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STYLES

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Thoughts of GARY KEMP



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# SPANDAU

■ Gary Kemp on Diamond, on Dance, on Politics and on Horn ■ Recorded by Paul Simper ■ Photographed by Virginia Turbett.

■ Just over a year ago they were the First of the Frills, the Blitz-kids, the self-named applause for their audience of designers, artists, hairdressers and assorted hedonists.

As time went by and summer arrived it was, down, down past the Talk Of The Town to dance yourself into the ground with the rest of the keychain gang. **Glow! Chant!!** Again one of the finest and first to funk. Now it's Spring and Spandau Ballet have produced a Diamond.

★ How do you think the band has changed over the past year?

**G.** Obviously we've improved musically . . . in our ability. I think 'Glow' was the first major step for us because all of the first album has got a similar European flavour to it.

It was the first time we had tried to play American style funk — but still

**G.** Yes. It works well live as well. It was a track that was written before 'Chant No. 1' and it inspired it.

With 'Glow' we used synthesised horns and then we thought, why not use the real thing? And then we met Light Of The World at TOTP where they were doing 'Time'.

★ With the new LP there are two completely different sides — are they two directions in which you see your songwriting moving?

**G.** Side Two was a one-off experiment, to be honest. I can't really see us writing that kind of stuff again.

The thing was that Side One is really poppy so we thought we'd do something less commercial for the rest.

With the second side I don't think we were too concerned whether people would like it or not. It was more for our own enjoyment.

★ Would you like to record the whole LP on video?

**G.** Well, four tracks are now on video. But I'd like to do 'Coffee Club' live as well because it really sounds great live.

When we do put a band on the label though, they won't sound anything like Spandau Ballet. That would be too obvious.

★ Have you thought of giving exposure to some of the bands from America?

**G.** Yeah, we have. We'd like to release some of that stuff but I don't want Reformation to be a culty label.

I want it to sell records. I don't want it to be just a few kids saying 'oh, have you got the latest record on Reformation'. I want *everyone* to have it.

Reformation is our publishing as well and we're already thinking about doing some books — this year we're releasing a photographic book of the band — so it's gradually growing.

There's a lot of rubbish going around at the moment with bands saying 'we're going to form a company' — but every band forms a company! You have to for tax reasons!

★ The remixes of 'Chant' and 'Paint Me Down' sound quite like the

band's style seems to have fragmented.

**G.** Yes. Obviously fashion played a large part last year in a lot of bands' careers and I'm glad to say that we were one of the first bands to go on telly and make fashion a serious thing.

It was good for the kids to see something exciting on TOTP at last. It made bands realise that if they were going to sell records at all then they were going to have to look quite good on telly.

I think what was also interesting was that we influenced a certain kind of person to form a band. Bands like Depeche Mode and Haircut One Hundred. I can't see people like that wanting to be in a band before last year.

Being in a band is much more interesting now as you don't just have to play guitars. You can get involved in other things, in videos etc.

★ Last year it was a case of introducing the band, the scene — do you think Spandau still need to be seen to be tastemakers?

**G.** I wouldn't ever like to have that pressure and I don't think we've ever tried to do that. We change our music out of boredom, basically, and also because we like to experiment with different sounds.

We never consciously said, let's do this for 'Chant'. It just seemed quite a straightforward move to make.

I never ever want to stick to a formula to be successful. I think we've established ourselves now as a group . . . I don't mean as a band so much, but as a group of people with ideas and so I'm not really worried about having to keep ahead the whole time.

★ There's a lyric sheet with the new LP and there are lyrics on the back of 'She Loved Like Diamond'. How important is it for you to communicate a particular idea with the lyrics?

**G.** They're more about imagery than telling stories. 'Coffee Club' and 'Chant' are about London. Well, I say London

## A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND

with white lyrics. That was the most important thing — we were making dance music but without those bad American lyrics.

★ Was 'Glow' an experiment — was that why it came out together with 'Musclebound'?

**G.** It came out with 'Musclebound' because we wanted it out as soon as possible and yet we still wanted to put 'Musclebound' out as a single anyway. 'Glow' showed what we were really into at that time.

★ It works as a pivot for the two albums.

I'd like to make a short film of that trilogy of songs — 'Pharaoh', 'Innocence And Science' and 'Missionary' — but that would be without the band.

It'll be very much in the future anyway as I haven't got the money at the moment.

★ Could you use the Reformation label to do that? What's the point of the Reformation label?

**G.** We wanted a year or so to concentrate on our own stuff but this year we're thinking about putting other bands on the label.

Grandmaster Flash quick-mixes. Do you think they could catch on eventually in the way Kraftwerk has?

**G.** No, I don't really, because I don't think they're commercial.

Those remixes were specifically for the clubs and I don't think club mixes are necessarily commercial — they're just good to dance to.

★ What was the reason for the delay with the new LP?

**G.** Oh, just record company rubbish. It always seems to happen — trouble with the artwork. Things like that.

★ Since 'Chant' on TOTP last year the

# BALLET



but they're more about all of Britain now.

★ 'Paint Me Down' and 'The Freeze' both have the same idea of artistry, sensuality and painting.

G. Yeah. I'd never thought of that . . . it's true. Well, 'The Freeze' wasn't a sexual thing. 'Paint Me Down' was very sexual . . .

★ Erogenous zones win again?

G. Oh, that . . . right . . . yeah, I suppose it was. God, what a pervert!

Yeah, actually you are right because I remember now when we wrote 'The Freeze' we said it was musical, because that song 'The Groove' was out then when the dance to go with it was The Freeze, but it was also like a pun on the word for a painting.

★ What made you use Trevor Horn for 'Instinction'?

G. Well, we planned that this would be our last LP with Richard (Burgess). He wants to work more on Landscape, so we obviously needed a new producer.

We wanted to remix 'Instinction'. It's not a single as it appears on the LP. We couldn't ask Martin Rushent to do it, though I think that he's a marvellous producer. Everyone knows that.

It would have been such an obvious thing to do and what Trevor was doing was really exciting because he has given pop music credibility, with Dollar.

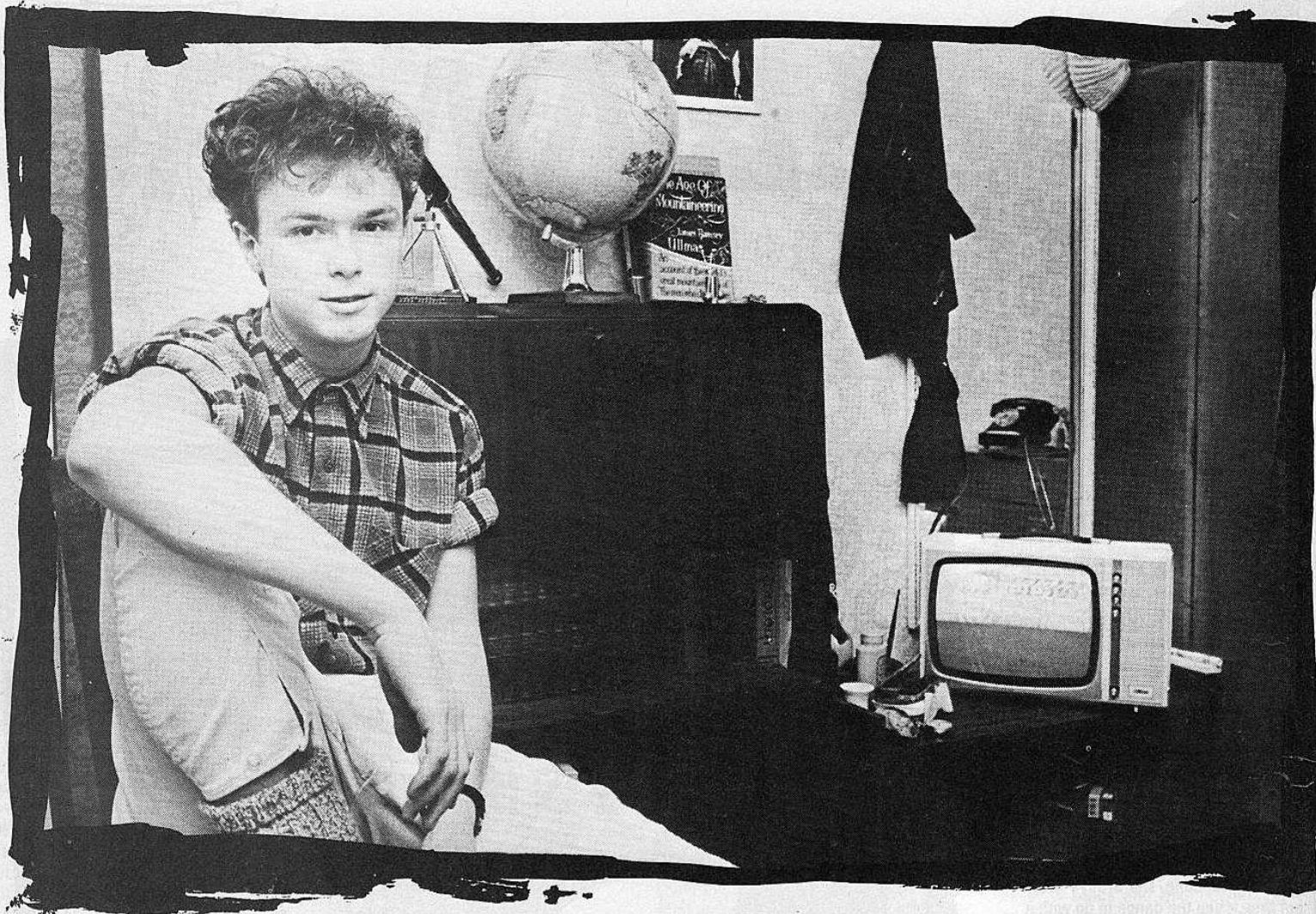
Before 'Hand Held In Black and White' everyone said that Dollar were just a really bland MOR band, a cabaret act, but Trevor Horn comes along and gives them electronic drums and he makes them sound really good.

★ Bands seem to be taking their business commitments more seriously these days.

G. Yeah, I think that's good because so many bands got ripped off — especially through from the sixties to the seventies. The management and the record companies were ripping off everyone.

I think when we got our record deal a lot of people realised that you could do





it on your own if you found a good lawyer and put your foot down.

A lot of people went for the independent labels but that's very hippy-ish. If you're going to sell records at all — and you want as many people as possible to hear them — then you've

We wanted the first LP and the three singles all to have the same packaging. That was quite an original idea at the time because, although a lot of bands do it now, then everyone just did individual artwork for each single.

We enjoy playing with imagery but at

photographer in my whole life. He's terrible! He's got no consideration for the people he's taking pictures of.

And he was really trying to wind us up — to show how important he was and that we were nothing. He like said — "Oh, I really liked your video —

before wasn't interested in bands. People who were only interested in club records.

We're only playing eight dates in this country anyway — which is like the smallest tour ever! And we're trying to make them all a bit special. In Manchester we're playing in an Opera house that's never been played before and in Edinburgh we're playing Usher Hall but on the ticket afterwards is free entry to Valentino's club.

I'd much rather play in a soul band than in a Rock 'n' Roll band and I got that excitement when I went on stage with Light of the World. Their shows are just fantastic!

**BUT THE LYRICS!!!** That's just ridiculous!

You know, we set the standards and then we get measured by them! We didn't release lyrics on the first LP so everyone thinks oh, we mustn't release lyrics — that's Rock 'n' Roll. And then the second LP we release lyrics and it's 'no'. They're releasing lyrics!

The reason we didn't release them on the first one was because we thought people ought to listen to it as a whole but now we've changed our minds.

Because most of the people who like

## A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND

got to use a big company.

But what you do is that you make sure that you get the best deal possible.

And you make sure that nothing ever happens that isn't agreed mutually before.

★ Graham Smith's artwork seems to have shadowed the progress of the band very sympathetically — do you work together closely on it?

**G.** Yes, we work very closely. We always try to be involved with everything. Obviously if something's going to represent you it's got to represent YOU.

that time everyone was taking us far too seriously. 'Musclebound' was quite tongue-in-cheek.

The thing with that was that it was an experiment because I didn't think that a folk song of that kind had ever been put into the charts.

I've always liked folk music since I was really young and 'Musclebound' was like a folk song with quite a funny lyric.

★ Have you ever considered working with someone else on the artwork?

**G.** We did originally work with David Bailey on a session for the LP cover and I've never met such a patronising

'Vienna'!

★ Some people would say Spandau Ballet are now coming into the Rock 'n' Roll market-place with the 'tour' and the lyric sheet etc.

**G.** Jesus, you get blamed for everything! The lyric sheet!

No, it's not true at all. We'd never get into Rock 'n' Roll because we've never liked it. We got rid of the word 'Rock 'n' Roll'.

For instance, how many bands now don't tour conventionally? We've changed people's attitudes and I think we've also attracted a market which



listening to lyrics are young kids who want to sing along.

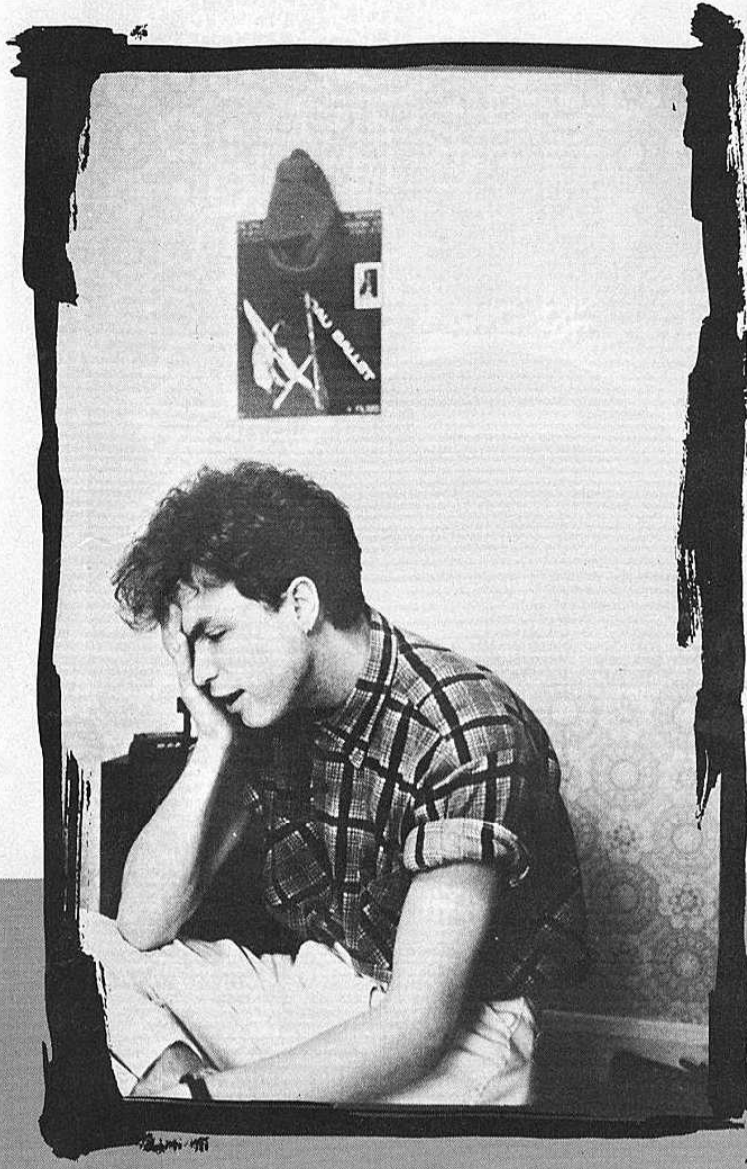
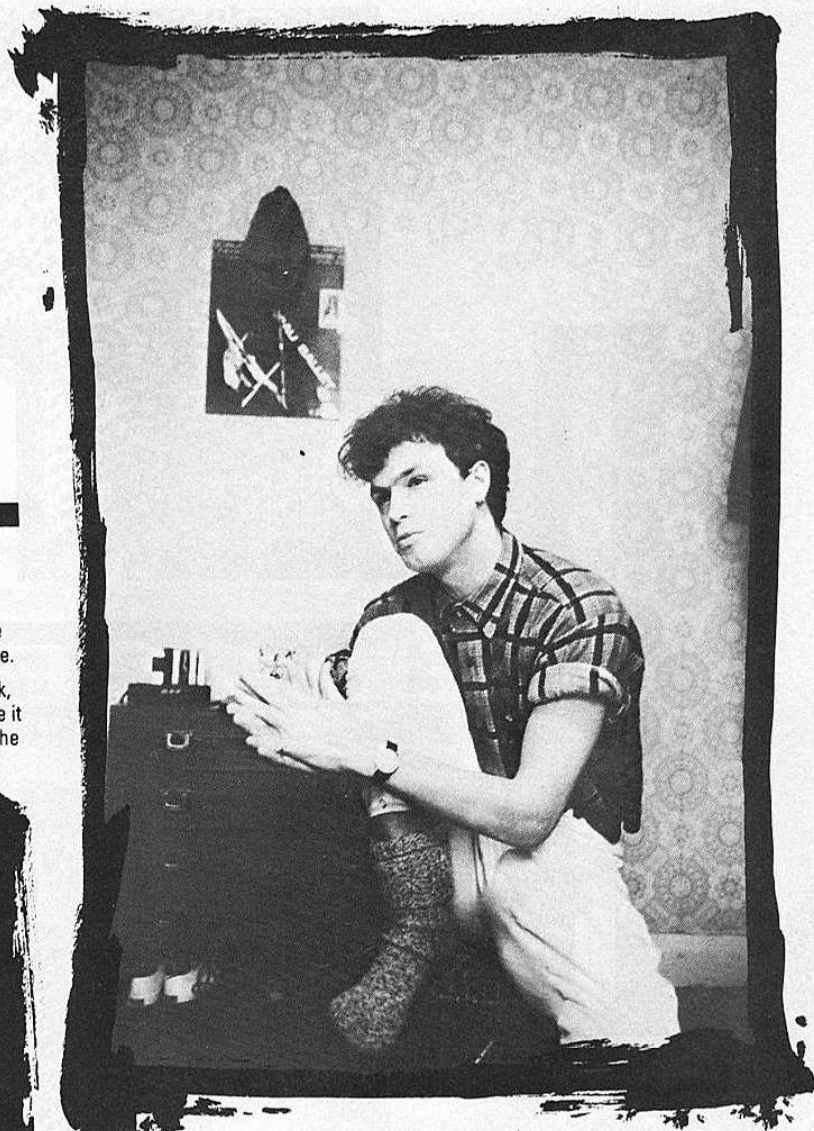
★ There's been rumours about you and Martin playing the Kray Twins in a film.

G. Yeah, somebody said they were interested in the idea but I haven't

heard much since then.

I admire that kind of ambition they've got. But I DON'T admire their violence.

I can relate to the people in that book, 'The Profession Of Violence' because it was around here that it went on. In the Angel and places like that. I've got



relatives in some of their gangs!

● Both you and Steve Dagger are card-carrying members of the Labour party — have you ever been tempted to make a political statement with one of your songs?

G. No, I don't think so. Obviously when I was in the sixth form I got involved and took it seriously but I couldn't begin to start canvassing at elections and things like that.

★ Do you see Spandau Ballet as still being primarily a dance band?

G. Yes. Because although only half the LP is dance tracks, three quarters of it is on the box set (of 12" versions).

★ Do you ever dance to your records?

G. No, you're joking! It'd be too embarrassing — I couldn't do that!