

Lawyers harshly criticized

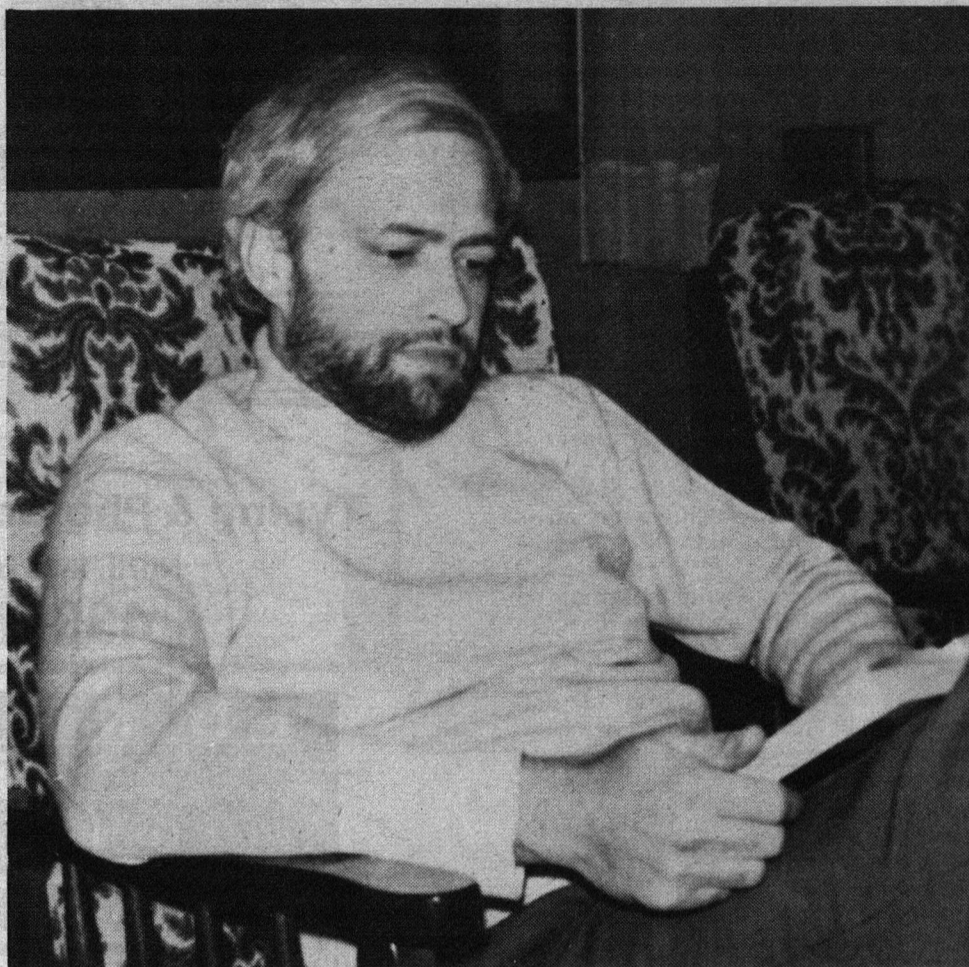
Writer condemns the indifferent

by Tom Juranka

Stephen Vizinczey became world famous with his first novel, *In Praise of Older Women*.

Praised first in Canada by the likes of Earle Birney and Northrop Frye and later by critics as far away as Sweden and Japan, it was translated into 11 languages and has sold to date over 2.5 million copies. A fictional memoir of a young man's affairs with women in their thirties and forties, *In Praise* shattered many taboos and was heralded by many critics as the best erotic novel of our time. "Vizinczey really knows" wrote an English reviewer, "D.H. Lawrence and Henry Miller only thought they did."

Vizinczey's second novel, *An Innocent Millionaire*, became an immediate



Stephen Vizinczey

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bestseller in the UK where it was first released last spring. "I was entertained but also deeply moved," wrote Anthony Burgess. "Here is a novel set bang in the middle of our decadent, polluted, corrupt world that in some curious way breathes a kind of desperate hope." It is certainly not a depressing book. It portrays our chaotic world with merciless clarity, but is also witty and funny, and you can't be all that pessimistic when you're laughing.

An Innocent Millionaire is about a young man on a quest. Mark Niven, a struggling actor's son, makes up his mind to find a treasure ship that sank in 1820 somewhere in the northeastern Bahamas. Fighting the opposition of his father, who wants him to settle down to a sensible life, he spends hard and dangerous years looking for the *Flora*, but his real troubles begin when he finds it. The wreck contains 300 million dollars' worth of gold and gems, and these attract some deadly predators. His only real ally, the neglected wife of a multi-millionaire chemical manufacturer, despises money and wants to live with Mark

"on an island inhabited by gallant, reckless, passionate people."

As for the predators, a New York art dealer and his powerful attorney, they do their best to rob him and what's more, they do it legally. Now in its 12th week on Canadian bestseller lists, *An Innocent Millionaire* has become a subject of great controversy because of its spirited condemnation of the legal profession.

Stephen Vizinczey now lives in England but returned to Canada for Christmas, and I went to see him during the holidays.

Gateway: The protagonist's fantastic ambition is constantly being ridiculed by his father in *An Innocent Millionaire*. Was this father-son relationship drawn from personal experience?

Vizinczey: No, actually it was inspired by my arguments with my step-daughters. I was always telling them what they should do with their lives and they just went their own way and did very well for themselves. It's very difficult for parents to realize that the young know best what they want to do and what they are capable of. You mustn't

believe your elders when they say that what you want to do is impossible.

Gateway: The heroine of *An Innocent Millionaire* is a rather withdrawn and indecisive young woman, the daughter of a tyrannical steel magnate. In describing her childhood you say, "Big money still buys a great deal of parental power."

Vizinczey: Yes, it's pretty tough to grow up with parents who can leave you a hundred million or disinherit you. Mark Niven, a middle-class child who often has to do without material goods, has a much better chance to develop into a strong individual who knows his own mind. All his father can do is argue with him. The cheerful news that the book brings to

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middle-class children, whom I imagine most of the student population to be, is that they are very lucky that their parents don't have financial power over them. If you have parents who are rich enough to feed you and give you a warm room and clothing, but not rich enough to terrorize you, you are among the luckiest people on earth.

Gateway: The greatest controversy about your book concerns your portrayal of lawyers. Some say you're unfair to lawyers.

Vizinczey: I hope so - I certainly tried to be. You can't be unfair enough to lawyers.

Gateway: Have you had any bad experiences with them yourself?

Vizinczey: Yes, I had three lawsuits, all connected with *In Praise of Older Women*. And each of them was won by the lawyers. I think I learned more from these lawsuits than from my university education.

Gateway: Do you have any advice for law students?

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Boring techno-pop and refreshing lack of pretension

Trans-X; Message on the Radio
The Coconuts: Don't Take My Coconuts

Review by Warren Opheim

It's difficult to be objective about an album like this. *Message on the Radio* caters to the trendy crowd who frequent Scandals and Flashbacks. Therefore, you can safely assume that disco drum machines and synthesized keyboards abound; you can also infer that the seven songs are long, repetitious and are good only for dancing to.

"Living on Video" is the single from the album, and is actually a pretty good track as far as the tune and its ability to retain interest are concerned. Do your best, however, to ignore lyrics like "Flying through hyperspace/On computer interface" in order to get as much enjoyment as possible.

After "Living on Video," it's all downhill. The remaining six songs are virtual microchip worship, with the exception of two songs, which include with a monotonous drum box and incessant synthesizer riffs.

But the thing that bothers me the most about this record is that it contains only seven songs - and the purchaser is expected to pay a full-length album price (as much as

eleven dollars) for it. Forget this one. In a year or so it will probably find a home between your *Saturday Night Fever* and *Bee Gee's Greatest Hits* records.

"Behold - the bravest woman I have ever known....The Coconuts!!" shouts August Darnell (aka Kid Creole) as he unleashes his female backup trio on the public. A canned audience roars its "approval" and the women launch into "Naughty Boy." The Coconuts consist of Cheryl Poirier, Taryn Hagey, and Adriana Kaegi. If these names look familiar it's probably because of their vocal contributions on U2's *War*.

In these days of musical pretentiousness, it is refreshing to listen to *Don't Take My Coconuts*. Between songs the gals sometimes speak to their "audience." For example, before singing "If I Only Had A Brain," one Coconut says casually, "I'd like to dedicate this next song to all the dizzy blondes all over the world."

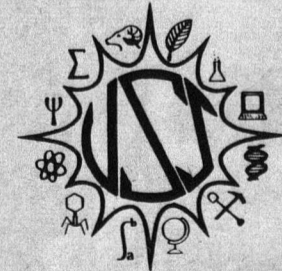
The music itself, for the most part is funk, heavy on the rhythm, but they do manage to find room for a melody now and then. An exception is "Kriminal - Tango," something one might hear at an Edmonton Symphony Orchestra concert. Sung in German, it sounds rather serious but there is an underlying campiness to it.

There are many good songs, but they unfortunately are too alike to stand up to frequent listening. If you buy the single ("Did You Have to Love Me Like You Did?") for all intents and purposes you have the album.

Questions of the Week: How do the

Police get away with those boring, unimaginative videos? It's not as though they can't afford a little extravagance. And does local band, This Fear, really exist (all the trendies wear their buttons?) Will they ever show themselves? Does anyone really care by now?

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