

KING SHAG IS BACK

● Bombing around The Riviera in a convertible BMW screaming abuse at the rich are STEVEN WELLS and lensman KEVIN 'O'GRADELY' CUMMINS. The soundtrack that roars from their speakers? BARRY WHITE, of course.

Barry," says the hack, "what is love?" Big Barry, just for a second, closes his eyes.

"The thing about love is . . ." he says in a voice deeper than the deepest depths of the deepest ocean, "the thing about love is that . . . it grows."

The hack nods seriously and sucks his pencil.

"Like this plant here," says Barry in a voice like a vast copper vat of bubbling chocolate. "If you came back here in a year this plant will have grown."

The hack reaches out and tenderly rubs a leaf of the pot plant between thumb and finger.

"Um, Barry, this plant . . ."

"Yes?" says Barry in a voice as rich as a lake of melted fudge.

"It's plastic . . ."

The disco scene of the mid '70s was not solely restricted to the *Saturday Night Fever*-ed fleshpots of the



Big Baz: every . . . er, inch a love machine

Big Apple. For myself and my contemporaries in Bradford 2 it was Friday night in a Boys Brigade hut where the DJ was a local minister and you had to salute the flag and stand to attention as they played the national anthem before you could strut your funky stuff.

The girls put their handbags at their feet, knew all the words and they had the dance routines (nicked off *TOTP*) down pat. The lads waited for Mud or Slade or Elvis and then did the broken-angled Showaddywaddy jive.

Only at the end did the sexes mingle. The "smoocher" played

as the lights dimmed and, even in this sanctuary of healthy Christianity, you were allowed to rub genitals and grasp each others' buttocks. 10cc's 'I'm Not In Love' was the most popular smoocher. After that it was Barry White and Barry White and Barry White and Barry White.

BARRY WHITE PROMOTES SECULAR HUMANISM

What is God, Barry? "I am God," says Big Barry in a voice like the distant rumbling of a million stampeding buffalo. "And you are God."

"What's your star sign?" Barry asks press officer Vicki in a voice like slow thunder on a sexy summer's night. She tells him she's a Capricorn.

"I thought so," says Baz. "You have beautiful eyes."

"And what's your star sign?" he asks the photographer in a voice like the back legs of a rusty giant robo-grasshopper rubbed slowly together.

"I'm a Leo, me," says Kevin.

"I have a son called Kevin," says Barry.

It's Monte Carlo and tonight Barry White, the man they call 'The Hippopotamus Of Love', is playing a club where a bottle of champagne will set you back £120. Backstage the white-suited musicians team. Round the front I have been stopped by a bouncer.

"I'm sorry, monsieur, you must wear a jacket." So I go and hire a jacket and a tie from the cloakroom.

A ponce in a monkey suit struts up to me, points at my training shoes and starts screaming. Tony, Barry's mate, says it's OK, the guy's with Barry, we can rush him in quick and nobody will notice.

I say, hand on a minute, these are very expensive training shoes. "Hey!" says Tony. "I have an idea, why don't we stick him up on the balcony?"

The ponce is holding his nose and gesticulating towards my feet as if I was trying to tread dog shit into his puce coloured acrylic carpet or something. "Presente!" he squeals. "Presente!"

This is really starting to piss me off. "Look mate," I babble, "you may have a dress code, alright, and you may just be doing your job but for f—'s sake don't start slugging off the way I'm dressed when you're got up like some

professional chimp impersonator . . ."

The ponce doesn't understand a word I'm saying so I take the jacket off, screw it up into a ball and fling it back in the cloakroom. I stomp off seething, passing the venue's adjacent drive-in porno-cinema . . . oooh! It's so Goddamned BIG! . . . Just relax, baby, and enjoy it . . . I can't WAIT to feel it inside me! . . . I hail a taxi and we've gone but a hundred yards when a feverish patting of tracksuit bottom pockets reveals an awesomely unprintable truth. I've left all my money in the jacket. I am called a *cochon anglais* and booted out onto the street. Hotel mini-bars are made for nights like this.

ABCESS NO-DRUGS FRENZY

Barry was late for the interview because he had an abscess in his mouth and his drugs had just run out. So being a polite young gentleman I asked him if he was the healthy type. Barry stirs a body the size of Jupiter. In the time it has taken me to ask the question he has chainsmoked 58 menthol fags.

"Up here I'm healthy," he says in a voice like glaciers grinding their way through primeval swampland. He taps his head. "This is where it really matters." I ask about the voice. Bazzar's voice broke all of a sudden shortly after his 14th birthday. His mum was well alarmed and Barry, or Little Barry, as he was then known, began to notice that women looked at him funny and sort of sagged at the knees when he spoke.

"Here," says The Barracuda Of Sex Soul in a voice like a granite avalanche, "feel." He takes my hand in a surprisingly gentle grip and places it somewhere in the middle of the vast, hairy plain that is his chest. Barry speaks and a startled herd of wildebeest break for cover. No sexual organ could emit such sensual throbbing. I feel in my hand the sound of pure sex.

"Sensuality," says Barry in a voice like a Tyrannosaurus Rex purring. "I'm glad you used that word." He launches into an attack on the filth and corruption he sees around him. He talks about the need for new moral values, about how sex and love is dirtied and cheapened. He says that women need new role models. He raises his eyebrows as he recalls the Cher video he saw, he lowers them when he talks of Madonna.

"Women," says Big Barry, "who walk around with their short skirts and their breasts exposed. That's wrong. And men get the blame when they get raped. It's not something men can help, it's

"Women who walk around with their short skirts and their breasts exposed. That's wrong. And men get the blame when they get raped. It's not something men can help, it's their hormones . . ."



their hormones . . ."

This is, of course, total and utter crap. Rape has to do with power, not sexuality and it's always dumb to blame the victims. Barry sees love as something pure, something special between a man and a woman. That, he says, is what he sings about. So when Barry sings, as he does, in 'Love Serenade':

"Take it all off . . . I don't want to feel no panties, take off your brassiere my dear . . . Baby, you and me, huh, tonight we're going to get it on . . . Lick your lips, tempt me, tempt me, tempt me. Make me want you . . ." he's talking about you and your monogamous spouseperson. And yet Barry White was the soundtrack of the '70s, a decade awash with the shagfrenzy of the '60s, the 'permissive society'. Fidelity didn't really come into it.

Most babyboomers may have been conceived to the sound of Frank Sinatra but most punk rockers definitely first got their rocks off to Barry White. It's a sad fact that had Sid the Vish been more of a Bazfan, he'd have probably been a far happier adolescent.

Barry's new album — 'The Right Night And Barry White' — has all the slickness and hardness you'd associate with a late '80s soul product ("I am the artist most sampled by rap acts," claims Barry) and all the songs are about LUUUUUUURVE! which means SHAAAAAAAAGGING! (but only between two consenting heterosexual adults in a long term relationship, ahem).

Little Barry was a bit of a lad. Growing up in LA's black ghetto he was an ace burglar — "but I only took people's record collections. I musta had the best collection in the world" — and he's still proud of his ability to nick the tail-lights off an automobile in the time it takes to say "take off your brassiere my dear". But how would Big Barry feel if someone slunk into his pad and nicked all their records back?

"Ahh! Ahhh! You're a funny man! Ahhh! I wouldn't be too happy. They're at my mother's now — there's about 7,000 of them including everything by Barry White. That's irreplaceable."

Barry's manager, a hard-bitten LA music lawyer, has been sat making notes throughout the interview. I look over and see that he's written 'BARRY' in massive letters on his pad. He is now filling in the letters with flowers.

Barry White played the Albert Hall in April. He invited a young couple on stage. His name was Brian. Brian told Barry he liked to do it "very slowly". Well, yes, we all do sometimes don't we? "It", I mean.

CLOSE YOUR EYES AND THINK OF ENGLAND.

John McCarthy's done nothing else for the last three years.

On April 17th 1986, John McCarthy was kidnapped in Beirut. A British journalist on his first overseas posting, he had been there for just 32 days. Sadly, he's still there.

If you would like to see John released, please complete the form and return it to the Friends of John McCarthy, PO Box 80, London WC1X 8XE.

I am concerned at the fate of John McCarthy. Please send me a full information pack and a postcard with which to lobby Parliament.

Name _____

Address _____

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Don't forget the British Hostages in Beirut.

