

# MISSING PERSONS

OR



## MODESTY IS NO VIRTUE

If Barbaraella and Roger Gorman could conceive a rock band, Missing Persons would be their offspring.

Consider the ingredients: a buxom blonde given to wearing plexiglass bras and skirts fashioned from 45s, and two prolific musicians, tired of striving after high artistic ideals, who opted instead for lots of money and the covers of magazines.

Missing Persons just may be the prototype hybrid of the rock band of the '80s—a mixture of futuristic high-tech camp and cold, hard realities. Onstage, surrounded by plastic sheets, tubing and brushed aluminum arranged as abstract sculpture, they're in the dressy sequencer of a Fellini film. Out of the limelight, these artists approach their work with the logic of a movie producer who knows how to draw crowds.

"I wouldn't call us contrived," Terry Bozzio, 31, says. The tall, thin drummer in Capitol Records' Los Angeles offices is soft-spoken and articulate. "But we are calculating. Missing Persons has been well thought out and designed. We're influenced by Madison Avenue and marketing concepts. And they say a pretty girl sells the pack of cigarettes, or the car. We decided to utilize those tactics. We're very aware of image, especially at a time when video is so important."

Guitarist Warren Cuccorullo, 26, is even more to the point. He says Missing Persons wouldn't exist if it weren't for Dale Crover, lead singer and Terry's wife. "I can't see how it could. Dale is the reason for the band."

Whatever the initial impetus, Missing Persons has exploded on the new music scene. Paradoxically, their success story began after every record company in America had turned them down. In April of 1981 they released their own EP using their own money, and sold over 10,000 copies (almost literally door-to-door) in hometown Los Angeles. One track, "I Like Boys," became a hit on progressive radio stations around the country. The big-time record executives woke up; they stayed up when they saw Dale Bozzio and the guys live on stage.

Capitol Records signed Missing Persons in early 1982. The label reissued the EP as a 12-inch, replacing a version of the Doors' "Hello I Love You" with "Words," an original tune the band felt confident would be a hit. Despite having only four songs, the EP appeared on national album charts, where it went Top 40 and sold over 200,000 copies—an incredible achievement, especially for a brand-new band.

Last October a debut LP, *Spring Session M* (an anagram for Missing Persons), took off strongly and presaged a national headlining tour. Still, Terry Bozzio isn't completely satisfied with the progress of their grand design.

"I'm not as successful as I want to be. The album's number 21, not number one yet. And we're going to be. We can't miss. If you think you're a king, you will be a king. We're going to be the best rock band in history."

That's pretty heady stuff. But Missing Persons are very confident people. They adhere to positive thinking principles and, so far, have been doing all right.

Terry Bozzio had been playing drums in classical and jazz groups in the San Francisco area. While backing trumpeter Eddie Henderson in 1975 he met George Duke, who was playing keyboards on a Frank Zappa album. Duke mentioned that Zappa was looking for a new drummer.

"I had turned my back on rock 'n' roll in high school," Bozzio says. "Rock had taken a redundant turn. I had listened to Cream and Hendrix—those guys could play—but then rock took a dive. I wanted to improve myself so I studied music. I found that John Coltrane made Hendrix and Clapton look like first-graders."

As a result, Bozzio knew nothing about rock when the chance to audition for Zappa came up. He bought a Zappa LP before flying to LA because he had never heard his music before.

"I discovered that his music was very intricate and more involved than most of the classical music I'd played. So I flew down to LA to audition with 40 other drummers for the job. Frank had all this incredibly difficult music laying all over the stage, and drummers were dropping like flies. I figured I wouldn't get it but after I finished Frank said, 'I like the way you play. We'll have to hear the others, though.' Then someone told him there were no others. They had all split after hearing my play."

Zappa taught Bozzio not only about music but the music business. "I was a baby. I had to start reading rock magazines to find out who David Bowie was I learned with Frank and wanted to be more like him."

Enter Dale Crover, Boston born and bred. A Playboy bunny in the Hub for two years, the five-foot-one, brown-eyed blonde was Bunny of the Year when she decided to leave the hutch in 1976.

"I had been there since I was 18!" she exclaims in a pronounced New England accent. "I was bored and looking for something else. I was curious about Hollywood. I had watched Ursula Andress and Britt Ekland and other blonde actresses since I was a kid. I'd tell my mom I wanted to be a movie star, and she'd say, 'That you already are.' I guess that's the way I've always acted."

So with two other bunnies she went to Hollywood.

"I flourished at first. It was a whole new world for me. The other two guys up and left, but I stayed. I did some modeling for Playboy Modeling, for Chi magazine,

BY SAL MANNA

some odd jobs, anything to stay alive."

About six weeks after arriving, Consalvi visited a musician friend at a recording studio. At the same studio was Zappa, whom she had met a couple of years earlier in Boston. He remembered her immediately.

"Tooch!" yelled Zappa, who had dubbed her that because of her big smile.

"Everyone in the band had their mouths open," Terry Bozzio remembers. "We were all saying, 'Oh my god, she's beautiful!'"

After watching Bozzio play, Consalvi became immediate good friends with the drummer. Shortly afterward they became roommates. Three years later they were married.

Neither Dale nor Terry Bozzio had any idea at the time that the former would turn to music as a career. Terry's three-year stint with Zappa came to an end in 1978. He quickly hooked up with UK, necessitating a move to England; Dale went too.

While there, she began writing song lyrics ("Here and Now" on *Spring Session M* dates from this period.) "It was all coming together. I'd written poetry and prose since I was 10. I have books and books of lyrics and I'm constantly writing. Terry would read them and say, 'You should write a book someday.'"

When the Bozzios returned to the US in 1979, Zappa asked Dale to appear on his *Joe's Garage* *open*. (Another participant was Warren Cuccurullo, who had known the Bozzios since Terry joined Zappa's band.) The part called more for talking than singing. She also appeared on Zappa's single, "I Don't Wanna Get Drafted."

"It was the first time I'd ever heard myself on tape," she says. "Frank said, 'Sounds great.' Warren said, 'I bet you can sing!' I asked Frank if he thought I could sing and he said, 'Sure.'"

Her confidence buoyed, she teamed with Cuccurullo to come up with a song and sound to market. It wasn't easy.

"I couldn't teach her melodies," Cuccurullo says. "But we put together 'I Like Boys,' used an echo machine and taped her talking the lyrics."

The tape went to Terry, now out on the road with UK. "I thought it was incredible," he says. "I knew that this was what I wanted to do."

After UK, he got involved with the cerebral Group 87—which he promptly quit to form Missing Persons. "I was tired of playing esoteric music that was intellectually above the man on the street. When Group 87 wanted to be just instrumental I didn't want to do that anymore. I wanted to re-channel our depth into new music."

Naturally, the new band would need a name. "We wanted something creative," Terry Bozzio says, "not easily obtainable, like perfume from Paris. 'Missing Persons' really fit too, because we're all missing persons from some name bands."

(The threesome had used the name US Drag when they appeared in *Trudly* and the *Roughriders* in *Lasochagos*, a mild sexualization flick. They played "I Like Boys" among other tunes.)

The next order of business was Dale's singing voice. Efforts to the contrary, her quality tones could not be forced into any preconceived mold. She was one of a kind.

"I tried to get her not to squeak," Terry says, "but she brought that out of herself and now it's a trademark. She has no influences. She doesn't sound like anyone else. She's fresh, new and wonderful."

Without question, Dale Bozzio is the visual centerpiece of Missing Persons. She and Terry both invest her bizarre fashion style—the designs her own costumes—and sexual allure is no affection.

"When I was a hippie, I'd have the biggest bellbottoms and the most patches on my jeans," she says. "I dyed my hair green when I was 14 to match my outfit!"

Dale is often compared to the *Placemats*' lead Wendy O. Williams and *Rionda*'s cringing Debbie Harry (coincidentally another ex-husband). Like them, she's come in for criticism about parading sexuality onstage, but she defends her approach.

"It's his-maw-ity. Men are the power structure. Tits and asses are gifts god give us and it's to my best interest to use them. You have to work with what you have into the job you have. If you can't beat them, join them. So you put on a tail and bunny ears." She laughs. "It's funny what you have to do to get by sometimes."

Yet there's a positive side to this attitude. [If he's so...-dit.] "You have to stand up as a woman. You have to get past the idea that you're throwing flesh out there or else you'll close yourself up. Maybe I'll give some women the idea that you shouldn't be ashamed to have tits and an ass. I feel bad that children are told to cover themselves up. That's not healthy. I hope even men will get past saying, 'Hey, look at those!' That's ignorance. I'm not saying take your clothes off but we need some sex education here."

"I don't need to sell sex to make a record. We proved that when all we had was airplay. They're raking me over the coals for wearing fishbowls on my tits but I'm trying to be a real person. I'm trying to find a tussy limit where a woman is still a woman."

*"They rake me over the coals for wearing fishbowls on my tits but I'm trying to be a real person."*

*—Dale Bozzio*



Left to r.: Warren Cuccurullo, Dale Bozzio, Terry Bozzio.



Dale Bozzio stands up as a woman.

**W**arren Cuccarullo is resplendent in a garish red and green painted shirt, red studded scarf and suede boots. He believes Missing Persons have the perfect combination of striking visuals and musicianship.

"This band is Missing Persons, not Ms. Bozzio. But you have to be aware of what sells a band. Sex is one possibility; if done right, there's nothing wrong with it. Dale's face is the trademark of this band. Her vocals dominate the live shows but

the audience can see everyone else's function too. Everyone is doing a lot all the time, playing a lot of music. I think the musicians in the audience watch us and everyone else watches Dale."

The short, dark-haired guitarist is Brooklyn-born and, like his fellow band members, of Italian heritage. Obsessed with music since he was 10, Cuccarullo played in innumerable garage bands with names like Art and Caution: High Voltage. As with many young musicians,

his taste progressed from Top 40 and the Beatles to Eric Clapton and Jimi Hendrix. Like a few, he then discovered Zappa.

"He turned me around from blues playing into strange music with odd timings and atonal lines, and playing much faster." Blessed with a phenomenal musical memory, Cuccarullo could soon copy all of Zappa's arrangements at will, not a simple task.

Zappa's soundman, a friend of Cuccarullo's, introduced him to his hero in 1973. The two hit it off right away. "I think it was because it was Halloween and I was wearing a blue bathrobe with pictures of Frank posted all over it. Maybe it was because he likes New Yorkers. But I loved his music and he could tell how enthusiastic I was."

Over the next year, he sent tapes of his playing to Zappa, who was also impressed with his memory. In December 1978, Zappa thought Cuccarullo was ready for his band.

"He said I sounded fantastic and I'd have to audition sometime. I thought, 'Great. I'll practice and by next April, when he comes back from a European tour, I'll be ready.' Four days later I got a call asking if I could audition the next day. I said, 'Dad, mom, I'm leaving tomorrow.' I flew to his house in L.A. He said, 'Play this.' I did. He said, 'You got it.' And we were on our way to Europe."

Big as that step was, Cuccarullo feels the jump into Missing Persons was even more precipitous.

"Frank takes you in full force, with a big organization. This band we had to build from scratch: the music, the business, the touring. I've had to grow a lot musically too. I'm approaching my instrument in a different way—not as a solo instrument but as an intimate part of an arrangement."

**C**uccarullo and the Bozzios entered the pop arena expecting to have it made in a matter of weeks. The two men knew dozens of influential folks in the music industry. Terry Bozzio turned down offers to play with Jethro Tull, Journey and Asia to form the group; Cuccarullo had just left Zappa.

They sent out the requisite demos, but nothing happened. No one wanted them. All they had was music; record companies had to be convinced their onstage presence could excite an audience of 5,000. Missing Persons had yet to play live, and Dale's appeal was still closed.

In desperation, they released the demo as an EP themselves. Cuccarullo's father printed up press kits and record jackets, while his mom ran East Coast public relations. The band finally convinced 22

radio stations to play "I Like Boys." Once Missing Persons began circulating on the L.A. club scene, they were quickly tagged that city's best group. Though economic times for the music industry meant that Missing Persons had a hard time getting signed, but Terry's belief in Madison Avenue finally panned out.

Now, of course, Missing Persons are on the high road. They expect up to six singles to be culled from *Spring Session M* ("Words") and "Destination Unknown" will be followed by "Windows"; "Waiting in LA" is a West Coast AOR hit.) Their innovative, intriguing and subtly semi-erotic videos are very well received.

In April they'll return to the studio for a second album, with new members Patrick O'Hearn (another Zappa refugee) on bass and Chuck Wild on keyboards. Another influential member of the cadre is producer Ken Scott, who's worked with David Bowie, George Harrison, Supertramp, Jeff Beck and Devo.

Despite their short term so far as Missing Persons, the band has come in for a good deal of criticism. Terry Bozzio is aware Missing Persons haven't convinced everyone yet.

"I've received a lot of, 'This guy has

copped out, and is jirping off his wife and copying new wave bands,'" he says, perturbed.

"First of all, Dale is very much in control of herself. She's strong-willed, independent and has a lot of guts. No one fools around with Dale. Besides, in the annals of rock 'n' roll, we are the next Elvis or Mick Jagger? What were they doing other than flaunting their sexuality? Can you compare Jagger's singing to Pavarotti? No. And now they're our heroes. All I'm saying is that Dale will be the next hero.

"As for copying out, that we're not playing music on an intellectual par with what we were doing before: I have to say it's harder for me to play a simple beat. I'm not cranking a thousand notes into one bar and probably destroying some good music. When you look at Weather Report or Hite Saria, they do the complicated and the simple. I'm writing songs now, something I've never done before. We're baby songwriters. I'm a late bloomer and we're all going to get a lot better."

Understatedly the criticism that hurls the most is a comparison of Missing Persons to the Knack, another LA band that soared to the top with their first album, only to come crashing down. But Missing

Persons have been professionals for some time, and understand the music business. They also believe their philosophy about music will help carry them through.

"We want to give positive, responsible entertainment experiences," Terry Bozzio says. "That's what art is. Not politics or violence or devil worship or sex or drugs or lunacy or stupidity. We want to reinforce people's lifestyles at any given moment. Some of the songs are cynical, like 'Words.' The song says nobody is listening but it doesn't say burn down the White House because of it."

Caccarullo agrees. "We plan on being successful. We're not going to get hairy. We'll keep it light: more love songs, things people can relate to as music. We design the music to be accessible and not to alienate. There are no joke songs or parodies of ourselves, no topical songs. There'll be less of diversity and some off-kilter material, but people will take us as a package and accept it.

"We're professional, level-headed and health conscious. We take care of our nutrition, take no drugs. We've outgrown all the incidental things ever associated with success and money, and we're concentrating on our career goals."

Such is a little matter of becoming the best rock band in history. ■

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