when they signed with Columbia eventually were warmup to Ten Years from Long Island bar Circuit and the late sixties, the group (then known as the Soft White Underbelly) played the Long Island bar circuit and eventually wound up touring Ten Years After at Stonybrook University in 1969. Their big break came in 1972 when they signed with Columbia records—still no rototory.

BOC's music is a little different from most rock music and I guess it can be described as amalgamated jethammere'd, hard rock. But unlike the Dolls and Kiss (or any other speedwhoreder, correspondence-school-trained, pseudo-musicians) they are serenely creative and technically perfect. Put the drums and bass of Albert and Joe Bouchard, respectively, guitars from the band's basic sound, Don (Buck Dharma) Rosser plays lead guitar, with lead vocalist Eric Bloom backing on "stun guitar" and synthesizer. Allan Lanier fills in all the gaps with rhythm guitar and keyboards, and all members contribute vocals to cutting effects. Cult music is characterized by high speed boogie rhythms with many weening and harmony guitar effects; Bloom's vocals are biting and persuasive while the other vocalists provide the back-up singing.

There are two good reasons for the Cult's lack of acceptance in the Boston area. Their three studio albums are basically mediocre and do not show up well on record, and just don't cut the bill. As BOC have been in Boston they don't really cut loose on a much more lively stage and there's always a feeling of uneasiness between cuts. (It's hard enough to understand their lyrics as it is.)

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The Blue Oyster Cult are one of the best live rock bands—their new disc, "Farewell, Mr. Clean: Peer Or On Your Knees," is a well rounded collection of the band's late 1970's New York tour. "The Red and the Black" is a ridiculously fast blues number from the album "Batteries Out." Buck Dharma's lead work does not falter at this high pace. His guitar work, focused and high pitch. Keeping the rhythmic style consistent is Bouchard's "Seven Screeching Dizbusters," designed to be performed live, it works much better than the studio arrangement, with an extended guitar solo exploring many paths.

"Buck's Boogie" is the Blue Oyster Cult's masterpiece, and at recent concerts it has become their theme song. It has a catchy theme, tight choppy interesting chord progressions, and, as the same suggests, Don Schenker loves some of his best solos. Buck's playing combines technique, wit, and idiosyncrasy into a style that is quick but very tasteful. This song is peculiar because it has never been released on a Cult studio album; (the studio version is available, however, on the Columbia anthology, The Guitars That Destroyed the World) moreover, it is never performed the same way in any two concerts.

"Then Came The Last Days of May" is a sweet ballad that allows a breather from the standard BOC repertoire and a chance for lead vocals by Buck Dharma. "Cities on Flame" is "ME 262," which loses something on the album if you've previously witnessed the visual production. Near the middle of the song the three guitars and bass set up a basic riff and then simultaneously improve around it. Some drummer Bouchard picks up a guitar and joins in with his licks. The end result is five guitars weaving in and out of each other on stage.

"The Subhuman" deviates from their usual style, for although the beat is hard and driving, the vocals are melodic and soothing. In the remainder of the album, a few nostalgie tricks are utilized. Their encore rendition of "Born To Be Wild" is a bit comical and their metamorphosis of the 50's tune, "I Ain't Got You," even includes the guitar solo from the Doors' "L.A. Woman" and parts of the guitar work from Free's classic "All Right Now." Some of the cuts on the album are arranged in the same style, one might conclude that all Cult music sounds the same; actually this is no more applied to the Blue Oyster Cult than it does to hard rock in general.

There is something to be said about the image the Blue Oyster Cult are trying to project. They proclaim dominance and subversion, whips, leather, and the like—and their music fits the bill. But on stage they still look like a bunch of skinny guys from Long Island. It was almost as if they were forced into arbitrarily choosing a gimmick.

This album has such great potential, it's a shame Columbia chose to ruin it. It is one of the most poorly engineered discs I have ever listened to. The sound resembles that of a bootleg album and the mixing is atrocious. The cuts on the album assume no logical order and stage announcements with applause are randomly mixed in between cuts. (It's hard enough to understand their lyrics as it is.)

Barring this tragic flaw, this is definitely an album to be heard. If possible everyone should see the Blue Oyster Cult in a top-billed format. If not, then pick up the album and listen to the best hard rock band of the seventies.

Discography:

The Blue Oyster Cult (Columbia KC 31063)
Dreams and Mutations (Columbia KC 31855)
On Your Feet or On Your Knees (Columbia PG 33571)