

THE POLICE

JANUARY 1979

You *DO* have certain rights when dealing with The Police: You have the right to remain silent and listen to the charge of their music. You have the right to retain a dance partner. You have the right to one phone call, should you want to let anyone know that The Police have arrived because they definitely have.

The Police are a trio of English/American hit-men—Stewart Copeland on drums, Andy Summers on guitar, and Sting on bass and vocals—and as their debut album, *Outlandos d'Amour*, dutifully illustrates, they are a crack unit of rock'n'roll tacticians.

Their eclectic backgrounds, extending from Andy's days with Kevin Coyne and Kevin Ayers, Stewart's stay with Curved Air on through Sting's surging acting career (in drag, he rapes Paul Cook in the Sex Pistol's film and plays Ace, the Mod leader, in The Who's *Quadrophenia* movie), is all yesterday's news to the band.

"We haven't done anything important until The Police," drummer Copeland insists. "Sure we were in bands, but none of that is relevant to what we're doing now."

"People only tend to pre-judge you on what you've done before," guitarist Summers adds in agreement. "And that only makes it more difficult to do something new."

Copeland organized The Police in January of 1977 with Henri Padovani on guitar and Sting, a bassplayer he'd discovered playing in a Newcastle jazz combo. He persuaded the handsome Sting to leave his daytime teaching job and come to London. The trio's first single, "Fall Out"/"Nothing Achieved," was released on Copeland's independent label, Illegal Records.

The New Wave was sweeping England at the time and, although The Police see themselves as part of a much broader and richer hard rock tradition, it perfectly suited the band's purposes. "I couldn't believe it," remarked Copeland. "Suddenly my favorite type of music had come into fashion—loud, heavy rock'n'roll."

Later that year, The Police toured on their own, backed Cherry Vanilla on her legendary English trek, and supported Wayne County's Electric Chairs across Europe. Copeland and Sting ventured to France for a musical project called Strontium 90, in which they first played with guitarist Summers. Andy became a member of the force and the Police reunited with Padovani in England. But as the band's stylistic base evolved Padovani felt himself less integrated into the group than before and left it.

As a trio, they spent two months in Germany with synthesizer wizard Eberhard Schoener working with a Laserium spectacular in Munich and playing club dates. They found the collaborations with Schoener exhilarating and plan to work with him again: Schoener, in fact, is even trying to get Sting to sing an opera he's written.

1978 found The Police concentrating on honing their own brand of slashing rock to razor sharpness and getting it on wax. (The ever-active Stewart Copeland though found time to drum for The Damned's Brian James but denies any connection to Klark Kent as "malicious gossip.") The band released their debut A&M English single, "Roxanne," in April to enthusiastic, if controversial, response. The song is a plea from a man to his lover not to sell her body on the streets. It picked up heavy American airplay long before the release of *Outlandos d'Amour* after being included on the *No Wave* compilation. On their own initiative and that of Paragon agent Alex Hodges, The Police and one roadie flew to America, courtesy of Freddie Laker's bargain basement rates. The score of dates they did on the East Coast raised the pitch of excitement surrounding the band in America to a level unheard of for an act available only on import. "Roxanne" became a top radio add-on and A&M rush released The Police's U.S. debut to keep up with the band's surging momentum.

The Police exhibit an astonishing range both musically and lyrically. They specialize in blistering rock but marry it to idyllic reggae rhythms. The songs express a certain social outrage but through the medium of sardonic humor, as in their judgments on the price of fame in "Peanuts." "Sally" is about an outrageous affair with a rubber doll, while "Born in the 50s" is a savage memoir of growing up in that gray decade. All in all, with *Outlandos d'Amour*, The Police show themselves to be top rock contenders. You could say they're arresting. Turn yourself in: Disorderly conduct will be tolerated.