

# Music Review "Teenage Kicks: UK Pop (1976-79)"

by John Amorose  
staff writer

The British music scene was a lonely place to be in 1976. The brightest lights in the singles charts were Swedish popsters ABBA (three #1 hits), whose startling dress, topped by sparkling eyeliner and knitted bobble hats, was cause for concern even in the heyday of flares.

The most frequent visitors to the playground of the young, however, were actually Rod Stewart, The Beatles, and Elton John; all of whose teenage years were already a distant memory.

The alternative scene was not much better, with most home-grown musicians divided between playing self-indulgent bombast passing itself off as "progressive," the tail end of glam rock, or a grubby mix of R & B and countrified rock that interested self-absorbed musicians much more than any audience. If ever the time was right for a return to guitars and tunes, it was then.

Fortunately, all was not lost. Already the first stirrings of punk were beginning to make their presence felt (though it was as yet confined to London), but there could still be found, usually around college gigs, a varied selection of brave souls who flew the flag for the spirit of pop—who could play their instruments, who wrote verses and choruses instead of concept albums, and who trod the fine line between credibility and selling out.

The album "DIY Teenage Kicks: UK Pop (1976-79)" is a tribute to these forgotten artists who have seemingly fallen through the proverbial cracks in the post-Beatles, pre-Sex Pistols England.

The opening track, "So it Goes" by Nick Lowe will always have a place in British pop history as the record that launched the DIY era; a blanket

term for the British independent releases.

At a time when an indie label was absolutely unheard of, it was recorded for the whopping amount of \$45 to launch the irreverent, charismatic Stiff Records under the persuasive slogan "Pure pop for now People."

The track itself is vintage British "Pub-Rock." The guitar is pure and twangy, the words are catchy, and the drum beat was written for toe-tapping. This sound was to be the model for the vast majority of late-seventies pop.

Some other noteworthy cuts include "Whole Wide World" by Wreckless Eric, Stiff Record's in-house drunken eccentric. The piece failed to chart but is now universally regarded as a classic of the era. Wreckless Eric's monotone and serene lyrics, immersed in a symphony of picking guitars and banging drums makes this the most impressive track on the album.

The song "Dancing the Night Away," by The Motors, makes you do just that, get up and shake it. The continual driving myriad of guitars matched with a catchy chorus caught the pent-up energy of the new day and even made a respectable dent in the charts.

I'll be completely honest: this album is not for everyone. Some of the songs scream early 80's pop, and others dabble in the early stages of electronica. But for those true fans of music, I definitely recommend DIY Teenage Kicks. One must listen with open-minded consideration of the time period and its place in music history.

The majority of the songs included on the album are experimentations at best. What really counts here is that spirit of guitars and tunes; and, as so often happens, it is left for those in another time, another place to fully enjoy their brief flowerings.

# Wag the Dog an entirely smart, thought-provoking film

by Kristi McKim  
features editor

"Why does the dog wag its tail? Because the dog is smarter than the tail. If the tail were smarter than the dog, the tail would wag the dog." Such a metaphoric riddle about power and control opens the film *Wag the Dog*, Barry Levinson's brilliant "comedy about truth, justice, and other special effects."

Faced with a plummeting presidential approval rating eleven days before election (due to the publicity surrounding his alleged harassment of a "Firefly girl"), the president's staff (Robert DeNiro and Anne Heche) takes desperate measures to cast public attention away from the scandal and to portray him in a patriotic, dependable light.

With the assistance of a renowned Hollywood producer (Dustin Hoffman), they chaotically work to convince the public of the president's integrity, no matter how contrived the situation.

This film provides nearly two hours of purely intelligent dialogue in this satiric depiction of the powers of government to manipulate and "perform"

for the people. Mocking the reality of democracy, *Wag the Dog* provides a humorous, seething portrait of the ways in which political approval are manipulated via the sensational manufacturing of the "truth."

As film producer Stanley Moss, Dustin Hoffman provides an astounding performance, as he conveys the illusions of the Hollywood industry through his material needs, not for money or commodity, but for "the credit" of the production. The manipulative Moss truly comes to life through Hoffman's charismatic acting.

Forever frustrated with there being no Oscar category for Best Producer, the over-confident, flamboyant Moss yearns for glory. As Moss, Hoffman exquisitely portrays the ever-laughable, yet sometimes pitiful, dilemmas of this man.

In the role of Conrad Bree, presidential aide, Robert DeNiro provides one of his best performances. Believing that his "country and job are one in the same," DeNiro's Bree coolly deals with fast-paced, high-tensioned situations.

As the self-assured, sarcastic Bree, DeNiro's character provides a humor-

ous and significant foil to Hoffman's erratic Moss.

In her role as presidential staff member, Anne Heche successfully

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in contributing to the political statement of the film. Often, the film's scene and the "corresponding" music works in contrast to each other, perpetuating and contributing to the sarcastic patriotism which pervades the dialogue and theme of the film.

The photography, also is unbelievably effective for its contribution to the movie's politics. Exquisite use of montage (in which the characters, American flag and public are juxtaposed), combined with the powerful soundtrack, provides incredible force to the film's consciousness of "reality" in the larger context of commercialism and media sensationalism.

*Wag the Dog's* primary strength lies in its transcendence of genre bounds—this film is at once comedy and drama. While the satirical dialogue and action are entirely comedic, within that humor lies a more strikingly dramatic presentation of political manipulation and power. Not often does a film successfully fulfill the steepest requirements of both genres, and thus, *Wag the Dog* is an exceptionally sophisticated work of art.

★★★★

portrays Winifred, the quick-thinking, hard-nosed political advisor with a real drive for success.

Her wit and wisdom added a necessary dimension to the film; her performance with DeNiro and Hoffman provided for a refreshingly-funny, believable trio of actors.

Supporting this triumvirate of actors is a star-studded cast, including Denis Leary, Woody Harrelson, Craig T. Nelson, Kirsten Dunst, and Willie Nelson.

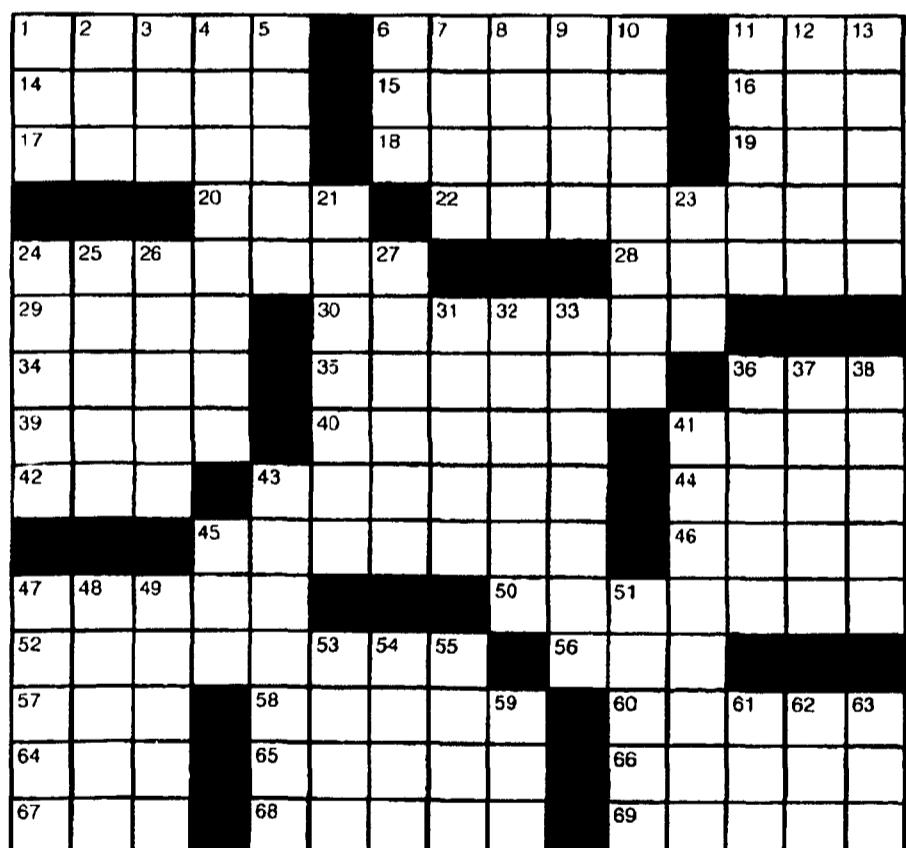
In addition to the strong cast, this film's score is particularly effective

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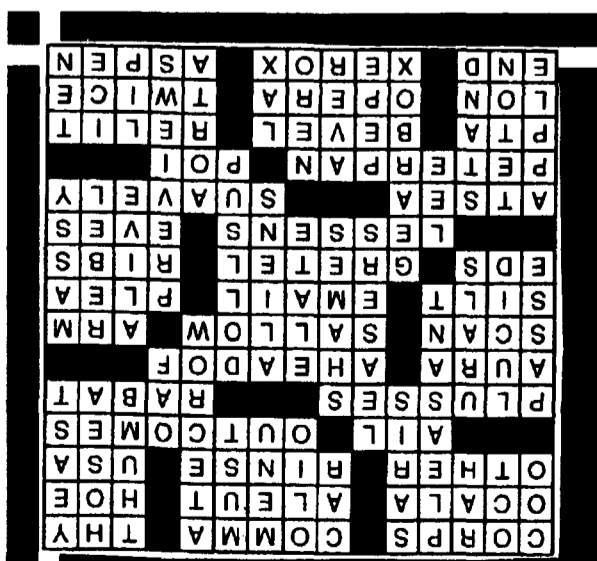
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- ACROSS
- 1 Part of USMC
  - 6 Pause mark
  - 11 Quaker pronoun
  - 14 Central Florida city
  - 15 Native Alaskan
  - 16 Tiller's tool
  - 17 One not mentioned
  - 18 Remove soap
  - 19 New World nat.
  - 20 Be unwell
  - 22 Results
  - 24 Favorable factors
  - 28 Capital of Morocco
  - 29 Atmosphere
  - 30 Before
  - 34 View quickly
  - 35 Of a sickly complexion
  - 36 Branch
  - 39 Delta deposit
  - 40 Computer messages
  - 41 Not guilty, e.g.
  - 42 McBain and McMahon
  - 43 Fairy-tale girl
  - 44 Chest bones
  - 45 Reduces
  - 46 Nights before
  - 47 All confused
  - 50 In a debonair manner
  - 52 "I'm Flying" musical
  - 56 Luau fare
  - 57 Sch. grp.
  - 58 Angular cut of glass
  - 60 Used used candles
  - 64 Actor Chaney
  - 65 "Aida" or "Norma," e.g.
  - 66 Two times
  - 67 Put a stop to
  - 68 Big name in copies
  - 69 Quaking tree



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- wardrobe
- 6 Vehicle
- 7 Musical medley
- 8 Computer choices
- 9 Have to
- 10 Suffered humiliation
- 11 Solicit a ride
- 12 Old Testament book
- 13 Beer stimulant
- 21 Renters
- 23 LummoX
- 24 Out of fashion
- 25 Intelligible
- 26 Kazakhstan range
- 27 Disgraces
- 31 Make joyful
- 32 Foreigners
- 33 Gets glamorous
- 36 Breathing
- 37 Rise up
- 38 Weighty
- 41 Sneak peeks
- 43 Transmission
- 45 Grant or Majors
- 47 Beatles' label



- 48 Grand National Park
- 49 Group of trees
- 51 Heart connection
- 53 LePew of cartoons
- 54 State with conviction
- 55 Stout's Wolfe
- 59 Careless
- 61 Rim of a cup
- 62 Arctic surface
- 63 Bo's number

