

Bill Sengstacken

As they say, you can't fight a trend. With that in mind I present what I consider to be among the top albums of 1988. It was a pretty good year — much better than 1987 — but there is still room for improvement.

● Let's Active became a cohesive whole, no longer simply the Mitch Easter solo project that seemed to crop up on earlier albums. The other three members on *Every Dog Has His Day* (I.R.S. Records), particularly Angie Carlson, tend to underscore the idea that this is a band, one that released the most enjoyable album of 1988.

● Dispelling the notion that you have to sell your soul to get a major label contract, Camper Van Beethoven succeeded with flying colors. *Our Beloved Revolutionary Sweetheart* (Virgin Records), a tongue-in-cheek tribute to Patty Hearst, combines witty lyrics with incredible instrumentation. Extra high marks go to violinist Jonathan Segel who, more than any other member, is responsible for the band's distinctive sound.

● Billy Bragg has always impressed me with his songs extolling the virtues of socialism, but on *Worker's Playtime* (Elektra Records), he shows another side of his personality. Yes, there are still songs that Karl Marx could whistle, but seven of the 11 songs deal with the affairs of the heart, specifically the full cycle of a relationship that Bragg just relinquished himself of. Touching to the extreme, this is a personal and poignant work.

● When I first reviewed the Butthole Surfers' *Hairway to Steven* (Touch and Go Records) this past spring, I gave it a rave review, but I honestly didn't think I'd listen to it as much as I have. In all honesty, this isn't for everyone, but if you can deal with a band that creates the most psychedelic music this side of Syd Barrett, you'll flip for this.

● If you're looking something a little less eclectic, you could do worse than the Pogues. *If I Should Fall From Grace With God* (Island Records) has party written all over it.

Early last semester I popped this Irish band on at a party, and it wasn't 10 seconds before someone was dancing on my coffee table. The band plays a combination of traditional Irish melodies combined with bar-band rock sensibility.

● Much more sedate by comparison is the latest from Canadian Jane Siberry. Playing in the same ballpark as Kate Bush and Laurie Anderson, Siberry uses the sound spectrum as more of a canvas than anything else. *The Walking* (Reprise Records) is extremely adventuresome, taking more than one listen to fully appreciate, but that is to the album's advantage. I've listened to this more times than I can count; I always hear something new.

● One of the coolest things about 1988 was getting a new album from Patti Smith. After nine long years, she returns in style with *Dream of Life* (Arista Records). While not as great as *Easter* or *Horses*, this is still one of the hottest discs of the year. Themes of motherhood and redemption abound with highlights including the catchy "People Have the Power" and the beautiful "Paths That Cross."

● After the incredible *This Is the Sea*, I almost felt sorry for the Waterboys. How do you top a masterpiece? The answer became obvious with the release of *Fisherman's Blues* (Chrysalis Records). Rather than repeat the electric sound of previous works, leader Mike Scott enlisted the aid of nine of his closest friends and made an almost exclusively acoustic album. The down-home sound makes for exquisite listening.

● This past year was the year for Irish music (except for U know who 2), and one of the most enjoyable outings was the pairing of Van Morrison and the Chieftains. Comprised almost exclusively of traditional Irish songs, this isn't an album that breaks new ground. Instead, it's more of a tribute to the music that influenced these musicians as they grew up. It's infused with a vitality and spirit that makes up for the lack of new material.

Of course, these are only the tip of the iceberg. 1988 also saw strong albums from Tracy Chapman, the American Music Club, Jane's Addiction, Michelle Shocked, Graham Parker and Midnight Oil.

This year looks promising as well. Within the next few months we should be hearing new stuff from Kate Bush, XTC, the Who and the album Elvis Costello and Paul McCartney have been working on for some time.

Stick around; it should be good.



The members of Tesla from left to right are Troy Luccketta, Tommy Skeoch, Jeff Keith, Brian Wheat and Frank Hannon.

Blue-collar rockers to play Sunday

Tesla: no-nonsense rock 'n' roll

By TODD HINES
Features editor

Not many rock bands today refrain from glitz, glam and a teen following. It's difficult not to take orders from the record companies that shell out the clams and make stars.

But one new band — if they can be called new — has a different game plan that includes no-nonsense rock 'n' roll without the make-up.

Tesla's the name, and the band makes its second appearance in Columbia Sunday as the opening act for Poison.

"We're not really trying to package ourselves and be molded," said Frank Hannon, who shares lead guitar duties in the band.

Tesla is just a no-frills, soul-based rock band that works hard.

They began a four-month tour Friday that will take them across the country. It's a contrast opening for Poison, a band noted for its glam-rock image, but as Hannon put it, "We're both rock bands."

Hannon said Tesla joined the tour at the request

of Poison. The two bands met briefly this past year at the Texas Jam rock concert.

The band already has strong references, having opened for the likes of David Lee Roth, Alice Cooper and Def Leppard. Hannon said the members of Tesla became close friends with Leppard members through touring with them for six months.

"We're not really trying to package ourselves and be molded."

— Frank Hannon, Tesla

In totem, the band has been on the road 14 months, an unusually long time for touring on the wings of one record. But as they begin their new tour, Tesla will introduce their new album *The Great Radio Controversy*, scheduled for release Jan. 31 on Geffen Records.

Hannon said it's a notch better than their first album, *Mechanical Resonance*, which sold more than 800,000 copies after its release in 1986.

He said *Controversy* is not too much more experimental than *Resonance*, but the band is playing together better after going through so much touring.

After nearly two years, Tesla was able to take time off and get back into the studio. But Hannon said the surprising success of *Resonance* and the touring kept from pressuring them into rushing into a new album.

A video has already been shot for the song "Heaven's Trail," but a single from the album will come later, he said.

The band, which got its name from Nikola Tesla, the father of radio, is made up of Hannon and Tommy Skeoch on double lead guitars, Jeff Keith on vocals, Brian Wheat on bass guitar and Troy Luccketta on drums.

Hannon said he is looking forward to hitting Columbia during the first leg of the tour where Tesla is always well received.

Tickets for the Tesla/Poison concert are \$17.50 and are still available at the Carolina Coliseum box office.

Features' Weekend

Black cats and ladders

My gosh, it's Friday the 13th! For this special day and night, we at the features desk have decided to include special "How to Get Arrested" supplements at the tail of each bulletin. Why? Because we at the features desk feel that busts, or should we say arrests, are very unlucky.

● The Koger Center (as in Nancy and Ira) opens in grand old style 8 p.m. Saturday. Not that, providing a propensity towards culture-enriched events exists in your body in the first place, you could even hope to get tickets, but it's happening anyway. Maybe, if you dressed in shabby clothing, stood outside and pressed your nose to the glass you could get arrested and really expose yourself to some culture.

● The Golden Spur officially reopens tonight. The Cartwrights (a band) will begin playing and celebrating righteously at 8 p.m. Admission is absolutely nothing. To get arrested here, should boredom occur, the features desk recommends either breaking something expensive or perhaps bringing lots of beer.

● If you just gotta dance and you like performing before large crowds and you're tired of smoky clubs, the USC Dance Company will hold auditions for its spring concert at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at the Blatt Physical Education Center, Room 114. Area dancers are invited to audition for classical ballet, modern and jazz styles of dance. Possible arrest potential exists whenever a costume doesn't.

● Headbangers will have a ball Sunday night as the group Poison rolls into town. Opening for them will be Tesla.



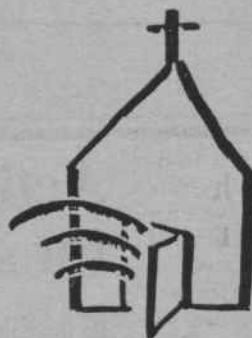
The London Philharmonic Orchestra

The two bands bring different styles of rock to Carolina Coliseum. Poison offers a glam-rock style, and Tesla is an up and coming blues-based band. Tickets are still available for \$17.50 at the Coliseum box office. We at the features desk figure that everybody knows how to get arrested at a rock concert.



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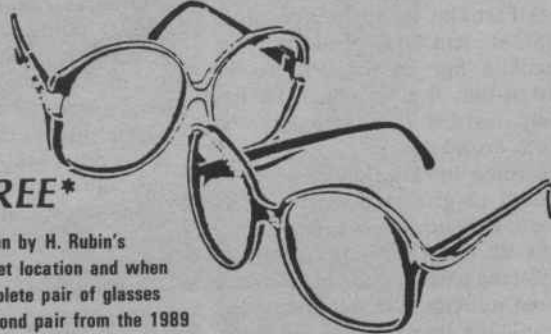
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