

Re-Flex puts theory to the politics of dance

By Cort Fernald
Of the Emerald

The rock'n'roll industry is filled with tales of bands who played the dingy clubs and seedy bars for years and then became an "overnight sensation." Publicists like these Cinderella stories. Seldom are the Cinderella stories quite gospel truth. One exception is the London-based band Re-Flex, whose "Politics of Dancing" is receiving considerable attention on the American charts and the AOR radio stations.

Once upon a time, actually two years ago, Re-Flex submitted a demo tape of the song "Praying to the Beat" to Melody Maker magazine's "Playback" column. Melody Maker liked the demo tape and included it on its "Playback" LP. And Re-Flex has been playing happily ever after.

Re-Flex's first release "Praying to the Beat" became a hit in the U.K. and they followed it up with "Hitline." The song "Politics of Dancing" is actually Re-Flex's third single — but their first American release.

Re-Flex's present line-up consists of Roland Kerridge on drums, computers and vocals; Nigel Ross-Scott on bass guitar and vocals; Paul Fishman on keyboards, computers and vocals; and Baxter on guitar and lead vocals.

Re-Flex has been touring America since February in support of the Police. The Emerald interviewed Baxter while he was in Los Angeles. Baxter spoke of the difference between American and English audiences and his "theory for today."

Emerald: You're on tour now?

Baxter: Yeah, we've been over to the States since the third of February. And then we did the Police stuff which took us about three weeks. And then we've been sort of continuing on our own.

Emerald: Where are you at now?

Baxter: Over in L.A. at the moment.

Emerald: Are you going to play San Francisco?

Baxter: Yeah, we got dates in San Francisco and one in San Diego as well.

Emerald: Too bad you're not coming up to the Northwest. I think people would like you here.

Baxter: Well, that would be nice, but we're so stuck for time. We're coming back to the States in April so I think we're going to get a chance to come up to the Northwest then.

Emerald: I was going to ask you about "Politics of Dancing" but I imagine you're tired of explaining it. Have you got any new statements about the song?

Baxter: New statements... hmmm.

Emerald: Any new theories?

Baxter: I'll tell you the theory for today is 'Keep going for God's sake.' "

Emerald: Has touring been that tiring?

Baxter: Ah yeah, we're under a lot of pressure to do a lot of things, talk to a lot of people and, you know... spread around the theory. The theory is very simple. I mean, it's just a case of feeling good. It's all there in that song ("Politics of Dancing").

Emerald: I like your approach — that dancing is political — and liberating.

Baxter: It's a very simple little thing. We don't write a book on it. It's just a case of... if people want to enjoy themselves they should just do it. Just get up and enjoy yourselves. You're not going to make a fool of yourself just bopping around — just do it.

Emerald: Re-Flex worked hard for a lot of years, playing pubs, how does it feel now playing before thousands of people?

'You really got to prove it to your home audience... over here, people say: "OK. This band's here to entertain'

— Baxter

Baxter: Between us — we're all still the same people. We still enjoy playing with each other on stage. I don't see any reason why we shouldn't. It's just the audiences have got bigger. The sound systems have got bigger and the monitoring has got better (laughs).

Emerald: Have you noticed any difference in audiences in the U.K. and the U.S.?

Baxter: The attitude towards us, as a band, having been over here for five weeks, has been almost total acceptance. People in America are prepared to just get up and have a good time. In England — English people, by nature, are very critical — unless you've had five or six number one singles over there you aren't much. You really got to prove it to your home audience. Whereas, over here, people say: 'OK. This band's here to entertain us, let's go there and have fun.' That's the difference.

Emerald: Does that give you a charge?

Baxter: We sort of give ourselves a bit of a charge. We all get off on each other musically. We actually enjoy doing it. I think a lot of bands don't enjoy playing live very much, whereas we get a natural buzz off getting up on stage,

plugging in and doing it. Coming over here and touring with the Police was perfect. As far as we're concerned the Police are the biggest band in the world.

Emerald: What was it like playing stadiums?

Baxter: Yeah, stadiums. But to see those three guys get up there and just exude that natural energy — we couldn't have had better teachers. They just got up there and had a good time. As for the audience, they reacted to that. When I used to go to concerts — well, I still do go to concerts — if I see a band on stage enjoying themselves, it's a lot easier for me to relax and get into what they're doing.

Emerald: What's your future now? Back to the U.K. and Germany?

Baxter: Yeah, we're going to go to Germany. Should be fun. We've been over there once already. We had to do a very quick promo trip before we started the tour.

Emerald: You use computers in your music. Do you think the guitar is declining?

Baxter: Even though we use computers and things I still bash away on my guitar.

Emerald: You're a friend of Thomas Dolby, who is also on the U.S. charts these days (with "Hyperactive"), do you stay in contact with him?

Baxter: Very rarely do we bump into Tom these days, because he's as busy as us, even though we're with the same record company. He was part of a clique of musicians that I myself was a part of quite a few years back.

Emerald: Must be interesting — years ago being part of a clique and not on the charts and now...

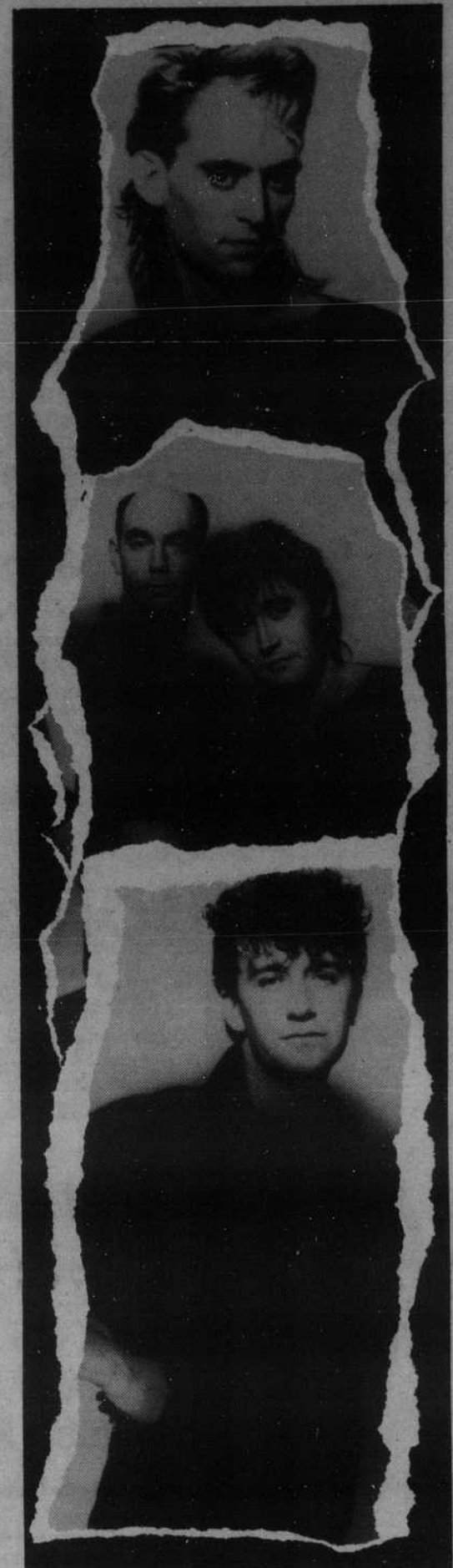
Baxter: Now everybody's working. There was a bass player named Mark Chapley and a drummer called Justin Hildreth who originally played with Lene Lovitch. Then Tom joined Lene. And then Justin and Mark went off and did Tom's first album with him. At the time I was doing sessions and then the Re-Flex thing started up. It sort of all grew out of that.

Emerald: You'll have a reunion in the years to come.

Baxter: Oh yeah. Justin, who did the drum tracks on the album (Dolby's) and the first album, he was like my first friend when I moved to London from the North of England. We were great buddies. He sort of showed me around London and introduced me to all his friends and I became part of that.

Emerald: Thanks very much for the interview.

Baxter: My pleasure — bye.



Photos courtesy of Capitol Records

Re-Flex members are Roland Kerridge, Nigel Ross-Scott, Paul Fishman and Baxter.

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