

# Wrack n Roll

by Alex Gray

Be-Bop Deluxe; FUTURAMA; Harvest Records

Once the bread and butter of the music industry, hard rock has recently fallen to unplumbed depths. Second-rate bar bands like BTO, Sweet and Kiss have captured much of the audience, while the artistes of the genre [Bowie and Ian Anderson come to mind immediately] have forsaken their successful styles for ill-conceived experiments. In fact, the only hard rock that I've heard lately which compares to the prime material of, say, four years ago has come from Phil Manzanera, Eno, and Be-Bop Deluxe. I've covered the former two in previous columns, but to recapitulate, Eno takes hard rock beyond its apparent limitations, while Phil has refined the form, giving it more emotional subtlety and tonal variety. Be-Bop's leader and composer Bill Nelson prefers to remain within the established perimeters of the style, but he is comparatively new to the music industry and is still developing a singular sensibility.

Nelson writes dramatic melodies, after the Ziggy Stardust style, and possesses a guitar technique comparable to that of Mick Ronson's. Although Bowie, Tull, and Cream are his most obvious influences, Nelson's most distinctive tracks have a lush and very European romanticism rarely found in such loud music.

Be-Bop Deluxe's first Canadian release, FUTURAMA, is certainly indication enough that the band abounds with talent. Nelson is always in control, using his voice, guitar, and keyboards to outline his conception of rock. The cuts "Music in Dreamland", "Maid In Heaven" and especially "Swan Song" show an intriguing dynamic structure, while the jazzy ballad "Jean Cocteau" is quite in keeping with the other worldliness of the subject's writings.

I feel that once Nelson feels confident enough to discard his more obvious posturings, and gains a little more subtlety in the use of studio electronics, then we will hear much excellent music from his band. For the moment, though, FUTURAMA is a pleasant change from the tired histrionics many older rockers are trying to foist upon the public.

Dave Mason; SPLIT COCONUT; Columbia Records

Dave Mason has made some excellent music in the past, but only when he has transcended his influences and established his own persona. Mason drew from Stevie Winwood's fragility and Jimi Hendrix's psychedelia to create great music with Traffic, and then created one gorgeous solo album [ALONE TOGETHER] which borrowed heavily from Clapton and Leon Russell yet stood on its own strong melodies and vocals. However, on SPLIT COCONUT, Dave seems to have rerun a number of funk and California pop clichés without generating any fresh ideas of his own. The end product bears some relation to Clapton's 461 OCEAN BOULEVARD, but lacks the elegance and good humour of that rather subdued album.

The problem is simply a gross lack of imagination. Dave's vocals are consistently bland and non-committal, while his guitar style hasn't changed or improved since 1970. In all fairness, SPLIT COCONUT is Mason's best since ALONE TOGETHER, but it adds nothing to the earlier work and is shallow and superfluous in comparison.

Yes honey, I know we need a new bathroom... But where will we get the money?

We thought you'd never ask.

## 'Tidal Wave' washes up the mess

By LYNETTE WILSON

Have you heard the latest on disappearing countries and states? You know, land masses being swallowed by the sea? Well, for awhile we thought we were going to lose sunny California. Now we're in danger (?) of Japan slipping under, or at least that's what the film 'Tidal Wave' is all about.

Actually, 'Tidal Wave' isn't about a tidal wave. It starts off in the ocean (the action of the movie) then shifts onto dry land. But the wave comes at the end, as if to wash up the mess.

Lorne Greene was the only name in the case that I recognized. The rest of the names were Japanese and I have a terrible time remembering Japanese names.

So, anyway, the movie, like 'Jaws', starts in the sea. I fully expected to see one of those dreadful characters (sharks) all the time the cast was under water. But there wasn't a shark to be

seen, thank God!

The initial reaction to the knowledge gained from this voyage to the bottom of the sea is one of pure disbelief. From looking at the bottom the Japanese scientists could tell that real trouble was heading for Japan. Just by the way the mud swirled they knew disaster was coming.

The theory of irrelativity, in respect to mud swirls and destruction, was slowly losing hold. The theory of continental drift took its place.

It seems that there is a theory that the land masses of earth were, at one time, one. They separated through a gradual process of the earth's crust expanding, spreading, cracking and other such naughties caused by heat. The shocked Japanese scientists believed the process was merely continuing. Japan had nowhere to go but under.

A good portion of the movie was spent emphasizing the plausibility

of this catastrophic occurrence. Another point of particular interest in the plot was that of finding homes for the Japanese. Embassies were dispatched to all corners of the world hoping to find some allies to their cause. It wasn't until the actuality of events took over that the countries of the world did reach out to help. This was, I think, a moral issue. Lorne Greene played the part of the morally concerned American representative, something like Henry Kissinger.

Visual effects and special effects were superbly done in 'Tidal Wave'. Fire, earthquake, volcano, etc. tear up the islands beyond belief. I don't know how to describe it, wild, wicked and super good table-top photography maybe. It was, it really was. I think it might have surpassed 'Towering Inferno' for flame. And the tidal wave is the finale, to it all. (Oh, and there's an oddly comical completion of a search going on between two lovers separated by all this.)

## La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc

Marks high point of silent film

By MARION OWEN-FAKETE

Directed by Carl Dreyer. France, 1928. Script: Dreyer and Joseph Delteil. Photography: Rudolph Mate. Main performers: Marie Falconetti (Jeanne d'Arc), Eugene Silvain (Pierre Cauchon), Maurice Schutz (Nicholas Loyseleur), Michel Simon (Jean Le-maitre), Antonin Artaud (Massieu), Ravet (Jean Beaupere), Andre Berly (Jean d'Estivet), Jean d'Yd (Guillaume Evrard).

The experience of seeing La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc is never to be forgotten. The picture marks a high point of silent film art, indeed a high point of film art generally speaking. Marie Falconetti's performance as Jeanne surely has never been excelled by any other actress in any other film role. Most importantly, and this next comment encompasses above statements, emotional intensity of the film is overwhelming: persistent use of the close-up causes the viewer, willing to submit to the film, to become as aware of Jeanne's loneliness, betrayal, confusion, pain, fear, helplessness, anguish as he might ever be, unless the viewer underwent the actual experience himself, the experience of being asked to deny what one truly believes and feels with every fibre of being to be true, even if one does not understand entirely the conviction having to be defended before authority determined to elicit recantation with every possible method, including torture and power to terminate life itself. The committed viewer leaves La Passion entirely exhausted, but a better and wiser person as well.

Carl Dreyer, who directed 14 feature films altogether, in several countries, including his native Denmark, spoke once about abstraction, which he defined as "something that demands of the artist to abstract himself from reality in order to strengthen the spiritual content of his work. More concisely: the artist must describe inner, not outer life". Result of abstraction is emotional power accomplished in one way by the camera's searching relentlessly for every indication of inward self, not missing a turn of a head, movement of a brow, glance of an eye. Demand for close-up shots becomes clear. (Rudolph Mate's photography is thought by several critics to among the most remarkably concise and lurid in

film history. Given what seems to have been complete freedom, Mate's camera becomes clairvoyant. There is style but no self-consciousness and stagey film tricks.)

When Dreyer first interviewed Marie Falconetti, an actress playing insignificant parts, and who incidentally, never created a role of any importance after the Jeanne film, he saw beyond appearances, through make-up (of which there is none in La Passion), to what he called "soul". And when he worked in important scenes with Marie Falconetti, asking others not needed to leave the set and requiring silence, in keeping with his ideas about abstraction, he proceeded to contact with her soul, to find a Jeanne to surface. Critic Roger Manvell believes Falconetti might have been hypnotized at least partially during filming, she seems to feel so deeply the emotions portrayed. Or, maybe Falconetti in this special instance was an excellent pupil of the Stanislavsky school. Whatever the reason, her performance is remarkable. She is Jeanne. The viewer feels that he is witnessing, as through the medium of an unusual newsreel, the actual reactions of the simple French peasant girl who in 1431 was burned at the stake because she saw angels.



Dreyer's purpose in making the film was not to prove one way or another whether Jeanne actually did see angels. His purpose was to show what happens when a convinced, and in that way inspired, person is opposed by a powerful antagonist equally convinced and strangely inspired to stamp out that conviction, to bring it to heel. (Tom Milne says Dreyer's purpose "was to reveal Joan as the victim of one of the most terrible of all perversions: the perversion of a divine principle

in its pass through the minds of men, whether they be Church, Government, or what you will".) The film is a testimony of the human spirit's plea for liberty to the point of the physical body's destruction. To achieve this testimony, Dreyer, by use of actual trial records, concentrated on the last day of Jeanne's interrogation and on the burning, instead of on the entire 18 months the proceedings took. (Eighteen months, coincidentally, is precisely the time Dreyer's film required for completion.)

It seems nearly sacrilegious to find fault with this sincere, highly artistic film, meticulously researched in every aspect and made with submission to public taste and box office ratings. In fact, to find fault one must generally concentrate on disadvantages of Dreyer's choice of techniques. The film is too long, some say. But movement is always forward and the emotional power Dreyer wanted is not to be attained quickly. The film devotes itself too much to single shots, not using efficiently the important cinematic element montage, others say. But montage was used as much as possible given Dreyer's artistic decisions, even if the technique were not so comfortable for him as it was for Eisenstein. The close-up nearly

eliminates background, location and context not always obvious: this is another objection. But must background and context be entirely explicit? The film would have better continuity if made with sound. Dreyer wanted sound, but the French studios were not equipped in 1927-28 for producing sound movies; at any rate, is Bresson's 1962 Procès de Jeanne d'Arc, any better for all its sound?

The film is too stylized and Dreyer's use of emotion is false. My response to this is that Dreyer had his own visions, artistic ones, and who are we to deny them? Dreyer's visions may not appeal to all of us, but they have validity of being real to the artist himself and the weight they carry is momentous enough to deserve notice and high respect.

Also showing: fifth episode of The Perils of Pauline.

December 6-7: The Band Wagon, best musical by Vincente Minelli, father of Lisa Minelli. Subscriptions available at the door.