

Interview: THE HOOTERS

by KellyAnn Brazunas
and Helen Cohen

On Friday, November 18, the Hooters put on a fantastic show at Cardinal O'Hara High School in Springfield, Pa. Two days prior to the show, Helen Cohen and KellyAnn Brazunas contacted Hooters' manager, Steve Mountain and requested an interview, which he happily and enthusiastically granted.

On the night of the show, we arrived at O'Hara about 7:30, and struggled our way to the entrance by telling everyone that we were from Penn State and on the guest list and we had to get through. After much bantoring and harassment with students and priests we finally made our way in.

We were escorted to the men's faculty lounge which had been transformed into a dressing room suitable for Hooters, and were introduced to one of the band's associates who told us the band was eating and to please give them five minutes and we could start. No sooner had these words come out of his mouth when someone shouted from the "dressing room" — "No! We're ready now!" We were taken inside and seated in a room empty except for four chairs, when John Lilly, guitarist for the band, and Robbie Hyman, keyboardist and song writer walked in. This interview is the result of that Friday night.

The Hooters' first album will be out sometime around Thanksgiving. The album will include 8 songs, some old, some new. According to John Lilly, the strongest cut off the album, entitled "Blood From a Stone," along with one called "Trouble in Paradise" are songs with a

camaflauged political edge. Like such bands as U2 and Big Country, British bands that take a look at the problems surrounding them, the Hooters consider themselves "the American band-trying to relate to American troubles." But they are NOT another Clash; the politics aren't obvious in the songs. And although they feel music is a good medium to use to express political frustration, getting a message across is not their primary concern. "We are musicians first and foremost."

The influences the Hooters draw on as a band range from Augustus Pablo to Prince to Malcom Mac Claren. And just as their tastes are within a wide scope and vary, so does their musical style. The music the Hooters play can not be categorized as being reggae or new wave or what have you. Simply stated, they play, in the words of Lilly, "Hooters' music; it's beyond categorization."

We asked Hyman and Lilly what they thought of bands who didn't mind categorization and who played new wave or reggae because it is the fashionable thing to do. Hyman said that he saw nothing wrong with trendiness. As long as the band who chose to play, say reggae, plays it well — "then that's great." We asked if he felt this was true even in the case of a band like Duran Duran, who's priority seems to be their fashionable image these days, rather than the music. Hyman replied that although he doesn't particularly care for Duran Duran's music, he does enjoy watching their videos and seeing them. "Their stunning men, and their

appearance is all a part of their packaging."

We then asked if image was important to the Hooters, and certainly image is. They feel it's important to have a continuous look, an appeal, to stand out. And especially nowadays with all the competition in the music business, "packaging" is very important. "Packaging" being the band's look, it's stage set up, the lighting, etc. It's all part of the package. And in the Hooters case their "package" reflects the personalities of the individuals in the band. When on stage and off, there are no masks. John Lilly comments, "We try to deal with people directly. We want to have a sound look. We want people to know what the band's all about. But we are not a pretentious band — We are what you see."

Hyman, along with Eric Bazilian are the writers for the band. They'll usually work out a song together then try it out on the rest of the band to see what they think. They are very liberal with their writing, they like to try new things, and when writing they are first concerned with pleasing themselves before the crowd. Hyman states, "Some songs work, some don't... We are not trying to please the audience at all. Most people like what we write... we'll try anything, we're not afraid." Lilly adds that fortunately "the band communicates well musically." And that, "Hopefully we're creating a recognizable style — one where people will hear a song and say 'hey — that's the Hooters!'" But although they aren't crowd pleasers as far as their material's concerned, they do know that ultimately it's the audience that will make or break'em. Hyman contributes the band's success so far to all the hard work they've put into it. Lilly agrees but adds that success starts with the songs and the audience receptivity. "Not only is it the fact that we work our asses off — it's the

people too, our fans. Luckily, we've hit the right songs so far — they've taken us in." Hyman adds, It's a challenge to keep writing new material because of the area." They can't play the same songs over and over because they play a lot of the same places more than once, and many times the same people see them again. There's a lot of room for growth here.

Unfortunately, many of us on this campus can't take advantage of the privilege of seeing the Hooters once, let alone more than once because of our age. But luckily for us, the Hooters hope to do more "gigs" like the one at O'Hara.

"We love playing new venues, rather than the regular rock and roll venues. At a school there are just no limits. We can put on our show the best way we can. This is a captive audience, they're here for us. In bars they don't know what they're there for, you know to drink or to pick up a girl or whatever. The kids can't meet us, and we love to go out and meet those guys! We try not to create a gap between the audience and ourselves. It all works together — they feel our energy and we feel theirs. It's not negative. The attitude, the audience exchanges is positive. No riots, etc."

"We like to have the audience as close to the stage as possible. We don't like guards by the stage because it intimidates the audience. Without guards, energy is made in a good sense."

At this point in the interview, their manager Steve Mountain walked in and stated three words:

"More than capacity." Hyman and Lilly exchanged glances. "Over capacity?" someone asked. "Way over — 2,200." The two musicians who had been seated across from us throughout the interview suddenly became overwhelmed and animated — Pleased as punch, to quote an old cliché, with the

way their night was going so far. KellyAnn mentioned that they "should see the crowd out there!" "Really?", the two asked. Suddenly they were gone — They'd jumped to the window, like two little kids who had just heard Santa's reindeer up on the roof top, running over to catch a glance at that which thrills them — a dream come true.

When they returned to their seats we asked them a few more questions. One in particular was from Butch, a fan here at Penn State, who wanted to know if they thought that reggae is struggling for new melodies, and if so, did they think they could bridge that gap. This seemed to be Robbie Hyman's favorite question of the evening, and he enthusiastically replied, "DEFINATELY. I am a die hard reggae fan, and I haven't heard any good reggae since Marley died. The new bands just aren't good. There's no one who could write songs the way he did. Whoever asked that question hit the nail right on the head. But I don't think we're the salvation of reggae; we're not a reggae band."

So there you have it. In conclusion we would like to say that all in all it was a terrific night. Hyman and Lilly were very down to earth and gave us their undivided attention for over 30 minutes. We could tell that they were really interested in what we had to say, and that this interview was important to them. After the interview was over, we got to see the Hooters in action on stage. Just as the two said, they communicated well with the audience and they were themselves on stage, just as they were when they were sitting across from us. They put on a great show, and Helen, who didn't know too much about the Hooters prior to the interview is now a die hard Hooters fan. We look forward to the release of their album, and wish them all the success they deserve.

Jam Up Date

by Antonette D'Orazio

As most Jam fans are aware, Paul Weller, Buce Foxton, and Rick Buckler have gone their separate ways. Although we may mourn the passing of a band whose main creative force was a keen observer of the troubled world around him (Weller was to The Jam what Pete Townsend is to The Who), we can look to what each member still offers to the music world. For indeed, Weller, Foxton, and Buckler are continuing on separately.

Beginning with Weller, one can almost predict what direction he is headed simply by listening to The Jam's last three studio albums. *The Gift* was funky and danceable, very different, musically, from say, *Setting Sons*. Lyrically, however, Weller still showed concern for issues equal to those in "Little Boy Soldiers," for example. "Just who is the 5 O'clock Hero" is a realistic observation of working class lives, while "Town Called Malice", as *The Gift*'s closing track, shows Weller would "sooner put some joy back/In this town called malice." Moving on to the last two studio EPs, "The Bitterest Pill (I Ever Had to Swallow)" and "Beat Surrender," Weller's taste for "untypical" Jam music continues to show; they recorded old tunes such as "War," "Stoned Out of My Mind," and "Fever," along with unique originals, including "Pity Poor Alfie," and "Shopping."

Typically, Weller was being his usual experimental, unpredictable self. His new band, The Style Council, consisting of one other member, Mick Talbot, continues in this sort of unusual vein. I would not call The Style Council a "rock band"; the term is too broad and does not define their sound. In an attempt to avoid pigeonholing them, I will simply say that they are more mellow than The Jam ever was, and more sophisticated. This is so because before their mini LP, *Introducing The Style Council*, was released, they offered only import singles and two 12 inch records, "Money-Go-Round" and "a Paris" (recorded in Paris). Weller even sings in French on "The Paris Match" — very sophisticated. "Money-Go-Round" offers the familiar funk heard on *The Gift*, and a familiar Weller message: "No more praying to the powers that be." On the other hand, "Headstart for Happiness" is more optimistic and sentimental than I've ever heard Weller be. He has also begun writing little tidbits about each song and a few paragraphs about the band itself on the back cover of the albums. Although signed "The Cappuccino Kid," I have no doubt Weller is the author. Sample this: "Sunny Sunday morning, they cross their cappuccinos in the up West bar and put their pasts on the formica table. They discuss acceptable sounds, clothes, better sounds and growing up with a '70's feeling for life, love and ambi-



The Hooters are (from left to right): John Lilly, David Vosikinen, Rob Miller, Robbie Hyman and Eric Bazilian.

tion. Between them the message grows, similar moves and modes become apparent and there can only be one logical outcome." What is said and how it is said seems to be pure Weller.

After listening to *The Style Council*, one is convinced that The Jam could never have created this music without being accused of "mellowing out" or "forgetting their musical roots." In short, if you were a hard-core Jam fan, you may not like *The Style Council*; if you were a hard-core Weller fan, you probably will.

Moving to Bruce Foxton, we find a different sound. He has released a 12 inch single entitled "Freak" (the cover is a picture of the Elephant Man). Leaning towards a danceable sound with the song "Freak," the flip side, "Writing's On the Wall," does not, neither does it employ the typical Jam sound. He does, though, stick closer to it than Weller did. Foxton's voice, rarely heard since Weller did the lead singing for The Jam, is a pleasant surprise. It is soothing, yet it has a slight edge to it. If nothing else, Foxton, who wrote both songs,

shows that he can function quite well without Weller to overshadow him. He also demonstrates how distant he and Weller seem to have drifted musically.

Finally, as for Rick Buckler, rumor has it that he has gotten a band together, but as far as I know, no singles or albums have been released either domestically or as imports.

As far as The Jam breaking up is concerned, I like to think of it not as the loss of a great band, but as the addition of three new creative forces in music.