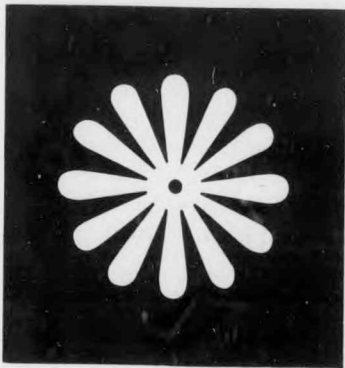


Music Reviews cont'd ...



Big Electric Cat
Dreams of a Mad King
(Cleopatra)



Children on Stun
Tourniquets of Loves Desire
(Cleopatra)

Here you go, two reviews in one for the black clad amongst you. American gothic label, Cleopatra, brings you Australia's **Big Electric Cat** and England's **Children on Stun**; proving that pale skinned moping lives into the nineties. Cleopatra provided pages of interviews with their acts' products, and since the music is half decent, I suppose the effort was worth it to some extent.

For those of you not familiar with gothic music, let me try to fill you in. It's kind of a dark, churning, asexual type of music, with roots in eighties bands such as **The Mission** (U. K.), **Sisters of Mercy**, **Bauhaus**, **The Cure** (to some extent). At the outside edges, you could include **The Cult** (although lots of people would argue this one) and **Ministry**. try and imagine what Victorian punk music would sound like...that's gothic! Paul Sadler of **Big Electric Cat**, says that the essence of goth, as a term applying to all art forms, is "...growth through destruction." These guys see themselves as quietly subversive, like Victorian punks might.

Of these two acts, **Children on Stun** is probably the bigger deal. They seem to be the great new hope (according to their promotional package) in the British goth scene, which is probably the largest goth scene traditionally (something to do with the English penchant for artsy, whiny music). Unfortunately (for them) Tourni-

quets of Loves Desire isn't particularly good. I think its mostly a sonic problem; frankly they sound kind of thin. The bass is mixed too far down, the guitars might as well be elastic bands, the drums just click along superficially and the wanky keyboards are vintage eighties dreck. Thankfully, they pinch their rhythmic sense from **Ministry**, meaning that whatever depth the music has, comes from the style of playing. Tracks to look for are: "Hollow", "By the Wayside", "Pandora's Box" (for a change of pace), and "Choices".

Big Electric Cat's *Dreams of a Mad King* is a better album. The songs are better than **Children on Stun**, the sound is better and it looks better to boot. The factor that makes the real difference, is the sonic density; these guys sound heavier, making the music more interesting. There is also a diversity of pace that mixes things up. The biographic material correctly points out songs such as "Orchid Dreaming" and "Paris Skyes" (which sounds like **The Cult**) as examples of poles at play here. "Orchid Dreaming" emphasizes the melancholy aspects of gothic music, while "Paris Skyes" works on churn, produced by real electric guitar noises! Oh, and one final note, **Big Electric Cat** uses the best sounding drum machine I've ever heard. Drummers beware, the technology is out there now.

Andrew Sneddon



Mark Curry
Let the Wretched Come Home
(EMI)

Ahh, where can I start with Mark Curry. First of all—this is a white folk singer, not the black comedian with the same name who has a sitcom. My love affair with the singer (the comedian's stand-up is quite good also) began a couple of years ago with his first album, *It's Only Time*. What a piece of work it is! In another Canadian student publication, I named it as one of my top ten picks of that year, and, unlike some of my other choices, I would still call it one of my favorites. That record brought the first tentative recordings by this man to the public—and nobody noticed. My wife, my brother and I all love the album, but the only person I've ever

heard mention it since is Jackson Browne, in *Rolling Stone*, hailing its brilliance. It's *Only Time* was Mark and his guitar, smart songs with fat hooks (the title track is a stick-in-the-head finisher to a terrific album), and one gravely voice.

So, given the resounding lack of attention, I was overjoyed to get a review copy of the second work. And it's every bit as good as the first one. The differences—Curry sounds much more confident, and there's a fuller band involved, called Hell's House Band. The songs are still propelled by Curry's acoustic guitar, but now some of the hooks lie in the music rather than in his vocal lines—the piano and electric guitar in "Back to Square" are a case in point. With the band, Curry's music has expanded in sonic depth, while much else remains the same.

About his new confidence, however—some of the charm of *It's Only Time* lay in the sound of a man unsure of his place in the world, but at home in his songs. Now, Curry seems to be asserting himself against the world, and some of that original charm is gone. It's my only criticism of the new work, and its the kind of comment that could lose importance of Curry's recording career develops anything close to a body of work. Then these atmospheric variations will provide depth of tone, rather than this sense of loss.

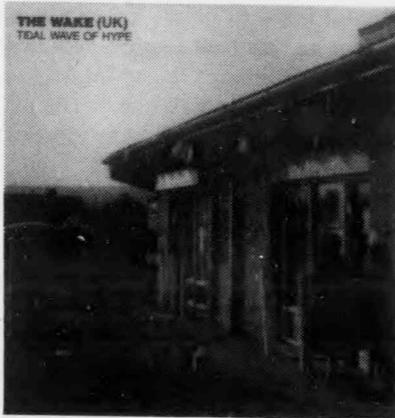
The opening track, "Don't Die", starts thins off on a jaunty note, even though the song is an appeal for life. Over its two minute duration, Curry delivers the same verse several times with slight changes in intonation that emphasize different meanings of the appeal. It's a brilliant song-writing touch, so concise and understated. Curry's rough voice is deceptively expressive, and this is an example of him suiting his writing to his assets. One can listen to the rest of the album, ignoring the music and revelling only in the vocals and lyrics. Of course, this would be to miss some snappy layered playing, acoustic and electric instruments serving the song with absolutely no grandstanding. On *It's Only Time*, a cello on the title track was the only sweetener in the mix; *Let the Wretched Come Home* features subtle electric guitar, organ, piano, a sparkling sax solo on "Please", and a larger variety of acoustic stringed instruments.

"Little Wet Dog" starts with a subdued, churning electric guitar, the only real hint at Curry's interest in punk music. Lyrically, the songs can be raw, but that's legit singer/songwriter territory. The song soon changes pace and sound, with Curry's voice accompanied solely by a plucked acoustic guitar, occasionally disturbed by ominous percussion and swelling voices.

The title comes from the album finisher (again), "Buying the Farm". The music is virtually a sleeper version of the opening track—a wiser, more introverted variation of the theme. Again, it's about death, but Curry sounds cool with the possibility of his own demise. "Buying the Farm" isn't just the last song—it provides a note of real closure to the intensity of the whole album.

Let **The Wretched Come Home** is, again, one of the year's best. Maybe this time Curry will sell a few copies.

Andrew Sneddon



The Wake(U.K)
Tidal Wave of Hype
(Sarah Records)

Yep, another bunch of droning Brits, and the record's terrific. It took me a while to warm up to it, what with the dry vocals, droning (hard to avoid the word) guitars and keyboards, and the just-a-bit-too-much percussion, but **Tidal Wave of Hype** is one tasty track after another. This is **Stone Roses/Soup Dragons** territory, but calmer. The grooves are laid back, not frenetic at all. Vocal chores are split between male and female voices (sorry—no info with this one, so no names), and the contrast is a real delight. His vocals propel the sarcastic songs, and hers the introspective ones.

Tidal Wave of Hype contains no weak tracks, and no outright standouts. "Provincial Disco" is a mildly depressing look at British City night life—very 'Morrissey' in lyrical tone. There's a priceless image of young women dancing around their handbags that is concise, sad, pathetic, and familiar all at once. The chiming keyboards are ear candy though. The harmonica on "I Told You So" is a welcome sweetener—not

over-the-top, but a subtle part of the mix. "Back of Beyond" is actually an instrumental track, although there's no in your face soloing just rifling without vocals. "Britain" and "Brit Mix" are variations on a theme. "Big Noise, Big Deal" is 40 seconds of a church or clock bell chiming, along with some gentle percussion. "Lousy Pop Group", the finisher, is a jab at popular music: "I hate Eric Clapton/I hate Elton John/I hate the guy in Dire Straits/And the list goes on." Not naming **Mark Knopfler**, although probably determined by the rhythm of the song, is a nice touch.

Comfortably sad, tastefully impressive, subtle and complete—a small gem.


This
Space
Reserved
For
Retired
Phone
Sex
Workers




THE NATIONAL THEATRE SCHOOL OF CANADA
Acting Playwriting Scenography Technical Production
Call or write: National Theatre School of Canada 5030 Saint-Denis St., Montreal, Québec H2J 2L8

A U D I T I O N S

DEADLINE FOR APPLICATION: FEBRUARY 15 TEL: (514) 842-7954 FAX: (514) 842-5661

smash hit across Canada

mothers & daughters
tender & funny



If We Are Women
by Joanna McClelland Glass

Supported by
du Maurier Arts Ltd.

Contains a few coarse words

The Playhouse 458-8344
January 20 to 27, Mon-Sat 8:00 pm
Tickets on Sale Now, Playhouse Box Office
Previews: Wed, Jan 18 & Thurs, Jan 19
THEATRE
NEW BRUNSWICK