for the band (one they later found themselves having to live down); they were to convey serious messages, as much as is possible in the format; and, perhaps most important, they were to crack the all-important America market.

Rio (the album) had been released for over six months in the US before it made the American charts. And it made the charts, at the same time as the *Hungry Like The Wolf* single, due to the considerable amount of exposure they received from the Sri Lanka/Antigua videos. Despite the cost - over seventeen thousand pounds per four minute video - they have made up for it a thousandfold in creating new audiences for the band, and keeping them in front of the public eye.

DURAN DURAN VIDEOGRAPHY.

1) **PLANET EARTH**. Location: St. Johns Wood. Director: Russell Mulcahy. Producer: Lexi Godfrey. Lighting: Mike Sutcliffe. Editor: Tim Waddell.

A head surrounded by clouds. Lightning flashes. Duran Duran are seen playing, apparently on a pillar, on the sides of which is a distorted map of the world. The band are dressed in their most New Romantic clothes and make up; the camera cuts to almost random shots of the band, dancers, a model, and images of fire, air and water. Information crosses the screen: *'The area of the surface*

6





of the Earth is 196,537,600 miles'; '247,680 people are born every day'; the percentage of men to women, the oldest known song, then the ambiguous "'DOOMSDAY'" The song ends with Simon leaping 'off the world'.

Probably the weakest of Duran Duran's videos. The effects seem cheap, and the symbolism (both that of Earth, Air, Fire and Water - the four traditional elements that comprise the universe, and the band playing 'on top of the world') rather pointless. The boys look pretty, in a self-conscious way, but Simon's dancing is very weak, and the camerawork and special effects come across as shoddy.

2) **CARELESS MEMORIES.** Location: Soho. Credited as a Perry Haines Production. Directed by Terry Jones.

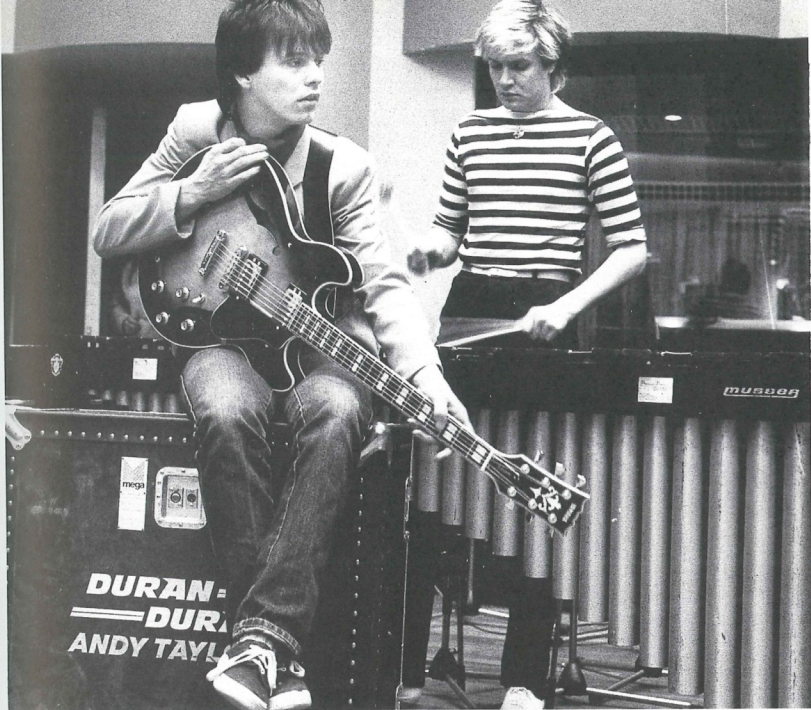
A white room alternates with a film of the band 'live'. While the band plays (well, and confidently) a set of evocative but simple images unfold: four of the band around a table, examining a sheet of film transparencies; Simon sits alone on a settee; a phone off the hook, beside a slim vase of tulips (wasn't that an old pregnancy test/abortion advice service advert?); the flowers are thrown in slow motion across the room; brief shots of a dark-haired girl; photographs; love-letters blowing about; the girl vanishes down a passage; Le Bon, live, forms his fingers into a gun and blows away the smoke.

A far more adult and confident, if still undistinguished video. The band come across as less uncomfortable and self-consciously 'posey' than in *Planet Earth*. That the video is still more of a sequence of pictures - the 'careless memories' of the title - than a coherent whole, as later videos were to prove, is apparent, but it is still a great improvement. The use of the plain white room set adds a quality of unreality and timelessness to the scenes, enhancing the 'memory' effect.

3) **Girls On Film.** Location: Shepperton Studios. Directors: Godley and Creme. Producer: Christine Smith. Camera: Nick Knowland. Editor: Terry Bennet. 'Duran Duran's *Girls On Film* video was naughtier than a lot of the soft porn videos we get to review' - Editor of a leading 'Men's Magazine'.

A studio set - something like a boxing ring with catwalk - is being erected, and behind it the stage is set up for the band to perform. Models arrive in the dressing room, Nikon and Hasselblad cameras are loaded with 35mm film. The shoot begins: girls in negligees pillow fight, revealing breasts and scattering feathers. They kiss, pour wine on their bodies. A girl in a see-through top climbs the cat-walk, enters the ring and demolishes a sumo wrestler; a girl in a nurse's costume rubs him down with oil, leaving him exhausted. A girl rides a man in a horse mask, then washes him down. A girl in a black leotard falls and writhes in a child's paddling pool, and on being rescued by a lifeguard, revives, and begins to kiss him passionately. A naked girl rubs an ice-cube on her nipple in close-up. As a finale two semi-nude girls enthusiastically mud-wrestle; the film ends with their being washed down.

Easily Duran Duran's most controversial video, it was directed by Kevin Godley and Lol Creme (once of band 10cc, since then video directors *par excellence*). The film purports to show 'girls on film', that is to say, the shooting of soft-porn fantasies for, one assumes, a glossy magazine. Visually interesting, the film is too slick and posey to be truly erotic.



The video was decried by feminists (on the 'This Video degrades women' basis) while the band justified it on the grounds that it is tongue-in-cheek, which it is, and that the women keep coming out on top, which they do. John Taylor once claimed that the storyline was written to let the band 'get to work with more chicks'. Although Simon Le Bon claimed John was joking, he has admitted that one of the attractions of doing what was essentially a soft-core porn video, would be in being there and actually seeing it filmed.

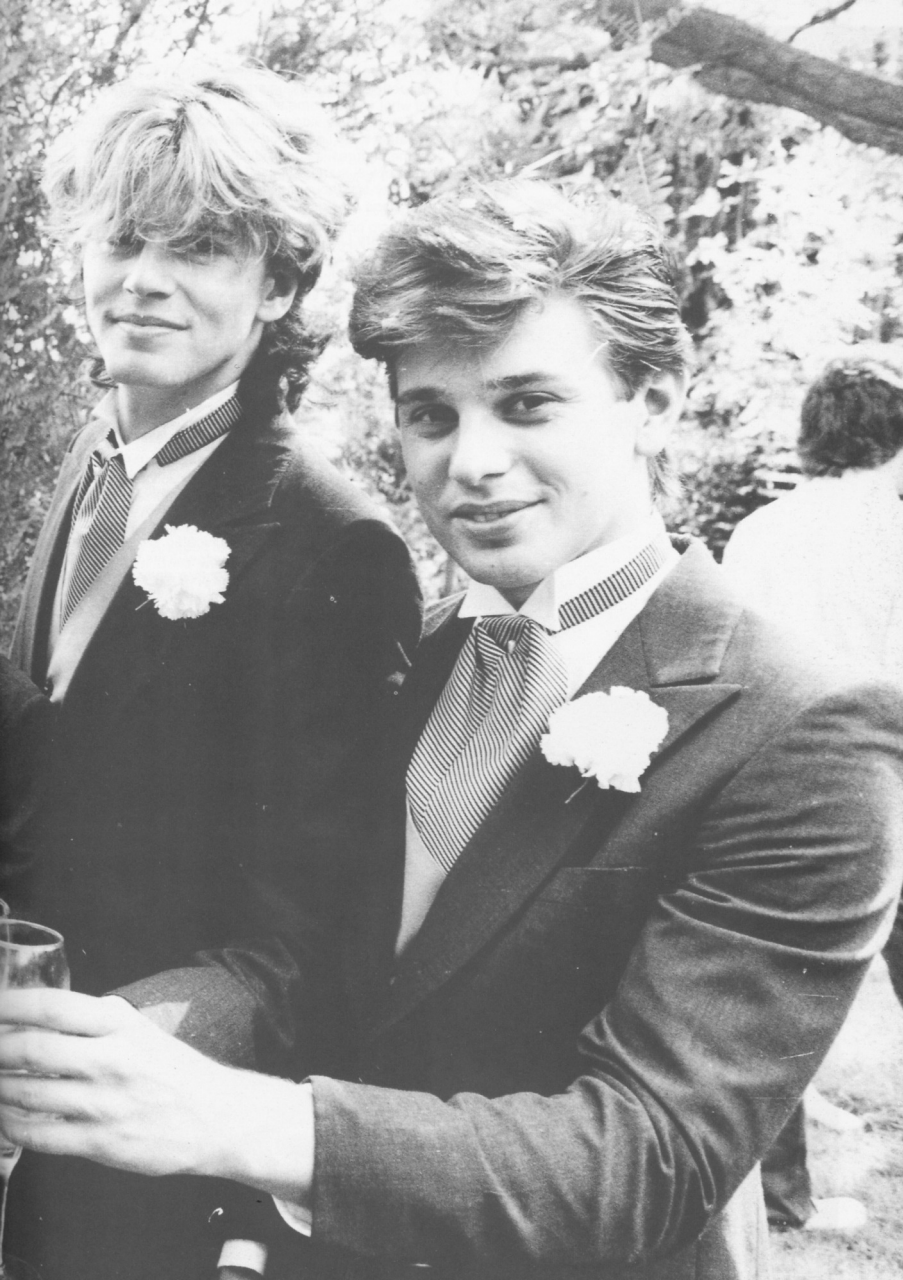
A visually interesting film, if sexually immature.

4) **My Own Way.** Location: St Johns Wood. Director: Russell Mulcahy. Producer: Eric Fellner. Camera: Nic Knowland. Editor: Tim Waddell.

The background and the band are red, black and white. Andy Taylor swirls a matador cloak, the band start to play, and a girl's shadow dances behind Simon. The band continue to play; a high-heeled shoe steps across the frame; a red and black clad girl dances down the stairs; a green parrot hops about the keyboards; four girls dance across the set, scattering a cascade of glitter from their dresses as they do; a single red rose; a final fall of confetti.

With plenty of split-screen on various band members, this video – almost an exercise in red and black – was the last of Duran Duran's videos to be, obviously, just another rock promotional video. The girls and parrot do





Previous page: Andy's wedding, July 1982

perk things up somewhat, and it is technically sharp and smooth, but still very unimaginative, especially in the light of what was to come after it.

The next five videos are the Exotic Quintet, filmed on location in Sri Lanka and Antigua. They each contain, to some degrees, a storyline, and were shot in lush, subtropical surroundings at a cost estimated between seventy-five thousand and two hundred and fifty thousand pounds.

5). **Hungry Like The Wolf.** Location: Sri Lanka. Director: Russell Mulcahy. Producer: Eric Fellner. Camera: Pete Sinclair. Editor: Dave Gardner.

It starts with a girl laughing and some exotic Sri Lankan shots, then moves in to a restaurant/bar. At one table a man is charming a cobra. Nearby is Simon Le Bon, in a wide-brimmed hat and dark glasses, looking like a refugee from *Raiders Of The Lost Ark!* Simon throws over the table and leaves, to hunt down a girl somewhere out in the jungles of Ceylon; a dusky skinned girl with leopardskin markings. He travels downriver in a dugout canoe, crosses a hanging rope-bridge. Meanwhile, back in the marketplace, the rest of the band are searching for him, showing people his photograph. The girl's face blends into that of a leopard. Like two wild creatures the lovers meet - Simon's face now exotically decorated - and together they writhe around in the undergrowth.

The plot is concisely communicated, the atmosphere well-sustained. The film tells a story, it fits the lyrics, and is one of the most successful of their early videos. There is also an interesting image, that of a page turning as one moves from segment to segment. The factor that distinguishes it from the other 'location' videos is the sensible use of the Sri Lankan locale as more than just an unusual backdrop.



6) **Save A Prayer (Till The Morning After)**. Location: Sri Lanka. (Credits - as above, but Tim Waddell editor).

Interspersed with shots of Simon in an empty room on a sofa, then romancing a girl with wine in his room are shots of: children playing ring-a-roses on the beach; native fishers on poles at sunset; an aerial shot of the band atop a ruined temple; the ubiquitous snake-charmer; washing elephants; children in saffron robes (the traditional garb of Buddhist priesthood) and gigantic statues of Buddha; the band passing through a field of pillars...

A pleasant video, if a little heavy-handed in its use of the prayer motif, and in the 'these are our Sri Lankan holiday home movies' feel of the segments. ('One scene we had about 125 extras, and we just paid them a ball point pen each' - John Taylor)

7) **Rio**. Location: Antigua. Director: Russell Mulcahy. Producer: Jack Adams. Camera: Nic Knowland. Editor: Tim Waddell.

Our videos seem to be taken so seriously. The *Rio* one was just a total piss-take of the whole jet-set yacht scene.' John Taylor.

Almost plotless, this video shows the five boys indulging their fantasies on a yacht in the Antilles. They play about, sending themselves up. A Jamesbondian girl steps from the sea, a knife strapped to her thigh - Roger Taylor hams it up, as a 'Bond' with a giant crab on his foot. John Taylor reads a Charlton *Fighting Army* comic, then charges across the beach in black and white. A giant red ball almost knocks Simon Le Bon into the sea, after he narrowly misses stepping on a banana skin. A smashed mirror re-forms. Many-coloured dyes are poured over the model. And dominating the video, the ever-present image of the yacht, symbol of the super-rich, the jet-set, the leisured classes.

Perhaps their best-known video, although not their best, *Rio* was to do much to establish the popular image of the band, one that they have since had to live down and deny, an image of indolence and of the 'jet-set' life. (John Taylor makes much of the fact that he hated the yacht, and was violently seasick while filming on it.) That the band were unhappy with it even then shows in the mannered way in which they attempt to send the whole thing up while at the same time trying to appear a comfortable part of it. And the video itself embodies these faults. It is tongue-in-cheek, but falls into the trap of so much 'tongue-in-cheek' material, of neither being done fully seriously, nor badly enough to be a send-up. The amateurishness of the band is reflected in the production: a model aeroplane flying past; the saxophone player apparently on a raft mid-ocean, revealed by a breaking wave to be embarrassingly close to the shore: moments like this are nothing else but amateurish.

The finest moments are during the chorus, with the band together on the yacht, scudding towards the camera - at which point the video is played straight, and works.

8) **Lonely In Your Nightmare**. Location: London and Sri Lanka. Director: Russell Mulcahy. Producers: Jacki Byford, Eric Fellner. Camera: Peter Sinclair, Pete Bizou. Editor: Tim Waddell.

(Note: on the *Duran Duran* video album, this track acts to bridge *Planet Earth* and *Careless Memories*.) Simon Le

Bon, in an empty house alone, examines some dusty polaroids, stares out of the window at a black-clad figure walking down the road. Then, in colour, a girl is seen, asleep in a four-poster, lace-hung bed. (The same bed and bedroom of the *Save A Prayer* video.) The action switches back and forth, between the girl in an exotic bazaar in Sri Lanka, complete with shots of cobras and whip dancers, and the girl and band in a singularly unexotic London streetmarket, shot in black and white. She sits on a park bench and feeds the pigeons. In the derelict house, the polaroids are shown to be of the girl. She rolls in her sleep in the lace bed. The figure turns away from the window, to reveal each member of Duran Duran in turn.

An excellent film, manipulating the various images - the sleeping beauty, the watcher at the window - with confidence and dexterity. It adds a further dimension to the lyrics, and leaves some aspects pleasantly ambiguous: is the nightmare the drab and mundane black and white English world that the band grew up in? Is it the exotic Sri Lankan location? Does the watcher really want to play Prince Charming to her Sleeping Beauty, or has he some more sinister intention? Is this a simple love song... or something nastier? And would it have been the same moody video if Duran hadn't run out of time in Sri Lanka?

9). **Nightboat.** Location: Antigua. Director: Russell Mulcahy. Producer: Jacki Adams. Camera: Nic Knowland. Editor: Tim Waddell.

The scene is an Antigua quay, outside a beach hire shop. Three of the band arrive in a rubber motorboat. Simon and Nick are talking. Simon: 'She'll be here soon.' Nick: 'If she comes.' Simon: 'Nobody even knows what she looks like.' He begins to recite Mercutio's Queen Mab speech (from *Romeo and Juliet*), and drifts off into a dream. On the beach giant crabs are scuttling about. The atmosphere is tense: the waiting, referred to in so many early Duran Duran songs, is almost palpable. In Simon's imagination, strange zombies and snake people emerge from the woods and water, they glow with an obscene blue light. He retreats into a house, locking the things outside. The *Nightboat* - an eerie vessel with ragged, tattered, shroud-like sails, emerges from the darkness, and Simon sails away on it, leaving the zombies on the shore.

An artistically ambitious film, highly atmospheric. Although Simon's soliloquy comes over as a trifle pretentious, the waiting sequence combines well with the zombies and the *Nightboat* to form a haunting video.

10). **THE CHAUFFEUR.** London. Credits as given: Produced and directed by Ian Emes.

An exotically dressed (or perhaps, undressed) woman is being driven around London in a 1940s Wolseley limousine. In her bedroom, another woman dresses in 1940s erotic underwear - suspender belts, stockings, bra, lace gloves. She puts on a trenchcoat and walks to an underground carpark, where the limousine arrives. The women meet; one undoes the other's trenchcoat, and they dance. The chauffeur is no longer a handsome young man, but an androgynous blonde girl, who removes her coat and cap to reveal herself topless. The women dance. *The Chauffeur* video comes across as a pleasant period piece, almost an exercise in *film noir*. Filmed in black and white it is not so much about

lesbianism as a return to the *Girls On Film* theme of images which men are meant to find titillating. However, it is less crudely done than *Girls*, and acts as a well-crafted interpretation of what is undeniably an erotic song, than simply as a promotional video for the band.

11). **Is There Something I Should Know?** Location: London. Director: Russell Mulcahy. Producer: Jacki Byford. Camera: Pete Sinclair, Pete Bizou. Editor: Tim Waddell.

A studio film of Duran Duran singing in a futurist studio alternates and blends with odd images: a green glass globe smashes, a red ball bounces up steps, Nick Rhodes clasps a sextant. A small boy runs through a black and white forest, clutching a red ball. Back in the studio, a baby watches Duran Duran videos that appear on the stairs. A boy scribbles on a dusty map. Bowler-hatted businessmen swarm the steps outside the British Museum, step out from behind pillars in unison. Then they appear in a forest, measuring trees and surveying the ground. The boys sing their Nuclear War line, dressed in costumes straight out of a romantic comedy about eighteenth century soldiers, wagging their fingers. It ends, intercut and split-screened with shots of past videos.

Drawing on earlier themes, the band's first video following the exotic quintet is open to a number of different interpretations, with its oblique and obscure imagery. Essentially it is just a continuation of the basic plot of the earlier videos: a plea for colour and excitement in otherwise drab lives, a cry not for measurement and conformity, but for individuality and acceptance. The eternal theme of youth.

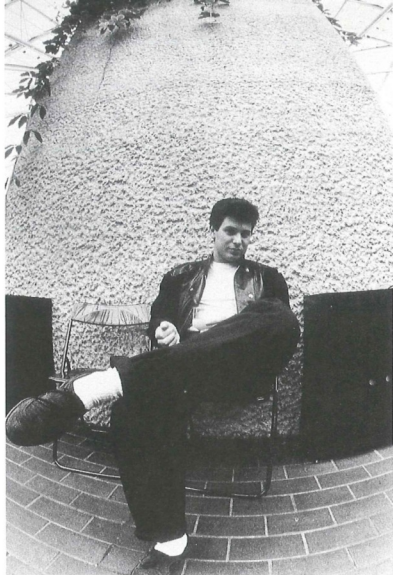
12) **Union Of The Snake.** Location: Australia. Directed by Russell Mulcahy.

While a basilisk-headed, reptilian, green-tinted man crawls over the sand dunes, Simon Le Bon goes questing through strange worlds. A bellhop takes him down through the sand in a lift, through a huge construct of scaffolding and rope rigging, swarming with people, to a temple – something between a cathedral and a street-market. A procession of virgins walk past; a tousle-haired urchin crops up in camera; a juggler plies his trade in one corner; Nick Rhodes studies a parchment, later shown to be a map, similar to that on the cover of *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*. As the video ends Andy Taylor is seen climbing the thronged rigging.

Filmed in Australia, both this video and *New Moon On Monday*, which followed it, are similar to videos like *Hungry Like The Wolf* or *The Nightboat* but with a far higher budget, and far less impact. It suffers from trying to cram too much into the limited time available. There is too much activity – confusing, rather than clarifying. The special effects – especially the snake-man – are very competent; however it seems to wind up resembling nothing so much as a poorly edited film trailer, in this case for a fantasy epic somewhere between *Dune* and *King Solomon's Mines*.

13). **New Moon On Monday.** Director: Brian Grant.

A play is being staged in an almost deserted theatre, run by a white-faced Master of Ceremonies who speaks in a French-English polyglot. Simon Le Bon watches, as does a lovely dark-haired girl, who sends a man in military uniform to talk to him. He leaves, riding off on a







motorbike. A car drives through deserted streets. The rest of Duran Duran are seen working in an undercover printing press at night. We see aerial shots of a continental village, and the boys rendezvous in a pub. They are obviously part of a resistance movement. They surreptitiously distribute the leaflets among the villagers. Night time, and the boys raise a kite/radio aerial in the sky. The band and the villagers meet in the town square, carrying torches and fireworks. A troop of cavalry rides in, waving plastic *Star Wars* light sabres, and they ride through and around the townsfolk. Together they dance. In the background burns the *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* sign - also to be seen on Le Bon's lapel.

Having paid their tribute to *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* and the James Bond genre, Duran Duran turned their attention to *Cabaret* (Nick Rhodes' favourite film) and all the World War Two Resistance films. Not very successfully. The message - what message there was - was blurred, leading to accusations that the band were attacking communism. Roger Taylor, when interviewed, denied this. 'It could have been any society,' he said. 'It's about colour breaking through darkness, which is what the band has always been about.' Which, to some extent, it is. It also ties in with the *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* imagery of the band as a commando team, leading an armed assault on the ragged tiger of success.

Even so, the mixture of *Cabaret*, *The Prisoner* and *The Guns Of Navarone* is uneasy, and the conclusion, in the village square, is limp. Even the band were unhappy with the video of *New Moon*, Nick Rhodes describing it as 'In one word... a disaster. There were a lot of awfully good ideas in it, but they weren't executed as anticipated. I think there was third dilemma of trying to produce a video that actually moved on a little bit, and it didn't.'

14.) **The Reflex.** Location: Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto. Director: Russell Mulcahy.

In a video unlike anything else Duran Duran had done so far, we see them miming to *The Reflex* in a packed concert hall in Toronto. Behind them is the set of their World Tour - six pillars which change colour on cue - and above them is a large video screen. The screen alternately shows close-ups of the band, and a shadowy couple, all muscles, chains and kisses. The lighting is impressive; the camerawork is faultless. In a final touch of surrealism, animated water pours from the video screen, drenching the audience.

The video is a deliberate attempt to get away from the exotic locations and studio sets which had come to characterise Duran videos and to present a much 'harder' image, showing that, above all, Duran are a live band. No plot, no glamorous models; just a return to their rock roots. In addition to which, it was different: where once the band could break new ground by trolling off to Antigua or Sri Lanka, these days almost every rock video would show a band doing exotic things with leopards, or mini-epics, or three minute versions of *Revenge Of The Blood Beast*. *The Reflex* was a change of direction, and the band were very happy with it.

DURAN DURAN LIVE. Location: Hammersmith Odeon, London. Date: November 1982. Director: Simon Milne. Producer: Eric Fellner. Camera: Nic Knowland. John Metcalfe. Peter Sinclair. Chris Morphet. John Symons. Sound: Garth Marshall. Ray Beckitt. Lighting Design: Alan Goldberg. Executive Producer: Geoff Kempin. Production Executive: Martin Wyn-Griffith. VT Editor: Ian Aitken. Editor: Simon Milne.

Recorded over two days in 1982, at London's Hammersmith Odeon, this video gives the feeling of that period of Duran Duran's development, and of a live performance of material from their first two albums. It is a record of that point of the band's development, of a tour of which Simon Le Bon said, in September 82, 'Our set will be much more dramatic than of late, concerning itself more with the theatrics. I don't want it simply to be us reeling off our songs like a greatest hits album. We've come to the point where we've seen a lot of shows and I think there's a lot lacking in today's live music. We're going to go a lot further.'

'We've never gone in for sumptuous sets and we're not going to start now. Instead we like to create an atmosphere through the use of lighting and our music. We use a very good lighting designer called Alan Goldberg, who is very subtle.'

It begins with *Rio*. The set is lit in black and red. The

John Taylor at AIR Studios



audience is enormous and consists - as far as it is possible to tell - of fourteen to seventeen year-old girls. Simon is wearing a white suit over a light blue tee shirt with a Japanese symbol on the front. The song sounds very like the album track. (The most evocative moment is when a girl at the front hands a teddy bear to Nick Rhodes.)

Hungry Like The Wolf. One gets a better look at the other band members: Andy Taylor, looking very rock star cool; John Taylor moving into the spot for a bass middle eight. Simon moves near the front of the stage and a hundred hands stretch towards his snow-white trousers. At the end Simon's voice starts getting stretched; he starts sweating, and the show begins to come alive.

Nightboat. Nick Rhodes begins, enveloped in a purple haze. Smoke drifts across the stage. Andy Taylor in a red light. Simon Le Bon re-appears in a leather jacket and a hat with a feather in it, prowls onto the stage through the mist, places the hat on the mikestand, stalking the set like a shadow.

New Religion. An organ introduction: the excellent lighting creates an effect reminiscent of a cathedral; the decor shifts to black and white. Simon plays the tambourine. The stage is flooded with white light. The audience go wild. It is a new religion, and Simon Le Bon is its messiah. *Save A Prayer For Me Now.* Comes across as quite weak. Simon carries an acoustic guitar, which he pats from time to time.

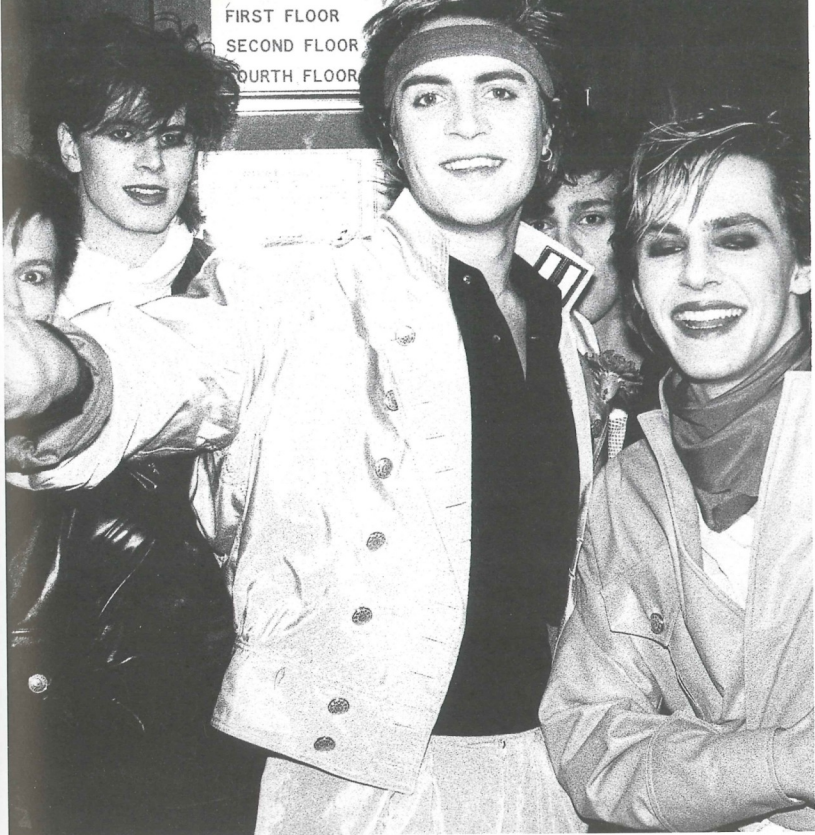
Planet Earth. The band really bounce around for this high-energy poppy version of their first hit. The background effect is one of glowing black and white trees and nebulae. Andy Hamilton and John Taylor do a very classy saxophone/bass duet, and Andy does an enjoyable sax solo. The camera pans over acres of girls. *Friends Of Mine.* Very laid back, with lovely lead guitar, and Le Bon sounding like Bowie. Far moodier than the album version, the band play as if they mean it, almost talking to the audience, teasing them. Simon finishes it in a slightly embarrassing manner, writhing around on the stage clapping, before collapsing. A shot of the front row of girls reveals some of them waving what looks like their underwear in the air.

Careless Memories. John, Andy and Simon stand together at the front of the stage, John and Andy in red shirts, Simon in his blue tee shirt. The lights dim, then the stage flares with light. 'Look out! Out!' shouts Simon, stabbing the audience with his finger.

Come Up And See Me (Make Me Smile). Nick Rhodes on piano, Simon in a blue light. The pace has changed. It is slow, and sounds sincere in a way that doesn't come across on the *Rellex* B-side version. John Taylor now wears a hat, and a topless Andy Taylor wears a flat cap. Andy does his guitar solo unmoving, seeming fragile yet dangerous. The teenies blow kisses, bounce, wave, sing along. At the end an audience shot shows a brief glimpse of a male apart from the band and a few police at the end, the only one we see.

'This young lady in the front row is about to announce the next song,' says Simon, bending down. '*Girls On Film*,' she says, in a moment she will treasure for ever, and *Girls On Film* it is. A staccato, fun-filled number, and it is enjoyable watching Simon Le Bon doing his audience participation bit. 'Hands above heads, everybody - that means you, too!'

The credits roll over shots of the band climbing into limousines, surrounded by clutching and stretching young women. Blue-helmeted policemen stand around, looking bemused.



Duran Duran leave the Strathallen Hotel to play their Rum Runner Christmas show, 1982



Barbarella: Where did you get those pills/ Did an Earth person give them to you? A man named Duran Duran?

Dildano: That's correct.

Barbarella: Well, where is he?

Dildano: He gave me these pills when he first arrived...I haven't seen him since. He's assumed to be alive somewhere, probably in the castle...

(From *Barbarella*.)

Simon Le Bon: It's one of the dilemmas of being up onstage. You have to make yourself seem like a god in some ways while still retaining your accessibility so that people feel they can know you and can understand you. You have to combine the two.

December 1982 to June 1983.

From the last month of the year through to the first few months of the next a tradition has sprung up, whereby everybody gives everybody else an award. Shows, stars, singers, songs... mini-Oscar ceremonies are televised late at night, and newspapers and magazines invite their readers to cast their votes for their personal favourites. And Duran Duran fans are nothing if not vocal.

Which was why Duran Duran found themselves winning such prestigious awards as The British Rock And Pop Awards (sponsored and run by BBC television, Radio One and the Daily Mirror newspaper) for Best Group, Best Album (Rio), and Best Male Singer (Simon, of course). Record Mirror gave them a similar line-up of trophies - Best Album, Best Band, Best Live Show, Best Video (Save A Prayer), Best Record Sleeve. And that's just a small selection of their winnings. But there was one award they still didn't have - the prestige of a British Number One Hit Single.

Surprisingly, Nick Rhodes was the first of the band to get to Number One, as producer of the Leighton Buzzard band and fellow EMI stable-mates Kajagoogoo's first single, *Too Shy*. The single went straight to Number One. But a few weeks later Duran Duran reached the top with the release of *Is There Something I Should Know?*, on 14 March 1983, with *Faith In This Colour* as a B side. Neither song has been released in the UK in album form, although *Is There Something I Should Know?* was added to later pressings of American copies of the debut album, *Duran Duran*. It has proved itself one of the band's most enduring and popular songs, with a number of strong hook-lines, and a very strong chorus.

The band learned of their success upon their return from New York, where they had been promoting the release of a video 45 from Sony of *Hungry Like The Wolf* and the uncut *Girls On Film*. Their arrival time in New York had been broadcast by local radio and MTV, along with their itinerary, in order to allow the fans to locate the band. The turnout at the airport was somewhat disappointing - only one hundred people - although a day or so later, when it came to their personal appearance at a Manhattan Video Shack store promoting the video, mounted police had to be called in to control



The original Duran Duran, Milo O'Shea in *Barbarella*

7

'THOSE AT CANNES...'

the four thousand girls who turned up. Less than five hundred of them actually made it into the shop to talk to their heroes.

The next few days were taken up by an incredible number of interviews, television appearances - the high point of which was their spot on Saturday Night Live - and a party, hosted by the head of Capitol Records, at which they were presented with their first American gold record, for *Rio*. (By April it had gone platinum.)

They returned to England to find themselves with a Number One single, and a minor controversy on their hands. The Duran Duran video album, consisting of the band's first eleven videos, had also just been released, and *Girls On Film* was once more causing fur to fly. Not to mention mud and feathers. Over three thousand copies of the album had been released before complaints to the press forced EMI to stick warnings on the remaining fifteen thousand, letting parents and video-sellers know that it wasn't really quite suitable for younger children. (The best headline of this period reads 'Warning! Would You Let The Kids Watch This? Even The Duran Duran Record Boss Says No!') However, any losses in sales or rentals of the video to fourteen-year-old girls were doubtless made up for by sales and rentals to fourteen-year-old boys, and their fathers.

No sooner had they returned to England than they were leaving once more, in a flurry of headlines. They had become, for the next year, tax exiles. As Simon explained to the press, 'The tax situation is a sore point with us. There's one big thing wrong with this country and

Behind the dream...





that is that people are more rewarded for their need than their ability. People who say that it's hard to make money are wrong. Nothing fell into our laps. We invented a product and marketed it ourselves... Pop is a very fickle business - you are usually at the top for a very short time - so you have to make the most of it.' Which was why the band were to stay out of England for a year. It would allow them to keep a much larger chunk of the money than they were due to get, especially by recording their next album overseas. They had no intention of becoming permanent tax exiles, like so many rock stars before them. And anyway, their contract with EMI was expiring, and they were due to re-sign for a rumoured five million pound deal.

They went first to the South of France, where they stayed in a Chateau and wrote the numbers for *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*, while they complained about being bored, missing the adulation, and francophile Roger Taylor complained about putting on weight from all the delicious French cooking. The band visited Cannes (something they repeated in the following year, staying on a yacht in 1984) for the Film Festival - one of the year's chief megahype events, where films, stars, and endless acres of flesh are shown. According to the Kaspar De Graaf press release six months later the band spent their time 'reflecting on the nature of life'. This was later admitted by Simon to have been a joke - they were just mixing business with pleasure. They played tennis. They entertained their girlfriends. Wrote songs, stayed three months, and then went to Montserrat to record an album they planned to call *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*.

... in dressing rooms.







The third album was a watershed for the band. No longer were they trying to crack either the English or American markets: both had been cracked. Now they had to keep it up. As Simon Le Bon said in an interview with British DJ Anne Nightingale, 'For the British market you have to keep coming up with something new, progressive and technically agile. For America, three good albums would mean we would be firmly established - permanently. Once you've reached Rod Stewart status you can turn out one album every two years with a couple of half-decent tracks on it, and you'll maintain loyalty from the fans.'

The band announced that *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* was 'something different', and just from the album cover it's obvious that something has changed. Take the title - Seven? Ragged Tiger? Without some explanation it is incomprehensible. The actual cover design itself is ambitious; the only black red and white is on the clothes of the band; in the ultraslick, bepillared cover photograph; in addition to the photo, the front cover sports a golden-ochre burnt map, stylised clouds, a twenty-eight point compass centering on a circular tiger's eye, a diamond and a rectangle both showing snippets of tiger, and two gold-rimmed squares, containing a) a five-pointed star and crescent moon, b) a design consisting of six hooked lines branching off from one long central line, like stylised guitar keys or a musical swastika.

The delicately delineated back cover shows an orientally stylised map, with a pleasantly meandering blue river, trees, mountains, covered with obscure runic symbols and designs - the only one immediately decipherable is a crowned castle. The immediate impression is that of a treasure chart. A map to success? As for the album itself...

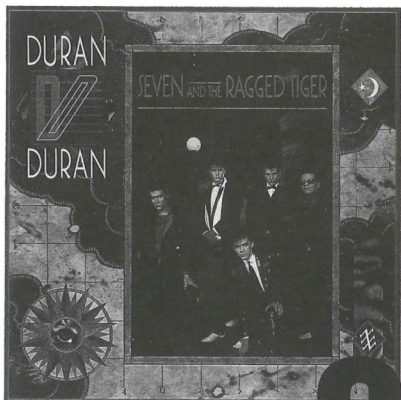
Side One

1) **The Reflex.** The song that sums up the album. It is melodic, and enjoyable. The lyrics are obscure - is it (as has been variously suggested) about luck? Elves and fairies? Magic? Just plain old sex? Even Simon Le Bon wasn't sure. It is *rather* forgettable. And yet....the same song, when remixed by Nile Rodgers as a single, has a verve and power totally missing from the album track: the guitar sharp and stabbing, the vocals stuttering and scratching, the drumbeats exploding into the song like fireworks from nowhere. On the album the potential is there, but the mix is drab and bland.

Listen to the remix, and ponder on what might have been...

2) **New Moon On Monday** Even Rolling Stone in an otherwise vitriolic album review ('...nothing short of reprehensible: a haughty, pretentious paean to the joys of new money...an egregiously mellow funk hybrid (by) dance oriented wimpoids...') had to admit that this song is enjoyable. An uptempo drumbeat heralds a pleasantly funky song, delightful Ferry-Bowie vocals, and an excellent harmonised chorus. The lyrics are intriguing and fantastic.

3) **(I'm Looking For) Cracks In The Pavement.** The pressures of stardom and sensory overload are the subject of this, probably the most Roxy Music influenced song Duran have done. 'If I had a car I'd drive it insane' sings Le Bon, with a rare pun. The middle-eight beat change midway is ambitious, but doesn't quite come off.



8

'BURNING BRIGHT'

- 4) **I Take The Dice** The metaphor is love seen as a gamble, in this unpretentious song. It is breezy, light pop, its chorus is bright and original.
- 5) **Of Crime And Passion.** A thudding heartbeat intro and we're into the seamier side of life. The images cascade out, black orchids, death, violence, and murder. And it doesn't work. The song is too mellow, lacking in sparkle - perhaps the least menacing track on the album. Harmless, even. And it shouldn't be. It isn't - as one reviewer suggested - that if you've got to talk about it you ain't got it; but if you are going to talk about it you should sound as if you mean it.

Side Two:

- 6) **Union Of The Snake** Another set of Roxy/Ferry vocals introduce a song that could have been a hit if remixed. More reptilian images - *New Moon On Monday* boasts a 'Lizard mixture', and *Cracks In The Pavement* begins with Simon shedding his skin - and the slightly bitter, haunting saxophone break adds an extra dimension to the track. According to Simon, it's about sex.
- 7) **Shadows On Your Side.** An autobiographical song? It is easy to assume so, as Le Bon sings about being in front of a shining crowd, music louder than even the crowd's roar, your life exposed by the scandal sheets, losing touch with friends... yet 'as soon as the lights go down' one sinks into the embrace of the night and the dark. A moody, sombre song with an ambiguous chorus.
- 8) **Tiger Tiger.** The first instrumental since *Tel Aviv* on the first album. A synthesiser echoes and stops. A chord begins to take shape, then hesitates and retreats. Only then does the song proper begin. An almost jazzy melody line slides from the guitar to bass to saxophone to keyboards. The cumulative effect is sophisticated yet fragile. An engrossing, disturbing piece.
- 9) **The Seventh Stranger.** The last song on the album, slow, complex, and sad. A study in loneliness and disillusion. The sparse quality of the lyrics are complemented by an exotic and intricate backing track, of which Nick Rhodes explained 'We recorded it in layers, like Lego building bricks, adding melodies and rhythms, and that extra malaise is something we wanted to make it more interesting.' It works.

The album's main strength is also its chief defect. The previous two albums had been recorded in relatively short periods of time; the band had known what they wanted, gone into the studio and done it. The end product was, in each case, an album that was to some extent patchy - clusters of catchy songs padded out by material obviously not as good. Those that worked most definitely worked. Those that didn't were equally as obvious. The albums lacked coherence.

Seven And The Ragged Tiger does function as a whole. But, over six months of production, the highs and lows have been evened out. Everything has been done and redone, recorded and rerecorded, mixed and remixed so many times that the final product somehow lacks punch. How much this is due to the band, and how much it is due to their new producer Alex Sadkin (who had previously produced Talking Heads and the Thompson Twins) is debatable.

As John Taylor said of this period; 'Six months was far

too long. Everything we'd done before up until then, we'd just gone into a studio and said "Right, turn the tape on"... This time people actually said "Well no, I'm not sure about that, I think we'd better have a rethink." So everything was done again and again and again. I'd question whether that was the right thing to do. I used to argue with Alex like mad because I'm a firm believer that what you feel initially right is usually the best and if you spend too much time messing about you lose that.

"I mean, after six months there was no way this album wasn't going to sound careful..."

Simon had earlier troubles with Sadkin, describing him as 'a very tough producer' who 'wouldn't let me get away with anything, and I hated him for about a week.' He even made Simon rewrite his lyrics, to the point where Simon felt they were actually comprehensible, rather than just imagist constructions.

Seven And The Ragged Tiger was recorded at Air Studios on Montserrat – a volcanic tropical island in the Caribbean, in the Leeward Islands of the West Indies, discovered by Christopher Columbus on his American voyage. It was recorded out of England for tax reasons; British tax laws state that a larger share of the profits can be claimed for an album made out of Britain. However, Duran Duran made a point of explaining that they weren't tax exiles to the daily papers, feeling it to be a label they didn't need.

Air Studios had previously been used by such big-name stars as The Police, Paul McCartney, Stevie Wonder and Elton John, and were created by former Beatles producer George Martin as a place where bands could come and record away from the pressure of fans, phone calls and commitments.

This was the chief reason Duran Duran picked Montserrat. No fans (well, only two – twenty-four year-old nurses, who spent over £1,000 each on the trip out there, and waited for two weeks outside the studios before the band invited them in for dinner and made their decade – but that is almost no fans), no nightlife (just late-night recording, from late afternoon onwards, with Nick Rhodes haunting the studios until the small hours of the next morning, and lengthy games of 'Pop Quiz', the loser to be thrown into the pool). No distractions. Just a scheduled five weeks of recording and creation, only the band and assorted girlfriends, agents, engineers, roadies and visitors. Palm-lined beaches, marble villas, a tropical paradise. They hated it.

They hated the climate, the lack of action, the iguanas. They found themselves lounging around the pool instead of working; they described the studio facilities (rather surprisingly) as shoddy and rundown. It was 'awful', 'boring', and according to Simon, they had arrived at the start of the hurricane season, and the weather was better in England that summer. They were meant to complete the album in the Bahamas, but were 'unable to face another bloody desert island', so it was finished off and mixed in Sydney, Australia (John Taylor's favourite city) an environment they found much more congenial.

As Nick Rhodes explained, 'You should always record albums in creative places, otherwise you don't get any buzz. I get most of my inspiration from television, films, people and clubs (not) from going to beaches and looking at the palm trees.'

But between Montserrat and Sydney was the event that crystallised Duran Duran in the public mind as the Next Big Thing; which took the name of Duran out of the world of pop fans and teenyboppers, and made them media



Nick, Julie Anne, Anthony Price (who designed their clothes) and friend, at London's Embassy Club, December 1982

heroes (and, briefly, anti-heroes). These were the concerts for Princess Di and the Prince of Wales' Trust at London's Dominion Theatre supporting Dire Straits (tickets just under thirty pounds each).

Diana, Princess of Wales is a media star in her own right. A fairytale princess, good-looking, young and 'with it'; her wedding to Prince Charles was watched by over seventy million people; anything that Princess Di, as she is known to millions, does is big news. So when Diana picked her two favourite groups to play a charity benefit concert for the Prince's Trust (which helps young and underprivileged children), it was natural the media should be out in force.

As a publicity exercise it worked only too well, and Duran Duran took full advantage of it. Not always to their credit. It began with announcements in two national newspapers that 'Duran Duran fans sweltering for a glance of their heroes should be at London's Heathrow Airport on Tuesday Morning. The five superstars are flying in at 7.30 a.m. from Miami...'

The inevitable occurred; thousands of screaming Durannies arrived early in the morning, agog to see their idols, thronging the arrival lounges. Many of them camped out overnight. For hours before the band's plane landed they were screaming and banging on the barriers. On Duran Duran's eventual appearance the fans crashed the barriers and caused scenes that the sensation-hungry press immediately compared to those surrounding The Beatles, two decades earlier.

Simon was 'socked on the jaw', the band were jostled and grabbed before being escorted by minders into a waiting limo for a quick getaway (using the technique of slow acceleration to avoid hurting anybody). But it was not to be - a young lady had fainted underneath their car ('I don't even like Duran Duran,' she is meant to have told reporters) thus holding up the proceedings and causing mounting hysteria. (British Airways were most upset, accusing the group's management of irresponsibility in releasing the time and date of the band's arrival, and pointing out that as long ago as the Beatles agreements had been made that details of groups' arrivals and departures wouldn't be published in newspapers.) This was *Media Happening Number One*.

At this point Simon's engagement to Canadian fashion model Claire Stansfield was allowed to leak out, and was played up heavily - from the initial revelation of the significance of her white gold diamond ring, to the full story of the couple's meeting in a Toronto nightclub where the band had been playing earlier. Of their first words ('Were you smiling at me?' 'No, you were smiling at me'), what happened next (he invited her to bed), her response (no), his refusal to take no for an answer ('Will you come to my hotel for breakfast then?') her response (yes), and then the whole Hollywood Love Story of how her alarm clock didn't go off and she failed to turn up, and thinking that Simon had left the country did nothing else. Simon, undaunted, and knowing no more than her name and that she worked as a waitress, earning money while going through college, with the help of some kind soul in his record company tracked her down, phoned her, had dinner with her that night, and from there onwards it was starlight and roses. The media lapped it up, even comparing Claire's looks to Princess Di (who else?). *Media Happening Number Two*.

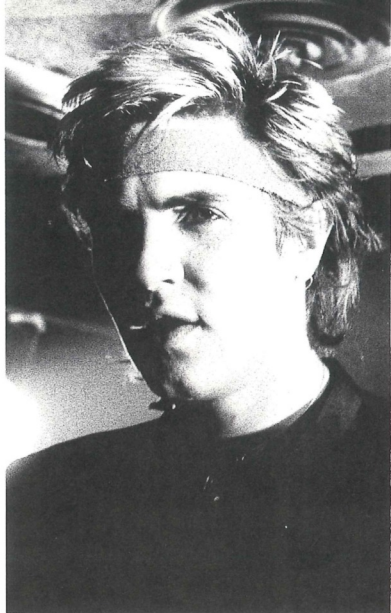
The charity concert, at London's Dominion Theatre, was a disaster for the band. They had just returned from the recording studios, were under-rehearsed, nervous, and working with unfamiliar equipment; during the first

number a drum pedal broke, a guitar string snapped, and a thrown box of chocolates knocked the bass guitar badly out of tune. It was a fiasco. Princess Diana was not amused (neither were the band) and she and Prince Charles left for the bar ten minutes before the end, only returning for Dire Straits (fresh from a recent tour, familiar with their equipment and the songs) who she was seen to enjoy. Whether it was the screaming of the fans, the poor quality sound, or something else, it seemed obvious to the press that the Princess preferred Dire Straits. *Media Happening Number Three.*

Aha! went the press - divided by politics, policy and opinion, but united by the conviction that if there was one thing that sold newspapers as well as a good disaster it was Princess Diana, and that Diana versus Duran Duran was too good a story to miss - and they proceeded to ignore the £150,000 reportedly raised for charity, and to manufacture and obtain anti-Duran Duran stories. Since at this point they weren't about to attack the band proper, they started with the fan club. The overloaded, understaffed fan club was brought under fire by some disgruntled fans who felt it was a rip-off; that they had received nothing, or next to nothing, that their letters had not been answered, and they wanted something done. The fan club explained that they had taken over when the previous London-based fan club went into liquidation, that they had inherited piles of unopened letters, had over fourteen thousand members to cope with, had but a small staff and enormous floods of requests for information, but they were doing their best, and were hoping to get the whole thing computerised in the near future. Not much of a story, but the press played it up for all it was worth. And they soon found another angle to link it with: Princess Diana was sent a Duran Duran fan club package by the club, which, following established Royal policy of non-acceptance of unsolicited gifts (to prevent unwarranted claims of Royal patronage), were immediately returned. This was intentionally misinterpreted by the press as meaning that the Princess was disenchanted with the band ('Duran Duran may well be the Princess's favourite group but she will have nothing to do with the club, many of whose members complain they've not been getting value for their £4.50 subscription', as one paper put it.) or that she felt the fan club to be unsound. *Media Happenings Number's Four and Five.*

This was briefly followed by the scoop on Simon's parents' separation: they had lived in separate next-door households for many years (the children commuting between the two), Simon's mother moving more recently to Florida, while his father remained in Pinner. (Not really enough of a news story to be a media happening.)

Then came the Mencap concert, at Birmingham's Aston Villa Football ground. Musically this was a great success ('a standard set for live performance so high that many are destined to try and match it and, I fear, most are destined to fail,' as Melody Maker's Steve Sutherland said in his review) and Simon described it as 'Fantastic! My favourite show we've ever done.' It drew over twenty thousand fans. But in terms of money raised for Mencap it was a disaster. Simon again: 'It was just a major fuck-up on a lot of fronts, basically... we overestimated the amount of people that would come to the show. We thought we'd be getting people from all over England but about ninety percent of the people there came from within a forty mile radius of Birmingham, so we actually had about seven thousand less than we'd hoped for and those seven thousand were the ones that were going to make the profit for Mencap.'



Rum Runner Christmas concert, 1982

The band and their managers wound up donating over ten thousand pounds each to Mencap (a charity organisation for the care of the mentally handicapped). *Media Happening Six.*

At this point the band quite wisely went back to recording their third album, and flew to Sydney Australia to do it. The plan had been just to polish and do a final mix on the material they had recorded in Montserrat, but by the time they arrived in Australia, they dropped almost all the Montserrat material and started from scratch. The only number to survive from Montserrat unscathed was *The Reflex*.

For the rest, the songs were, to a greater or lesser extent, rewritten. Melodies were altered, lyrics were changed. A song called *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* (after which the album was named) was rewritten and split into two, becoming the instrumental *Tiger Tiger* and the evocative *Seventh Stranger, I Take The Dice* apparently started life as a song called *The Cat With The Magic Dice* (but that was thought to sound too much like a folk-story, and the lead character became a human male), and a number called *Farthest Shore* wound up as *Looking For Cracks In The Pavement*.

The title of the album was chosen for two reported reasons: Firstly, it was fairly long, and since the first two albums had both had short titles it was felt it was time for a change. Secondly, it meant something. It was symbolic. The Seven of the title are Simon, John, Nick, Andy and Roger, and the two Berrow brothers, seen as comprising some kind of commando unit. The Ragged Tiger symbolises luck and success. Thus the title denotes the band's assault on, and pursuit of success, triumph and prosperity.

The band spent over four months in Australia, completing the album, getting the cover photograph taken, and kicking off their world tour. According to a report in the British *Daily Star* newspaper over two hundred thousand pounds was spent on the cover photograph. This included flying out over fifty people from Britain, including a photographer, and wardrobe team.

It also included, one can safely assume, the rental on the tiger. The tiger was heavily sedated, on hire from Sydney Zoo, and was not very impressed by what was happening. It was on the end of a chain, held by Simon Le Bon who 'spent the whole time worrying that it was going to eat us'. The band were scared silly, and the only photographs to be released that include the tiger show a



very pale Simon looking more than a little nervous, while the rest of the band attempt, not very successfully, to appear nonchalant and unconcerned. The album cover is relatively tigerless.

The band loved Sydney. They have always had a soft spot for Australia – after all, it was there that they had had their first-Number One hit with *Planet Earth*, almost three years before. They were mobbed by girls, but apart from an almost disastrous car-crash that John managed to survive intact, when his BMW went out of control on Sydney Harbour Bridge, and John's two-day stay in hospital with nose trouble, their stay down under was fairly quiet.

The single released from the album was *Union Of The Snake*. This was launched in a blaze of American controversy; it is usual for records, on their release, to be exclusively premiered on selected radio stations. It may not matter much to the listeners where a single is played first, but it matters a great deal to the radio stations. An exclusive on a name band means that the radio station will help the record company when it comes to pushing a lesser-known band that the label needs pushed.

Duran Duran, or their management, or somebody, broke the unwritten rules. *Union Of The Snake* was released to MTV – the Music Video cable station – as a video to premiere, a full week before the single came out. Everybody was most upset (except for MTV, who had, after all, broken the band in the USA, and deserved a few favours). It was unheard of, unprecedented. Capitol Records denied having any part of it, explaining that 'MTV had the new Duran Duran video before radio because of the relationship between MTV and Duran Duran's management.'

Their next single *New Moon On Monday*, although a catchy enough song, wasn't the huge success the band had hoped for. Were they losing their touch? There was no sign that the bandwagon was slowing down: the awards were piling in, the fans were if anything even more fanatical, but (as the band had so rightly pointed out) it is the record-buying public that buys records – not just fans.

Something had to change. It did. The band brought in Nile Rodgers, of disco superband Chic, to remix *The Reflex* – their planned next single – for the twelve-inch disco release of the record. Although Rodgers was only hired on a flat fee for a couple of days, he wound up getting so engrossed in the remix that he spent over a week on it. The band had no idea what he was going to produce. 'That was the exciting thing about it,' as Andy Taylor later said. 'He seemed to have brought all the parts that we felt didn't come out on the album. When we heard it, we just said "Yeah. Press it. Tomorrow!" I think it's the quickest decision we've ever made.'

Capitol Records, however, had different ideas. *Seven And The Ragged Tiger* – at least as a source of lucrative singles – was obviously a jinxed album, a loser. They wanted to release *Save A Prayer*, from the *Rio* album, a worldwide hit, but never released in the US as a single. The band were incensed by what they saw as a step backwards. They refused. They put their feet down. They pulled telephones off walls, or so they said. And eventually they had their way.

The Reflex was an almost immediate UK and US Number One, where it stayed for weeks. As a special incentive, the seven-inch single cover included a wraparound poster of the group, but it was hardly needed. The record won thousands of converts to the Duran Duran banner.



Nick Rhodes: See, people never seem to get us right; they either think we're a stupid con like the new Bay City Rollers or they take us too seriously - y'know, good musicians, good image, all that. We're neither really, we're in between.

ff

23rd Street Magazine: How long could you do without a mirror?

Simon Le Bon: Until I need to chop my next line. (23rd Street. December 1981.)

Simon Le Bon: We don't do lots of drugs... (Simon Le Bon, 1982.)

In 1982 the music press were amused by Duran Duran's latest presumptuous statements, that they would achieve 'World Domination by 1984', that they would play Madison Square Garden, that in two years time they would have the world at their feet. And two years later?

The end of 1983 and the first few months of 1984 were spent touring the world, chiefly staying out of Britain. The tour culminated in the band's biggest shows yet - two concerts at New York's Madison Square Gardens, which they played on March 19 and 21, to audiences of over twenty-thousand people a night. The tour's chief innovation was the use of giant video screens above the stage, which allowed the more distant members of the audience to see what was happening in close-up.

As John remarked at a later press conference: 'We're always experimenting. I'm sure that in the next twelve months everyone's going to start taking video screens on the road with them. It's going to set a precedent. It's a whole new thing having cameras following you around on stage. You've got nothing to yourself at all. You can't turn around and scratch your bum, because it's following you everywhere.' The concerts were a great success.

Finally, in April, at the end of the five month's touring, Duran Duran came staggering home, intent on shifting their image from that of spoilt and lazy rich kids to that of seasoned rock 'n' rollers. They had missed England while they were away. They wanted to put down some roots. *The Reflex* single was in the charts and they wanted nothing more than to get a little peace and quiet. To settle down, buy places to live, and get away from the noise.

But things were not to go as they had planned - there was a hiccough in their relationship with the press. The Sun newspaper (a tabloid, Murdoch-owned, right-wing paper famed for its bare-bosomed huge-breasted Page Three girls) started a series of 'revelations' about the band, by ex-minder (i.e. bodyguard) Al Beard. In them he told reporters that Duran Duran were a) rather heavily into cocaine 'I Saw Duran Duran Go Crazy On Coke! They Need It To Perform They Need It To Relax Says Ex Minder.' b) Rather keen on girls, and C) Spoilt little *nouveau-riche* kids.

Beard was a body-building champion and former Mr England, who had worked at the Rum Runner as a reception manager, and who, according to himself, was once a 'great mate of the band'. He claimed he had been upset by the band when they broke their promises to take him on tour with them to the US and Japan. 'They've

Simon with Allannah Currie

9

NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR

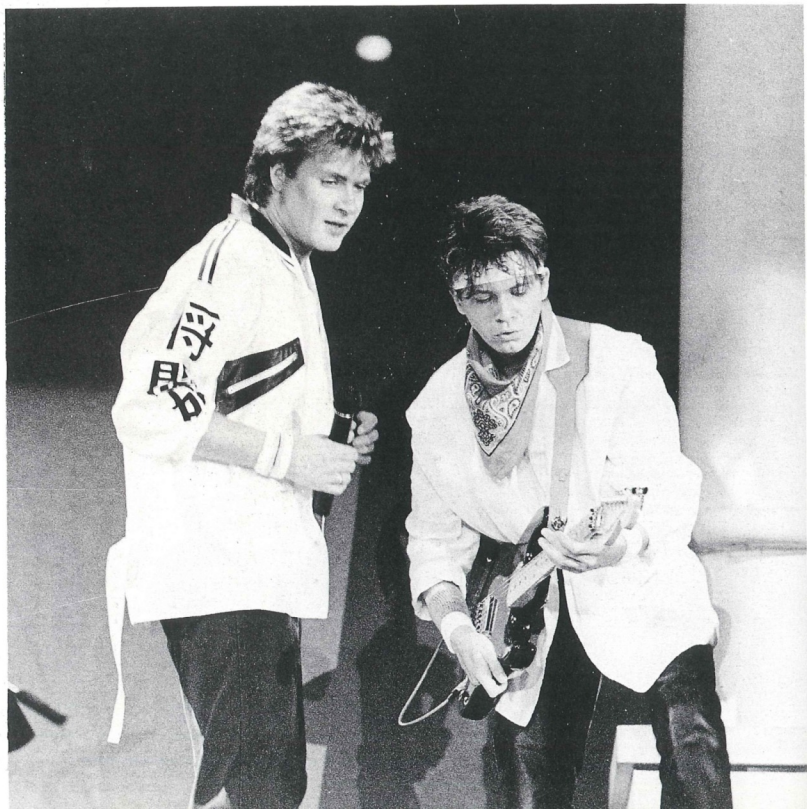
Right: After the Mincep benefit

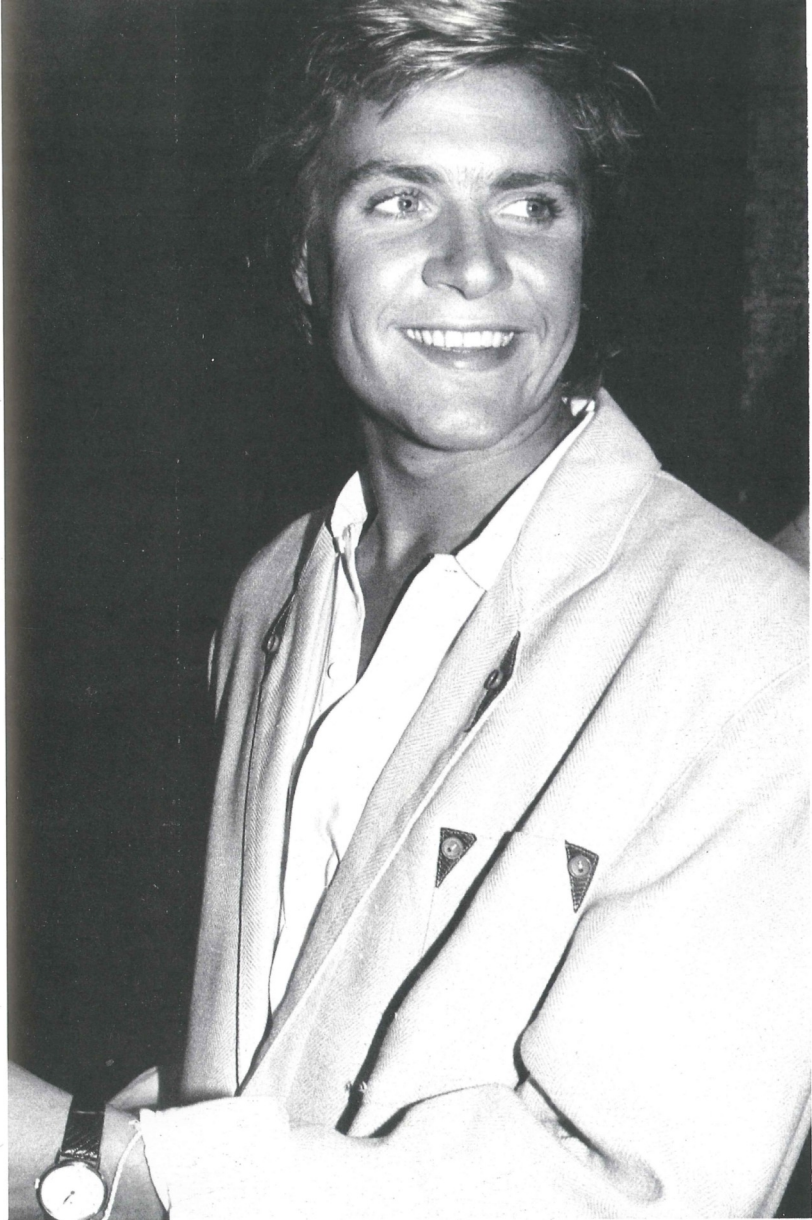
broken all their promises, that's why I'm telling everything I know.'

The 'Sun' exclusive was divided into three parts, over three days. The first dealt with the band's drug use. While Duran Duran have hardly ever denied they have used drugs, the article's implications were that the band were 'Coke Crazy!' and could not survive without the drug. 'On their first tour all Duran Duran could afford was hash. But by the time they were on tour again they were all heavily into cocaine - all except Roger Taylor who sticks to champagne.'

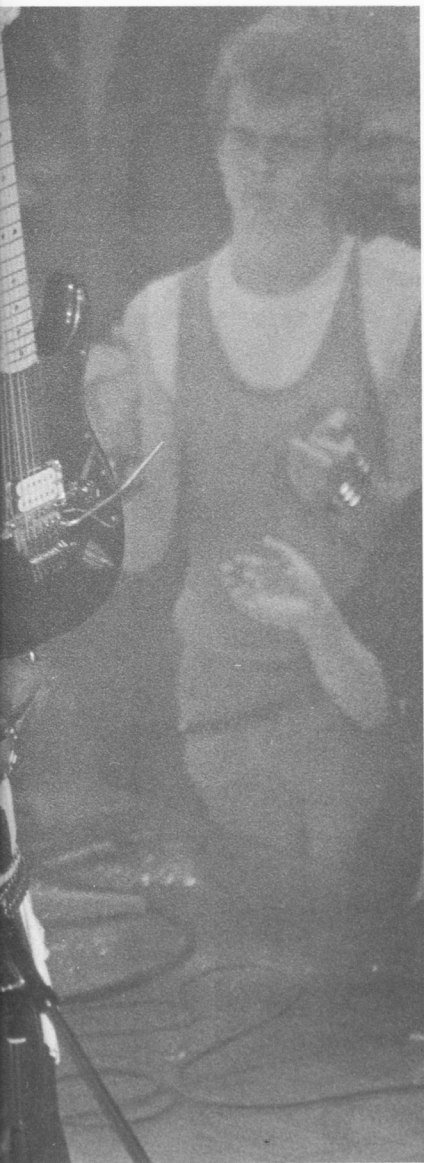
The article named Andy Taylor as the heaviest user, followed closely by Simon Le Bon and John Taylor, with Nick Rhodes described as a 'more moderate user'. It also stated that Andy's tour collapses were due to drug overuse, and that the band's visits to health farms were not just for unwinding, but also for 'drying out' on the orders of their managers, the Berrows brothers.

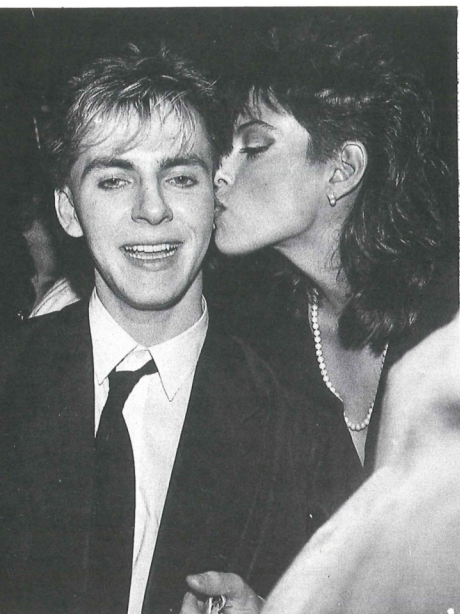
The second part of the article, 'Here Are The Girls You Ordered, Said The Posh Porter', concerned such things as the 'Sex Offenders' Room' at the rear of the Rum Runner; how Andy Taylor was 'very good at chatting up girls but he didn't spend very long with them. It would all











Nick Rhodes and Julie Anne Friedman before their wedding

be over in three or four minutes,' and other tales of sexual excess (frankly rather tame in comparison with the stories about other bands, from The Beatles and The Stones through to the Bay City Rollers) and of Mr Beard's role as the procurer for all the members of the band except Roger Taylor (who was always 'the faithful type'), and of how the band used the lift - the elevator - in the Rum Runner, as a trysting place.

Day Three was 'Spoil Little Rich Kids! I Saw Them Change, Says Ex-Minder'. This was Beard's attack on John Taylor - who, he stated, was no longer the 'laid-back, witty guy I knew in the early days' - and on Andy Taylor ('I'd say his marriage was the most important thing to him after coke'). It was also the place where Beard's extra gossip about the band could be fitted - how fat Simon Le Bon used to be; how 'We all watched Nick Rhodes' closely because we weren't sure whether he was gay or not. Paul Berron once said to me "I don't know if Nick knows either!"; and where Beard got the chance once more to say what a nice guy Roger Taylor was.

It was in the same edition of *The Sun* that a letter from Pete Townshend (ex-leader of The Who rock band) was printed. Townshend had been mentioned as someone who had indulged in drugs with Duran Duran in the early days with the band. The letter read: 'There is a tragedy hidden behind the exciting drug and sex exposé of Duran Duran in *The Sun* this week. It is that young people might read the articles and be lead to believe that success, glamour and drugs are all part of the same process. They are not.' And he continued, 'The part about me wasn't all true, but enough of it was to make me feel deeply ashamed once again about the mistakes I made...'

The band were not happy, especially since they had just been approached by the BBC to play at the new-formed and prestigious Montreux Pop Festival, where they were to mime a couple of numbers along with over thirty bands - including Queen, Slade, Elton John and many other big-name artists - to a total audience of over three hundred million people. In a press conference given in Montreux, John Taylor denied that Beard had ever worked directly for the band, and pointed out a few of the more obvious mistakes in the articles.

The *Sun* articles can be taken with a large pinch of salt. Even so, much of it (and more, none of which shall be gone into here) had been admitted or implied by the band in earlier interviews or articles, or had been gossiped in London club-land. And for the rock business it was all rather tame.

This was followed by some appearances on British Television on such shows as *Top Of The Pops* (which resulted in damage to the BBC television Centre's stone facia by fans) and *Pop Quiz* (where John Taylor just lost to Roger Taylor's team. No, the one from Queen), and in putting together a made-for-television film.

It was at this time, too, that the film *Hot Dog* was released in the UK. This was an 'R' or '18' film about hot dogging - freestyle skiing incorporating various showy manoeuvres - and the World Freestyle Skiing Championships. The film is notable only for a) superb skiing stunts, b) plotlines rather reminiscent of half-a-dozen other films, c) an anti-European stance (the wicked world champion is the sort of unsporting Austrian it's been unfashionable to depict in American films since the end of World War Two), d) a large amount of exposed female flesh, and e) large amounts of exposed female flesh. It also has a number of well-known artists performing their songs in the background to accompany

the action.

Duran Duran's contribution to this movie is the song *Hungry Like The Wolf* (the album/single version). It is played in the background during a party scene, during which our hero (and all-American clean-cut freestyle skier) is seduced by a ski-groupie in her bedroom, while at the same time hordes of drunken skiers bop around in the party area. The unabashedly sexual nature of the song, and its imagery of love as a wild hunt, are entirely consistent with the scene they accompany.

The plan was to make 'the greatest rock video ever seen'. A sixty-minute live performance, filmed in Oakland California and Birmingham (UK), intercut with 'concept' studio footage, filmed in London's Twickenham studios, to include desert scenes, pyramids, robots, rollerball and a certain amount of mock-sex and violence.

It is planned to be released late in 1984, with an initial showing on television before it is released as a commercial video.

In addition, a two-hour long American documentary about the making of the video has been filmed, with interviews and behind-the-scenes footage.

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A total of over 25,000 requests for tickets for the filming of Duran Duran's *Home Box Office* film were received for the two batches of two thousand tickets, offered free by the Birmingham Mail and the London evening paper, *The Standard*.

In fact, *The Standard* representative described it as 'The best response to any competition we've ever had - we've had sacks of requests for tickets, and loads of phone calls from girls pleading for tickets and telling us their names and addresses.'

To complicate the matter, many fans were taking their O and A levels on the days of the concerts, and their parents made them return the tickets.

Despite the way that the tickets were issued, those that fell into the hands of touts, or those that were extra (they were sent out in batches of two to a person) were soon changing hands for up to twenty pounds each. The band and their fan club asked the fans to play fair, and to give away any extra tickets free of charge.

I was there to observe the Duran phenomenon up close.

The fans were marshalled into Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre's Hall One, and many of them had been waiting all day in order to get places near the front of the two thousand-strong queue. The doors to Hall Two were meant to open at 3.30 pm. They didn't.

My first glimpse of mass hysteria in action was wholly media created. Central TV (who were filming the concert) brought their cameras to the front of the queue, turned on their lights and asked the fans to scream. Hearing the screaming, the fans assumed the band had appeared, and surged forward into a mob that it took a number of stewards and security guards to disperse. At least twenty-four fans were pulled from the crowd, eight of whom had been crushed against walls and barriers and were carried off to a sick bay that was to be busy all night. The mob was dispersed; the orderly queue had disintegrated. The average age of the fans was about thirteen or fourteen, although I saw children as young as four or five wandering about, and a fair number of mothers chaperoning their offspring. The female to male ratio was about to five to one.

Nobody seemed to know what the hold-up was. A reporter said he'd heard it was something to do with the lights or equipment; a security guard opined that the band were still rehearsing.

Jane and Sharon were both nineteen and unemployed; they had travelled a couple of hundred miles each to attend the performance. 'I like the band, but I'm still trying to decide if it's all worth it,' said Jane, the more talkative of the two, as a chorus of piping voices in the crowd at the front struck up a chorus of 'We want Duran Duran', over and over. (They had tried singing *The Reflex* and *Is There Something I Should Know?* earlier, but each time had started in a key too high for themselves, and had given up in defeat.) Both Sharon and Jane had been keen on Duran Duran since the days of the first single: Jane was the John Taylor fan, Sharon loved Simon Le Bon ('He's a show-off. I like that.'). Both had been waiting since early that morning, and neither was happy.

It was gone six when the audience, hot and hungry, finally began to be ushered into the halls in sections. Once inside, hundreds of the girls began to pull out their pocket instamatic cameras, in blatant disregard of the 'No Photographs' rule. The screaming and the pushing

was already occurring. Ian, the assistant director, came on stage and directed a section of the crowd to move, in order to fill a blank space in front of the cameras; he begged, pleaded, cajoled, but nobody was going anywhere: they had no intention of giving up their hard-won inches near the front.

Eventually enough people moved, and the show began.

The set was the six pillars, familiar from the *Reflex* video and the last world tour. A raised rostrum behind the stage, for the drums, percussion and girl backing singers; slightly further down were the Nick Rhodes' consoles. The assistant director said something that sounded a little like the band would be miming to tapes of a San Francisco concert, but he was drowned out by the girls.

The band sauntered on and took up their positions. The screaming unbearable - most of it for John and Simon, some for Nick and Roger, a little for Andy. My ears stopped registering different screams; my tape recorder separates a few of them out from the high-decibel squeaks of the throng - a strangled, choked 'Oh God Simon, I love youuuuuuuuu...' 'Jooooohn I'm dying for you Jooooohnnn', ecstatic, orgasmic, speechless with thirteen-year-old joy. Simon tried to tell the audience to move back a little - already ten girls had been dragged out of the audience by bouncers, having collapsed with heat exhaustion or just plain squashed - and the volume of screaming, and the push to be just an inch or so nearer the band, redoubled. It was enough that he'd opened his mouth; no-one was listening. The filming of the show began. 'Please please tell me now...' sang Simon, bouncing across the stage, mirrored a thousandfold by a bouncing audience, few of them old enough to remember pogoing, who had been exhorted beforehand to move about and look excited. The number finished, the band went off stage, came back on to



Roger Taylor and Giovanna Cantone



Roger Taylor's wedding, with bride Giovanna
Cantone and best man Simon Le Bon



announce there was something wrong with the lights. It was corrected.

The concert resumed. *Union Of The Snake*, *Careless Memories*, *Save A Prayer*, *Rio* (the audience ecstatically singing along on this), *Planet Earth*...More people fainted or were squashed at the front and were hauled out by bouncers, and people from behind pushed forward to take their places. I found myself at the front and the centre, unable to move or to breathe, and scabbled my way further back into the crowd and into the relative cool of the back of the hall.

A tiny food kiosk at the back of the hall sold out of cold drinks in minutes; the squash at the front of the kiosk was almost as bad as that at the front of the stage. The band began to stay on the stage between numbers, while cans of film were being changed, cans of coke drunk (it was the week the 'Coke Crazy' headlines appeared in the Sun that the band were to be found on US television advertising Coca Cola with the words 'It's the Real Thing - Cokel'), camera positions changed, audience moved around.

The band played around, while the cameras were not filming, showing their more 'human' side to their fans; doing things with the flowers, scarves, letters, and assorted items of feminine underwear that were flung onto the stage. (John Taylor having fun with a black

Simon and his close friend Yasmin Parvaneh





Duran walk into a Media Event...

suspender belt. Andy Taylor wearing a bra on his head, the cups forming an odd, double-headed cap. Simon Le Bon strangling himself with an impromptu noose formed of a flung scarf with 'I love you' painted on it.)

In a later break there was an unaccompanied performance of the first few lines of *There's No Business Like Showbusiness* in duet by Simon and Andy. *Happy Birthday To Ian* was sung by Simon and the audience to embarrass the assistant director.

Simon 'showed off'; Andy played at being a guitar hero; John teased the girls at the front; Nick too his shirt off halfway through, revealing a nipple to screams of glee; and Roger hid behind his drum kit until the very end (when he walked to the front with the rest of the band and smiled shyly at the audience).

More numbers: *The Seventh Stranger*, *New Moon On Monday*, *Lonely In Your Nightmare*, *Hungry Like The Wolf*, *The Chauffeur* (with a strange construct of some kind visible behind the screen at the back, and Simon only appearing for the last few choruses, wearing a chauffeur's cap *a la* Bowie or Freddie Mercury).

Surreal lighting displays appear on the screen behind the band, complementing the songs.

The band leave the stage. Nobody is quite sure what's happening, especially as they said 'Goodnight' before leaving. The assistant director comes out to say that it isn't over, and they return for a ten minute version of *Girls On Film*; very nice.

They take a bow. Leave the stage.

'That wasn't a concert,' weeps one girl, 'it was an experience!' Her friend nods, unable to speak.

According to a bouncer, over two hundred girls had been through the sickbay. The figure was given as fifty in the next morning's paper. I had stopped counting at twenty.

There had been seven or eight invasions of the stage - the first had been entirely a set-up; the rest were unprompted. My favourite was the girl dragged up on-stage, apparently fainting, who immediately revived and made a lunge for John Taylor, and succeeded in ripping off most of his red sash.







The assistant director announced that that was all, the band were tired, and the last train for London would be leaving in a few minutes.

On the way back to London I complained about the inarticulateness of most of the fans I'd interviewed ('They are great' 'I love Simon' 'John is great' 'They are just great' 'Great' 'Great') to the person in the next seat, only to find myself buttonholed by a small, Duran Duran fan when the train reached London who had heard the conversation and wished to set the record straight.

'I quite agree that the majority of Duran Duran fans are just hysterical little kids,' she told me. 'But if you ask me why I like Duran Duran, well I think that if any person creates something, and that creation makes an emotional impact, even if it does it to just one person, then I feel that person is fantastic. That's what Duran Duran do for me.

'I'm not your average Durannie. I don't like Culture Club. I hate Kajagoogoo, I'm into Pink Floyd and Genesis.' Her name was Audrey. She was fifteen. 'I just wanted to tell you that, because I hate it when I see things written about us...I mean, most of them *are* like that, but I hate it when we all get labelled.' Gradually her friends had crept up about us. 'Take this lot here. They aren't like that either. We follow Duran to see them, to talk to them, but we want to meet them as musicians, not as five pretty faces. I've followed them for two years, and when I bought *Rio* I didn't even know their names, so the music impressed me more than their looks.'

How about the rest of them?

They nodded agreement. 'I didn't know what they looked like when I bought *Planet Earth*,' said one. 'All of us have liked them since *Planet Earth*, but we've followed them since *Hungry Like The Wolf* time,' continued my little informant. 'I'm not denying that they're good-looking, and that helps a lot. It's a bonus. But it boils down to hearing the records and going "Ooh, this is nice, I wonder who it's by?" and then you find it's Duran Duran. The looks are just an added incentive. You have to write that when you write about them and us," she added, truculently.

And the film of the concert?

Filming continued on the following day. Apparently the film will consist of 'live' footage intercut with especially filmed studio work, and is unlikely to be shown on television before December 1984.

Duran update: Roger Taylor became the second Duran to marry when he took Giovanna Captone as his bride in Naples, Italy, in late July 1984, while less than a month later Nick Rhodes married Julianne Friedman in London.

Andy Taylor, leading the domesticity stakes, was the first member of the band to become a father.

Simon Le Bon, on the other hand, seems to have split up with his long-term girlfriend, Claire Stansfield, and has been pictured in the press with a large number of other young ladies.

John Taylor has achieved his ambition, it is rumoured, by arranging for Duran Duran to write and perform the theme song for a forthcoming James Bond film.

The fourth album has been recorded, in London, with Nile Rodgers producing, and the planned single, called *The Wild Boys*, is reportedly a 'ballys rock song'.

The last words of crazy mad scientist Duran Duran in *Barbarella*, after Barbarella had survived the pleasure machine (the naughtily titled *Orgasmatron*) and his own attempts to destroy the city, were; 'You win, Barbarella! But the Earth has lost its last great dictator - the inventor of the positronic ray! Aaaaarrrrgggghhhhh!!!!'

Left: John Taylor, Alanah Currie and Tony Hadley

Previous page: Panic at Heathrow

Not, unfortunately the cry beloved of all mad scientists, since Victor Frankenstein first noticed that the thigh bone connected to the hip bone, 'The world has not heard the last of (name of mad scientist).'

Which is a way of leading up to something that no sane person likes to do; predicting the future. What will happen next to Duran Duran? There are two very basic choices, at either extreme of the success spectrum.

They could go the way of the Bay City Rollers - become last year's thing and this year's embarrassment, the fond memories of a million housewives and businesswomen as they look back at their early adolescence, with nostalgia and just a little sheepishness. Or they could go the way of bands like the Rolling Stones, transcending the generations and going on forever. More probably it will be some kind of combination of the two.

Not that the band have any illusions about the permanence of their superstar status. As Roger Taylor said, in May 1984, 'People can get very blasé. We've always been aware that it's possible to slip. We're not in the big league yet. One day it'd be nice not to worry that if the next album isn't quite up to scratch, we could disappear with out trace.'

And John Taylor agreed: 'The image of the group is bigger than the group itself. The biggest trap we could ever fall into is to believe we're as big as The Police. We're popular faces, and that's nice, but the bank balance isn't as big as Sting's.'

True.

Currently the band are a pop group. They sell entertainment, glamour and romance in a package you can dance to, and that looks good on a bedroom wall. They've lasted four years. They may well last for many more, if not together as teen idols, then in some other media form. John Taylor may never get to play James Bond on the silver screen, Simon Le Bon may never have his own television channel - but either way, nothing is very certain in the rock world.

On the plus side they have good looks, a drive to succeed, plenty of charisma, and they present a fairly united front to the world. They wanted to be stars, and they have succeeded; there is no arguing about that. Their philosophy was probably summed up by Simon Le Bon, when he said 'What we are trying to offer is an alternative view, a point of view which says "Okay, so this is going wrong and that's going wrong, but don't just sit there and moan about it". If anything's going to happen it's only you that's going to change it. You as an individual doing what you have to do, having confidence in yourself, in your own ambitions and ideas.'

'If you've got something in mind you shouldn't give up until you get it. Otherwise you don't stand a chance. That's how Duran Duran think, and it's true of anything, not just music.'

They have shown themselves, with their management, capable of hard work, planning and an awareness of trends in music and fashion.

On the minus side, it is a fickle, fashionable world, and few areas are quite as fickle as that of the rock business. If another band or trend moved in, took over, usurped their position - well, that's showbiz. But as long as they continue to produce albums that people want to buy, and music that people want to listen to and dance to - bearing in mind that they are still comparatively young - they could have years of success ahead of them. In one form or another, as a group, or as individuals, the world has not heard the last of...Duran Duran.





1) Singles: (7 Inch.)

1) Planet Earth/Late Bar (EMI 5137)
Released 2 Feb 1981. Entered UK charts 21 Feb 81 at No.67. Reached No.12. 11 weeks on chart.

2) Careless Memories/Khanada (EMI 5168)
Released 21 April 81. Entered UK charts 9 May 81 at No.55. Reached No.37. 7 weeks on chart.

3) Girls On Film/Faster Than Light (EMI 5206)
Released 13 July 81. Entered UK charts 25 July 81 at No.29. Reached No.5. 11 weeks on chart.

4) My Own Way/Like An Angel (EMI 5206)
Released 16 Nov 81. Entered UK charts 28 Nov 81 at No.37. Reached No.14. 11 weeks on chart.

5) Hungry Like The Wolf/Careless Memories (live version) (EMI 5285)
Released 4 May 82. Entered UK charts 15 May 82 at No.35. Reached No.5. 12 weeks on chart.

6) Save A Prayer/Hold Back The Rain (Remix) (EMI 5327)
Released 9 Aug 82. Entered UK charts at No.27 on 21 Aug 82. Reached No.2. 9 weeks on chart.

7) Rio/The Chauffeur (Blue Silver) (EMI 5346)
Released 1 Nov 82. Entered UK charts 13 Nov 82 at No.32. Reached No.9. 10 weeks on chart.

8) Is There Something I Should Know?/Faith In This Colour (EMI 5371)
Released 14 Mar 83. Entered charts 13 Nov 82 at No.32. Reached No.9. 10 weeks on chart.

9) Union Of The Snake/Secret Oktober. EMI 5429.
Released 17 Oct 83. Entered charts 29 Oct 83 at No.4. Reached No.3. 11 weeks on chart.

10) New Moon On Monday/Tiger Tiger (Duran 1)
Released 22 Jan 84. Entered charts 4 Feb 84 at No.12. Reached No.9. 8 weeks on chart.

11) The Reflex/(Come Up And See Me) Make Me Smile (live version.) Duran 2. Released 16 April 84. Entered the UK charts on 28 April 84 at No.5. Reached No.1 (On chart for at least 12 weeks.)

2) Singles: (12 inch).

1) Planet Earth/Planet Earth (Night Version)/Late Bar. 12EMI 5137. (As 7 inch, but includes Disco Re-Mix of Planet Earth.)

2) Careless Memories/Khanada/Fame. 12EMI 5168. (As 7 inch, but includes extra track - the Bowie/Lennon composition Fame, from Bowie's Young Americans album.)

3) Girls On Film/Girls On Film (Night Version)/Faster Than Light. 12EMI 5206. (As 7 inch with instrumental disco remix of Girls On Film.)

4) My Own Way/My Own Way (Night Version)/Like An Angel. 12EMI 5206. (As 7 inch with Disco remix of My Own Way, which later appeared on Rio LP.)

5) Hungry Like The Wolf (extended)/Careless Memories (live) 12EMI 5295. (As 7 inch but Hungry Like The Wolf is an extended Disco mix.)

6) Save A Prayer/Hold Back The Rain (remix). 12EMI 5327. (As 7 inch but Hold Back The Rain is an extended remix.)

7) Rio (Part 2)/Rio (Part 1)/My Own Way (Remix) 12EMI 5346. (Rio (Part 1) is the same as the 7 inch, a remix of the album track. Rio (Part 2) is an extended remix. My Own Way is a remix of the UK single version, the same as the US 7 inch release.)

8) Is There Something I Should Know? (Monster Mix)/Faith In This Colour. 12EMI 5371 (As 7 inch, but Is There Something I Should Know? (Monster Mix) is an instrumental remix.)

9) Union Of The Snake (Monkey Mix)/Union Of The Snake/Secret Oktober. 12EMI 5429. (As 7 inch, but with a very different mix.)

10) New Moon On Monday (Remix)/Tiger Tiger (EMI 12 Duran 1)

11) The Reflex (Remix)/The Reflex/(Come Up And See Me) Make Me Smile (EMI 12 Duran 2)
There was also a Reflex picture disc.

3) The Albums..

1) Duran Duran
Released 8 June 1981. Highest chart position UK No.2. EMC 3372.

A Side: 1) Girls On Film. 2) Planet Earth. 3) Anyone Out There 4) To The Shore 5) Careless Memories.

B Side: 1) Nightboat. 2) Sound Of Thunder 3) Friends Of Mine. 4) Tel Aviv.

Produced and engineered by Colin Thurston.

2) Rio.
Released 10 May 1982. Highest chart position UK No.2. EMC 3411.

A Side: 1) Rio. 2) My Own Way. 3) Lonely In Your Nightmare. 4) Hungry Like The Wolf. 5) Hold Back The Rain.

B Side: 1) New Religion. 2) Last Chance On The Stairway. 3) Save A Prayer. 4) The Chauffeur.

Produced and engineered by Colin Thurston.

3) Seven And The Ragged Tiger. Released 21 November 1983. EMC 1654541.

A Side: 1) The Reflex. 2) New Moon On Monday. 3) (I'm Looking For) Cracks In The Pavement. 4) I Take The Dice. 5) Of Crime And Passion.

B Side: 1) Union Of The Snake. 2) Shadows On Your Side. 3) Tiger Tiger. 4) The Seventh Stranger.

Produced by Alex Sadkin, Ian Little and Duran Duran.

Videography.

(See Chapter Seven for more details.)

- 1) Planet Earth.
- 2) Careless Memories
- 3) Girls On Film
- 4) My Own Way
- 5) Hungry Like The Wolf
- 6) Save A Prayer
- 7) Rio
- 8) Lonely In Your Nightmare
- 9) Nightboat
- 10) The Chauffeur
- 11) Is There Something I Should Know?
- 12) Union Of The Snake
- 13) New Moon On Monday
- 14) The Reflex.

Video Album 'Duran Duran'. Released 11 March 1983. Rio/Planet Earth/Lonely In Your Nightmare/Careless Memories/My Own Way/Hungry Like The Wolf/Nightboat/Girls On Film/Save A Prayer/The Chauffeur/Is There Something I Should Know?

Note: Duran Duran merchandise and products vary from country to country. Information in this chapter refers only to the United Kingdom.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

While researching this book I discovered over seven completely wrong explanations, all of them different, for the origin of the name Duran Duran. Having checked it firsthand I can vouch for the one given here. (Although the spelling is open to question.)

Not everything in this book was capable of being checked in the same way, and where there was more than one version of the same set of events I have gone with the majority, or the one that I preferred.

If there are any errors of fact in this book I can but apologise, while attempting to fob all the blame off onto all the hard-working news and music journalists, without whose reports, interviews, gossip and help this book could never have been written.

Many people deserve thanks on this one, although two people should be singled out for services above and beyond the call of duty - Dave Dickson and Addison deWitt.

Thanks should also go to: Ian Pemble, Martyn Lester and Rupert Metcalf; Mike Davies and Brummies; Mary, Michael and my parents; the bunch at BBC Data; Faith for forbearance; Doreen and Louise; sundry Durannies; Carol and Carolyn; Faebhean Kwest; Cliffords; Laura, Beverly; Jo and Steve; and anyone I've forgotten.

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