

Once upon a time in Britain the term cabaret meant contemplating combine harvesters with the Barron Knights, while ripping open salt sachets for your chicken in a basket, or BBC 1 at Christmas with Liza Minelli.

Then came Agnes. Agnes Bernelle could probably win a prize for the world's most charmed existence, she has spent her entire life on the edge of musical history.

As a child Agnes grew up surrounded by expressionist theatre and the Cabaret of the Absurd. Her father gave Marlene Dietrich her first work. During the Second World War she was attached to M6 as Vicky the "girl with three kisses" (the original pirate radio presenter) as a mere teenager. Agnes was the first solo performer at the Establishment Club. The Establishment was the brainchild of Peter Cook, the godfather of modern satire, and "alternative" comedy in England together with the then unknown Alan Bennett, Jonathan Miller and Dudley Moore. The first issues of *Private Eye* were printed in Agnes' dressing room. She has performed constantly all over the world and at many prestigious festivals, the Edinburgh Festival, Dublin Theatre Festival, Berlin 750th to name but a few among many others.

What she has accomplished is original and experimental, often both in sound and method, yet it is emotionally effective and within the boundaries of popular music and songwriting. For those who consider her Avant-Garde it would probably be a surprise that her latest album encompasses a century of cabaret, past and present.

"Mother The Wardrobe Is Full Of Infantry Men" manages to capture the quintessential spirit of cabaret. Released on Some Bizzare the album boasts music and lyrics by composers and writers as diverse as Stanley Myers (Deer Hunter) and Klabund (Caucasian Chalk Circle). All the tracks are linked by Agnes' individual vocal style, witty but with a touch of irony. Agnes has the rare ability to make a song come alive. In the true style of cabaret each has its own measure of personal observation. She has evoked the interest and collaboration of the highest calibre popstars, Philip Chevron, Elvis Costello, Marc Almond and Tom Waits.

*New Music Express* described her last release "Father Lying Dead On The Ironing Board" (produced by Philip Chevron of the Pogues) as the strangest LP of the year. No-one was more surprised than Agnes when her record was released on a label co-owned by Elvis Costello. Tom Waits suggested that Agnes should include "Broken Bicycles" from the superb musical "One From The Heart."

"Kept Boy" was the start of the whole project. Marc Almond wrote this in 1988 for himself and Agnes. This track is included on the cassette and CD "The Slatz We Are" album. Marc also introduced Agnes to the legendary Steve of Some Bizzare and the idea for an album was born in Steve's office. Marc and Billy Mc Gee wrote "It Was Me" for Agnes.

Live Performer is a separate issue of course. Agnes seems most comfortable on stage. I think a quote from N.M.E. would best sum up her style:

"I never approach a song as one singing it I approach it from the text, and if I like the content I try putting it across. I've had singing teachers coming up and saying 'let me teach you for free, I'll let them I've spent years unlearning the technique."

#### CHARLES GREY

Charles Grey has a track record which includes the "Aurise Got Fetus On Your Breath" project, Zeke Manlyka's "Masterrime" album and Marc Almond's "Jacques" album.

Agnes admires Charles' rare combination of talent as a musician and as an engineer. Of course Charles' producing career has called him to heights unknown in his previous incarnation as a humble Doctor of Physics.

#### PETER O'BRIEN

(At The Piano)

Peter, who comes from Dublin, has worked with Agnes over the last 20 years. He now lives in England. He is a very fine jazz musician, working in all the major jazz venues and festivals.

Stephen Mears

#### 1. OLIVIA (1947)

by Desmond Leslie

Desmond Leslie was born in London in 1921 and comes from an Anglo Irish family. He married Agnes B. on the first day of peace in 1945. He is the author of several books, mostly novels, but also wrote the first book of his kind entitled FLYING SAUCERS HAVE LANDED, which was translated and sold in almost every language in the world. He wrote some cabaret songs for Agnes B. in the 50s and 60s. They parted in 1969 but have remained friends. This is the first collaboration after nearly 20 years.

#### 2. BROKEN BICYCLES (1978)

by Tom Waits

It was Tom Waits own suggestion to Agnes that she should include this song on her record. It comes from the sound track of the film ONE FROM THE HEART and has never appeared on any of Tom's albums.

#### 3. GONE SHOPPING (1988)

by P. Gaston and R. Kavang

They are two up and coming Irish song writers living and working on London.

This song fell into Agnes' lap unexpectedly one day before going into studio, when she was very short of contemporary material. She is very glad she bumped in to Phillip Gaston, an old friend, at the right moment!

#### 4. IN AMSTERDAM (1919)

Music by Michael Dress  
Words by Klabund

Klabund was born in 1898 and died of T.B. at the age of 38. He was a poet and playwright who wrote the original version of THE CAUCASIAN CHALK CIRCLE which was later adapted and annexed by his friend Bertold Brecht.

#### 5. THE MERRY WIDOW (1900)

Music by Leo Fall  
Words by Rudolf Bernauer

Rudolf Bernauer, Agnes Bernelle's Father, was born in Budapest in 1880. His family moved to Berlin where he became one of that City's most prominent theatre producers, owning 4 theatres by the time he was 30 and directing many famous productions including Wedekind's LULU and Strindberg's DREAMPLAY. The advent of the Nazis threw him and his family into exile and he died in London in 1953.

#### 6. JULIA (1988)

by Daniel Cainer

This song was specially written for Agnes by Daniel Cainer and is having its premiere on this record. Agnes is delighted to have found a source for new songs in Daniel Cainer.

#### 7. SONG ABOUT MARY (1959)

Music by Michael Dress  
Words by Adrian Mitchell

This well known contemporary poet and playwright met Agnes in London when they were both appearing at a fund raising performance for C.N.D. Adrian was reading his own poems and it occurred to Agnes that some of these would make a splendid addition to her programme.

#### 8. THE ROAD TO MARSEILLES (1988)

by Daniel Cainer

#### 9. MOTHER THE WARDROBE IS FULL OF INFANTRY MEN (1974)

Lyrics by Roger McGough  
Sound Effects by Desmond Leslie

Roger McGough is one of the contemporary Mersey sound writers and definitely Agnes' favourite living satirical poet. A line from this poem has provided her with the album title. Desmond Leslie is one of the innovators who began to use Musique Concrete in the sixties, a movement which led directly to synthesizers and electronic backing tracks.

#### 10. I SLAUGHTERED AUNTIE ALICE (1889)

Music by Michael Dress  
Words by Frank Wedekind

Wedekind was born more than one hundred years ago in 1864. Through almost unknown in his own country, Austria, he is said to have influenced world literature in a way similar to that of Sigmund Freud. He perpetually mixed horror and laughter, was bitterly opposed to naturalism in the theatre, his language was aphoristic and abrupt and he forstalled Expressionism with his plays and songs, which were banned during his lifetime.

#### 11. GO TO THE WALL (1957)

Music by Stanley Myers  
Words by Christophe Logue

Agnes came across this song in what she refers to as her "Establishment days," when she became the first solo performer to appear in Peter Cook's Establishment Club and met Stanley Myers, later to become world famous as

the composer of the Cavatina from the Film the DEERHUNTER and Christopher Logue, the Establishment's resident poet, who is still writing his column in Private Eye

#### 12. AGATHA (1983)

by Mark Bunyan

This is a song from Mark Bunyan's own repertoire. Agnes heard Mark at the Festival Club in Edinburgh when they were both appearing at the Festival in 1982. She accosted him to tell him how much she had enjoyed his performance, and they have been firm friends ever since.

#### 13. HARRASSMENT (Der Fall In Den Fluss (1909)

Music by Michael Dress  
Words by Alfred Lichtenstein

Both were born in Berlin, Ike Bernelle herself. Lichtenstein was born in 1889 and was killed in action in the first World War. A small volume of his poems was published in his lifetime.

#### 14. CHOCOLATE ECLAIR (1911)

Music by Leo Fall, Willy Bredschneider  
Words by Rudolf Bernauer

Leo Fall and Willy Bredschneider were names amongst the most famous composers of German Operetta during the first two decades of this Century. Both collaborated many times with Agnes' father in his own work in this field.

#### 15. IT WAS ME (1988)

Words by Marc Almond  
Music by Billy McGee

It was Marc who was the instigator of and inspiration for this record. Agnes says of him: "It was He!!!!" Agnes is grateful to Billy McGee for his music and for the endless trouble he took in so many ways.

#### 16. THE TRIUMPH (1978)

by Peter Maxwell Davies

Peter Maxwell Davis is one of the most famous figures in contemporary music. For many years the composer, conductor and inspiration of THE FIRES OF LONDON, TRIUMPH is a song from his work THE YELLOW CAKE REVUE, which is in itself a departure from his usual orchestral and operatic work and Agnes feels privileged to be able to include Mr Maxwell Davis among her authors and composers.