

STREET SCENE

Loneliness prevails on Duran Duran's new tour



CHRISTINA FUOCO

Le Bon said he'd rather play the teeny-bop magazine game. "You're not going to ask me my favorite color or the color of my underwear?" he asked. He cites pink as his favorite color.

"It's the color of all good things. It's the color of my favorite things. It's the color of girls. We're Duran Duran. We're still a girl group. That's why we get such (bad) reviews from all the critics. It's because they're sexist. They think that girls haven't got any taste in the world."

Le Bon is speaking on the telephone from a hotel in Hartford, Conn., Wednesday, Nov. 12. Although Duran Duran hadn't played a gig yet, he found the tour interesting. "I just found out that Connecticut has three C's in it. Con-

nect-i-cut," Le Bon said slowly putting emphasis on each of the C's. Upon being told that this tour has proved to be educational, Le Bon said, "That's as much on my little brain case handle." Proud of his accomplishments, he tells of the state's connection with the "Last of the Mohicans." "I'm going mad, which is what happens when you're in hotel hell."

On top of being lonely and bored, he's upset that the book he's reading, "Crede" by Melvyn Bragg, is "crap."

"It's sensationalist. It's set in the dark ages. There's a lot of rape and pillage. The sex scenes are really bad. Doesn't that tell you that it's written by a guy? The battle scenes are really good, but I'd rather it be the other way around - good sex scenes and bad battle scenes," Le Bon said.

Suddenly it strikes him. He's supposed to talk about music and his new album "Medazzaland" (Capitol).

The album, Duran Duran's best in years, is the first as a trio; bassist John Taylor left in January. "Medazzaland" harkens back to Duran Duran's earliest albums. The first single "Electric Barbarella" carries a keyboard/techno sound similar to

one of the Duran Duran's first singles, "Rio." Classic Duran Duran is the common theme running throughout "Medazzaland." "Big Bang Generation" absorbs '90s dance grooves while songs like "Michael You've Got a Lot to Answer For" blends Duran Duran's playful pop sounds with industrial-driven rock.

"I think there's an excitement there that was rediscovered that was on the first couple of albums. I guess after what happened with 'Thank You' (the band's miserable cover album), our backs are really up against the wall. It just drew the best out of us," Le Bon explained.

"With John leaving the group, it made us fight for survival. When you want to get shrubs to flower, you want to pluck it, put it under threat. It responds by becoming very prolific. That's exactly what happens with artists. They fight back, at least we do anyway."

The trio and John Taylor began working on "Medazzaland" off and on since the end of 1994. "We wrote the songs and then we went out and did an eight-month promotional tour with 'Thank You.' We only started reworking on this in November 1995.

"We had seeds at the beginning. We went away and came back to grow them. This had been a very horticultural conversation. If I hadn't become a musician, I would have been a gardener."

Duran Duran's tour, which comes to the State Theatre in Detroit on Monday, Nov. 24, will include the trio, a bass player and a drummer - that's it.

"It's the first time since 1982 that there's only five guys on stage. I'm really proud of that. There's no horn players, no extra percussionists, no backing vocalists. It's just the band on stage.

It's great." According to music web sites, the band's set includes songs from early in Duran Duran's career.

"We have a lot of old stuff practiced up. We have some real surprises, some things that you wouldn't expect us to play, songs that we haven't played in 16-17 years that work really well with the new stuff. The 'Notorious' period is not working with what we're doing now. We have returned to that slightly left of center dance rock, harder sort of sound with this album."

Remembering he's lonely in a hotel room, Le Bon asks, "Will I see you at the show? Please, bring some girlfriends."

Duran Duran performs at 7:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 24, at the State Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave., Detroit. Tickets, \$25 general admission and \$40 reserved seating in the mezzanine, are still available for the all-ages show. For more information, call (313) 961-5451.

After touring arenas and summer sheds, Billie Joe Armstrong, singer/guitarist for Green Day, is excited to be back in clubs.

"It's a lot more intimate. I can make more of a spectacle out of myself, which I have never had much of a problem with anyway," Armstrong said with a laugh. Green Day is touring in support of "Nimrod," its third album for Reprise Records and fifth overall.

Green Day and Superdrag perform Thursday, Nov. 20, at the State Theatre, 2115 Woodward Ave., in Detroit. Tickets are \$17 in advance. For more information, call (313) 961-MELT.

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