



Back in Bleach

THE GROUNDBREAKING GROUP BLONDIE SEEKS TO RIDE THE COMEBACK WAVE OF THE '90s

Before Madonna, before Courtney Love, before No Doubt's Gwen Stefani, there was Deborah Harry. Most people know her as the lead singer of Blondie.

It's hard to talk about '80s music without bringing up old Blondie tunes such as the disco favorite "Heart of Glass" and the mariachi-flavored "The Tide is High." Although the band dissolved just two years into the decade known for breakdancing and one-hit wonders, both the energetic beats pumped out by drummer Clem Burke and Harry's sometimes sultry, sometimes scatty vocals encapsulate the sound of the times.

For the past 16 years, the band's late-'70s disco, punk and reggae-rock songs have found a steady home on flashback radio programs and nostalgia compilation CDs.

But lately, Blondie tunes have been popping up on the latest music charts, and the word is out that a summer tour lies on the horizon, although the dates have

not been announced. And on Feb. 23, the band rocked a live New York audience full of radio contest winners.

No longer just a nostalgic number, Blondie is back and eating to the beat with a new CD full of original songs to bring the band into the '90s.

Founding members Harry, Burke, guitarist Chris Stein, and keyboardist Jimmy Destri have reunited to form a streamlined version of the group and join the growing ranks of comeback acts that have crowded onto the music scene in the past several years.

Blondie released "No Exit" the weekend of the Grammy Awards, and the album debuted at number 18 nationally, selling 60,000 copies in its first week. It hit number three in New York and number 12 in Portland, where it sold 2,000 copies in two weeks — not bad in a mid-size city, said the band's publicist, Josh Norek

of Shore Fire Media.

By mid-March, the album's first single, the pop anthem "Maria," was receiving airplay after hitting the alternative chart at number 49 and the hot adult contemporary chart at number 22.

"It's doing reasonably well there, although it probably won't go a whole lot further," said Paul Walker, program director for the top-40s radio station KDUK.

John Strieder, host of the campus station KWVA's "Latent '80s" show, agrees. He called the song "eminently forgettable."

"In a revival context, new '90s albums by revived bands tend to have no new ideas," he said. "The creative spark passed them long ago."

Strieder played the title track "No Exit" during his show and received all kinds of negative feedback.

"I thought it was pretty lousy," he said.

Although KDUK plays a lot of old Blondie hits during its "Flashback

Lunch" program on weekdays from noon to 1, "Maria" is not on its play list because it hasn't made the top-40s chart, Walker said.

"The difference is, that is more nostalgia — people have memories of those days," he explained. "But the people who were fans of a band when they've had previous success have moved on. They're not that enthused about new music from old favorites; the majority probably don't care."

Few broken-up bands actually manage to make a huge comeback despite their previous success, he added.

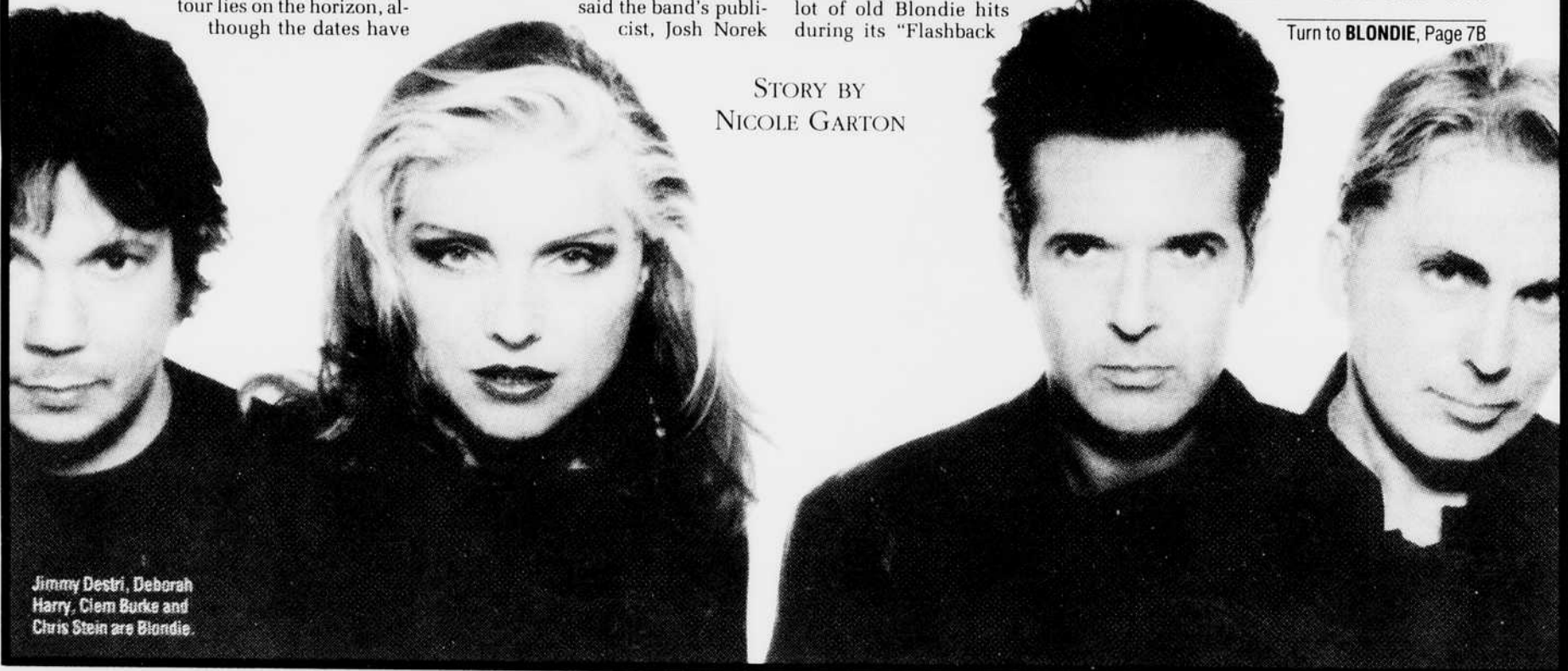
But it's hard to imagine Blondie not finding a place among the plethora of genres and bands they helped to make possible.

The energetic, new-wave punk band sprang up in 1977 with a fairly successful self-titled album. After releasing several hits in the United Kingdom, Blondie finally made it big in the United States with the number-one hit "Heart of Glass" from

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STORY BY
NICOLE GARTON



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