

A FLOCK OF SEAGULLS



The Gulls (clockwise, starting from bottom): Paul Reynolds, Mike Score and his silly bairdo, Frank Maudsley, Ali Score.

Songs for Our Gull-ible Age

BY BARRY ALFONSO

Unexpected flying objects seem attracted to Mike Score, a Flock of Seagulls' lead vocalist/keyboardist. Here comes one now—a fat black bumblebee sweeps past Score's head, almost brushing the curtain of golden hair which veils half of his face. Everyone at the table by the Hollywood hotel pool starts to duck, but there are no further divebombing missions.

Score has seen a lot more than large bees descend from the sky. On this hot and smoggy July afternoon we've been discussing the UFO he and brother Ali (the Flock's drummer) sighted in their native England several years ago. Don't tell them that the object was a surveillance plane or swamp gas—they *know* it was a spacecraft.

"We were driving back from a pub when we suddenly saw this flash," he says in serious tones. "This thing kind of skips across the sky, and everytime it skipped there was another flash of light." His hand makes a rippling motion in the air to illustrate. "There was no build-up of noise like a jet would've made. We've been told there are sightings of saucers in that area all the time...."

Mike Score and his fellow Gulls have had ample chance to tell Americans about this Close Encounter. The band spent the better part of last year diligently touring the States, bringing their spacey-but-danceable technorock to large and small audiences. And, in classic show biz fashion, the hard work paid off: a Flock of Seagulls is now among the brightest of the rising New Music stars.

"I Ran" and "Space Age Love Song" ascended high on the U.S. singles charts in '82,

defying any expectations that the Flock was too odd for American tastes. This summer, they did it again with "Wishing (If I Had A Photograph of You)," like the band's previous hits a pulsating, moody track with a mysterious lyric. A gold album and a Grammy (they won for "Best Rock Instrumental") came to the group within a year of their first LP release on Arista.

Score is aware that his group is frequently compared to the Human League, Duran Duran, Soft Cell and a host of other U.K. outfits who base their sounds around synthesizers. He's quick to point out the difference between the Flock and the rest of the pack. "There are a lot of bands preaching doom and despondency. They tell people to follow a particular line. But we're not trying to say what people should do or expound our thoughts on the universe. We'd rather hide our ideas in a song and let someone find the little jewel."

The Flock came together in Liverpool at the end of 1979, after Mike Score (then earning his way as a hairdresser) had served as bassist with other groups. Switching to keyboards, he formed his new band around brother Ali on drums and Frank Maudsley on bass. After many unsuccessful candidates, Paul Reynolds was chosen for the guitarist's slot. The combination of Mike's synthesizer and Paul's guitar styles, placed on top of a solid rhythm section, came to define the band's sound.

The way Score tells it, the Flock was some-

what on the outside of the hip British music circles at the start. During the band's early period, the since-faded New Romantic movement was *the* chic development in U.K. rock. In contrast to its foppish exponents (including Duran Duran and Spandau Ballet), a Flock of Seagulls played with an aggressive edge. "We'd go out and play with a New Romantic band," says Score, "and we'd let loose with this horrendously powerful sound and they'd come up with this wimpy little-thin-White-Boy sound. We'd seem really outrageous, because it wasn't a fashionable thing back then."

If the Flock's energized approach disturbed the New Romantics' sense of cool, it poised the group for success across the Atlantic. American rock fanciers are a lighter-hearted lot than their British counterparts. Morose, brooding bands such as Echo and the Bunnymen and New Order do well in the U.K. but have never found equal favor here.

"There's a lot of British bands that wouldn't have done anything in America if we hadn't come here and toured as much as we did," Score feels. "We won over a lot of people by playing live and that served as an advertisement for new English bands. Duran Duran tried for a year to break in the States, but they couldn't until we had an album in the Top Ten here."

There are a few dark undercurrents in the Flock's songs. Even a group as technologically-inclined as they recognizes the dangers of science out of control—"Man Made," from their debut LP *A Flock of Seagulls*, is a warning about the misuse of the machine. The same applies to advances in music, says Score: "If you can use technology creatively, it's good—if it uses *you*, it's bad."

Hand-in-hand with the band's interest in musical advancements is a love for science fiction, especially in films. While their fixation on extraterrestrial phenomena might've been too bizarre for the public in the past, the current mass appetite for outer-space movie epics makes the Flock's songs quite in step with the times. "Everybody wants to believe in flying saucers nowadays," says Score. "When they go to a science fiction film, they want to escape into it, to let it saturate them. It's the same thing when they hear our music."

Score's lyrics often personify (and eroticize) his cosmic themes. I mention to him that "I Ran," "Space Age Love Song" and "Wishing" all depict goddess-like women who visit male earthlings, only to prove elusive in the end. "I find it easy to sing about that," he acknowledges. "The woman in those songs is a dream woman, always in the mind but never in the flesh. You always want the one you can't get, I guess."

Does the band worry that such private fantasies might be lost on the public? "That doesn't concern me at all," Score responds. "I'm sure we've done songs that have completely different meanings to the people who listen to them than they do to us. That's why we don't put lyric sheets in our albums—if you actually put the words down, maybe it'll ruin someone's ideas of what the songs are about. You've got to make people *feel* things, not just put it all out on a plate for them."

Right now, a Flock of Seagulls is perceived as primarily a dance band, but Score doesn't guarantee they'll stay that way. "We're getting more into atmospheric stuff with *Listen* (their latest album). We're still developing—I think it takes a band five to ten years to develop a special way of playing and recording. Record companies want you to do your hits over and over again. Sometimes, you have to forget about success to progress musically."

MICHAEL PARÉ

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acting hurdles of off-Broadway, summer stock, commercials and soap operas. "It was a good experience," he allows. "I learned how to hit my mark and get to make-up and wardrobe on time."

Along the way, Paré took a breather and got married. "I met my wife Lisa when my brother Terrance, who writes romance novels, took her out on a blind date. We've been married two years." Lisa, a law student, studies and works as an assistant in the Los Angeles D.A.'s office. "We'll stay in California until she finishes school," Paré confides. "Then hopefully move to upstate New York."

Not, apparently, if the Hollywood powers-that-be have anything to say about it. In the midst of his stint on *Greatest American Hero*, Paré was singled out by director/writer Martin Davidson to star in *Eddie and the Cruisers*. "It was a big gamble," Paré says, "for both of us. I really felt the pressure, but in the end, being able to get up on stage and let loose, it all fell together. I loved it." Paré's involvement in two rock-oriented pictures (*Streets of Fire* concerns the kidnapping of a rock and roll singer, played by Diane Lane, in some doomy, unspecified future, and features a performance by rockabilly purists the Blasters) raises questions of Paré's own interest in modern sounds. "I wish I could sing like Frank Sinatra," he responds, answering several questions at the same time. "Music's okay, but I never go out to concerts or anything. It's too dangerous... too many maniacs out there. When I get time off I like to fish, or whittle or cook. It helps me relax."

Hovering behind the cameras, Hill instructs his young lead to get into a fire-engine red, chopped, channeled and lowered Mercury that sits ready on the hosed-down street, wait for his cue, then stride out through a phalanx of 1951 bullet-nose Studebakers, decked out as world-of-tomorrow police cars, and glare menacingly at the lens. Paré prepares for the scene with a bit of shadow boxing and, after four takes, returns to his chair, the job well done.

"After *Eddie and the Cruisers* I went to Australia to be in a movie called *Undercover*," he picks up, as his *Streets of Fire* co-star Diane Lane (last seen in Coppola's ill-fated *The Outsiders*) rehearses her next shot. "It was directed by David Stevens who did *A Town Like Alice* and wrote *Breaker Morant*. It was the first time I'd ever been out of the country." And the second time in two films he landed a leading role. "I play a New York promotion man in the 1920's who goes to Australia to teach people how to sell corsets. It's kind of like a Cary Grant/Doris Day screwball comedy." He adds, "Australia is a beautiful country, but empty. There really isn't much competition over there if you're an actor."

What Paré knows about competing is, on the other hand, hardly a topic for meaty discussion. Two weeks after returning from down under, Hill called him with an offer. The kind of breaks that have littered his career to date don't seem to be diminishing: if *Streets of Fire* is a hit, which appears likely from both Hill's current success and the fashionably futuristic look of things around the back lot, Paré, as Cody, is assured of a starring role in at least two more films. "Cody is a character I think Americans can really identify with," Paré says. "He's someone who can come in and straighten everything out. It's great to be that guy."

As Hill summons his star back to the set, a sweating extra, shrouded in black leather, looks up briefly from a copy of *Variety*. "Look at that," he says to a nearby lighting man with a mixture of awe and contempt in his voice. "Walter is setting him up in every shot like he was Clint Eastwood or something..."

A M P E R S A N D