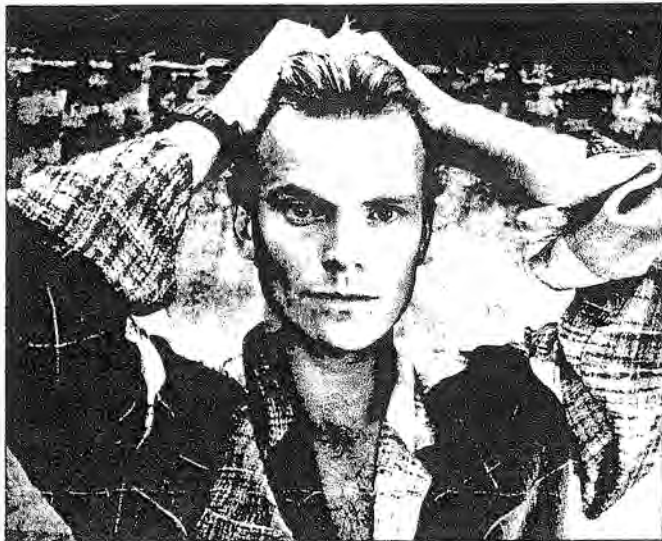


MUSIC WEEK

By D.B. Atkins



Sting: a new movie gives pretension a bad name.

► THE INDULGENCE OF BEING EARNEST

If you want to watch Sting's girlfriend Trudie Styler give birth to his fourth child, by all means go see the rockumentary **Bring On the Night**. If you want to see Sting's new band prepare for their Paris debut by rehearsing tunes they had already recorded on his LP **The Dream of the Blue Turtles**, this movie is for you. If watching Sting try to sing the blues is your idea of a good time, go no further. But if you are put off by a man who, when asked what the birth of his child means, responds, "More than I thought it would," avoid this movie at all costs.

Of course the groundwork for Sting's Olympian pretensions and stultifying pop "philosophies" was laid by the album itself. *Blue Turtles* was to be Sting's breakthrough—a record that would cross the boundaries between white and black music, between rock and jazz. For this arduous journey Sting hired four terrific young black jazz musicians: pianist Kenny Kirkland and saxophonist Branford Marsalis of brother Wynton Marsalis' quintet, drummer Omar Hakim of Weather Report and bassist Darryl Jones of Miles

Davis' recent group. Then he whisked them away to Barbados and had them play like session musicians on any slick pop record: almost no improvising, no spontaneity, splendid execution, little fire. The music was less dynamically sophisticated than that of the Police, and the lyrics worse.

When Sting wasn't preening narcissistically in his love songs (certain hits), he was discoursing

gravely on the fate of the earth in his political songs. Not even Sting—who sings splendidly if coldly on the record—can redeem a verse like the one from his antiwar *Russians*: "How can I save my little boy from Oppenheimer's deadly toy/ There is no monopoly of common sense/ On either side of the political fence/ . . . I hope the Russians love their children too." Is there a question?

After interviewing the likes of Francis Coppola and Martin Scorsese, he hired Michael (*Coal Miner's Daughter*) Apter to direct. The film consists of beautifully framed images of Paris, exhaustive footage of the band rehearsing in a countryside chateau, even more exhausting footage of their first concert, and a mix of good-natured, stagy joking-around scenes intercut with one-on-one interviews with the participants about *What It All Means*. The whole thing is expertly done and fundamentally soulless. It is the first documentary in memory with a wardrobe consultant. It's an intellectual's vanity production.

► HORNS OF PLENTY

Wynton Marsalis *Black Codes (From the Underground)*. Before Kirkland and Branford left Wynton Marsalis for greener (\$) pastures, they recorded this startling session together. Wynton Marsalis, like Sting, is a pretentious ideologue—in the liner notes you will find him ranting about junk food, illiteracy and "anything that pushes your taste down to an ob-



Marsalis: cool control.

vious, animal level"—but when it comes to the music, he has the distinct advantage of closing his mouth and *blowing*. Wynton's trumpet playing—his ticket to the twin Grammys for jazz and classical albums that he won two years ago—sounds less like brilliant mathematics and more like mature emotion than it ever has in the past. And his writing, which betrays a love for Wayne Shorter's mid- to late-'60s work with Miles Davis, remains sharp and clear and muscular.

Wayne Shorter *Atlantis*. Just the existence of this album is a cause for celebration: it's the saxophonist's first recording away from a stagnant Weather Report in eleven years. Shorter's nine compositions dominate this almost totally acoustic session: they are dodgy and whimsical, like mysterious little jewels or musical haikus. And Shorter shows his lucid soprano is still the most gorgeous saxophone sound around. ♦

THE SOUND OF MOVIES

► Jessica Lange's exuberant portrayal of C & W singer **Patsy Cline** in the film *Sweet Dreams* should win Cline a new posthumous generation of admirers. About the star, who died in a 1963 plane crash, Lange says admiringly, "Patsy never overthought anything. She was like a firecracker going off all the time" . . . ► **Paul McCartney**, fresh from his disastrous movie musical, *Give My Regards to Broad Street*, is trying comedy again—with Chevy Chase and Dan Aykroyd. The threesome were at London's famed Abbey Road Studios in mid-October, making a video for Chevy and Dan's next picture, *Spies Like Us*. McCartney will stick to the sound-track single this time . . . ► Months after he stabbed his girlfriend, Nancy Spungen, to death, Sex Pistols star **Sid Vicious** was found dead in a Greenwich Village apartment of a heroin overdose. It was Feb. 2, 1979, the beginning of the end of punk music. Now Vicious will be resurrected on the large screen by Alex Cox, director of the cult classic *Repo Man*. The title is *Love Kills* . . . ► **Michael Jackson's** twelve-minute space-fantasy film for Disneyland and Disney World, *Captain EO*, is now in the can. Shot in 3-D by director Francis Coppola, the project and a record are said to be what kept Jackson from appearing at the Live Aid concert.