

MUSIC

David Foster
The Symphony Sessions
WEA Records

By HOWARD KAMAN

Every major country seems to have its own established popular keyboard wizard. The United States has Billy Joel, "The Piano Man." England has Elton John, who worked wonders on his classic albums out of the '70s. Canada has David Foster, well known for, among other things, his collaboration with Bryan Adams on "Tears Are Not Enough."

On *The Symphony Sessions*, his latest album, David Foster secures his position as one of Canada's most gifted musicians. Recorded entirely in Vancouver, this album, with the exception of one track, is a departure for the composer. Usually opting for small-scale synthesized sound, Foster has, for the first time, enlisted the help of an entire symphony orchestra to perform his compositions.

The exception to the album's orchestral works is "Winter Games," the theme he wrote for the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary. With the same distinctive style, combining synthesizer programming with masterful arranging, this piece will become yet another of Foster's distinctively Canadian pieces of music.

Outside of "Winter Games," the album is closer to classical music than what we are accustomed to hearing from the Juno award-winning producer. And yes, there is the inevitable movie theme. His last record (*David Foster*) contained two themes (from the films *White Nights* and *St. Elmo's Fire*). This time he has chosen to feature only one: "Water Fountain," the love theme from *The Secret of My Success*.

Perhaps the reason for so many film themes is the fact that Foster writes so beautifully, painting a picture with each song. The music has a cinematic quality which is rare in instrumental music. Particularly good is "The Ballet," a solo piano piece with soaring violin accompaniment.

The album's one drawback is its problem of placing it into a particular part of any record collection. Labeling a musician like Foster is a difficult business. Is he a classical

pianist, or is he a writer of pop/rock? You can never be sure. While this album has one hit single in "Winter Games," the rest of the album is undoubtedly classical in nature.

On the other hand, it is this versatility that makes Foster one of Canada's greatest treasures, and his records essential to any music lover's collection.

Village People
Komrads
February 18, 1988

By KEITH A.D. COLE
and ROBERT J. ALTON

On Thursday, February 18, an enthusiastic crowd witnessed the resurrection of one of the '70s greatest disco phenomenas—The Village People.

For 42 minutes, the downtown club, Komrads, boogied and hustled to some of the greatest lyrics ever composed by six gay men during the disco period of the late '70s.

Although they presented no new material, classics such as "In the Navy," "Y.M.C.A.," "San Francisco" and the ever popular "Macho Man" more than satisfied the crowd.

The Village People play no instruments (excepting the footbells of one of the performers) yet the pre-recorded soundtrack more than fulfilled the audience's expectations. In



fact, three songs into the set the microphones failed and the audience remained spellbound, seemingly unaware of the lack of lyrics. The wave of nostalgic that touched many that evening was especially apparent during the song "Y.M.C.A." Glancing around the club, men everywhere threw up their arms and made the universal gestures of the letters Y, M, C, and A.

The whole experience had the flavour of an archaeological dig through the increasingly unpopular disco period. Although The Village People are now in their mid-to late 30s, time has not taken its toll on these vibrant performers of the recent past.

Disco is not dead, it is just embalmed.

Scrabble and condoms and cogs: visual poetry in *Yak's* walk-in issue

By KEVIN CONNOLLY

For two days prior to reading week Vanier College Common Room was host to *Yak's* second issue of the year, perhaps the first "walk-in issue" ever presented on campus. And although the space itself was not perfect for the undertaking, and the success of the pieces on display varied, editors Sarah Cooper and Michael Redhill should be applauded for their efforts to provide an accessible yet challenging reading/viewing experience for a largely uninitiated student body.

For most people, the idea of a concrete or visual poem is in itself alienating; the fact that *Yak* managed to assemble over a dozen poetry and prose installations in the same room without terrifying passers-by is alone a success. But the room was too large for the number of works displayed, while lacking the kind of open wall space some of the pieces needed. Indeed, the room's chief selling point seemed to be the descending screen and viewing area used for creative writing instructor Susan Swan's contribution—a short story with slides chronicling the adventures of a bumbling office worker and his quest for sexual gratification on holiday in sunny Puerto Rico.

Though the piece was entertaining, most of the humour was derived from the pot-bellied image of the protagonist in the slides and the somewhat overdone, whining, falsetto of the taped first-person narration. Standard magazine images of men and women were interspersed with the slides at the opening of the story as our hero describes the encounters he and his libidinous friend Warren have with two nurses staying at the same hotel.

The piece may have worked better on paper, but the combination of the affected taped voice, the cheap visual jokes, and the stream of insensitive, sexist, stereotyped thinking from the hero made the laughter uncomfortable in a way I don't think the author had fully anticipated. In the end, Swan's attitude towards her own characters seemed a little too condescending.

And while Swan's story seemed to form a functional centrepiece for the issue as a whole, there were other, sometimes less-ambitious pieces that seemed to work better. Of these, Voula Anastakis's series of condom pieces were perhaps the best. The poem/sculptures included a Barbie and Ken couplet in which the celebrated mannequins appeared naked under see-through condoms, an egg carton containing inflated condoms of various shapes and sizes, a dangling egg suspended inside a condom, and a number of breast-like condoms tacked to the wall, one of which contained a photo of Henry Morgentaler.

Mike Redhill's "Evolution" series, which presented the various historical stages of the alphabet, finishing each time with a corporate logo (The Macdonald's "M", the CBC "C", the Loblaw's "L", for example), provided an effective literary one-liner. But presented as they were, spread throughout the room, the effect quickly became redundant. His flip poem "Missing Link," worked on the same level, but not as the comment on Clarence Darrow and the theory of evolution he later explained to me.

Deron Mitchell's "Roll-a-Poem" provided some welcome, hands-on fun. The piece was comprised chiefly of a box containing about two-dozen wooden dice, with individual nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs mounted on each face of each die. The viewer/author was expected to roll the dice and construct his/her own poem from resulting combinations. Like the Redhill pieces, the concept itself doesn't run too deep, but the results were successful.

The same principle was used in a more permanent fashion in Cyril Walker's scrabble scene. The work included four chairs arranged around a game table with scrabble pieces covering most of the table's checked table cloth. Empty snack bowls and half finished drinks were scattered on the edge of the playing area and the words spelled and anagrammed on the table cloth provide a self-reflexive commentary on the piece itself.

considerably less successful were Melanie Freeman's obscure prose poems written against the background of some affected black and white photographs, and Janet Broomhead's "cog," in obvious, three-dimensional concrete piece in which the tail of the "g" clicked back and forth regularly after a button was pressed. But at least these pieces attempted to provide some kind of visual foil for the "text."

In contrast, Dave Lomax's pieces (inexplicable placed prominently near the door), though tightly written, made no attempt to do anything beyond the boundaries of the page. The fact that the poems were mounted on hinged blocks of wood (one of the poems made reference to trees, I think) did little to help matters.

One of the most interesting pieces in the show, unfortunately, had only a tenuous connection to *Yak* magazine and to York University in general. Published as a silkscreened "insert" in the stapled, 8½"x11, mimeographed *Elfin Plot* magazine in 1972, the approximately 4"x4" "Seagull" featured visual poems from Russian poet Andrei Vosnesensky, west coast poet Andrew Suknaski, poet/critic Stephen Scobie, and York creative writing instructor bpNichol, all beautifully produced on handmade chinese paper.

Though I suppose the *Yak* editors might argue that the inclusion of this piece constitutes a "reprint," its presence in this exhibit unfairly overwhelmed some of the other works, and smacked a little of an attempt to give the issue legitimacy by including some "big name" writers. In this case, however, the piece was so impressive that it's hard to know whether to criticize Redhill and Cooper, or to thank them for the opportunity to see it.

In the end it was the spirit of the endeavour, the obvious attempt on the part of the magazine to do something different and keep it accessible, that impressed me most. Now, if the editors could only translate a little of that same spirit into the next "regular" issue of *Yak*...

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