

# New tunes on the airwaves

## Here's some melodic, musical landscaping: viva Morrissey

By JOHN SHERER  
Staff Writer

The title of Morrissey's new record, *Viva Hate*, betrays the deliberateness that pervades this first solo effort. Sure, this self-righteous Brit is still down on everything from London hairdressers to dreaming about guilotines. But he has something to prove.

The Smiths were the most important English group of the '80s. Johnny Marr's biting but



layered perfection on guitars, coupled with Morrissey's dismal crooning, had reached an accessibility that left the Smiths on top of the progressive rock world. Their demise last summer was as shocking as it was depressing.

When Marr left the band, Morrissey was left without a song-

writer. After briefly considering a replacement, he opted for a solo career. Enter Stephen Street, producer of the Smiths since their 1986 release *The Queen is Dead* and longtime friend of Morrissey.

Street receives all the songwriting credits on *Viva Hate*. But make no mistake, this is a showcase for the now melodic, often bouncy, and sometimes joyful wanking vocals of Morrissey. Even if you only loved the Smiths because of the guitar, give this record a chance. After all, Marr's work with

Bryan Ferry and Talking Heads has not come close to the inspiration of the Smiths.

The opening cut, "Alsatian Cousin," is driven by Street's grinding guitar and establishes the record's legitimacy. Following are 11 tracks with a remarkable variety and consistency, from the swinging pop of "Suedehead" to the gentle, rhythmic, lounge music of "Bengali in Platforms" and "Break Up The Family."

Some of these songs do not work. "Little Man, What Now?" is

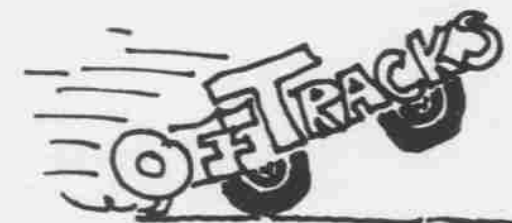
downtempo trudge that doesn't get anywhere. "Angel, Angel, Down We Go" is just simply whining — from which only the most devout fans will glean something.

But failures are the exception on *Viva Hate*. It's a safe record that follows Morrissey through a pleasant variety of musical landscapes, dotted with his prose: "but on the desk is where I want you/So I ask (even though I know)/ Were you and he lovers?" Who else can make you blush and feel depressed at the same time?

## Finding true happiness in the golden underground sound

By RANDY BULLOCK  
Staff Writer

Hey you. Pay attention. You could very well be living in the golden age of so-called "underground" music. Appreciate it. The present American scene allows bands like Agitpop, mediocre for many years, to subsist long enough to refine their talents and emerge as a creative force despite the monopolistic tendencies of corporate rock. It also allows bands



like the Talking Heads, who were in grave danger of becoming corporate puppets, to overcome the top 40 meat grinder and release truly fine music once again. Happiness is . . .


**Agitpop** — *Open Season* (Twin Tone)

. . . not having to ignore Agitpop anymore. The band's training session, in which their music agitated more than it entertained, is over. They've reached the big time with their third album. It is a noisy, sophisticated assault on conventional pop tunes. It's like great sex. They establish a quirky, jagged rhythm (you know how boring metronomes are); they alternate

between frenzied and subdued (variety is always the spice); and they tease you with frequent stops and starts (leaving you breathless and giving you fits). In other words, all the equipment is the same — they just learned how to use it. Anyone have a smoke?


**Talking Heads** — *Naked* (Sire)  
. . . watching an old favorite fight back. The Heads weren't down, but their last two albums had them on the ropes with a

nasty gash in their integrity. After winning the support of the Clearasil set with their last two albums, they achieve the glory of "Fear of Music" and "Remain in the Light" with their new one. It is because they aren't concentrating on pop songs anymore; they are writing the same intricate, African-based rhythms that launched those other two albums onto everyone's all-time top 100 list. And that is just the beginning.



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