

Richard Lloyd

Interview

TELEVISION

Back! Considering that they actually planned to record their third album in 1992, Television has fulfilled the fondest dreams of the many rock critics who swooned over these progenitors of the CBGBs scene in the late '70s by reuniting to make an eponymous album. To witness Television in action is to observe two pas de deux. On the one hand, there is the crack rhythm section of Billy Ficca on drums and Fred Smith on bass, coolly choreographing the scene. On the other, there are the guitarists Tom Verlaine and Richard Lloyd who split the spotlight in an interaction that alternates between a duet and a duel: Lloyd's swaggering and throaty muscle music in counterpoint to Verlaine's ethereal and abstract etudes. Having all laid aside their individual projects and commitments to give free rein to the group charisma, the four have recently completed European and American tours. Interrogated individually, Verlaine and Lloyd provide a parallax view on Television.

What's it like, now? Is it different being Television only as opposed to Television Machine years ago?

Verlaine: "Shouldn't be different." I don't think it's very much different at all, actually.

The music still is distinctively Television—what you wrote has called "your ally can fighting in a garbage can," but I think it sounds older—a pretty predictable effect of aging—like a fist in a glove as opposed to just a fist. How has a certain quality of alchemy in Television's music, "Blame, she wrote this," for example, or "Mr. Lee," sort of a James Bond sound, that makes TV music sound that makes me wonder if you are looking back in your youth or early pop culture for inspiration.

Verlaine: "Do you think so? That's very funny because Tom has been playing that sort of theme consistently."

And Tom said in one interview that "Four Seasons" is real garage and somewhere else I found a reference to the Ventures.

Verlaine: "He says that I like it even less now than I do. I like what maybe it does for Tom. That's a difference between us rather than a common bond. It was like that would, you should check out Tom's instrumental record. It's very much that. Maybe Tom wanted a bit of music. I was more into



Richard Lloyd—Shouldn't think we're back in it

sound by other things. I started playing a little guitar that was in my parent's house and I had only heard it. I wasn't very successful. I started playing it with my fists and a bottle and they wouldn't get me another one. In New York, my ambition had a setback when I was seven and eight and he didn't want me playing it because it was a waste since the amplifier he'd want to work it. And I played drums in the middle school and sang along with the records. I was going to be Dave Clark or a Beatles or a Rolling Stone. Then I switched to guitar and here I was playing it next issue.

I'll tell you what I like that I think has influenced Television. Remember there was this magazine called "Ragga?" It was a compilation of all the really '60s American garage bands—the Trash, Les Luthes, The Pogues—they were all rubbish bands. They all had one for me: make the American Dream in the '60s—a lot of these stupid songs and just really badly sounding love letters—"I Had Fun Making an Ocean Last Night," "Gone, Water"—but if you took all of those songs and kind of made one band

out of it, that was the band that influenced Television. I like how that kind of sound rather than the James Bond, which I remember thinking was real cool when it came out but it, didn't say with me.

As the interview continues, well, I don't feel that is the music that was more interesting to me. But, the last thing that we did was we moved a little studio and we were forced to pack up our instruments, we plugged them in and began to play. The songs, we did songs, we did songs—just making music and seeing what was up and if it was going to be too far or not if it would work because you never know in that period of time if somebody has really moved in another direction musically and guess what they're not interested in the example. You just don't know. I think it was immediately obvious that it would be very difficult.

I was thinking previously when listening to your old and newer music that the sound is so differentiated. It's four people playing and the sound that keeps getting used in your music is "music," which I think is a very good word. I was talking to somebody who described something they liked in music which was a quality of design in the musical/sonic space and who drew connections between this quality and several different things: words of music which are almost or equal. That's the quality I get very strongly when I listen to your work. One thinks of each piece progressing as four different strands with a certain dramatic experience.

And then when I was reading especially in your press about how you all sounded so comfortable all the time, I thought about that and the sort of "music" there is around each of your musical lines and I don't get the feeling that Television is a "one thing" or a multi-faceted experience.

Verlaine: "Well, you got to be there in a certain sense but, you know, we have differences of opinion, we just play together in a way and I'm going to like you and Fred will like another and Tom will go to the other of them. I think we are four very strong individuals in this sense. But the common denominator which is probably more important is that when the music is happening, our points of agreement are 99% stronger than our points of disagreement. And even in the music there will be some differences of opinion."

Do you feel like playing with the group as opposed to working on your own stuff or working with someone else brings out different facets of your identity as a guitar player?

Verlaine: "It brings out different facets in my playing. One thing, I think, is that what we have is generally unique in terms of guitar bands. Other bands are mostly one guitar—CD or B.B. King, which started out as a one guitar band though now they have two or you have two guitar bands which usually either one or both of the guys is something more or more about but they are something in a folk style more in electric guitar and the other guy is playing a bass or it's really defined one lead, one rhythm."

What we are completely not that. We hardly ever play a whole about. Mine's like somebody's part, two pieces of a guitar piece that when they're connected, even though you can differentiate them, because one object of movement from the beginning of the song to the end of the song. That really does change each other. I think that's really unique. For me, if I'm playing, thing is moved in my mind. I try to come up with two parts or well because that's what I like to hear. Usually I'm thinking of both sides. With Television, Tom is going to think of something completely different than I am and then I am going to play something completely different than Tom would have come up with.

Tom also in the previous of when I was here in about about what you that he doesn't like and I will continue to those things and you will come up with something that he and makes I feel for the response of aggression we just have Tom that maybe Tom that if Tom having trouble feeling a relationship. With Television, it's a very different style that's being drawn out of me and I think the real music is constantly something. In one sense it's a bit more like both of us because neither is playing the leads the whole night. Obviously we can both play lead—there's negotiation of that. What you have then something, a kind of more personal and watching the lead on stage, so that you're going there you're going out there, you're going. I think you have that. You know you can go 220 and you don't know which one's going to jump out of the box when and if they do. That's looking at something always in the range of a playing. Let me make sure what you said you said about being exactly. The same phenomenon with the stars can come with aggression it does in a particular particular one sense of energy. I think that's beauty in the rock band.