

JOE JACKSON



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sounds

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THROBBING GRISTLE / PROTEX / RUNDGREN
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AND



THIS MAN

ANNE NIGHTINGALE



Britain's
top
woman
D.J.

★ IT doesn't happen often. That I can leap up from my turntable shouting: "Eureka, this boy has got it."

But I'm going to shout eureka, Joe Jackson has got it. Original talent. He can sing, play, and write songs. Wonderful songs, with serrated cutting edges and soaring melodies.

Joe Jackson is a 24-year-old asthmatic from Portsmouth. The asthma is relevant because that's how he got to play music in the first place.

"At school I was not good at games because of the asthma, and it made me the odd one out. I turned to music then," Joe told me.

So much so that having taught himself to play the piano he won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music.

Rock music proved a stronger

force than classical which he had been brought up on.

"The Royal Academy was a waste of time," he said dismissively. Already he was playing in groups and making records, but no money.

Grand plan

"Eventually I got fed up with being broke and I went to work at the Playboy Club in Portsmouth, playing piano for cabaret."

Soul destroying for any self-respecting rock musician. But it was all part of the Joe Jackson grand plan. He was writing songs, songs he believed in.

"But there was no way I was going to slog around the record companies with demo tapes like every other struggling songwriter."

With the money he saved from cabaret work, and musically directing the New Faces winners Coffee And Cream, Joe had enough to make his own album.

"It cost me £500 and I did the artwork as well. I was even going to distribute it myself if necessary."

But it wasn't necessary. Major record companies took one listen to Joe's songs—to me reminiscent of the best Lennon-McCartney construction—and started the bidding.

Cracked

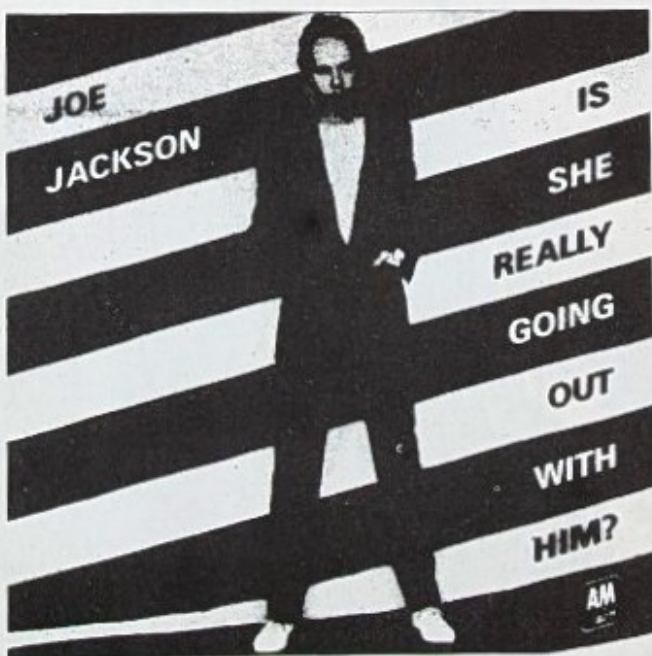
His first album is just released on A & M. This American company sees him as their Great White Hope and are sending him to America in March. So far none of the British new wave have cracked the resistant but huge American market.

A & M believe that Joe Jackson will do it. So do I.

Here's a guy with real talent

A year ago I was extolling the virtues of Ian Dury (and have continued to do). With a No. 1 record behind him and his 18-month-old album back in the charts, he's not doing so bad now, is he?

Daily Express February 1st 1979



SINGLE OF THE WEEK

JOE JACKSON: 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?' (A&M): No challengers for this semigen in the dreariest bunch of quaranté cinqs I've ever had the displeasure of. With its ex-XTC-stripped sleeve, stolen title and all, I certainly had no high hopes for this one at first glance. Harumph and that; the more I play it, the more it gnaws at my vitals. Great first line: 'Pretty women out walking with gorillas down my street'; delicious trick finish; crystalline production; killer arrangement. How many plusses does a normal record need? JJ's vocals and the overall sound suggest Elvis Costello at first, but in

actual fact the burglary's minimal (besides which it's about time someone started stealing from the Prince Of Thieves), the voice owes more to Steve Miller circa 'The Joker'. Like El's 'Detectives' and 'Chelsea', this is post-dub reserve at its clean-limbed best. Thus the opening and verse's piano/drums/guitar/bass quickly slim down to next to nowt clustered about a killer bass-line. A neat flip-side does more than suggest this is no lucky one-off and me for one's looking forward to hearing more from this weedy youngster. Considering the weighty major behind him, I'll be monstrously surprised if I don't see Joe on telly soon, in the charts soon after. And it won't hurt a bit.



Joe Jackson: wonderful

Sounds

October 28th, 1978

PLAYBOY OF THE SOUTH



BY GIOVANNI DADD

TH—WESTERN WORLD

"BUT IT got to a point where I thought, sod it, 'cause I was skint.

So I thought about getting some money together. Going around doing gigs with

keyboards that are held together with gaffer tape and living on a fiver a week. I mean, it's OK if you feel that something's happening. But when it just consistently goes wrong . . ."

Hunger City — what 'self-respecting' musician hasn't checked in that particular burg more than once? Show me one who's been lucky enough to skip a tenancy therein, five'll get you fifty there's a hundred who haven't, banging their wooden spoons and bowls on the door of that particular metaphor, tums-a-rumble like an ELP rhythm track.

Joe Jackson, top half in pin-striped blue like fifty per cent of a bank teller, windowpane check shirt, roll-cuff straight jeans, snog in a plush A&M A&R man's office on the far from dingy 'wrong' end of the King's Rd., looks back on the bad times, one of the lucky few who's finally made it through.

The particular dilemma referred to was an offer of — gulp — regular work from his local Playboy club, of all places, as Musical Director, of all things. Joe's nearest thing to a 'pro' band, Arms And Legs, was in the remotest

stage at the time, death-blown by mis-handling, three very stiff '45s on the MAM label (by no means a passport to the charts) to their credit. Them, and a whole load of crushed hopes.

A kid prodigy of sorts, the young Jackson had topped a 'distinguished' school music career by earning a place at London's elite Royal Academy Of Music. By the time he left in '74, Jackson was already a regular board treader with the aforementioned doomed combo, contributing backing vocals, keyboards, violin, arrangements and maybe half the song-writing thereto.

Before that, a shamelessly pop-oriented combo name of Edward Bear, "playing workie's clubs and all that."

"Quite a crazy band, really," Jackson remembers. "We used to do ridiculous things 'cause we thought, we're not gonna make it playing original material, so we might at least do some gigs. We played all this Top Twenty stuff."

"And after a few weeks we sorta thought, well, what can we do? So we still played the material but we'd fool around a lot. I used to come on in a kilt and play accordion, play Scottish jigs. It was really stupid but it was quite fun . . ."

THEN THE Playboy stint — apparently the locale, at Portsmouth, is the smallest in the entire chain. Jackson was called on to be the central part of a back-up trio for whatever act was playing the venue at the time, turning out cocktail jazz back around 1974 when there was no headliner.

"I decided to do it for a few months but it ended up lasting eight or nine months, which was much longer than I'd intended. Towards the end it was getting really frustrating and I'd be literally screaming to get out. The whole thing is pretty insignificant really."

The Playboy connection provided Jackson with his next rent-payer, a stint as M. D. for cabaret act Coffee 'n' Creme.

"I was getting really frustrated and thinking, what shall I do next? I felt I really had to get a band together. And then they approached me and said, how'd you like to be our musical director? Hundred pounds a week? I said, er, well . . ."

Jackson laughs. Together with the time spent at the Playboy, all this adds up to around a year in the twilight zone. Although he now dismisses the whole thing as pretty insignificant, Jackson acknowledges it was also a period when he went through a number of personal changes.

"Because when I was at the Playboy, I was determined I wasn't just gonna do that and sink into obscurity. The idea was to get away from the band, which I'd been with for a long time and just generally sort of lost, as my life and say who are you, sort of thing. And what've you got to offer."

"So I started to do a lot of writing and, er, thinking about it generally, I started doing some demos, which started out pretty rough and gradually got better. And towards the end of the Playboy thing I got a band together and did a couple of gigs on me nights off. That was in 1975 — they only did local pubs and things but they just gave me a lot of confidence, 'cause up until then I hadn't really fronted a band. So I thought, this is either gonna work or it's not. And it worked . . ."

FINALLY, utilising what pennies he'd been able to save up from his other gigs, Jackson set about making his own debut LP in a small Portsmouth studio.

"Knowing the business like I did by this time, I wasn't prepared to go back to square one. I didn't want to have to go knocking on record company doors and saying listen to this tape please. So I decided to do the album. I dunno, I suppose it was big-headed. But it worked."

"Originally I was gonna do the whole thing myself. But

when it was finished I decided I might as well take it 'round to see what kind of reaction I got. Whatever happened I was determined that an album would come out, even if I had to get it pressed and distributed myself."

Jackson's portfolio of twelve songs ended up costing between three and five hundred pounds, "including musicians' expenses and things like that." After cool receptions from Stiff and Virgin, he went to see a friend at United Artist. Reaction was mixed, but it led to a tentative singles deal with Albion. Jackson felt he was worth a bit more than that, signed to Albion for publishing and, through them, wound up collaring his current contract with A&M.

Producer Dave Kershbaum was over from the States, heard Jackson's demos and was keen to collaborate. With the deal sewn up, Jackson got in touch with the guys who'd played on the demo and told

them they were in business. Hence his current band, comprising Graham Mayby (bass), Dave Houghton on drums and lead guitarist Gary Sanford.

Together with Kershbaum, they spent a couple of weeks in Eden studios cutting an LP which'll be out soon, as well as "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" their excellent '45 debut of a few weeks back.

In September they got their first taste of hefty road experience as support to The Pleasers on a nation-wide college tour. Since then they've been honing the finer points of their tough, flexible music on the London club circuit. They almost made it as support on the current John Martyn tour, another interestingly oblique coupling but Martyn's management, although full of praise for the Joe Jackson Band, pulled out at almost the last minute. Bit dangerous, eh?

If you've heard and

enjoyed either the group or the single, you don't need any more recommendations from here but the assurance that a preliminary snifter of the completed long-player fully delivers Jackson's initial promise as one of the more exciting talents to have emerged in the past year.

His terse, sparsely arranged songs pay tribute to what he's learned from the parsimoniousness of the reggae music he's all ears for, while his strong melodies and salt 'n' pepper lyrics are all his own.

A genuine talent, boy, remgurl. Get in on the ground floor.

New Albums

★ Joe Jackson 'Look Sharp' (A&M).

Instant comparisons to Elvis Costello are proved over-hasty in the light of Jackson's first album. While Costello has looked on in envy, suspicious of human nature, in Jackson there lurks a cheerful optimism, viz 'Happy Loving Couples' and 'Fools In Love', and a writing maturity that can make a wry approach to women's liberation without offending. Endearment is Jackson's forte, however much he tries to hide behind a 'Spiv Rock' tag. A shrewd absorption of rock & roll influences from early r&b to Steve Miller, Steely Dan, and an occasional jazz sophistication he tries hard to disguise, give him a clear identity. Wisely A&M have left his production uncluttered, he and the band working as a tight unit, much of the material resting on Graham Maby's bending bass lines. The result means that obvious care and control are neatly submerged in a feeling of spontaneity. As 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?' hinted, Joe Jackson sees a lot of the world through glass: observations from windows, into rooms, on TV screens. Sharp and singular, his attitude is personified by the title tracks: be individual, stride out . . . but look over your shoulder all the time. Only a twisted neck can stop the clever little blighter now. (Penny Valentine)

Time Out

February 9th, 1979

JOE JACKSON
Look Sharp! (A&M)

Joe Jackson is a contender: he's fast, tough and he doesn't mess around. At a time when the orthodox powers-that-be in the rock business are geared to start acknowledging then pushing artists round about the time that they put out their third albums, this may be something of a disadvantage.

"Look Sharp!" is an impressively authoritative debut album written, sung and played in a manner that suggests that Jackson has had enough time to discard approaches that don't work and to get stylistic excesses and false starts out of his system before going into the studio.

The album's title and cover (a photograph of Jackson's feet encased in a pair of white side-lace Denson winklepickers that are, unfortunately, not nearly as cool as he evidently thinks they are) suggest an obsession with style. The style adopted within resembles a parallel-universe alternate take on the first Elvis Costello album. The ringing, contoured pop melodies, the jaundiced, sceptical lyrics and the crisp vocals recall the Big EL with the important proviso that Joe Jackson seems to be resisting hostility and alienation rather than fast succumbing to and then finally cultivating these particular symptoms in the spectacular (no pun intended, honest) and disturbing manner demonstrated on "My Aim Is True."

Three basic strains seem to have been boiled down into the music of Jackson and his band: the melodic, crafted group pop of the mid-'60s, the angular, metallic sound of the post-punk late '70s and the white reggae-rock which is rapidly becoming as distinct from its origins as the old post-Stones British R&B was from proper Chicago blues.

The band pivots around Graham Mabry's punching, jostling bass with Gary Sanford's sparse, spitting rhythm guitar and Dave Houghton's slightly over-cautious drumming as a counterpoint. Jackson himself contributes occasional piano (which is fine when he rocks out and increasingly shaky when he tries to get jazzy or stonal) and mouth harp (wheazy and slapdash).



Is he really going to keep wearing those ties?

Joe Jackson models a more modern print but CSM still prefers the music.

The resulting sound is forceful and decisive without resorting to steamroller tactics except on the frenetic "Throw It Away" which ends the first side in a manner unfortunately summed up all too accurately by its title. It's sad that too many bands attempt to disguise an overly slight song by pulling out all the stops. The outcome is that the song is completely swamped and nothing much emerges except a thrash.

It's a rare miscalculation. Elsewhere on the album it's



Joe's polka dots definitely don't cut it — luckily, his vocals do.

the songs that count, and the band do what's necessary to get Jackson's songs over, rather than trample on the material to get instrumental heroics across.

Despite taking fashionable whacks at supermarkets ("(Do The) Instant Mash") and the hideous excesses of Fleet Street ("Sunday Papers"), Jackson's main theme is L-U-R-V-E, either lost or — worse still — sought but never attained. His bitterness is aimed at the girls who reject him (either right off the bat despite his cool threads or later on after he's put an emotional investment into the relationship) and at the "Happy Loving Couples" and "Fools In Love" who innocently and infuriatingly flaunt their bliss at poor lonely Joe.

In "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" he can't believe that his ex and all those fantastic girls he sees from his window are going out with guys who seem like complete and utter bozos. In "Pretty Girls" he goes for a walk in the town centre and gets driven crazy by all these amazing women who don't seem to fancy him a lot. In "Happy

Loving Couples" he gets reminded of his own loneliness by "happy loving couples (who) ain't no friends of mine." Towards the end of the track he gets so emotional that he can't even retain enough control to sing; instead he launches into a berserk monologue about couples in "identical white poloneck sweaters" reading copies of *Ideal Homes* before realising that he's gone over the top and cutting off the track with a terse "right, that's enough" and catapulting into "Throw It Away" (yeah, well, that number is a thrash but it's an exhilarating thrash for at least the first minute or so on record and it'd probably be the killer dance number of a live set).

He states his case more poignantly in "Fools In Love": "Fools in love, they think they're heroes / because they get to feel more pain / fools in love, I think they're zeroes / I should know because this fool's in love again."

Joe Jackson seems to be drawing on the same traumas as his bespectacled counterpart (not to mention some of the same chord changes — try singing "Less Than Zero" against the verses of "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" or "Miracle Man" against the choruses of "Happy Loving Couples"), but ultimately he seems a far more sympathetic character and one whose emotional problems could be solved by the right girl rather than the destruction of the entire planet. He's a sharp (that word again) lyricist and a very, very fine singer — simultaneously crisp, matter-of-fact and highly expressive. If he can shuck his debts and maintain his standards, Joe Jackson is going somewhere.

Definitely. Just one thing, though. That polkadot kipper tie is gonna have to go.

Charles Shear Murray

NME

February 3rd, 1979



Tasty to the last drop

**JOE JACKSON
BAND
'Look Sharp!'
(A&M AMLH
64743)*******

IN THE couple of weeks since he had his face on the cover of this periodical, more than a few people have asked me, "So who's this Joe Jackson geezer?" or variations on same question ("Dick Jockstrap, who's he?", "Wossalldissabaht Jack Jerkoff den, John?" etc.....).

Happily there's been just as many voices eager to communicate their enthusiasm for J.J. and his band live and/or their stunning debut '45 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?' of a few Fridays ago.

Now, as January fades into the big 'F' and the Jackson gang extend their in-person operations nation-wide to tie in with the release of this debut long-player come Friday week, there's really no excuse for ignorance.

Thosefortunates who've experienced the combo live should be all too aware of the slickless polish with which a Jackson set casts its net, gently persuading them feet and pelvises, leaving you itching for another shot of Portsmouth Potion. Conscious too, of the fact that Jackson's ease with a velvet whip is matched by the quality of his carrots: I Mean, the bugger's got a bunch of cracker tunes to flog, and there's no passengers in his band niver, Ivor.

Got an itch to dig a ditch in a fiver? Clairvoyancy's not one of my fortes but sometimes I can see for months and, peeping in a December direction finds 'Look Sharp!' easily ensconced in at least my next honours list.

This paragraph is for all you lazybusy persons who don't read anything through to the end: find a copy of this record, insist on hearing 'Sunday Papers', 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?', 'Baby Stick Around' and 'Fools In Love', at least. You can bugger off now and skim something else, assholes.

That's got rid of the rubbish: — little do they know that it's virtually impossible to 'skim' 'Look Sharp!', a regular mousetrap of a record which, entered at any point, won't let go until it's said its piece, ha ha.

But there's really no reason on earth not to start at the start: 'One More Time' opens with some most pukka guitar

chukkas from Gary Sanford, briskly boosted by Dave Houghton's drums and the super-flexible bass of Graham Mayby. In steps Jackson with a typically wary observation on affairs of the heart, whole kit/caboodle sweeping into a chorus of no little smartness. The subsequent 'Sunday Papers' is an already much-acknowledged Jackson Gem, all clucking 'Can I Get A Witness' guitar rhythms, cock-strut bass and dead-on woids: "I you wanna know about the gay politician.....How to drive your car.....The new sex positions..... You can read it in the Sunday Papers". Breezily wheezy harp interlude from Joe in there too, all beautifully wound up in a lift-off coda.

'Is She Really Going Out With Him?': I don't know how many times I've heard this one and it still gives me an incredible buzz every time. One of the songs of 1978, just as much one of the songs of the current annum. About once a year there's a record I get so hot for, I keep giving copies away. This happened with Richman's 'Road Runner', for example. I'm on my sixth copy of the J. J. single at the moment. What more can I tell you? That much-devalued word just has to come out of the cupboard again: a classic.

I'm sure young Bushell's reservations re 'Happy Loving Couples' last week stemmed at least partly from self-defence him being, so far as I can tell, part of one of those blissful unions described by the song's title. In point of fact, 'HLC' isn't so much a cheap shot at an the olives in this Martini — 'Couples' is another beautifully crafted/played number, Mayby's perverted 'La Bamba' bass-line worthy of special commendation. The song ends with a curt "Alright, that's enough..." from Joe and the band thunder immediately into the pounding 'Throw It Away', a dense, breathlessly echoed rocker to close the side, complete with (sic!) throwaway McCartney-does-Little-Richard (remember 'I'm Down', 'She's A Woman', easy target as yet another example of Jackson's wary attitude to the thin ice on which the bulk of 'romance' is built: "Happy loving couples make it look so easy.....always talk so kind/'Til the time that I can do my dancing with a partner/Those happy couples ain't no friends of mine". Not so much cynical as sensible is how I read that. But who listens to the

words much anyway, they're just 'Long Tall Sally'?) impression.

The flip's stuttering 'Baby Stick Around' is another personal fave, all bouncing verses and so-subtle touch of Merseybeat harmonics for a middle-eight. Neat wordings once more, Jackson in the disco twilight with "somebody telling me the latest scandals/somebody stepping on my plastic sandals". I'm jealous, already, definite case of shit-I-wish-I'd-written-that. More evidence of Jackson and co.'s talent for nifty understatement on the title cut: breezy chorus, skeletal piano and drum altercation and a couple of winning pin-pricks of humour.

'Fools In Love' is the Joe Jackson Band's other no contender ace-in-the-hole, a loping masterstroke with strong reggae debts in its chirping guitar and sensual bass parts, with ultrabrite wound-licking lyrics. It takes guts to put out something this restrained, quite as melodic when mouth-froth's still pretty much the order of the day but this gamble pays off everywhichway: get next to it.

'Instant Mash' is a nifty chunk of pure pop: Mr. Lowe would, I'm poz, be proud to have penned the lyrical twists that cut from supermarket to disco-floor to cinema; pun city. 'Pretty Girls' is another stumpy rocker; more inspired stutterings and a chorus packed with Dangs, Doo-Do's and Wops (no relation). Love the words too: "God if you're up there/Listen to my prayer/In the future man should have a different design/Give him a switch so he can turn his libido off/Give him a tranquiliser built into his mind." Sexism makes monkeys of us all: a song for anyone who's plagued by the hots every time a lovely woman walks past (that's me, too).

'Look Sharp!' bows out with 'Got The Time': 200mph rock 'n' roll armed with ska guitar, wondrously bubbly bass, knock-steady percussion and rousing voice. First time I heard it a low whistle escaped my lips, now I just clap my hands and say yeah.

This is no hype, I'd gladly have written about this dazzler for free. Joe Jackson's here to stay, I say. And this really is one of the strongest debut albums in quite some time.

Let it inflame you.

GIOVANNI DADOMO

Sounds

January 27th, 1979

TAILOR-MADE FOR THE TOP—THAT'S Mr JACKSON

I'M NOT a heavy betting man. Dollar each way on a Saturday is about my stretch. But if I had a few bob to spare and the field was made up of who's going to make it in music this year, I'd shove my lot on Joe Jackson.

In racing terms he's a certainty. I've just got hold of his debut album, "Look Sharp," and it's one of the strongest I've heard in ages.

His main strength is his writing. His songs are brilliant, yet unbelievably simple. "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" is a classic example. It gives me a real buzz every time I hear it.

Violin

It came out towards the end of last year as a single and I must have missed out on it. Still, as the best cliché says, better late than never.

Twenty-five year-old Joe started taking music lessons 14 years ago in the shape of violin practice at school. When he was 16 he talked his parents into

buying a piano and taught himself to play before taking formal music tuition.

He then took a three-year course at the Royal Academy of Music and since 1974 he has been a professional musician.

He then joined a band called Arms and Legs who were playing New Wave when it was a Dean Martin haircut. When the band started to have managerial hassles he ended up being musical director to popular cabaret act Koffee 'n' Kreme. At least he's versatile.

He then left the duo and started work on his first album — before he had even signed on the dotted line for A & M Record.

Surprise

The end result was "Look Sharp." He now has a

three-piece band backing him up and they are about to get out on the road for a bit of experience as support to the Pleasers.

Having heard the latter band, they are about to be blown off the stage.

Says Joe — "My prime musical objective is to surprise people — to be unpredictable."

That's a fair summary of his music.

Evening Times
Glasgow

March 1st, 1979

Great sound

We've had punk, new wave, power pop, pomp rock. Now what? Spiv rock. It could be just a one-man movement, but as long as that one man is Joe Jackson it'll be a welcome change.

Take time, make the effort to hear his new album *Look Sharp!* (on A and M Records). You'll be lucky if you hear a brighter debut album this year. There's not a weak link throughout as Joe and the band strike a near-perfect balance between, sleazy r'n'b, breathless pop and teen-dream classics.

And Spiv Rock? That's just an image, stage costumes include mandatory winklepickers and matching tie and handkerchief — no more than an attention-getter. But who can complain when such a gimmick helps bring a great new sound to a wider audience?

The Northern Echo March 1st, 1979

Hey, Joe — razor sharp

Joe Jackson — "Look Sharp!" (A & M).

JOE'S about as esger to ignore as a polar bear in a dinner jacket at a disco... and the debut album is just as difficult to get away from.

It's pure dynamite on a short fuse. The kind of album you hurry home to put on just to hear THAT track again... and then you find another favourite song.

Sure, somebody said he's just like Elvis Costello and he is vocally. But there's enough difference in style and content to make Joe just as great.

The rock is refreshing, vibrant, irrepressible. It's a mix of strong sixties-type pop melodies, seventies "new wave" angular rhythms and reggae.

The Ayrshire Post
March 2nd 1979

ALBUMS



• JOE JACKSON

Tracks to recommend are multifarious. His great single of last year "Is She Really Going Out With Him" — and just listen to

his incredulous voice.

"Baby Stick Around" really skelps along and his new single "Sunday Papers" is another winner which opens with a stolen riff from the Stones "Can I Get A Witness."

"Fools in Love" really highlights similarities with EC — it sounds just like "Watching The Detective" musically and vocally.

The strutting "boys only" feel of "Pretty Girls" is tremendous and it is interesting that he breaks into a snatch from the old Manfred Mann hit "Pretty Flamingo" during it.

That's the style of the album — you can dance to everything and you cannot avoid singing along with the songs.

It's Elvis Costello sunny side up... bright, forceful and fun. A must.

'LOOK SHARP' Joe Jackson (A&M)

A new name, a fresh approach. Vocally, Joe Jackson recalls Steve Miller, visually a youthful George Melly. In the clubs, backed by a very tight trio, he presents a dynamite live act. His songs shine in a variety of styles ranging from fast rock to pseudo reggae. The songs come over well on record thanks to the bright sound and sparse arrangements.

Standout tracks, all written by Jackson include 'Sunday Papers', 'Happy Loving Couples' and the killer single 'Is She Really Going Out With Him'. You are certain to hear this music at some time in the future. Why not buy the record now? (P.S. from R.K. — My fave album of the year so far — buy, buy, buy!!!)

Girl About Town
February 24th, 1979



★ **LOOK SHARP Joe Jackson (A&M).** Jackson is irresistible! Like early Costello, he sounds like no one else, but you recognise Steve Miller and Steely Dan. He has the touch of the early Who and lyrics which touch on snazzy social comment and observation!

ROBIN KATZ.

Daily Star

LOOKS SHARP, SOUNDS SHARP



● Buy me or you'll stop one!

RIGHT then, by now — if you read the music press and listen to the better DJs — you must have heard about this character **Joe Jackson**.

So hopefully we've got beyond the puzzled glances and "Joe Who?" inquiries and can move on to the knowing nods of recognition.

This bloke (that's him on the left) has come from the southern wastes of Portsmouth to be adopted by the national music scribblers as their Great White Hope (1979 model). Whether he'll still be there come the 80s, only the passing months will tell, but my guess is yes.

I know you'll have heard eulogies like this before, but Joe Jackson does deserve at least 40 minutes of your time and who knows, you may be glad you bothered.

Firstly, a convenient comparison, which may be restricting but does make a good starting point. JJ sounds a lot like Elvis Costello — in music and vocals. The structure's similar—new pop, a blend of aggressive rhythms, spine-tingling melodies and sharp lyrics.

□ □

On *Fools In Love* especially, the beautiful loping reggae strides are ever so reminiscent of *Watching the Detectives*. It's got the same feel to it. Restrained, with more to it than first meets the ear.

But JJ's not just an EC sound-alike, although the Costello name will undoubtedly keep cropping up as you first listen. But wait for the tunes to grow on you and for the words to get through and you'll see that JJ isn't so fired up as EC (except

**JOE JACKSON
—LOOK SHARP
(A&M)**

maybe about the *Sunday Papers* — rather standard jibes about the gutter press, though set to a marvellously strutting tune).

□ □

Mostly, he sings about love—rejected love in the wonderfully held back *Is She Really Going Out With Him*, cynical love with the swaying sound of *Happy Loving Couples*, in love on *Fools . . .* and in lust on *Pretty Girls*, with its shades of the Manfreds' *Doo Wah Diddy*.

The title, *Look Sharp*, sums it up—no wasted space, no padding, it's clean and crisp and thoroughly irresistible.

RF.

Midweek Advertiser Times

February 20th, 1979



Words
by:
**CHARLES
SHAAR
MURRAY**

Pix
by:
**PENNIE
SMITH**

CRISP. IN A HUGE IN AMERICA SORT OF WAY.

JOE JACKSON, ex Portsmouth, newly fitted out with the trappings of stardom and sounding like he deserves it, explains how things started cooking.

THE HANDS spell nerves: balled into fists and rammed into the pockets of the pinstripe jacket. The elbows jerk and the knees twitch, the face is contorted into a frown of concentration; Joe Jackson is making sure the set starts off right.

Around and behind him, his band rampage through "One More Time" with the fierce economy that characterizes Jackson's music; a lesson learned from reggae and Dr. Feelgood, everything taut and mobile.

"Spiry Rock" say the buttons and stickers: a Jackson joke that A&M Records took seriously. "Look Sharp!" says the album cover; a Jackson joke that I took seriously, Thursday night at Dingwalls; pay attention!

Joe Jackson is the name on 1979's first great first album. A tall thin man with a truculent baby face, a domed forehead and a short scowls of hair, a Leo (you can always spot Leo; they all look as though they ought to have their pictures stamped onto eggs), a mod.

Not a displaced '60s mod, not a kid living a vision derived from old Small Faces album covers, but a '70s mod.

His album title is an appropriate play on words: Jackson has a sharpness modified by a mild, self-parodying belligerence. On record he sounds a touch like Elvis Costello, but his stage demeanor is more reminiscent of Lee Brilleaux or Graham Parker.

"Crisp" is the word that comes to mind when you dip into the adjective search for something that describes his singing. It's articulate, matter-of-fact, down-to-earth, economical, precise, untheatrical, forceful and assured as well, but "crisp" does it better.

The same adjective will also perform starting service to describe his band: Graham Mabry bolts and weaves stage right, punching out riffs, licks and comments that simultaneously underpin and lead Gary Sanford's jabbing remorseless rhythm guitar while Dave Houghton stays on the case in the engine room. On the album, Mabry dominated most of

the instrumental department with ease whereas on stage he's simply first among equals — behind Jackson, that is. And by the end of the number Jackson has unbent enough to open his eyes and drag his fists out of his pockets as the applause washes over him. Crisply.

JOE JACKSON gave the impression of having come from nowhere during the dying days of last year when A&M released his first single "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" and sent him out on tour as support to The Pleasers (as obscure a means of warming an act up as could possibly be desired).

The single got Jackson a reputation as a man to be watched, though despite its excellence it didn't exactly send him careening to the heights of public attention, and the tour was conducted under conditions of such secrecy that I didn't even know it had taken place until a couple of months after it finished.

Joe Jackson didn't come from nowhere: he came from Portsmouth. He'd taken his demos round to United Artists, who'd declined to involve themselves in

either his present or future activities.

However, they did put him onto Albion Music, who — as impressed by Jackson's songs as any rational people should be — signed him to a publishing contract. The Albionite who signed him, an affable, bearded fellow by the name of John Teifer, later became his manager.

From Albion, the demos went to producer David Karshenbaum, who immediately alerted A&M Records while simultaneously booking studio time. So it was that Jackson took time out of his first day of recording to hop over to the A&M office to — tadaaaa! — sign the contract.

Whammo! Suddenly there he was, kitted out with all the apparatus: manager, publisher, record company, ready to take his tilt at whatever people take their tilt at when they give into the glittery world of rock music.

So the single came out, the album came out and Jackson is currently slugging his way through a minefield of club dates before A&M — whose U. S. offices set up and looked sharp as soon as they clapped ear to tape — whisk him off to the States to launch the album over there in March. After

that . . . who knows? He could be El Monstroso in the States by the time Radio 1 start asking "Joe who?" and playlisting the next single.

But of course, right now Joe Jackson is onstage at Dingwalls explaining that he and his band have all got flu (the applause for the second number, the single B-side "The Fever", having just subsided), goodnaturedly fencing with the hecklers and getting set to run through his album material, a couple new songs (one of which, "I'm The Man", is a hilarious and piercing attack on manufactured trends that I can't wait to hear on record) and a splendidly incongruous piano performance of the Burke-Van Heuses obscure standard "Polkadots And Moonbeams."

Jackson's piano sits behind Graham Mabry, and he occasionally rushes over to it to plunk out a hasty interlude. The basic trio sound of the band is so full, complete and appropriate, however, that the piano sequences seem like afterthoughts: they intrude rather than extend a lot of the time.

A&M's managing director, Derek Green, is over by the mixing desk. He is feeling no pain. In his white

windcheater, beard and baseball boots, he's the living image of Record Magnate in Repose. "Good, innit?" someone enthuses.

"Better," responds Green. "He was awful when he started." The enthuser opines that Jackson is A&M's best signing since the Pistols.

Ouch. "If he makes an album as good as 'Never Mind The Bollocks', I'd be delighted," mumbles Green ruefully (a foot on his sore corn, a footstep on his grave). The enthuser inquires how Jackson first came to Green's attention. "He didn't," retorts the magnate. "I was out of the country when he was signed."

Such confidence and enthusiasm is moving beyond belief.

Still, Green's in the dressing room laughing it up backstage with Joe and the band after the set and things get sufficiently hilarious for a seat to collapse under him, so we can assume that a good time was had by all. Must've been, because just as Jackson was moving into his herky-jerky idiosyncratic encore of Chuck Berry's "Come On" (take a pinch of the Stones' version, add a touch of reggae feel, double the line lengths from four to eight bars and you got it), someone over by the toilet door broke out the amylnitrate and stank the piece out.

Flu or no flu, Jackson and his men laid out a show that says they know what they're doing, and even under par it's clear that they just need the last lick of polish that a little solid giggling brings in order to put on a real contender of a show. Look sharp!

FIRST THING in the morning, Joe Jackson is smooch-faced and blinking in the leather jacket that he wears "for looking about in." He is horrified at the notion of being photographed in such a garment. "After all, you gotta look sharp," he amiks self-consciously. He refuses cigarettes, requests a can of shandy, settles down in a cold office with walls emblazoned with Stranglers propaganda.

The bass-driven arrangements, which frame most of his songs, derive from his reggae fixation — "Though having a very good bass,

Continues over

From previous page

player helps. That's the way I like to arrange things. It makes them more interesting. I started with Marley around the time of 'Burnin'.' 'Natty Dread' was the first reggae album I bought.

"So I can't say that I got into it when I was a skinned." Jackson assumes a studiously 'street' accent and demeanor. "All me mates was into it an' all the 'ardest kids at school was black an' [at sniff]." He returns to normal mode. "I wasn't a teenage Prince Buster fan. Basically I heard Marley and thought this is really good and since then I've been really into reggae.

So what were your teenage kicks?

"I was really into classical music, as it happens." He pauses briefly. "I was a slightly odd teenager." He gives the word *odd* a savagely ironic twist.

"A normal teenager goes to youth clubs and tries desperately to pick up girls and plays football. I didn't do any of those things. I didn't play football because I've been a really bad asthmatic all my life. I didn't try to pick up girls because... ahhhhh... I used to think that I didn't stand a chance, and I didn't go to youth clubs because the other kids who did go seemed to be pretty boring.

"So I started getting into music in my early teens. I thought this is great. It'll be an intellectual, not like the rest of them. So I was an odd one out all the way through my childhood and teens. I just felt rather... odd. A chuckle of nervous embarrassment. "This is all good psychological stuff.

"I've got a very bad memory, actually. I find it very hard to pin down exactly what got me into music. What was the first song you wrote, what was the first record that turned you on and all that. I don't remember. It was all a very gradual thing, but I don't really think very much about the past. It wasn't therapeutic, but I didn't have a particularly happy childhood and teenage. Then again, I don't think it was especially traumatic.

"I wasn't very much into rock music as a teenager. It may seem strange, but there it is. The first rock music that I liked was The Beatles and Stones, but that was when I was about ten, so even though I really liked all that stuff, I wasn't really old enough to think about forming bands or anything. So it was quite a while later that I came full circle and started liking rock music again and started getting into bands."

Jackson ended up doing three years at the London College of Music, and was rated as a highly promising young pianist. So: an ex-child prodigy, hein?

"Sort of, yeah. Not a prodigy in the sense that I could play concertos when I was ten, though, I mean, I taught myself most of my piano playing, and I was probably a better pianist than I am now, actually."

Though Jackson was born in Burton-on-Trent, he grew up in Portsmouth, where he lived until January of '78.

"It's not a particularly nice place, but it's all right. I actually have quite an affection for Portsmouth. I go back there quite often, since my parents live down there... a lot of my friends and my girlfriend."

JACKSON WAS highly taken with the first stirrings of the New Wave. "It was great. At first I thought this is ridiculous, I used to really laugh at it. I thought it was really funny. The Damned I thought were great. They were the first punk band that I got into because they seemed so outrageous. They were totally over the top when I saw them on that tour they did with Marc Bolan. Ridiculous. They made me really laugh.

"And then I saw The Clash, and they made me realise. They knocked me out, and I thought shit, they really mean it, these people. That was a definite influence."

"And the Feelgoods! They really started the New Wave, a lot more than most people seem to think. They were definitely the first New Wave band. Everybody says it was the Pistols who started it, but I

couldn't really see the Pistols happening without the Feelgoods happening first."

Jackson knocked around a few bands in Portsmouth: Edward Bear was a straightforward top-40 working man's club band who changed their name after a Canadian group called Edward Bear got an album out. Then there was Arms And Legs.

"Arms And Legs was the prototypical material/recording type of act. It evolved out of Edward Bear, who were a shameless pop band. I played piano and I used to sing a couple of songs, but I wasn't the actual lead singer. When I left Arms And Legs I went through an intense period of getting my writing and singing together, because I wanted to do it for me rather than for a band. Just ego, I guess. Just becoming aware of what I had to offer and thinking that I had to be able to do more than this."

From Arms And Legs, Jackson played piano in the Portsmouth Playboy Club and worked as musical director for a cabaret act called Coffee And Cream while saving up enough money to record his demos and have them pressed up into album form. The demos went around to United Artists and... we've done this bit. Overalls.

It is appropriate that Jackson got his first in to what is laughingly referred to as The Big Time through his Albion publishing contract, because—even over and above the excellence of his band and his not inconsiderable strengths as a performer and vocal—his songwriting is his most striking calling card.

"So this is what happened to powerpop," mused a friend to whom I played Jackson's album. The comment is less cynical and less misguided than it would first appear: the songs have energy, wit, melody and solid harmonic structures. His lyrics are daffiant, idealistic, ironic (just how ironic some of them are didn't hit me until after I'd written last week's album review). Hence, some of the analyses therein included are a trifle simplistic: a fact Jackson

points out with ill-disguised glee. "The lyrics that I write change constantly. I've got a song that I'm working on right now called 'It's Different For Girls', which is a phrase that you hear a lot. It reverses the stereotype relationship: in this song the girl just wants a fuck and it's the bloke who's getting all sensitive."

"I want to get right away from all that macho shit, but at the same time I don't want to do the Elvis Costello god-I've-been-hurt-in-love thing either, even though songs like that do try to put forward a realistic approach to relationships."

"I think my songs are all the songs of a survivor rather than, as you pointed out, cultivated hostility."

"Take 'Happy Loving Couples'. What that song isn't taking a slap at easy target: let's knock-marriage. It's easy to knock. If I haven't got a girlfriend and he has then he's a cunt. There the line wants to be really witty but my friends pretend to be so happy; maybe their relationship isn't as good as what I want. It's saying that I don't want a false relationship. 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?' is intended to be humorous: you can't take an opening line like that seriously."

The only really bitter song there is 'Fools In Love'. It's about when you split up with your girlfriend and you think what a load of shit all that turned out to be."

Recording bores Jackson, which is why he keeps his records sophisticatedly basic (apart from the odd vocal harmony, there's little or no overdubbing on the album). Apart from a slightly more extrovert on-stage role for Sanford, what you hear onstage is what you hear on the "Look Sharp!" tracks and vice versa. Songwriting and performing are the buzzes; recording is a chore.

He used to have a synthesiser and a clavinet, but he's cut his onstage equipment back to one battered electric piano and a pocketful of mouthharps. "What we didn't want when we were recording the album was your

typical '77/'78 New Wave band sound, where you've got this very middley Ramones-type guitar going ramalama-lama all the time. We wanted to get right away from that and have more of a reggae mix, where you have a very upfront bass and drums and the guitar is very thin and keeps going in and out doing chops and things. Some of the songs could probably have done with a bigger guitar sound, but that's one reflection after having done a few months of gigs. I think that thin guitar sound works, though, because it makes more distinctive, gives it more character. The idea is to leave a lot of gaps to let the song really come through."

And that leaves the States.

I DON'T really know much about the States and I can't really comment on things I don't know much about. I haven't been there and I don't know what the average American rock fan is really like. One gets the impression that the average American rock fan must be mentally retarded. I've been told that L.A. is four years behind London and that New York is two years behind London. Why that is—or whether that's true—I don't know."

Jackson's view of the current scene over here is that "there seem to be lots of cutly little bands around and each one of them seems to have about two good songs. There's no one artist about who you can think of as really good and who you'd want to have an album of—just all these silly little bands. Actually, I'm sure some of them are really good, but none of them seem to be... going anywhere."

Joe Jackson is going somewhere (and I don't just mean the States, smartass). While I would prefer to have a diaphanous rhinoceros sit on my sandwiches than to finger anyone as the future of rock and roll (or anything even faintly resembling same), anyone wanting to pip Joe Jackson for "Best First Album Of 1979" is going to have to go some to do it. So hey, ace, shut your face. And look sharp!

New Musical Express March 10th, 1979



Track 6
Scoop spot

what's on Music: Rock Previews

Joe Jackson
Manchester Poly
Feb 24

Joe is currently the positive darling of the London rock crits. With his debut A&M album "Look Sharp", an event which one would expect to greatly excite an unknown singer/pianist who's only recently graduated from semi-pro Top 40 bands.

In fact he's remarkably unaffected by the fuss, and is well aware of the pitfalls of being hyped too — "It doesn't really worry me because I think we can deliver on stage". Certainly if the album is anything to go by, Jackson's got no worries. Recorded in a lean spare fashion, with simple instrumentation (guitar - bass - drums plus Jackson), "Look Sharp" immediately appeals as an accessible set of melodic rock tunes.

Jackson promises that his future material will be "more bizarre", but those of us that like rock 'n' roll but find the macho stance makes us cringe, should find much of interest here. Quite apart from all that, Joe Jackson is great to dance to.

Ian Wood

SPIV-ROCK ROLLS O.K.

LOOK SHARP—JOE JACKSON. (A & M).

FROM the moment the opening track, One More Time, came under the close scrutiny of my Saini M117G cartridge. I couldn't stop snapping my fingers, tapping my feet and doing all sorts of antics too embarrassing to mention.

Yes, this is one hell of a debut album.

Although comparisons are odious (it's never stopped you before—Ed) Joe Jackson reminds me of a cross between Elvis Costello and Nick Lowe. In fact, in places the Costello connection is very marked. Fools In Love can be sung to the tune of Watching The Detectives, and the title track sounds remarkably like Costello's Waiting For The End Of The World.

□ □
□ □

But the big difference is that the spivish looking Mr Jackson doesn't have a ten-ton chip on his shoulder about being rejected by women. And he doesn't want to punish every girl in Christendom: all he wants is to find the right one.

Turning to the music we find a nimble, lightweight

bass line leading the songs through a beautifully clean production, and into... Throw It Away, a merciless rock'n'roller with a touch of 50's style echo on the vocals.

□ □
□ □

I don't care if it does sound like Costello. At least Joe Jackson doesn't have to hide behind a pseudonym. And at least he suggests that there's a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel. This man is big, and he can only get bigger.

Welwyn & Hatfield
Times

February 1979

Look Now
February 16th, 1979

Manchester Review
February 23rd -
March 8th, 1979

JOE JACKSON
Hope & Anchor,
London

SOUNDS

By RUSSELL KYLE

IT might have been cold enough to freeze your teeth together outside the Hope that night, but inside, the genial affability of the Joe Jackson Band brought a slow, spreading sparkle to my pearly-whites.

Built on a tall, spindly frame, with a breadth of forehead to compete with maestro Devoto's expanse, Jackson's baby-pouting lips gives the whole game away. The man's a softie. I don't mean by that he's got his marbles in the wrong order, or that he's one of those god-forsaken... blighters to whom nothing but bad deals get dealt — no, Joe Jackson is a born romantic whose consequent vulnerability is barely covered up with a dose of gentle, self-deflating irony. Just a lovable human being, really.

For those to whom Joe Jackson's name is still unfamiliar, let me elucidate. The recent favourable mumbblings have been due to his superb single released last September on A & M — "Is She Really Going Out With Him?", a wonderfully lilting number — and to a swelling band of followers who have caught his act on the Pleasers tour.

Before that, Joe paid his dues in such diverse occupations as student at the Royal Academy of Music, singing at the Sundown with hard-rockers and short-livers Arms and Legs, followed by playing accompaniment to the bunny funsters at the Playboy Club in Portsmouth, ending up as musical director of successful cabaret act Coffee 'n' Creme.

What the sum of this wandering added up to at the Hope was a sound that was as spare, and as swept-clean and dynamic as the single had promised.

Although operating in the same area as Graham Parker and Elvis Costello, the inevitable tag of imitator will, one hopes, be avoided by Jackson's ability to write sweet strutters with an accessible humility sometimes missing from the two aforementioned startlets.

Songs that stoked up my central heating were "Got The Time", a manic rush-hour bash; "Sunday Papers", another reggae-backed rocker with a precisely-observed lyric; and "Look Sharp", which Joe dedicated to Todd Rundgren's carrot-and-onions physical equipment. I could have done without the solo rendition, on keyboards, of "Ain't Misbehavin'", which was as unnecessary as it was awful.

Bringing Ian Gomm (minus guitar strap, plus skinfur) on stage for the three encores, which included a riotous version of "Come On," was an added bonus, and one which sent me out into the night grinning like a geek.

With an album out in early February and some more dates lined up for the band, there'll be plenty of opportunities to be exposed to Jackson's music.

— FRANCES LASS.

Melody Maker January 13th, 1979

Timothy Cooper predicts . . .

YOU'RE GOING TO HEAR MORE OF JOE JACKSON

**JOE JACKSON—
"LOOK SHARP" (A&M)**

JOE JACKSON is a name I predict you will all be hearing a lot more of in 1979. He has all the charisma and visual appeal of last year's two newest superstars, Ian Dury and Elvis Costello — with just as much musical integrity and individuality.

In other words, full marks for star quality. Joe has all

ugliest guys. Well, that's life Joe!

For sheer exuberance though, look no further than the opening cut, "One More Time," with its staccato Dr. Feelgood guitar intro . . . and Joe bellowing out a memorable singalong chorus.

Other highpoints are

"Happy Loving Couples" and "Fools In Love" ("Is there anything more pathetic?" he queries sardonically) but every song is a gem—and they are all penned by Joe. Look Sharp! is the most satisfying debut album since Costello's "My Aim Is True." All Joe Jackson needs now is a hit single.

DISC DATE

the qualifications to become This Year's Model.

You don't have to be a genius to notice that Costello and Dury, although generally lumped in with the New Wave, are no spring chickens. Likewise Joe Jackson.

Look Sharp! is a classic album from a mature musician. The influences are obvious: reggae, jazz and rhythm 'n' blues. Joe has absorbed these styles into his own brittle sound—songs composed of spiky, shuffling rhythms, overlaid with perceptive lyrics displaying witty and, yes, "sharp" observations on life.

Cynicism and humour combine effectively in "Sunday Papers," a wry comment on the scandalmongering of the weekly sheets.

"If you wanna hear about the Bishop and the actress/ If you wanna learn how to play guitar/ If you wanna know about the gay politician/ You can read it in the Sunday Papers," snarls Joe savagely, while in the single, "Is She Really Going Out With Him?" he sneeringly remarks on the "pretty women out walkin' with gorillas down my street"—astonished at how all the best girls (including his "ex") are escorting the



JOE JACKSON

Hackney Gazette February 16th, 1979

'I'M NOT ANOTHER ELVIS' SAYS JOE

WHEN Joe Jackson was a teenager he preferred Beethoven to The Beatles. Now Joe, 24 and a native of Portsmouth, is being hailed as the man most likely to succeed on the rock scene in '79.

When Jackson played London's influential Marquee Club last week the place was so full that you couldn't have swung a stick insect, never mind a cat.

On stage the six-foot-plus Jackson sings tough reggae-flavoured rhythm and blues with all the potency of five star bourbon. His songs are well tailored statements that successfully combine raunch and melody.

Already Jackson is being compared with some of rock's most important new guard. Some have likened his on stage gait — he wears his clothes as sharp as a fresh razor blade — to Dr. Feelgood's Lee Brilleaux, Graham Parker and, most of all, Elvis Costello.

Feeling

"I'm fed up being compared to Elvis Costello," complains Joe. And he's not without justification, for despite a slight vocal similarity with Costello, Jackson has about as much in common with the Whitton wonder as he does with Helen Shapiro.

He says: "I'm not at all influenced by Elvis Costello. What I'm doing is more new than it is anything else, but I'm not writing exercises in a style. I just write songs. I'm not part of any movement or any sound."

"No one's compared me with Ian Drury and I think I've got a lot in common with him. I just get the same sort of feeling out of seeing him on stage as what I feel people must get off us. His band are similar to the guys



JOE JACKSON: 'Look Sharp!' (A & M AMLH 64743)

LET'S START where we left off. The mighty Joe — if you still haven't heard of the man then back under your boulder forthwith — has garnered some of the most ecstatic

I've got — very tough but very versatile."

Although Jackson became a firm fan of new wave after witnessing The Clash, his own musical background is very different from most of the artists who've dominated the British rock scene this past 18 months.

With three years at music college to his credit, he's more than an accomplished pianist, as anyone who's acquainted with his new album, his first, *Look Sharp* will be aware of. When he isn't on stage fronting his crisp combo he's fleshing out the sound with some very tasteful piano playing.

Joe's classical training didn't, however, land him a job playing sonatas to audiences in evening dress. Instead he opted for a stint doing cabaret work before concentrating on rock.

He backed New Faces' winners Coffee and Cream and later tinkled the ivories for guests at London's Play-boy Club. Says Joe: "It was a bit frustrating but I always say it's better than working in a factory."

"If you can play and you're able to read music, then you're able to work in cabaret. So I thought why not. I needed to do it so I could get some money to finance my own music. I wanted to do it properly — and not make compromises. Cabaret may sound like purgatory, but it can be quite good fun."

reviews since *Crossroads* hit our screens. Seriously, the praise heaped on the Spiv's pate has been monumental and the anticipation of this, his first recorded work since the epic 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?' has been just as great. 'Look Sharp!' after two days of solid listening, quite simply thrusts it's way to the fore of 79's best work.

Live, Jacko's band exude a tightness, confidence and self-righteousness which makes them, unknown as they are, sound as if they own the world. On record, the apparently sparse three-man line-up fill out the sound admirably and recreate the live atmosphere note perfectly. The album is the true excellence of a JJ gig sans polka dots and pinstripes.

Prepare yourself, people, for the soundtrack to the Jackson conquest of the nation. It opens with what I believe is the new single 'One

So what did he like about the new wave? "The energy and its down-to-earth attitude. People started to write songs again about their own lives and what they saw around them."

Jackson's songs are not difficult to relate to either. His first single, *Is She Really Going Out With Him?* — sadly not the hit it deserved to be — was thought of in some quarters as a bitter love song. In fact it was written with Joe's tongue planted firmly in his cheek.

Ugly

He told me: "It's just a comment on why are all the nice birds going out with all the ugly blokes. It's not a song about being neurotic or screwed-up." So he's not anti-women? "Quite the opposite actually," he says.

One problem Joe does have is his health. All his life he's been a chronic asthmatic, though thankfully he doesn't suffer from it so much now. He was, however, in hospital just before Christmas with a bout of the illness.

And it has had a profound effect on his life — and is perhaps one of the reasons why he's on his way to becoming a rock star. "Probably being a bad asthmatic when I was a kid and in my early teens made me feel a bit different from all the other kids," he says.

ROY JONES



More Time', scratchy break-neck paced reggae and forlorn angst that when you think about it isn't really rasta induced, rather it's sizzling rock-a-boogie. A happy marriage of musical idioms is the result of JJ's playing arranging and writing. In essence the man thieves, sorry borrows heavily from numerous black — influenced honkies. Apologies for dredging up the Costello - Parker - Morrison connection but surely this man is the son, or kid brother, of Last Year's Model.

There are no highlights on this disc, it's one joyous romp through all the facets of past experience. Love figures on 'One More Time', 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?', 'Happy Loving Couples', a song which attacks the noble institution of marriage. The popular Sabbath day press get it on 'Sunday Papers' with some marvellously incisive lyrics.

Side two peaks with 'Fools In Love'. This epic coasts along a la the myopic Elvis' 'Watching The Detectives' and as I stated in a recent live report, the melody is redolent of the classic MOR anthem 'Feelings'. The other personal fave, this being the only criterion by which to judge such a prestigious album, is the title track which is Steely Dan circa 'Katy Lied'.

Spot the influences. I got, Bo Diddley, Elvis, Manfred Mann, Steely Dan, Steve Miller, Maurice Albert, G.P., and I'm going for the set. There are numerous blues, soul, reggae, punk and 50's / 60's straight rock 'n' roll influences in there too. A more complete package you couldn't want for.

His only problem is getting the follow-up as good as this together. I have faith in him and for now my turntable taste is satisfied. Oh, and the shoes were by Denson. + + + + RONNIE GURR.

LIVE CIRCUIT

Joe Jackson — set to win



Joe Jackson at the Nashville

It was quarter to eleven, the Nashville was getting packed, hot and very smoky. Someone started up a chart of why are we waiting, but no-one had the energy to follow on, though many were heard to mutter that it had "better be worth it". The point was that very little is actually known about this strange man from Portsmouth, whose first single on A&M last October barely sold more than a few copies. But word must have got out somewhere that here was a guy worth asphalting yourself for, because no-one has that many relatives and a crowd that size can't all be paper.

But he finally arrived on stage, and you have this correspondent's word that it was, indeed, worth it. The band is tight, the tunes simple and the lyrics catching. An unassuming character with a strong voice, Joe Jackson seems determined to start a trend of his own. "Punk is dead," he informed a few gobbling poppers in the front row. "Didn't you know? This is the year of the spiv." So that's what he is — attired as he was in pin-stripes and sneakers, with a confident line in chat, he looked more like an insurance agent. The first number, "Pretty Girls", brought the likes of Nick Lowe to mind — mainly because of an incredibly positive Lowe sound — alike has a player whose name was inaudible through the appreciative cheers which resounded when he was introduced, but, in fact, as we have since taken the trouble to discover, is called Graham Maby. The set was well-paced, with the title track of the new LP "Look Sharp" early on, and a sharp calypso-rock interlude, with Mr. Jackson proving his worth on keyboards and harmonica. The new single sounds great, entitled "Sunday Papers", preceded by an amble on a silly item in the "News of the World" in which he proved nothing if not his ability to deal with hecklers of the Australian bonzo kind.

The slow reggae number was followed by a whimsical dirty well known to philosophers, "Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries", and rocked up Parker-style climax left the crowd calling hoarsely for more with the certainty that here was a star character of whom we shall be hearing much more in the very near future.

Albion, wisely, have agency.

College & Club Circuit

February 1979

The last minute addition to the list is A&M's Joe Jackson, who has been gigging quietly around since last October, and already has one single to his credit, although not surprisingly his mother bought the only copy when it escaped in the autumn. This time, however, there should be no mistake and his price is likely to treble after the album release which is scheduled for February 6. A&M are not known to back losers and if a jam-packed Nash-

College & Club Circuit

February 1979

JOE JACKSON: "Look Sharp" (AMLH 64743).

IT'S a truism to say that one of the reasons for pub rock's demise was its apparent inability to reproduce its live atmosphere on vinyl. A fistful of years after its decease, along comes super-spiv Joe Jackson to prove everybody wrong. Gathering more critical approval for his stage appearances than seems decent after such a short career, Jackson has taken a shrewd, but entirely natural next step. For his debut album, he has produced a sound and feel almost identical to that of his gigs.

In fact, "Look Sharp" could well have been a live recording; even its running order is structured for full live impact. Grab the attention with the pumping vitality of the Beatish "One More Time" for openers; fill in the holes left by its slight lyrical content with a witty ditty like "Sunday Papers." Slow it down for the show-piece, a slice of self-deflating angst in the form of the single, "Is She Really Going Out With Him;" bung in a filler or two and finish them off with a Jerry Lee Lewis-pets-the-Clash manic rocker, "Throw It Away." Chummy little spoken asides and a

sparse production job by David Kershenbaum add spice to the illusion.

The format is repeated almost exactly for the second set (sorry, side). Featuring the bass/guitar conversations of Sandford and Maby, "Baby Stick Around" is the sort of song that made Nils Lofgren fall in love with the Stones, and is a killer. Jackson's ability to write precisely-observed lyrics with a stunning economy finds its perfect example in "Look Sharp," whilst his knack of style-blending (reggae and jazz, in this case) makes "Fools In Love" the highlight of this side. A couple of live favourites, "Instant Mash" and "Pretty Girls" follow, and the whole is neatly rounded off with "Got The Time," a furiously paced piece of obsessiveness that got me clapping like mad for an encore. — FRANCES LASS.

Melody Maker

February 3rd, 1979

THE VENUE

Robin Denselow

Joe Jackson

AFTER Graham Parker, Ian Dury and Elvis Costello, Joe Jackson looks all set to be the latest British singer-song-writer rock balladeer to emerge as a major force. He has all the currently vital requisites, for his style is distinctive, professional and tight and his looks are distinctive and fashionably ordinary.

He is young, with short receding hair, and at The Venue he wore a pin-striped suit and blue spotted tie. If he hadn't been an energetic singer he might have been mistaken for a flashy junior clerk at the Stock Exchange.

Before suddenly bursting into fashion with the release of his first, highly recommended album Look Sharp, Jackson had an unlikely musical career. He became an accomplished pianist at the Royal Academy, played at the local Playboy Club in his native Portsmouth and went middle of the road to back New Faces winners Coffee and Cream.

Naturally, he rejects all that now, claiming rightly to be more influenced by the new wave, but it was the solid professionalism and constant hints at a wider musical range that made his set so interesting. Many of the songs from the album, like Honey Loving Couples and Is She Really Going Out With Him? were terse, tight and carefully pared down with deliberately simple rhythmic playing mixed with understated wry lyrics. Jackson hates the comparison, but the result was often like a more raunchy, bar-room Costello.

Elsewhere, there were signs of how he could develop when the beat ballad boom wears off. He mostly sung accompanied only by his simple line up of guitar, bass and drums, but he occasionally darted to the keyboards to add subtle, even jazzy embellishments.

A solo keyboards piece, Amateur Hour, was nearer sophisticated Playboy material than punk while the encore of Pressure Drop showed that a white Portsmouth band can actually play respectable reggae.

Arts Guardian

March 2nd, 1979

Joe Jackson - the new sharp hero

THE FIRST big media hero of 1979 - Joe Jackson, he of the haunted features and polka-dot tie. With little apparent past history to trade on, Jackson is suddenly one of the faces of '79 with several music press articles and a front page on *Sounds* to his credit.

An interesting point is whether Jackson can turn his media laudings to album sales. At present, his *Look Sharp* album (A&M AMLH 64743) is showing little movement.

Jackson comes from a highly musical background. He trained at the Royal Academy of Music but found the resultant knowledge "totally useless" with reference to the grainy, r&b-influenced stance which he now takes. Once a member of rock band Arms and Legs, the Portsmouth-raised singer was looking into the possibilities of launching his own label to get his music heard when A&M producer David Kershenbaum heard his tape and convinced him to sign with the King's Road company.

Wise to the dangers of instant stardom, Jackson asked that his contract with A&M (one year with review option at the end) yield him a steady living rather than a large advance and came to

an arrangement whereby he and his band are paid a weekly wage instead.

"We'll then haggle over tour support and things like that" he says. "They've been very co-operative because they

know that we don't ask for the impossible."

Jackson's dry, wry music has been compared to Elvis Costello's although the artist denies charges of being directly influenced by Costello. "I was aware of him but my reaction was not to imitate him but to say 'oh great, he's doing what I'm trying to do!'"

The comparison comes from Jackson's sharp song observations about life around him, his smart but spartan visual pose and the dry, clean musical textures he insisted on in the studio.

This last aspect, he admits, may need beefing up. The *Look Sharp* album, good as it is, may be rather too sparse. For his next album (probably out in the autumn) he foresees "no amazing change of direction but a bigger production."

If the intense exposure that Joe Jackson is getting on the nation's evening rock shows doesn't pay off for *Look Sharp* it seems probable that the spiky-haired, pinstripe-suited star will at least crack it sometime this year. A quiet self-assurance and a general star ambience onstage must sooner or later make things happen for Joe Jackson.



Radio & Record News

Would you live next door to this tie?



JOE JACKSON: a slob

JOE JACKSON, Dingwalls, London.

OH, IRONY of ironies. 'Look Sharp' is one of J J's chunes which has pride of place in a set that is full to the brim of rock - a - boogie quality. Yet sharp, as a hep adjective is anything but an apt description of the Jackson stage stance. In short, the man is a slob, all be it a hugely talented one. Sartorially the man is pure wimp next door. The wide lapelled pin - stripe and the matching polka dot kipper tie and hankie are, as our own resident slob Tim Lott pointed out, hardly the attire one associates with a potential teen star. Still, as the man himself states, in '79 "spiv" is the word.

Obviously J J has the complete works of Parker, Costello and Morrison safely committed to memory as he trots out heartfelt melodies redolent of the aforementioned gents. 'You're Kinda Cute' is a complete steal from Graham Parker's 'White Honey' while 'Fools In Love', arguably Jacko's best song, lifts its bass line from 'Watching The Detectives' and borrows heavily, melody-wise from Morris Albert's 'Feelings'. Nothing more than rehashed riffs but performed with a ballsy nonchalance by the Joe's fine, fine three man back-up. Gary Sanford, the metronomic and occasionally manic guitarist, Graham Maby, the ass-tight bassist and Dave Houghton on drums make a mighty noise for such a weedy looking band, as a unit, they play as well as anyone I've seen this year or

last.

J J stalks on stage reading a Sunday tabloid while the band strike up. In a flurry of Sunday People his throat opens up and he immediately stakes his claim as this year's model. The first real treat is the performance of the B - side of his critically acclaimed single 'You Got The Fever' which limps along funkily and is as good as any US honky funk you could care to wish for. The gingle 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?' follows immediately and leaves nothing to be desired. 'Sunday Papers' finds the Jackson wrath wrapping itself around justifiably attackable targets. Again a neat Arabic reggae excursion which accelerates to rock pace with two similar follow - ups in 'Baby Stick Around' and 'Don't Ask Me'. Both emanate from the Costello School of Angst and are as good as anything that the bespectacled one has ever come up with. 'Life Is A Bowl Of Cherries' is pure music hall and allows the band to take a breather as the oldie is performed by Joe and his trusty electric piano. The set ends up with some ridiculously fast neo - punk songs called 'Throw It Away' and 'Got The Time' which are oodles of dancing fun.

The encores were versions of Toots' 'Pressure Drop' and a Carib flavoured 'Come On' followed by a truly fab version of Fats Domino's 'Ain't That A Shame'.

Yes, Joe Jackson is a real talent. Last week's showing at Dingwalls showed that the hope for '79 is now no longer merely a hope. He is now a dead cert. RONNIE GURR

Record Mirror January 20th, 1979

Joe Jackson

Hope and Anchor
There's talent, and there's talent. Joe Jackson has both.

His single "Is She Really Going Out With Him" is playing on tape. Survivors of the weather conditions are singing along in a state of partial thaw. A Scotsman informs me that "JJ's dead brilliant." I mention his name to the bar staff, and they lapse into starchy ecstasy. Is it a conspiracy?

The band arrive to a heartwarming reception. Drummer Dave Houghton wears black, guitarist Gary Sanford wears white, bassman Graham Mayby wears both, and the man himself favours a hoodlum pin-stripe with a gross-out polkadot tie. He looks like he

hasn't slept for a month; he acts like he doesn't need to.

First impressions of the set suggest an excellence in every respect; from then on it only improves. A near-perfect sound balance points out the most thoughtful, controlled springboard backing, the band's range widened by their deliberately economic style.

Over this, Joe's precision lyrics paint a very clear picture; an unusually sharp mix of observation and sentiment given an added lift by his confidential cabaret-type delivery.

Pacing throughout is supreme. "Pretty Girls", "Look Sharp" and "Baby Stick Around" are all firmly grounded in slick, dance band rock. There's the same clipped, tense appeal as

Costello, but with an immediate warmth and colour.

Shuffled into a mostly fast moving set are a couple of reggae-based numbers. The first, "Sunday Papers" makes the same stab at the tabloids as The Jam's "News Of The World". More acute, and less a statement of the obvious, it comes with a killer chorus line and a dedication to the overhyped news feature of the week; Todd Rundgren's codpiece.

The second is "Fools In Love", a shamelessly catchy and lilting song that's almost a ballad. So much so, that if it were to fall into alien hands it would probably resurface with palmcourt orchestration. As it stands it's unique, both for a lyric that strangely

alternates sleaze and aggression, and the uncannily thin dub rhythm that traces out the vocal line.

Also on offer is a genuinely affectionate version of Fats Waller's "Ain't Misbehavin'". Busking most of the lyrics, Joe plays it as a keyboard solo, which shows an evident technical skill that will allow him endless possibilities with the band.

Joined for three encores by Ian Gomm, they play Domino and Chuck Berry covers "Ain't That A Shame" and "Come On". Not a gratuitous, fail-safe exit route, but two fine re-vamped versions that finally spotlight Sanford's solos.

'79 will see an ascent of the charts by Joe Jackson.

You'll believe a man can fly.
Mark Ellen

NME January 13th, 1979

Joe Jackson Hope & Anchor

WELL, WELL — far from the weedy tyke suggested by the sleeve of the superb 'Is She Really Going Out With Him' (A&M '45 — AMS 7392), Joe Jackson's physique is definitely on the neck-cracking stringbean side of a metre. No matter, of course, except that his occasional heaven-bound leaps are, shall we say, rather constrained in the coffin-cosy confines of the Hope.

Jackson, in revoltingly spotted kipper tie and marching hank, fronts a quartet of standard structure, i.e. one drummer (Dave Houghton), one guitar player (Gary Sanford) and one bass-man (Graham Mayby).

If you still haven't heard the single, I'll attempt to encapsulate things: Joe Jackson writes really solid, really catchy songs, his band play them with powerful understatement. One gig isn't really adequate for any worthwhile conclusions except in the most extreme cases of plus or minus (and even then there's ample error-room). How much difference there is between the JJ's studio and live sound I'll not commit myself on at such an early stage. Certainly it's centimetrical, the sparseness of the recorded version lending itself (and so designed, I'm told) to convincing 'live' presentation.

14 songs, two non-originals. The first, a Jackson solo keyboard work-out on Cochrane's "20 Flight Rock" I didn't really warm to. The crowd did however, and myself, I confess I was thirsty for originals, found this an unnecessary crowd-pleaser that cut the set in two. Lastly though, "Ain't That A Shame" (Domino, Fats), and it made a perfect closer, not to say a splendidly vibrant interpretation — far from easy with such a vintage chestnut.

Elsewhere the most lasting impressions came from 'Sunday Papers', a really spunky rocker with some killer lyric cracks, 'Fools In Love', which was a magnificently calculated risk — a really gentle, loping tune with an ironic tail-twist that totally vindicated itself, thereby proving not only that even the beer'n'barf crowd have ears but that 'Jacko' has plenty courage.

My other odds-on favourite? 'Got The Time', a sharp, speedy rocker that would stand its ground easy even in a Clash set. This towards the end of the set, by which time all stops were out and the band actually *blowed*, something which the sparse instrumentation of the bulk of the material hadn't really left room for so far. I'm thick, yes, but it was a relief all the same to hear some busy guitar and drums finally being given their head.

I cheat: those particular titles were most enjoyed because I'd been the privileged receptor of a snifter from the upcoming Jackson album. A couple of potential winners I hadn't heard before, then: 'Throw It Away', a stubby, precision-built bouncer, 'Look Sharp', similar but more so.

Joe Jackson has the feel of a winner to him. What he and his band are on the brink of getting, I'm sure, is the freedom that only total confidence can bring. Once past that hurdle, there'll be no stopping them. And, like I've already said — once is not nearly enough for any worthwhile conclusions of long-term worthiness. I don't even know if this was one of their good nights', in other words. One thing they don't need though is to play safe. They've got too much stardust to needs to compensate.

GIOVANNI D'ADAMO

Melody Maker
November 18th 1978

Jackson - Looking to the Heights

JOE JACKSON is a young Englishman with a fast growing reputation, firstly as an emerging songwriter and secondly as a guy who has the courage of his convictions. Following a couple of quick deals with Albion Music and then A & M Records (producer David Kirschbaum sparked off their interest), his first single was released a short while ago, to a rave review from Sounds (where it was made single of the week) and undry other positive appraisals. But the funny thing is that Jackson had an album fully recorded before all this had happened.

On his own but he'd got enough money together (through doing cabaret work in a Playboy club in Portsmouth!) to record an album of self-penned material and was determined to release it, record deal or no record deal. Working with a band comprising friends from various bands he had previously worked with, Jackson set out on his solo career.

His first tour was as support act to The Pleasers. And how did he get on?

"The reaction we got was totally unexpected — it was very satisfactory indeed. It was really good to see the people coming away from the bars in the clubs when they heard our music, 'cos everybody usually stays in the bar while the support band is on. On more than a few nights it got quite embarrassing 'cos we were getting more applause than The Pleasers were."

As a result, Jackson is likely to score the support slot on John Martyn's next tour. Things have been happening very quickly for a complete unknown.

"I was quite surprised really 'cos everything happened so quickly. David (Kirschbaum) was the main link in the proceedings. We hit it off together almost immediately and just got down to making the album without any messing around. The album, by the way, will be coming out in January. I'm sure it could be out sooner but we don't want it to get lost in the Christmas rush."

Admittedly when I first heard Jackson's single "Is She Really Going Out With Him" it did sound a bit too much like Elvis Costello for comfort. "Well everybody has to have something, or some standard, to compare the product with when it comes out. I don't really want to be compared with anyone else, because I'm doing what I want to do not something which I've been motivated to do by another person's work." But surely you have some 'influences'? "Yes, I'm heavily influenced by all Reggae music and I like both Bowie and Springsteen quite a lot but they are not really influential characters on my music."

Between one thing and another a lot is expected of Joe Jackson in the next few months. After his promising, if somewhat commercial single, I for one am waiting expectantly for his album in January.

Hot Press
November 16th - 30th

LIVE MUSIC

Joe's panache and tempo

Artist: JOE JACKSON
Venue: Nashville Rooms (50)
Tickets: £1

Audience: Bone-headed Aussie drunks and lots of trend-setters.
Current Product: Single 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?' (A&M AMS 7392) (C)

THE NASHVILLE has never been so packed, and the wait has rarely been as long as it was for young Joe Jackson on Friday. Obviously the word had got around that here was an up-and-comer for '79 and nobody was going to miss out.

When he finally appeared, clad in natty three-piece pin-stripes and looking a lot more fresh-faced than the sweltering audience, it was worth the wait. A&M seems to have found the perfect synthesis for the end of the decade... a voice reminiscent of Nick Lowe, a songwriting style that smacks a little of Elvis Costello, a panache similar to Robert Palmer's and bags of confidence.

The material is mostly up-tempo, three-minute pop songs with quirky



ideas like the calypso-style middle eight in 'Look Sharp' but he knows how to pace his set, including in it a nice slowish reggae tune 'Fools In Love' and even having the brass face to accompany himself on the piano for a solo version of 'Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries'. His band features a fine and positive bass player who carries the reggae numbers with ease and puts the punch into the pop songs. Like Beserkley's Rubinoos, Joe Jackson has that infectious, innocent feel, but he has a cheeky, cockney stage presence calculated to appeal to UK audiences. He must have hits this year.

JOHN HAYWARD

Record Business

January 22nd, 1979

Spiv rock—the big thing in '79?



JOE JACKSON: unlaboured niffiness

Joe Jackson Nashville

YOU MUST have noticed all the good reviews old JJ's been getting lately: favourable niches on certain eminent posers' picks to click in '79 and near-sycophantic write-ups in all the papers. Y'know, the big build-up treatment. Time for a touch of knocking down, then, d'you reckon?

Wrong, wrong, wrong, Rosetta, because the key to all the back drooling ain't wads of readies from A&M (no free dinners and trips to America for us — why not you tight-fisted *****?) but four words: Class, Unlaboured Niffiness and Talent, whose collective initials spell STAR.

Comparisons with Elvis Costello have already been widely handled about, and who am I to argue? There's times when you can close your eyes and imagine it: is Mr Paranoia up there, but Jackson's no mere musical magpie and the 13 originals in his current set sparkle with a life of their own. They get the beef, the beat, the hooks. And JJ's got a look.

He walks on stage (late!) looking sharp and in a double-breasted, RAR-badged pin-strip jacket and polka dot tie, explanation being: "Punk is dead, 1979 is the year of Spiv Rock". First mistake Joe, but he paid the price in gob from outraged spikey tops who gave him the chance to try out his working man's club heckler training: "I've got a soft spot for you. It's a bog in Ireland."

No musical cock-ups though as the band powered into a well-paced 17 numbers, many with a strong reggae backbone to their sure-fire melodies. Like the punchy 'Sunday Papers' ('If you wanna know about the gay politician/Ditto sex position/Read it in the Sunday Papers').

Another institution under attack is 'Happy Married Couples' — that target's a bit too easy — but in general he's less bitter than EC. More romantic. See 'Pretty Girls' or 'Fools In Love'. And note also that whether they're tackling the latter's gentle reggae, the up-tempo drive of 'Throw It Away', or the encore variety of 'Pressure Drop', 'Come On', and 'Ain't That A Shame', the JJ Band (Dave Houghton, drums; Garry Sanford, guitar; Graham Maybe, bass) always come out on top.

The highpoint of the set was the superb 'Is She Really Going Out With Him', their essential-purchase sparse sparkler of a single. While the low point was Jackson's solo keyboard rendering of 'Life Is Just A Bowl Of Cherries', the sort of cocktail cabaret he should have left behind at Portsmouth Playboy Club.

But on the whole he made very few mistakes. Joe's been waiting a long time for his bite of the apple, and I don't think he's in any mind to blow it now he's got this far. A last word from the man: "People ask me if success will change me. Well, I was a c*** before and I'll be a c*** afterwards."

Oh, yeah, there's something going on around here...

GARRY BUSHFELL

Sounds January 20th 1979

ON THE TOWN



JJ by ROB HALL

Joe Jackson

Leeds

The eight-foot-six Neurotic Stockbroker look just had to reckon sooner or later, but even though he's been squaring-off all his life, spiv rocker Joe Jackson now has the kind of image which not even a seasoned actor could contrive. Cabaret in Portsmouth must do something for a man.

In the case of Jackson, more has been revived than the polka dot.

Keeled over and automatically combing his hair on the condensation stalactites which have a tendency to proliferate at the Fan Club on nights like this, Jackson spewed his vitriolic raps over an audience of

punters barely ready for the pin-striped phenomenon who sweated, swigged pills and executed open-heart surgery for their perusal.

'One More Time', a sure-fire opener sung in sure-fire manic style (cf. Graham Parker) paved the way here for a brutally fast-moving 50-minute set which easily trashed the Leeds all-comers' record. Fronting a band whose frugality more or less defines 'minimalism', contender Jackson gets through his fair share of hang-ups in a gig, but nothing here (not even a hiccupping fire siren) could prevent him from getting everything out of his system. Spoken preambles spotlighted the humourist communicator in Jackson: "I quit the polka dots (for horizontal stripes)

because the NME don't like them. I wouldn't know what to wear if it wasn't for them," while the keen, terse lyrics of 'Is She Really Going Out With Him?' (cf. Steve Miller), dedicated to Rick Nielsen and Cheap Trick who he'd just seen up the road, 'Look Sharp', 'Fools In Love' and (hey Joe, what you doin' with that pun?) 'Happy Loving Couples' (cf. Elvis Costello) ensured that nobody left thinking Jackson was just a joker.

The unrecorded 'I'm The Man' promised even more, possessing a similar intensity to the 'Look Sharp' collection, but with a much more obviously commercial structure and feel — and featuring a vocal fade-out which one dares Jackson to record: "I was last year's model, baby, and I'm going to be next year's too." Very camp, very cocky. But still cool.

Introducing the band "because they're so good," Jackson gives credit where due. Prouetting and generally flipping out behind him, guitarist Gary Sanford and bassist Graham Maby provide a complementary bizarrerie as an oddball backdrop to Jacko's frenzied stoicism. The no-superfluous-action 3-D vista is competitive, especially if and when you could also see drummer Dave Houghton — a physical impossibility not exclusive to myself.

Jackson's raw harp (featuring prominently on 'The Fever', the flip of the single) and boogie electric piano (notably on 'Ain't That A Shame') were successful, if a little gratuitous. They seemed conclusive indications that Jackson (unwisely?) intends to take the scope of his talents to the outer reaches of endless possibility.

But essentially, Jackson knows where he's going (you can't put a good spiv down), and hopefully, most similarities with other rock artistes past, present, living or dead, are subconscious rip-offs. They told you J.J. was going to be BIG, and you suckers, you believed them.

This time around, though, nobody loses: if Jackson has seemed to fall into the 'hype' bracket, then this at least is one hype we can all use.

Emma Ruth

March 10th, 1979

RECORD
MIRROR

May 10, 1986

JOE
JACKSON

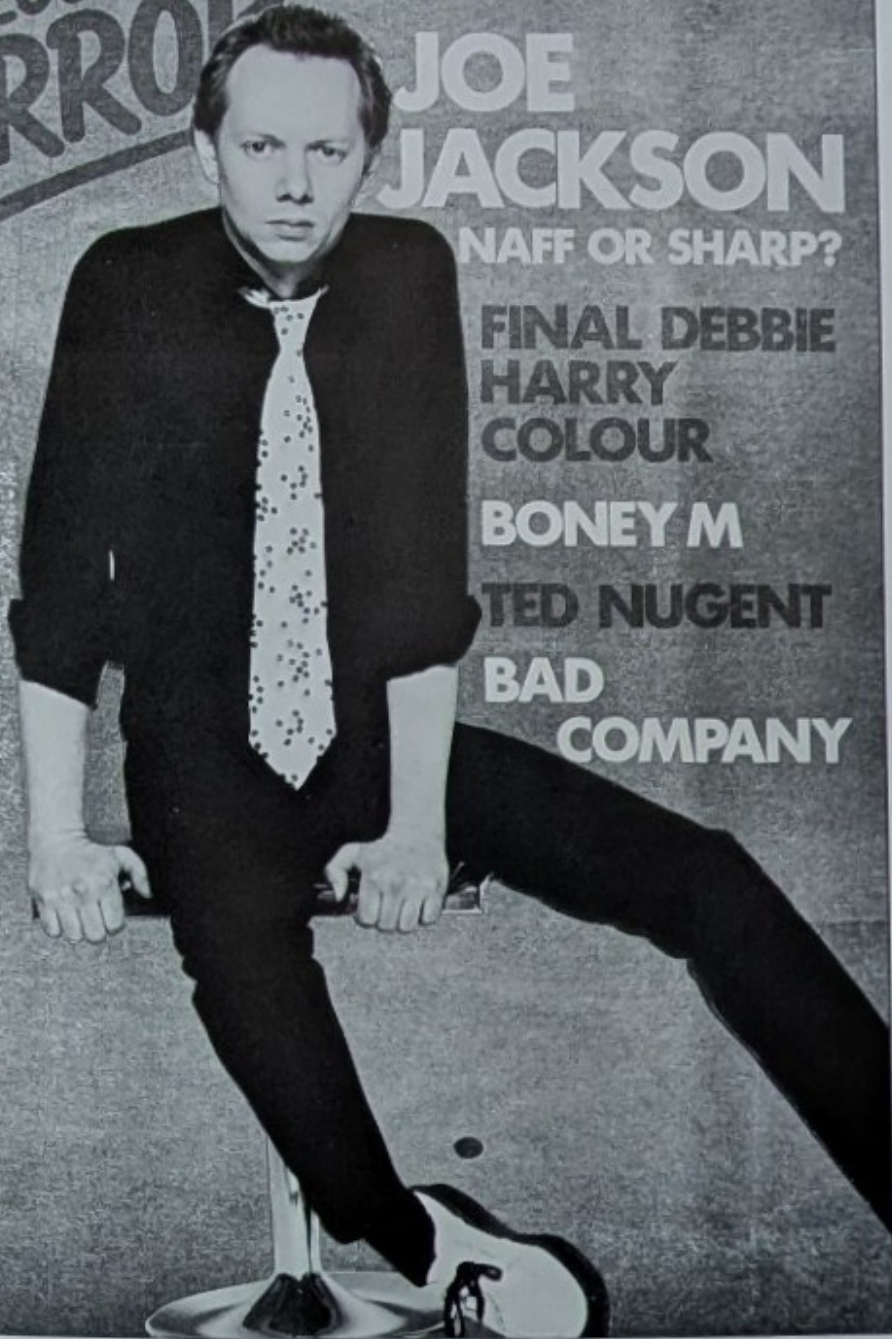
NAFF OR SHARP?

FINAL DEBBIE
HARRY
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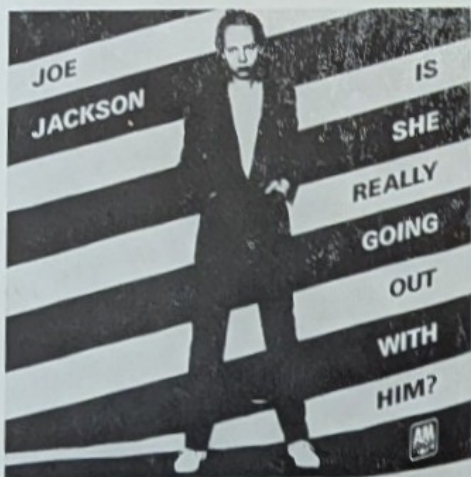
TED NUGENT

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LOOK SHARP! AMLH 64743



IS SHE REALLY GOING OUT WITH HIM?
AMS 7392



SUNDAY PAPERS AMS 7413