

Entertainment

GENREKIDE
MICHAEL EDWARDS

**A FAREWELL TO
ALMS...**

This has been a really good month for new releases, but by the time I got to the office the vultures had descended and gone through what had arrived and only rather meagre pickings were left. Sigh. So I dug around and at the very back of the drawer I found something that had been overlooked for quite a while...

The Beatles Please Please Me

So here it is, the debut recording by the next big thing according to the kids in Britain. The self-proclaimed 'Fab Four' have already had four hits in their home country, but have failed to crack the notoriously tough Canadian market yet. And will this album do it? Well, I cranked up my gramophone and give this a listen in glorious mono, and to be perfectly honest I was really unimpressed. Sure they do sing some rather nice harmonies (but then again didn't the Everly Brothers?) but

not completely forgotten about them. The latest one from Auchtermuchty's finest, *Hit The Highway*, covers such mundane subjects as marriage and spirituality with a surprising lack of any politics as they have been rather obvious with their views on Scottish nationalism in the past. Even the religious songs are handled in a non-patronising way that doesn't preach their subject matter to unwilling ears, while remaining one of the more genuinely moving moments on the album. And couple that with a fine take on Otis Redding's "These Arms Of Mine" and it makes a rather good album. Anyway, it still sounds the same as before with predominantly acoustic guitars, vocal harmonies not unlike the Everly Brothers (who seem to be getting way too many mentions this week for some inexplicable reason...) and accents that you can cut with a knife. Put it this way - if you like anything they have done before, then you will like this; good pop melodies with plenty of hooks to pull you in. Not too bad at all.

Another welcome return is that of Elvis Costello. I realise that he hasn't been gone for quite as long, but *Brutal Youth* finds him being backed up by the Attractions for the first time since *Blood And Chocolate* I believe. Just having those three musicians behind him (and Nick Lowe too on some songs) makes the world of difference to the album. Hard to believe, but it makes the album so much more listenable - think back to *Mighty Like A Rose* and how bad that seemed; I don't think I got past the third song at any one sitting. And lyrically Elvis is just as caustic as he has ever been too, which is always enjoyable. One of his pre-occupations with the decline of Britain is well documented here as he spits bile at anyone in a position of authority. It would seem that the catalyst for his finest work is the Attractions, so here's hoping they stick around for a while this time.

Blue Note has been producing the finest jazz since 1939 according to their motto, and who am I to argue? But these days they seem to be diversifying a little bit whilst still staying under the general banner of jazz although most people would be more comfortable categorizing it as rap. The combination of jazz and hip hop has been around for quite a while now - my first exposure to this was through Galliano's stunning *In Search Of The Thirteenth Note* which was criminally ignored by most people. But commercial success has been had by Digible Planets and Guru in the past year; maybe its time has come. So that brings me to US3's *Hand On The Torch*. These people were given permission to raid the Blue Note archives, sample whatever they wanted; as you can imagine the music here has some of the funkier grooves you will hear in a long time. Using such legends as Herbie Hancock and Art Blakely, it would have been hard not to do something stunning with such a freedom. And on the first track "Cantaloup," it is hard to imagine a better fusion of jazz and hip hop. But alas, such a standard is not upheld over the complete album; the lyrics shoot off into the all-to-typical macho territory and there is an uncomfortable contrast between the tasteful music and the words. Sigh. A real shame.

Dance music is one of those things that is difficult to assess without being surrounded by a few dozen sweaty people under one groove. You get the idea. And so while listening to the *Pirate Radio Sessions Volume 1*, it was real diffi-

cult to form an opinion. It was also rather disconcerting the way that although 16 tracks are listed, it sounded as if it was just one long song. Skilful mixing by DJ Chris Sheppard, or simply all the songs sound the same? That is the main problem I have with dance music - the fact that most of it is so very generic; whenever one sample or rhythm becomes popular, it can be found right across the board. Don't get me wrong, good music can be wonderfully inspired ("Progen" by the Shamen for example) but this collection gets so very tedious very quickly. Add a strobe, fluorescent clothing and give everyone a whistle then it might be acceptable, but definitely not music to vacuum to.

Back to the just plain peculiar. Hailing from Los Angeles, That Dog's self titled debut is rather difficult to describe. A punk rock Wilson Phillips as the press release



the real weakness comes from their songwriting. Messrs Lennon and McCartney just don't seem to be able to put together a song that stands up against well against "Twist And Shout" which is surely the high spot of this offering. Unless they do something drastic before their next LP then they too will go the way of Herman's Hermits - I give them a year before they have to return their day jobs.

Ho hum. I'm really torn here. Should I use my last column as an attempt to try and put over some of my more extreme ideas on how to cleanse the music industry (the public execution of Bryan Adams...) as there is no chance for people to reply? Or should I take some more shots at such easy targets as Pearl Jam and Nirvana (a combined talent rating equivalent to that of Stone Temple Pilots and Soundgarden...) just to try and show how superior I am for having heard of such bands as Northern Picture Library and Guided By Voices? Or should I try to stir up some controversy just for the fun of it? Hmm. Maybe I should just concentrate on the music which is, after all, the most important thing in what I have been trying to achieve this year. To try and introduce you to some artists that you may not have heard of otherwise. Even if it just means a few minutes of aural delights that life will never seem the same without then I have succeeded. Yup, I should stick with the music.

One of the more pleasant surprises was the new album by the Proclaimers, a mere six years after their last. Still, they did get that an added boost to popularity last year when their song "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)" was featured in the soundtrack to Benny & Joon, so people had



that dog.

suggests? Absolutely not. Starting out as an acoustic band, they have added electric guitars, violin and cello to their female vocals that can harmonise sweetly (in a way nothing like the Everly Brothers...) and also scream, whoop and giggle their way through other songs. Peculiar. The group comprises of Anna Waronker, Tony Maxwell and also two of the Haden triplets; Petra and Rachel; with the third Tanya playing cello wherever appropriate. Songs like "Old Timer" are almost reminiscent of Belly in vocal style, yet "Westside Angst," which laments the life of the young in a rather cynical way, is kinda rocking - the guitars can thrash as well as the next band. But on slower tracks like "She" where the strings are predominant and the angelic harmonies take over, their sound is quite unique. Creepy, distressing but always compelling. That Dog are a band that will mature in the most disturbing way.

And I guess that's about it. Well, I've had fun anyway and isn't that the main thing? Anyway, if you have to go out and pick up just one of my recommendations from the year then you should make it either *The Roaring Third* by Prisonshake or *Striving For The Lazy Perfection* by the Orchids both of which I can't imagine living without. And remember, next time you try to tell someone that you don't like a particular type of music, will you do 'Uncle' Michael a favour and at least give it a listen before you liken it to having shards of glass put under your fingernails while being boiled in sulphuric acid. But once you have listened to it then feel free to do so. And thus endeth the lesson for the year.

Taming The Goat:

symbolisms of the visible and invisible world



Photo - Mark Bray

By Jethelo E. Cabilete

Artists from all walks of life find the inspiration for their works from many sources. Some derive their focus from social issues, in the simplicity of life and sometimes from the nightmares and desires of the human mind. This month, the UNB Art Centre exhibits a most interesting show that delves into another focus; that of pure creativity, passion, the spiritual and the material.

Taming The Goat is an exhibition featuring Halifax artists Leya Evelyn and Sylvie Stevenson, and refers to the struggle that artists must go through to create a work; of taming one's own personal goat in order to produce a reflection of their inner creativity. Both artists share this common vision of creativity, the flow of work, and observations on the visible and invisible world. Yet, each artist finds a different focus on how that creativity and vision is achieved. For instance, the title *Taming The Goat*, has different meanings for each. For Sylvie Stevenson, it is the struggle of actually doing work, of putting thought and feeling into action. A structuring of one's life in a manner that will produce results. For Leya Evelyn, the title is a way of going beyond the parameters and limitations that artists impose on themselves. It is a way of transcending "...the individual personality..." to harness a deeper, universal creativity. The works in *Taming The Goat* possess a presence that is subtle yet dynamic, a way of looking at the visible and invisible meanings behind art.

Leya Evelyn's pieces, *Genus Capra/Study No. 1*, *Genus Capra/Study No. 2*, *Genus Capra/Study No. 3*, *Bridled No. 1*, *Bridled No. 2*, *Bridled No. 3* and *Genus Capra*, emphasizes the observer's self-interpretation of her work. The 15 pieces contain micro and macro imagery in their very being; one can look at individual images such as bicycle tires, a bridle, separate swatches of vibrant colour or scenery, then stand back and envision a common whole, uniting independent parts into a cohesive assembly. When I asked Leya Evelyn about the inspiration for her exhibition, she

replied that she had wanted to do multiple panel pieces that could relate to each other in some form. The pieces are painted in its entirety, even the frame, and then various media are incorporated to produce each piece. It is a reflection of her interpretation of *Taming The Goat*; there are no divisions or boundaries in her art. Each piece can stand on its own, or be combined in a larger whole. Leya Evelyn's exhibition is very Zen-like in quality, a composition of space and non-space that does not clutter the mind with too much stimuli.

Sylvie Stevenson's *Vajrayogini* is a massive piece that reflects the artist's own belief in the Buddhist emphasis on enlightenment and wisdom. The *Vajrayogini* is a semi-wrathful dancing female energy form, symbolic of an empowered practitioner of Buddhism's understanding of emptiness and the dissolution of the energy manifestation back into emptiness at the end of a practice session. The work by Sylvie Stevenson forces us to look beyond mere physical detail to the hidden meaning behind this manifestation. The various accoutrements, known as charnel ground ornaments, appear as severed heads, skulls and numerous bone jewelry, but also symbolize various states of human emotions, Buddhist doctrines and practices. The inspiration for *Vajrayogini*, according to Sylvie Stevenson, was her desire to transform her beliefs and thoughts of Buddhism into a physical reality; a way of making the invisible visible, so to speak. In a way, this comes through in the piece; Mary White, a local artist commented that the piece could almost be put on - a sort of mantle that people can wear to acknowledge awareness of their potential.

Taming The Goat began March 3, 1994 and continues until May 1, 1994 at the UNB Art Centre, located in Memorial Hall. Hours are Monday to Friday 9:00-5:00 and Sundays 2:00-4:00. This is an excellent exhibition that you don't want to miss.

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