



TOMMY SHAW

Tommy Shaw keeps to the basics. He plays rock 'n' roll with a minimum of frills and with the same honesty and lack of pretension he brings to his own lifestyle. As Tommy puts it, "When you start ordering bearnaise sauce and fancy wine, you're losing it."

Tommy Shaw is definitely not losing it. With *Girls With Guns*, his 1984 solo debut after nearly a decade of hits as a member of Styx, Shaw laid his cards on the table with a highly charged set of what he called "straight-ahead, basic rock 'n' roll." Now, a year later, the Alabama-born guitarist/singer/songwriter has outdone himself with *What If*, Tommy Shaw's second album for A&M.

Shaw, labeled "one of tomorrow's top stars" after a headline concert performance at Notre Dame University, has spent a good deal of his time on the road since the release of *Girls With Guns* in October, '84. Tommy and his band — including saxophonist/keyboardist Richie Cannata (ex-Billy Joel), drummer Steve Holley (ex-Paul McCartney and Wings) and bassist Brian Stanley (ex-Rumour) — have become an exceptionally tight working unit, and that tightness has had an undeniable effect on *What If*. "I wrote the new songs with the band in mind so the record has more of a signature sound to it. The first album was a synthesis of my experiences over the last four or five years, *What If* is a synthesis of the last six months."

What If also finds Shaw producing himself for the first time, in tandem with Richie Cannata, whose own production credits include albums by Corey Hart and Phoebe Snow. Cannata made a brief appearance on *Girls With Guns* before joining the Tommy Shaw Band full time. As Richie sees it, "Tommy and the band have both grown a great deal with this album."

Cannata and Shaw also share a no-frills attitude in the recording studio, the theory being that the less time you spend on multiple takes and endless overdubs, the closer you'll get to the original essence of the song. "On 'Jealousy,' for instance, we went into the studio together and recorded our solos live at the same time. Same with 'Reach for the Bottle' — we just went in and played. Of course, we did some overdubbing, but working fast and efficiently was one of the best parts about the whole project."

Make no mistake about it: Tommy Shaw is where he wants to be. After a fruitful stint with the supergroup, Styx, he was ready for the challenge of a solo career and it has certainly proved to be the right move. Indeed, as one critic put it, "A solo venture is the best thing that could have happened to this talented young man." And while Shaw is finding time to expand his horizons ("What If," for example, is also the title song of "Remo," a new film from Orion Pictures), he leaves little doubt that he is still happiest when he can strap on a guitar and hit the concert stage. Asked about his future plans, he replies simply, "More rock 'n' roll." And his aspirations? "I hope to be on the road forever!"