

NUMANME

THE GARY NUMAN FAN SITE

ISSUE FOUR

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GARY NUMAN

MAGAZINE

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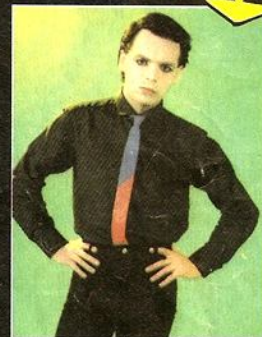
AN INTIMATE PROFILE



ROCK
STAR

No. 1 45p

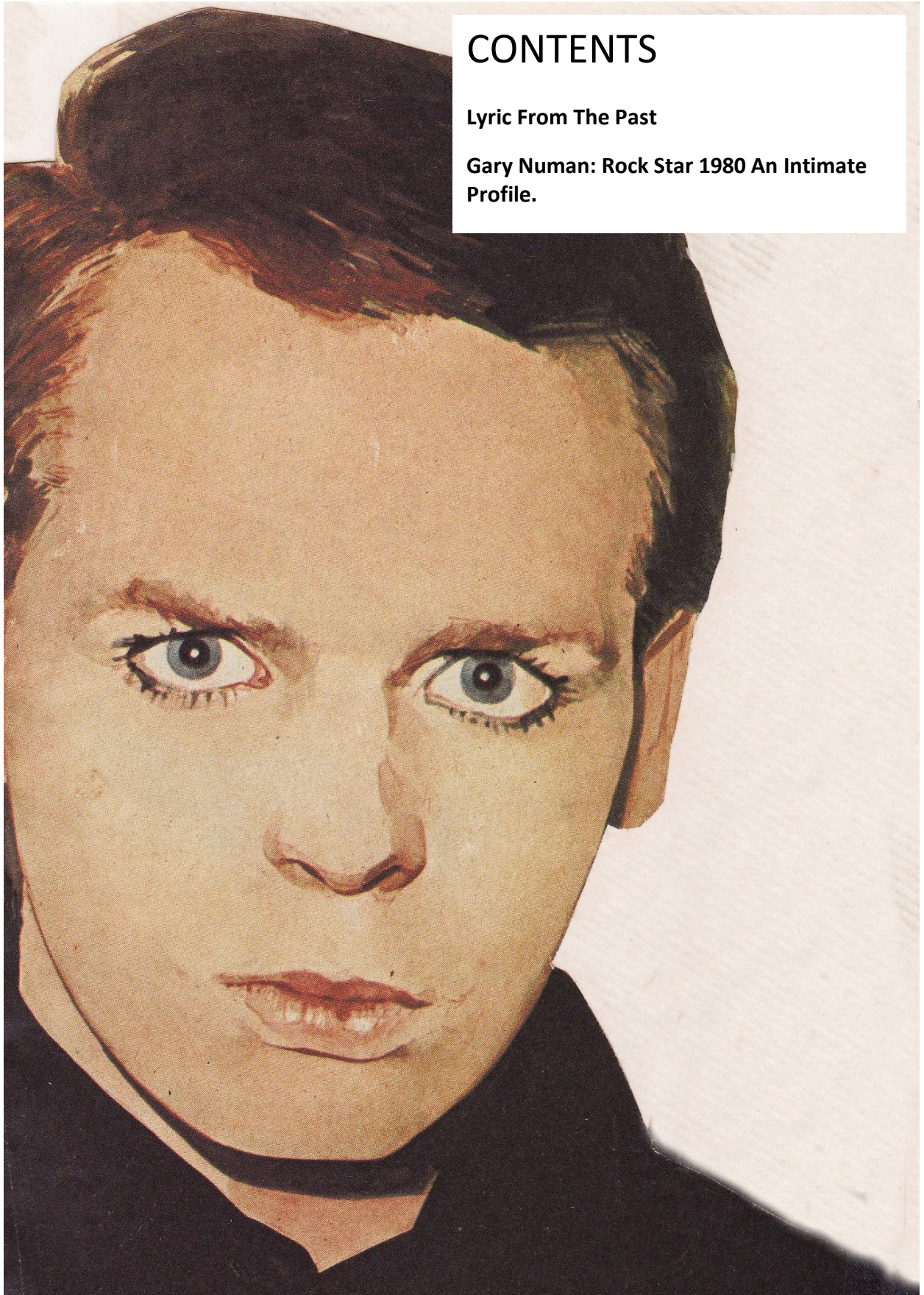
POSTER
INSIDE



CONTENTS

Lyric From The Past

Gary Numan: Rock Star 1980 An Intimate Profile.



LYRIC FROM THE PAST



I Assassin (**'I, Assassin'** album, 1982)

We are assassins
We are not evil
We act with reason and heart
Your hear

We are not vicious
Is that surprising?
We're so much larger than life

I, assassin, I am
I, assassin, I am

'I just arrived
Something to fix
This new depression'

We are not hunters
We are just patient
We'll wait a lifetime for you
Just you

I've never felt good
I've never felt bad
I've never felt much at all

I, assassin, I am
I, assassin, I am

'There's nothing personal
Just read the papers
that's realism'



NUMAN'S COSMIC MAKE-UP

THE SEMI-DETACHED STAR OF SUBURBAN STAINES

Alsatian dogs lurk in the bushes. A tall, white gate stands between the neat, red-brick house. The barking dogs give their warning and Gary Numan's father appears from the side of the house to pull them away. Numan Jr is at home in his fortress, his cage. A product of the rock and roll machine age, his dazzling success - with both singles and albums topping the charts within the last three months has all the neon-bright, cold edged trappings of synthesisers, video, supercars and technological toys.

22-year-old Numan (real name Gary Webb) is 5ft 9in high, and dresses in tight jeans and black heeled boots. His hair is dyed coal black (where as it was once bleached blonde, it's naturally brown) and brushed behind his ears. It is reputed to be suffering from the onslaught of chemicals, he can't use aftershave or antiperspirants because they bring him out in a rash. He still exists on a diet composed almost exclusively of junk food like "chips and hamburgers".



"Hi," he says and the hand shake is firm. But he seems shy, waiting for me to speak first. He tucks himself into an armchair and a mock fire burns behind mock logs. His mother brings us a cup of tea.

"I don't drink alcohol or smoke," he volunteers. "I made up my mind I wouldn't and I've never put a cigarette to my mouth.

"If I'm feeling upset about anything, I go for a run in the car," he says, jerking his head towards the back window and a gleaming white Corvette.

Doesn't he sometimes wonder if he'll wake up one morning and find it gone, that none of this ever happened to him?

"I did to begin with," he agrees. "Just like when we first went to number one, I couldn't believe it.

"I had a carefully worked out plan but it went wrong. Everything happened faster than I thought it would. We never thought 'Are Friends Electric?' would go to the top. I thought it wouldn't happen until 'Cars', the second single and by that time I would have had more experience with performing."

In fact, the first time he fronted the group, Tubeway Army, was the first time he appeared on TV's 'Old Grey Whistle Test', in June last year.

He did that programme and 'Top of the Pops' in the same week and he credits his entire meteoric streak to the top to that one thing: television exposure.

"It's what sells records in this country," he says. "Visual image is important, because it gives the kids something to latch on to."

So on stage he dresses in tight leather, paints his face white ("I started doing it to cover my spots. I only eat burgers and chips so they never seem to get any better") and rings his slate grey eyes with black pencil. His fans are already beginning to dress like that, but Numan appears to derive little satisfaction from that,

"Being a success is a tot different than I thought it would be," he says wrying. "I thought it would be fast, hectic, glamorous; wild parties and lots of flashy women. I got into that briefly but I didn't like it. It's all very false."

He finds the other members of his band helpful as sound in boards for his musical direction, and describes the relationship between them all being "not so close as brothers it's more like being in the Army and they are the other blokes in the barrack room."

"I wouldn't trust them not to leave me for another group that paid more money," he says realistically. "We get on very well, but it is a business arrangement."

When he gets bothered by people on the road the others help him escape. It is rudeness wich bothers him the most.

A key to Numan's work and character lies in his attitude to David Bowie.

"If it wasn't for him I would never have got into theatre and movement and putting on a big show," he admits quickly. "Bowie made it obvious to me what I could do."

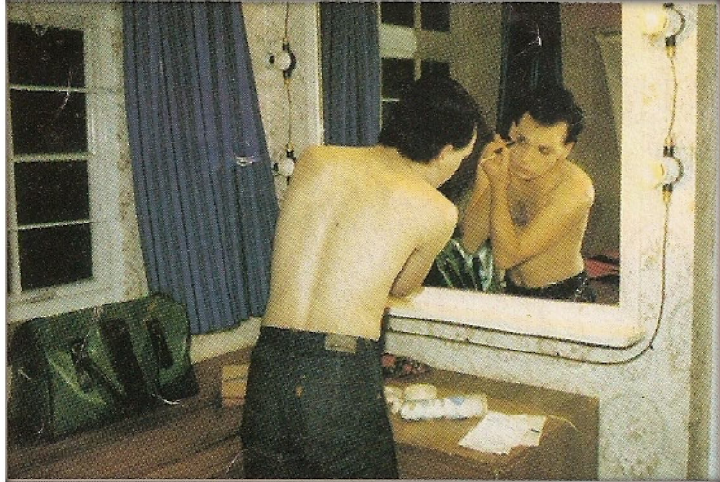
He first saw Bowie perform live during the 1976 'Station-to-Station' period, when he slicked back his hair, wore a dinner jacket and started to experiment with white light.

Two years later Numan attended the Earls Court shows where Bowie straddled, with consummate ease, all the phases of his development, welding them into a coherent whole.

Criticism of Numan's stage show stems mainly from the fact that many music writers found it monotonous rather than cohesive, and Numan unable to sustain the pace and excitement needed

for performance to build to a climax.

"I knew that would happen," he says angrily. "I designed an enormous computer news screen to create images behind the drum kit, from thousands and thousands of tiny light bulbs. It was obvious to me that the audience would be used to the special effects by about 20 minutes into the concert. The computer was supposed to start lighting up then, to avoid a slump.



"I worked it out so carefully," he says, slamming his fist into the palm of his hand. "They didn't tell me 'til the day we were going on the road that it wouldn't be ready on time. I put £10,000 of my own money into it and it's still not ready."

Bowie and Newman have never met, so it is worship from a distance.

"I think he is one of the most creative people, to come out of the last decade," says Gary. "I'd like to be able to change as much as he does. But you must remember he didn't try to change his image until he had established himself."

Bowie is a star of the sixties going on seventies; Numan is a star of the seventies going on eighties and all its technology.

He writes all his own conflict into his lyrics.

But unemployment, bad housing, bad drugs, bad company are far cries from the Numan crouched before me in a comfortable armchair. Glancing at the normality of his home, it seems ridiculous for him to be writing about, and for, punks and their problems. A bit like Oscar Wilde writing about the indignities of manual labour a double standard.

He simply shrugs this off and says: "You can feel things strongly enough to write about without having to actually live them."

"My family has lived in this area since I was two months old." His arm describes a wide arc, embracing what seems to be the whole of this Thames side area, from Staines to Windsor. "I guess a lot of people would hate it," he says wryly.

He is seriously considering moving around a bit more now that he has some money of his own. H

explains that he gets very stuck in his ways. For years the furthest away from home he ventured was Weymouth, for an annual summer holiday. Then somebody suggested Cyprus, so he went there every year.

“Now, what I’d really like to do is buy an island in the Pacific. I was reading about one the other day. It’s only £150,000 and that’s quite cheap, isn’t it?”

I smile and try to work out how much money he must be making or about to make. The tour won him acclaim, not money. All of £30,000 of his own money went into creating a spectacular stage production. Royalties are now pouring in for publishing and for the last three albums and singles. Massive sales of the third single are worth untold thousands.

I ask how it all began and learn that at eleven he started to play with his school friend’s electric guitar. But all he really wanted to do was to be a pilot.

“That was until I was 13. Then we had a careers talk at school and they told us only one in a thousand ever gets to be a pilot. It stopped me there and then. I looked around at the thousand people in my school and I knew I wasn’t the cleverest. So I weighed up the odds and decided to go into something else pretty quick.”

Now he can say: “There’s a lot of commonsense involved with success in the rock and roll business. You have to be very shrewd in terms of deciding what you’re going to do and when you’re going to do it.”

His method of song-writing is to compose several songs, then chop them up, and put different chunks from each together into one song. But he does it by verses.

It is not the same as the Cutup method favoured by Bowie and taught him by William Burroughs, which involves writing lines, then cutting up the words and sticking them back together again in whatever pattern they fall.

“It’s meaningless,” says Numan dismissively. “Too random” If you’ve got feelings you want to write about there’s no point in doing cutups because it makes no sense to you or the person hearing it. Apparently, my lyrics are hard enough to understand as it is.”

There is a bitter lemon twist to the statement which comes out of a kind of wounded disbelief that anyone could or would criticise or misunderstand his work. He claims people do that all the time and basically he does not like people. So, he admits, his ultimate reason for remaining in the musical rat race is fair and square, money.

“I want to take as much as I possibly can,” he says. That day he had been out buying a 200mph go-kart. A few days previously, an enormous screen and slide projector were added to his possessions. Flying lessons are also part of his lifestyle. He has no feeling of betraying his ‘art’ for gold. Gold is simply one of the goals.

Closer dreams or ambitions include considering a film version of his 'Replicas' album. He is also preparing plans for a series of four minute videos. This projected 'Replicas' film is likely to have a similar story line treatment to 'Soylent Green', which was set in an over populated future. "I would like to have robot machines winning, the bad is getting badder and badder but a machine could handle life perfectly."

Then there's his coast-to-coast tour of America which he started in February 1980. If he breaks there (in the world's biggest record market) and the records start selling, he can look forward to a sizeable fortune.



"If I got that island in the Pacific," he says, pursuing the immediate fantasy, nobody would tell me I couldn't, ride my go-kart because it was making too much noise. And that I can drive my car at only 30 miles an hour through the town. I could do what I wanted and that means a lot to me. Money can buy me freedom."

But not necessarily satisfaction. To me, he seems very confused beneath the controlled exterior. "I used to go into shops, and if what I wanted took too long to say, I wouldn't even ask for it," he says. "I couldn't talk in front of a queue of people. I'd just get tongue tied. I'm still shy, but not on stage."

"I don't feel nervous playing to thousands of people. Yet when we were just playing to 10 or so I used to get so frightened I would almost be sick."

"The power of the mind fascinates me," he says. The album he is working on now, called Telekon, is concerned with telekinetics and telepathy. He reads R D Laing, science fiction and books on psychology. "I started reading them to find out about myself. I used to have a problem when I was younger." Until six years ago, while he was still at the local grammar school, he used to have blackouts or fits and became unexpectedly violent.

"I'd be perfectly normal," he explains. "Whatever might be bothering me I would simply take in and behave as though nothing was wrong. Then one thing would happen that was no more or less than any of the others, but it would just trigger me, and I'd be off. I'd flare up and catch everybody by surprise, including me."

"I wasn't violent towards people, but things. I just had to smash things. I would smash chairs and scream."

This uncharacteristic lack of control is the one area where he cannot confide in his parents. "I can talk to them about almost anything else. Sex can be a bit of a problem when you're growing up, but I talked to my Mum completely openly."

He has had one serious love affair, which broke up two years ago. "It affected me very badly," he admits. "it made it very hard for me to get along with other people. No matter how long someone is around, I never believe that they won't up and leave the next day. I put very little value on people's promises."

"She went very suddenly, without any breakdown in the relationship. One night she just said 'That's it' and left. I could never do that to someone I loved."

Yet in a way that is what he is planning to do with his millions of fans, most of whom are in the six to 16-year-old age range.

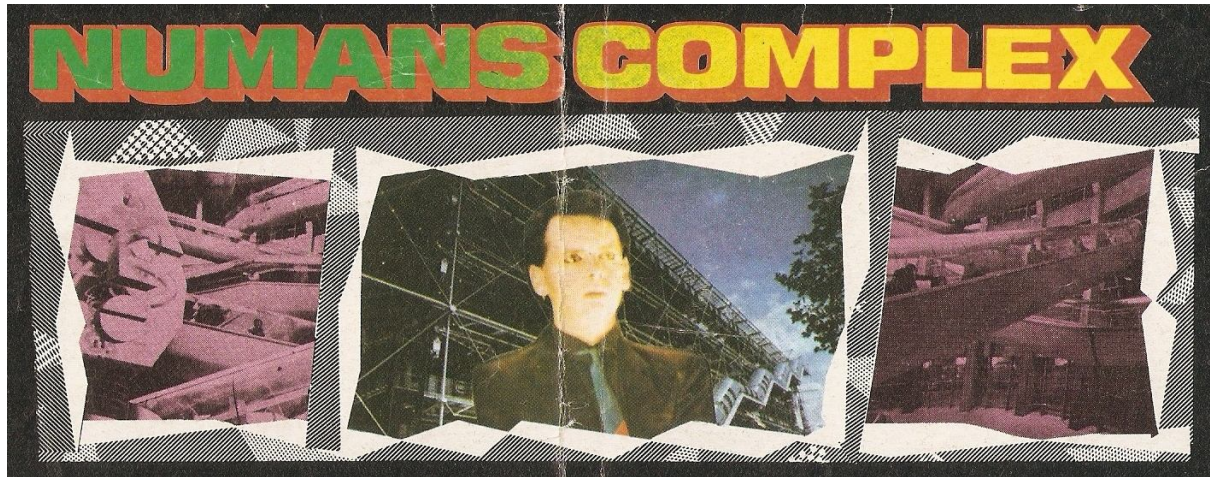
He is not prepared to develop his stage performances through voice training or movement tuition. Rather, he will expand the theatre of the show as a whole, and then stop performing completely.

"I'm not going to be in it long enough to take classes," he says. "Next year I want to have a huge stage show. Take it on the road for a world tour. Then pack up completely and never go on the stage again."

Perhaps it is instinctive self defence. He is more guarded than anyone of his age should be. Outside the dogs prowl, ready to scare off the carloads of teenagers who sometimes descend on his house in the dark of night and sometimes hurl milk bottles through the windows. Indoors, his parents, ever attentive, make tea in the shiny, Formica-topped kitchen.

Looking at his white punk-next-door face, I can't help feeling he is paying the price for stardom.

"I'm just a boy," he says defensively. "Hardly even a man yet. I just write songs. But some people seem to feel I'm a threat to their existence. Why they have to take me seriously I'll never know."



NUMANS COMPLEX

Numan is an aural equivalent to other eighties obsessions: the ubiquitous computer game 'Space invaders' and the latest filmic sensation 'The Black Hole': "We are entering the eighties and we need new distractions. Isn't it grand?" Numan is a perfect icon: his public face makes significant attempts at prettiness (kohol and pouts) he isn't more or less good-looking than anyone else, but he tries and that's enough. His rarely (and understood) talent is as much that of producer as anything else both in studio and on the stage. It showed him overcoming any (understandable) deficiency in stage sets and a constant supply of changes and toys to keep the audience amused. Clever, realistic showmanship, teasing a latent but rising hysteria.

In fact, a Spectacle. The stage set dual towers enclosing the synth players and drummer with a frontage of lights which flashed and circulated in sync with the beat was displayed during the first number a functional instrumental, 'Airplane'. Numan then entered to sing 'Cars'. A more experienced performer would have built on the message charge generated by the introduction and his rapt reception; as it was, the energy sagged and the audience stared.

Numan made the transition from his fantasy to its practice with a clever yet courageous ease. Quite apart from any deficiencies in his chosen path, new and pressing problems now present themselves: is the new spectacle the same as the old? If he gets typecast, how long can he expect it to last? Might he be the last pop star?

Back in October 79, at the time of writing, Gary Numan's first tour since becoming a major "POP" attraction had just finished. He has played to roughly 40,000 people in 16 capacity venues throughout the country: by the last date, at Sheffield's City Hall, he had lost about £30,000 on the tour (including the £3,000 or so given to Save the Whales from one of the Hammersmith nights) which has, nevertheless, confirmed Numan in many people's eyes (including pop columnists on the national tabloids) as a new pop star. It can be said to have been very successful.

"I think . . . no, I'm not really interested in a new relationship: I'm sure what can be done. I've really no idea . . . apart from the fact that you talk to the audience and claim to be one of them, which is why you're singing and they're not and get on with it, which is what I've done . . . I've very little to

say to them. They know what he songs are, I'd imagine. I really wouldn't want to tell them what the songs are about before each number: there's no- need to tell them what they are because they already know. There really isn't much more, to say you can't have a conversation it's very false with between two and four thousand people."

Captured on CR02, Numan's voice plays back to the writer a few days later. At the time he remembers being impressed by Numan's candour and directness, whether or not agreeing with, all of what he said.

Continuing: "That kind of performance suits me. I don't like being very close to them. I don't like standing gigs at all: I get very worried when I get near the front. Know it's very flattering that they rush the stage but it does worry me when they get that close. I like there to be a gap. I like theatres where there's an orchestra pit. It isn't that I don't want to take to them, meet them, pr anything like that it's just that I don't feel safe with all those people trying to get there ...~

I travel with. Numan as he drives from Wolverhampton 'to sheffield in his shiny, white, expensive American sports car a present from WEA Records to induce Numan to enter into a fresh five-year deal. Here, in his car, Numan appears safest of all. By his own admission not a natural performer, he decided to do the show as it was and lose money, because: "I thought there was no point in going out unless you were going to give people something to re-member and to make it worthwhile. There's no point in being top of the pile unless your show's going to be top of the pile as well."

Was the lavishness not also to cloak his inexperience?

"You mean to take the limelight away from me a bit? No, it wasn't, really. To be honest, the show\was put together to be something to look at. I wouldn't be very interesting to look at for one and a quarter hours.

"I don't think I am: I can't do enough different things or look in enough different ways to keep people interested for that time apart from the real diehards who'll look at me for hours. Obviously the majority of the audience isn't like that — especially at this early stage, a lot of them -half of them are just going to see what the fuss is all about."

What was the point of the pyramid?

On The Pleasure Principle cover? It was image. On stage, the robots are pyramid-shaped — that's to tie in with the cover, and also because I thought that robots..... you say a robot and people think of something that does this (gesticulates mechanically) and clinks about, and really that's the most unpractical shape you can think of because it's so unstable, it keeps falling over all the time. A pyramid is, I think, the most stable shape you can have: it really is hard to budge. Talking about a straight-thinking machine, it'd have to be that shape where it didn't fall over and damage itself.

"So I thought — well, if I'm going to do it, let's do it realistically in the proper shape of what they'll be and not go for the image. We had enough impact in the show itself — it'd be nice to put some realism into it.

"I also think that the panels, the walls, it looks like they just light up. I think that one day probably we'll have buildings like that where you don't have street lights but the walls of the buildings themselves light up outwards, so it's not like street lights and shadows and little quiet corners that you could get mugged in .. "

I demur: It transpires that Numan was actually beaten up in a 'quiet corner'; that would account for it. I then mention that the show lacks an edge of provocation that we became used to.

"I think it's just taking it back to cabaret showbiz for showbiz more than anything. That's trying to explain what we're on about, and use this as a visual expansion of our songs. To be honest I used to hate all that stuff (cabaret) but fairly recently I've got to really like Bing Crosby and now I like Frank Sinatra. I never did before, but the way he just breezes among his crowd as if they're in a circle and not on stage and he's so relaxed"

To compound the impression Numan performs a reasonable version of 'On Broadway' in his current set: it's a song he's always liked and featured in the lyric of 'You Are in My Vision'. I find the conservative aspect a little hard to take, and wonder how Numan felt about the atmosphere in which he moved in late 1976 and early 1977, seeing the Sex Pistols early on (at Notre Dame Hall) and playing the Roxy in June 1977.

"I always thought it was a movement, especially in the early days before it became fashionable. I don't feel part of it, no. I don't think I'm doing what I'm doing now because of it. I think I'm doing what I'm doing now I'm doing quicker because of it, if you- know what I mean. The business side of it changed: people go signed up, so I went out, crashed away for a few months, got a contract and ten away we went on our own tack. Which is because of punk but I didn't get it and evolve into what I'm doing now. I just simply used it."

It fits, in moving the audience away from the last fashion, Numan mustn't appear to identify too much with it. For good or ill, his preoccupations are different.

"I did use it solely as a means of getting a contract. I didn't see it as going anywhere. I don't think it has gone anywhere. I was excited by the things as a whole, that all of a sudden there was something that was completely new — new fashion, new music.

Hopefully when it got started something really great would come out of it but it sort of got destroyed by its own ideas. The anti-hero thing could never happen because this country has always had the heroes, it always will do - I think it's a very English thing to make heroes."

He replies to another question:

"I never agreed with coming on and being the same as the audience, I never liked that side of it. I never liked it as a personal taste. Also I thought it was very false; you'd see bands as they got more and more well known get more and more distant. Half of it is necessity, really — you have to."

Continuing this journalist's questions: I suggest that Numan's lyrics project a nightmare, depressing view of the future...

"It's an extreme view of the future . . . from what's happening now, but only one view. It's not necessarily the only one I have, the only view I think there could be — it's possibly the most interesting to write about. It's what I see around me. I'm obviously very affected by things — the violent side of human nature. Human nature itself is quite interesting to write about, if you take it to its extremes."

Does he think they'll get more extreme over the next decade? And if so, what can he see himself doing in that case?

"Hopefully I'll have enough money, whatever, to get away from it.

Wouldn't he try to do something about it, even if it was merely banging his head against a brick wall..

"I haven't got the interest to want to prevent it or stop it I tend to be much more selfish and think how I can get out of it rather than help other people out of it — that may change as I grow older and hopefully grow up a bit more. I know a lot of things I do are very selfish — there must be a word stronger than selfish to cover it — something I'd imagine really isn't quite right."

Numan's honesty at least is refreshing. Like many who are in control of their own destiny, who've struck lucky at an early age, he often seems impatient of those weaker than him, heartless perhaps. He's done it himself:

Why shouldn't others?

His business instincts are acute apart from having as much control over his career as is possible he writes the songs, produces them, designed the stage set, hired the band entered a favourable deal with WEA, through licencees Beggar's Banquet. The deal is for a five-year period with an advance of £17,000 for the first year.

The deal further binds him to seven albums over the five years:

"But we did write into it that if any time I wanted to, I could stop we talked a lot about this, and it's quite important — that any time I wanted to I could stop and they can't withhold the royalties, but the agreement is that if I ever do go back to writing I go back to them and finish off that deal. I've signed up for albums, but not for any special time — I don't have time schedules to meet. It's quite nice."

Earlier he'd mentioned his appreciation for the down-to-earth aspect of WEA, their honesty about the nature of their involvement with the music business (cash). It is suggested that he's extremely fortunate in his relationship with them - in being in a position to dictate his own terms: they need him more than he needs them.

He ponders, and replies: "I think on a straight fifty-fifty basis that's true... because he could go elsewhere, and they couldn't go and just nip out another number one."

His position is even stronger because of the current comparative weakness of the music business:

"No, no. They need everyone they can get (laughs). WEA have got Rickie Lee Jones and... God knows Fleetwood Mac, the Eagles... they're all right. They're doing quite well at the moment, but these people may not be going for another five years and they think I will."

The white sports car with the red naugahyde is an illustration of that strength, that bargaining power. I enquire whether Numan thinks it's a toy.

"It's toy for a little boy, to keep him happy, that's the feeling I get... It doesn't bother me. It appeal to that side of me... 'Oh wow!' that sort of thing. Also, it's a good move on their part to make sure negotiations went on in a semi-friendly fashion, I found it: flattering that they gave it to me. I don't think they've done anything like that for quite a while.

"I was told that when they heard that I'd been talking to CBS — it was only really to find out what the going rate was — it got back to WEA and they thought 'Oh my God, he's signed to CBS' and — this is what I've been told mind you, it's not me shooting off my own trumpet — I was told that they said: 'Get him, whatever he wants, just make sure he doesn't go' — which is fair enough 'cos I suppose I make a lot of money for them."

All isn't entirely roses, however: "It's easier for me to dictate now than it was before... to say we want to do this, we want to do that. Before we used to have big arguments about it, now I sort of say 'That's what we're doing,' and then make sure that they do it — but that's half the problem, to get them to do what they say they'll do, because they say OK to keep you happy and then worm their way around it. They need constant watching.

"But . . . I don't know if this is true, but they seem to have, a respect for my intuition if you like, in what's to be done. I think they're realising I know more of where I'm going than anyone else does, because they've no idea of what I'm going to do until I have. Problems haven't arisen."

Numan's known where he's going for a long time. Is 'being a star' what he'd-always wanted?

"Yes, very much so, that's why I went into it. It's the only thing I've wanted, you know, for such a long time. I . . . always thought I'd do it — looking back on the material I based that opinion on, I'm very surprised. I was 15, 16, hadn't even written a song, still thinking I was going to be a star.

"There was something about the atmosphere of the - business that interested me — I can't really give a definite thing that gave me that atmosphere I just remember reading about~ it. I had a cousin about seven years older than me who was really into it — and an uncle. Jess (Lidyard) on drums, who I ended up working with — and obviously being around this side of the family, I'd read their papers, I'd watch RSG, and I just got the atmosphere from it, really from when I was quite young I thought:

Well, that's for me, even though I didn't really do anything constructive about it until I was 18. "

Often becoming a 'star' is as much an act of will as of talent: some have the talent, few the will to enter the marketplace in the manner that being a 'star' demands, and then to hold on to what you've got: the consolidation is even more of an effort than the initial rise. one stage, Numan admits that he's sometimes at present holding on by his fingertips. The pressure is intense, and increasing:

"I didn't plan on it being this early."

I ask Numan about his adolescence, seeking clues. Numan admits he was a very isolated child, by choice:

"I wasn't bothered trying to meet other kids. It didn't bother me to 'meet other people and talk to them.'"

He left school at 16: "I went to a grammar school: that's the one that sent me to a psychologist. I was expelled from there eventually. I was a disturbing influence. They did try to help me, they were quite nice: they let me stay an extra year: they didn't expel me — even though I should have been I went into the top class, the A stream. The next year I was demoted to the bottom class."

Numan's 'problem' was irrational fits of violence which came on quite suddenly, without warning. In the next couple of years he went from school to school.

"I then went to — I had a talk with my dad who said (in 'Summertime Blues' voice) 'You really need an education, son' (laughs) so off I went to technical college .and.. it happened again. I had some really weird experiences there . . . I was just sitting down and all of a sudden you feel like a bubble forms and people's voices stop making sense.

"I couldn't understand what people were saying, and I could feel myself actually moving back into it, and my head became the bubble and I was going inside that. It only happened about three times: it made me feel quite strange, occasionally it really did affect me quite a bit."

"I left college and: went straight into, work. In the daytime I put air-conditioning into buildings, I was a driver, a clerk, really just everyday jobs, all the time planning as well as writing. I was always intending that it was just for now so it was about bearable. It was enjoyable if I enjoyed the people I was with one job I had, I was there exactly a year from birthday to birthday, and it was the worst time of my life horrible. Horrible people. They hated me because I dyed my hair: they used to call me 'Wally Wanker' that was my nick-name."

It is guessed that this might be one of the reasons why he doesn't like people very much

"Obviously this is where ... at various times I met people, particularly when I was younger, and I've taken it all in. Another thing that affected me a lot when I was split up with the girl that was quite some time ago, about two years ago in September or three years ago. It was very painful. That's possibly affected me more than anything, particularly in terms of me getting close to people. It was

the one and only time I've ever loved someone outside the family." Still, it happens to a lot of people and they survive.

I ask whether he has any of his old friends left. Numan comments with a certain objective humour: "No, they dropped me long before I became famous. Quite some time ago. They got rid of me because... I was singing in a group and they didn't want me writing the songs anymore, so I said 'It really doesn't bother me I didn't intend at the time to become a big front-man pop star anyway I was just doing it to gain experience, but they weren't writing any songs.

"So I said, 'Well, write them then, I don't mind', but that wasn't very good. And so they got rid of me, then went out and did their own set it took them about six months to write their set, and they had a couple of my songs in it anyway there was only about a 30-minut set and it really was awful. The group? It was Mean Street. They were on the Vortex live album." I dimly remember hating it. "I was disgusted. And all my so-called friends at that time would follow them around religiously, and pogo at every gig, it was like rent-a-crowd. And they dropped me completely from parties, from anything at all... I had one other one, called Gary Robson, who's the only friend I've got... the only friend I trust completely...

Presumably that's where 'Are Friends Electric?' came from?

"Yes, it was based on that. And then obviously being deserted made me very paranoid in my attitudes towards friends. I often tended to write 'friends' in inverted commas in a lot of the songs." I mention that he seems to have had a lot of unpleasant experiences . . .

"I don't think any more than most people, I just think that I take them badly (laughs). I find it hard to accept that and understand it I find it very hard to understand human nature a lot of the time, which is part of the problem."

The same day, in the Daily Star, Numan is given the honour of a centrespread: "Gary — We Love You! But Numan Is so lone". The image machine revs into higher gear; Numan is type. cast as "aloof and arrogant"...

"Most of what I said had been blanded out — I didn't, actually say what he wrote down, he took the gist of it only. It wasn't done in a nasty way, so I didn't mind it - it was a bit sweet and sickly. I'm not like that.

The image doesn't worry me from an outsider's its probably accurate. I think I'm quite strong-willed and know exactly what I'm doing - which is mistaken for arrogance. The 'aloof' bit is my wish not to get too close to the audience . . . which isn't being aloof, It's more survival really, "

His audience?

"It's very awkward - to be honest about it without giving the wrong impression, I don't reall any . . . I won't say loyalty, I don't feel that I owe them anything. I made the records and they bought them.

They owe me as much as I owe them, so they cancel each other out, really. I don't now have to make another albums; I get very annoyed when I hear these things like oh, people saying, 'We made you'. They really didn't, they really didn't make anybody at all. We made ourselves. They simply bought the records."

What kind of hero does he think he is to them?

"It's a bit difficult to answer. I think possibly to a lot of people I'm a symbol of something new — I wouldn't venture any more than that. The... pose element is an image: they'll see that, and then they'll go home and imitate it in a mirror and do G Numan handclaps. That's thought out the same as the image is thought out, to give people something to latch onto. It's taken everything I did when I was young and when I was a fan and using that, knowing that other people somewhere must be similar to me: I'd like them to do what I did to my heroes."

Gary Numan (real name Gary Webb, is 22 on 8th March 1980) moved in January 1980 from his parents' home in Wraysbury near Slough. "I just got a flat in West London - it was getting hard on my family with groups of girls hanging around outside the house all day, constantly chasing after my car (a Corvette) and ringing the door bell. His mother runs his fan club and his father, who used to work for British Airways as a driver is now his manager. Originally, his father sank all his savings to enable Gary to start without a record contract. The family, mum and dad called Tony and Beryl, and younger adopted brother John, are obviously very close.

As the pressure mounts, and the demands increase, Numan's attitude to his audience, like most stars before him, becomes all the more equivocal. But then, his attitude is, as well; an extension of his attitude towards people in general — wary, mistrustful.

Most of Numan's songs are about alienation, distances between people, 'failures to communicate. By becoming a star, he's given societal approval to live out those states without attracting attention, as he used to in school.

"I used to live it out quite a lot before, really, because I didn't go out much, I've never gone to parties, If I go out, I normally go out on my own, in the car, driving.

Is he treated as an object?

Completely as a product,

Yes

Would this encourage him to treat others in the same way?

"I think it would do. I think it's a bit early yet for me to change my personality to that extent. I find it difficult when the audience meets you, because 'when they do they're obviously nervous or edgy because they're not sure how you're going to be. Most of them you meet are completely unnatural: they're not giving you their real personalities at all, and you have to accept this. Obviously a lot of

them are impolite because of that, and a lot of them try to give the impression that they're not bothered a bit about meeting you and put on this big air of indifference. That upsets me a bit, because it's unnecessary as well."

Does he feel under pressure?

"Not consciously, but all of a sudden things get on top of me for no reason whatsoever, and really it can come on within minutes. I feel as though I have to do something but I don't know what it is and nothing you do seems to be it. I'd imagine it's like getting stuck in a lift; it's the same sort of helplessness. It's very frightening sometimes."

I emphasise, having noticed previously, as one by-product of this tour, numbers of stray females making their way in a very determined fashion s into the hotels where the groups are staying. Numan find this hard to cope with.

I find it very unnerving when people come back to the hotel, because being a 'rock 'n' rollstar' you're obviously expected to pull the lot — so you've got to come out with the smooth talk, and I'm just not like that. I don't chat people up at all. I find that, trying to get the role right - my 'position' - that what they expect me to do and what I want to do aren't the same. I find that possibly the most difficult part of it."

The next day, I tie up some loose ends with Numan. Gradually I find out that last night Numan finally buckled under the strain.

"I like it exactly as I am at the moment, except that there's still too many people getting to me after gigs and before gigs. Last night there were too many people that I didn't know and that I didn't want there, but I was just too polite to. say 'Get them out', so I ended up having rows again.

"There was another scene last night: during the last two or three days I finally decided that I'm fed up with trying to be nice to people, because it isn't respected or appreciated for what it is. I don't think they realise the effort that's needed for somebody in my position to constance be nice all the time and sign every little bit of scrapper they stick under your nose... I think there should be quite a change of attitude from now on.

"If people are rude to me be-cause of nerves, or anything else, then I'm really getting into the frame of mind that I really won't put up with It, which isn't getting.... tired, although, of their attitude. I don't want to be treated like a product any more, I think it's about time I put my foot down, make people realise that they can only get so much before you get fed up like any normal person."

I suppose that it's the pressure?

"I think, finally, yes. I was really surprised — I was completely calm, and then something happened and then I went off..

But surely that's a direct function of his wishing to become a star, which is what he always wanted

“Yeah . . . but then I don’t have to take it when I get it, I can adapt.”

It transpires that the straw that broke the camel’s back was a pair of professionally stray females, shrink-wrapped in lurid turquoise, who gained admittance to the hotel and then settled in. Apart from harassing Numan at a particularly vulnerable point, they attacked his assistant, Su. These irritations were compounded by further annoyances until I finally said — this is the first time in six months I’ve done that — I just said, very loud, ‘Get off my back’ and just shrugged them off, walked away. And then I walked past this woman and she goes: ‘Temper, temper’ — and that was the last straw. I started slamming doors and throwing things. Then I calmed down a bit but it then flared up again later on and I wrecked a radiator — three a fire extinguisher and smashed a radiator — and a phone and a chair. . . then I was all right. I was completely calm . . .

It reminds me of Numan, s description of his schooldays, a little unnervingly. If the pressures of touring are now over for a while, others begin: the next day, Numan and the band are going into the studio to begin demoing the new album Telekon.

It is due out in September 1980 under his one album a year contract with beggars banquet. Track listing will include Telekon , Remember I was vapour (which is dedicated to his fans), I Die You Die (which is dedicated to the music press), Sleep By Windows, The Joy Circuit and A Game Called Echo. The album production returns to the stark approach of Replicas as Numan felt The Pleasure Principle was too smooth.

Telekon is about:

.... A man who can finally harness the power of telekinesis, who can move things by thinking about it. He realises he can do it and it just increases and snowballs: because of his power he ends up destroying everything , including himself. Maybe I will continue as I am, or become even more successful or perhaps I will destroy myself.

“If you’re going to sing about something, you’ve got to show it, like radio-controlled robots, laser guns and Macmen. When I portray a Mach man, I dress in black leather because it’s a nasty colour, the Nazis looked great in it. I wear white pan-stick makeup to hide my spots and ring my watery eyes with black eyeliner and I wear stacked high s heeled boots to compensate for my lack of height (he’s 5ft 9ins). My wearing of makeup is purely an effect, not a case of trying to be glamorous.”

Gary Numan



IN THE CITY

This feature incorporates interview -material originally published in 'In the City.

"A Maehman is a human being who has had intercourse with a machine. I am a Machman." Garth Murphy. 'Twilight of the Machmen'. Oz 43. 1972

Gary Numan believes that future cities will be policed by robot-like Machmen (he portrayed one on the 'Replicas' album cover). The Machmen hunt down the deviants and those who fail to measure up to strict genetic standards in order to exterminate them.

Another time zone: materialising from his monochrome stage set into a half-lit technicolor Ealing wine bar is Gary Numan, 22 on 8th March 1980. He is dressed entirely in black, his brown hair, once bleached blond is also now black. There have been other changes to; Following initial pub gigs, Numan formed a band called, ironically, Mean Street, for internal friction over his monopoly of the song writing results in his departure. Along with bass player Paul Gardiner, he formed a new band called The Lasers, whose name he subsequently changed to Tubeway Army. Now known purely as Gary Numan, for the last two years he's been with Beggar's Banquet (a small label marketed by the giant WEA combine) during which time he has already put out six singles and three albums. Gary is a very intense person with a streak of natural shyness, only partially discarded when a subject strikes him deeply. Then he will speak rapidly for a while.

So who actually formed Tubeway Army? Gary: "As it is now, I. did, but the original name was the Lasers. At the time I just wanted to be in a group, I always wanted to do something of my own,

instead of just doing my version of somebody else's song. Nearly every song I've ever written has been written after I've heard another song. When I was 16 I wrote a series of songs all based on Ziggy Stardust. I was influenced a lot by Bowie and although I can't remember the titles, every 'one was a rip off from the tracks on the Ziggy Stardust LP. All the names were changed but apart from that they were the same. I still do that now but I disguise them much more. Most people think I've been influenced by Bowie, but most of the things that people pick up on are completely wrong anyway. I mean, I don't like Bowie's 'lyrics very much these days. I don't think he writes very good lyrics anymore."

What was it about Ziggy Stardust that Gary liked so much?

"It was mostly image really, totally in fact. Obviously, I liked the music as well but that wasn't what really influenced me. It was Bowie as a person, as a character, his whole image I wish he'd carried it on". Gary then explained how he wants Tubeway Army to be remembered: "As a band I just want it to be. Something which people 'will accept as a band I used to be in, I would like Tubeway Army to be' known as the starting ground for me and nothing more than that.

I can't work with a lot of people telling me that they want to do this or they want me to do that. I really don't like that, I tend to stop altogether!" Is it practical to be in a band with those ideals? Surely it's better to go into a studio and play every instrument yourself on your own? Gary agrees: "As a writer, I can only do it on my own but I'd rather work with people who will play the way I ask them to".

Your music is very doomladen, is that deliberate? Gary: "It's meant to be depressing". Why depressing? "I don't know why, most of my songs are 'I wonder what would happen if' situations. Both the first 'album and the second one are about what might happen. Like 'Are You Real?', is about cloning. What might happen if you met a clone and the conversation that would go on. 'My Love is Liquid' is about what could happen with test-tube babies. You fertilise them, put them in a tray and they grow. It's about what could happen if it ever got to that stage. The reason it's depressing is because I think it is depressing, I think what might happen is very depressing. If you're going to write songs like this, you can't have happy tunes that bounce along. Although sometimes I do take it all too seriously and that's a fault I'm trying to get out of. But the new album's no different, it's still depressing."

What is the song, 'The Life Machine' about? Gary stared at us across the table; he sipped his Coke and replaced the glass on the table in front of him. "You know when a person's heart stops and they sometimes stick them on a machine that keeps them going - a life-support machine, when the person wants to die and - the doctors won't turn them off, well it's about that". Are the words to your songs your own inner thoughts and feelings then? "Yes, they are because you'll notice they've got a lot of 'I' and 'me' in the lyrics. They're either about what I feel or putting myself in another person's place and trying to see it through their eyes. Like in 'The Life Machine' I'm putting myself in the situation of the person who wants to die. He's in limbo and he can't go to heaven or wherever he's going 'cos they won't switch the machine off that's keeping him alive. And he can't be in his body because he's dead, he's just sort of floating. Have you ever read somewhere, where someone has said, 'I died for five minutes and I was able to see my own body'. Well I saw a programme about

that once and that was how the song came about. There was this man looking down at his own body and he watched as the people came in to see him. Even though these people still love him, he's not quite the same. They love him because they are supposed to, and that is basically what this song is about. The torture in that man's mind, where he can't go and yet he can't stay either".

Gary spoke as if he had firsthand experience it was as if he was the man on the actual machine. He swallowed and continued: "I believe if somebody is dead, they should be turned off. I don't see any point in keeping somebody's heart going when they don't even know they're alive". If they're just a vegetable you mean? "yes, if that person doesn't even know they're alive, there's no point in them being alive. There's no point in my mum being kept alive if she doesn't even know who she is or who I am. And then there is just no point in keeping her alive". You would think that a person who thinks so deeply about life and death like Gary does would have some sort of spiritual belief, but he says he's not a bit religious. "No, I'm not really religious at all. I believe in something, I believe in ghosts. I believe that there must be something that goes on but I can't really tie it up, it's like space and the universe, it's hard to comprehend."

I like to write things that make people think. The same way that I'm interested in people that make me think and see things that I'd never quite seen that way before."

Were you ever personally involved in the punk thing? "Yeah, I used to be involved in it, jumping up and down and pogoing. I saw the Pistols an all that lot, I used to go to all the pubs that they all went to before it all really started. I used to go around with dyed hair, going to the Vortex or David Bowie nights and it was all fun for a while and then it got very boring. The bands didn't get any better as far as I was concerned. Shortly after punk started, Bowie came over for his '76 tour and then I realised what it was really about. And then all of a sudden the bubblegum lot started coming out again, and that was terrible — there was no power!

Do you mean the power pop syndrome? "Yeah, the Boyfriends and all that lot. I really didn't like that. And after the Machine, bands like Ultravox started to come out, then I got into Kraftwerk. I think it's really good, I like most of the new .electronic bands". Can it be true that Gary Numan is actually admitting to actually LIKING Ultravox? Gary: "Yes, I am, they're my favourites. Ultravox and Human League — one or two others have put out some things I like but Ultravox have always been my favourites." Have Ultravox been an influence on some of the things you have put on record? "Oh yes, the latest album, 'Replicas' is almost completely Ultravox". Some of the things that Ultravox do are doomladen too. Is this what appeals to you? Gary: "That's probably what I like about the band, yes. I like John Foxx's voice as well as some of the keyboard runs, they're very effective". What sort of a person are you Gary? "I am a very shy person I always have been ever since I can remember. Whenever I'm out and I meet people for the first time I never say hello. Sometimes I come over really bouncy though. I don't really know what I'm like. I tend to adopt the character of whoever I'm supposed to be at the time. Gary It changes all the time. I go through phases of liking different people. At the moment I'm into Eno and before that I was into Kraftwerk, then, of course I've been into ultravox, now and again. Then, of course, there's David Bowie, who I'm into most of the time". By this time we've ordered our third bottle of wine and Gary's into his second class of Coca-Cola. Why doesn't he drink alcohol. It is because he doesn't like it or is there some other reason? Gary: "No, it's' nothing to do with beliefs or anything like that. I've just never got into it. Y'see when i was



17 I was on valium and nahdil for over a year and when you're on those type of tablets you mustn't drink alcohol. All my mates were out getting drunk every night, discovering and experimenting with drink but I wasn't able to". Why were these tablets prescribed? Gary "Yeah, the school sent me to' a psychologist. Valium turned me into a zombie. It stopped me feeling so pissed off and also stopped me feeling emotions; The only problem was, they stopped me feeling anything at all"

Do you ever worry about material for your next album? "Yeah, it worries me a lot. What happens is I write a lot of songs in one go. This makes me very, very happy because I've managed to write a lot of songs that I consider are good. But I can't write songs when I'm happy so I stop writing. Y'see I can only write songs when I'm depressed.

We explained that this made sense in a way. "It's unfortunate, though because it means that if I'm going to be successful for the next five or ten years, I've got to be depressed for that length of time well". You can't help feeling a little sad for Gary but at the same time you can't help smile at him either. "I get happy and stop' writing, then I get depressed 'cos I'm not writing and because I'm depressed I start writing again. Then I write until I'm happy, then I stop Writing again and so on. I've been like that for years"

I explained to Gary that this was a similar situation to a person who gets very depressed and goes out and bashes away at the garden. I told him this is what I do. I go out in the back garden and dig, dig, dig, I dig like a lunatic. Steve: "You must have great big trenches in your garden by now. World War 1's over you know? Frank: "no, Pete's a gravedigger, didn't we tell you?" This time the laughs were all at Pete's expense. (Who's paying for all the wine.—Ed.) Pete ignores the jokes and speaks to Gary about his own background. Pete: "I am interested in your saying that you're a depressive because I went through a phase of depression and like you was on valium etc. But I seemed to come to terms with myself and whenever I feel a bout of depression coming on nowadays I just occupy myself by doing gardening or something. When you feel depressed Gary, do you channel it into something constructive? Gary: "I don't channel it anywhere because I can't control it. I mean, I don't enjoy being miserable with people but I must admit that a lot of the time I am miserable. Often I've got no sense of humour even when someone says something that is really funny. Other times I can be really ratty as well. Somebody will give me a perfectly normal answer to a question and I'll pick up on, say, one word and fly at them Just cos' the word didn't sound quite right. Or I'll do very childish things like I'll stop talking to them or ignore them or else I just storm out hoping to Christ they're gonna call me back. If they don't call me back I can think up some excuse for going back, saying I've left something behind or something. I suppose it's attention seeking in a way but I'm not aware that I'm doing it for this reason but deep down maybe do want attention".

What sort of person is Gary now, since everything has happened? "I'm pretty much the same sort of person as I was before really I expect a little bit better treatment now though, which I suppose is just ego really. Now that I am famous I think I ought to be treated as such but that doesn't get out of order at all. It's just that if I go out to eat at a restaurant, I don't expect someone to tell me to wait outside. I expect them to respect me more and be more polite, just as I expected them to have treated me before but now I think I'm more aware that I don't have to put up with people being impolite and things like that anymore." Gary assured us that this attitude doesn't spill over into his private life, though. He doesn't expect anything more from his own family or close friends for

example. In this respect he's convinced he hasn't changed at all.

He gets a lot of letters from people saying what he needs is someone to look after him, someone to protect him. Is this what he felt he needed? "No! I don't want someone to feel as if they want to protect me. No, I don't want protection at all. I do need somebody that I can scream at, someone that won't vanish the very first second I start screaming, a person that won't disappear for good. I need that kind of person, y'know, someone to moan at but I think that most people need someone to moan at, it's just that I moan a little more energetically than most people do." What about marriage? Does Gary need someone he can devote his life to or does his past experiences make him feel that he wouldn't want to get in that situation? "Until a short while ago, I very much wanted to get married but I really don't feel I want to at all now. I don't feel a bit like getting married, I don't feel like I want to have children or have anything to do with anybody (he looks down at the floor). These feelings might all be gone tomorrow, to be honest with you I haven't 'really thought about this very much until you just asked me." Was it the feeling of being 'tied down' that bothered Gary? "No, I don't mind being tied down at all, I don't think being married does tie you down. If you get married, you get married because you want to stay with one person. You wouldn't want to sleep around or do anything anyway, so it wouldn't tie you down because you wouldn't want to do these things if you got married for the right reasons. I believe in doing things for the right reasons. I don't know why I don't want to get married anymore; maybe I've just lost interest." Gary looked a little sad and we asked if success had given him this attitude? "I don't know, I've only just this second thought about it." He pauses and swallows. "It must be that but I don't know how or why if's done it - - - I just haven't met anybody that I'd particularly want to stay with permanently. Although I've never met anybody in my life, apart from 'Jo' and at that time I really did want to get married."

Following his tour of the US and Canada, Gary will be returning for European dates in March. 'Telekon' is virtually completed and as yet unselected single will be released in late June. (A previously announced four-track lie EP has now been cancelled).

In September, Gary will be undertaking an extensive UK tour almost a year from his first here. For this and the world tour he is using the same band (Paul Gardener, Cedric Sharpley, Russel Bell and Chris Payne) he used on his original British tour, with the addition of a digital news-style print out machine Tomorrow the world?

People need heroes. To be a hero you've got to be awe inspiring, somebody like Charlton Heston. In a couple of years I'll move on to something else, perhaps short stories or making films. I'd like to be someone like Clint Eastwood."

Gary Numan

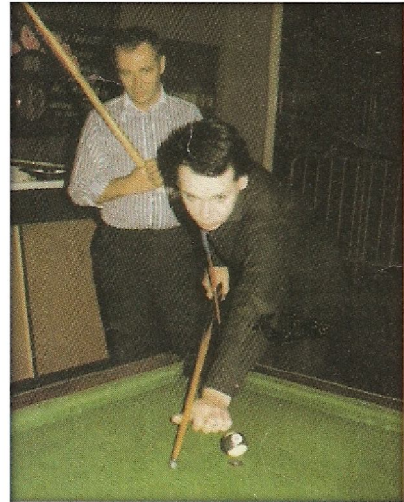
"Two years ago, I was going to get married. I was engaged to this girl. Then she suddenly walked off. I don't know why. I was devastated. This huge hole opened up in my life and I retreated into myself."

Gary Numan

"Are Friends Electric?' is about how life in the near future will be, basically what London or any city

will be in about ten years time. A world of personal alienation (hence the song 'Me, I Disconnect From You' and 'Cars' which is all about the security of sitting in a car with the doors locked). In the future you will be able to buy friends that is hire them by the hour they're electric like robots or cyborgs (a combination of man and machine). You ring up an agency and say you want a friend for something, for sex, or conversation, or whatever you want and they'll send one along. The 'Friends' are like clones, all identical so that nobody knows what you're hired them for.

Gary Numan



"The music press don't like me much because I made it without them promoting me. Doing big shows was very unfashionable. I don't believe in communicating on a personal level with an audience. Fans want to see heroes.

Gary Numan

'The Pleasure Principle is more statements about things now. One song called 'Observers' is about when I walk around. Basically I don't involve myself with people. I just observe them. I don't like being in crowds and so close to people but then I don't think much of most people, they're not very nice. But then you see something like an old man and woman driving in their car and you realise they've been in love for 60 years and you realise that it's not all bad.'

Gary Numan



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