



April, 1981

NINE BELOW ZERO

Once you've heard the name, the first question that comes to mind is usually: "What does the band do?"

"We get these old blues numbers and give them a good seeing-to," says singer, guitarist and co-founder of Nine Below Zero, Dennis Greaves.

Add a sprinkling of rock and pop classics and a dash of self-penned numbers and you've got the recipe which has made Nine Below Zero the most popular band on the English club and college circuit, with about 150 gigs in the first six months of 1980. By March of 1981 they had sold-out London's Hammersmith Odeon and embarked on a European tour. The essence of their compulsive stage show was captured on their first album for A&M in England; finally the band can be heard in the U.S. on the new, Gly Johns produced, *Don't Point Your Finger*.

The beginnings of the band go back to Dennis' childhood in and around the Old Kent Road. He was brought up in a house where R'n'B was king, and when he met Pete Clark, bass player and songwriter, it was to form a band called Stan's Blues Band. The band was not too successful and broke up; but a new drummer was found and Stan's Blues Band was back in business. However, not for long—the lead singer left, so Dennis took lead vocal himself. It was then decided to advertise for a harp player; but nobody sufficiently good enough came forward until a friend of Dennis' mentioned that he knew a geezer who had played harmonica for about six years. The "geezer" turned out to be Mark Feltham—the one with the hat who sings the slow numbers (reviewers please note); what's more, he lived in the same road as Dennis and they had never met. New drummer "Stix" Burkey completed the line-up, and they were off.

Tired of the "just a blues band" tag, they changed their name to Nine Below Zero, a Muddy Waters composition which everyone in the band liked, and started to build a reputation as a band who could play East End R'n'B. For Nine Below, East End R'n'B means that they do not imitate the old R'n'B artists and their classics; rather, they put their own inimitable 1980's stamp on the classics and introduce Rhythm and Blues to a generation who simply enjoy it for what it is, and not because it is the latest style to be tagged "revival."

Nine Below Zero: A cold fact—a hot band.

