

Layabouts Release “No Masters” LP

Ana Coluthon

1986

Enthusiasm about the work of friends is often taken skeptically, since the assumption is that one's critical faculties are lessened by affection. Hence, a gushing review of the Layabouts' new album, *No Masters*, from those of us on the *Fifth Estate* staff who are friends and even relatives of the band members will probably be suspect. Fortunately our appreciation of the group's music is shared by enough other people to make us believe that, beyond our subjective feel for the people who produced this unique blend of music and lyrics, is a solid effort worth substantial listening.

The spirit of the music reflects the varied ethnic backgrounds and musical experiences of the Layabouts as the music travels between ska, reggae, rock-based new wave, and good old shit-kicking Detroit rock and roll. The band consists of three members from England, one from the Dominican Republic, another of Panamanian background, and two native Detroiters.

The lyrics to many of the songs express a strong vision of an anti-authoritarian world while others speak of a hatred of things in this society, from the mundane in “I’m Tired” to the oppressive in “Johannesburg/Police Reaction.” “Fuckalot” urges you to “feel yourself,” while hope radiates in the reggae “Too Late” and even the sweet ballad-like quality of “Seven Minutes” shines while filling you with dread of a nuclear holocaust.

But these are not sermons or anarchist lectures set to music. The songs are saved from being pedantic by the high-spirited music from a band which appears to believe full-well in Emma Goldman's dictum, “If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution.” In Detroit, the Layabouts are known both for their political commitment and their ability to produce a joyful night of dancing.

The record's production and album cover compare favorably with anything done in the “professional world,” thanks to the many studio and graphic arts people who volunteered their labor and time because they were so impressed with the music and the message.

The *No Masters* album contains within it a special edition of the *Daily Barbarian* newspaper which includes the album's lyrics—another example of attention to a labor of love. The issue also has a statement of political perspective and explains that all of the proceeds from the album (not just the profits) are going to feed the hungry in Detroit's Cass Corridor area—meaning that the band itself is donating several thousand dollars to the relief effort.

The band says in its *Barbarian* statement that they don't want to be associated with liberal-guilt efforts, such as USA for Africa or Farm-Aid, but realize “We can send all the money we want, but after the bucks run out, and they inevitably do, it is back to life as usual—the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” For how many more generations must this cliché be passed on before we put an end to it?!

“Well we want to put an end to it now and we want you to join us—none of us can do it alone. We want to see a world without armies, police, leaders, governments and all the things that are presently ensuring the starvation and poverty of millions world wide. But this new world can only come about through a radical transformation of society, a transformation which will only happen if all of us decide that we will no longer put up with this shit. The choice is ours.”

No Masters is an album worth listening to. You can get a copy by mail by sending \$8.50 to the Daily Barbarian, Box 02455, Detroit, MI 48202; checks made out to the Daily Barbarian.



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