

A Sway To The Right

Dave McCullough swings along to Sudden Sway



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IN THE age of the post-Fall band we are plagued more than anything by the false Messiahs. These are the bands who take what Punk declared and the Fall amplified and minimally developed, only so far . . . Some do it wilfully, like Spandau (as much as an 'alternative' as Kiss), some can't go on though it-would-seem the simple pressure of the task like recently depleted good-thinking Repetition; and others, who I'm too kind to mention, simply are too weak (or too greedy) to carry it on.

SUDDEN SWAY are disgusted and racked by guilt. Because? They are releasing their second, this-time 10 inch record within weeks (it is bloody marvellous, incidentally).

A Sudden Michael: "Aw it's just (grimace)! To think that we're perpetuating these round little black things that you see in shops. It's just (heavier grimace)!"

A Sudden Pete: "You've begin to wonder whether or not you're doing harm, keeping the whose thing at the status quo, by even releasing records."

This is in a pub opposite the British Museum. The setting is a subtle choice of the band's; "the place reflects a lot of what's going on in the music, I can't explain over the phone" was what I was told. It fits.

Sudden Sway's music, in the form of the ten incher, has been with me for weeks that seem like years. Ditto

Michael and Pete: it was eerie but I thought sure I'd met them before. More things in heaven (up there) than earth, and Sudden Sway's swaying takes it to heart. The record is all heaven.

And more! A Sudden Pete sports a Hooksian beard and plays a Son Of . . . Hooksian bass. The sombreness of J.D., is there in Sudden Swaheyhey! Still more: a magic mushroom folksiness that both U.2 and Bunnymen (one for the honey the other for the show) have shown in the past — 'Pictures On The Wall' did not go unnoticed I'll bet by incipient Sudden Swaythings.

Sudden Sway were first noticed by Sounds excellent Terri Sanai. They had released a single on Peterborough's Chant label: I purposely ignored 'Jane's Third Party' for weeks because I was sure it was a re-release of an old single, possibly circa, the Action, at any rate that low-lying pre-psychedelia period at the start of the Who.

What can I . . . s(w)ay? It's was astonishingly off-centre/in another world of its own.

They explained Chant. Pete: "It's a co-operative for want of a better word based in Peterborough. Not like Pil, because they're rich and famous (sic) but in the same frame of mind."

Michael: "It's another example these days of people thinking alike. It's an attempt to get away from the Very Small Label In Peterborough/Liverpool/Manchester, whatever . . ."

Pete, saddened: "But it's going back to square one. Peterborough's very isolated . . . and the people there seem to be beginning to look on it as a Record Company now. But (muffled tape) it's okay . . ."

Yeah? Pete described the recent ejection of two ex-members of the band with an expression on his face

approaching a leer. "You could say they left. They thought we were going too far, they wanted to keep everything to the same poppy level of the first single, which we found limiting . . ."

Sudden Sway are hard-to-please, constantly-disatisfied moaners. Thank God.

SUDDEN SWAY are an aggrieved opposite of the rather-less aggrieved (but still unhappy U.2.) While their songs are as melodic and immediate and as anachronistically-delightful as Bono's Boys, they go much further in the way of rock-politics. Close to (realising!) the new Messiahs; to post-Fall realism.

We share notes on how disappointing, mysteriously, Teardrop Explode's final 'breakthrough' on TOTP for instance proved. As if, despite (fanfare, trumpets) 'winning' they'd become enmeshed in everydayness. In bland sameness.

Michael: "That's what we'd like to strive towards. To being that first band to appear on TOTP who succeeds in retaining that alternative feel about them. To be not 'just another alternative', but a viable alternative . . . And it's not just music either! We've so many ideas outside music."

Pete: But the minute you say that it sounds hip. That's the problem . . . You see we've evolved over a long time, not reading music papers, not buying records, not going to gigs. And it's hard to explain to you here and now . . ."

Michael: "It's early days yet but I envisage in a year and a half's time we'll be operating totally outside the context of a normal band."

Will this include 'success'/being in a position to communicate to people?

Michael talks about a "little ledge" they hope to "scramble to" — "from where people see that we've maybe gone through experiences that they can learn from

but that we're not any better than they are, that we're not extraordinary people, that we're not stars . . .

Pete, Hook-like, disagrees: "But again you're talking about ledges, platforms — stars! It's all the same thing . . ."

Sudden Sway's most valuable rock-political asset is a strong critical faculty. It pulls them up. Pulls them down (to earth). The intense Pete says later that in nearly everything they do they have to ask themselves, "Is this being hip?"

It sounds purist. But then the hurdles of new-flunk/new pedantic are hard and high-built and coyly corrupt. A new-purism, not to say the continuing new Puritanism seem the best counters. They gay daft laugh opposed by the supple, albeit sullen sway.

SUDDEN SWAY are again the inverse of U.2 in their essentially Eastern religiosity. Michael says it's his ideal to play in Tehran in front of "five thousand fanatical Muslims. They seem the farthest away you can get from the West!

"If they let us play five minutes, not even play, talk to them for five minutes and they understand one word . . . that'd be worth a million Gold Discs or whatever!"

Three steps back and Sudden Sahibs would be Moonies: I jest! It's a Daily Mail world again . . . grimaces at Toyah's mock-Egyptian presence. You bwute you!

Aligned to their Eastern-ness is a fascination with the sciences — mathematics, philosophy, chemistry. Mike?

"The music's linked in with structure. We're experimenting at the moment with mathematical formulae — can you say two and two is four? that sort of thing. We're basing songs around accepted mathematical and chemical formulae . . ."

Pete Sway explains: "You can take in on the level that everything follows a logical sequence. If you're struck you're going to react with a particular kind of emotion.

You can coincide the two. And therefore you can take it to a very mercenary level: people are going to be moved by playing so-and-so song."

That sounds Big Brotherish to me . . .

Michael: "It is! That's just it: the fact that we recognise the structure of the world is a standpoint from which to fight against that. This 1984 mentality that's common — that's a product of structural-history. People believe we've reached the year 2,000 therefore everything must end.

"To understand that mentality you've got to look back and understand the past. We don't accept that mentality, that '84 thing. We believe there is hope, a real hope that the human race will develop on to another better stage . . ."

There is argument to say that this Utopian Ideal, which must terrify the prosaic mass of most rock critics, has been intrinsically in rock since the start. It is at least, mythically or real-ly, its constant *raison-d'être*.

Mike: "I get depressed at the thought of people still playing guitar solos with long hair. There again, that other people are looking through it as an art-form, that is so utterly exciting, so awe-inspiring . . . it'd make you fall over in the street! It really really would, wouldn't it?"

I fall and laugh and agree — at the happy risk of being thought a neo-Moonie.

WILL YOU ever play gigs?

Sudden Mike: "Never never never! Never augh! gig."

Explain further please.

Pete: "It seems pointless asking people to pay one-fifty

for something they probably disagree with to see us 'playing', which would really consist of us telling them how we disagree with the 'gig' per se as well. It's all too complex to be worth it, in any respect . . ."

God! Colossal! Magnificent! I agree! But how . . . ?

Mike: "We don't want to look hip, or 'Spandy' — that's the important thing. We agree with what Pil did in New York, but we'd do it in a different way. Not so Rottenesque, we wouldn't want people to throw things we'd want them to come up on stage and talk to us . . ."

"You see, I think rock music in fifty years time will be looked on like the Paris of the 1900s is looked at now — when they look back they'll say the culture of the 1980s was rock music, rock writing, whatever."

"So I think you've got a duty to reflect your time in a positive way. You've got to be inspiring . . ."

How close to religious conclusions have you come?

Mike: "We're all very strongly religious-feeling. But not in dogma. Belief is belief in . . ."

Pete, exquisitely: "Belief."

And belief is as great as the truth is. I hope the strain between the thorough uncomplicated excellence of Sudden Swaheyhey's pop-psychedelics, and their terse rightful rock-politics isn't great enough to break them. We need that historic Swa . . .

Going home Michael compares current-rock to a nearly-mature adult who is tied to his mother's apron-strings, gratuitously given its Ham Odeon doses of HM and petrified — 'punk' — just waiting and longing to break loose of the old selfish bonds.

We both tacitly agreed if we can't make the giant living-corpse fall, we can at least make it sway.

SINGLES OF THE WEEK

SUDDEN SWAY: 'To You With ReGard' (Chant 12" EP).

And yes the g is a capital G . . . God knows why, but isn't it marvellous? I think Sudden Sway, religio-psychedelics on a new(ish) PiLesque label based in Peterborough, have enough capital Gs to just about save our besmirched pop world. And somebody needs to save it: urGently.

Sounds Sanity Squad bulletin number 3 reports a, to say the least, *disturbing* increase in the critical post-modern myth. This truly limp-wristed tendency, reared no doubt in New Romantic late-night dens where limp-wrists are legion, to bluff your way into believing that vitality alone and a kind of spurious hedonistic faith in 'music alone' (sic) will save the day is harmful because it hides (behind?) the real facts. Which are: the still mammoth force of big record companies, indifferent to creativity; the myth (and big record companies' willingness, rightly so, to have it continued) of the sex and rock 'n' roll and drugs and Pointless Gigging (ugh) etc etc.

It seems to me there is still unquarried worth, pop-wise, in a humanistic-modernism as fashioned by stars as varied as U2, Fall (in their own perverted way), Hana Mandlikova (isn't she great?!) . . . and Sudden Sway, the latest affirmation of the still-constant truth that you cannot live by elegant posing alone. You need capital Gs and lots more.

'To You . . . ' is a fabulous four-tracked twelve-incher that mixes the hypnotic charm of Van Morrison (an Old Man, you probably don't remember him but read on reGardless) with the searing modernism of JD, Bunnymen (when they're not being POSTmodernly hyper-egotistical) and, especially, the Peter Panish U2. Or . . . imagine 'Space Oddity' in now-language four little operas of song, mad irresistible lyrics, a passionate Classic Voice. Imagine the first time you heard 'Atmosphere' or yes-gosh-that-good! 'Astral Weeks'.

Sudden Sway take drug-myth, the LSD-image and make it good. And if ever I see (GOD forbid it!) their hallucinogenic divineness cocooned in that *funny writing* ("A Swa. . . y, A Sudden! A limpid pool of swaying piss!" etc etc) I will take the, uh, *hack* concerned and throw his limp-wristed body (suitably emaciated but of course) into a boiling pool of melted down Flip jackets and personal stereos. You Get it?

Pity there aren't any capital Gs though in Mandlikova . . .