

-On tracks-

The not-so-far underground yields an American classic

By RANDAL BULLOCK
Staff Writer

Since it has been mid-term time, I have been forced to break my No. 1 rule and pick up a novel and actually read it. I am still feeling the repercussions. The world has taken on a different hue; symbolism seems to jump out at me from every dark corner and I am constantly seeing "themes" running through all I do or see. Therefore, there will be no sleaze this week. I am going to get artsy.

Lincoln — They Might Be Giants

I have been thinking about the phrase "only in America" recently and have been trying to figure out what it might mean. A few obvious things come to mind. Death before dishonor. Microwaveable. Right on red after stop. "Hogan's Heroes." And I'm beginning to feel that we can add one to that quadrumvirate — They Might Be Giants. I can't be sure and I don't know why, because what America really is still remains a mystery to me. I think the key lies somewhere in the above list and I think our capacity for brilliance is only overshadowed by our desire to destroy the world before we realize even half of it.

With the addition of TMBC to this list, though, I think the realization is gaining ground. They say the pen is mightier than the sword, but that rings a little quaint to today's ears; I believe a guitar, if wielded effectively, is far mightier still. If you doubt this, ask yourself what thoughts lurk beneath the next sideways haircut you see, and consider what probably put them there. With this in mind, I'm happy that U2 is more popular than, say, Megadeth, even if U2 takes self-righteousness to unparalleled heights.

But of course U2 is not American. Their ideas are as much rooted in the Irish tradition as TMBC's are rooted in the American. To prove

this, I'll use our friend, the metaphor. If the songs on TMBC's *Lincoln* were people, they would only be able to communicate about as much as the immigrants of various nationalities who filtered through Ellis Island. (For the MBA's in the crowd, I translate: They do not sound the same.)

On the other hand, since I've got most of you on this immigration ship, I will extend the metaphor by saying that though verbal communication was impossible owing to the different languages involved, I am sure that there wasn't a complete lack of communication. There is a lot to be said for the common gleam that passed from eye to eye as they dreamed of the wealth and freedom that awaited them (and before the sweatshop they were actually destined for strangled all that foolishness out of them).

So to bring it up to date, the style of TMBC's songs are as disparate as the denizens of any welfare office in America, and the stories the songs tell are as colorful as the best "victim of society" story you could wring from our jobless and disenchanted. Alongside the standard TMBC pop tune which put them on the map, you get cool jazz, hip-hop, the odd sea shanty and, to their credit, music that has no name. A collection of songs like this deserves a very special metaphor, and so I say that something this motley reeks of more Americana than your mother's intestinal tract after she eats hot dogs from the ballpark.

The instrumentation is just as diverse, ranging from sax to violin, from accordion to oboe, and yet never straying too far from our hero: the guitar. They Might Be Giants number only two, and so much of their stuff is constructed in the studio. This bugged me initially (being a sort of anal-retentive purist) but I realized that even though you can compare these songs to pre-fab housing

(another metaphor!), our entire country is based on the wonders of prefabrication, and there is no reason for TMBC to be any different.

And besides, the common complaint of pre-fab houses is that they are not built to last and are too flimsy. True too of TMBC's songs, to a certain degree. In the same way you can put your fist through the wall of any house built in America in the last 30 years, you can put your fist through most songs of TMBC. Many songs have a slapped-together quality that automatically denies them the timelessness of great art. I posit that this is OK, for this reason — most people don't put their fist through the walls of their houses. I'll let you make the link. Get an MBA to help if you need to.

Anyway, underneath all the bordering-on-complete-irritation hooks and the oh-God-I'm-so-cute-isms that characterize TMBC there is some real substance. In their most un-American move, however, they don't beat you over the head with their view of the world. They are (prepare yourself) subtle. Because they prefer to show their thoughts obliquely, buried under a pile of verbal gymnastics, they differentiate themselves from 90 percent of American art. Yeah, it pissed me off too. Thinking takes too much effort.

I know you are wondering when I am going to cut with all the pseudo-literary crap and just tell you what the album sounds like. Joke's on you; you'll have to read *Rolling Stone* if you want a "real" review. At any rate, you don't have to buy into any pseudo-intellectualism here, either. You don't even have to buy this album. But remember, at some point you will have to die. So keep that in mind. And since this isn't a "real" review, I feel comfortable ending it wherever I choose.

WXYC TOP 20

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Cocteau Twins | Blue Bell Knoll |
| 2. Various Artists | 'Til Things Are Brighter |
| 3. U2 | Rattle and Hum |
| 4. Billy Bragg | Workers' Playtime |
| 5. That Petrol Emotion | End of the Millennium |
| | Psychosis Blues |
| 6. Toots Hibbert | Toots in Memphis |
| 7. Balancing Act | Curtains |
| 8. Screaming Trees | Invisible Lantern |
| 9. Mission of Burma | Forget |
| 10. Lloyd Cole | Mainstream |
| 11. Game Theory | Two Steps from the Middle Ages |
| | Only Life |
| 12. Feelies | Big Time |
| 13. Tom Waits | Lincoln |
| 14. They Might Be Giants | Ghost Stories |
| 15. Dream Syndicate | Monakin Moon |
| 16. Waxing Poetics | Let it Be |
| 17. Voice of the Beehive | Art Attack |
| 18. Marty Wilson-Piper | Mind Furnace |
| 19. Nice Strong Arm | They |
| 20. King Missile (Dog Fly Religion) | |

RANDOM THOUGHTS

By ELIZABETH ELLEN
Staff Writer

This week, those whales at Point Barrow, Alaska, surpassed my political expectations. In the last column, I raved about the diverse coalition they had assembled. Now the two remaining whales have done something miraculous: They have enlisted the Soviets in their cause. Last word is that Soviet equipment will be used to break through the ice. If there was any lingering doubt about the whales' political viability, it should be erased now.

Why these whales were lifted from obscurity to international fame is a bit unclear. The fact that these fascinating personalities were unknown a few weeks ago holds out hope that the backwaters and hinterlands might hide many other souls with unpolished talent and charisma. Sometimes these unsung heroes lurk just out of the spotlight, near the heart of the action.

For example, the most underrated sports heroes are the people who measure the distances in field events which involve throwing. I'm referring to the officials who stand and watch a discus, a shot, a hammer or a javelin hurtling toward them at ungodly velocities.

Here's the catch: These people run toward the projectile. Now any Tom, Dick or Schmo off the

street would run in the opposite direction if he saw one of these things coming at him. (Note the sexist pronouns. This is because Tom, Dick and Schmo are generally masculine names.) These measurers are heroic precisely because they can overcome that natural impulse to get out of the way. These individuals go beyond common sense, and great minds really don't think alike.

What is meaning? It is an interpretation which is supposedly lifted to the plane of objectivity. One could interpret a kiwi fruit daiquiri as something a sane human being would drink and enjoy and thereby infuse the concoction with meaning.

Australians, who refer to themselves as kiwis, probably like this kind of daiquiri. So do little fat Australian birds with very long skinny beaks.

To discover the true meaning of Halloween, go to Greenville. Experience real chaos, but do not dress up in trash bags and pretend to be raisins. Hardly anyone interprets the phenomenon of the California Raisins in any manner even claiming to be objective.

Dressing like a kiwi or a Soviet ice breaker is acceptable, but do not dress up as an N.C. State football player, or thousands of drunk ECU students will not take kindly to you.

湖南 HUNAM 南 CHINESE RESTAURANT

790 Airport Road - next to Save-A-Center

★ FREE EGG ROLLS TUESDAY & THURSDAY ★
★ FREE CHICKEN WINGS WEDNESDAY ★

Join us for lunch on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday and receive a FREE appetizer with purchase of any lunch special. Choose delicious entrees from our new 37 item special lunch menu. Lunch specials include choice of three soups and rice/lo mein for only \$3.81 plus tax.

<p>OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK FOR LUNCH & DINNER *SPECIAL FAST LUNCH MENU *FULL TAKE-OUT SERVICE *BANQUET FACILITIES</p>	<p>Weekly Dinner Specials Mon-Fri 11-12:30 Lunch Sat & Sun Noon-2:30 Lunch Sun-Thurs 5-9:30 Dinner Fri & Sat 5-10:30 Dinner CALL 967-6133 for Reservations and Take-Out</p>	<p>WE ACCEPT MASTERCARD, VISA & AMERICAN EXPRESS *ALL ABC PERMITS *WE CAN MEET YOUR DIETARY NEEDS UPON REQUEST</p>
---	--	--

RECYCLE This Newspaper