Discipline can't be beat

Beat: King Crimson on EJ/Warner Brothers Records.

Those who were amazed by last year's resurrection of the venerable art-rock ensemble King Crimson will be even more amazed by the appearance of their second album in less than a year, an unheard-of event in the Crimson saga. That this album features that same personnel as Discipline, the previous release, will seem impossible to those who know that no two albums by K.C. ever maintained a consistent lineup. The same disbelievers will no doubt fall into a swoon when they hear Beat and realize that it may well be Crimson's most commercial effort to date. Yet, despite the potential shocks that may befall the staunch art-rockers, all of these assertions are true.

The renewed energy of the once-dead band is largely due to the musical presence of guitarist/vocalist Adrian Belew. At last, Crimson has a frontman who is musically accomplished and an excellent singer as well. All the credit must go to Belew, however, because this is still Robert Fripp's band. His hiatus from performing and his solo experiments provided a rare opportunity to try out his ideas on his own before integrating them into the context of a performing ensemble. The contributions Fripp makes to Beat are subtle, the Frippertone chord changes in the bridge of "Sartori in Tangier" are the best example of a practical application of his experiments. Let us not be disappo-

Combating with the Gang of Four

How long can you say the same things and get away with it? Well, here's two different answers to that question.


In the Clash's sixth release of punkstuck, and suffers from a real lack of fresh ideas. This album is littered with anti-establishment rhetoric, but this band neither lacks passion nor is going over old ground. This year's worst song, by a mile, has got to be "Know Your Rights." It's got absolutely nothing going for it; the melody has little structure and is about as mid-speed rocker toed as Joe Strummer sounds like his larynx went through a meat grinder. You and I have heard this stuff before, too ("Glasnost of Brixton" and "Jailhouse Rock" in the Drug Squad, for example). It's not even approachable to the ears, the operative word here is drek.

This disc is very much like every other Clash, only worse. There are the obligatory songs which are, respectively, anti-corporations ("Car Jamming"), anti-war ("No Radios" and "To菁") and anti-social stratification ("Ghetto Defendant"). Awful, awful, awful lyrics.

If there is one bright spot, it's that the musical quality of these efforts is still very good. However, the whole band is trying to say, "Car Jamming," "Incongruous (Cl)," "Reggae Rock," "I'm So Bored" and "Overpowered By Funk" are decent singles.

On the other hand, we have Gang of Four. After Solid Gold's critical bankrup-

As for the commerciality of this venture, one of the tunes, "Heartbeat," seems destined for airplay (but with the increase of conservative rock programming this probably won't come to pass). Again, they adhere best to his own group's avant-garde vision. In particular, "This Old Feeling" and the title tune are well-written pop tunes, with the harmonics on "Vacation" softening Belinda Carlisle's somewhat

Permanent vacation

Vacation. Go-Go's on IRS Records.

I approached this album with a lot of trepidation. The odds were good that the Go-Go's, invigorated by the heady success of Beauty and the Beat, would travel down that same simplistic and endearing route to A&R (Album-Oriented Rock) superstardom. It is a rare band that sticks to its artistic guns rather than producing that which sells.

This year, at least, Vacations wins. The girls have produced another album of songs about love, both in the past and present tenses, with some stabs at progrock flourishes along the way. The whole, however, this album is uneven.

Some of the best tunes are those which adhere best to the Go-Go's girl-group an-

Grating voice. "Girl of 100 Lists" is a very whimsical tune about classifying and keeping a tally of every aspect of her life, and features an excellent bridge (Charlotte Caffey is actually a very decent pianist). But, if you only listen to one song on this album, pick up on "Beatnick Beach." It's the ultimate in camp, from the lyrics on down. There's a neat little bass power-ize, but what gets me is the backing vocals, which consists of maniacal whoops during the chorus. "I said, 'Come on, love, let's go. The sun's up. We'll play. Well, the girls work only occasionally. Most of the time we're on vacation and our backs are flat on our faces. Personally, I would not shed a tear if Jane Wiedlin (author of "It's Everything But Paradise") never wrote another song. I think It's Me is a nice tune, but you get something from the lyric drive it's been handed. Oh yes, the cover of "Cool Jerk" is Godawful. Car-

I guess when you really come down to it, there's one fundamental difference between these two albums. Gang of Four makes music with a message, while the Clash accompanies its message with music. And that is why Songs of the Free wins Combat Rock does.

(Editors Note: Mr. Sahl's review of "82-Ima" is currently living in exile someplace in Long Island. Whenever he can smuggle out counter correspondence he will print it. It's vital for his sanity.)

Eric A. Sahl

Not bad, but not great is how the report card on Vacation reads. The group has potential to become pretty good within the confines of their niche, so stay tuned.

Eric A. Sahl