

COMMUNARDS

Jimmy Somerville's soaring, silky falsetto voice, both unmatched and unforgettable, helped make Bronski Beat the surprise hit of 1985. Their debut album yielded two Top 40 smashes, "Why?" and "Small Town Boy," and made Somerville's patented vocal technique instantly recognizable. Differing musical visions and the pressures of overnight success lead him to leave Bronski Beat in May 1985 and form The Communards with an old friend, the classically trained multi-instrumentalist Richard Coles. The name was originally used to describe a group of romantic revolutionaries whose desperate insurrection in Paris, 1871, was extinguished in a week of bloody, block-by-block street fighting. Certainly Somerville and Coles see themselves in similar light as visionaries bucking the traditional tide. Their debut album swirls with audacious rhythms and ethnic influences; hypnotic dance beats; and Somerville's ever more astounding vocal gymnastics.

Born and raised in Glasgow, Somerville came to London at 18 where various jobs, the dole, and many late nights in the discos kept him alive. With a group of friends, including Coles, he helped make an award winning documentary video "Framed Youth," a series of interviews, alternately hilarious and heartbreaking, with teenagers about their families, their lovers and the law. It included a song, "Screaming," written and sung by Somerville, that led to the formation of Bronski Beat.

Richard Coles was born in Northampton. From an early age, he exhibited obvious musical talent but always remained somewhat out of step with those trying to train it. He was thrown out of chorus for playing poker dice during communion with Kevin Haskins, who's now in Bauhaus. He studied piano, violin and organ until he was again tossed out of the program, this time for his predilection for adding rhythm tracks to Back fugues. Two hundred casustic critics convinced him, he says, that he wasn't meant for drama, and he found himself in London practicing lots of saxophone in a Kings Cross attic. Coles appeared with Bronski Beat on an informal basis after renewing his friendship with Somerville.

Together they form an exceptionally gifted duo, animated by their congruent musical vision and a shared political commitment to Gay rights and other humanist concerns. But their politics never weigh down their ebullient, wide-ranging



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music. From a raucous cover of Thelma Houston's "Don't Leave Me This Way," propelled by Coles' powerful piano chording, to the haunting, Arabic feel of "So Cold the Night," their debut album moves with both authority, intelligence and even wit. Dance rock is still the center of their universe, and fans of Bronski Beat will not be disappointed by the heat generated by the brassy "You Are My World" and the scalding "Disenchanted". Change-up pitches come with the delicate violin of "Reprise" and their torch song tribute, "Lover Man".

The Communards are at the forefront of today's most exciting musical and social barricades. Their commitment to each is genuine and total. The result is music with both energy and heart.