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Knack looks strong

By Nick Charles
special writer

The No. 1 group of 1979 is back stronger than ever to show the world its success wasn't just a fluke. The Knack, whose debut L.P. "Get the Knack" went gold in just 13 days, has just released its third vinyl wonder.

Even though the Knack became the critics' darlings, with the bull's-eye being the group's career, it still attained No. 1 status with the first single "My Sharona" from the debut L.P.

Most of the songs on this album can be listened to with girlfriends, mothers and even grandmothers. The album contains nine songs available for your mixed-company listening pleasure.

Gone are the days of songs about naughty little girls who do and say they don't, or don't say they do, all the while teasing frustrated big boys. The new album finds the Knack growing and stretching beyond the single concept.

"I THINK we've stretched musically and I think I've grown vocally," said vocalist/guitarist Doug Fieger. "The songs are a little more complex and a little richer in texture."

A song like "Africa" proves that the band has pulled itself out of the rut that it was in. The song doesn't sound like your average pop band. Fieger's voice has a very mystical quality.

"Sweet Dreams" shows another side of Fieger's talented personality. In these lyrics we can find our own past, present and future of dreams that lie in dark closets, as well as singing with us in the light of day.

"Li Cal's Big Mistake" is like a lyrical jigsaw puzzle. The tune sounds like a musical "General Hospital," com-



The Knack is Bruce Gary, drums (back row, left); Doug Fieger, vocals/guitar (front row, left); Prescott Niles, bass; and Berton Averre, guitar.

plete with names, but turns out it's a true story.

"I wrote it about a black kid that I went to high school with," Fieger said. "He tried to rob a newspaper delivery truck and the police were waiting for him and they shot him to death."

A HUMOROUS succession of songs (to the careful eye) finds "Just Wait and See" followed by the song "We Are Waiting." The latter was written by Fieger and Silver Cordy guitarist/keyboardist John Corey.

The two most commercial songs are saved for last. "She Likes the Beat" is filled with Fieger's side comments, muffled yells and opinions from the peanut gallery.

"Boys Go Crazy" makes me say just

one thing: this is the Knack that I know. This is the song of the teenager who finally blows out of his schoolbook-lined prison into the free and exciting night.

One mistake made with the latest album was Capitol's choice for a single. Guitarist Berton Averre's "Pay the Devil" is a good tune but it doesn't have the mass appeal of the second single, "Boys Go Crazy."

"That was not our choice to have 'Pay the Devil' be the first single," Fieger said. "The band was against releasing that. We were all happy to release 'Boys Go Crazy.'"

THE CONCEPT of the new album "Round Trip" came from the band's journey through success and failure.

Rising rock star feels close to home

By Nick Charles
special writer

M.R. AND MRS. Bernard Fieger of Southfield are proud to announce that their son Doug has got the Knack.

The Knack, in this case, has a double meaning: one, the ability to crank out Top 40 pop tunes, and two, one of the best rock 'n' roll bands of all time, who will hopefully get its earned recognition soon.

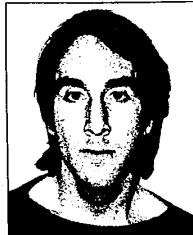
The Knack is led by vocalist-guitarist Fieger who grew up in Oak Park. Fieger graduated from Oak Park High School but also attended Detroit Country Day School in Beverly Hills when he was in the seventh grade.

"I left Michigan to go to L.A. in 1976," he said, in a recent interview after a concert at the Royal Oak Music Theatre. "I think it's much more difficult to make it in the Detroit area."

"EVERYTHING I do is for fun and to satisfy something inside of me that I can't explain. I've always had the need to be involved in the arts. I was an actor at the Vanguard playhouse in Detroit. I was Peter Pan at the Detroit Institute of Art and I produced 'Waiting for Godot' and 'The Zoo Story' at Oak Park High."

"I only do things that I believe in from my heart, and the Knack is one of them. It somehow saddens me that people think it's something other than that. If they get a chance to meet us and talk to us, they'll realize that, because you can't fake sincerity."

Even though Fieger has lived in California almost as long as he lived in Michigan, he still feels a closeness to his home.



Doug Fieger leads the Knack.

"You can take the boy out of Detroit, but you can't take Detroit out of the boy," Fieger joked. "Actually the Detroit area is a place where you must internalize your feelings. It's a very hard environment. It's not like Hollywood."

"There's not a lot of palm trees and glitter around here, so you have to build your joys from within. It's a wonderful thing to have to do because anywhere you go you carry that joy with you. It's not dependent on something outside yourself."

ALSO, IT TENDS to make you a lot less lazy than environments that are adaptable to leisure activities.

Fieger, who was dressed comfortably in a sweater, jeans and pink boots, reflected back then the band didn't talk to the press and why.

"We were a real new band. We didn't have anything to say. We were also frightened with the prospect of dealing with the press. We

'I think we've stretched musically and I think I've grown vocally.'

— Doug Fieger
vocalist/guitarist

thought we'd let our music speak for itself."

Unfortunately, the press around the country didn't understand why the Knack wasn't talking, and the band members promptly got labeled as snobs. When the Knack was talked about, it was cut down for the outright profanity of its songs and for being arrogant enough to copy a Beatle look on the back cover of its debut album "Get the Knack."

The group was also criticized for the album title, as being too pushy. "What else would you call a first album?" asked Fieger in self-defense.

"AS FAR AS language in the songs goes, that's the way people talk these days. I don't think you can have a '60s morality in the '80s."

"Rock 'n' roll is supposed to be a reaction to the seriousness of daily life. And also an attempt to enjoy that childlike attitude before we had to get serious and be adults."

The first hit that Fieger and the Knack had was "My Sharona" from the first album. The song rose to the No. 1 spot and became the biggest-selling song of 1979. Even though the song was the biggest seller the Knack ever had, it still has more meaning for Fieger.

"Sharona is my fiancée," he said. "We're getting married sometime this spring. She's from Hollywood." Who says fairy tales don't come true?

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