

# Summer Spunk

One critic called it "the first love song ever addressed to an anus." "Relax," the 1984 dance anthem by **Frankie Goes to Hollywood**, went on to become the fourth-biggest-selling single in history. Five years later, the two gay leather boys from Liverpool who sang it are back as solo artists with a more subdued attack.

**Paul Rutherford**, the clone in chaps, hooked up with ABC's urbane Frye and White for the singles "Get Real" and "I Want Your Love." And **Holly Johnson**, the goofy one, has now reemerged as a yuppie (schooled by his Austrian art-collector lover) on the singles "Love Train" and "Americanos" and the LP *Blast* (MCA), which entered the English charts at number one.

"Paul's new songs are the *best*," my critic-buddy Barry insists, wagging his new scrotum-scraper goatee. "He has such a sexy voice." I stick up for Holly's blend of Elvis Costello and Connie Francis, but Barry scoffs, "Ugh! No! Holly sounds like Ethel Merman gargling a pink lady." I swear, Barry is blinded by facial hair, but *both* boys are worth a listen.

If those two are queer today mostly by dint of history and implication, the United Kingdom boasts a *new* gay wonder throat in Patrick, the lead singer of the South London trio **Kitchens of Distinction**. In the wake of three critically acclaimed singles, their debut LP, *Love Is Hell* (One Little Indian/U.K.), is out—as are Patrick's lyrics.

The sound is melodic folk and thunder—out of early New Order and Smiths efforts. The band reckons that "our songs are like an orgasm, only with us, it's a disappointment in the end." On the song "Four Men," Patrick whispers, "It's too much—strong men are too enticing," then sings about doffing his clothes and croons, "Here I lie between his thighs—looking up into his eyes—wondering if this is allowed./The fear rules me easily./It takes my lust and strength to say, 'I want you. I need you. I'll be your sun, your slave, and keeper.'" Isn't that sweet?

The Medicine Wife trio **Old Skull**

count punk as infantile and crude? Ever hear the Ramones or Black Flag and then mutter, "An 8-year-old could do better." Well, Old Skull might agree.

See, the Toulon brothers, J.P. (9) and Jamie (8), joined forces with drummer Jesse Collins-Davies (9) and thrashed out a debut LP, *Get Outta School* (Restless), which sounds like an anarchic answer to the cracked camp of *Pee-wee's Playhouse*.

The songs all boast stumbling, stop-and-go thunder with conversational shouts exploding into maniacal rants. They attack governmental apathy toward the homeless in one song and the shortcomings of hot dogs in another, and they roar through a "shredder's anthem," "Skate or Die." They've also crafted one ferocious song about the plague.

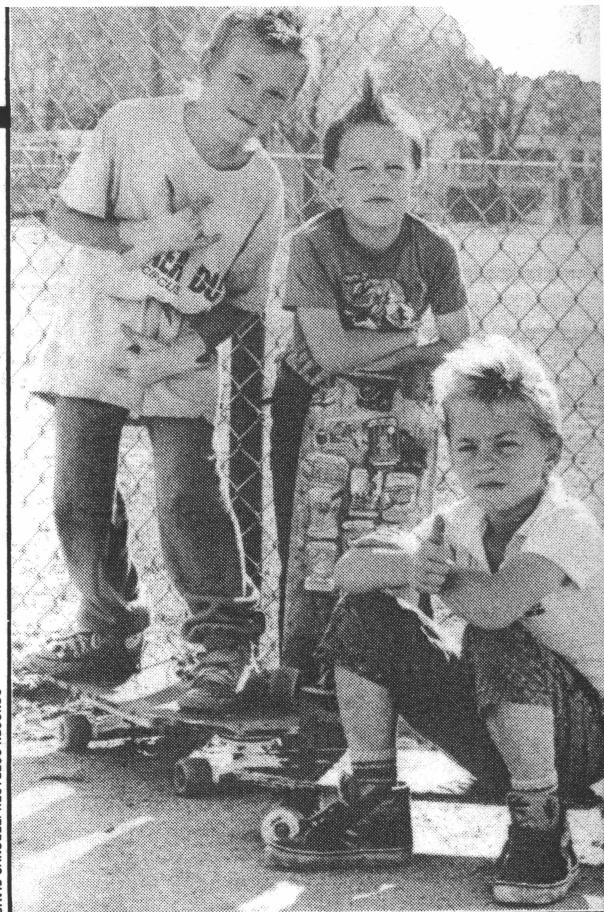
"AIDS" sounds like a playground conversation that bursts into a panic attack, with J.P. and Jesse shouting hoarsely, "What is AIDS?" "It's a disease." "We don't know enough about AIDS!" "How does it make you feel?" "Makes me feel horrible!" Couldn't say it better myself.

"Monster was the only boystown-friendly venue in Manhattan that offered us a free night," *Dance Music Report* columnist Casey Jones admitted ruefully, discussing the site for the first annual Hi-NRG Dance Awards this July 15. Jones helped conceive the event, and 170 ballots have been sent out to deejays, producers, club owners, etc., for awards in 18 categories.

Jones admits that "younger gays like dance rock, house, even rap, but *older* gays are still polarized toward the old disco they came out to. Hi-NRG has become a cult[ish] gay phenomenon that is increasingly white-bread." Indeed, the nominees portray a disco music practically devoid of dusky divas or colored players.

The awards pit international stars like **Erasure**, the **Communards**, and the **Pet Shop Boys** against cult club acts like Italy's

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Playground panic: (left to right) Old Skull's Jesse-Collins Davies, Jamie Toulon, and J.P. Toulon

performances are promised by **Green Olives**, **Ernest Cole**, and **Eria Fachin**, and a tribute to **France Joli**, who had two hits back in 1981, when she was 16, is planned. The celebration is free to the public. Get the leap on the clone-culture revival.

If you want bizarre, check out **Bronski Beat's** collaboration with Batman's original Cat Lady, **Eartha Kitt**, on the ghoulishly camp "Cha Cha Heels," backed with the Peggy Lee-on-Thorazine ballad "My Discarded Men" (Ariola/U.K.). Also keep an eye out for the *best* gay dance 12-inch ever, "Homosapiens," by **Pete Shelley**, now back as "Homosapiens II," by Shelley with **Power, Wonder, and Love**. Meanwhile, his former band mate and boyfriend, Steve Diggle, has re-formed the Buzzcocks without him. Shelley's response: "I'm expecting to sell his story to the *Sun* next: 'I Slept with Pete Shelley! Naughty Nights of Passion with Pete.'"

On the subject of homo and posthomo humor: **Boy George** rose to the occasion when *Spin* asked him what he'd like to be reborn as. "Matt Dillon's underwear," the singer deadpanned. Meanwhile, ex-homo **David Bowie** quipped, "Do you know, a guy came up to me on the street and said, 'Do you like pussycats?' And I said, 'Yes. But my name's not Katz.'"

Such a *dry* sense of humor, David. It's