

# rock



By ISSAC WILLIAMS

One of the fastest rising Canadian singles of late is *White Hot* by a Toronto band named Red Rider. The song comes in a picture sleeve, something unheard of in Canada except for independent new wave acts. The glossy single and equally flashy album *Don't Fight It* contain no information on the outside to help the consumer in their quest for good music.

It is not until you have laid your money down and opened up the inner sleeve that you find all the information that you never really wanted. The list of engineers alone would have filled the back cover of the album. The worst news isn't the long list of engineers, studios and session players used, no the worst is saved for the last three words: Direction: Bruce Allen. I nearly threw the album away then and there.

Allen, from his position as manager of Canadian bands, bears more responsibility than most for keeping Canadian music in the dinosaur age and I had just purchased one of his beasts. Bracing for the worst, (perhaps another Prism) and with cotton stuffed in my ears for protection, I put the record on my turntable. Forty minutes later I was still alive and awake as well. Not bad, quite good in fact and I put the record on for another spin. Most of the songs are fast, simple and clear with original lyrics. The slower songs are embellished with short instrumental breaks that keep the listener interested.

The clean production emphasising the bass and drums gives the album all the markings of a new wave recording, which is pretty hilarious coming from a Bruce Allen band. In an article in a recent issue of RPM magazine, Canada's weekly trade publication dedicated to keeping music in the dark ages, Allen exposed his views on New Wave music.

He called it just a pssing fad with little commercial possibility. The article, trying to defend the big companies for having nothing but boring albums while all the interesting new Canadian talent is on independent labels, went on to claim that no real manager would touch a new wave act. The article affirmed Canadian music's biggest problem, the money is all south of the border. Managers like Allen aim for the U.S. market, not with Canadian music, but with bands playing music for an American audience. They then try to hide this sham by awarding their acts silly little Juno awards for outstanding Canadian talent. Prism, for lack of a better example, were formed solely as a Canadian version of Boston, the band have even admitted it.

So why are Red Rider in the Bruce Allen stable? Possibly a subversive underling signed the band when the boss was on holiday in Hawaii. More likely it would seem that even dinosaurs can read.

One look at the charts coming out of Toronto and Vancouver and names like XTC, The Police, Costello, Madness, etc. making up more than half the top thirty, and the message is clear. Who said new wave wasn't commercial? Red Rider are by no means any threat to XTC, as they seem to draw their influences from a 1975 band called Racing Cars. The vocals, musical style, clarity of production and even album covers of the two groups are very similar. Unfortunately The Racing Cars became obsolete in the punk explosion of 1976 and the same fate could befall Red Rider.

However, *Don't Fight It* makes an excellent vehicle to take Canadian music out of the ice age and nearly up to the present.