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Dance

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attention and club play, and some are generating healthy sales. Franz Ferdinand's self-titled Domino/Epic disc, released in April, has sold 512,000 copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan, and the Killers' "Hot Fuss" (Island), issued in June, has moved 274,000. Also making inroads at retail are Scissor Sisters' self-titled debut (Universal) and T.I.'s sophomore disc, "Louden Up Now" (Touch & Go).

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Also figuring into the current mix are Duran Duran and Depeche Mode—two groundbreaking acts from the '80s that greatly influenced today's dance-rock bands. Epic is releasing the re-formed Duran Duran's new album, "Astronaut," Oct. 12, while Reprise will issue a Depeche Mode remix project, "Remixes 81-04," Oct. 26.

The interest in sounds from the '80s is emerging amid numerous other developments. Among them are Marilyn Manson's cover of Depeche Mode's "Personal Jesus," which is currently being delivered to modern rock radio. The B-52's are recording a new dance-rock album. And No Doubt scored last year with a cover of Talk Talk's '80s new wave hit "It's My Life."

Now No Doubt frontwoman Gwen Stefani is gearing up for the Nov. 23 release of her solo debut; the as-yet-untitled Interscope album is preceded by dance-rock single "What You Waiting For."

'AN EXCITING TIME'

Universal Records president Monte Lipman isn't sure if what's happening is completely new. "It's the same thing that happened in the '80s with the British invasion of rock music," he notes. "And when you think about it, what was referred to as 'modern rock' or 'alternative radio' was, in a lot of cases, synonymous with dance music."

Still, Duran Duran keyboardist Nick Rhodes finds this new wave of acts exciting—primarily because "they're real bands, which we didn't see much of in the producer-driven '90s. And while these new bands have clearly been influenced by some of the '80s music, they've each got their own sound."

Such words are music to the ears of Kathleen Hanna, one-third of Le Tigre, whose third album (and first for Strummer/Universal), "This Island," streets Oct. 19.

"This is an exciting time for us," she says. "Our label was telling us that we weren't rock enough for the rock world and not dance enough for dance. But now we're amongst other bands doing similar things."

Shears notes that before grunge exploded, "you could always dance to rock music—without necessarily headbanging or moshing." Historically, he adds, rock music has always been made for people to dance to.

Richard Morel, who records as Morel, says today's music is appealing to those who were listening to bands like New Order in the '80s, as well as to a much younger audience.

In both cases, Morel believes that people are responding to "swagger and distortion" inherent in the music of Morel's second album for Yoshitoshi Recordings, "Louden Up Now" (due Oct. 19), draws inspiration from the glam-rock of Bowie and T. Rex, as well as New Order's synth-pop sound. Producer Jason Nevins has been championing a hybrid for nearly two years. His remixes—for Made in Chelsea, Nelly, Aerosmith and others—are steeped in rock. In fact, his "bootleg remix" of Nelly's "Work It" referred to "Back in Black."

Earlier this year, Nevins' "I'm the Main Man"—with T. Rex's "Telegram Sam"—was featured in Coors' U.S. campaign for its Fine Lite Beer (*Billboard*, Jan. 10).

The dance-rock jam is included on the artist's full-length album, "Jason Nevins Presents the Funk Rocker," which Tommy Boy will release in January.

"I certainly didn't invent this sound, but I've been using guitars and rock elements in my productions and remixes for a while now," Nevins notes. "In this sense, I've always bucked the system, always preferring to go against the grain."

Ditto for Mercury Prize-winning Franz Ferdinand, whose lead vocalist/guitarist Alex Kapranos says that the band has always eschewed the rigidity of musical genres.

"We'd go to a club and dance to house music or electro or whatever," he offers. "Then, we'd go to see a band and come back [home] with a list of five or six new covers to make. We would all these things. Why can't we do that?"

The support is clear on the *Billboard* charts, where the Killers' same thing, which helps to explain why such artists are part of a larger, and growing, scene—a musically feisty movement that is being championed by such modern rock outlets as KITS San Francisco and KNKR Portland, Ore.

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KEY DANCE-ROCK TITLES

Franz Ferdinand, "Franz Ferdinand," Domino/Epic
 !!! (Chk Chk Chk), "Louden Up Now," Touch & Go
 The Killers, "Hot Fuss," Island
 Scissor Sisters, "Scissor Sisters," Universal
 Beep Beep, "Business Casual," Saddle Creek
 Radio 4, "Coolness of a Nation," Astralwerks

UPCOMING RELEASES

Spalding Rockwell, "Kate," Defend Music, Sept. 21

Interpol, "Antics," Matador, Sept. 28

Duran Duran, "Astronaut," Epic, Oct. 12

Le Tigre, "This Island," Strummer/Universal, Oct. 19

Morel, "Lucky Strike," Yoshitoshi Recordings, Oct. 19

UNKLE, "Never, Never, Land," Global Underground, Oct. 26

"Somebody Told Me" holds at No. 3 on the Modern Rock list for a second week, while bubbling under on Hot Dance Club Play.

Franz Ferdinand's "Take Me Out" also peaked at No. 3 on the Modern Rock chart.

Scissor Sisters' "Take Your Mama" is a top 30 hit on adult top 40, modern AC and triple-A. The Elton John-hued track has just been delivered to mainstream top 40 radio.

While KITS assistant PD/music director Aaron Axelsen says it's an exciting time to be programming modern rock, he also notes that it's important not to get carried away with any of the trends the format has experienced during the last 10 years.

"Whether it has been punk, electronica or nu-metal—and now indie dance-punk, post-punk or however you classify it—it's all very congruent with the forefathers of this format," he says.

For Axelsen, this means acts like the Ramones, Depeche Mode, New Order and the Smiths.

SHARING ONCE AGAIN

Still, it's notable that rock radio formats—and not dance stations—are championing this new sound.

Looking back, there was a point when the mainstream and modern rock formats shared acts with dance clubs. Prior to the advent of the Modern Rock chart in 1988, many acts reached both the Mainstream Rock and Club Play charts. These included Blondie, Culture Club, Duran Duran, Go-Go's, Billy Idol, INXS, the Rolling Stones and Talking Heads.

After the Modern Rock tally bowed, acts continued to cross between that chart and the Club Play listing. The B-52's, the Cure, Depeche Mode, Erasure, Nine Inch Nails, Siouxsie & the Banshees, U2 and others comfortably mingled on both charts.

However, since the mid- to late '90s, when darker, more aggressive groups like Korn, Limp Bizkit and Linkin Park began to dominate modern rock, fewer acts crossed over to danceclubs.

While there have been exceptions—including hits from Moby, No Doubt, U2, Depeche Mode and Filter—no act consistently criss-crossed between the two arenas.

"In the '60s, '70s and '80s, rock music had a strong dance element," Killers lead singer/keyboardist Brandon Flowers says. "Then, in the '90s, it got too aggressive and macho for its own good."

That decade began with grunge music, which begat rap-rock, which begat nu-metal.

Now, it has shifted to a more new wave sound. "You would definitely hear Talking Heads or Blondie in any type of club [years ago]," says Susan Busch, director of radio promotion at Sub Pop Records. "Now that you're hearing Franz Ferdinand, the Postal Service and the Killers on the radio, it makes more sense to hear this music in clubs—rather than a song by Mudvayne."

At the end of the day, she says, it's all cyclical. Rich McLaughlin, a format manager at Sirius Satellite, finds truth in this, but he also believes that current dance-rock is resonating with people "because of what's going on in the world today—particularly politically."

This is something on the minds of numerous artists interviewed for this story. "It must have something to do with the political climate in the air," says Jacob Thiele, keyboardist for the band. "It's a shift, and people just want music to be more fun again."

McLaughlin, Franz Ferdinand and the Killers are in-estimated acts on the two Sirius stations for which they are programming.

As a great for retail, says Richard Bridge, Virgin Entertainment's music product manager for dance and singles, "These acts are blurring the line between indie rock and are buying music for music's sake," he notes. "They're purchasing on quality, not some preconceived idea of sound like."

Club-based DJ/promoter Paul V. believes it's much the same: "People's tastes are much broader today. You used to have a very narrow focus."

