

No Speak - Music Too Good For Words

...Miles Copeland talks about his new project

by Machgel Bakker

"I miss great guitar players!" Maybe this is what has led the indefatigable Miles Copeland to set up another project - the

No Speak series. Marketed under the slogan, "Music Too Good For Words," No Speak is an instrumental rock label designed for the 90s. It attempts to grab the 30-plus age bracket whose interest in pop and rock has seriously waned now that the era of image-marketing is at its climax. What makes No Speak so different from New Age and is there really a gap to fill? Miles Copeland speaks.



Wishbone Ash

The first four No Speak albums will be available this month and include LPs from: the 70s' formation Wishbone Ash who regrouped in their original line-up for the occasion; former Climax Blues Band guitarist Pete Haycock; William Orbit, frontman of the ex-I.R.S. band, Torch Song; and Stewart Copeland, ex-drummer of the Police and Miles' brother. By the end of the year, the No Speak series will comprise 12 albums, all instrumental and all in the rock genre.

Copeland: "What we're aiming at is an audience that grew up with rock music in the 60s and early 70s - whether it be Jimi Hendrix, Led Zeppelin or Cream. Currently there is hardly any music for the 35-plus age group. Of course, there is the New Age Music stuff; they are also aiming at an older audience which is not satisfied by current pop music. But it is all very one-sided. It's the sort of music that's

great for dinner parties or to relax to, but not very good for driving down the highway: you would end up having your car smashed!" No Speak, however, is for the active adult market, the awake side of that audience.

The music industry is, in fact, facing a new renaissance: there is an upsurge in jazz, New Age is finding its niche, and labels like Elektra's Nonesuch and Island's Antilles are concentrating on various ethnic forms of music. "But there are no records for a progressive, older rock audience," says Copeland. "If you want to hear something new and modern, and you don't particularly relate to lyrics about picking up a girl for the first time, well, then there is not much to appeal to you. And that is a real shame. There are very few bands these days where the musician is just as important as the group. Except maybe Knopfler, great musicians fall out of



Pete Haycock

the business. And I found an opening that interested me: I want to listen to great musicians and hear them for their musicianship and not for their latest hairdo or looks! There is a gap to fill!"

The idea of No Speak started when Copeland got hold of a demo cassette by Pete Haycock, the former guitarist with the Climax Blues Band, a band Copeland used to manage years ago. "All the songs on the tape were neat three-minute songs, with no guitar playing - he was desperately trying to make a hit single and secure a record deal. I called him up and asked 'what happened to your guitar playing?' He said that if he didn't come up with the right type of hit single, he wouldn't get a deal.

"So there you are: you are a master of your instrument, and that is what he is - a fabulous player - but nobody is interested! I wish there was a little less emphasis on singles. It's the tail wagging the dog. You're supposed to make records for the audience, not for the radio.

"We are now on the edge of a new era, where the musician is becoming more important. It all goes in circles. Every 10 years there is a new orientation. In the 50s it was the solo performer, like Presley, who was popular. The Beatles changed all that and suddenly pop groups with hit singles were in. Long hair was in, image was important. Ten years later there was a rise in progressive rock and its accent on musicianship. Anti-image, anti-singles and the rise of FM radio in America. A complete difference in orientation.

"The punk came along and musicianship was frowned upon. Drum solos and guitar battles were all shunned. Now we're facing a similar update. The musician is becoming more important again. Look at what happened with Sting: the guy uses jazz musicians, like Omar Hakim and Branford Marsalis, puts them into a rock setting, and it works. People love it!"

CBS, distributing the No Speak series through I.R.S., are particularly excited about the upcoming launch and want to push

No Speak as a quality label to both media, consumers and rental. As the music does not lend itself directly to release on singles, the promotion emphasis will obviously be more on the series' suitability on CD.

As Paul Burger, Vice President CRI Europe puts it: "Recently, some record companies have released instrumental product which might be described as 'no music'. But with No Speak we have a project built entirely around great music from some of the all-time best musicians. We're not going to find top 10 singles, but the public will certainly find super music on each and every No Speak CD. This is the ultimate CD project - the kind of music mature consumers have been waiting for us, the record industry, to produce."

The first four releases cover a wide spectrum of music. Although the listener sometimes needs an experienced ear, the launch of No Speak is definitely an accomplished one. Whereas Stewart Copeland's *The Equalizer* & *Other Cliff Hangers* (the score for the Equalizer TV series starring Edward Woodward) is a textured collection of hyperactive themes and dreamy notes, the Wishbone Ash album *Nouveau Calls* is of more direct appeal.

The sparkling dual guitars of Andy Powell and Ted Turner, are amply featured on melodic and imaginative rock tracks like *Tangible Evidence* and *A Rose Is A Rose*. Pete Haycock's *Guitar And Soul* opts for a more traditional bluesy and thematic rock approach, with a lot of rollicking guitar riffs. *Dr Brown I Presume* is perhaps the best example of Haycock's confident guitar phrasings. And finally, William Orbit's *Strange Cargo* creates an ambience that is both rocking and nebulous; the track *Fire And Mercy* makes a serious attempt at fusing New Age values with rock idioms.

"I am not going to claim that these albums are the best records of the century. But what is more important: I like them. And if I like them, there will certainly be others who are equally interested." ■

No Speak Discography

Pete Haycock - *Guitar & Soul*
Wishbone Ash - *Nouveau Calls*
Stewart Copeland - *The Equalizer And Other Cliff Hangers*
William Orbit - *Strange Cargo*
Available on LP/MC/CD

Copeland Can See For Miles



Miles Copeland

Miles Copeland can boast an impressive career in the music industry that started way back in '69 when he started to manage Wishbone Ash. The group enjoyed several album successes in the early 70s with titles like *Argus*, *Pilgrimage* and *Four*. His management firm, Scope International, flourished with the addition of acts like Climax Blues Band, Renaissance, Curved Air, Caravan, Al Stewart and Joan Armatrading. In 1975 he formed a record label, BTM Records, representing a lot of these acts in the US.

"Then everything started to go wrong - album releases were delayed, a major European package tour collapsed, it was like dominoes." Copeland had to drop everything and was just licking his wounds when the turbulent punk era arrived - and he was the first one to book the Sex Pistols in the Marquee. "I realised there was a new genera-

tion coming forward. Nobody saw it. I did, because I wanted to see it: I had nothing at that time."

A little later, The Police were formed. Copeland became their manager, took the band to the States and cracked that market. The rest is history. I.R.S. Records was formed in 1979 and yielded successful acts like The Bangles, R.E.M., The Alarm, Go-Go's and Timbuk 3. At the moment his management company is representing artists such as Sting, the Bangles, Squeeze and Rosie Vela.

Copeland also owns a publishing company, Bugle Songs, and an LA-based film company called I.R.S. World Media. Finally, a new label, Pangea, has recently been set up in co-operation with Sting, with the aim of releasing "art punk" era arrived - and he was the first one to book the Sex Pistols in the Marquee. "I realised there was a new genera-

Wishbone Ash/Pete Haycock European Tour

April (Germany) Aachen (6); Bayreuth (7); Erlangen (8); Bueren-Hardt (9); Bremen (10); Bochum (11); Tuttlingen (12); Hamburg (13); Hannover (14); Fulda (15); Bocholt (16); Geiselwind-Wuerzburg (17); Munich (19); (Austria) Vienna (30); May (Holland) Amsterdam (3); (Germany) Frankfurt (4); Stuttgart (5).