

# GEORGE TO SUE UBU?

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## PERE UBU...

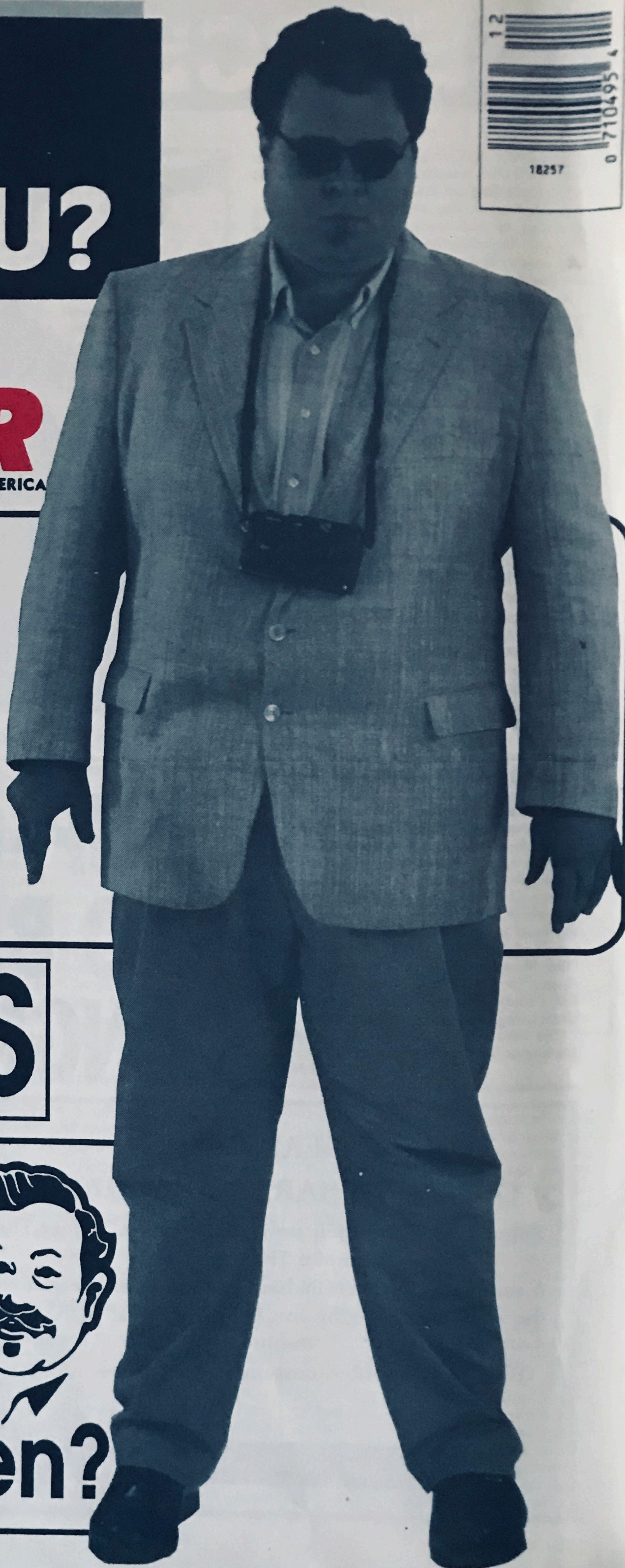
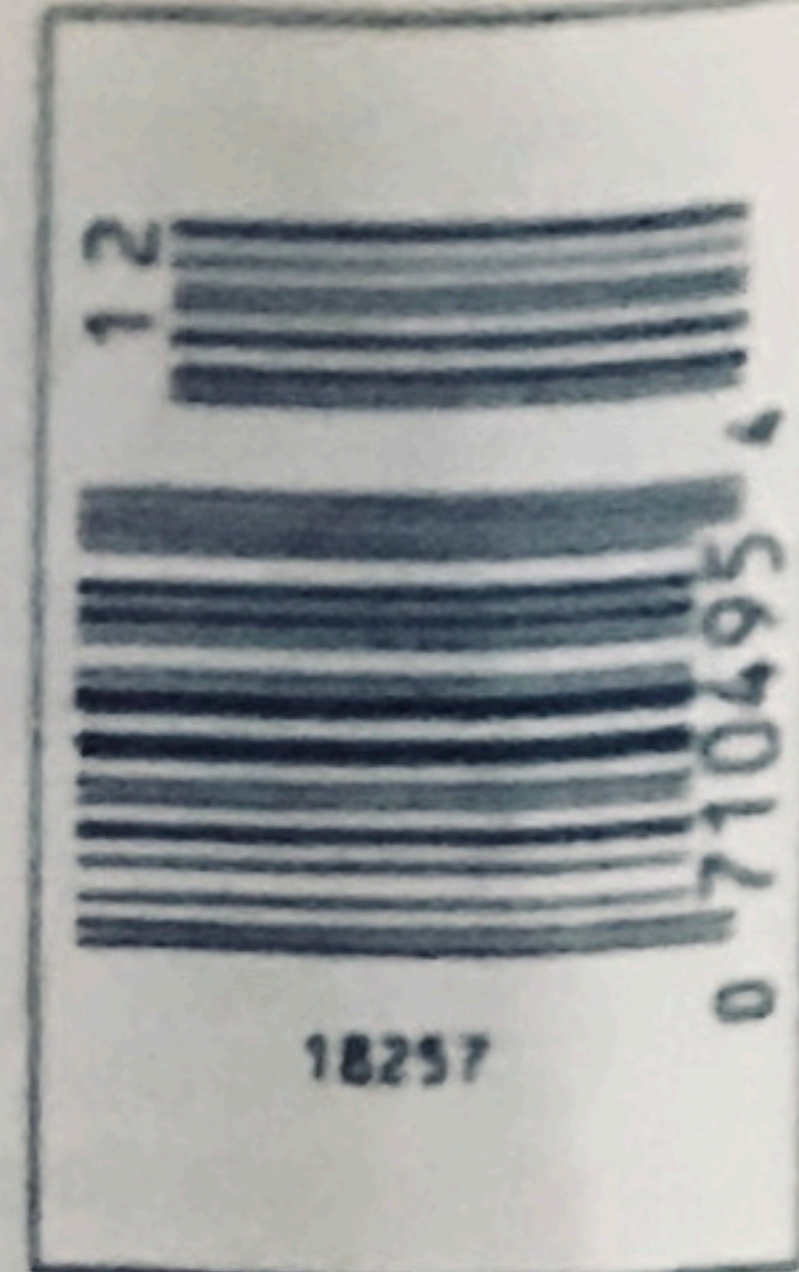
WORLDS  
IN  
COLLISION



## UBU SOARS THROUGH CLOUDLAND



Pere  
Ubu  
Chicken?





# GEORGE TO SUE UBU?

**G**EORGE MICHAEL is not going to sue Pere Ubu, despite a story that appeared in the Daily Star last Friday February 22.

According to the story, Pere Ubu were planning to call their new album 'Listen Without Prejudice Vol II', with artwork that was exactly like the George Michael album of the same name.

In fact, the cassettes were a very limited number of advance copies of Pere Ubu's forthcoming album 'Worlds In Collision', circulated around the music press.

A spokesman for Phonogram Records, who put out the tapes, said: "There were 100 pre-release samplers put out for the album which is released in May. This is not the cover art for the album, which actually has a picture of a flyover."

"The intention was to send cassettes to people who may have had preconceived ideas of what Pere Ubu sound like and that snowballed into the idea of 'Listen Without Prejudice Vol II'."

"We didn't mean to piss anyone off, particularly not George Michael and we are apologetic if we did."

The spokesman confirmed that Sony, George Michael's record company were talking to the legal department at Phonogram, but said it was unlikely that they would sue.

A spokesman for Sony agreed with this.

The story also said that "Pere Ubu's lookalike record went out to Radio 1 producers and record reviewers. It would inevitably have made them sit up and take notice."

A record reviewer, commenting on this said: "Anybody so uninformed, stupid and humourless as to think this was a new George Michael album shouldn't be working in the music press or radio!"

Pere Ubu, who formed in the mid-'70s in Cleveland, Ohio have been consistently one of the most innovative and influential American bands of the last 20 years. Their debut album 'The Modern Dance' is still regarded as a classic. Their last album, 'Cloudland', their first for Phonogram subsidiary Fontana found them going in a more commercial direction.

The new single 'I Hear They Smoke The Barbecue' is released next week.

-SOUNDS Magazine



PERE UBU: easily confused with George Michael

## 'RIP-OFF' BAND TO BE SUED BY ANGRY GEORGE

The worry is that George's unsuspecting fans may be fooled into parting with their cash — if the LP ends up on record stalls.

The Pere Ubu sound is miles apart from George's smoochy style, and has been labelled "alternative industrial trash" by critics.

Phonogram Records, who market the Pere



COPY: Pere Ubu

Ubu LP, are keen to defend the cover.

But George's spokesman raged: "This is a nightmare for him."

"He's going into the studio after his tour to record his next album."

"It was supposed to be Volume II — but now he may have to re-name it because of this other album."

-SPLASH Magazine

### PERE UBU

#### ORIGINAL BARBECUE CHICKEN

Pere Ubu release their new recipe single 'I Hear They Smoke The Barbecue'

A unique GIL NORTON blend of knobs & spices. From the man who brought you PIXIES Pasta & BUNNYMEN Bouillibase

Over 10,000 satisfied customers every time.

*The Secret's in the Sound*



**F**URIOUS George Michael is threatening to sue a rock group whom he accuses of cashing in on his latest hit album.

Megastar George, currently at No 3 in the album charts with Listen Without Prejudice Volume I, flew into a rage when he saw an almost identical album sleeve, claiming to be the long-awaited Volume II follow-up.

Cult band Pere Ubu's lookalike record went out to Radio One producers and record reviewers. It would inevitably have made them sit up and take notice. But now George is fuming because he may have to scrap his own plans for Volume II.

Although the Pere Ubu record will also be released under the alternative title of Worlds In Collision, hundreds of cassettes bearing George's LP title have been distributed around the music industry.



Cloudland  
(PolyGram)

**P**ERE UBU, CLEVELAND'S pataphysicians of punk, established themselves as leaders among America's avant-garde rockers 11 years ago (hardly seems possible) with their first LP *The Modern Dance*. Four albums, four compilations and a six-year layoff later, Pa's back, tougher and tighter than ever.

*Cloudland* offers a more focused picture of the band's current sound than last year's return *The Tenement Year*. As the new record's title indicates, the group continues to work in the same rarefied air. But, while Ubu's music broils, bubbles and yelps (thanks largely to the childish catarrh of David Thomas' voice and the post-industrial groanings of Allen Ravenstine's synthesizers), many of these tunes can pass for slightly dented pop numbers. Pere Ubu's skewed approach no longer gambols with self-indulgence, as it often did on its late-'70s and early-'80s exercises (most of which were recently released on CD by Rough Trade).

The most bracing music on *Cloudland* is propulsive, compulsive, but not abrasive; tracks like "Breath," "Race the Sun" and the obsessive "Love Love Love" would not sound out of place on some conventional rock radio formats (no kiddin'). "Fire" almost reads like a David Byrne-styled soul-funk number, while "Nevada!" toys with the lyrics to "Sloop John B." in its mutant replay of a Reno divorce. Singer Thomas still mutters and babbles his way through the group's hermetic lyrical scenarios, but his style has calmed down and now seems almost pensive. His instrumental colleagues (Ravenstine, guitarist Jim Jones, bassist Tony Maimone, and drummers Chris Cutler and Scott Krauss) are likewise careful about where to drop the errant dissonance or the random offbeat.

Whether one credits the work of such co-producers as dancemeister Stephen Hague and electrowiz Daniel Miller or the band's burgeoning wisdom, one reaches the same conclusion: *Cloudland* offers listeners a Pere Ubu that has matured to the point where pop savvy is now a surprising part of the game plan.

-MUSICIAN Magazine - Chris Morris

# UBU SOARS THROUGH CLOUDLAND

## PERE UBU'S SUNNY "CLOUDLAND"

**P**ERE UBU is one of those self-consciously arty bands I've always filed under, "Lord knows I've tried." Yes, I know they've been widely influential. True, other musicians I respect, like Richard Thompson, think they're swell, and, unlike a lot of other rock avant-gardists, they've never (well, hardly ever) thrown the baby out with the bath water—no matter how quirky they got, you could tell they respected the rock verities they were nonetheless subverting. Still, I would listen to Ubu records, respect them in principle, and then, inevitably, put them away.

Until now, that is. I hope that long-time Ubu partisans won't resent my bandwagon-hopping, but the splendid new "Cloudland" album is a thoroughly accessible piece of work. It's obviously designed to get the band on the radio with integrity—and quirkiness—intact, and on those terms, it's an almost total success.

Of course, the album's sunny listenability notwithstanding, nobody is ever going to mistake the music in "Cloudland" for, say, Bon Jovi. David Thomas's singing still drips a peculiarly Midwestern kind of irony, Allan Ravenstine's synthesizers

still burble and roil like the musical equivalent of Walt Whitman's "barbaric yawp," and the band's songwriting remains unsettling—a goulash of mutated soul riffs, skewed country licks, mysterious examinations of relationships in trouble, and borrowed bits from sources as seemingly unrelated as the Beach Boys, Elvis Presley, and (gasp!) the Seventies junk band Blue Swede (those haunting "ooga chuckas" in *Ice Cream Truck*). This is pop/rock, but it's a funhouse-mirror kind of pop/rock—the kind that results from knowing far too much about far too many things and having the chops to express a lot of it.

The most obvious analog for "Cloudland" would be recent XTC—both bands make smart music for a mass audience. But, in a peculiar way, Pere Ubu is also profoundly American sounding. What it really reminds me of is (I'm not kidding) Charles Ives. Of course, Ives never had the backbeat provided here by Chris Cutler and Scott Krauss, he never wrote a radio-ready anthem like *Breath* (a song that rings brilliant changes on, of all things, the psychedelic-era Tommy James), and he certainly never concocted an intoxicating tribute to the Stones' "Satanic Majesties" period like the sure-to-be-a-hit *Waiting for Mary*. But the overall effect of "Cloudland" is as exhilarating and collage-like as the finale of Ives's *Second Symphony*.

Granted, that's a lot of baggage to load on what is, after all, just a rock-and-roll record, especially in an age when it's hard to talk about any popular entertainment medium in terms of Art without breaking out in gales of helpless laughter. But when everything here is working, in songs as cool and spooky as *Nevada!* or as kinetically effective as *Love Love Love*, that's the kind of response "Cloudland" inspires. I'm an Ubu fan after all these years, and I suspect that when you hear it you'll be one too.

Steve Simels  
-STEREO REVIEW

### ■ CLOUDLAND Pere Ubu

Wait a minute. That sounds an awful lot like a pop song, and those arrangements sound extremely disciplined and rehearsed. This can't be Pere Ubu, the band

that shook Cleveland in the late '70s with its ground-breaking style of free-form electronic jamming.

Oh yes it can. On this, the band's seventh release, Pere Ubu stamps its typical weirdness onto conventional music and in doing so takes its greatest risk so far.

On a first try, most people won't like this record. Pop fans will find it too harsh; avant-garde types will find it too easy. Those with the patience to hear it more than once, however, will be rewarded because the contradiction of styles only gets more alluring with repetition.

Lead singer David Thomas still sounds like an insane version of David Byrne; Thomas whines and quavers as if his voice were an instrument too unwieldy for a mere human to master. Yet careful listening reveals expressive nuances in his delivery, and his 16 songs (14 on the LP) begin to fit together into an American travelogue, depicting a real-life and psychological voyage from Thomas's home in Cloudland, Ga., to L.A. The background arrangements reveal similar richness over time. A complex texture of whistles, clangs and other unexpected noises has been subtly woven into the mix too. The crosscurrents in *Cloudland* make it far more enjoyable than *The Tenement Year*, the maximally bizarre album that the band released last year after a six-year hiatus. This new work is the aural equivalent of finding chutney in a peanut butter jar: It starts off surprising and becomes an acquired taste. (Fontana/Polygram)

—Michael Small  
-PEOPLE Magazine



## Pere Ubu The Condo Year

BY RICHARD GEHR

**S**leek, beefy, utterly compromised, and almost indefensibly wonderful, Pere Ubu's *Cloudland* (Polygram) is to their *Modern Dance* what David Lynch's *Dune* was to *Eraserhead*: a leap from the indulgent freedom of low-budget surrealism to high-ticket ambition, accompanied by a tip of the beret to craft and career. *Cloudland* is practically guaranteed to piss off John and Jan Ubufan. But where the elusive *Art of Walking*—the group's

1980 patch test for listeners allergic to ambience and improv—engendered only persnickety mutterings, Ubu's latest could ignite a boho revolt.

*Cloudland's* schematics, like PiL's *Album* or X's *Ain't Love Grand*, read like a desperate prayer for airplay. Ubu's gone corporate, with four of the release's 16 tracks produced by Stephen Hague (Erasure, New Order, Pet Shop Boys, and other groups you shouldn't listen to) and two others diddled by Rico Conning and Daniel Miller (Depeche Mode, Yaz, and ditto). Which, translated into sonic terms, means that drummers R. Scott Kraus and Chris Cutler's snares snap the inside of your head like thick rubber bands; Allen Ravenstine's synthesizer omnipresence has been shoved into the background in favor of disco keyboard parts; and Jim Jones's guitars have been tripled and quadrupled to a fulsome Foreigner sheen. Ubu manipulates these parameters like a found concept, tooling

mainstream production into something eccentric and fresh (which, for Ubu, it of course is), transforming MIDI-tempoed rockers into something like art.

The sound's as big as all outdoors, and so's the subject. Starting in Cloudland, Georgia (vocalist/lyricist David Thomas's hometown), the songs track a troubled couple's cross-country journey west. Flat, hot, and dry, Thomas's America—a Baudillardian abstraction of horizontals and speed—reflects the duo's communication breakdown amid a panorama of unjust deserts viewed through the windows of cars, trains, and buses. Sorrow and tears, yearning and wistfulness are recounted in typically elliptical lyrics suffused by optimistic rhythms and arrangements camouflaging the relationship's considerable angst factor.

"Breath" and "Cry" sound downright anthemic, in a soft metal kind of way; "The Wire" and "The Waltz" are—guess what?—deranged waltzes; "Race the

Sun" and "Bus Called Happiness" recall such early-'60s Ubu antecedents as the Beach Boys and the Buckingham; and "Waiting for Mary," the single, is pep incarnate. All seem constructed from the pop-formalist flotsam the group once so studiously hammered apart (most forcefully on their last release, *The Tenement Year*, to whose commercial failure *Cloudland* so eloquently responds), and each is as insidiously addictive as my *Legend of Zelda* Nintendo game.

Fourteen years ago, along with Devo and Tin Huey, Pere Ubu epitomized Akron, Ohio's steampunk aesthetic. With its phoenixlike '87 resurgence, the group proved that while its avant-garde strategy had staying power to spare, effective surrealism always demands a bourgeois audience whose preconceptions it can épater. Pere Ubu's *Cloudland* is their attempt to create such an audience from ground zero, and it's a lot more than just another bright idea.

-VILLAGE VOICE



# Song and dance men

By Greg Kot

**D**avid Thomas and his band, Pere Ubu, have been a thorn in the side of the music industry for 15 years.

Mainstream radio and myriad stuffed-shirt record-company executives dismiss the band as "art rock," unfit for mass consumption. Thomas returns the favor by calling the music biz a "mountain of stupidity."

But this atmosphere of acrimony hasn't dimmed Pere Ubu's creative powers. Their experimental albums of the '70s, newly reissued by Rough Trade on compact disc, have become landmarks. And their latest release, "Cloudland" (Fontana/Polygram), is—surprise!—even getting some airplay and might just make the band some serious money.

With a name like Pere Ubu—after the hero in Alfred Jarry's absurdist play "Ubu Roi"—it's no wonder the band has a reputation for being slightly more cerebral than the average rock 'n' roll outfit.

But anyone who has seen them perform knows that David Thomas and his band of serious thinkers from Cleveland are really a fun bunch of guys.

"We're song and dance men," Thomas said. "People have this impression that we're this weird experience that no one enjoys; that we go on stage slapping meat on our heads while reciting Byronic poetry."

"So we came up with the term 'avant-garage,' to make fun of it."

Pere Ubu will demonstrate Sunday at Cabaret Metro just how much fun an "avant-garage" concert can be—a feast for the mind and heart, most certainly; but also an invitation to smile, dance and laugh.

The large, courtly Thomas is anything but the typical rock 'n' roll front man. His array of the-

rock that incorporates garage-band grunge and jazz-like improvisation.

"We put the 'deep stuff' on record," Thomas laughed. "On stage, our goal is to entertain."

The strength of Pere Ubu's music is that it can be approached from many levels—as poetry, catharsis, experiment or a foot-stomping good time.

The new "Cloudland" album extends that legacy, without shooing away mainstream listeners.

"The previous record, 'The Tenement Year' [Enigma, 1988], was like a storm in the night, a record that was designed to feel and sound like great elemental forces sweeping across the landscape," Thomas said. "'Cloudland' is like the day after the storm: The air is washed clean, the garbage swept away. There's still ambiguity there, but it's a bright, new day."

In going for a simpler, more direct sound on "Cloudland," the band enlisted Stephen Hague (who has worked with Pet Shop Boys and New Order) to produce four tracks. These songs, to use Thomas' word, are some of the most "marketable" music of the band's career, especially "Bus Called Happiness" and "Waiting for Mary."

"We set out to do a more emotionally direct record," Thomas said, "and Stephen helped us do that. I hate to call it a 'pop' record, because I think that word is too easily misunderstood. But here we are—just when you thought it was safe to ignore pop music."

Pere Ubu has been doing everything but playing it safe since forming in 1975.

"Cleveland was a fascinating, rich breeding ground for different sounds," Thomas said. "To us, there was no difference between Soft Machine and T. Rex. We didn't think there should be any boundaries."

The band quickly progressed from raw, punkish singles such as "Final Solution" and "Heart of Darkness" to the eerie experimentation of the classic "Dub Housing" album (1978). A decade later, these works still sound challenging, timeless.

"Pere Ubu has always been a moving target," Thomas said. "We never get into a rut because we're always trying to shake ourselves up."

Band members constantly move in and out of the lineup, insuring a constant flow of fresh ideas. Recently, synthesizer whiz Allen Ravenstine and drummer Chris Cutler took a hiatus from the road. Second drummer Scott Krause and new keyboardist Eric Drew Feldman (formerly of Captain Beefheart and Snakefinger) will pick up the slack, with guitarist Jim Jones and bassist Tony Maimone.

Even after selling only modest numbers of records and breaking up in 1981, Thomas and his mates forged ahead in various solo projects. Then Pere Ubu reunited in 1987 to greater acclaim than ever.

"The record business is a mountain of stupidity," Thomas said. "But we keep finding these perfect, crystalline moments of mystery and wonderment within the mountain that make it worthwhile. It can only be a few seconds—sometimes I'll be on stage and notice someone in the crowd and think, 'This is worth doing because of that person.'"

—CHICAGO TRIBUNE

PERE UBU  
**CLOUDLAND**  
Fontana

Ubu's second album in as many years is both swan song and harbinger. Keyboardist Allen Ravenstine, whose oddball synthesizer "soundscape" Ubu since it began in Cleveland 14 years ago, plays a secondary role. He's been replaced by Captain Beefheart Magic Band keyboardist Eric Drew Feldman and will no longer tour with Ubu. Meanwhile, this album is Ubu's first serious bid for pop success. Four tracks, including an infectious, whacky "Waiting for Mary," were produced by Pet Shop Boys/New Order boardman Stephen Hague. Daniel Miller, who's worked with Yaz, produced a rollicking "Love Over Love" and helped mix the vocally sumptuous "Why Go It Alone?" Dave Meegan, an associate of Hague and U2, mixed most of the tracks. All this outside influence gives Ubu its best-sounding recording. Ubu throat David Thomas still bleats and squawks but is singing better than ever. His lyrics intelligible, and at their best personal, include a gorgeous, Hendrixian "The Wire" and a bluesy, leisurely "Monday Night."

—Carlo Wolff  
—THE BOSTON GLOBE

Pere Ubu. "Cloudland" (Fontana)

★★★★

Though Ubu's penchant for abrasive whimsy has given this Cleveland band a reputation for making difficult music, the band has never suffered from the smug elitism so common among rock's artier types. The artier types who love Ubu will likely dismiss "Cloudland" as a commercial sellout, but it is in fact not only the most consistently listenable album that the band has made, but the most daring move it could have made. As an uncompromised bid for a larger audience, "Cloudland" doesn't compromise the qualities that make Ubu special.

What initially sounds like a musical transformation is really more of a shift in balance, as the rhythms and melodies that give these songs their hooks are pushed to the foreground, and the buzzes and whirrs that give the music its textures recede in the mix. Ubu's music has shown a fondness for and a familiarity with the range

of pop convention since the mid-'70s era of "Final Solution" and "Heaven," but the pop underpinnings of the band's music have become the focus with "Cloudland."

The result is the industrial-strength equivalent of a classic Beach Boys album (with one of the "Cloudland" songs even quoting heavily from "Sloop John B."), a perfect summer album from musicians more familiar with factories than surf. The production by Stephen Hague (Pet Shop Boys) and Daniel Miller (Depeche Mode), as well as longtime Ubu associate Paul Hamann, gives the album the sound of the modern dance (with much more polish than "The Modern Dance," Ubu's 1978 debut), but the material is as provocative as ever.

Filled with great Ubu songs that also would make great hit singles, "Cloudland" is one of the best albums of 1989, one that leaves the impression that musical middle age is even more interesting for Pere Ubu than it is for Paul McCartney.

—CHICAGO SUN TIMES

**Pere Ubu proves that 'art rock' can be a heck of a good time**

atrical and mime-like gestures and his high-pitched warble evoke pathos, passion and humor—sometimes all in the same song. Meanwhile, his impassive compatriots play driving



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