



THE INNOCENCE MISSION

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THE INNOCENCE MISSION

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THE INNOCENCE MISSION

the new track

"I REMEMBER ME"

*To hear The Innocence Mission is to enter a world
 of wonder, love, hope and imagination.
 Welcome.*

THE INNOCENCE MISSION
 The debut album

PRODUCED BY LARRY KLEIN
 MANAGEMENT: ASHER/KROST MANAGEMENT

Savvy Industry Falls for Innocence Mission

Shy leader of Pennsylvania band lands an A & M deal

BY GINA ARNOLD

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

KAREN PERIS is so shy she can barely speak in sentences to strangers. Upon graduating from high school eight years ago, she lasted less than one semester at Penn State before hightailing it back home to Lancaster, Pa., where she says she "felt safe."

So it must have surprised Peris' hometown friends when the 20-year-old singer/songwriter and her band, the Innocence Mission, cut a

The Innocence Mission performs tonight at Slim's, 333 11th Avenue.

sweetheart deal with A & M Records and were about to hit the big time. Within weeks of its release, the band's debut album, "Black Sheep Wall," started getting rave reviews in magazines from the New Yorker to Rolling Stone.

It even surprised Peris herself. "Rock stardom has always been really far removed from us," she explains. "We've never really had a clue."

Peris began writing songs on piano and guitar at age 7. "I remember making up little songs," she says. "My older brother played guitar and sang and I idolized him, so it was natural for me to want to do

what he did."

In high school, Peris met her future husband (and Innocence Mission guitarist) Don Peris and band mates Mike Bitts (bass) and Steve Brown (drums), and the four began playing Karen's songs in a rock format. Lancaster didn't have a nightclub that featured original bands then, but Peris remembers playing cover songs at high school dances and local bars: "The Police, U2, Peter Dinklage. I've always assumed that every band starts that way."

As the Innocence Mission began developing its own eerie sound — grounded in Peris' atmospheric keyboards, her high, quavery yet

pretty voice, and introspective lyrics — the band began to sense the need to find new places to play, she says. Though "we really aren't cut out for that kind of thing," the four started driving 200 miles on weekends to rock clubs in such places as Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. The band opened for popular Philadelphia bands the Hooters and Tommy Conwell, although the roots-based rock sound of those bands has little in common with Peris' own serious-minded, slow music. Audiences didn't seem to mind.

At the same time, Peris says, "we began being aware of other music" and the band recorded demos at a 16-track studio. Within a few months, they had their deal with A & M.

The result was "Black Sheep Wall," one of the more unusual records currently climbing the charts. Its peaceful pace and pretty, soaring vocals are seductively enthralling, but it's the subject matter of the songs that sets it apart from the generic world of pop. Rather than sticking to the usual subjects, love and happiness, Peris' songs are about the two things that matter to her most: religious faith and family relations.

THE INNOCENCE Mission has been performing around the country since the album's release, and Peris has no qualms about her new life in the rock world. She misses Lancaster — "it's so beautiful there!" — but her homesickness is compensated for by the sensation of success.

"I've always wanted to lead a life of music, and have people listen to my songs," she says. "It's just been this progression, where over the years we became better writers and found out what we wanted and started getting it. It doesn't seem that surprising because it's all been so mixed up with just plain growing up."

"COME AROUND and See Me," for instance, is the plea of an elderly person for an afternoon visitor of any kind, and the title cut is about an older sister's fears for her younger brother as he grows up. But not all of Peris' songs are so introspective. In one, she impersonates a French impressionist painter circa 1867; and in another, she is a Russian czarina with amnesia.

The result is a soothing, shy sort of record, one that seems, like Peris herself, to come from a simpler time and more virtuous world. The Innocence Mission recorded "Black Sheep Wall" in Los Angeles with producer Larry Klein, whose wife, Joni Mitchell, is a strong supporter of the band.



THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Musically, a new brand of Innocence

By ROB RIOUX
Contributing writer

You'd probably have to look hard to find a contemporary music act that romanticizes traditional values. But if Karen Peris has anything to say — or sing — about it, more people will be hearing her songs about families and healthy young love. Peris and her band, the Innocence Mission, have started to turn heads with their unlikely message.

"Some of our songs are about families. I came from a big family and now it's just nice to look back at the everyday things that happened," explained Peris during a recent telephone interview. "It would be great if people could get hope from these

songs... to enjoy the different stories in the songs and to sympathize with the characters in the songs."

Not that all of Peris' messages are sweet and light. Her repertoire runs from the playful "Curious" to the dark "Black Sheep Wall," in which she sings of a brother temporarily gone astray.

Since the Innocence Mission focuses on the family, it seems fitting that Karen is married to band guitarist Don Peris. "I think a big part of our music is our closeness. We love playing together," she said.

The band's origins date back to its members' high school days, when Karen and Don met bass player Mike Bitts and drummer Steve Brown. The quartet initially practiced in Brown's basement, and then started playing to audiences in Lancaster, Pa. "Even though we met in high school, we didn't really start playing together as a band until after graduation. There were always musical things to do around town like Masses and musicals," said Peris.

The band's hometown following soon expanded to cities such as Philadelphia and Washington, DC. "It's really amazing

to go into cities we've never been before and to know people have come to see us," said Peris.

The band's self-titled debut album was produced by veteran session bassist Larry Klein. Klein's wife, folk singer Joni Mitchell, was also frequently in the studio to lend the young band a word or two of advice.

"She (Mitchell) would come in to the studio and listen to us. We're all really big fans of hers and so it was all very exciting," said Peris. "I think she was a real confidence builder in general. She gave us a lot of encouragement to go with what we were doing. She's a very genuine person."

The Innocence Mission has a mature, subdued sound comparable to Kate Bush or, perhaps, a higher-speed Cowboy Junkies. The band's music and its message are not directed at a mainstream pop audience. But talking to Peris gives the impression that the Innocence Mission is making the music that it wants to make. And despite the possibility that the band will never sell records in the millions, Innocence Mission will be making its own brand of music for a long time to come.

New York Times
Oct. 15, 1989

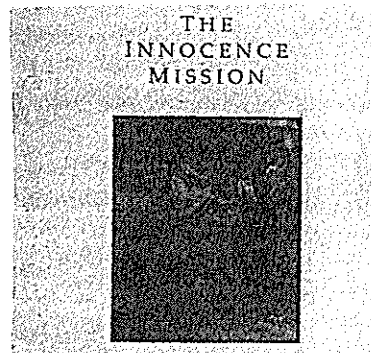
The Innocence Mission: 'The Innocence Mission'

A & M 5274; all three formats.

The quivering angelic voice of Karen Peris, a singer, songwriter and keyboardist who is the center of The Innocence Mission, a rock quartet from Lancaster, Pa., suggests a hybrid of Stevie Nicks and Kate Bush. Her fervent vocal sensitivity complements original folk-rock songs that portray everyday feelings and observations as near-miraculous happenings. Delicate chiming

guitar and keyboard textures and circular chantlike melodies underscore lyrics whose subjects range from wondering what kind of person a brother's fiancée will turn out to be ("Curious") to entranced meditations on the afterlife ("Mercy," "Wonder of Birds"). This debut, produced by the rock bassist Larry Klein, is filled with promise. — S. H.

Cash Box
Dec. 21, 1989



□ THE INNOCENCE MISSION:
The Innocence Mission (A&M
SP-05274-B)

Karen Peris is a goddess. Her angelic voice floats, soars and gently touches your soul with the innocence of a young child. She sounds like a cross between Kate Bush and Edie Brickell, creating an ethereal aura that envelopes you, captivates you, and will strike you instantly as talented with which to be reckoned. The music is very basic, nothing overdone or having that "studio-mixed" sound. It just sounds like these guys got together in comfortable surroundings and played what came to them. It's a relaxing, enjoyable experience, not just another record. This album is a beautiful expression from a group that we're sure to be hearing a lot about in the future. (SB)

Innocence Mission waxes poetic in dreamy, fanciful performance

By BRUCE BRITT
Daily News Music Writer

The usually reclusive Joni Mitchell was among the many fans in attendance Monday at the Roxy Theatre to witness a Pennsylvania band named Innocence Mission, and it was instantly ap-

REVIEW

parent what the discerning folk-music legend likes about the quartet.

The band opened its set with "Paper Dolls," a ballad so pastoral one could almost detect the fragrance of lilacs in the smoke-filled room. Most impressive was the band's understanding of the importance of economy: The performance lasted a little more than a minute, leaving fans ravenous for more.

Innocence Mission's music has drawn favorable comparisons to that of British conceptualist Kate Bush. The comparisons are understandable: Both acts use Celtic folk music as a melodic foundation. But Innocence Mission's songs possess more of a pop flavor than Bush's, which makes the band's music more listenable than her other-worldly experiments.

Led by singer-keyboardist Karen Peris, the band proved it is a serious contender in the post-modern pop sweepstakes. Peris exhibited a strong knowledge of music, sometimes doubling on guitar. Her voice has a mellifluous lilt reminiscent of Bush and Edie Brickell.

The singer also proved herself an inventive keyboardist, coaxing

a broad array of sounds from her synthesizer. Peris set up the unsettling mood of "Black Sheep Wall" with oboelike keyboard tones. Warm, orchestral sounds were used on the exquisite ballad "Surreal."

Despite their musical strengths, Peris and her bandmates won't win any excitability awards. The band delivered its mysterious repertoire in a sub-

dued fashion that made Julio Iglesias seem hyperactive by comparison.

Nonetheless, there was something likable in Peris' demeanor. The singer seemed genuinely tongue-tied when attempting to explain the inspiration for the song "Wonder of Birds." Amused by her own ineloquence, Peris burst into embarrassed, girlish giggles.

It will be interesting to see how far Innocence Mission can take its flowers-and-frills sound. The band unveiled some new songs that never quite materialized. One sensed that the spacey sound effects featured on songs like

"Revolve" and "Drone" were there to mask the lack of discernable melodies.

As enjoyable as the band's set was, Innocence Mission was upstaged by Minneapolis singer Peter Himmelman, who opened the show. A superb guitarist and songwriter, Himmelman established a strong rapport with the crowd, at one point passing out crayons and inviting fans to submit their most creative etchings.

A young lady named Christie won the impromptu contest, and the inventive Himmelman tailored a hilariously winsome song around her name.

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Of a style
Kate Bush, below, and
Innocence Mission
(Don Peris, Karen
Peris, Mike Bitts and
Steve Brown, left to
right), keeping their dis-
tance from their music



anyone needing a chuckle, in fact—should just say yes. (Dr. Dream)—*Michael Small*

■ THE SENSUAL WORLD

Kate Bush

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

The Innocence Mission

Bush is one of the most striking stylists in pop music. Attribute a good measure of that to her vocal delivery, which sounds like Cyndi Lauper with a very British stiff upper lip. By turns stern and breathily fragile in the lower range, her voice is quite ethereal in its upper reaches. Siren-like, it puts her at an arresting distance from her material. As is usually the case with Bush, the melodies and harmonies on *The Sensual World* (Columbia) are adventurous and exotic. Lend an ear to the sensuous, snake-charmer allure of the title track or the mock woodwind, river-fairy piping on "Never Be Mine." The most exciting moments in the Bush canon have come when her reserve melts and the passion of the music carries her away. That happens here on "Love & Anger" and "Heads We're Dancing," but not often enough. The album is, though, often pretty and thoroughly characteristic.

Bush fans may want to check out Inno-

Billboard
Oct. 21, 1989

PICKS & PANS

SONG

cence Mission. Lead singer Karen Peris has a lovely, winsome voice markedly similar to Bush's, if slightly earthier. The music on the Larry Klein-produced debut of this Lancaster, Pa., group is decorously arranged neo-folk. Though many of the songs are more traditional in form than Bush's leaps of fancy, at their best, as on "You Chase the Light" and "Black Sheep Ran," Innocence Mission is creating music every bit as entrancing as the idiom's past mistress, old Kate herself. The similarity in sounds is a serendipitous treat for listeners. (A&M)—*David Hiltbrand*

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

NEW ON THE CHARTS

With "Black Sheep Wall," the first single from its eponymous debut album, *The Innocence Mission*, a quartet from Lancaster, Pa., secures a slot on the Modern Rock Tracks chart. The band, composed of vocalist Karen Peris, guitarist Don Peris, bassist Mike Bitts, and drummer Steve Brown, stresses the song's lyrics and cites the Beatles, James Taylor, and Kate Bush as its influences.

"We like to read a lot," Peris says of her band. "I have a lot of respect for people who can tell a story, and I always try to do that in a song. I also like to write from different points of view." Mission's album was produced by Larry Klein, who is married to folk-pop star Joni Mitchell. Peris recalls that Klein helped the band develop its song-writing style. "He cared about the

lyrics, which I appreciated a lot," she says. "I'm always trying to make the lyrics work together with the instrumentation and Larry was the same way. He didn't want to do anything that wasn't right for the mood and spirit of the song."

The members of Mission began playing together in high school and set out for Philadelphia in 1986. There they made their first professional appearances, gaining a loyal following and winning the praise of local music critics. Two years later, they were signed to A&M Records.

All of the songs on "Mission," which touch on such topics as a mother's pain watching her child grow up and the lonely world of an elderly woman, were written by Karen Peris and her husband, Don.

JIM RICHIILANO

Innocence Mission

There's Hope

BY JULIAN DIBBELL

It's hard to justify loving the Innocence Mission, but I think I'm ready to try. If two seasons of defending an indefensible *thirtysomething* Jones hasn't prepared me, nothing will. No joke: The show's theme music—all new-age blues-lite acoustic guitar and whooshy calliopeated synths—is a major influence on the Innocence Mission's sound (the occasional nods to U2 or 10,000 Maniacs seem like market-driven afterthoughts in comparison), and that only points to deeper parallels. The songs on the debut album, *The Innocence Mission* (A&M), scripted by lead singer Karen Peris, share with *thirtysomething* a passionate middlebrow commitment to lovingly rendered detail and the proposition that there's no drama like familial drama. Also like the TV show, they'll either win your heart or turn your stomach.

This *thirtysomething* connection tempts me to claim that the best excuse for liking the Innocence Mission is that of all the pop-folk new bohemians who've come traipsing by lately (from Edie B. herself through Tracy C. and Timbuk 3

to the *thirtysomething* band Natalie M.), these guys are the least duplicitous about the yup-appeal that's smuggled the whole phenomenon onto the charts. There are less convoluted reasons to choose from, though, Peris's voice being the simplest. Of the many it has been compared to, the two best cross hairs are Rickie Lee Jones and Dolly Parton. Splicing the kittenish mannerisms of the first to the shimmering sweetness of the second is dangerous genetics, with the risk of cloying awful high. But listen with any sympathy and you're likely to be seduced. Flitting in and out of lilting melody lines, buoyed by the band's taffy-textured arrangements and buffed by Larry Klein's artful production, Peris's voice is among the *prettiest* things to happen to American pop.

And then there are the moments when those creative writing classes pay off. Peris's lyrics work fairly well at a minimal level of ambition, as in "Black Sheep Wall," a love song to a wayward brother, or "The Wonder of Birds," a daydream about nothing in particular. But the record's most moving song is also its most pretentious. "You Chase the Light"—set in "Honfleur, 1867"—purports to be a dialogue between an Impressionist painter and his working-class mistress, with Peris's lead as the woman and her multi-tracked voice as the guy. But the song's secret is that this isn't the 19th century at all. Listen to the woman: "Let's talk about my feelings, talk about your lack of them." This is Hope Steadman, hashing it out with Michael again. "Isn't that funny?" she asks. "No, I don't think that's funny," he answers wearily, but the mistress/Hope cuts him off—"I think it's funny"—her voice flashing sullen anger and crystallizing an instant of great TV.

Only to shatter it in the next song, the embarrassing "Notebook," in which a dreamy couple, young and in love, sappily devote themselves to the pursuit of Art in their spare time. The closing refrain—"Don't you think there's more to life?"—

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

DIBBELL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

is maddening. While I know in my sinking heart that she's only asking for something more than the routine of day jobs redeemed by occasional escapes to the museum. I keep hoping she's questioning the museum itself, poking a self-doubting hole in the conventional artiness that blankets this album from beginning to end.

Not likely. This record isn't interested

in giving you an excuse for loving it, and if you find any they're liable to seem flimsy compared to how good it sounds. You'll never convince an unconvinced friend that the Innocence Mission is worth listening to. That's OK: If you're a *thirtysomething* fan, you're used to that, and if you aren't, you'll never get this record anyway.

The Innocence Mission is at the Knitting Factory December 10.

THE
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THE INNOCENCE MISSION: Shown from left are Don Peake, Karen Peris, and Mike Bitts, and Steve Brown



Innocence Mission (from left): Don and Karen Peris, Mike Bitts and Steve Brown

Innocence Mission

LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA, IS BETTER known for its Amish farm population than its music scene, but Karen Peris of the Innocence Mission says that's changing. "Now there's a real nice progressive-music club and a lot of bands," she says (including the Ocean Blue — friends of the Mission — based in Hershey). "We're sort of going through this together," she adds, *this* being the attention afforded a young band with a strong debut album and a single ("Black Sheep Wall") garnering alternative-radio play.

Peris traces Mission-ary origins to 1981 at a Lancaster Catholic high school. She wrote songs for talent shows; her future husband, Don Peris, composed guitar pieces. "Those were our dates," Karen recalls. "We'd get together and play guitar." Upon graduation, bass player Mike Bitts and drummer Steve Brown joined them to form the band.

Working around Philadelphia, the band members delineated their uncluttered and atmospheric sound with gigs wherever they could find them; in one particular week during 1986, the Innocents managed to play shows in a church basement, a biker bar, a strip joint and an oldies club.

Signed by A&M, the band recorded its debut album in Los Angeles with Larry Klein, the bassist and producer who is married to Joni Mitchell. Encouragement from Mitchell was no small bonus. "Of course I'm a fan," Peris says, but the young songwriter hesitated to ask Mitchell for advice. "I don't

think I could approach her on that level."

Peris's lyrics have the revealing but unselfconscious feel of automatic writing, although she "wishes it was that easy." Issues of family and faith reverberate throughout her work: "Black Sheep Wall," she says, is "a brother and sister song," and "Medjugorje" was completed the night of her grandmother's death. Peris says she wrote the song by fusing the story of Medjugorje, the Yugoslavian town that claims visitations from the Virgin Mary, with her grandmother's devotions.

The strong Catholic element in Innocence Mission's work is no accident. "It's funny that people don't talk about faith," Peris says. "Years ago, that was the center of people's lives; now people are really embarrassed to talk about it." In fact, the Innocence Mission still plays the occasional Mass back home in Lancaster. True to its name, the band isn't concerned with just being cool. "I gave it up for Lent last year," Don says. — MARIANNE MEYER

THE
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The Innocence Mission brings tour to the TLA

By Tom Moon
Inquirer Popular Music Critic

When 10,000 Maniacs first toured nationally, to support the critically acclaimed 1985 major-label debut *The Wishing Chair*, the band was ravenous for sounds. Any quirky instrumentation — violin, washboard, mandolin — that would set it apart from the rest of the pop heap was welcomed, even played up. Sometimes the convergences were brilliant. Sometimes they resulted in a clangorous clutter that showed the band was still grasping for an individual sound.

In the first concert of a two-night stand at the Theater of Living Arts last night, Lancaster's the Innocence Mission — which is now on its first national tour — had none of those problems. Building its presentation around the knifelike, crystalline vocals of keyboardist Karen Peris, the quartet stuck to a familiar sonic repertoire: prickly rhythm guitar parts that served as melodic springboards; droning synthesizer atmospheres; and alternately thumping or melodic

Review: Music

bass lines that lent a vital, airy openness to songs like "Surreal."

The band's crisp identity was admirable, but it came at a price: Predictability.

There were moments when Peris' terraced, carefully delivered vocal lines built to peak intensity independent of the music. There were occasions when drummer Steve Brown — who repeatedly proved he was incapable of implying rhythms rather than bashing them out — missed opportunities to reinforce the frail choruses.

As the Innocence Mission worked its way through most of its debut album and a number of still-rough new songs cut from the same moody cloth, it became clear that Peris' ability to enchant with a simple line of lyric was the main attraction — one with not yet enough presence to carry an entire show.

shows in Philadelphia and became much more resolute about the band and the direction that they were taking. "About three and a half years ago we started recording, or 'demo-ing.' Then about two years ago we sent tapes out to record companies and were signed," states Peris.

It was A&M Records with which the Innocence Mission decided to sign, a small yet very important label with an unusual roster of artists. The band stresses that it was not so much the promises and the actual "deal" that drew them to A&M. It was the people. "They were one of the first record companies to come out and see us. Right from the start they were just terrific. It came down to not really anything but personalities, which is the most important thing," explains Peris.

Drummer Steve Brown agrees wholeheartedly. "Patrick Clifford, who is our A&R guy, helped us find the greatest people to work with. He helped us find Larry Klein, our producer. Looking back at making the record, I can't imagine doing it without these people that've been involved. Everyone here at A&M is super."

The making of the album was a leisurely sort of thing, and the band is thankful that they had that extra bit of leeway. "It took the better part of a year to make the record. We had the luxury of having a lot of time to do it with no real pressure from anybody saying, 'You have to get this done.' We were able to just take time with it and have a record that we felt good about," states Peris.

The lyrics on *The Innocence Mission* are really a collection of stories, it seems. Vocalist/keyboardist Karen Peris has a unique way of bringing real human feelings into a song, making the listener really experience the music. "Karen writes about half of the songs by herself, lyrics and music," explains Peris. "The other half she and I write the music together and she writes the lyrics. We have a room that we keep our instruments set up in and she and I just go in there and play different ideas."

The name the Innocence Mission brings a variety of images to mind. Children, discovery and perseverance are only a few of the things that one might conjure up when analyzing such a title. "When we were trying to think of the right name for the band, one of the

The Innocence Mission's Brotherly Love

BY STEPHANIE BRAINERD

IT ALL BEGAN IN LANCASTER, PENNSYLVANIA in 1982. Four young people came together in high school and began creating a sound that was very much their own. The music had strength, emotion and an intensity that could envelope one totally. Today, seven years later, the group is still together and still making incredible music. Only now it is possible for the entire world to hear, on their self-titled A&M debut album, *The Innocence Mission*.

During the first four years or so of the band's existence, the Innocence Mission played regularly in Lancaster County but weren't really focused on what they were doing quite yet. "We just sort of knocked about for a few years, not really playing seriously," says guitarist Don Peris. Around 1986 they began doing



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things that we liked about the Innocence Mission was that the quality of innocence is seen as a strong thing as opposed to weak," asserts Peris.

When asked what they think about the whole "fame" thing, the entire band was so humble and shy, it was hard to get an answer. "It feels great, having a chance to have your music heard by people. That's the main thing," asserts vocalist Karen Peris. "The band is thankful for the opportunity to spread their music to the rest of the world but doesn't like to think of themselves as anything but a group of people doing what they love most in the world."

"It's a dream come true," reflects Brown with a shy smile. "It's what I've always wanted to do with my life. I couldn't be happier." ○

Confined to the keyboards, Peris was even less animated than Brickell, Timmins or Merchant. The ennui was compounded by the sameness of the Innocence Mission's material, which relies on vocal inflection to the exclusion of instrumental, dynamic.

This left the one-hour set heading into the clouds about halfway through. By the time they struck up the encore with the sappy *Both Sides Now*, the Joni Mitchell song recorded by Judy Collins, it was time to head downstairs and see if December's Child could play.

Innocence of rock

Group seduces with breathless pop

By MARTY RACINE
Houston Chronicle

Music review

Having grown up in the saloons and the streets, having survived and scored monumental social change, rock 'n' roll is hardly an innocent music.

Are any of us without guile in 1990?

The aptly named Innocence Mission is — within the context of rock as a contemporary art form.

As it proved at Fitzgerald's Monday night in its Houston debut, the Lancaster, Pa., quartet is not a rock band, but it does need rock the way Elizabeth Barrett Browning needed poetry or Vincent van Gogh needed the canvas. Rap notwithstanding, rock is simply in the air, and it is a vehicle for all types of drivers.

rock band was flailing away. The band, December's Child, was asked to reroute its set around even quieter upstairs opening act Peter Himmelman, although it had no deleterious effect on the Innocence Mission.

Peris, a willowy, ivory-colored angel with flowing brunet hair, stood behind her keyboard pulpit and gracefully, sensually soared over the otherwise plain melodies, taken from the band's new self-titled debut album. Peris cuts a fragile yet imposing figure, and one doubts that the majority of the large crowd diverted its attention to the band: bassist Mike Bitts, guitarist (and husband) Don Peris and drummer Steve Brown.

The band signed with A&M following a showcase audition set in Philadelphia. In a grade-B *Rock Around The Clock*-type flick, one can imagine a cigar-chomping talent scout reporting back to the record company: "Boss, we keep the dame, fire the band, and make her a star!"

But it doesn't work that way in 1990, when self-contained units make for their own charming stage (non-)presence. It didn't work that way for Edie Brickell and her New Bohemians, nor for Margo Timmins and the Cowboy Junkies, nor for Natalie Merchant and 10,000 Maniacs.

These women have elevated pop into a quiet, dreamy poetry that makes for soothing, maybe even brilliant records and, with their bands standing dutifully in the shadows, less than exhilarating live performances. Monday's show pretty much replicated the album, which means nothing was added except Karen Peris' presence.

A scenario in which naivete and breathless romance (as opposed to seduction) conquers all is deliciously subversive to those who follow pop music, whose continued growth is predicated upon the whims of mavericks.

And it is too tempting for most rock critics to pass up. So, against their better instincts, the major scribes on either coast are going gaga over a band with such lyrics as:

We keep our heads above the water

We know that, someday, we will fly away

With all the wonder of birds

With all the wonder of birds

This sort of pleasant, ethereal songmaking, windblown on the remarkably wistful pipes of lead vocalist Karen Peris, turned the normally boisterous Fitzgerald's into a listening parlor Monday. The dance floor was removed in favor of candlelit tables, and the combined glow produced a sanctuary from bombast as near as downstairs, where at Zelda's a local

★★ NO. 1	★★
PICTURES OF MATCHSTICK MEN INSTRUMENTAL CUT	CAMPER VAN BEETHOVEN 1 week at No. 1
HE GINA ELEKTRA 7-69270	THE SUGARCUBES
SOLD ME DOWN THE RIVER RCA 7-3003/MCA	THE ALARM
I WANT THAT MAN SIRE 7-22816/REPRISE	DEBORAH HARRY
SOWING THE SEEDS OF LOVE CAPITOL 7-88844	TEARS FOR FEARS
JAMES BROWN COLUMBIA LP CUT	BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE
PERSONAL JESUS SIRE 7-21328/REPRISE	DEPECHE MODE
IF IT'S LOVE A&M 1457	SQUEEZE
KNOCK ME DOWN E.M. LP CUT	RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
LOVE SHACK REPRISE 7-22817	THE B-52'S
WAY OF THE WORLD ATLANTIC 7-88844	MAX Q
SICK OF IT RCA 90804	THE PRIMITIVES
BETWEEN SOMETHING AND NOTHING SIRE LP CUT/REPRISE	THE OCEAN BLUE
INTO THE HEART OF LOVE SIRE LP CUT/REPRISE	THE MIGHTY LEMON DROPS
CROSSROADS ELEKTRA 7-69273	TRACY CHAPMAN
DECLINE AND FALL BEGGAR'S BANQUET LP CUT/CAPITOL	FLESH FOR LULU
KINGDOM OF RAIN EPIC LP CUT/E.P.A.	THE THE
SELF! Geffen 7-22809	FUZZBOX
DRAMA SIRE 7-22768/REPRISE	ERASURE
SUGAR DADDY WARNER BROS. 7-22819	THOMPSON TWINS
HE'S GOT A SHE RHINO LP CUT	EXENE CERVENKA
BLACK SHEEP WALL A&M 1462	THE INNOCENCE MISSION
LOVE IS A SHIELD ATLANTIC 7-88844	CAMOUFLAGE
A GIRL LIKE YOU CAPITOL 44480	THE SMITHEREENS
SHATTER ROUGH TRADE LP CUT/COLUMBIA	SHELLEYAN ORPHAN
LOVE SONG ELEKTRA 7-69280	THE CURE
NO SOUVENIRS ISLAND 7-99176/ATLANTIC	MELISSA ETHERIDGE
SATELLITES Geffen LP CUT	RICKE LEE JONES
MAKE BELIEVE MAMBO SIRE LP CUT/WARNER BROS.	DAVID BYRNE
SHE BANGS THE DRUM SILVERTONE LP CUT/RCA	THE STONE ROSES

Billboard
Dec. 9, 1989

Washington Post
Oct 27, 1989

THE INNOCENCE MISSION
Cafe Largo, Los Angeles

A FULL HOUSE of industry schmoozers responded enthusiastically to the Innocence Mission's ethereal music at the West Coast coming-out party for this Pennsylvania quartet.

On their premiere road date here Nov. 18—the first of three sold-out shows at the L.A. restaurant/performance space Cafe Largo—the A&M act evidenced some tentativeness. The group has yet to amass a solid hour of consistent songs, and it paints its sound with a limited stylistic palette. But the Innocence Mission's warmth and intelligence ultimately proved winning.

The band's point woman is singer/keyboardist Karen Peris, whose low-keyed charm and vocal ability are the linchpin of the unit's impact. More than one observer compared her swooping singing style to that of Kate Bush, although Peris lacks Bush's artsy affectations.

Peris, her husband (guitarist Don), bassist Mike Bitts, and drummer Steve Brown manage a sound that is at once muscular and dreamy. The band members played their best on their most tightly focused and melodic pieces, such as "Black Sheep Wall" and "Broken Circle." The set lagged, however, on some numbers in which melodies became diffuse and lyrics strained for poetic effects.

Nonetheless, the house cheered the band loudly. The Innocence Mission is a still-developing band that can look forward to a bright future as it grows closer to fulfilling its artistic vision.

CHRIS MORRIS

The Debt Of Innocence

THE INNOCENCE Mission's eponymous debut album could have been better timed. There's a new Ricki Lee Jones album out after a long layoff. Ditto for Kate Bush. Oh well, at least there isn't fresh Stevie Nicks on the market.

Singer and producer of "keyboard sounds" Karen Peris—Innocence personified—owes rather a lot to those singers, and her three-man Mission owes nearly everything to her. Though drummer Steve Brown can thump with vigor, the dominant tone of the quartet's music is set by Peris's wispy, little-girl trilling, on such subjects as "Paper Dolls," in the manner of Jones, Bush, Nicks and their acolytes. (There's also the obligatory Joni Mitchell influence,

but at least the Mission comes by that honestly: The album's producer is Mr. Mitchell, Larry Klein.)

This is as elegantly produced as Klein's participation would indicate, and as precious as titles such as "Curious" and "Wonder of Birds" might suggest. "The Innocence Mission" couldn't be much prettier, gentler or more delicate, but it could be a lot more distinctive.

— Mark Jenkins

THE INNOCENCE MISSION — "The Innocence Mission" (A&M). Appearing Saturday with Winter Hours at the 9:30 club.



PHOTO: ANN CUTTING

10

2-90 "MUSIC PAPER" THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Leading The New Renaissance

by Bhargavi C. Mandava

PR reps pump Karen Peris, lead singer and keyboardist for The Innocence Mission, as vocally being "like 80 times better than Natalie Merchant." When Karen is informed of this extolling commentary, her blush spreads like the aroma of fresh toast. "Oh, that's nice," she says pleasantly. "It's odd to hear different comparisons, but that's just inevitable. I guess it's not something that I think about. I just sing the way I sing and write whatever comes out."

What comes out on The Innocence Mission's self-titled debut album on A&M Records are songs about topics such as the woes of the last Russian czarina ("I Remember Me") and a 19th century French Impressionist painter's conversation with his working class lover ("You Chase The Light"). Karen is reserved and a bit timid during the interview — the kind of person who would bolt from an open-mic poetry reading. Writing, however, is her refuge. "I just really admire writers who can make you love a character just through their words, and make you see places and feel emotions just by the words they

use," gushes. "That's one of the most fun things for me to try to do with lyrics. I'm a shy person in general, but my writing is one thing I'm not shy about."

The Innocence Mission may be bashful, but they love to frolic in a field of poppies. They stream through the sky, the tails of their kites disappearing behind clouds, beckoning you to join in and skip a little skip. The cover of the album, at a fleeting glance, looks like a cherubic Norman Rockwell painting, but it's not. It's a painting by Eva Ross. "I really can't find much about her," Karen discloses. "I came across the painting in a book and I loved it. Luckily, we were able to get permission to use the painting for the cover. She isn't very well known. I couldn't even find her name in the big resource books of artists. The painting was done in 1894 — the period of art that I love." The painting captures the carefree innocence of children playing. This "ring-around-the-rosie" cheeriness of The Innocence Mission entices one to follow and join in on "what was."

Don Peris (guitarist and Karen's husband), Mike Bitts (bassist), Steve Brown (drummer) and Karen all love to read. At the moment, Karen is digging into Virginia Wolfe, and she adores E.M. Forster

and Charlotte Bronte. The Innocence Mission's recent release has a historical ambience that seems to stem from Karen's list of favorite artists and writers. If she had a "Back To The Future" traveling contraption, she'd zoom right back to the 19th century for a while. "I think, even though I wouldn't want to stay there because I couldn't do what I was doing now, I would like to go to the late-1800's," she says softly. "I'd like to meet some of the artists and writers that I admire from that time and go out with them."

The Innocence Mission's taste for the past envelops not only history, but emotions and memories. In "Wonder Of Birds," the song musically, lyrically and emotionally paints the mood of triumph when one rises above circumstances. Karen's lyrics are deeper than a ditty about Grammy's cherry pies cooling on a window sill. The illuminating "Come

Around And See Me" sprang from her memories of her grandmother. "I spent a lot of time with my grandmother before she died and I was really close to her," she explains. "I felt a lot of sympathy for her situation because she was really sharp mentally, but she had to stay in her room in her chair all day because she couldn't get around. But she lived with my parents — both of my grandmothers are always surrounded by family. The woman in the song is on her own. There are some things that are definitely my grandmother — like she always watched the news and listened to the radio news shows and just sat there and worried about all the things she heard all day."

Musically, there is a certain metaphorical thread that loops and ties the album together. The music floats like a bird, sometimes gliding calmly and

sometimes flapping fervently. And Karen's rich voice prances in and out of a myriad of rooms, wrapped in a sheer, wispy chiffon gown. The sound is a touch of Jane Siberry, Elizabeth Fraser, Kate Bush and, of course, Natalie Merchant — all of whom Karen mentions as her favorites, right next to Lennon and McCartney. When talk turns to performance and touring, Karen reveals proudly that The Innocence Mission now have the same booking agent as Siberry — and who knows what that can lead to? One thing is certain in the future of The Innocence Mission, though. You'll never ever hear a keyboard solo emanating from anywhere close to their vicinity. When asked why, Karen says frankly, "I've never liked them." She also adds that she's not exactly your "typical synthesizer whiz, either."

Although the band formed nearly eight years ago, soon after they all

graduated from their Catholic high school in Lancaster, they started taking music seriously only a few years ago. After they began playing gigs regularly in Philly, Karen, Don, Mike and Steve were inspired to keep climbing the mountain. While working with producer Larry Klein, the band was encouraged by Klein's wife, Joni Mitchell, who fell in love with the album. The first single, "Black Sheep Wall," has cleared a space for the band on college radio stations across America, and MTV plays their video.

They may not be heading for an elite holiday resort in Nice, but The Innocence Mission are definitely going places. "We had someone who asked us to write a mass for the archdiocese of Philadelphia," reveals Karen happily. "It would be a national youth mass. It's a real honor, but I don't know whether we can take all that or not."

The Music Paper, February 1990 19

HIATT & PERIS



John Hiatt and Karen Peris are pictured at Ocean Way recording studios working on a song for Hiatt's next A&M album, slated for a late summer release. Hiatt was reportedly "looking for the voice of an angel to sing on the song" and found said voice in the earthy bound form of Karen Peris, singer of A&M's excellent band, the Innocence Mission.

MUSIC CONNECTION, APRIL 16—APRIL 29, 1990

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26

The Innocence Mission at the Roxy.



ANN CUTTING

■ Ever been in Amish country? The Innocence Mission hail from Lancaster, Pa., which is right on the border of Quakerland, and if they don't exactly embrace the principles (they do play amplified music), the sound of this quartet is distinctly rustic and genial. This also marks the first appearance in a properly large showcase venue for this husband/wife/plus band, and the expansiveness of the room may enlarge the scope of their folksy sound. They are *not* a New Agey or James Tayloresque sensitive introspectathon, despite their relatively sparse and light sound, but are more reminiscent of Brit traditionalists like Fairport or Incredible String Band, as filtered through the sensibility of late '80s college radio fare. And they can play. (Johnny Angel)

TOUR: THE INNOCENCE MISSION. L: MARY A. REAGAN/CAUTION OF OFFENSES

LA Weekly Feb 1990

Mel. Maken 2/24/90

Side lines

THE INNOCENCE MISSION



THE INNOCENCE MISSION dwell in Paradise. Well, not quite Paradise, that's the next town but one. The Innocence Mission live in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, right next to a town called Intercourse and one on from Paradise — Amish country. The effect of such an idyllic address can be heard on their eponymously titled debut album just out on A&M. Imagine an intricate interweave of Kate Bush, Cowboy Junkies and All About Eve and you might be getting close. But faith and the family play a big part too as Karen explains with a lack of interview chatter akin to the literary economy of her lyrics.

"I come from a big family and there are a lot of things that happen everyday just in family life and it's not until you move away from them that you can see just how wonderful it is. I think everyone in my family thinks my songs are about them."

But this Mission isn't a quest for innocence, more a shelter from the storm. A retreat for embittered, embattled souls.

"It's a mission in the sense of a place rather than a quest thing. I really love children's books, you can really get lost in them and they always have these great big family houses and that's the kind of place that I wanted to evoke with the name. A kind of shelter in the woods."

Karen's angelic voice is swept up by the oblique waves of ultrasound guitar from husband Don. The Innocence Mission love The Waterboys, the Cocteau's and Blue Nile and likewise their oceanic rock is sprinkled on holy water. The LP is full of little stories about Lourdes-like miracle towns and the power of faith over reason.

"I'm horrified by evangelists, I always try to put my faith into action because words become meaningless. I'm really sorry for other people if they're too embarrassed to talk about it."

The Innocence Mission's retreat into the fantastic has so far endeared them to Joni Mitchell and hubby Larry Klein who produced the LP. More are sure to follow. Sail on the ship when it reaches these shores in April. — MS

FACES

Musikian
Dec 1989



THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Rest for the weary

THEY HAVE the Cocteau Twins on their answering machine and echoes of them in their music, along with the traditional strains of rounds and waltzes.

Kate Bush on Valium might sound like this—if she mixed stories of lonely grandmothers, French Impressionist painters and confused czarinas with more oblique tales of

longing and wonder.

"I think anyone who can make people see things with words—people who can make you fall in love with a character by the way they phrase things, I just think that's wonderful," says the Innocence Mission's singer/songwriter/

keyboardist Karen Peris, a shy 26-year-old whose charm comes partly from being nowhere near as eloquent as her lyrics. Musically, however, she ranks among the raconteurs she so admires; the Innocence Mission's self-titled debut LP is ethereal rock filled with images and emotions to soothe the soul.

"By the time somebody gets to the end of our record, I'd like them to

have a sense of comfort and encouragement from the songs," Peris says. "I always think of 'the innocence mission' as a place, rather than being on a mission." But if the Lancaster, Pennsylvania quartet writes lullabies for a restless world, there's more than

dreaminess to its music. "I think of innocence as a strong, not a soft, quality," Peris says. "To me, cynicism is a weakness. But the purity of purpose that goes with innocence, that's strength." —Robin J. Schwartz

AIRMAIL SPECIAL

WHY DO JAZZ musicians make such compelling subjects for dark, moody onstage photographs? We dunno, but Lee Tanner's 1950s and '60s portraits—in *Jazz: A Book of Postcards* (Pomegranate)—are further proof of the genre's power. Give 'em as stocking stuffers to friends and hope they send them to you. —Scott Slater

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

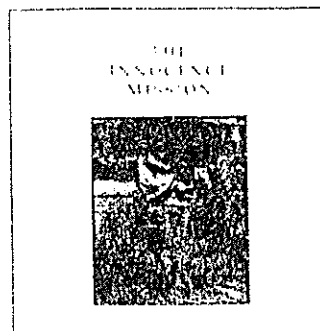
« The Innocence Mission »

(A & M)

Best Magazine
(France)
May 1990

Trompeur, ce premier contact, on jurait entendre les petits frères des 10 000 Maniacs. Même voix de derviche éplorée (l'impressionnante Karen Peris), mêmes ambitions littéraires, même flou artistique. Leur grâce féline se double, ce qui n'arrange rien, d'une réticence à se livrer au premier venu, peut-être due à leurs origines campagnardes (ils viennent de Lancaster, Pennsylvanie, la patrie des Hennis). Mais ce serait aller un peu vite en besogne. Innocence Mission, malgré un nom qui a l'air de promettre ce qu'il ne peut justement pas tenir, possède ce charme naïf propre aux grands rêveurs, cet amour du détail qui trahit un sens du conte ancré en profondeur. La production du célèbre — et pas seulement parce que sa dulcinée s'appelle Joni Mitchell — Larry Klein, satinée à souhait, sert parfaitement ce folk rock bien ficelé, autant capable d'emballer le rythme (« Wander Of Birds », « I Remember Me ») que de s'étirer languoureusement (« Medjugorje », « Broken Circle »), tel une chatte ronronnant au soleil. Un disque qui gagne à se laisser arpoiser.

Frédéric TOMESCO



the live wire

MISSION POSSIBLE



THE INNOCENCE MISSION: "The Innocence Mission" (A&M)

Don Henley, The Innocence Mission Forum, June 8

Performers are not supermen. No matter how well they may be able to entertain most of the time, sooner or later each will get sick or tired or both. Usually, though, even a performer who is slightly ailing will continue to perform. After all, the show must go on—especially when it's a headlining appearance in front of about 15,000 people at the Forum.

Vocally, Don Henley clearly was fighting off some scratchiness Friday night. When in doubt, he opted neither to hit certain high notes nor to push his voice into rock and roll raspiness. It wouldn't have mattered too much if Henley's band had been anything other than slick studio gods who grinned at each other over their ability to duplicate recorded parts.

With that sort of backing, Henley had to lead more than just by example. When he was able to summon the vocal power to put across a song decisively—as he did on "The Heart of a Matter," a soulful and lovely tune from his latest album—Henley concocted renditions worthy of his generally excellent songs. Otherwise, the concert was pleasant and diverting, but not much more.

Toward show's end, Henley spoke at

length in support of a project of great personal interest to him, the attempt to save Walden Woods, Henry David Thoreau's old Massachusetts stomping grounds. Henley exhorted the crowd to help him prevent developers from destroying what is a culturally significant forest. In typical Henley fashion, his remarks were well-articulated and worthy, but he couldn't help but let some egoistic nastiness slip through (although that, too, may have been exacerbated by his apparent physical malaise). In all, the concert was not quite what one would have hoped for.

Openers The Innocence Mission remain a rookie band, although one with considerable potential. Frontwoman Karen Peris has an extraordinarily expressive voice, and she was wise to use it this time almost entirely for singing rather than speaking.



Don Henley

Photo by Donna Santisi/VV

The Pennsylvania band's ethereal pop songs may seem a bit too similar at first, but Peris' bittersweet singing/songwriting won over the still-arising crowd by set's end.

—Bob Remstein

**Blues Festival (Stevie Ray Vaughan, Joe Cocker, B.B. King, etc.)
Pacific Amphitheatre,
June 9**

If no news is good news, it stands

Village View June 1990

THE INNOCENCE MISSION (A & M)

Much touted band from Pennsylvania. Though they've been together some years this is their debut album. The time spent getting it right has got it right. Fronted by Karen Peris who has a voice of fractured beauty. It isn't the perfect voice (show me a perfect voice) but she has a style all her own. On first few hearings I'd place them alongside 10,000 Maniacs in some respects, maybe a little less frantic in style but getting there. They are a four piece, basic guitar/drums/bass with Karen Peris coming in on all manner of keyboards. A fragile, almost acoustic, sound at times with THE WONDER OF BIRDS (this is also their forthcoming single) standing out immediately, a majestic swirling soaring style. I'm a sucker for cover art and there is real pretty and suits the kind of almost pastoral approach they've gone for. If you have a fondness for a measured electric guitar with acoustics this may be your day. Joni Mitchell is rumoured to rate Peris as a songwriter. It was a long time coming but it was worth the wait. Nice stuff.

Kevin Ring

Zip Code
Magazine
#5 UK

THE INNOCENCE Mission arrive with one of those annoying debut albums that's difficult to get a handle or make predictions on. Whilst it's clear that singer Karen Peris and their guitarist and her brother Don, have a talent for wistful, serene melodies, the production by Joni Mitchell's husband Larry Klein, is too soft-centred, radio-friendly and tolerant of their second-hand influences to carve out a startling identity for the group.

So the intro to "I Remember Me" is pure Edge, the keyboards rill from Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill" lurks in the foundations of "Black Sheep Wall" and you can often get the sense that The Innocence Mission are a band over-controlled by their A&R department who view them as the missing link between 10,000 Maniacs and Fleetwood Mac, a perfectly pastoral post-Live Aid group.

Equally, they wear their sensitivity on the lyric-sleeve. The Innocence Mission can be sophomorically self-absorbed with Karen Peris writing about painters and museums as if to show off her refinement. And Eamonn McCann won't be the only person to wonder about a lyricist who writes positively of Medjugorje.

Still that is some kind of first and you can pause to speculate if The Innocence Mission are an American band clumsily trying to replay the early U2 Smiths anti-rock bluff paradox. Because despite Klein's impersonal production, they do have tunes and those flashes of insight that often come from those woman writers who are still timid about rock'n'roll and falling into the boys' all-match bain.

So perhaps The Innocence Mission just might be brighter and more genuinely eccentric than this debut reveals. Even so, they'll have to smarten and toughen up any such quirks if they're to matter here.

Bill Graham

NME 1990(?)

Page 14

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

BORDERLINE, LONDON

LISTEN only to the tone, ignore the content, and Karen Peris sounds marvellous. Her voice is strong and precise, yet there's a strange, appealing shivery quality built in to her delivery.

At first tonight, it seems that The Innocence Mission might be able to support that strangeness. They begin with the brief, bitter aside that is "Paper Dolls", then lurch into "I Remember Me". It's a shaking identity-crisis song, Karne's fairground

keyboard noises adding to its hallucinatory atmosphere.

But as the show goes on, the sound's prevailing blandness bleaches everything a sickly sugar white. Steve Brown's drumming is jagged and imposing, but he's the only one attempting to give The Innocence Mission some *clout*. There are exceptional moments — the realistic dialogue and resonant guitar shimmers of "You Chase The Light", for instance — but mostly it's all too cosy, too casual, like a tranquilised 10,000 Maniacs.

This clean-cut quartet hail from the depths of the American Bible Belt, and the Waltons factor in their songs is oppressively strong. Karne's words are too often sweet nothings, denying any hint of anger or lust. "Broken Circle" is mildly offensive, apparently endorsing the dreams of traditional family values shared by anti-gay, anti-feminist bigots the world over.

They show some taste by covering their chum Joni Mitchell's timeless "Both Sides Now" for an encore, but it only emphasises the inferiority of their own equally wistful, dreamy ditties. In the end, this Mission seem too innocent for this dirty world.

DAVE JENNINGS

march 17, 1990

POMO MUGS



CURIOS: What is wrong with this picture? Here's one of the world's greatest bands, the Innocence Mission, looking pleased as punch, as they have probably just received a hefty advance from the also smiling, attractive executives from Island Music. So, what appears to be the problem? "I'M NOT IN THIS PICTURE!" How could that be? And where is Joni Mitchell, who's been to every Innocence Mission show in Los Angeles with their producer/bee hubby Larry Klein? "I demand an explanation!" Thank you.

7 Hits mag 1990

NEWSREELS

2-26-90 ↓ Roxy



INNOCENCE MITCHELL—When Innocence Mission played the Roxy last month, admirers Joni Mitchell and producer/manager Peter Asher were in the audience. Afterwards, they stopped backstage to pay their respects to the band's lead singer, Karen Peris. While in LA, Peris also got a call from John Hiatt, who was supposedly looking for "the voice of an angel" to sing on his next A&M album. She gladly offered her services and sang in the typically "heavenly" style that graces her band's debut album. A&M's Laura Swanson heard the Hiatt song and reported, "It's beautiful."

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

TALES OF AND MYSTERY IMAGINATION



MAT SMITH MEETS THE AMERICAN BAND WHOSE ACCLAIMED FIRST ALBUM HAS PROVOKED A RUSH OF COMPARISONS WITH COWBOY JUNKIES AND ALL ABOUT EVE.

THE INNOCENCE MISSION SIT BEFORE ME IN A semi-circle like none too optimistic defendants awaiting the outcome of a Spanishquisition. The relentless ticking of an ornate wooden clock punctuates the seemingly impenetrable cloud of silence that hangs over the living room of Don and Karen Peris' Pennsylvania apartment. A sonorous chime signals the arrival of every new half hour with a comforting but definite KRANG! that would drown out even Lemmy's dulcet tones, let alone this lot. They're so quiet I'm sure they communicate by radar. The atmosphere of restraint and positive shyness could be cut with the page of an assertiveness training manual.

The quite gorgeous Karen Peris is sitting closest, yet weeks later on my Walkman, her words trail off into an unassured silence at the end of each imaginary line as if what she's saying is either too astounding or

ambiguous for general translation and consumption. Bassist Mike Bitts and drummer Steve Brown just sit and listen intently, nodding every now and again. Christ! I should be on double pay for this one! Suddenly, Karen offers a clue.

"I saw something in a book called 'Float Planes'. In the beginning there's a quote from a hymn that said 'When I die Hallelujah! Bye bye, I'll fly away...' And that's exactly what I think we want to say."

THE Innocence Mission are aghast at the pretence of having to translate the purity of emotions through such impure means. They don't dislike (they're too positive for that), but are disconcerted by the actual physical clumsiness of life and its endless calls to voice an opinion.

"When I die I hope I'll have the grace to do the things I'm too clumsy to do in life," Karen whispers, fixing me with an inquisitory stare to see if I've guessed what she's saying. I'm not sure I have. I'm not sure any number of arcane references will lead you to a greater understanding of what they're on about. Perhaps the best recommendation I can make is that you listen to the stunning music on their debut LP. For some kind of starters, however, The Innocence Mission love the one track they've heard by The Sundays, all of Peter Gabriel's "So" LP, The Blue Nile, The Waterboys before Mike Scott discovered Guin-

ness and, of course, The Cocteau Twins. In fact they gently tip Robin Guthrie and Liz Fraser's special coupling on its head - whereas Liz hides behind the shadows cast by the sound of words, Karen's lyrics are direct to the point of confession.

Between, below, above and seemingly beyond it all, Don's oblique, dense, chiming guitar gently traces the course of the stars. Like Liz and Robin, they're an item, spending their early dates not like everyone else, necking behind the stalls of the local Amish farmhouse, but working on songs for local talent contests.

From their chosen name to the songs on the LP, The Innocence Mission cling to the comfort of childhood. The things they enjoyed way back then and the joy to be had in never being embarrassed by the limitless unselfconscious of a childlike imagination.

"A child's imagination is so massive," Karen explains. "A lot of it comes from the books they read. We tend to live in a book world sometimes. Most of the authors I like are English authors. I think older authors develop their characters more. I've tried to read contemporary authors and I just can't get into their characters. Older character's lives are more like mine. I had a strong family life and I love reading books that just talk about going through people's days - there doesn't have to be any great plot, I'm just into the characters."

The search for the personal is well documented on the LP. Echoes of their own faith and family life colour and surround the lives of the people within its grooves. One song, "I Remember Me" sounds like the tale of someone who's lost the love of a family and found themselves really adrift.

"In a way that's right. It was about a real person called Anna Anderson and she claimed to be the daughter of Tsar Nicholas II. Her whole family had been killed. She had such vivid memories of life with her family, but when she tried to claim her identity most of her main family wouldn't recognise her - mainly for political reasons because of all the changes that had happened in their lives. I didn't want it to be a political song siding with the Tsar's family, it's just about that girl. If it's true, it must have been a horrible thing to have gone through."

THE song, like much of The Innocence Mission's best work, is faintly mystical. Karen admits to an obsession with the Virgin Mary and a penchant for real life miracle situations as evidenced by another track, "Medjugorje".

"It's a town in Yugoslavia. About 10 years ago these six young people started having visitations from the blessed mother. It was a town oppressed by communism, but it became a mecca for lots of people. The song is written from the perspective of someone on their way home from there. There's a sense of peace there. Millions of people go and stay with local families and just find an inner peace they didn't have before. People say their rosaries have turned from gold into silver and that the sun has danced in the sky."

A religious upbringing "where parents openly practised their faith rather than evangelised" it is obviously important to the Innocence Mission psyche. When we met, Don was reading a book about someone who was an unwilling instrument of God - "He's affecting a lot of lives but he doesn't want to." It also caused a lot of soul searching when the idea of recording the LP in Los Angeles, the city of sin, sex and everything else great beginning with S was first mooted. In the end the band took their own "environment" to LA to do the job. Early demo tapes escaping from A&M Records had led Joni Mitchell to dub Karen Peris as "the most interesting of the new singer songwriters" and her hubby Larry Klein was picked to produce their debut LP as Don recalls.

"We were trying to figure out who to work with and they suggested him. We liked him right away. He's worked with a lot of the people we like, Joni Mitchell and Peter Gabriel. He's such a nice person, we felt very comfortable with him. Although we were nervous to start with, but it never seemed that things were actually being pulled apart and worked on but it all got done. He made us aware of the importance of mood and spirit."

Joni was there a lot during the recording. She used to sit and listen and she had lots of positive things to say. It wasn't as if she was sitting there judging, she was just enjoying listening. She would always say when she heard something she liked."

The Innocence Mission call it "making a home with windows to fly through" - an atmospheric other-worldly dream, full of safety and surprise which crosses horizons, even continents. Understandable really, as Don says, "When you're from Lancaster PA, it feels like you're from another planet."

ON the drive back to Philly we pass scores of horses and carriages - Amish people bringing their children home from school. A friend of mine tells me that at night they're not so easy to spot. Black horse, black cart, black clothes means they often end up black and blue in a roadside ditch run down by a car, ironic victims of the 20th century they've tried so hard to keep away from. Not surprisingly Mike is excited about seeing what lies behind the neighbouring lawns of Paradise and Intercourse PA.

Travelling is really exciting. Before we started recording I'd only been as far north as New York and as far south as Maryland. Now we get to see the country in which we live and the way people live in other countries. There's a man in Virginia Woolf's "To The Lighthouse" and he spends his whole life worrying. He's a very brilliant speaker and writer but he worries that he'll never reach a certain plane and go beyond. That's how we feel about the next LP. We want to be better so much, but that's not a worry, in fact it's half the fun!

'A child's imagination is so massive. A lot of it comes from the books they read. We tend to live in a book world sometimes' — Karen

LA Times

Finding a Place for the Innocence Mission

■ **Pop Music:** The band is drawing attention for its uncommon sound. Its first national tour will include stops at the Roxy on Monday and Bogart's in Long Beach on Tuesday.

By STEVE HOCHMAN

The innocence part of the band the Innocence Mission is pretty easy to figure.

The young quartet of clean-cut friends who went to Catholic high school together in semi-rural Lancaster, Pa., certainly looks innocent, and the tone of the band's songs is one of poetic simplicity. Singer-songwriter Karen Peris even makes her own plain, Amish-inspired clothing.

But what's the group's mission? "The mission in the name is a place to us, as opposed to a crusade," said Peris, 26, sitting with her husband, guitarist Don Peris, at A&M Records' Hollywood offices recently. The group was preparing to launch its first national tour,



ELLEN JASKOL / Los Angeles Times

Mission's Karen Peris: "Things are definitely getting busier."

which will include stops at the Roxy on Monday and Bogart's in Long Beach on Tuesday.

"The name is just something I thought of one day and we liked it," Karen continued. "It made me think of the giant houses in children's books where you might find a refuge."

It's an uncommon attitude for a band with an uncommon sound. The Innocence Mission's recent debut album has drawn comparisons to the haunting, dreamy styles

of Kate Bush, the Cocteau Twins and Joni Mitchell (whose husband, Larry Klein, produced the record). At the center are Karen's ethereal vocals and keyboards, with support from Don's guitar and loping rhythms from bassist Mike Bitts and drummer Steve Brown. But most noteworthy are her vivid lyrics, with imagery and emotions that conjure the spirit of Emily Dickinson.

"I have all her records!" joked Don, 25, when Dickinson's name was mentioned.

But Karen said, "I haven't read much poetry, except for Rilke, a German poet and writer—really simple, beautiful language. But that was only recently."

And while many reviewers have suggested that her songs reflect the aura of their hometown, pop. 54,000 and in the heart of Amish country, Karen is less certain.

"It's hard to say how the environment affected us," she said. "I've never written about the area or the people. But I'm sure we've been affected by seeing our parents act out their faith. Catholics are not

often very vocal about their faith, but I learned it through their actions, the way they treated people and did things."

For all that, the group's history is your basic American band saga.

"I met Karen and the other guys in high school and put the band together after we graduated," Don said. "We played in Steve's garage while we went to college until '86, when we started putting most of our energy into the band. Through the help of an attorney in New York we got a tape around to people, one of whom was with A&M."

From there it was a fairly standard series of events: signing a record contract, coming to Los Angeles to record, getting a fair amount of college and alternative radio airplay and some video airings on VH-1 and MTV.

Needless to say, this is not a band that slots nicely into the fast-paced rock 'n' roll world.

"I think about it sometimes," said Karen, taking a long pause to contemplate how the forces of show biz might play on them. "Things are definitely getting busier and at times it's hard to take. But for the most part we try to be what we always have been."

WWUH

Sept/Oct - 1990

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An Interview With The Innocence Mission

Laura Grabsch

THE INNOCENCE MISSION consists of Karen Peris, Don Peris (Karen's husband), Mike Bitts, and Steve Brown. This interview was conducted during the afternoon of May 23, 1990, on which night they were the opening act for Don Henley at Lake Compounce.

LG: I happen to have a lot of faith in this band and I think it is a perfect combination. I know everyone has practically grown up together. Was there a time when you said let's go for it seriously?

DP: Yeah, I think we had been playing together for a few years playing mostly in Philadelphia and during that time always writing songs and recording them. I think just after a bit we wanted to see what would happen if we sent things around and see what the reaction would be.

LG: Was playing music always a dream of yours?

KP: Yeah, It's just the only thing I really wanted to do.

LG: Did you used to play out at places constantly with your own material or did you play covers as well?

MB: I think every band starts playing covers and you just gradually move away from that when you have enough songs of your own.

LG: Did you initially get good recognition?

KP: We always just had a small group of friends who listened, who's always been kind of underdogs locally, and then regionally, and now nationally. That's nice sometimes because then you really know that the people who are listening to you seem really sincere or are listening to you because they really like the music.

LG: The songs remind me so much of my own favorite influences. Are there a few influences in your own lives that you think have contributed to your musical style?

KP: Musically? I think probably John Lennon and Paul Simon and more recently the Cocteau Twins and Jane Siberry.

LB: Yes. I agree. I think we all like the same people. The Beatles are especially a favorite of mine.

LG: Are the lyrics often written first or do you work from a simple idea or melody and work on it together?

DP: Well, on the songs that Karen and I write together it's usually always just her and I sitting around playing together, and hopefully some music will trigger a melodic idea and sometimes a lyric idea at the same time, but we never work to written lyrics. Karen never has a lyric and we try to make music to it, it's always the other way around.

KP: Yeah. That's always the way when I'm writing by myself. It's just always comes out of the music. A lot of times I have lyrics ideas for things that I want to write about, but it would be hard for me to take a finished lyric and try to fit it into music. It wouldn't feel right or it wouldn't feel comfortable, there wouldn't be such a marriage of melody and lyric that way.

LG: So how were you finally signed to A&M records?

SB: After we played in Philadelphia for a little while and we had a lot of our songs demoed, we decided that we wanted to try, and we hired an entertainment attorney in New York and we sent some tapes through him to some record companies, we liked the people on their label, and waited for a response, and A&M was the first to respond. Patrick Clifford who is our A+R person at A&M is really enthusiastic and everybody there is great.

LG: The album was recorded between November 1988 to June 1989 and then released that Fall. How was it during that time being probably your greatest leap into the music business?

KP: Making the record was probably the most fun we've had, not only working on the songs and being away from home, and just having so much concentration on the songs, but the sort of studio family that we had because it was just the four of us and Larry (Klein, the producer) and Tony Phillips and Steve Churchyard engineering and we all liked each other so much and so it was fun in that way.

LG: Were you confident about what you were doing and are you happy with the result?

DP: Yeah, I think we spent enough time on it to not have any excuses not to be happy. Always though, after you finish something and have enough time away from it there's always little things you wish you could have done differently. I think that will always be the case.

LG: I think the album turned out beautifully and the songs are really uplifting. They're really wonderful because they're personal on your standpoint, but a lot of people can relate to the lyrics as well. The music is also so captivating and flowing. Is there much a struggle in producing song?

KP: No, I mean, I think the music hopefully comes out naturally and then the lyrics, to finish them I seem to spend longer and longer on the lyric and write pages and pages for one song. But that's such a fun thing for me. It's what I enjoy doing, trying to write a lyric that people can see and can recognize themselves in maybe.



The Innocence Mission

Karen

I met the sweetest of angels yesterday.
And I knew it was true
Since she got those
Flowers with the message
"The Angels are watching your every move"

And I never saw the most innocent of clothes
That she's chosen for her mission.
Is there a thrift shop in heaven
Where the clothes of the once pure go?
She must have picked them up there.

Soul Sisters?
We chirped and chattered,
Exchanged blessings.
I watched lighted sparks spring.
Oh yes, there's electricity in angel wings,
Didn't you know; I was sorry to have to go.

Nov. 89 ©

LG: I know you've been working hard on touring. The best break so far must be the Don Henley tour that you've been opening up for. How has this been and was it started because of the great connection between his latest album title and your band name?

Everybody: No (laughter)

DP: It was really something our management had heard of, an opening and he was looking for someone, and we were finishing up three months of touring United States on our own in clubs. Everyone involved wanted us to be out on tour and we thought we should be on tour for a while longer, and it was a good opportunity to get in front of a lot of people. It's been a good experience, it's been a real learning experience as well to go from playing clubs which I really like and I like the intimacy of it, to playing gigantic places and dealing with that as well.

LG: How was it being on the David Letterman show?

Everybody: (laughter)

KP: Unfortunately, for some reason they never have a full band on that show and so Mike and Steve had to sit in the audience, and we missed them very much. The song didn't sound nearly the same without all of us playing. I've never been so nervous in my whole life. We've always liked that show so I think I would have been less nervous for any other show than that one.

SB: I think Mike and I were just as excited or nervous sitting there. I couldn't sit in my seat!

LG: I don't think there's much that feels better than being on a stage and playing music. You probably really have an inner desire to do it, but do you think you're still trying to get used to it?

KP: This has been a change playing for such a large audience every night, but we've been playing together for eight years so I guess it's pretty much a natural thing now. I try when I'm singing the lyrics to communicate the feeling of the song in my face, I'm playing the whole time so there's not much I can do, I'm standing in place, but with such large arenas it's hard, people don't really see your face, so that's been one really strange thing playing at these big places. Because I'm used to playing in clubs where you can see everybody and everybody can see you and they can tell kind of by your face what the song is about even if they can't hear all of the words.

LG: Do you prefer the studio?

DP: I enjoy both places. I think now that I've been out playing on this tour so long I'm really anxious to get in the studio and work there, but I know that when we were in there for six or seven months I was anxious to get out and play as well.

LG: Do you have any additional musicians for the tour? Have you felt the need for any back up in vocals or keyboards because of your multi-layered sound?

KP: No. I'm playing all the things that I played on the record, all the keyboard things, almost everything. And the other vocals on the record, I hope that they wouldn't be missed. There's one song, You Chase the Light, where the other vocal part is another person in the song, so it's not a conversation, it becomes a monologue when we play it live, but other than that I hope it still stays as much as a song with the main conversation or main story.

LG: How do you see the future of your goals and musical projects?

MB: I think we all hope to make more records, keep doing what we're doing, and hopefully keep getting better. I want to become a better player, I think we all do.

KP: It's the only thing I'm really thinking about now, the songs that I'm writing now and the songs that Don and I are writing, I just really want to be a better writer. That's what I'm concentrating on.

DP: Me too.

LG: The West Coast has really taken to you quickly I've heard, and I hope the East will too. You are from Pennsylvania so that a point.

KP: We're from Lancaster and we just played in Phila last night, it's about an hour and a half away. I just seem to get a lot of letters from California, and our shows there, when we did our own tour, the audiences were probably the most enthusiastic outwardly. They really were wonderful. I'm not sure why that is, but it's nice because it seems kind of far away and that was one big surprise to go to a lot of different cities that we've never visited before and have the people there to hear us.

The Innocence Mission is definitely a must for anyone who loves Kate Bush to Rickie Lee Jones. True beauty.

Party ALL NIGHT

Listen To

"Metal by Moonlight"

With Tori

Thursday Morning

from 3-6

**The Best Heavy Metal
and Local Talent . . .**

... CHECK IT OUT!

Mike, I saw your ad
in Goldmine. I love
The Innocence Mission
too, and I thought
you'd like this. I've
met them twice so far
and they are so sweet
and nice. They are great.
Hopefully they'll get the next
album out early next year.



Hello college/alternative radio person,

You are holding the very 1st piece of vinyl by one of the most impressive new groups of 1989. The **INNOCENCE MISSION**'s LP will be in your hands by 9/5, however, we are prefacing their self-titled debut with a college/alternative only 12" of "**Black Sheep Wall**" which includes 2 acoustic **non-LP** B-sides. I'll leave the basic background & critical acclaim info for the BIO (included in this package.) I just wanted to express my personal view of the band to you.
I know what you are saying,

"But why Jeff? I have so much to listen to & read already, and why do I want your skewed opinion anyway?"

WELL...you will not get a letter like this from me very often & I guess my own theory is that if I'm insanely fond of a band (this goes way beyond A&M/work induced attraction I assure you) this much, then there is never too much that I can do in my attempt to reach out to you and say, "**THIS BAND IS GREAT!!! LISTEN!!!**"

The **INNOCENCE MISSION** are a rare band whose music is fulfilling enough to **more** than reward any efforts I make to turn you on to them. This is music from the heart of four real people, and I hope you will embrace them as I have. Any and all feedback is appreciated!

Thank You,

Jeff Suhay

National Director of College Promotions & rabid Innocence Mission fan



Adelphi Records Inc.
1000 17th St. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Tel: (202) 331-1111
Fax: (202) 331-1112

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Their name suggests both a child's sense of wonder and an adult's sense of purpose and personal commitment. And the same could be said about the music of The Innocence Mission, whose self-titled first album for A&M is one of the most noteworthy debuts in recent memory.

Produced by Larry Klein, *The Innocence Mission* will bring to a worldwide audience a sound that one critic has already described as "stunning, intense, emotional, and genuine." For these four musicians — singer/keyboardist Karen Peris; guitarist Don Peris; bassist Mike Bitts, and drummer Steve Brown — the release of their first album is the culmination of a process that began some seven years ago.

The mere enjoyment of playing music, along with shared influences ranging from the Beatles and Peter Gabriel to James Taylor, Paul Simon, and Kate Bush, is what brought The Innocence Mission together in Lancaster, Pennsylvania at Lancaster Catholic High in 1982. They played regularly in their own area during and after school, but it wasn't until the band expanded their horizons beyond Lancaster County and began playing in nearby Philadelphia that they really took off.

"We started playing in Philly in 1986, and that's actually when things started to grow, and we started to take the band seriously," says Don. "It was an inspiration to be able to gather our songs together and then know that we could go out and play them for people who would appreciate them."

The Innocence Mission attracted not only a substantial following, but considerable critical attention as well. Steven Rea, writing in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* in December, 1987, praised Karen's "strong, supple voice...the quartet's economical, inventive instrumentation, and...the sheer originality and emotional power of the songs themselves."

Meanwhile, Eve Zibart in the Washington *Post* compared Karen's voice to "a Toledo blade: silver on steel, both shining and slicing and

with a shivery quality in the higher registers. The Innocence Mission wander lullingly through a child's garden of virtues."

What those critics heard, and what the band has brought to *The Innocence Mission*, is a style dependent on mood and atmosphere, not on individual virtuosity. Says Don, "That's not something that we consciously sit down and decide, but I think we all realize the song is the most important thing, and the instruments are there to create the feel and mood of the song. Adds Karen, "I don't like keyboard solos, but I love making keyboard sounds to help paint the picture of the song.

In Larry Klein, The Innocence Mission found the perfect mentor to help them commit their ideas to vinyl. Klein, himself a world-class bassist, has become something of a specialist in producing (or co-producing) new artists.

During the course of the production of The Innocence Mission, Larry's wife, Joni Mitchell, became equally enamored of the band and their music. As she puts it: "For the last six months the music of The Innocence Mission has wafted through our house. I love this record. Of all the new singer/songwriters, Karen Peris is the most interesting to me."

"Larry encouraged all of us to think more about supporting the song," Karen explains. And he cared about the lyrics, which I appreciated a lot. I'm always trying to make the lyrics work together with the instrumentation and Larry was the same way. He didn't want to do anything that wasn't right for the mood and spirit of the song."

Klein's interest in Karen Peris' lyrics was well-founded, as even a cursory listen reveals that these songs are not your ordinary pop music fare. "Curious" details a family's variety of mundane questions about "our dear brother's" fiancée. "Come Around and See Me" is told from the perspective of a lonely, elderly woman, while "I Remember Me" is the lament of Anna Anderson, the woman who claimed to be Anastasia, the last Russian czarina, and "You Chase The Light" is a conversation in 19th Century France between an Impressionist painter and the working class woman he loves.

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August 1989

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The album is done, the video (for "Black Sheep Wall," the first single) in the can, the tour planned. And for The Innocence Mission, the mere possibility that their songs will reach literally millions of new ears is a little overwhelming.

"Don and I always wrote our own music," says Karen. "But I don't think we ever imagined writing songs that people would actually hear! When you're from Lancaster, that feels like something from another planet, especially because at the time there was no local music scene at all. We were just really writing for our own pleasure." with the release of *The Innocence Mission*, that's all about to change.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Innocence Mission's pretty music



Members of The Innocence Mission are (from left) Don Peris, Karen Peris, Mike Bitts and Steve Brown.

By Harriet McLeod
News Leader staff writer

It's not surprising that A&M chose Larry Klein to shepherd The Innocence Mission's first album. Lead singer of the neo-folk quartet Karen Peris has a voice containing a dose of Klein's wife Joni Mitchell's inspired phrasing. Lifting, quivering, her high voice also has some of the sensuousness of Kate Bush, whom she admires along with Jane Siberry, Ms. Mitchell and the Cocteau Twins.

The Innocence Mission — Ms. Peris, Don Peris, Mike Bitts and Steve Brown — met in high school and played in and around Lancaster, Pa., and Philadelphia, for a couple of years before falling with unusual ease onto the A&M label.

Although it's pretty music, The Innocence Mission should deliver enough punch onstage that they don't, like Canadians the Cowboy Junkies, have to ask audiences to shut up and listen.

With Ms. Peris' chantlike vocal melodies backed by a pretty wash of guitar and keyboard textures, The Innocence Mission deliver strongly personal song-stories, written by 26-year-old Karen and her husband, Don, about strangely eclectic things.

Eclectic topics

"You Chase the Light" is an imagined letter of anger from the lover of an Impressionist painter at Honfleur in 1867. "Curious" is siblings' chatter about their brother's upcoming wed-

ding. ("She comes from London. We think that is so romantic. Maybe she's distantly related to D.J.") Another song identifies with Anna Takowsky, who claimed to be Anastasia, youngest daughter of Czar Nicholas II. "Medjugorje" refers to supposed visitations by the Virgin Mary to the Yugoslavian town. There are also songs to family members and meditations on the afterlife ("There are no fires of hell. There is only Merry.")

Ms. Peris, who seems shy in a telephone interview, says all her music has a religious feel. "I don't like to emphasize that division some people make between secular and religious music," she said. "I think everything has the potential for spiritual experience."

Name that place

The Innocence Mission refers to a place, not a journey, Don Peris said. "We were trying to find a name that was a visual. We thought of The Innocence Mission as a comfortable place, a comfortable home."

Karen Peris is still innocent enough to write a song called "Paper Dolls" about the disillusionment of growing up to realize your heroes have clay feet.

"Innocence is a hard word to define," she said. "It means just having purity of purpose."

The Innocence Mission will play tomorrow night at the Jade Elephant. Doors open at 9 p.m. Cost: \$5. \$6. Details: 353-9674.

VIC GARBARINI

The debut album by *The Innocence Mission* (A&M) marks this band as one to watch in the Nineties. It also prompts such hybridized descriptions as "Joni Mitchell meets 10,000 Maniacs." Hell, Joni's husband, Larry Klein, even produced the album, agreeably balancing the ethereal and the earthly within the unique synthesis of singer Karen Peris and her band. Klein nicely frames the ebb, flow and occasional swell of I.M.'s fluid melodies, but the Joni comparisons are most apt in the lyrics department. As a writer, Peris, like Mitchell, has access to a deeper level of perception than your average singer-songwriter.

If it's big hooks and muscular playing you're after, try L.A.'s the Graces. And if you think their debut, *Perfect View* (A&M), sounds like *The Go-Go's Grow Up* (and wear lots of make-up), you're right. Former Go-Go's chief songwriter Charlotte Caffey and bandmates Gia Ciambotti and Meredith Brooks churn out at least one resounding anthem about resolving the war between the sexes, *Lay Down Your Arms*, and spend the rest of their time reflecting seriously, but inconclusively, about women who love too much and men who can't. A chat with Karen Peris might be helpful.

Henley wounded and feisty as ever

By Peter B. King

The Pittsburgh Press

Lucky for us, Don Henley's innocence ended a long time ago.

How else would the ex-Eagle be able to carve TV newscasters with such practiced, surgical skill, or switch gears and confront love's complications in a golden, world-weary tenor?

From acoustic laments to up-tempo, excoriating scorches, the 42-year-old Henley proved in concert at the Palumbo Center last night that he's both as wounded and as feisty as ever.

The tall, ponytailed Texan carried himself with an erect, almost military posture. Together with his suitcoat, vest, white shirt and jeans, it gave him a dignified, formidable presence.

His voice was in top shape — a smooth/rough tenor, like good wine with a little resin.

Backed by nine singers and musicians, Henley concentrated on his latest album, "The End of the Innocence" — an album I'm guilty of having underestimated in print. While it's certainly not as strong as "Building the Perfect Beast," it offers some tasty stuff. The melodic title track (co-written with Bruce Hornsby) neatly mingles love and politics, finding little comfort in either sphere.

"Heart of the Matter" is another love song that plumbs the depths. As Henley succinctly puts it: "How can love survive in such a graceless age?"

The rave-up rocker "I Will Not Go Quietly" worked better live than on record — possibly due to the kick of a full band as opposed to the studio layering of co-writer Danny Kortchmar.

Among the tunes from his previous two solo albums, Henley did "Dirty Laundry," with its precise description of a "bubble-headed" newscaster who "can tell you about the plane crash with a gleam in her eye." I've seen that, haven't you?

But Henley's best post-Eagles song has got to be

"The Boys of Summer," also co-written with Kortchmar. It's a cinematic elegy for both an era and a love affair.

Not everything Henley did last night worked. "The Last Worthless Evening," descends to soap opera.

And while "Desperado" still sounds fresh, the two other Eagles songs Henley performed — "Hotel California" and "Life in the Fast Lane" — sounded dated. Perhaps that's because Henley chained his two energetic, inventive guitarists (especially Frank Simes) to the original floral solos, which we've heard a billion times.

The politically conscious Henley made an Earth Day plea for Henry David Thoreau's old stomping grounds. He urged the crowd of 4,838 to write Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis and ask him to keep developers out of Walden Woods.

Opening the show was the Innocence Mission, a quartet from Lancaster. Could we call singer and chief writer Karen Peris "a Natalie Merchant type"? She seemed young, bright and ever-so-earnest — dressed in a prim, floral-print dress and sensible shoes, saying things like: "This is a song about yearning for grace. It's called 'Wonder of Birds.'"

Her breathy, ethereal singing reminded me of a mixture of Merchant and Rickie Lee Jones, with something of its own besides.

The band's overall sound was pleasant — a sort of folk-art-rock with lyrical bass, Peris' synthesizer work and Edge-like guitar scraping by her brother Don. But the songs were less than memorable. Only "Curious" and "Come Around and See Me" really stuck.

(Peter B. King is The Pittsburgh Press pop music critic.)

REVIEW

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Innocence Mission easy on ears

Music review

By John Wirt
Special correspondent

The singing and stage presence of the Innocence Mission's Karen Peris is reminiscent of several young singers who've made big sound waves of late. She's got Kate Bush's high notes, a bit of Edie Brickell's shyness, the low-decibel quiet of Cowboy Junkies and the circling soundscapes of the Cocteau Twins.

Also present is the influence of older singers: Judy Collins, Joni Mitchell and, especially, Janis Ian. In fact, Ms. Peris was occasionally a dead ringer for Ms. Ian during the Innocence Mission's Wednesday night show at the Jade Elephant.

Nonetheless, Ms. Peris' singing most often reminded one of 10,000 Maniacs' singer Natalie Merchant. While Ms. Peris has a high, delicate voice — compared to Ms. Merchant's big, brassy one — her phrasing, songwriting and the Innocence Mission's instrumentation have much in common with 10,000 Maniacs.

But Innocence Mission, which includes Ms. Peris' guitarist husband, Don, is usually softer in tone and slower in tempos than the message-heavy Maniacs. You could call it Maniacs on Valium.

The group was easy on the ears and relentlessly pleasant. The backdrop for Ms. Peris' singing consisted of gentle sound washes which, if colors could be assigned to them, would be pastels.

Peris, sounding like U2's guitarist in an impossibly mellow mood, generally stuck to floating arpeggios. When he did a rare solo, however, his echoing notes resembled those of 10,000 Maniacs' guitarist Robert Buck; again, in an especially relaxed mode. Adding to the mellowness of it

all, Mike Bitts executed Windham Hill-style bass slides.

Although Innocence Mission appears derivative, Ms. Peris and her husband have given it tuneful, sophisticated songs. The Jade audience of about 50 listened intently.

Once Innocence Mission discovers its own voice, it can become a formidable talent.

Opening the show was Harry Gore, a singer-guitarist who's best known

as a member of Richmond's Good Guys.

Gore, playing originals and an uncanny rendition of Jimi Hendrix's "Purple Haze," proved an amiable soloist who could keep an audience's attention. That's not an easy trick when your only resources are your voice and acoustic guitar.

Hits Magazine
7-29-1991

Washington Post
Dec. 15, 1989

Incidentally, in a sort of regional double bill, House of Freaks is

playing with Lancaster's Innocence Mission; it's hard to imagine a stranger combination of pastoral nostalgia and rock lampoon.

— Eve Zibart

HOUSE OF FREAKS — "All My Friends" (Rhino) Appearing Saturday with Innocence Mission at the 9:30 club

Washington Post
Dec 9, 1990

Songwriter packages abound in a sparse schedule: Monday, DAR hosts John Hiatt, Lowen and Navarro and Innocence Mission (the last also at the 9:30 on Saturday); on Friday, the Birchmere hosts pen pals Christine Lavin, John Gorka, Patti Larkin and John Wilcox.

POMO PICKS

Edited by Karen Glauber



The Innocence Mission, "Umbrella (A&M): Sparser and more personal than their debut, the Innocence Mission have once again melded talents with Larry Klein to produce another brilliant album of pure poetry. Karen Peris' voice is the sound of an angel's wings in flight, and her lyrics, with references to everything from Madeline, the storybook orphan, to the spiritual, soar above the extraordinary musicianship of the band. The Innocence Mission have surpassed their influences and have become the barometer by which all others will be compared.

Billboard Magazine
August 3, 1991

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Umbrella

PRODUCERS: Larry Klein & the Innocence Mission
A&M 75024

Second album finds foursome disporting themselves as ethereally as before, with Karen Peris' gauzy vocalizing wafting subdued yet affecting lyrics. "And Hiding Away" is track with most immediate lift; other choices for modern rockers include "Sorry And Glad Together," "Now In This Hush," and "Beginning The World."

ADADADA

Since 1986's *Preliminary Hearing*, an independent sampler from the Lancaster PA-area from the folk who produce the Creation Festival every year, we've heard that Innocence Mission and Ocean Blue were due for releases on major labels. Both arrive within a month of one another three years later, and both tend to understate the case for their commercial appeal. (The Ocean Blue is reviewed elsewhere.)

The striking feature of Innocence Mission is the wispy voice and songs of Karen Peris, she's equal parts Rickie Lee Jones, Stevie Nicks, Sam Phillips and Maria McKee. While Peris never quite sounds as strong as those mentioned, she holds the promise in her delivery of "Come Around And See Me" and "Wonder Of Birds" to match and surpass them all.

Subtlety, nuance and texture seem to be the bywords for this band, as the music seems to serve only the primary purpose of supporting the songs of Peris. She also plays keys, while her husband Don Peris adds guitar and bass player Mike Bitts and drummer Steve Brown make up the rhythm section. "Black Sleep Wall" finds Innocence Mission at their very best, bringing a solid foundation with Karen Peris' fluid, dream-like melodic questioning. Each successive listen reveals greater depth, this is a debut that promises this band an artistically appealing future. If you're "Curious," don't miss *Innocence Mission*; where there's "Mercy" for the "Broken Circle."

— Brian Q. Newcomb

The New Yorker
Dec 11, 1989

NIGHT LIFE

It took the Innocence Mission seven years to come from out of nowhere. "We really had no idea how it was done," the singer, songwriter, and keyboardist Karen Peris explained recently, adding that in the rather improbable pop breeding ground of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a career in music used to seem "like something from a different planet." Still, the group's self-titled album, which came into our possession a few months back and hasn't left it since, is an exquisite debut run through with murmurs of the Cocteau Twins and Kate Bush. The Innocence Mission, which will perform at the Knitting Factory on the tenth and at Maxwell's on the fifteenth, is led by Ms. Peris and her husband and co-writer, the guitarist Don Peris. The group's style of instrumentation is not unfamiliar: chiming acoustic guitars, airy synthesizers,

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far-off backing vocals. Ms. Peris, however, has a gorgeous, breathy voice, and her lyrics—nineteenth-centuryish ruminations on themes like faith and the family—have pretty much upended pop's priorities. The Innocence Mission has been playing in the Lancaster area since 1982, and even then, it seems, was taking a lot of people by surprise. "We've played some places where the audience was expecting something a little more hard-core," the soft-spoken twenty-six-year-old Ms. Peris told us. "But that just made us want to win them over. Even in the biker bars they were very polite."

Subject: Valentine's Day 1990 concert review (sort-of).

Vickie here. I found this sort-of-review I posted in rec.music.gaffa after the Valentine's Day, 1990 concert in Kansas City, MO. It can go to the mailing list if you think it might interest anyone.

The Innocence Mission

In some article I wrote about a thousand years ago I said:

> I can't wait to meet Karen & Don Paris. I just hope I'll be able to
> actually TALK to them instead of just "hi, i really like your music &
> lyrics i like kate n jane too i play you on my radio show thanks for
> coming" kind of thing.

I'm a prophet. That's EXACTLY what happened! I tried & tried to get someone at the bar to call & tell me when they arrived so I could set something up. No one called me. Then, I wanted to try to talk to them before or during the opening band. No luck, their road manager was fairly strict in who went back there. Ala, lead singer for the opening band The Catherines, couldn't even put her coat & things backstage.

About 15 minutes after the show ended Don & Karen came out to meet people. I hung back until everybody else had gone and what's written above is just about everything I said. I did thank Don for being responsible for one of the few times that Jane Siberry's been mentioned on MTV. He said he couldn't understand why she's not better known and that they are very big fans of hers. I showed Karen my playlist book and she reacted immediately to the words Suspended In Gaffa ("oh great!"), so she's definitely a Kate fan. I tried to fit everything I wanted to say into 60 seconds (see above, plus "i think you're a great role model, i'm glad that you like to listen to other people's music (so many musicians don't) and that you have GREAT taste in music and that you're not afraid to talk about the people who influence you".) I gave Karen tapes of my shows plus a Happy Rhodes sampler and she said that they would listen to them in the van they travel around in. They were very, very nice and friendly. I'm so happy they came.

Unfortunately, there were two huge problems that the band actually didn't have anything to do with. First, the weather was horrid. Sleet and ice with snow on top. There were a lot of people there anyway, so I'm sure that if the weather had been nice (just a few days ago it was 70 degrees!), the place would have been packed. Second, it was a bar so a) no one under 21 could get in, b) the "DJ" played loud, awful, grating, boyz with guitarz & synths BOOM-BOOM crap before & between bands. I couldn't get back to the DJ booth so I begged & pleaded with one of the employees to ask the DJ to mellow out a bit. I requested Kate saying "the Innocence Mission LIKE Kate Bush, it will probably make them happy" and tried to make him understand that the people there to see the band were there because they like sensitive, intelligent, meaningful music and couldn't he please ask the DJ to find something fairly compatible? NOBODY appreciated Ministry at earthquake volumes before an Innocence Mission concert! Well, just before the band came out the DJ played "L&A" so he must have gotten my message. c) I hate to see great bands at bars because there's this "bar mentality"

that some people have. They think that it's perfectly OK to talk as loud and as much as they want to even when the band's playing. Hearing some yuppie jerk talk loudly about this rad party he went to while Karen's singing "Paper Dolls" is nearly enough to make me consider homicide as a lovely human invention. The thought that I couldn't do my show from a jail cell made me come to my senses.

OK, all that said, the show was WONDERFUL!!! The band was tight and Karen's voice was beautiful. They did every song on the album except for Mercy and Notebook. They performed quite a few songs that aren't on the album so they must have enough material for a second album. Silly me, I forgot to ask when they would be going into the studio again. They came out for three encores, very nice! During one of the encores Karen sang a very moving cover of "Both Sides Now". I'd never really liked that song until last night.

Even with all the problems, I had a great time and I urge everyone to go see them if they come anywhere near where you are.

Vickie (one of Vickie'n'Chris)
katefans@chinet.chi.il.us

==Your wish is my command == :

Music

Faith, curiosity and chiming guitar: The music of the Innocence Mission

There's at least one place that Don Peris, guitarist for the Innocence Mission, would like to visit that won't be on his band's current American tour itinerary.

Peris would like to spend some time in Medjugorje, a village in Yugoslavia where six children said they saw the Virgin Mary in 1981 while they were tending sheep on nearby hills.

"It's an amazing thing," says Peris of events in the village, which became a religious shrine visited by tens of thousands in the years following the reported apparition. "At some point, I might go over there. I've always been fascinated by Fatima and Lourdes and Guadalupe, those visitations. Growing up in the Catholic Church and Catholic schools, those things have always fascinated me."

"I just believe it can happen. The fact that it's happening in this day and age, in this century, when things seem so far removed from anything like that... When any sort of miraculous happening occurs now, I think people are very skeptical. But at one point, I don't know if they would have been."

Peris' interest in Medjugorje is shared by his wife, Karen, vocalist, lyricist and keyboard player for the Innocence Mission. On the band's new album, "The Innocence Mission," there is in fact a song titled "Medjugorje," a short piece that contains the lines "Mother Mary, Mother/Filling up this place/ With hope and peace."

"That song was primarily inspired by the appearance of the Blessed Mother to these children," says Peris. "Karen's grandmother was really devoted to the Blessed Mother, and the day Karen and I

The insider By Tom Popson

were writing the music to that song, Karen's mother came to the door to say that her grandmother had died. So Karen just finished the song and dedicated it to her grandmother."

Married almost four years, Don and Karen Peris grew up in Lancaster, Pa., and attended Lancaster Catholic High, which is where the Innocence Mission came together in 1982 with the addition of bassist Mike Bitts and drummer Steve Brown.

A town of some 59,000 residents, Lancaster is still surrounded by a lot of open country, says Peris—although he adds that there has been a good deal of building activity there in recent years. Anyone who has heard the Innocence Mission's music—airy, chiming-guitar, folk-tinged songs ranging from quiet reveries to me-dium rockers—might naturally wonder if the open environs of Lancaster had anything to do with the open feel of the band's music.

"I don't know," muses Peris. "It is very quiet where we live and rehearse. We live on the outskirts of the city, and we rehearse in a studio in a barn out in the country that's completely surrounded by cornfields. The barn is owned by an older lady who made it a studio a long time ago for the local TV station, which has since moved out. She's really cool. She rents it to us for next to nothing."

Like many other bands, the Innocence Mission—which appears Friday at Cabaret Metro—began its career playing



Innocence Mission (from left): Steve Brown, Karen Peris, Don Peris and Mike Bitts.

Who: The Innocence Mission, the Pedal-jets

Where: Cabaret Metro, 3730 N. Clark St.; 549-0203

When: 11 p.m. Friday

How much: \$6 (21-and-over show)

cover versions of other performers' songs.

The band went dormant after Don and Karen Peris and Mike Bitts entered college. But eventually the lure of performing became too strong, everyone bailed out of school, and in 1986 a revived Innocence Mission—still based in Lancaster, as it is today—began playing original material in nearby Philadelphia.

One of the places the quiet-spoken Peris

and his band were booked into was a biker bar, which seems, to say the least, a little inappropriate.

"A lot of times, we had no idea what the places were like when we got the bookings," says Peris. "But we always went through with it and played. It ended up being a really good night. Earlier that week, we had played at a lot of churches—youth sings in church basements. It was quite a contrast."

Eventually signed by A&M Records, the band spent eight months, off and on, recording its debut album. Since its release, Karen's singing—supple, strong and capable of a notable purity on high notes—has been likened several times to that of Kate Bush, while the unusual phrasing she

See Innocence, page R

Concert line

By Michael Weiner

INNOCENCE

Surreal Songs From the Notebook of the Curious

By Dan MacIntosh

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As I waited in the lobby of A&M Records to talk to Innocence Mission, I couldn't help but think about my favorite tune on its delightful self-titled first album. It's a song called "The Wonder of Birds." It speaks to me about how, like birds, we will all escape from this bird cage we call planet Earth, and one day fly away. This subject of birds also reminds me of a great old film I saw recently called "The Birdman of Alcatraz" starring Burt Lancaster. Lancaster plays a prisoner sentenced to a lifetime of solitary confinement. In one of his rare occasions of being outside in the fresh air of the prison yard, he happens upon a lame little sparrow. He takes a liking to the bird, and takes the tiny gentle bird into his large callused hands and back to his cell where he nurses this frail fowl back to health.

This singing, fluttering, joyful feathered friend seems so out of place in the prison Lancaster's character calls home. Though this may be a stretch, I think The Innocence Mission's presence in Hollywood's rampant decadence seems to be as environmentally misplaced as this bird appeared to be in the movie.

Coincidentally, this band is from a place called Lancaster (so short me, I said I was stretching), PA, a place best known for its large Amish population. Though none in the band have Amish backgrounds, its music reflects the quiet contemplation one expects from a part of the country which tries so hard to cut itself off from the hustle and bustle of modern day life. But dress this foursome in basic black and white clothing, and I'll bet any director in Hollywood could cast them as extras for real live Amish folk in a movie.

"I don't think the Amish surroundings have had an effect (on the music)" guitarist Don Peris states. "I think the surroundings of Lancaster plays an important part. Maybe not just the music, but in the makeup of everybody." He's not kidding, either. Led by Don and his wife, Karen, and supported by bas-

sist Mike Butts and drummer Steve Brown, the members of Innocence Mission are four of the quietest rock 'n' roll musicians I've met in a long, long time.

Innocence Mission had the good fortune of having Larry Klein, husband of the equally introspective Joni Mitchell, to produce its first major label album. Don Peris praises Klein for being "very aware of the meaning of the lyrics, and picturing them from sounds and instruments, and helping to avoid something on tape that would detract from the spirit of the lyrics, or the picture you would get from them."

"The great thing" adds Karen Peris, "was that our ideas were really kindred. So we were always working towards the same goal. He was just a person we could trust, but wasn't so close to the music that he wouldn't be able to be critical of it. He was so comfortable, so down to earth, such a genuine person, and was just so easy to work with."

Responding to a question about which musicians influenced her, Karen Peris mentioned The Beatles, Simon & Garfunkel, and The Cocteau Twins. The Cocteau Twins is known for its ethereal music where the singing becomes so entwined with the rest of the music, that most of the time lyrics cannot be deciphered. "The most emotional time for me to sing a song" relates Karen Peris, "is when lyrics aren't there yet, and I'm just beginning to write the melody, and singing syllables."

This emotionalism comes through in the songs of Innocence Mission many times even before the meanings of the lyrics can take hold. "I don't think you miss the lyrics, because there is so much emotion there, especially in certain records. Sometimes if you put lyrics there, something would be taken away," adds Don Peris.

Yet, Karen Peris also writes some of the most literate, image-filled lyrics in recent rock music. "I want people to get pictures from the songs," she says. A majority of them play like short stories put to music, with a novelists attention to detail and character development. And some are meant to be pointed

messages. "Surreal" is simply about reassurance directed at a worried friend. "What I mean by that song is that the things that the person in the song is so worried about aren't really that important, they're not the real things. The really important things, they know what they are. It's probably what Don says to me sometimes when I worry about little things," she says.

Some of Karen Peris' stories never become songs, and she even tries to write actual short stories, but her husband, Don, says she rarely finishes them. One would also assume that this singing bird would also write a lot of poetry. "No, I'm not a poetry person. A lot of poetry I try reading, but I can't make heads nor tails of it."

Is this a band with ambition to be stars? "I don't think there's any danger of it," jokes Don Peris. "I think the only thing that we would like is for people just to hear the record, and get something from it. In that respect, I hope the record does well, and not for any other reason than that."

But don't they want to save the world? "If we say no," answers Karen Peris, "then we sound like we don't care. If we say yes, then we come off like a savior or something."

"I think you can try," intones Don Peris, "you try to change it on a small level. But not by doing anything crazy like mounting some big campaign, but just the way you act. I think everybody should try."

"It's not so much with the music" rejoins Karen Peris "I don't think it matters what you do for a living, but the way you treat people, and how you care about other people's situations. It doesn't come so much into our music, but we try in our personal lives."



THE INN MISSION

Innocence Mission is not a band with an obvious evangelical agenda. "Our faith is important and personal. It's not something we talk openly about a lot," explains Karen Peris. "But it's not something I mind talking about. I would be very embarrassed if I was embarrassed to talk about it. It is, indeed, the most important thing." It is not a band which paraphrases scripture in song either. Instead, its faith can be observed in the kindness its songs speak of. Whether it's the longing for the prodigal in "Black Sheep Wall" or the empathy for a senior citizen in "Come Around and See Me" there should never be any doubt about its Christian concerns. "The way I look at things, everything has potential for spirituality," states Karen Peris. This means that the band's viewpoint on the people it sees in the world gives away its Christian leanings.

Innocence Mission is a pillow to lay your head on after a long day of banging it. Expect no slogans or political manifestos from these folks. It's the quiet, simple pleasures of life that give this music its power. Maybe you could call it New Age with brains, or soft alternative with intelligence; I don't know. I do know that it is a band no one should ignore.

This is a bird which has wings to take it far and away from the quiet countryside of rural Pennsylvania and up into an almost heavenly dimension. It is so worth the trip. Come fly with them.

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ACM Journal: I know this is a pretty common question, but how did the band get started?

Karen Peris: We met in high school and that's how the band got started. Anyway, it was just always a natural thing for me to do...to make up melodies. I have really early memories of making up songs, it seems, for my younger brother ever since I was seven or eight. So I never really thought about why but I just always wrote and we met in high school. I just decided to put the band together after that and we really played in Steve's garage for the first couple of years. We did school dances and things like that and it really took a long time to find places to play because there were no original music clubs in Lancaster, Pennsylvania at the time. So we ended up going into Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and eventually we were playing every club in Philly especially. It just took a lot of opening for other bands and driving back that night until people knew of us enough to come to hear us on our own.

ACM: Where did you come up with your name for the band?

KP: Well it was just something I thought of and the guys liked it. Don, Steve, Mike and I liked it. I thought it was just something that I could put a picture with. It doesn't have a definition it just makes me think of a family house or like a house in a children's book. There are so many great houses in children's books where all the action takes place.

ACM: The band has received so much recognition through MTV, VH1, and college radio stations. What kind of responses do you get from some of your listeners after a concert?

Don Peris: I'm just trying to think of one thing that I hear of. For the most part, like tonight they seem to enjoy it. I see a lot of the people smile. It makes you feel like you're doing something worthwhile.

ACM: Besides enjoying playing music, what is your purpose for doing music?

DP: It's so much fun actually to play for an audience.

KP: Yeah! It's almost a physical need to play and write.

DP: I've always had a band, different bands in high school and just picking it up just always seemed so natural to do.

KP: I always played my songs by myself until I met Don, Mike, and Steve, and we would play at school talent shows and things like that. It seems so different to come into the band situation now. The greatest thing in the world is to work out a new song with all of us. It's the most fun part.

ACM: How did you get Joni Mitchell's husband, Larry Klein, to produce your album?

DP: Well, we've always known about Larry as a bass player and he's produced for Joni. And when we were working on our own record we were trying to figure out who it was we wanted to work [with] and A&M suggested talking to him,

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and just right away it was exciting. We had the right thought of him, but once we talked to him we hit it off right away. He is a terrific person and he is very gifted and he is a very comfortable person to work with. He had no ego or anything like that.

ACM: You two are the primary lyric and music writers. Did Larry help bring out some hidden gifts inside of you or did he help you to redefine the sound of your music?

KP: He really tried to emphasize the good things that he liked in the songs. He really thought that there was an individual spirit with each song and he just helped us to paint the separate picture of each song and it was really inspiring to be away from home and with him and have all that time to work on these songs and to work on sounds. He and I both love to make keyboard sounds and Larry is the only person who I've talked to who likes the same kind of sounds that I do so we had a lot of fun.

ACM: I've noticed Amy Grant recorded one of your songs "Shadows", and Mylon LeFevre recorded your song "I Belong". Are there any other artists besides Amy and Mylon who have recorded any of your material?

DP: No, just those two. Somebody asked me about that last night, because they thought that we wrote these songs specifically for them. Both of those songs were just songs of our own that they heard and wanted to record.

KP: "I Belong" was a song we were just playing at church. I think that our manager at the time was a friend of Mylon's and Mylon heard it and wanted to record it. It was very different from our version. Our version was just acoustic guitar and vocal and it was just really simple. And Amy...that song was a song that we weren't doing. We hadn't played it in a long time. So it was nice that someone wanted to play it so someone could get something out of it. The lyrics were slightly rewritten. She asked permission first and I understood that...she said that she just wanted to have her own interpretation of it. So I thought that it was fine.

ACM: How do you approach writing songs? Is it based out of your life experiences or is it based out of inspiration from reading, because everytime I listen to your songs I can vividly picture in my mind the story that you're telling.

KP: Oh, that's wonderful to hear! That's exactly what I wish for. It's all different things. There is no process that we have in writing. We just love to write. Some of the lyrics are more

personal than others. And some are just stories but the characters in those stories are people that I sympathize with and I hope other people can see themselves in the stories.

ACM: You talk a lot about families in your songs like "Black Sheep Wall", "Curious", and "Broken Circle". Is family very important to you?

KP: Yeah it is. My family is a definite strong point in my life. My parents are the best people in the world and they've been great role models. But it's just really enjoyable to write about family because it's only now looking back on just the everyday things that I have and I'm reliving inside of different people. At the time you don't realize that there's anything special about that and now even though...like the family stories that I wrote... "Curious" isn't a true story, that happened...I could just go on writing stories about family situations because it's a fun thing to do.

ACM: Is there a particular song that has special meaning to you from your album?

KP: "You Chase the Light" is my favorite I think.

DP: And mine shifts around sometimes. Sometimes it's "Paper Dolls", and sometimes it's "Wonder of Birds". But I think those two songs are my favorite. I just like the way that the spirit of those songs came out on the record. Those two songs turned out nice. I just feel that.

KP: I think that I'm proudest of that song "You Chase the Light", and I'm not sure why.

ACM: How is life for you apart from the band and music? What do you do when you're back home in Lancaster, Pennsylvania?

KP: We spend a lot of time at our parents' houses. I mean we don't like hang out there all day. We like to visit them. They're fun people to be around. We ride our bikes, and I sew. I love to sew. And mostly we just write and work out songs with Mike and Steve. That's where we spend most of our time doing...and rent out old movies.

ACM: What are your future plans? Is there anything different you would like to do on your next album?

DP: We're trying to write songs for the next album, but it's difficult to do when you're touring. So we're looking forward to getting home and writing. As much as we like to tour,

we're looking forward to getting home and writing. And as far as anything different, hopefully the next record is a lot better.

KP: I think that the songs that we've written recently have a real good spirit in them. We're not really conscience of a direction, we're just writing.

ACM: Your faith is also important to you. How do you see God working in your personal lives and being reflected in your music?

KP: I think connecting faith and life in songs is very...I write about God very unconsciously because it's just a main part of life. It should be the...I just don't like to differentiate between my spiritual songs and secular songs because God creates everything and so everything is sacred and connected with God so it just very naturally flows into the songs. We're trying right now to write songs for mass that the church can use for a youth mass. I really want to do that when we get home. It's gonna be...I'm not really sure how universal it's going to be but at least for one event held in Philadelphia all the C.Y.O. (Catholic Youth Organization) groups will come to have a national youth mass and then they could use the music for other services. But I'm really excited about that and I really want to do a good job. I've only written two pieces of the whole mass track. We play at children's mass when we're at home and it's really a great casual service with aids and things to act out the readings (scriptures). And I enjoy those masses so much because it's basic truths taught to children and I think that the adults who attend them enjoy them more than the children do.

ACM: Is there anything important that you would like your listeners to know about yourselves and your music?

KP: (Long Pause) I think that there are a lot of misconceptions about the music industry so to speak. People, maybe who have a really strong faith, are afraid of what they'll find if they love music and they want to enter into a more mainstream audience. And talking to musicians, there are so many good, sincere people at the record companies and just looking for songs that they'll find something they'll love...but there are a lot of myths about drugs and alcohol. But all the musicians that we know don't abuse those things at all or even use them anyway, so I think that may be one good thing to tell people. If you would look for those things you would find them surely but I think maybe that you'll always find what you're looking for.

ACM: In one phrase or sentence, how would you describe the Innocence Mission?

DP: That's usually one that I say.

KP: Next!

DP: Yeah, cause it's hard to think about. It seems like a very natural thing to us...it's hard for me to figure out what it is...so I usually pass on that question or try to stir around it. I guess we hope that people get something out of it and that they could get enjoyment from that from the lyrics. That would be nice.

KP: Yeah!

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THE INNOCENCE MISSION

"I don't have a translation," says The Innocence Mission's Karen Peris almost apologetically about the name of her Lancaster, Penn.-based band. "It's just a name that makes me think of a place. We wanted a visual name, and Innocence Mission sounds like a haven or a place to get away from everything."

The Innocence Mission is a haven from the crowded pop jungle. Its self-titled LP is a quiet, textural foray into songs that are evocative musically and lyrically. And with Peris' pure, clear voice and conversational phrasing, comparisons to Kate Bush, Rickie Lee Jones and Jane Siberry are inevitable.

Produced by Larry Klein, The Innocence Mission is the work of a young band finding its own voice. If "Black Sheep Wall," a song of warning from an older sister to a younger brother, or "Come Around," which deals with grandparents' isolation and loneliness, don't seem like traditional themes, then the foursome has accomplished what it set to do.

"Some of the songs, I hope, people will be comforted by and some are surreal," explains Peris' husband/bandmate Don, 25. "But mostly, they're story songs and as long as people can see themselves or people they know in them, then we're doing fine."

The pair met in a high school production of "Godspell" and got together to play guitars and write songs almost immediately. "We joked about getting married the first week, but what we really wanted to do was put together a band," Karen says.

Local gigs led to an attorney, a deal, then Klein and manager Peter Asher, and The Innocence Mission finds the stakes are changing just as quickly. As Peris explains, "It's harder to finish a song now, because we want so much more. Now there's this thing in the back of your head that you aren't just writing for yourself, but for other people, and you want it to be good for them."

—Holly Gleason

Innocence Aplenty In Mission's Music

THE INNOCENCE Mission's second album begins with a surprisingly energetic burst of sound, but "Umbrella" soon downpedals to a more languid tempo, which it largely maintains. Singing of the sky and flowers, Paris and Jesus, butterflies and "my someday coming child," this Pennsylvania neo-folk-rock quartet is like 10,000 Maniacs without the edge—and these days 10,000 Maniacs doesn't even have that much of an edge.

On songs such as "Now in This Hush," the voice of singer/songwriter/keyboardist Karen Peris glides closer to the ethereal glossolalia of Cocteau Twin Elizabeth Fraser than before, but otherwise this is not much different from its predecessor. Produced again with Larry Klein (Mr. Joni Mitchell), "Umbrella" is again pretty, sweet and bland. Such songs as "Flags" and "Revolving Man" find midtempo bliss in parenthood, gardening and a nature-oriented Christianity; those who share similar values might find "Umbrellas" more than merely pleasant.

— Mark Jenkins



Innocence Mission (l-r) Karen Peris, Mike Bitts, Don Peris and Steve Brown

Bruce A. Brown

LP's: *Swirling Eddies*, *Outdoor Elvis*; Randy Stonehill, *Return to Paradise*; Veil of Ashes, *Pain*; Vector, *Simple Experience*; X-Sinner, *Get It!*

Other Faves: Innocence Mission, *Innocence Mission*; King's X, *Gretchen Goes to Nebraska*; James McMurtry, *Too Long In the Wasteland*.

Michael Delaney,
Our Itinerant Iconoclast
CDs: Steve Scott, *The Lost Horizon*; The Call, *Let The Day Begin*; The Choir, *Wide Eyed Wonder*; Innocence Mission, *Innocence Mission*; Swirling Eddies, *Outdoor Elvis*

Harvest Rock 33 1989
concert Review vol 4 issue 3

CONCERT REVIEW:

INNOCENCE MISSION

Cabaret Metro
Chicago
February, 2

There are concerts where the band gives its all, and you walk away knowing that you got your money's worth. Then there is that one life-changing experience to which every concert afterward will be compared. We didn't believe this until last night, when our perspectives were forcibly broadened.

The Innocence Mission played at Chicago's uptown Cabaret Metro, before a rather bizarre mix of black leather bikers, punk rockers, and attempted yuppies after an opening act that sounded like a garage band that should have stayed in the garage. From the tone set by the videos played pre-concert, and the general mood of the venue I half expected Innocence Mis-

sion to be 'booed' off the stage. Definitely not your typical metal/thrash/punk hybrid, Innocence Mission more closely recall a cross between *Rumours*-era Fleetwood Mac and *Unforgettable Fire*-era U2. Karen Peris' vocal style, at once powerful and hauntingly beautiful, lacks a decent companion; she gracefully outclasses the competition.

Opening with "Paper Dolls" and "I Remember Me," the latest video, the musicians gave the impression of nervousness. The crowd, although recently blasted by the Pedal Jets, loosened up and took to the floor right beneath the stage. No one really danced, all attention was focused entirely on the band.

Relaxing a bit, they cut into "Surreal" and spots went blue, catching every wisp of smoke in the room and setting the appropriate mood. The concert then gained momentum. Karen Peris showed her versatility, switching from keyboards to acoustic guitar; as the band scattered several new songs throughout the set. The newer music was just as rich and tasty as

that which fans have come to love from their current self-titled debut.

The mix and performance of the band rivaled the excellence heard on the CD, exceeding that of any concert we've ever seen. Period. Live music doesn't get any better than this.

The guitar work of Don Peris, while not in the forefront, definitely gave depth to the quality of the music and mood. His quiet personality seemed a counterpoint to his wife's soft richness. The interpretive bass playing of Mike Bitts and Steve Brown's drumming were complimentary, giving Innocence Mission an air of fullness. The strength of each element combined creates a masterpiece of tone, texture and purity. It was a concert that became a work of art.

After a total of seventeen songs and two encores, Innocence Mission had given these reviewers the best live music experience of their lives, thus far.

— Kent Nebergall and Larry Shuman

LA Times 11-10-77

Catholic Joy From Innocence Mission

A few less knowledgeable spectators at the Innocence Mission's Club Lingerie show on Saturday were speculating over the origin of singer-songwriter Karen Peris' soft-spoken accent, which, like the band's warm and moody sound, is elusive. Best guesses: European and otherworldly.

In fact, she, her guitarist husband Don Peris and their definitively middle class-looking rhythm section are all from not-so-far-off Lancaster, Pa., whose green hills apparently helped impart some of the same down-to-earth mysticism that Ireland inspired in Van Morrison. In concert and on record, Karen Peris' words roll off that ethereal tongue with almost complete unintelligibility, but the lyrics read like fine, wholly comprehensible Romantic poetry; imagine the Cocteau Twins with substance behind the slurring.

For anyone in need of respite from Madonna's Catholic guilt, the Innocence Mission offers the rarer, intriguing tonic of Catholic joy. And though Peris is indisputably shy and reserved behind her synthesizer, she was also, surprisingly, a delight to watch—just your average cheerful, beautiful, thin-boned girl next door who wants to be Joan of Arc and who sings in the lovely tones and tongues of angels, but who isn't so ethereal she can't spin some very funny, worldly stories.

—CHRIS WILLMAN

Saturday, November 16

A & M Artists

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Plus RADIO BLUE • MARK DAVIS • TERRY & the B-SIDES

The Innocence Mission

Club Lingerie, November 16

Village View, L.A.
Nov 22-28 Vol 1-16

The 1989 debut album by this Pennsylvania quartet is a classic in its genre: ethereal, atmospheric pop/rock that, in the case of this band, falls somewhere in between the moodiness of Kate Bush and the more folksy flavorings of 10,000 Maniacs. On the follow-up, *Umbrella*, the band's gorgeous layered sound and the impossibly lovely and expressive voice of Karen Peris remain. If only the songs were still as compelling.

With this in mind, the band's appearance Saturday night at Club Lingerie (their only L.A. area show on the current tour) wound up a somewhat uneven affair. With the exception of the title track, the Cocteau Twins-ish "Sorry and Glad Together," and the peppy "And Hiding Away," the songs from the new album seemed directionless, largely bereft of the graceful melodic leaps and harmonic pull that made the older material so engaging.

Not that the band didn't try their damndest—if anything, The Innocence Mission performed more tightly and with greater

confidence than they did on their first tour. Drummer Steve Brown and bassist Mike Bitts combined power and finesse, without ever covering Peris' more delicate keyboard parts or her husband Don's glassy and shimmering guitar work.

Karen's vocals, the most attractive ingredient in an already enticing ensemble, cut through the band's soundscape with a potency that belied the fact that they had had to cancel a few shows earlier in the tour due to her having a sore throat. She subtly reinterpreted several of the older songs such as "Curious" by singing slightly behind the beat and seemed generally more assured than, for instance, last June when the band opened for Don Henley at the Forum.

With a crop of new songs, The Innocence Mission could be wonderfully successful, but until then, they remain an undiscovered diamond in the rough.

—Bob Remstein

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

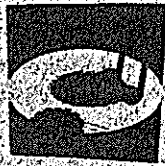
November 16, Club Lingerie, Hollywood

November 17, The Coach House, San Juan Capistrano

The Innocence Mission is a bit lacking in traditional rock 'n' roll credentials: Sex, drugs, and power chords are notably absent in the music of these quiet, rural Pennsylvanians, all of whom met through either the Cub Scouts or a Catholic high school production of *Godspell*. But if you think such wholesomeness is dull...well, you're wrong. The Innocence Mission's music is gentle, sensuous, and startlingly beautiful, while the combined effect of sparse instrumental interludes and Karen Peris's childlike yet richly evocative vocals is both joyful and heartbreakingly melancholic, almost like a rainy Sunday afternoon. Although both of the group's A&M LPs have

received critical praise, the band is still relatively unknown to the record-buying public. Which is a shame (since both albums are gems), not to mention a bit surprising, given the success of the Cocteau Twins and the Sundays, two bands the Innocence Mission is often compared to. But while this band is undeniably cut from the same cloth, the Innocence Mission is warm, earthy, and sincere, where those acts can be sterile and precious. When asked how her subtle, contemplative songs—perfect for lonely, late nights—will come across in a live setting, Peris pauses. "The music is very personal," she says, "but I hope the experiences described are common enough that people can be...comforted by them. When you're singing to people who are right in front of you, you're almost having conversations with them in the songs." My guess is that it will be enchanting.

—Leah Hennen



YV SOUND BITES

Umbrella

Innocence Mission
debut album
covers all emotions

By Keith Abbott
News Leader campus correspondent

They have been compared to artists such as Kate Bush, 10,000 Maniacs and Edie Brickell, but with nearly 10 years of experience and a second album to their credit, the Innocence Mission is clearly not trying to copy anyone. They are, however, one of America's most popular alternative rock bands.

The four-member group's new album, "Umbrella" is artistically, emotionally and spiritually similar to its self-titled debut album. The new album opens with a fun, upbeat song, "And Hiding Away," sung by

lead singer and keyboardist Karen Peris. The cunning harmonic guitar changes of her husband, Don Peris, create a sense of mystery and keep the playful feeling alive.

Sadness in slow song

This playfulness doesn't last. The next song, "Sorry & Glad Together" brings us down to a kind of sadness or despair. The slow tempo helps Ms. Peris' melody through its emotional ups and downs. She supplies a shrill yet angelic back-up harmony that adds to the song's emotional power.

The title song has to be one of Ms. Peris' greatest personal achievements. Her duet of synthesizer and voice is all her own. While there is an occasional whisper of guitar, most of the work is solo. As in all her songs, she tells a story. At a Philadelphia concert last year, Ms. Peris said of the song, "It's really (the) words of a woman to her husband. She's so grateful because he embraces her weaknesses, as well as her strengths."

"These Waltzing Days Are Over/Mintas Waltz," a waltz put to rock music, is another success. The Innocence Mission would make a classical composer happy. Ms. Peris' neo-romantic melodies and the band's rhythmic simplicity follow the classical romantic traditions of the late 1800s. This is borrowed music in a contemporary setting, performed, as the classicists would say, "brilliantly."

A classical twist

There is, however, one song that sticks out among the rest. "Revolving Man." This song has a kind of classical-medieval twist. The Perises play an acoustic guitar duet, while Ms. Peris sings the melody. The harmonies move strangely at times, but they do not stray from the sense of tonalism. Bassist Mike Bitts and drummer Steve Brown pop in and out at times, but the whole band returns for the climactic end.

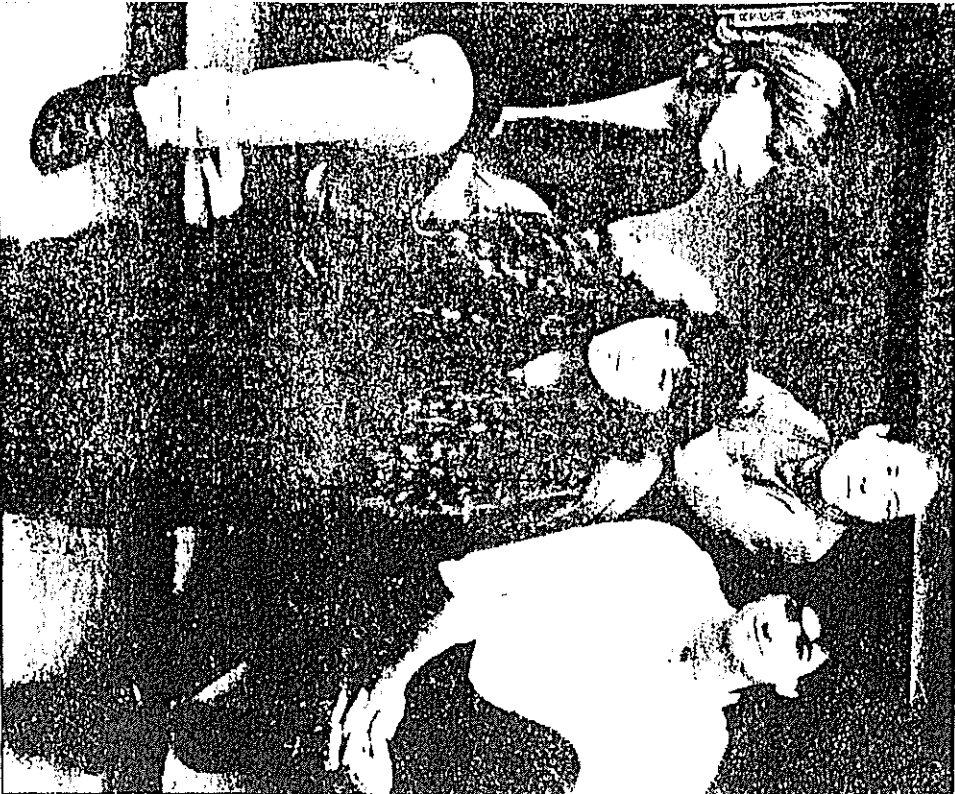
The rest of this album is in much the same spirit as the group's previous album. Songs are of slow to moderate tempo and contain the same type of picture paintings. They are by no means the old songs reproduced, but they create a similar result: one heck of an emotional roller coaster ride. If you liked the Innocence Mission's first album, you'll like this one. It may not be the King's Dominion "Anaconda," but it certainly will throw you for a loop.

Keith Abbott is a senior at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Richmond News Leader

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1991

MENT



'Umbrella' is the strong second album by the Innocence Mission (from left): Don Paris, Karen Paris, Mike Sitts and Steve Brown.

The Innocence Mission returns

*** The Innocence Mission Umbrella Warner Bros.

Dreamlike and eloquent, this second album by the Innocence Mission brims with fragile emotions.

Up against MTV pop divas and angry rap groups, this Lancaster-based band looks like the new kid in a tough school, but their vulnerability and honesty are among their chief assets.

Vocalist and keyboardist Karen Paris has a haunting voice that ranges from a little-girl whisper to a throaty wail, and her lyrics hint at much more than they actually state. In the opening track, "And Hiding Away," she sings:

*"Try, catch the thoughts that flap and fly
in the cloudy, tearing sky,
that touch and stir and won't be
had —
and try to speak them.*

Indeed, the whole album seems to take place under a windswept, cloudy sky — a chill enhanced by the band's echoing, chiming arrangements.

Karen's brother Don weaves his guitar into the sonic swirl, often holding an equal footing with Karen's evocative vocals.

She wears her heart on her sleeve, singing the praises of home and hearth, religion and family. In one of the album's high points, "Every Hour Here," she contemplates the place of God in busy lives:

*Our self-importance grows so
dazzling we don't see You.
But Gentle Jesus, aren't You
always,
aren't You every hour here?*

It's to the band's credit that none of this sort of musing comes across as heavy-handed. Admittedly, Paris' lyrics sometimes walk a fine line, but she never topples into cheap sentimentality.

In "Beginning the World," she analyzes her own shyness with a universal image:

*Aren't you bursting with
butterflies
on the fourth of September?
Like you'll have to get on the bus
in your turtan dress, with your
lunch box.*

Paris has an uncanny knack for recalling images of childhood and treating her every subject with respect. "Flags" points out a person's less obvious gifts — parenting and gardening — and says that everyone has talents that may not call attention "like flags waving themselves."

If comparisons must be made, Paris sounds like a cross between Kate Bush and Natalie Merchant, but the Innocence Mission really recalls no one else. They tread a lyrical territory that's too seldom explored, and they do it with consummate grace.

They probably won't be blasting the public relations alarm for this literate, understated band, so you owe it to yourself to seek them out. You won't be sorry.

— John Chambliss,
Staff Writer

***** Outstanding
**** Good
*** Fair
** Poor
* Poor

Innocence Mission speaks out — quietly

AUG 21 1991

By JOHN CHAMBLESS
Staff Writer

Last spring, tucked inside a converted church in Kingston, N.Y., the Innocence Mission set about recording the follow-up to their debut album.

Surrounded by stained glass and reminders of their Catholic faith, the band members came up with songs that dig deep into themes of doubt, longing, love and spirituality. "Umbrella" was released last month on A&M Records, and it has been spreading the critical acclaim that greeted the band after their debut in the summer of 1989.

At the forefront of the new album is Karen Peris — the vocalist, keyboardist and chief songwriter. She still lives in her hometown of Lancaster with her husband, Don, who plays guitar and co-writes some of the lyrics.

In a phone conversation this week, Peris' gentle good humor and long, thoughtful pauses reflected the deeply introspective nature of her lyrics.

Recording "Umbrella" in the church, she said, "was so much like a home. We felt so comfortable there. The person that had converted it into a studio had left a lot of it untouched, so it was really beautiful."

After touring for much of the past two years, Peris said the band is closer than ever.

"We certainly didn't get tired of playing together in that time," she said. "We've been practicing since we came home. We're kind of excited to go on tour in October. The thought of it makes me nervous, the longer I'm away from it, but I've been more eager to go out again since we started practicing together."

On the road, the Innocence Mission played four months as a club headliner, and several months as an opening act for Don Henley.



The Innocence Mission (from left): Mike Bitts, Steve Brown, Karen Peris and Don Peris.

The stadium shows with Henley "were a good experience — a once in a lifetime kind of thing," she said. "It wasn't extremely compatible" she added, grasping for words. "But it was still nice."

As the band toured the country, "we were amazed that there would be an audience in a place we've never been before," Peris said. "It gave a face to the audience."

The band has been bolstered by college radio airplay — the same route that introduced R.E.M. to the world — and they've gotten encouraging feedback to their Lancaster post office box.

"We didn't have any expectations for a bigger audience (with "Umbrella")," Peris said. "We just hoped that the people who liked the last one would like this one."

Several singles were released in England from the first Innocence Mission album, but Peris said they aren't exactly a household name there.

"I don't think this album has been released there yet. We played one show there, and that was so much fun. We had always wanted to travel overseas, so we were kind of in a dream that week. It was almost too much excitement."

Three videos were released from the first album, but they were seldom seen, aside from MTV's 120

Minutes" late-night show. The band just finished a video for "And Hiding Away" that was shot in and around Lancaster.

"We don't know if anyone will play it," Peris said, laughing. "We like it a lot better than the others. It's a lot of performance, us practicing together and a lot of cloudy sky."

The photos on the CD booklet — including the moody image of a church tower on the CD itself — were all taken in Lancaster.

The strip is on St. John's Lutheran Church on Orange Street," Peris said. "I was glad that we got to take all the photos here this time."

Peris said she and the band aren't treated like celebrities at home. "I think that would be funny," she said. "People here are just being really encouraging about this album."

For a private person, Peris is surprisingly frank about her flaws and doubts when she writes. She said that "there are some songs I've done that I wouldn't record, because they're too specific to my life."

"I do worry a little bit that I'm writing too much about myself. These songs are hopefully about common feelings that other people have. There's a lot of joy in recording a song like that."

While some of Peris' lyrics are clear, others make literary allusions or explore subjects not everyone is familiar with. Take "I Remember Me," from the last album, which was about Anna Anderson, who maintained she was really the Czarina of Russia.

"Someone came up to me at a club in Philadelphia and said 'Good for you. All these other bands are writing songs of cars about the world, and it's good to see someone who's writing about themselves,'" Peris said, laughing.

After nearly ten years in Innocence Mission, Peris said she's ready for ten more.

"Oh sure," she said. "Our friendship has so much to do with the way the music sounds. We were all in (Lancaster Catholic) high school together. Don and Mike (Bitts) were in Cub Scouts together."

"There are all these common feelings and experiences. There are so many ties that we all have."



▲ Innocence Mission: Hope for the new musical decade.

INNOCENCE MISSION UMBRELLA

This follow-up to their self-titled 1989 debut appears as a natural extension of their first release. This foursome has crafted a beautiful and relaxing set of songs. Most are laden with thick and chorus-filled guitars à la the Durutti Column or the Cocteau Twins, with occasional acoustically-based melodies thrown in.

However, it is Karen Peris, the entrancing chanteuse, who creates the focal point of almost every song

with her stellar voice. Her voice trembles perfectly each time she explores her dynamic range, and is neither overpowering nor hidden. It is an integral part of each composition, as it was on their debut.

Although I like every song on this CD, the best cuts are the opener, "And Hiding Away," "Now In This Hush," "Beginning The World," and "Revolving Man." There is joy in hearing this band's consistency. It's apparent that a lot of personal feelings and emotions have been touched upon during its creation. A good sign for the development of music during this decade. (A&M) — Steven Petrovic

Alternative Press 12/91 #4/3

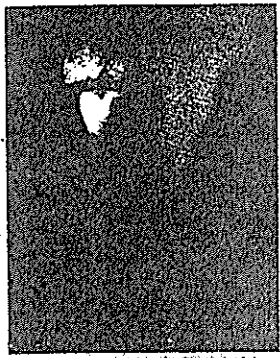
Page 4

DON'T GET CAUGHT IN THE RAIN!

PICK UP

THE
INNOCENCE
MISSION'S

UMBRELLA



NOW IN STOCK!





The Innocence Mission

The Innocence Mission

Umbrella

Umbrella by The Innocence Mission is a release to be saved for a rainy day or as a reminder of one. The sound cascades like a gentle rainfall, bathing the soul with a mood that is far from depressing.

Vocalist Karen Peris has a delicate but powerful voice that compliments the acoustic, lightly synthesized style of the album. Peris wrote or co-wrote all of the songs on the album, and played synthesizers, acoustic guitar and piano as well.

The album's mood is easy going. No interpreter is needed to understand the lyrics, which are imaginative and clever. "Now In This Hush," for example, asks the questions, "Where is color this hour? / Where is music this hour? / Are they still going on somewhere?"

Peris' voice is soothing throughout the album, especially in "Flags," where she sings of everyone's personal inner talent. She tells a friend, "Few draw notice to those who possess them, / Like flags waving themselves."

This album is worth checking out. When frigid winter winds blow, *Umbrella* is like a warm summer rain ... a reminder that the snow will melt and the world will come back to life.

By Gina Hostler

The Maneater, 12.6.91

Tonight (Thursday, November 14) R.R. Church presents
THE BEAUTIFUL • GRACE PERIOD
ALMIGHTY HI-FI • PUSH

Friday, November 15
EVERYTHING
THE INCLINED • NOT DEAD YET • SECTION 8

Saturday, November 16 A&M Artists
THE INNOCENCE MISSION
 with GUEST MARK DAVID, TERRY DAVIS & CHES

Monday, November 18 Gas House Mary presents
HEX • COAT • THE SHIVERS • Our Mother's Children
 Free admission with this ad

Tuesday, November 19
THE BLACK WATCH • THE UNINVITED
The New Kind • Book Of Fears

Wednesday, November 20 Epic Artists
THE CHOIR plus THE WOODIES
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Thursday, November 21 R.R. Church presents
PILGRIM LOVE CIRCUS
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Friday, November 22
THE MONKS OF DOOM
 plus Beggar's Banquet Artists **THE DYLAN'S**
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SISTER DOUBLE HAPPINESS
SHRINE

Wednesday, November 27 The BRC presents
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JIMI HENDRIX BIRTHDAY BLOWOUT
UMPTEN BANDS • NON STOP • 9-2 am

Saturday, December 7
HUMAN DRAMA TICKETMASTER

Saturday, December 14
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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16

WE RECOMMEND:

KEEP LEFT at the Natural Fudge Cafe.
 ALMIGHTY HI-FLI, RICHEL WEST & SUBURBAN RAINDANCE, CRUEL FREDERICK at Al's Bar.
 ALY DUNNIE, SOY COWBOY at Al's Place.
 POI DOG PONDERING, GIANT SAND, PAGAN BABIES at Bogart's.
 THE INNOCENCE MISSION, RADIO BLUE, MARK DAVIS, TERRY & THE B-SIDE MOVEMENT at Club Lingerie.
 SAVOY at King King.
 JOHN DOE at McCabe's.
 SONNY SHARROCK, THE FIRE MERCHANTS at the Palomares. See Jazz Pick of the Week.
 THE ELECTRIC FERRETS, BULIMIA BANQUET, WOOL, WILDMAN LARRY FISCHER at Raj's.
 THE YELLOW JACKETS at the Rexy.
 DUMPSTER, WAX, MY PAIN at the Shamrock.
 THE DRAMATICS at the Strand.

CLUB LINGERIE, 6507 Sunset Blvd., Hlywd. Terrific sight lines and incredibly varied bookings featuring the finest of Amer-indie rock grace this pleasant locale. It pays to show up early, since sellouts are frequent, and the openers are almost always worth a tumble. Two full bars. Doors open at 9 p.m.; over 21. (213) 486-8557.

Fri.—High-octane blend of rock, pop and funk from Everything; plus The Incubated, Not Dead Yet!, Section 8.

Sat.—Ethereal, mood-elevating pop-rock out of Pennsylvania; The Innocence Mission; also Radio Blue, Mark Davis, Terry & the B-Side Movement.

ROCK & POP

LA Weekly
 11-22 to 11-28

CALE

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Take Shelter

The Innocence Mission

UMBRELLA

The breathtaking new album

FEATURING:

"And Hiding Away" and "Now In This Hush"

Produced by LARRY KILIN and THE INNOCENCE MISSION



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IF YOU MISSED THEM AT CLUB LINGERIE, YOU CAN PICK UP THEIR NEW ALBUM AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

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beginning the world,

INNOCENCE MISSION

"The Innocence Mission's newest
release "Umbrella" graced the
shelves of True Tunes back in
August. This moody atmospheric
music has captivated the attention
of pop, alternative, and adult
contemporary listeners. After the
release of their A&M debut in
1989, much talk was begun about
the spirituality of this Lancaster,
PA based quartet. The lyrics deal
with very human situations, but
with a sublime and serene poetic
delivery. Instead of further
speculation on this unique band, I
set out to get it straight from the
source. After over 2 months of
label politics, I finally made contact
with lead vocalist Kerin Peris on
Sept. 19th at 10:00 a.m. My coffee
was warm, the sun was bright, and
the conversation was well worth
the wait:

Can you give us a brief history of the Innocence Mission?

Kerin: The four of us met at Lancaster Catholic High School. We got together and decided to keep playing after high school because we enjoyed it. There weren't very many places around Lancaster to play our own songs. We eventually started going to Philadelphia to play in the clubs there. We'd go several nights a week opening for other people. Then we started gaining listeners there, which was always encouraging. We sent some tapes we thought were good to some record companies. We really liked the people at A&M so we joined up with them. That's about it.

Is it going pretty well?

Kerin: Yes, I don't know about commercially, but we're happy that we can continue to write and have listeners of our music.

Do you have any touring plans?

Kerin: Yes, we'll be starting a tour October 16th and it will go until December 15th. We'll be going all around the country. We really enjoyed doing that last tour.

Your lyrics really read like poetry. I've enjoyed reading the lyrics even without listening to the album. There are a few songs that stood out to me. "Beginning the World" was one in particular. Could you go into that song a little bit?

Kerin: Sure, I started writing that song just about leaving college without graduating. And coming home and changing my mind about what I wanted to do or what I could do, what was feasible. I loved writing very much, but of course that wasn't very practical. So I was trying to decide what I could do to survive and still be able to write. I thought probably a lot of people have had that experience, being undecided after high school. Then I found there was so many things that connected to that. Other moments in my life seemed to have a correlation to the times of College.

The song "Joan" is one I've heard on several bootlegs (I must admit). There are several twists in the lyrics. Could you explain some of what inspired that song.

Kerin: I thought it would be fun to continue a story of a character from one album to another. I don't know if I'll do it again on the next record. The voice in that song is the voice of the woman in "You Chase The Light" (off the Innocence Mission 1989) It's kind of a continuation of her. It sounds like I'm taking myself too seriously, but it was just fun. When I sing "You Chase the Light", I enjoy singing that woman's words. I thought what she would be thinking years later. I think of her thinking out loud but talking to another person. Jean, is not her name, but the name of the person she's seeing.

Also, "Revoking Man" seems to have a message a lot of people could handle better.

Kerin: I just wanted to write about a person who gave his whole life to his family! He denied himself things so he could be a good husband and father. This could definitely apply to women too. I know people like that. I think parents are unsung hero's and I wanted to give a voice to some of those feelings.

A lot of people have interpreted the Innocence Mission in many different ways. I've seen some outright Christian reviews that missed the multi-dimensional aspect to your lyrics. There is definitely a spiritual presence throughout the lyrics and art. Can you explain in your own words, the nature of that spirituality?

Kerin: I'll try to do that. It's difficult to sum up and find words for such a big subject. We've always been practicing Catholics and we've tried to keep our faith at the center of our lives. Even when I write about other aspects of my life, I don't see it as separate from my faith. I'll always be connected to it. I also think that a lot of the words I use come out of the Catholic Church.

Anytime someone believes something that profoundly, it will seep over into all areas of their life.

Kerin: Yes.

You've pretty much from an orthodox Catholic background?

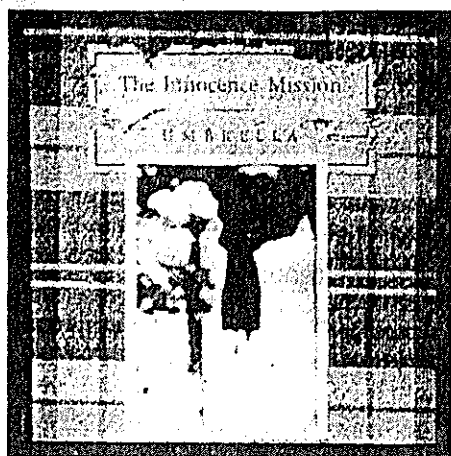
Kerin: Yes, I went to a public grade school, and a Catholic high school. So, I got to experience both atmospheres which I think is good. My parents are both very devout and go to mass every day. I always saw the beauty of that, even when I was young. I loved the quality of their reverence, even though they didn't talk about it much.

What needs to happen with the Innocence Mission in order for you to be ultimately happy with what you've done?

Kerin: I think we're satisfied now. We don't really have any great expectations of commercial success. And when we do hope a little bit for that, we're not surprised when it doesn't come. I know that we love writing and we devote a lot of our time to trying to find perfect expressions in the words. So, I think we'll always be striving to be better in writing, but we're grateful for the audience we have now. There's a lot of satisfaction at this point. I'm not sure where the sales are, but I hope that all the people who liked the first album have found this one and liked it. We'll always want to have new people find it too and we hope the sales allow us to continue to do this.

By: John Thompson

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THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Umbrella

PRODUCER : Larry Klein and The Innocence Mission
A&M RECORDS

Ask the average rocker to describe poetic imagery. Go ahead. The reaction will vary from a blank stare to a treatise on Wordsworth and Coleridge. Nonetheless, we all are drawn to similar qualities in rock lyrics. Through music and verse, any good rock or pop artist captures fleeting moments or thoughtful impressions in a way that we can all identify with. So it is through the eyes of Innocence Mission writer/singer Karen Peris, whose seemingly banal moods and im-

ages become both familiar and grand.

Like R.E.M., 10,000 Maniacs or Christendom's Out of the Grey, The Innocence Mission employs a pleasing balance of acoustic and electric. At times, guitar notes fly at us in a flurry, as in the opening tune. But it is the long, somber phrases against an acoustic backdrop that makes songs like "Sorry and Glad Together" or "Revolving Man" particularly compelling.

The focal point of The Innocence Mission is Karen Peris's light, hazy vocals and her Dylanesque ability to interpret the poetic imagery through intonation and phrasing. Folk music does have a subtle influence here, so it is no surprise that folk singer Joni Mitchell's husband, Larry Klein, helped to produce *Umbrella*.

While most of the imagery is self-reflective and playfully impressionistic, Peris' Catholicism figures largely into her writing. "Evansong" seems to be a reflection on St. Mary, and the lovely "Every Hour Here" finds Peris ruminating on how easy it is to overlook Christ's presence every day.

The overall impact of The Innocence Mission cannot be described in a few paragraphs; one must listen and listen again to *Umbrella*. With that kind of sensitivity, perhaps one can better hear the Truth and live it too: "Our self-importance grows so dazzling we don't see You/But Gentle Jesus, aren't You always/Aren't You every hour here?"

--Christopher Dale

← Notebored
No/Dec 1991
Vol. II No. 3

True News
↓ Vol. 3
Issue 3
1991



THE INNOCENCE MISSION "Umbrella"

The Innocence Mission is a band of four friends from Pennsylvania whose debut self-titled album gained them a respectable amount of airplay on college and AOR format radio stations and naturally, quite a few fans. Because comparisons are always necessary, I'll get them over with first. I would say fans of Clannad,

Cocteau Twins, the more "normal" sounding Kate Bush songs, and Out of the Grey, with a hint of Stevie Nicks would enjoy this band. *Umbrella*, their second release on A&M Records, should not disappoint old fans and should interest newcomers to their unique sound as well. Its charm is a bit more subtle and I find I like it better with each listen. Once again Larry Klein produces, and together with him, the band (Karen Peris, vocals, Don Peris, guitar, Mike Bitts, bass, and Steve Brown, drums) creates a musical atmosphere that is better than Calgon for "taking me away." Karen has a knack for finding lovely melodies and enchanting harmonies. The real beauty of this album for me, however, lies in the thoughtful simplicity of the lyrical content. This CD booklet reads like a fine book of poetry finding the wonder and beauty in ordinary people and everyday thetoses. My favorite is the title track, "Umbrella" which paints a picture of one being loved through weakness...

*I want you to be proud of me proud of me proud but how can
you be? When I wear my umbrella like this When I dwell on
myself like this When I need to be reassured like this*

*You dance around with my umbrella
You dance around the obvious weaknesses
You dance around the room with me*

Another song that especially stay with me is "Beginning the World" which I interpret to be about one being overwhelmed with their own inspirations and inability to follow through...

*Always the same underdog stance
Always the same happy sad sky
Eternally crying, am I still shy?
I am always beginning the world*

also love "And Hiding Away" and "Joan." However, I find the whole album enjoyable, and even if I had to separate myself from all bias, I'd have to say The Innocence Mission is a charming and talented band and this album is worth your looking into. (If you have never heard the Innocence Mission, you may also want to listen to their first self titled album, also on A&M).

-Beki Kerkman

Boston Rock, Thanksgiving
Innocence Mission
Nov 28, 1991 #115

by Stacey Urbanas

GOOD CONVERSATIONALISTS: The Innocence Mission are hard to categorize. So, inevitably, comparisons are made.

"We've been compared to everyone with a female voice," lead singer and keyboard player Karen Peris says of attempts to pigeonhole the group. "If it was one band all the time, I think we'd start to worry—but 10,000 Maniacs sound nothing like the Cocteau Twins, and they sound nothing like Kate Bush. We don't want to sound like anyone else; it's important to make music of our own."

The Innocence Mission has been making its brand of lucid and lyrical music since its days at Lancaster Catholic High School in Lancaster, PA. After graduation they adopted the Innocence Mission tag.

"We liked the idea of having a visual name that people would get a picture from," says Karen. "It reminds me of a grade school or something... or a family home."

Fueled by common histories and tight bonds (Peris and guitarist Don Peris are

married), the band often finds itself writing about family and faith, "but it's not something we decide to write about. Those are just really natural topics for us," Karen says.

"We've never been comfortable with pressing our opinions," she continues. "When Don and I are writing, we're writing for ourselves first, at the same time hoping these words will be about a lot of shared experiences."

The band's newest CD release, *Umbrella*—recorded in six weeks at Dreamland Studios, and largely live—features atmospheric songs about what Karen describes as "frailties I thought I had, but a lot of other people feel they share." Live shows have been eye-opening and uplifting for the band.

"Audiences are so kind to us. We can see our songs mean something to them," she says. "It's so much better to sing these songs to people who are right in front of you, because it's almost like you're having a conversation through the songs."

Some of the Innocence Mission's songs are actually imagined conversations, such as "You Chase the Light" from the band's first self-titled release, a fictionalized dialogue between an Impressionist painter and a female resident of the popular artist seaport of Honfleur, France in 1864. The new "Revolving Man" chronicles the disagreement between a free spirit and a father shackled by responsibility and love.

"Even if we don't have an audience at all, except for the four of us, I'd still need to write all the time," Peris says. The act of writing is so comforting—the release of feelings, of getting things out in the open and just playing music is so comforting." ♦

THE INNOCENCE MISSION

Umbrella
A&M

Reflex, 12/91, #21

Unless they possess a particularly angry disposition, most critical listeners would be hard pressed to dislike The Innocence Mission altogether. The shimmering guitars, supple rhythm section, and Karen Peris's wistful voice skillfully blend into a charming haze. Karen and her guitarist husband Donald write delicate songs about rainy afternoons ("Umbrella") and questions of spiritual faith ("Every Hour Here"), with melodies that slowly unwind and wrap around the memory. All these cuts lilt along gently, but chances are you'll want to curl up on the sofa and rock back and forth while playing the LP, rather than spin around the kitchen. Lyrics about French storybook heroines and the first day of school sound too precious in such abundance, and the unbroken melancholia grows wearisome. *Umbrella* is by no means a bad record, just one best reserved for small doses on cloudy days.

—Andrew Cable

MAINSTREAM

INNOCENCE MISSION

UMBRELLA

A&M

There is something wonderfully whimsical about the music that Innocence Mission

creates. It's like mist or driving into a bank of fog—deceptively denser than its actual substance. Innocence Mission is Mike Bitts, Steve Brown and the husband/wife team of Don and Karen Peris, but it is Karen who is the rudder for this college/alternative band out of Pennsylvania. Her music and words are filled with the juxtapositions of the surreal and ordinary. Family, faith, love, fear, trust—trips through the past and present—Peris uses her words and music with dreamlike economy.

Producer Larry Klein returns for this second, seamless album that has all the freshness and hope of its tartan album cover. Peris' writing is freer and less self-conscious than the group's self-titled debut. And as always it is Karen Peris' voice—strong yet fragile; airy and focused—that captivates the listener. Ironically, the album was recorded in an old Catholic church—Dreamland—that is now a studio. Peris is Catholic and symbols of her religion slip in effortlessly. Jesus, family, the Virgin Mary, rosary beads, cemeteries—important parts of Peris' life and thus her music.



UMBRELLA Harvest
THE INNOCENCE MISSION
A&M Vol 6 issue 1

1991

Throughout *Umbrella*, Innocence Mission's lyricist/vocalist Karen Peris longs for a childlike perspective. She seeks an ingenuousness that quietly slips away with the years. As a result, the most touching songs on the Pennsylvania quartet's second album of ten tell of minor pleasures—approaching day's end, dreaming under a cloudy sky. Peris yearns for a place of simplicity and great marvel—like the simply drawn Paris of Madeline, the red-headed children's book heroine of whom Peris sings in "And Hiding Away."

The quiet and the commonplace provide deep wells of inspiration in *Umbrella*. Peris watches a mother talking with her children and working in her garden in "Flags." And "I don't know how you cannot see,"



Peris marvels, "where your gifts may be found." In "Every Hour Here," an eloquent expression of humility and guilt, God is likened to a ticket-half tucked away in a jacket pocket—constantly present, usually forgotten, fingered over until it is well-worn and familiar.

But seeing the world through the eyes of youth has its drawbacks and *Umbrella* gives voice to Peris' fear and frailties. In "Beginning the World," self-doubt reduces her to a child nervously on her way to the first day of Catholic school. She contemplates parenthood in "Someday Coming," then thinks of all the world's evils she'd want to hide from her children. A headstrong youth chides "Revolving Man" for the ruts in his life, and then becomes confused when the man laughs off his remarks. "Of course I'm laughing," the man replies, "I'm happy to revolve around my children, to revolve around my love . . . You young ones don't believe in nothing but freedom for yourselves/Where are you getting ahead to/It's I who am sorry for you." With Ecclesiastic wisdom, he then adds: "And God is in His Heaven/All's right with the world."

Umbrella's fragile atmosphere bespeaks Peris' arcadian perspective. Drawn with a minimum of melody and musical lines, *Umbrella* is nonetheless deeply textured, with a moodiness that complements Peris' wail-ish voice. The album has a rather sleepy, dreamy quality, but at its best it possesses a certain whispering beauty that speaks in voices of childlike wonder.

—Brian Mansfield

The observations that Peris makes are common and oddly comforting; encouraging friends, loving family and in "Every Hour Here" the struggle to keep faith in the present reality. "You are a like the ticket-half I find inside the pocket of my old leaf-raking coat/There

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