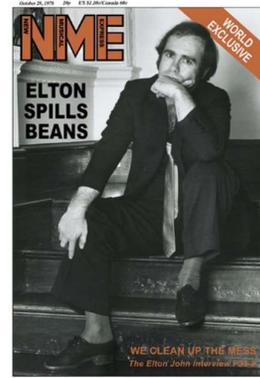


Mindless Aggrishun on Hippy Farm NME - 28 October 1977

THREE hours in a British Rail grill on wheels from London to Robert Calvert's Exeter farm hadn't left me in the best of moods, and I need interrogating on the intentions of the New Wave like I needed a swastika armband.

Calvert hangs over the back seat of the car and hangs out the carrot: "The Clash are the most orthodox band I've ever heard!"



This is he of Hawkwind and 'Silver Machine' fame, for whom I have no great love. I remain silent because I know if I speak I'll be insulting.

But he doesn't let up: "They just play three minute pop songs and throw in a few slogans! And they don't actually *do* anything to help anyone! We were always playing benefits!"

I remark in a high-pitched whine that it's real hard to be a saint in the city in 1977. It's alright for *you*, buster; you don't have to ride the stultifying subway and work in a hollow concrete tombstone! If I could gambol with the baa-lambs at twilight, I too might believe in peace and love!

You're all the same! I bet you went to University!

With this killer I smirk smugly till Bob Calvert says:

"I went to a secondary modern and I left at fifteen."

Well - I bet your audiences go to University!

"They don't, as a matter of fact. They're just kids with very definite ideas."

They must be morons if they like you!

Even through my extreme agitation I can see that this is somewhat over the top. Calvert glares. Hawkwinder Dave Brock grins at the driving wheel. Andrea from Charisma winces.

Calvert finally divides the dumbness with:

"Well maybe you're a moron too!"

He stares out of the window and is finally inspired by a field of living mutton to give me a sheepish smile:

"Well, maybe I'm a moron at times."

Won't argue with that one, Bob.

"I DON'T KNOW why they sent you. You obviously hate us; come to that, the NME hates us, don't they? Oh yes!"

Bob goes into a paranoid recital of the evil this publication has done him. I sigh - what a Boer. (For our more retarded readers, this is an allusion to Mr Calvert's South African origins). "Getting banned from the radio, using guerrilla tactics - the single we put out after 'Silver Machine' was called 'Urban Guerrilla' and it got banned! Do they actually believe in what they're saying?"

Who cares? They're neat to dance to. You've got a nerve - criticising these kids when all you do is swing in a hammock.

"What! You think we're some kind of tax-exiled dinosaur like Yes - that's what you think, isn't it?"

In one honey.

"Well, we don't have any money!"

Bob turns to the ever patient Andrea. "Can you give us a fiver for the petrol?"

O.K. -- I believe you.

"A New Wave band plays a free gig and it makes the front pages! We play free all the time!"

Maybe because no one will pay.

Later, ensconced on a sofa on Mr Calvert's secluded lawn, I feel more civilised as geese cackle and Morrison sings "When the Music's Over". Calvert lives in a kind of austere decadence, reminiscent of nothing so much as The Last Days of the Raj movies.

"No, more like Weimar."

I make with a *moue* of disgust, sick to the back dentures of the current Weimar chic, which for the majority of its neophytes serves as nothing more than a credible peg on which to hang their yeukiest S/M yearnings. One Lotte Lenya record and they think they're Goebbels.

"Is it fashionable in London now? I'm not into the image side of it; I just like the art that was around at that time."

Cold, crystalline, technical ecstasy, the bare bones of which protrude through into Hawkwind's latest album 'Quark, Strangeness & Charm', which indeed is not the usual idiot-dancing stuff one comes to expect from Hawkwind. Instead it's spacey, scientific and a somewhat scary item, which proved a trifle too - uh - cerebral for my taste - but then I reckon the definitive statement on life was "I Wanna Be Your Dog" - though those of you whose idea of paradise is reading Michael Moorcock while listening to early Velvet Underground might be wise to hear it.

The line-up now comprises Adrian Shaw on bass, Simon House on keyboards and violin, Simon King on Drums, La Calvert on vocals and Dave Brock on guitar.

Mr Brock is a card. He has a sweat obsession, interrupting a fevered repartee on topics such as the balance of classical and romantic incorporated into the perfect rock and roll lifestyle with the succinct discovery, "I'm sweating like a pig!" He looks like yet another boring hippie, but he is nobody's pigeon.

THIS IS Calvert's circus, however, and he talks about a book he's working on concerning the dissipation of energy - probably the biggest danger, even more so than Teds and censorship - to the New Wave right now. His heroes reflect this concern:

"Men like Nabokov and Brecht - they put all their energy to a positive use."

Curiously enough, Calvert also has admiration for one John Rotten:

"For some little ego-gratification game of his own, Richard Ogden who was looking after Hawkwind around 'Silver Machine' - told the press I was living at the Dorchester. This was five years ago, mind, and the first time I saw Johnny Rotten he came up and starting abusing me for it. But I explained and took him to a party at a solicitor's house. A really lush place, with all the country set swanning around.

Gee! You took Rotten to a society binge, Bob? Trouble, eh? Did he rape the chandelier? Butcher the butler?

"As a matter of fact, he got off with a debutante who looked like a horse."

Neighing rich bitches and now Arianna Slit? Johnny's taste seems to be all in his mouth.

Other irons in the fire are a poetry book, plays on the death of Brian Jones and the war career of Jimi Hendrix, not to mention (ah, if only!) an elaborate novel concerned with technological tussles between Arabs and aeroplanes someplace in the future.

Uh... don't you feel mean using Hawkwind as wheels on which to pursue your own ambitions, Bob?

Like, dig, man, aren't there any negative vibes ricocheting round the combo?

"Not on the surface. Anyhow, I could easily be replaced; so could any of the band."

So you admit that Hawkwind are basically faceless?

"Not faceless - but the whole is greater than the parts."

Death to the individual now!

"You see, I think of myself as essentially a poet."

I think poets are a fat pain.

"Poet is a terrible word, but there really isn't another. Bertold Brecht's my idea of a poet; a leather jacket and three days growth. Morrison was a poet; he respected words."

I smile, comparing "Horse Latitudes" with Bob Calvert's latest sonnet, "Idi Amin" (see NME, July 9, 1977).

At Exeter station I give Bob a Clash badge and he threatens to write a play about a blade-flashing girl reporter who slaughters an aging rocker.

Can geriatrics gyrate? Can country-dwellers cut the Colemans? Id dat Idi dead?

Julie Burchill