
Adam and the Ants at the Paradise, Friday, April 3.

You may not like the things we do.

Only idiots ignore the truth

Adam Ant, "Dog Eat Dog"

Pretty arrogant, get this, Adam Ant. He invents a musical style called "Anticemia," redefines Indian warrior/buccaneer philosophy and moda of dress, and, as if this were not enough, tells us that an Ant person is the only thing to be. Yet, somehow, this impertinence has paid off, because Ant man has swept England with a force that rivals the original Beatles roar. His second album, King of the Wild Frontier, has been acknowledged statewide and is receiving major play. Will Antmania take hold here?

Listening to the album won't provide any easy answer. It opens with the one-two punch of "Dog Eat Dog" and "Anticemia," tunes that define the Ant style. A relentless two-drummer, heavy-tom-tom backbeat propels the music, punctuated by repetitive bass lines and Marco Pirroni's tearing, distorted guitar. Adams delivers his lyrics in a manner that is more chant than song, backed by the wail whoopee and cries of the Ants. All this makes for an infectious combination—impossible not to like these tunes. The problems begin after the first two cuts. When riffs are recycled and the drums and chantis get a bit wearing. Some of the songs still hold well ("Flea in the Lens" and "Press Duration(s)"), but they represent the furthest departure from the Ant style.

All photos on this page by David Shaw.

Bearing Mild Bores

Roping Wild Bears. The Raybeats on Last Call Off The Flatsounds Record.

Perhaps being in with the in-crowd makes some things easier and some things harder. Certainly it didn't hurt publicity that the drummer and the guitarist of the Raybeats worked with the infamous James Chance on the infamous No New York compilation LP and that the band has more connections than New England Telephone. On the other hand, maybe it wasn't all that much fun either. Last year the Raybeats' bassist, George Scott, ended himself in a heroin overdose that caused something of a transatlantic music world uproar. Koif is a talented and well-known musician, and in a year that saw a number of similar deaths, his own became emblematic. While one would expect this to color the Raybeats' following work, it doesn't: the only acknowledgement is a dedication to the record sleeve, "For George." They will make the same pleasant background sounds they did in their earlier groups as Minneapolis' Overtones, the move to NYC, and ensuing tragedy left them unsullied.

This LP, mysteriously recorded in Austin, Texas, seems like updated cocktail lounge music to me. It swings along and sounds some mellow influences, but takes out little new territory. Numerous '60s instrumental groups come to mind, but the Raybeats cite the Shadows as their foremost inspiration. A chart that pretty much encapsulates their whole approach and genre classification.

They've labeled the two sides of the LP "Good Side" and "Bad Side," and, well, at least they're honest with themselves. The track "Searching," which is getting some radio play, seems to be superior sax work and a cool, urban feel. But the other cuts aren't particularly original, nor are they offensive; they just aren't. I don't think this anything low-key is going to get us through the 80's.