

# ARTS

## ROUNDAABOUT

by Michael Skeet

I'm pounding out some short shots this week (hoping to convince Anderson (sic!!!) to pay me by the review rather than by the column.

**Frank Zappa**  
*You Are What You Is*  
 Barking Pumpkin/Epic PW2 37537

Frank Zappa has always had a cynical, nasty side to him. Lately, though, that cynicism has begun to descend into bitterness, and one is forced to wonder if bitterness is the ultimate fate of every witty cynic. (the only other option seems to be that of being Born Again. Frankly, I'd rather have a lobotomy.)

Zappa's neurosis began to develop a nasty turn with *Joe's Garage*. It has reached an odiferous flowering of sorts with *You Are What You Is*, a double album which glories in gloating at everything which is slimy and rotten in American society. In the past, Zappa's shots at society and kultur have been amusing, if not downright hilarious. Laughing at this stuff is like laughing at corpses, though - it's nervous laughter, and we're approaching the O D stage. Maybe it's just that songs like "Teenage Wind", "Dumb All Over", "Any Downers?" and "Drafted Again" just hit too close to be funny anymore.

This album (like most of Zappa's, I must admit) has a strange, perverse fascination for me. A good part of this has to do with Zappa's musical skills. This guy may have frittered away more talent than most people will ever have. Although restricted to a four-minute vocal format (there's only one short example here of Zappa's quirky instrumental compositions), Frankie has a lot of fun working out with some of the more pretentious pop styles from the 1950s and 1960s. I wish I could say that Zappa's audience is having as much fun, but most of us are standing around wondering why he's laughing so hard, when he's in the shit as deeply as we are (sorry-make that 'in the cheese').

**AC/DC**  
*For Those About To Rock*  
 Atlantic XSD - IIIII

Ghod only knows why I'm writing about this one, save for the fact that, since doing a turn a week ago with Ted Kennedy on K-97's *What's New* (plug! plug!), I've heard enough of AC/DC's new album to turn my brain to ricotta cheese.

Let's start off with a qualifier: I *hate* heavy-metal music. There are better things to dance to, and if it's numbsen you want, see my first paragraph and join the church of your choice. At one time, or another, though (despite the obdurate posturings of Mr. J. Andersnatch, grinch extrodinaire), every dedicated critic has to suck it in and review something he's rather not be found standing next to. So here goes, and gosh-darn the torpedoes, admiral!

I think most would agree with me that we can ignore the lyric content of *For Those About To Rock*. This album 'showcases' lyrics no better and no worse than any other heavy-metal album - which is to say they reach absolute depths of triteness and banality. Definitely elementary, my dear Watson.

Musically, AC/DC aren't very adventurous, either. A guitar-heavy lineup slams out a series of ponderous power-chords and laborious hooks, all of it following a formula that was tedious a decade ago. And that Johnson character, with his wheezing, choking and snarling, is a pretty poor copy of the late, lamented (and over-loaded) Ben Scott.

Well geez, guy, doesn't AC/DC work at all? Yep, they shore do - on a pure energy level. Sure, the hooks are laboured, but they're played with frightening enthusiasm. And yeah, the lyrics are silly, but then again, AC/DC are aiming about three feet below the head. Watch for "Put the Finger on You" and "Night of the Long Knives" to get lots of airplay (unfortunately accompanied by the title track, which is

truly abominable).

Regardless of what one may think of heavy-metal, and no matter how the new album compares with *Back in Black*, it should be obvious that AC/DC are standing head and shoulders above the rest of the metal pack. And even though I hate the album, I've got the brains to realize that it's going to be very very big.

**Ian Dury**  
*Lord Upminster*  
 Polydor PD-1-6337

Great. Now we have to put up with reggae-calypto-disco, and this from a guy who used to be one of the more delightfully sardonic performers in the pop field. Ian Dury is the man who gave us "Sex and Drugs and Rock 'n' Roll", "Reasons To Be Cheerful (Part Three)", and "Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick". Now we're subjected to the likes of "Funky Disco (Pops)", "The (Body Song)" and other such drivel.

The blame for this mess should be dumped right in the lap of Chasz Jankel, co-producer and co-composer. Returning from a solo foray in the rapidly-shrinking world of disco, Jankel seems to have brought some bad habits with him. (Let us not forget that Quincy Jones (!) made a disco hit of Jankel's "Ai No Corrida").

Recorded in the Bahamas, this album takes elements of reggae and calypso, melds them with Dury's deadpan delivery...and then smashes the whole thing flat with a meat mallet. It's amazing and depressing how uninspired this album sounds.

There is one passably interesting song on the album. "Spasticus Autisticus" is Dury's own tribute to the Year of the Disabled Person, as well as a Dury-esque poking of fun at his own physical disabilities. Yet even this tune is spoiled by mindless repetition.

It pains me to have to say it, but *Lord Upminster* is a Grade-A Gobbler from a personal hero. Don't buy it. I can only hope that Ian Dury gets himself back on track soon.



Macbeth and wife contemplate drastic measures for minimizing political opposition.

## Just one problem...

**Macbeth**  
 Studio Theatre (Corbett Hall)  
 Until Dec. 5

review by Jens Andersen

Excellent costumes, excellent lighting, an excellent and unusual set (a mess of scaffolding with plenty of dramatic vertical lines) to meet the all-purpose requirements of an Elizabethan play, excellent music, sound effects and smoke puffs, a top-notch scriptwriter ... what more could you ask for? Well, how about some decent acting and directing?

For the most part the acting was competent enough - neither atrocious nor inspired - but every few minutes some gratingly unnatural act would be performed. For instance there was Duncan's glad-handing, back-slapping demeanor, suggesting that the king possessed about as much regal reserve as a salesman at the Brick Warehouse.

Then there was Macbeth, delivering his "All is sound and fury, signifying nothing" line. He roars out the word "fury"

like some two-bit politician lathering up an audience over high interest rates. A restrained but marked bitterness and distaste would seem to be what the situation calls for.

Macbeth's violent epileptic seizures when he sees visions were also rather comic (or embarrassing, depending on your point of view).

Such overblown histrionics were shown by almost all the cast at the critical junctures of the play (my ears are still ringing from one of Macduff's melodramatic, 120 dB cries of anguish). Was the director asleep when these excesses were committed in rehearsal? Or are they innovations of his own?

All in all the play strongly resembles the company's production of *Julius Caesar* last spring. Both productions seem to have the same premise: that the genius of Shakespeare is best displayed with a liberal sprinkling of heaving, bellowing and eye-rolling.

I would just like to go on the record again as being in favor of understatement.

## Up and Coming

### MUSIC

Doug and the Slugs; Dec. 3; SUB Theatre; 7:00 and 9:30 p.m.; tickets at HUB and all BASS outlets.

Galliard Ensemble; Dec. 2; SUB Theatre; 8:00 p.m.; admission by season membership only, available at the door or at Canadiana Gifts, 10414 Jasper Ave.

The Edmonton Chamber Music Society's second concert of the year will feature quartets (for flute, violin, viola, and cello) by Mozart and Boccherini, and a world premiere performance of a new work by Maurice Mozetich.

Campus Christmas Carol Songfest; Dec. 7; Rutherford Library Concourse; 12-1 p.m.; everybody is invited to come and lend their vocal cords.

### THEATRE

La Crique; Dec. 4-6, 11-13; Faculte St. Jean; 8 p.m.

St. Mark's Gospel; Dec. 7-19; Corbett Hall; 8 p.m.; tickets at Northern Light Theatre, Carousel Photographics and Fine Arts Rm. 3-103.

### GALLERIES

The Christmas Show; Dec. 3-18; Ring House Gallery; Weekdays 11-4 p.m., Thursday 11-9 p.m., Sunday 2-5 p.m.; admission free.

This exhibition and sale includes figurative works by various Western Canadian artists. And as long as you are on a spending spree, don't forget the SUB Art Gallery Christmas Craft sale Dec. 1-4.

### LOCAL RECREATION

U of A Ski Club presents Tacoy Ride; Dec. 5; Dinwoodie; 8 p.m.; tickets at the ski club or HUB.

## Free Commie Propaganda

Five hundred (count 'em) posters for the upcoming film *Reds* have been shipped by submarine from Moscow to our second-floor offices in SUB, in order to subvert young, innocent minds here on campus. The posters, really slick, capitalistic jobs, will be dished out to prospective dupes on a first-come-first-serve basis during office hours. The show, incidentally, begins undermining Canadian free-enterprise ideals Dec. 4 at the Paramount.

## It's the real thing No... Wait...

The Spot-the-fraud contest is still on, even if copies of last week's *Gateway* aren't on the stands. Come up to the *Gateway* office and, before you run off with the free poster, examine the six alleged works of art in a back issue, and see if your expert eye can spot the fake. The survey results will be tabulated by faculty to see which one contains the most perceptive students. The winning faculty will be presented with an... ah... artistic award.