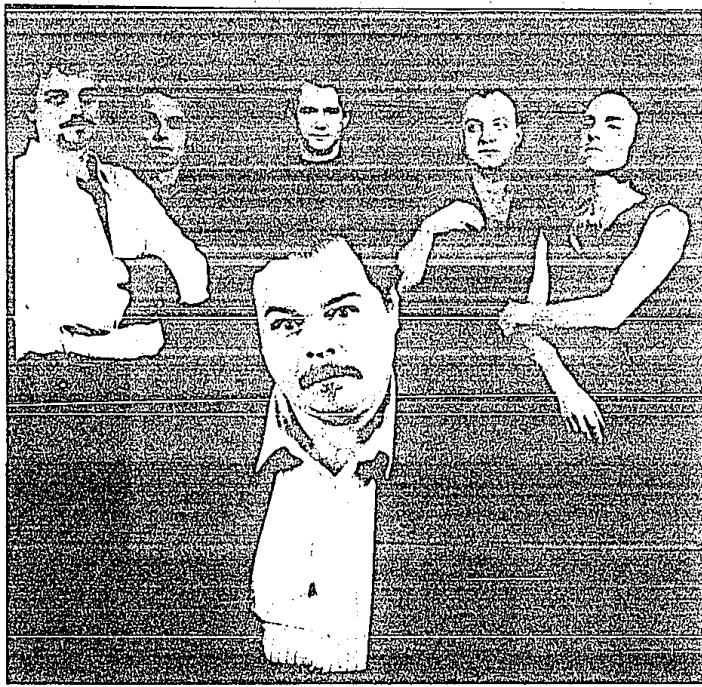




David Thomas (forefront) leads the avant-garage outfit from Cleveland, Ohio, Pere Ubu.

# Popped up

## Pere Ubu opens door to avant-garage

By Larry O'Connor  
staff writer

Sellout? You might as well be waving a red hankie in front of a rhino with indignation.

"How dare they say something like that?!" said Dave Thomas, vocalist and creative guy behind Pere Ubu. "This is Pere Ubu they're talking about, not chopped liver."

Yeah, how dare they? A few unlightened souls have mentioned that "Cloudland," the latest album from the Cleveland avant-garage outfit, is something of a compromising dip in lake commercial. May they all be lashed 50 times with a broken guitar string.

Thomas, though, acts like he's never heard any whispers about "Cloudland" commerciality. His tone in a telephone conversation from Cardiff, Wales, turns to a mock rage. But, rest assured, he's quite aware of it.

Sure, Pere Ubu has created its most accessible album to date. Sure, the group enlisted the help of Stephen Hague (who produced Pet Shop Boys, New Order and Erasure). But in comparison to last year's "Tenement Years" LP, labeling

"Cloudland" something of a sellout is comparable to saying Salvador Dali's "Persistent Memory" was commercial art.

One can hang his hat on the hooks, rest his head comfortably on the melodies. Pere Ubu has made the definitive pop album of the year, but one that only they could make.

"TENEMENT YEARS" is a very complex record, very layered," Thomas said. "We simply couldn't do another album like that. We set out to do something totally opposite of that. Something that would be very disciplined, very emotional."

"Tenement Years" was the storm in the night with trees crashing to the ground and etcetera. . . . This album is the day after the storm."

The cloud swell for the latest Pere Ubu rainfall started up again two years ago. The band came out of Cleveland in the late 1970s, releasing five albums. Their work was cherished by critics, especially in light of the corporate rock glut that gripped the music at the time.

But the creative forces that bound Pere Ubu became too big even for them to control. Band members started to haggle and ideas were

starting to run short. Pere Ubu broke up.

Thomas worked with an improv group and did solo projects during the non-Ubu years. The creative guy behind Pere Ubu originally had aspirations of becoming a journalist. He worked at a Cleveland area entertainment magazine, The Scene, for awhile.

Since Thomas wrote about music, he figured it would be interesting to give it a try. Thus Pere Ubu was formed as a studio group, featuring Allen Ravenstine, Tom Herman, Peter Laughner, Tim Wright, Scott Kraus and Thomas.

PERE UBU was part of a small underground music scene in Cleveland, which might seem to be the unlikely birthplace of one of the most innovative bands in this country. Perhaps some toxic debris from the Cuyahoga River has something to do with it.

The band has never been predictable. That makes the pop flavor "Cloudland" even more unusual. Especially taking on producer Stephen Hague, known more for jingle singles than technical masterpieces.

Hague provided the final buffs on

four songs, "Breath," "A Bus Called Happiness," "Race the Sun," and "Waiting for Mary."

"(Hague) is always been a big fan of ours," Thomas said. "He told the record people, 'Boy, I'd like to produce something by them. We said, 'Sure.'"

He was very nervous. He didn't want to mess up our sound too much. It worked out well. It was a pretty good relationship. We plan to use him on the next album as well."

Next album? Apparently, the band will do demos for album No. 8 in the second Pere Ubu series after their current tour. Thomas doesn't exactly draw a map where Pere Ubu is headed on the next disc.

"I think 'Cloudland' suggested that there might be some more done in that area," he said. "We found it exciting to work in a disciplined setting."

A record has to be done at that time. . . . You do what you do at the time."

Pere Ubu will perform at 10 p.m. Saturday, July 15, at Saint Andrew's Hall, 431 E. Congress, Detroit. For information, call 981-MELT.

## IN CONCERT

- **10,000 MANIACS**  
10,000 Maniacs will perform at 8 p.m. Monday, July 10, at the Meadow Brook Music Festival in Rochester Hills. Tickets are \$10.50 for pavilion and \$13.50 for lawn. For information, call 377-2010.
- **JUICE**  
Juice will perform Monday, July 10, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **KARIN NEWHOUSE**  
Karin Newhouse will perform on Tuesday, July 11, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **LOVE TRACTOR**  
Love Tractor will perform on Wednesday, July 12, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **DIFFERENCE**  
The Difference will perform on Thursday, July 13, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **GOOBER & THE PEAS**  
Goobar & The Peas will perform on Thursday, July 13, at Paycheck's Lounge, Caniff Avenue, east of Jos. Campau, Hamtramck.
- **STATIC ALPHABET**  
Static Alphabet will perform on Thursday, July 13, at "Rock 'n' Blow" at Garden Bowl, 4120 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Cover is \$4. Doors open 9 p.m. For information, call 832-9850.
- **STRYKER**  
Stryker will perform on Friday, July 14, on the Bobo Moonlight Cruise. The cruise leaves at 11 p.m. from the Bobo Detroit dock, at the foot of Clark Avenue.
- **Tickets are \$10.95 a person (\$9.95 for groups of 10 or more with advance reservations). For information, call 843-0700.**
- **HOLDEN CAULFIELD**  
Holden Caulfield will perform Friday and Saturday, July 14-15, at Skylights, 49 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. For information, call 334-9292.
- **REPLAY**  
Replay will perform on Friday and Saturday, July 14-15, at Jammers, 1812 N. Main, Royal Oak. For information, call 547-6470.
- **IODINE RAINCOATS**  
Iodine Raincoats will perform on Friday, July 14, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **TRACY LEE**  
Tracy Lee and the Leonards will perform on Saturday, July 15, on the Bobo Moonlight Cruise. The cruise leaves at 11 p.m. from the Bobo Detroit dock, at the foot of Clark Avenue. Tickets are \$10.95 (\$9.95 for groups of 10 or more with advance reservations). For information, call 843-0700.
- **BLUESBUSTERS**  
The Bluesbusters will perform on Saturday, July 15, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **PERE UBU**  
Pere Ubu will perform on Saturday, July 15, at the Blind Pig, 208 S. First St., Ann Arbor. For information, call 996-8555.
- **VAN ZANDT**  
Townes Van Zandt will perform at 8:30 p.m. Saturday, July 15, at the Midtown Cafe in Birmingham. Tickets are \$10. For information, call 540-9021.



Townes Van Zandt performs Saturday at the Midtown Cafe in Birmingham.

## COLLEGE

Here are the top-10 songs receiving airplay on WOLU-AM, campus station of Oakland University.

1. "Pet Semetary," Ramones.
2. "See A Little Light," Bob Mould.
3. "Just Like Heaven," Discolor Junior.
4. "Blind Hearts," XYMOX.
5. "Here Comes Your Man," Pixies.
6. "Too Far Away," Screaming Trees.
7. "From Out of Nowhere," Faith No More.
8. "So Alive," Love and Rockets.
9. "My Time," Cygnus X-1.
10. "Me, Myself and I," DeLaSoul.

## LOCAL

Here are the top 10 singles receiving airplay on "Detroit Music Scene," which is heard 4-5 p.m. Sundays (repeated 5:30-6:30 p.m. Tuesdays) on WDTN-FM 90.9.

1. "Muscles and Diamonds," Dancing Smootheries.
2. "Psychodrama," Funhouse.
3. "A Lot Like Me," Missionary Sew.
4. "State of Mind," World State.
5. "No Room to Swing the Cat," Rubber.
6. "Load, Hard and Fast," The Gear.
7. "Taking Control," Standing Pavement.
8. "Sour Cream," Sensitive Big Guys.
9. "My Time," Cygnus X-1.
10. "I'm Different Now," The Generals.

## REVIEWS

### MUSEUM — Mary My Hope

Mary My Hope is from Atlanta. This is their first record on Silver-tone/RCA records. The oldest member of the band is 23. Mary My Hope members claim they deal with primal, nihilistic extremism.

Mary My Hope members have no sense of humor.

They traveled to Wales to record this album with English producer Hugh Jones, who has previously worked with Echo and the Bunnymen, that Petrol Emotion and the Damned, apparently "to get the right atmosphere."

From listening to it, I would have imagined that hanging around morgues or funeral parlors might have worked just as well. Song titles like "I'm Not Singing," "Grind," "Suicide Kings," "Communism" and "Death of Me" means they're not going to do the sound track to the next Roger Rabbit movie.

Lyrics like "I have no faith that keeps me from tasting the joys of the world." Mellow out, Clinton!

Big sprawling guitar crunches,



1970s lead breaks and "serious" music fill this package. Oh, wait, they must be sensitive too. . . . they use a cello on one track.

Remember that classification of bands like Free, Yes and Zeppelin. That classification that we had hoped punk would kill. That classification called. . . (cover the children's cars and brace yourself). . . "progressive rock." Well, guess what? Just like Jason and Rambo movies, it still lives.

Who needs another, third- or fourth-rate Zeppelin rip-off band? These guys even make Guns N' Roses sound tolerable.

Now for that, no band should be shown mercy.

— Cormac Wright

### GREENPEACE — various artists

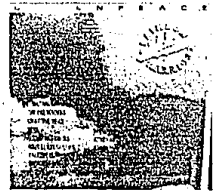
Do we have stars here or what? C'mon, you got yer U2, yer Belinda Carlisle, yer Sting, yer Lou Reed. And it's all for a good cause (like there hasn't been a lack of those lately)? Greenpeace.

Greenpeace is an international environmental group actively fighting such things as whaling, the killing of baby seals and the dumping of toxic waste.

Anyhow, this double LP is designed to bring awareness to Greenpeace and the causes the group is involved in. Included is a card where people can send for information on the organization. Also, royalties and money raised from album sales will be donated to Greenpeace.

Featured are no less than 27 songs by the likes of Terence Trent D'Arby, World Party, Bryan Ferry, Eurythmics, The Pretenders, Grateful Dead, INXS, Thompson Twins, Huey Lewis and The News, Talking Heads, Simple Minds, Waterboys, R.E.M., John Farnham, Aswad, Bryan Adams, Basia, Peter Gabriel, Bruce Hornsby and the Range, Martin Stephenson and The Daintees, Sade, John Cougar Mellencamp and Dire Straits.

Most of the numbers are previous hits. Some songs on the album have a



recurring theme of the environment. Titles such "Heaven is a Place on Earth" by Belinda Carlisle, "Small World" by Huey Lewis and The News and "Love is the Seventh Wave" by Sting definitely fit the spirit of the project.

In the case of Peter Gabriel's "Red Rain" and Lou Reed's "Last Great American Whale," it also marks some of those artists' most riveting work. U2 ("Pride") and Simple Minds ("Waterfront") contribute live cuts on the project.

Yet among the all-stars of U2, Sting, Gabriel, etc. are some groups hard to find on Top-40 radio. The Waterboys' spirit "Whole of the Moon" is a fine introduction of a group and definitely a highlight, as is Aswad's "Set Them Free."

Listen to the album and fill out the information card.

— Larry O'Connor

### CLOUDLAND — Pere Ubu

Pere Ubu has always been one of the groups that if you listen to one of their cassettes in the car, you're want to pull over and check for weird noises that you think are coming from under the hood.

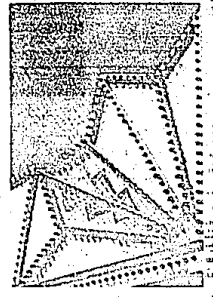
"Cloudland" (PolyGram), the latest from Cleveland's avant-garage outfit, is certainly no different in that regard. Yes, Pere Ubu has made a pop album. For once, though, pop is not a dirty word here.

With the stylings of Pere Ubu, there is hope for pop music. This is perhaps their most accessible album to date. But it still boxes you around the ears and challenges you.

The group's last album "Tenement Years" (Enigma) was a fine prelude for this LP because it is totally in the opposite direction. "Cloudland" is more focused, yet still providing the hallmarks that are Pere Ubu.

Stephen Hague (Pet Shop Boys, Erasure) is the unlikely producer on four songs. Yet the collaboration works, especially on the breathless "Waiting for Mary."

One reason is that there is a flow to the album. Using the distinctive mutterings of lead vocalist David Thomas as a focal point, Pere Ubu can use complex melodies and still



pull it together. The guitar work of Jim Jones blends in perfectly with the dreamlike quality of many of the songs.

The hooks here are arcane. Songs like "Why Go It Alone" bang in your ear all day long while interpretations of covers like "Nervosa" are nothing less than intriguing.

Pere Ubu, along with groups such as Talking Heads and Yes (Not Yes), are understated treasures of American music. "Cloudland" is a fine piece of musical craftsmanship to be savored.

— Larry O'Connor