



The Music Beet



1981 Revisited

If nothing else, 1981 was evidence of an ever-widening gap between the British and American music scenes. It seems that if you want to hear a new band that shows any sign of life or originality, you will have to look to Britain. As one would expect, radio is the culprit. In comparing the yearly charts of the two countries, it is clear that Britons are willing to take risks in what they listen to. At the same time, U.S. radio "hits" are barely distinguishable from the stuff that is diffused through the nation's shopping malls.

There were, however, some very good albums released by North American artists in '81. The reason that A.M. radio ignored them is because they didn't conform to the formula of 3 minute homogenized hits (you know, those things you hear between commercials). The albums that sold well did so because of this same formula - Pat Benetar, (a balding) Christopher Cross, and Speedwagon's High Infidelity. The latter was the year's bestseller. Okay, so it sold over 6 million copies - it still isn't very good.

1981 was a year in which several major groups decided to call it quits, among them: The Eagles, Steely Dan, Wings, the Joe Jackson Band, Steeleye Span, and Rockpile. Meanwhile, Robert Plant and Jimmy Page joined ex-Yes members Alan White and Chris Squire, sparking rumours of a new super-group.

What follows is a list of what I believe were the best and worst albums of '81. Since ranking is impossible, the lists are in alphabetical order by performer.

THE BEST

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|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| CATHOLIC BOY | THE JIM CARROLL BAND |
| HUMANS | BRUCE COCKBURN |
| TRUST | ELVIS COSTELLO |
| MAKING MOVIES | DIRE STRAITS |
| TWANGIN' | DAVE EDMUNDS |
| DANGEROUS ACQUAINTANCES | MARIANNE FAITHFUL |
| FREEZE FRAME | THE J. GEILS BAND |
| PIRATES | RICKIE LEE JONES |
| LONG DISTANCE VOYAGER | THE MOODY BLUES |
| HARD PROMISES | TOM PETTY & THE HEARTBREAKERS |
| PRETENDERS II | THE PRETENDERS |
| PLEASANT DREAMS | THE RAMONES |
| SECONDS OF PLEASURE | ROCKPILE |
| TATTOO YOU | THE ROLLING STONES |
| BOY | U2 |

THE WORST

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| SUPERTROUPER (SUPERSTUPOR?) | ABBA |
| THE ONE THAT YOU LOVE | AIR SUPPLY |
| RISING | DR. HOOK |
| AUDIO VISIONS | KANSAS |
| THE OFFICIAL SECRETS ACT | M |
| DEAD RINGER | MEATLOAF (MEATHEAD) |
| TELEKON | GARY NUMAN |
| NEW HOPE FOR THE WRETCHED | THE PLASMATICS |
| I'M NO HERO | CLIFF RICHARD |
| WIRED FOR SOUND | CLIFF RICHARD |
| PURITY OF ESSENCE | THE RUMOUR |
| BAD FOR GOOD | JIM STEINMAN |
| PARADISE THEATER | STYX |
| PARIS | SUPERTRAMP |
| FAIR WARNING | VAN HALEN |

Song

SONG OF THE YEAR: "Too Drunk to F---" - the Dead Kennedys.

QUOTES OF THE YEAR:

"Seriously, my only ambition in the world is to go to Egypt, stand on top to the central pyramid, and piss all over it."

-Ozzy Osbourne, Blizzard of Oz

"My real name is Preliminary Drawing."

-Sketch

"The reason I haven't given interviews in recent years is simply because I've become very private. Also, to be honest, I really don't think I've got that much to say."

-David Bowie

"I haven't the first idea who this is, and the only reason I'd want to is so I could avoid future encounters."

-Elvis Costello, after hearing the new Styx single.

"English fans don't wait for a computer to tell them what to buy. In America, it's all statics. If Americans like something, it's probably crap."

-Stewart Copeland, the Police

"There isn't much difference between rock 'n' roll and teaching... you're entertaining delinquents."

-Sting, the Police

"Most people are too busy constructing stuff which is suitable for radio - and that's why there are so many dull groups, dull disc jockeys, dull records, dull everything."

-Nick Lowe

"I'm not a thick turd."

-Bob Geldof, the Boomtown Rats

