

MUSIC

Lonely Planet Boy

Jobriath • Sanctuary Records

There is—in the context of our country's increasingly puritanical, anti-cosmopolitan cultural climate—a seductive whiff of the contra-

band to this new compilation of decadent, witty glam-rock tunes by the first openly gay pop star. The self-described "true fairy of rock 'n' roll," Jobriath recorded and released these songs, with much hype and little success, in the early '70s, a decade before he died—literally forgotten, poor and alone—of an AIDS-related illness in 1983 in New York.

Lonely Planet Boy was conceived and compiled by Morrissey, a longtime Jobriath obsessive, making it one of the most tangible acts of musical hero-worship ever. (How many artists pay lip service to their heroes/influences, and how many actually open the vaults, buy up rights and release long-buried gems?)

The disc contains songs from Jobriath's 1973 self-titled debut album and its follow-up, 1974's *Creatures of the Street*. Though more tender and whimsical, they strongly resemble the



The first openly gay pop star, the late Jobriath sounds like Ziggy Stardust-era David Bowie

grandiose, cabaret-weaned wistfulness of Jobriath's glam peer, the Ziggy Stardust-era David Bowie; tracks like the mournful piano ballad "Space Clown" and the funky rocker "Earthling" even match Ziggy's space-based themes of difference, alienation and escape. More earthbound are the sinewy, harpsichord-driven gender-identity challenge "i'maman"; the richly melodic, "Moonlight Sonata"-referencing "Heartbeat"; and the previously unreleased "I Love a Good Fight," a tongue-in-cheek celebration of the (homo)erotic side of conflict.

Lonely Planet Boy doesn't skimp on presentation, either. The bright pink inside sleeve is a Jobriath panoply, taking us from the lipsticked, angelic, statuesque chorus boy of the first album to the warm, scruffy, slightly sleazy softcore persona he adopted after retiring from the music biz that failed to achieve him stardom.

The liner notes include an introductory fan letter by Morrissey, a thoroughly informative biographical essay and still more photos, including a particularly gorgeous black and white composition in which the singer's visage is glamorously lit to resemble that of a brave, tragic cinematic heroine of the '40s. This image seems most emblematic of Jobriath's troubled life and early death.

Back to the future

Pioneering homosexual rediscovered; pioneering metrosexuals reunited

While Jobriath's outsize talent, beauty, imagination and ambition did go unrewarded during his lifetime, *Lonely Planet Boy* is at least some small vindication, not only of one fascinating should've-been queer icon, but of the currently endangered aesthetic ideals—should I say "values!"—that he represented.

—Christopher McQuain

Astronaut

Duran Duran • Sony

Unabashedly admitting my love for Duran Duran during the '80s at a small private school got me branded a fag by a fellow student who counted Queen among his favorites. Queen? Queerly, somebody wasn't doing his homework.

Fast-forward 20 years: I still love Duran Duran, and nobody's questioning my sexuality—only my sanity after dropping \$300 on a ticket to see them last fall in a small Arizona club. I figured it might be my



only chance to see the original five (singer Simon LeBon, keyboardist Nick Rhodes and three unrelated Taylors: bassist John, guitarist Andy and drummer Roger), who hadn't played together since Live Aid in 1985.

2004 is almost over, but the reunited Duran Duran are far from it, as evidenced by *Astronaut*, which should relaunch them into the stratosphere. "(Reach Up for the) Sunrise"—the exhilarating first single, originally featured in remixed form on the *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* soundtrack—will send Erasure into fits of jealousy and everybody else to the dance floor.

The rest of *Astronaut* has one foot in the bedroom and the other planted squarely in the real world. LeBon has not sounded this horny since 1990's *Liberty*, lauding the joys of sex and love on upbeat electro-pop-rockers "Astronaut," "Nice" and "Want You More!" His insatiable libido is also front and center on funky standouts "Taste the Summer" and the blush-worthy "Bedroom Toys."

The aptly titled "Finest Hour" could have been an Olympic theme à la "Not Enough Time" by INXS, had it arrived sooner. The same could be said for the optimistic, Oasis-esque "What Happens Tomorrow," which lyrically offers hope and a strong shoulder on which to lean during tough times.

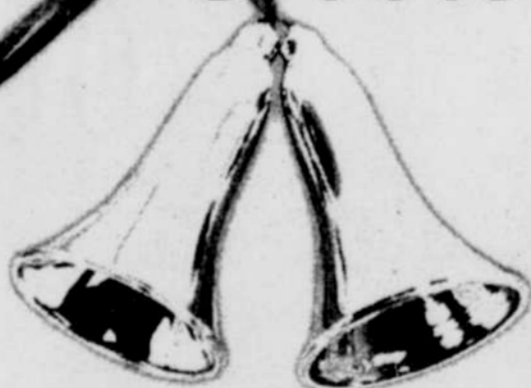
Astronaut boldly goes where few bands have been able to return to after reaching such lofty heights. Houston, we no longer have a problem.

—Jim Thompson

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