The Envelope, Please

By Michael Mariotte

K, maybe there was at least one significant musical happening in 1982. The Who finally packed up their guitar cases for good and through a series of outdoor concerts officially passed to the Clash their title of spokesmen for a generation. But, somehow, the passing of the torch seemed not only a little arrogant-after all, it takes a bit of arrogance to claim the title in the first place-but also a little pointless, being at least four years too late. And knowing that the whole shebang was bankrolled by Schlitz made it that much less convincing.

Other than that, it was the year of the rise of the Human League and the fall of the Go-Go's. Big deal. With the exception of the rapmaster Grandmaster Flash, no artist seemed to take risks. Instead, we were treated to the blandness and instant forgettability of an endless succession of British synth-pop bands. Does anyone even now remember Haircut 100? It was a year in which the music can be summed up in one word: harmless.

Locally, by far the most important event occurred on the next to last day of the year: the announcement of the pending sale and format change of WHFS-FM. It's not possible to overstate the devastating effect this will have on the local music scene.

The other major local music news of the year was the continuing rash of club closings. Desperado's and Psychedelly shut their doors forever, while Columbia Station canned live music. On the brighter side, the opening of the Wax Museum, Gentry, Upstairs 704 and most recently, a Friendship Station, means that the club scene is in a period of retrenchment, not decay.

Still, something must have happened this past year to catch your fancy-City Paper received over twice as many reader poll ballots as

Best Single. The Clash's tour with



The Clash finally made Hitsville with "Rock The Casbah."



Hoboken heartthrobs The Bongos were Rookies of the Year.

the Who and subsequent AOR airplay (finally!) paid off: "Rock The Casbah" was voted the year's best single, just nudging out Grandmaster Flash's angry rap epic "The Message"-a song that should have received a lot more airplay. No other single even came close. A local band, the Acrylix, finished a distant third with their "Waiting/Dancing" release. Two other local bands—Switchblade with "Rock Too Much" and the now defunct and missed Martha Hull & the Steady Jobs with "Face in Your Face"-also finished ahead of the

Best Album. You liked the single

"Rock The Casbah," it makes sense that you would like the album it came from as well-Combat Rock-right? Wrong, Combat Rock actually received only one vote. You figure it out. Finishing at the top of the balloting was new wave/AOR crossover Joe Jackson with Night and Day. The runner-up was Elvis Costello's critically acclaimed but rarely heard on the radio Imperial Bedroom. There was a three-way tie for third: Marshall Crenshaw's selftitled debut, the Who's finale, It's Hard, and Mental Decay by D.C.'s Tru Fax and the Insaniacs. Two other local albums also received significant mention: the Faith/Void



hardcore sampler, arguably the best of its kind ever; and the Slickee Boys German import album, Here to Stay.

Best Group. It's perhaps fitting that the band voted as the best didn't release an album this year. The Police apparently can, still riding the success of last year's Ghost in the Machine. Placing second was The Clash, and finishing a close third, perhaps on the basis of their strong live performances here (they weren't mentioned in any other category) was the Gang of Four. Honorable mentions must go to the late, lamented Squeeze, the Who, Elvis Costello, Vanity 6, and, for the nostalgia crowd, The Beatles.

Results in The Most Overrated category this year was a lesson in the fickleness of music fans. Last year the Go-Go's walked away with the title of best new band. You couldn't get enough of them. This year, following the dismal Vacation, you've reconsidered and decided they're the most overrated band in the world. Placing second in this category as well was The Clash. Third was last year's most overrated, The Rolling Stones.

Best Local Band. The top-rated local band this year, probably to nobody's surprise, was perennial favorites The Slickee Boys, whose Here to Stay retrospective and frenetic live performances have firmly established them as D.C.'s favorite. Second place went to artpoppers the Acrylix while the revved-up psycho doom sound of the Velvet Monkeys carned them third place, despite their having played infrequently during the last half of the year. Top runners-up included Tru Fax & The Insaniacs, Switchblade, the Nighthawks, and the Rosslyn Mountain Boys.

Most Valuable Player. King Crimson guitarist Adrian Belew topped this category with funk rocker Prince a close second. A three waytie for third: Joe Jackson, Elvis Costello and Tru Fax guitarist David Wells. A number of other local artists were right behind, including Under Heaven's Howard Wuelfing, Slickee Boys guitarist Marshall Keith and Acrylix drummer Shelly Sienna.

The Best New Band went to Hoboken's hard popsters The Bongos, whose frequent D.C. appearances and Drums Along the Hudson album have won them a number of loyal fans. Tied for second were the new wave mainstream of Marshall Crenshaw and the Stray Cats, followed by the synth bands Men at Work and A Flock of Seaguils. Two local bands placed high: Under Heaven and the Court Jesters.

The Most Hated Song seemed to be everyone's favorite category this year-there were so many to choose from. When the counting was over it was a dead heat: the Human League's overplayed "Don't You Want Me Baby" and Paul McCartney and Stevie Wonder's pathetic collaboration "Ebony & Ivory."
Toni Basil's "Mickey" finished a close second.

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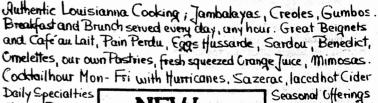
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