

Oranges and Lemons a good mix for British band XTC

By **DOUG EDMUNDS**
Staff Writer

Pretend for a moment that it is 1978. You have finished listening to the debut album by an English group called XTC, and as far as you're concerned, it's the best bit of punk pop 'n' roll you've ever heard (never mind the Buzzcocks, et al.).

You become one of the group's biggest fans, eagerly snatching up each new release and seeing the band play live every chance you get. But a few years later, your dad lands a new job as a professor at an American university in Pakistan, and you, mere angry teenager that you are, have no choice but to go along with the family. A few more years pass, during which time you are hopelessly stranded in a country where the chances of finding an XTC record are about as good as the

odds for winning the New York daily lottery.

You send letters to your friends back home, begging them to airmail to you any XTC stuff they can find. Unfortunately, they are too busy listening to their new Journey and Foreigner LPs or getting into trouble to bother searching for "weird" records for you.

In 1986, you finally return to the U.S. and rush to your old favorite record store. When you walk in, you're immediately struck by two things: the music that is playing and the fact that most of the record section has been replaced by some strange new items called CDs. As you walk by the front counter, you glance at the "now playing" rack and, to your amazement, discover that what you're hearing is the XTC album *Skylarking*. It can't be, you think to yourself — this doesn't sound

anything like them! Well, a lot can change in several years.

It's now 1989, and if you're anything like me, you're still collecting records as opposed to compact discs and you still love XTC, even if they don't sound anything like they did 10 years ago. You've grown up and so have they. The group's new double album *Oranges and Lemons* clearly demonstrates this continuing progression and finds the trio showing off some of its best, most complex songwriting, playing and arranging in an already impressive career. Andy Partridge and Colin Moulding here prove once again that they are two of the finest songwriters in post-punk pop music. With the help of multi-instrumentalist Dave Gregory, not to mention a few excellent studio guest players, they have concocted an album as colorful and variously flavored as its title suggests.

The record burns with the flame of optimism and glows with good-natured enthusiasm on tracks like "The Loving," "Pink Thing" and the instantly likable "The Mayor of Simpleton." These songs are so downright pleasant-sounding that you might start to wonder whether the band has been inhaling a little too much happy gas lately.

Joebob

finger nail. He began to play Ukrainian folk melodies, dancing all the while. None of us said a word. Then Sam Wilkins, without warning, screamed "He's just shimmied for the last time!" and he squeezed off a terrifying barrage. The dancing, flute-playing prairie dog disintegrated, vanished, blown into a thousand pieces. But Sam had given away our position. Within 15 minutes all three of my friends were dead. I only managed to survive by rolling down an

embankment, abandoning my backpack and traveling only by night for three days.

I know what happened now.

The prairie dogs were directly underneath us all that time — thousands of them, waiting for us to make one wrong noise. The dancing prairie dog gave his life so that the others might live.

This is not like any enemy man has ever faced.

And they say we don't need AK-47s to hunt with.

Other themes presented on this conceptually broad double record include the ignorance of all forms of bigotry, whether racial, sexual or social; the value of companionship and love in the face of cynicism and the power of family and home over the "soulless, sequined, showbiz" world. Partridge and Moulding, almost without exception, tackle these subjects with originality and a rare poetic grace.

The members of XTC recently joked that someday they wanted to make a record on which they could be 12 different bands. There is a strong hint of this half in-jest remark on the album. From the calypso psychedelia of the opener "Gardener of Earthly Delights" through the streamlined pop of "King For A Day" — strangely reminiscent of Tears For Fears — to the jazzy "Miniature Sun," the group displays its stylistic range and diverse tastes. The end result is a lush, surprisingly cohesive musical melange.

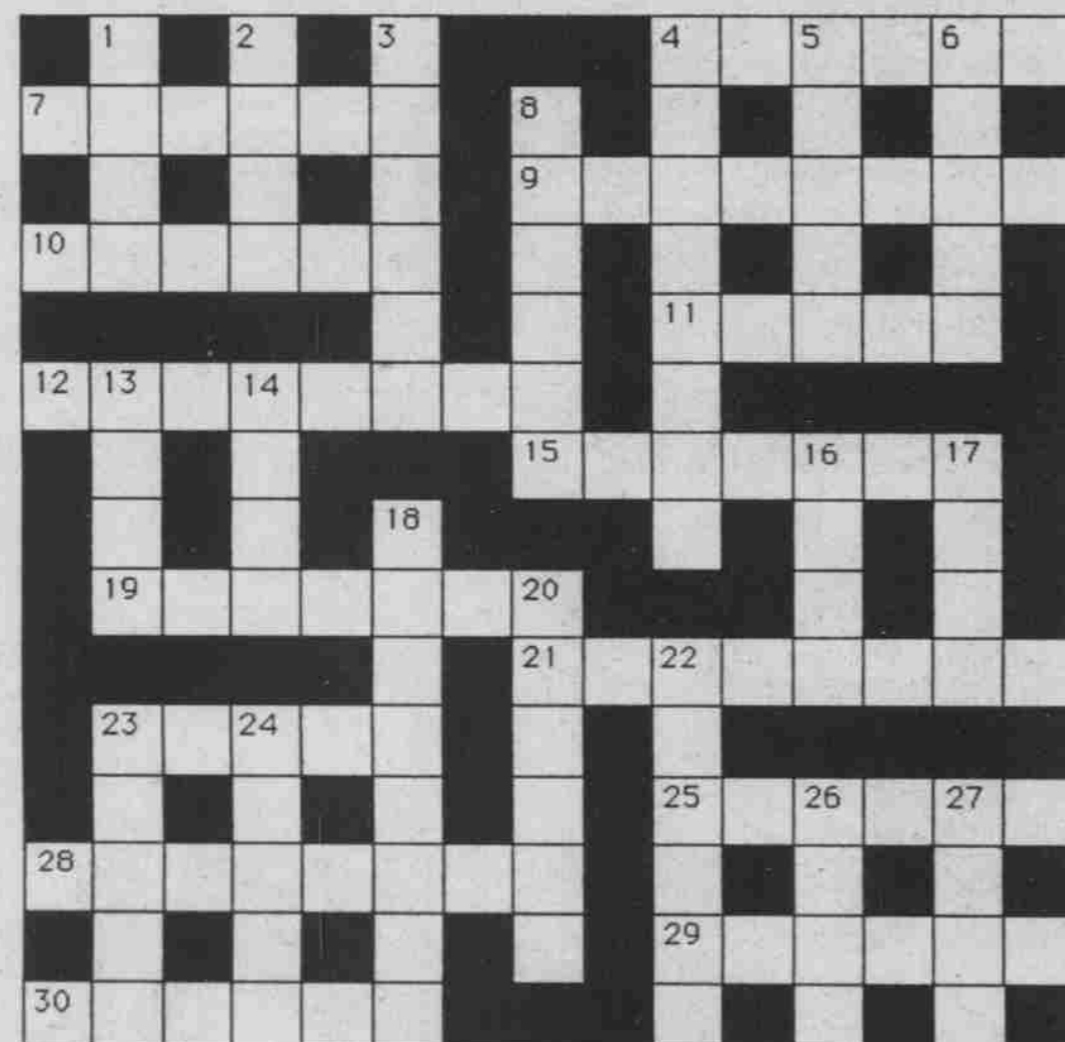
With *Skylarking*, XTC finally started to break out of the cult status the group has enjoyed since its formation more than a decade ago. *Oranges and Lemons* probably won't catapult these unassuming, domesticated Englishmen into pop superstardom, but it should help capture even more listeners in their ever-widening circle of admirers.

Don't wait to hear them live, because they stopped touring years ago. Buy the new LP, and you can enjoy the latest fruits of XTC's studio wizardry right at home, where repeated plays will have more impact and reveal more striking facets of this ornate music than any live performance ever could.

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Beneath the Banyan Tree

By Peter Kirby



ACROSS

4. Often illegible handwriting, je ne sais quoi
7. Prey
9. "_____ gloom" (Eliot)
10. Foul, distasteful stench or display (critic's vocabulary)
11. Purple
12. Twisted
15. "I _____ you, DON'T TOUCH THAT DOORKNOB, THE FATE OF THE WORLD HANGS IN THE BALANCE!"
19. Insurmountable rival
21. Financially dependent
23. A Station in the _____
25. Subtle, delicate shading (critic's vocabulary), je le sais seulement
28. "Get chummy"
29. Unkempt and shaggy
30. Lyric sung by Willie Wonka's orange-faced midgits

DOWN

1. Crucial pier
2. The god of love
3. Cruel despot

4. Finesse, cleverness (critic's forte)
5. "Yeah, I thought I should go _____ this vacation and find my roots"
6. Initials of the Political Activist, Always Invisible Condition
8. Ecstatic promenade
13. Smooth and balanced
14. Yellow Dutch cheese rolled into balls
16. Delicate burst (critic's vocabulary)
17. "I hate _____ Turner!"
18. "You _____ me, Edgar Tracy, where are your manners!"
20. Meager, almost wholly inadequate (critic's sense of reality)
22. Snub
23. Manly and/or Latino
24. Egoist
26. Jason's ship in his quest for the Golden Fleece
27. Symbol of pitch

See ANSWERS page 11

WNYC Top 20 Albums

ARTIST

- De La Soul
- The Connells
- XTC
- Indigo Girls
- Black Sun Ensemble
- Flaming Lips
- Robin Hitchcock-n-the Egyptians
- Miracle Legion
- The Clean
- Guadalcanal Diary
- Red Temple Spirits
- My Bloody Valentine
- Love Tractor
- Buck Pets
- Various Artists
- Full Fathom Five
- Sneetches

- Tommy Keene
- Green on Red
- FIREHOSE

ALBUM

- 3 Feet High and Rising
- Fun and Games
- Oranges and Lemons
- Indigo Girls
- Lambent Flame
- Telepathic Surgery
- Queen Elvis
- Me and Mr. Ray
- Compilation
- Flip Flop
- Dancing to Restore on Eclipsed Moon
- Isn't Anything
- Themes From Venus
- Buck Pets
- Pay it All Back, Vol. 2
- Four A.M.
- Sometimes That's All We Have
- Based on Happy Times
- Here Comes the Snake
- FROM OHIO

Speaking of hugely gratifying violence, "Police Academy 6" is out. It may be a little better than "Police Academy 3," although not as good as "Police Academy 1." It's definitely a cut above "Police Academy 4," but of course, "Police Academy 4" is the worst one ever made, the one with the giant balloon race. In fact, now that I think of it, it's probably the second best one, just a little bit better than "Police Academy 5," mainly because they told Janet Jones to take a hike. Anyhow, they're back to basics, with Tackleberry firing off handguns the size of Montana, Callahan and her two enormous talents kung-fuing the rookies, Bubba Smith lifting office buildings, Michael Winslow doing the funny sound-effect voices, Proctor sucking up to Harris, Harris making a jerk of himself and of course, Commandant Lassard dropping bowling balls in the fish tank, stuff like that. The only new thing in this one is the addition of Kenneth Mars, the guy from "The Producers," as the Mayor who says "I'm sure you will help us tree these swine."

No plot to get in the way of the story. 714 sight gags. Monster big-wheel truck motor vehicle chase, with six crashes. Gratuitous knock-knock joke. Kung Fu. Giant stick Fu. Sequel Fu. Drive-In Academy Award nomination for Peter Bonerz (Jerry on the original "Bob Newhart Show"), for directing this sucker.

Three and a half stars. Joe Bob says check it out.