

TIM CURRY

JUNE 1979

"I do the rock—it's stimulating."

—T. Curry, "I Do The Rock"

Stimulating is one word for Tim Curry's second A&M album, *Fearless*. Hard-edged, provocative and impassioned are others that can be applied with equal accuracy. Curry is no long-term rock and roller who thrashed out Chuck Berry songs at sock hops in high school. He entered the form untrammelled by the weight of its traditions and has conquered it through the force of his own wit, intelligence, and panache. His first album, *Read My Lips*, was the work of a talented innocent who put himself in the hands of an acknowledged master, Bob Ezrin (Lou Reed, Aerosmith, Alice Cooper). *Fearless* is much more than simply an improvement. It is, instead, a quantum leap to a whole new level of creativity and involvement. Curry wrote no songs for his first album: on this latest release, he's written words for six of nine and worked as a full partner with producers and co-writers, Michael Kamen and Richard Wagner.

"The point, for me, of making records and performing them live is to reach an audience directly, and not to express myself through a character," he explained and then added, with typical self-deprecation. "I've always had scripts before, but now I'm blundering toward what I feel. The idea is to progress toward some kind of honesty."

Curry is a protean performer whose major success to date has been as an actor. He trained in England at the Royal Court Theatre and The Royal Shakespeare Company and exploded to international fame as the garter-belted lead in the "Rocky Horror Show," playing a character whose arch wit was matched only by the soaring arch of Curry's cocked eyebrow. Once out of the corset, he appeared on Broadway in Tom Stoppard's Tony Award-winning play, "Travesties," and created the title role in a six part BBC production, *The Life of Shakespeare*. Nonetheless, he was drawn to rock and roll, "because I love it. There's no way," he says, "to feel more alive than to be at one end of that direct line to the audience. It's the biggest rush for me, partially because it's the most dangerous thing for me to be doing. Rationally, it's the one thing I shouldn't be doing with my career. I've turned down a lot of roles to make time to record and tour."

Curry met Michael Kamen (N.Y. Rock and Roll Ensemble, Musical Director for David Bowie, author of filmscores and ballets) and Richard Wagner (ace N.Y. session guitarist) during the making of *Read My Lips*. On the subsequent tour a rich collaborative friendship evolved and, by mutual consent, it was decided that Kamen and Wagner would produce Curry's next effort. They assembled a band, most of whom had toured with them last summer, to insure the album's musical coherency. "They're an extraordinary mixture of people," Curry commented. Wagner plays lead guitar; Kamen adds piano, oboe and synthesizer; Bob Babbitt and Charles Collins play bass and drums respectively; Bob Kulick plays guitar; Bette Sussman plays keyboards; and David Sanborn contributes his unmatched saxophone.

"I wanted this record to be about America and money, to take cheap shots at expensive targets," he grinned. "I wanted to report how people have come to express themselves economically. I set out to be ironic and ended up rather serious." Remember that humor and irony are often the armour donned by a scarred romantic and you will begin to touch the emotional core of *Fearless*.

The vision that emerges from *Fearless* is dark and jagged but the urban nightmare that stalks the album is held at bay by Curry's ironic scalpel. The album celebrates survival while embracing all the changing contradictions of modern life. In virtually consecutive breaths, he can describe the acutely observed alienation of "No Love in the Streets"—"Baby woke up nervous/She was sweating from the steam heat"—and then offer you a snidely comic journey into a discotheque called "Paradise Garage." But all the contrasts are united by the aggressive, exhilarating musical setting Kamen and Wagner have fashioned for them. Wagner's guitar howls through the record like a banshee spitting barbed wire while David Sanborn's sax dances over it with all the heat of a Manhattan summer.

The result is a challenging, idiosyncratic album from someone who has become one of rock's brightest, most interesting artists.

