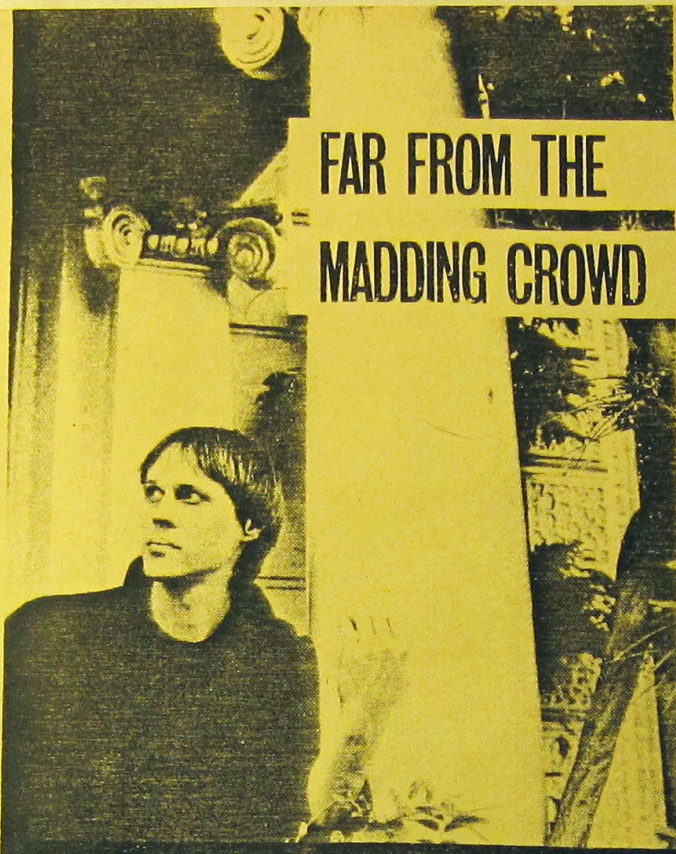


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# FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

**Tom Verlaine** is a tall frame clothed unremarkably. He's basically apolitical, carrying the air of a fine artist who's possibly been born into the wrong century. He's too American to be 'eccentric', he's not garrulous but thoughtfully articulate, often considering a question in a few moments of silent contemplation before delivering his reply.

A non-compliant 'guitar hero', one of the first from the infant ear of 'punk rock', he works now as ever in isolation from the rushing world-of-pop. Minus any devious business strategy he has arrived where he is today (a cafe in Westbourne Grove) via the lingering legend of Television and his (less heralded) solo albums.

He's fortunate to have record company (Virgin) finance. One imagines him without such support walking the streets of downtown Manhattan and rummaging through the garbage pails but *still* working.

At the moment he's enjoying a lengthy stay in England, content with the good fortune of being able to fly back to the States with Virgin Atlantic more or less anytime, to complete his new LP 'Cover'.

"It's two years since I started doing things for it. Various things have fallen by the wayside, some lyrics are a year old and some are three months. It wasn't a steady thing, being in and out of the studio every month or so until it was done. It's a long time I suppose, but it doesn't seem a long time to me."

Yippie! The artist out of time. So what else were you doing?

"Nothing."

With some people I wouldn't believe this but with Tom I do. It's easy to see him drifting into anonymous existence when not actually *creating*.

"But the way some people crank out albums... my stuff tends to come out of a mood. Sometimes the opposite music comes out of a mood. You might be depressed and end up creating something riffy and beaty just to get yourself out of it. I don't think music *per se* has all that much to do with day to day life. A lot of people just create of-the-moment products — 'let's have a little of this and a little of that to get this'. I don't find myself doing that although some people create fun music that way."

Could you do that if you wanted? He nods nonchalantly:

"Oh yeah. It might be a relief!"

Verlaine discs can best be enjoyed if allowed to assume a purely subjective relevance. Escaping from firm 'meaning', they either strike a personal chord or they don't. 'Cover' is blessed with both a graceful lightness of touch and a powerful ringing of emotions.

Tom ponders that the 'typical Tom Verlaine fan' might possibly be someone who doesn't listen to much pop music. A person who probably doesn't listen to much music, period.

His future ambitions concern travel rather than becoming a raging rock and roll success. New York is no longer a happy home for the man. He finds it oppressive and "time to move on." But to where? He betrays a certain bohemian restlessness:

"I'd like to visit Nepal, see Bangkok, maybe go to the the Mediterranean in October or November when there are no tourists there. I'd like to see Ireland, anywhere where people think for themselves and are not influenced by radios and television."

Influenced by Television? Now there's a thing...

MICK SINCLAIR