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NAZARETH

Scottish rockers Nazareth have built a twelve-year career by doing exactly the opposite of what's prescribed by the dictates of fashion, commerce, or by the standard operational procedures for a rock 'n' roll band. Yet in the process, they've sold 15 million records worldwide and scored 14 number one hits in countries around the world.

Their latest A&M Records album, *SNAZ*, is no exception. After over a decade of concertizing and resisting pressure to issue a live album, Nazareth have finally done so—their way. When the band recorded the LP during their Spring, 1981 tour, they avoided the "greatest hits" approach of most live albums (while including their hits "Love Hurts" and "This Flight Tonight," albeit recast in the inimitable Nazareth fashion), and offered such surprises as a two-song studio "encore" recorded immediately after the band got home from the tour.

"We finally felt that it was time to do one," explains singer Dan McCafferty of the live disc. "With two new members (22-year-old Scottish guitarist Billy Rankin and ex-Spirit keyboard player John Locke, who have joined the Nazareth founding core of McCafferty, guitarist Manny Charlton, bassist Pete Agnew and drummer Darrell Sweet), we're approaching the numbers differently. It seemed a perfect way to wrap up over ten years of music that would really cover the whole spectrum." Produced by the band and John Punter, who engineered *Hair of the Dog*, *SNAZ* reflects the band's unusual range.

Nazareth's choice of material and subject matter has always been unusual. For a hard-rocking band to cover an Everly Brothers ballad that failed to chart in 41 previous attempts might seem like commercial suicide; but Nazareth's 1976 single of "Love Hurts" has sold over four million copies to date and has topped the charts in 11 countries, becoming the best-selling single ever in Norway, and outselling the classic "Bridge Over Troubled Water" throughout Europe.

Their own choice of subjects to write about are equally bizarre. Their last A&M studio album, *Fool Circle*, was inspired by the election of President Ronald Reagan, and paints a wry vision of impending doom, with Soviet troops dressed to kill, nuclear warheads soaring giddily through the sky, and media men lunching with urban guerillas on expense accounts.

Such determination and independent thinking has been at the core of Nazareth's music and career since the beginning. McCafferty, Agnew, Sweet and Charlton have been playing in bands since the seminal early-Sixties days that yielded acts like the Rolling Stones and the Yardbirds. And in 1964, when the London music papers refused to give Scottish bands serious attention, future Naz guitarist Manny Charlton walked 450 miles from Edinburgh to London in protest, getting TV coverage for his cause every night. A few years later, Charlton joined a group called the Shadettes, which included McCafferty, Sweet and Agnew, who later emerged as Nazareth in the early Seventies on two promising albums—*Nazareth* and *Exercises*.

When Deep Purple's Roger Glover took over the band's production with *Razamanaz*, the group finally hit the British charts. The Glover-produced *Loud 'n' Proud* hit number one in Sweden and Switzerland, number two in Germany and top five in Austria. In 1974, the band recorded Joni Mitchell's "This Flight Tonight," which not only received an award for staying in the German charts longer than any song before it, but launched the band's Canadian career. Nazareth became the first British band to make a transcontinental Canadian tour, and have earned ten Canadian gold and nine platinum discs for their efforts. They also earned the admiration and friendship of Mitchell herself, so impressed with their version of her song that she later introduced it to her fans on a British tour as "a Nazareth song."

After *Rampant* in 1974, Manny Charlton took over as producer and cut "Love Hurts" as a single and five more albums until Jeff "Skunk" Baxter, former guitarist with Steely Dan and the Doobie Brothers, was recruited to produce *Malice In Wonderland* and *Fool Circle*.

(over please)



After meeting keyboardist John Locke, who played on *Fool Circle*, Nazareth were delighted that they could coax him out of semi-retirement to join the band for the following tour. After all, Nazareth used to play songs in their bar days by Locke's old band, Spirit. Guitarist Rankin was discovered through a tip by an ex-Naz employee, and knocked the band out in audition.

The band recorded a number of dates during the tour's second half for the planned live album. Anxious to have a live album whose quality equaled their studio work, the band "hardly slept for a week, sitting up every night listening to tapes of the show we'd just done, on the bus," says McCafferty.

Still energized from the tour, Nazareth bounced back into the studio to record more songs. Reworking Tim Rose's "Morning Dew," first covered by Naz on their debut album, and cutting a new original song, "Juicy Lucy," the band decided to add the studio cuts to *SNAZ* as "an extra bonus for our fans. And as usual," says McCafferty, "we couldn't do a live album totally in the usual form."

Encompassing material from all twelve years of Nazareth's history, *SNAZ* proves them to be, as England's *Sounds* observed, a "band that hits you in the gut without knocking you senseless ... (and) delivers songs, not noises to tune Concordes to, and aren't afraid to slip out of style for a number or two."

According to McCafferty, slipping into preconceived modes is close to impossible for the band. "Anytime we've ever tried to formulate something, it's turned out terribly. After 'Love Hurts,' people would say, 'If only you could do another one of those' And for about a year afterwards, I'd get at least three tapes a week—stuff like 'Love Burps,' 'Love Limps,' 'Love Crawls'

"So instead of making our live album like a 'Stars on 45' type of thing, just re-doing the hits, we changed things around and mixed them up a bit."

But after all the gold albums, stylistic innovations, quixotic cover songs and highly unusual international tours, one question still remains: What is this distinctly unclassifiable entity known as Nazareth?

"A rock 'n' roll band," declares McCafferty. "There are very few left"