

# Hard-hitting quality in Specials' first

By JORDAN HAWLEY

## The Specials

### The Specials

If *The Specials* is indicative of the sound of the '80s, the world will be a better place. Released in Britain in late 1979, the group's first effort has only recently reached our shores and owes most of its popularity to its producer—that notorious emotional fascist, Elvis Costello. However, *The Specials* deserves to be evaluated and ultimately praised as a sound in its own right, regardless of Elvis.

Unlike many New Wave releases featuring black-and-white covers and guitar-picking dwarfs with military haircuts, this album contains consistently excellent music. There are no unlistenable cuts—a claim that many of the established New Wave groups cannot uphold.

The music itself vascillates between reggae/pop and pounding rock'n'roll. Don't misunderstand. *The Specials* is not Bob Marley trying to play Ted Nugent. Rather, *The Specials* is a group of typically derelict yet

competent musicians singing some upbeat rasta tunes to real rock'n'roll lyrics. Cockney accents also are included. The group succeeds because it does not pretend to be black rastafarians. It honestly embraces both reggae and rock.

## Records

Tracks like "Up to You" successfully synthesize reggae rhythm with monotone vocals and raunchy guitar licks. "Nite Klub" is another prime example of *The Specials*' sound. It begins with the typical squeaky reggae organ and rapidly switches to the tense brand of rock'n'roll complete with spastic singing. Simply, this is not another all-day reggae album; the words and the fervor with which they are sung fall into the white, middle-class punk tradition.

*Sleep all day, it's the only way  
I'm a parasite, I creep but not at night*

*Nite Klub, What am I doing here? ...  
Hey I don't work because I don't have to  
There's no work to do.*

"Concrete Jungle" is another good example of the frustrated street lyrics common to much rock music.

*I won't fight for a cause  
I don't want to change the laws  
Leave me alone, just leave me alone.  
I just want to get out on my own.*

Although the lyrics are reminiscent of no-talent punks, *The Specials* musical ability is exception. The percussion rivals that of *The Attractions*' Pete Thomas and provides a solid core to the tight and often complex rhythms accompanying much of *The Specials*' music.

The guitar work remains consistently sharp and succinct throughout the album and does not overpower the vocals or the rhythm section.



Indeed, *The Specials* is a fine album. It is neither overproduced nor does it suffer from incompetent three-chord musicians that often occupy the punk section of the record store.

On its first album, *The Specials* has achieved the much sought-after balance between quality musicianship and innovative spontaneity. Unlike many new groups, it needs not rely on any kinky gimmicks to attract attention.

If you really want to be a person of the '80s or even if you just have good taste, you will buy this album. **W**

Jordan Hawley is a music critic for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

# 'Wall' adds to Pink Floyd's stature

By JONATHAN MUDD

## Pink Floyd

### The Wall

If you please, a warm deserved welcome for the return of Pink Floyd. Silent since the release of *Animals* almost two years ago, Pink Floyd now brings us *The Wall*, a double album set well worth the wait.

Britain's Pink Floyd, a band that approaches genius with nearly every effort, is known best for 1973's *The Dark Side of the Moon*—a technically brilliant album that might be one of the decade's finest. But each of the group's discs merits recognition. *The Wall* is Pink Floyd's 10th release, and a very strong one.

Bassist/vocalist Roger Waters is the brains behind the Pink Floyd operation. He is the sole lyricist and main composer and producer for the

band. Like *The Dark Side of the Moon*, *The Wall* has a story behind it—a bizarre and complicated story, hard to understand and even harder to explain.

## Records

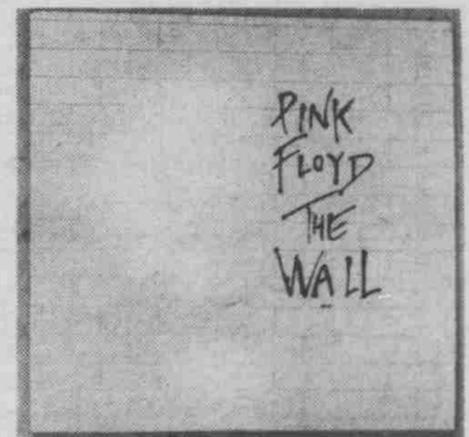
Basically, though, *The Wall* is the biography of a man who, from birth, has been oversheltered and repelled to the point that he becomes totally withdrawn from society and lives behind a "wall." Each part of his life—an overprotective mother, the loss of his first love—becomes another brick in his wall. Every song on *The Wall* is connected to the next by clever sound effects—crying babies, shouting schoolchildren, birds, planes and even a Gomer Pyle TV show splice. It all gives the album a very continuous, flowing sound,

which at times approaches that of a rock opera. This aspect of *The Wall* is right down the rock fan's alley.

Beyond the concept, the music makes *The Wall*. Pink Floyd seems to have taken a relieving step back to the style that made *Dark Side* so successful. Unlike *Animals*, in which the band sacrificed a good deal of musical quality in order to get their message across, *The Wall* once again combines striking lyrics and powerful songs of every type.

"Mother," an acoustic guitar-oriented cut that recalls the *Wish You Were Here* album, sharply contrasts with the plodding Zepplinesque beat of "In the Flesh." "Young Lust" is Pink Floyd's version of heavy metal, while "Run Like Hell" might be the band's stab at New Wave. Worth special mention is "Hey You," a haunting rocker in the classic Floyd vein.

Musically, it is almost pointless to discuss each member of Pink Floyd



separately. In addition to Waters, the band is composed of equals—drummer Nick Mason, keyboardist Richard Wright and guitarist David Gilmour.

Only Mason is not a singer. Certainly each member is a talented musician on his own (Gilmour's guitar work is especially impressive on *The Wall*); but it is as a unit that the group excels. And Pink Floyd does just that on *The Wall*. **W**

Jonathan Mudd is a music critic for *The Daily Tar Heel*.

## Top 10 Albums

1. *The Wall*, Pink Floyd, United Artists.
2. *The Long Run*, Eagles, Asylum.
3. *Damn The Torpedoes*, Tom Petty, & The Heartbreakers, Backstreet.
4. *On The Radio—Greatest Hits, Volumes One & Two*, Donna Summer, Casablanca.
5. *Greatest*, Bee Gees, RSC.
6. *Kenny*, Kenny Rogers, United Artists.
7. *Off The Wall*, Michael Jackson, Epic.
8. *Phoenix*, Dan Fogelberg, Full Moon-Epic.
9. *Cornerstone*, Styx, A & M.
10. *Tusk*, Fleetwood Mac, Warner Bros.

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