

Bronski Beat proved to be the sleeper hit of 1985. Certainly few would have predicted the magnitude of success that the electro-funk trio achieved not only in their native Britain, but also in Europe and the United States. The keening wail of their lead vocalist and their unusual musical and lyric approaches made them only an outside chance for major success, but they were huge hits virtually everywhere. Their debut album, The Age Of Consent, spawned two hits, "Why" and "Smalltown Boy," and is currently edging its way towards gold in America.

The Age Of Consent's haunting textures, provocative themes, and covers of Gershwin and Donna Summer made it one of the year's true left field delights. But most important was its emotional credibility, the heartfelt sincerity of Bronski Beat's examination of longing and alienation. No one could deny their genuine talent or the political fervor that animated it.

The group is currently going through personnel changes, with Larry Steinbachek and Steve Bronski remaining and vocalist Jimmy Somerville cooking up a new brew and calling it Communards. The demise of the original collaboration left in limbo a collection of alternate versions, remixes, and tracks previously unavailable in American release. Two special packages of material has been culled from these orphan tracks: A specially priced mini-LP including two new songs for American listeners, "Fun from Love" and "Hard Rain" and new versions of "Heat Wave," "Why," "Smalltown Boy" and "Junk". On the cassette of Hundreds and Thousands, as this new release is titled, the six tracks from the mini-LP are joined by four more new songs for American ears, "Infatuation," "Memories," "Close to the Edge," and "Cadillac Car" plus a remix of Bronski Beat's famous "I Feel Love Medley". The remixes seem, in general, to give the recordings a funkier, "live" feel than achieved amidst the dreamlike shimmer of The Age Of Consent. The new songs expand the group's musical territory and offer added testimony to the enduring quality of Bronski Beat's music.

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