 Much media noise has emanated recently from a California congressional clown wolfing the presence of Satanic subliminal messages in rock 'n' roll. The revelations include whispered sweet-nothings to The Man Downstairs on back-tracked Led Zeppelin records (what, no "Bonzo is dead"?), and similar horrors all exhorting the sheerlike youth of America to detonate down the inferno-bound exit ramp.

But hell (wrong word?), this sort of neo-red-baiting ain't exactly new on the pop-culture battlefield, especially from the knee-jerk paranoidists on the Christian no-fun fundamentalist right flank. And while such whining does have its nuisance value (a further reminder of America's dangerous swing rightward—as if we needed another), it's also welcome evidence that rock still has the power to offend someone, somewhere—between institutionalized arena rock and sanitized dance music, things have gotten pretty inoffensive.

The irony, though, is that these guys needn't have gone so far as to play stuff backwards—I would've pointed 'em towards plenty where the subtext is as plain as the guilt-twists in their libidos. Killing Joke, whose third LP, Revelations (Editions EG, dist. by Jem), busts this jolly English quartet through their Jerry Cornelius stage of dance-band the apocalypse (hollow and unconvincing, I thought) into a far more credible (and less chilling to the point of psychosis, is Sydney, Australia's SPK (stands for Surgical Penis Klink, if you just knew), which is the stickiest band in existence (makes Throbbing Gristle look like Debby Boone). Their first American release (fourth overall) is Leichenschrei (Thermidor), which, a press release helpfully informs me, translates as "corpse shrieks." Charming bunch. If the album's positively demonic blend of Luciferian hammering, overexcited noise generators and Stigian doom-muttering is too much for you, just be thankful you missed SPK's brief American tour this past spring. These seriously twisted Aussies filled NYC's notorious 99 cent beer dive with viciously colliding metal, hoarse screeching, and a subterranean bass rumble—all accompanied by a slide show so hellishly deranged it would've sent Adolf Eichmann running for the vomitorium. Whew.

For the more faint of heart, there's Bauhaus, a sort of goth-psychadelic heavy metal band teetering on the brink of obnoxiousness. Their two import LPs, in the Flat Field (4 A.M.) and Mask (Beggars Banquet), have some clever moments of dark-atmosphere manipulation. But live, their overdramatic, narcissistic image-mongering strangeness everything (prime offender: singer Peter Murphy, trapped in an identity crisis between Dr. Bowie and Mr. Hyde). Seeing them recently at the Riot—smoke machines spewing—I found it easy to accept them as an opening act for Black Sabbath within a year (evidently A&M Records agrees with me—they've just picked up Bauhaus for American release).

Since Chrome don't perform live, they avoid some of the traps Bauhaus fall into, but they too seem ensnared in a heavy metal thud-rumble tar pit. Their latest LP, 3rd from the Sun (Siren, dist. by Faulty Products)—something like their sixth or seventh—only briefly equals the brilliance of their 1977 Alien Soundtracks (confined to "Off the Line"). The rest is just ex-Pearl Harbor rhythm section John & Hilary Stench thrashing dazedly behind a drooling, treated guitar and form beyond the-great apocalyptic nature of a.

These sourpusses could take a lesson or two from Nash the Slash, the Canadian one-man band, who keywords his horror-film imagery with Vincent Price-y camp humor. His latest release, the all-instrumental Import of the Month

Second only to a top-tied Residents and Yello, You've Got Foetus on Your Breath (nifty name, eh?) are my current favorite band. The music imprinted on their LP Deapth (Self-Immolation import) is alternately ugly, hilarious, ironically coy, intensely bitingly, and brazenly tuneful. I know absolutely nothing about them, I think they're great.

Lou Statths

Addresses:
Thermidor: 912 Bancroft
Way, Berkeley, CA 94710
Faulty Products: 633 N.
LaBrea, Hollywood, CA
90036
Cut-Throat Productions: Box 279,
Station J, Toronto, Ont.
Canada M4J 4Y1
Rough Trade: 326 6th Street,
San Francisco, CA 94103
Self-Immolation: 35 Brick,
Enbury Road, London
N2 UK

Downers

DESSIOUR

NU

VINYL

Heavy Metal Oct 82