

Non-conformist Bergman criticizes dinos, fluffy music

By HEATHER SANGSTER

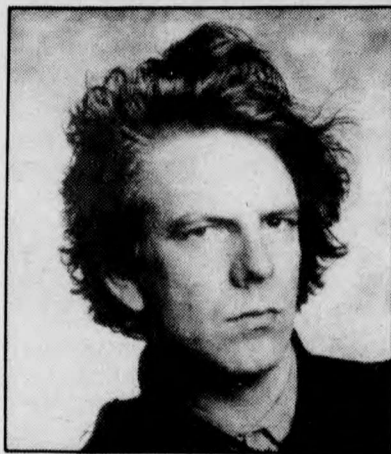
"I hated music for years," admits Vancouver-based singer/songwriter Art Bergman in an interview from a Thunder Bay cafeteria pay phone.

Bergman, on tour to promote his new LP on Duke Street Records, *Crawl With Me*, loathingly refers to the early '70s glam rock period as a time when the music industry "became bloated" and popular bands were "dinosaurs" incapable of producing innovative material.

Influenced by his older brothers' record collections that included Buddy Holly, Elvis and Eddie Cochran, and the lyrically innovative John Lennon and Ray Davies, Bergman avoided pop music and entered the world of alternative music.

Bergman's first band was called The Schmorqs — their name for "hallucinations" experienced while writing music. A Schmorq is "a certain persona" used to describe "a non-existent thing," explains Bergman. After the release of an independent album which Vancouver college stations still play, The Schmorqs fell into obscurity.

Bergman's second band, The K-



Art Bergman, on tour promoting his new LP, *Crawl With Me*,

Tels, contributed "I Hate Music" to *Vancouver Complication*, a compilation album that gained much attention. K-Tel International was not pleased to have its name on the album and threatened Bergman's band with a \$50,000 lawsuit; The K-Tels changed their name to The Young Canadians.

In 1980, Bergman left the group to join Los Popularos, a band that started out playing at parties and

eventually emerged as one of Vancouver's top acts. After releasing an EP, *Born Free*, and a single, "Mystery to Me," financial problems split up the band.

Bergman went on his own in 1984 and recorded a six-song EP, *Poisoned*, which spawned the hit "Yeah I Guess."

His musical style reflects his development in underground music. His lyrics, describing survival outside popular music, are hard-hitting and intelligent. Their delivery is important to Bergman. The first to admit his voice is "not classically trained," Bergman feels that his powerful, raw voice — like Iggy Pop's and Lou Reed's — is how music "should be delivered." Bergman reiterates his dislike of "fluffy music" that produces no reaction from the audience.

His unique style and good timing finally opened the doors to the music industry for Bergman. While recording demos in Vancouver, Bergman's "gut feeling" lyrics and passionate music attracted legendary solo artist John Cale — one-time member of The Velvet Underground, producer of The Stooges, Patti Smith, and

Squeeze — who decided to produce Bergman's next album. Like Bergman, Cale remained outside the music industry in order to pursue his unique brand of music. Bergman feels that he and Cale have similar attitudes and that Cale "recognized it in my lyrics." Both musicians had been equally ignored by the popular music scene.

The results of their partnership are impressive. Bergman's new LP, *Crawl With Me*, is receiving regular airplay at college radio stations. The attention it's receiving at commercial FM stations, however, is merely "tokenism," Bergman says. His new video, "Our Little Secret," is being

shown on MuchMusic, and he's in the middle of a Canadian tour that, so far, has been a success.

Though his foot is in the industry door, Bergman will not conform. He continues to play his own formula of "street level rock and roll" and criticize the human condition. When asked how free trade may affect his work, Bergman replied that "the free trade thing is all about the US taking over our culture. But that won't happen. We don't have a culture and neither do the States. We have a junk culture, a trash culture. My music is a reaction to that culture."

Art Bergman will be opening for 54.40 at the Concert Hall on Sept. 9.

ARTS CALENDAR

GALLERIES

The Glendon Gallery presents the first major solo exhibition by Toronto artist **Don Carr**. Opening reception on Sept. 8 from 6-9 pm. Show runs until Oct. 9 at York Hall, Glendon College, 2275 Bayview Ave. on Mon. thru Fri. from 10-4 pm, Thurs. 6-9 pm, and Sun. 1-4 pm. Free.

The Winters Art Gallery presents **We Will Name This Place**, recent works by York MFA student Larry Streicher from Sept. 6-23. Opening reception on Sept. 8 from 5-8 pm at Winters Art Gallery, 123 Winters College. Call 736-7618 for gallery times.

The Art Gallery of York University displays selected works from its permanent collection from Sept. 1 to Oct. 7 in Room NI45, Ross Bldg. from Mon.-Fri. at 10-4:30 pm. Free.

MUSIC

A series of five programs will be aired on CJRT-FM (91.1) in early September focussing on composer **Shostakovich**. The series was prepared by Music Prof. Sterling Beckwith and Paul Robinson, Musical Director at CJRT. The programs are taken from a conference on modern opera and cultural politics in Soviet Russia in the 1930s, jointly sponsored by York and the Centre for Russian and East European Studies. Beginning at 7 pm on Sept. 8, an unusual recording Shostakovich's first opera — an adaptation of Gogol's tale "The Nose." On Sept. 9, a complete recording of "Katerina Izmailova" — the later revised version of the opera "Lady Macbeth."

DANCE

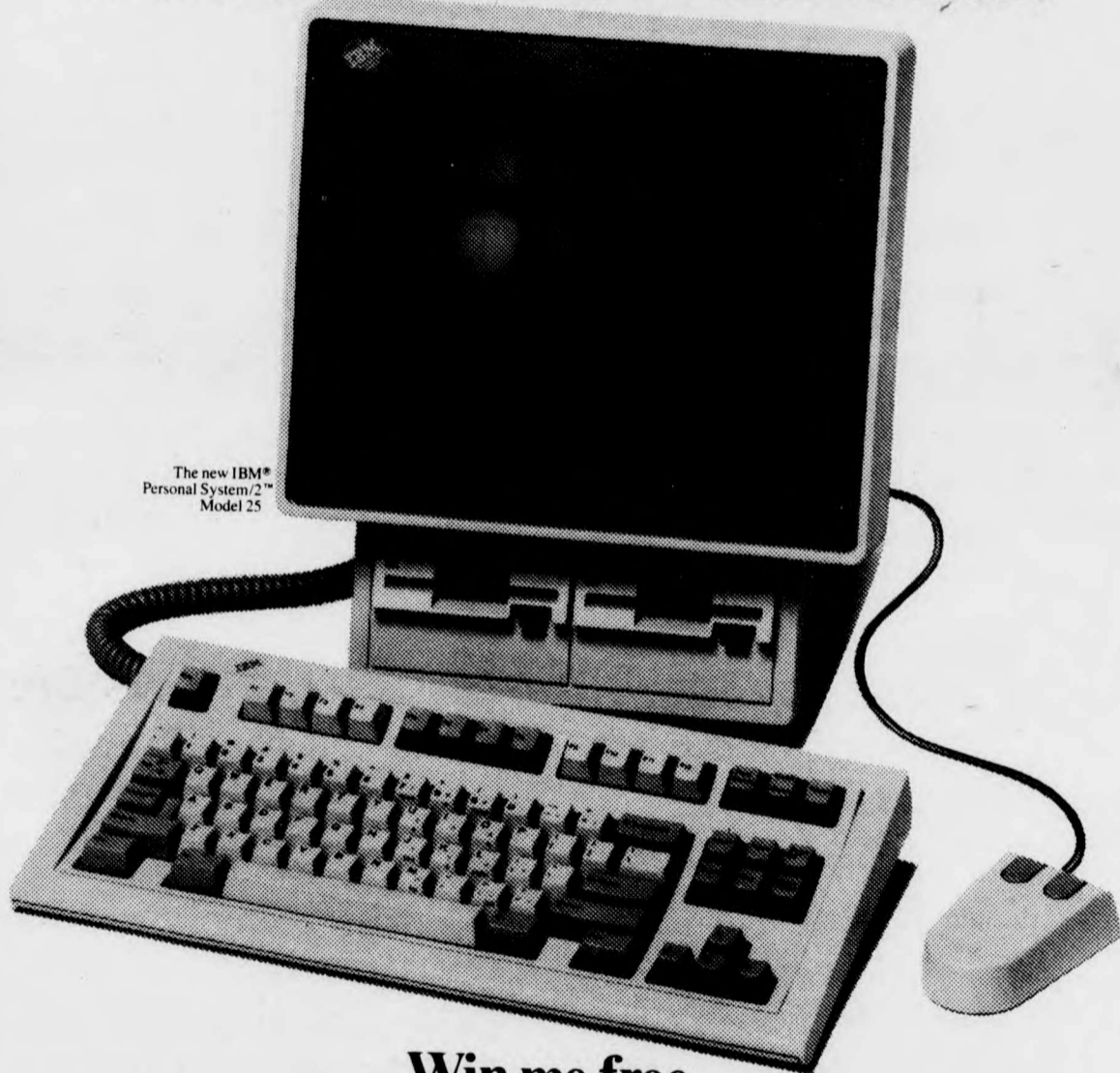
The York Dance Department presents a lecture by **Donna Krasnow** on dance injuries on Sept. 23 from 12:30-2 p.m. in Studio One, Fine Arts Bldg. Free.

LECTURE

Alex Stockwell, alumnus of York University Faculty of Fine Arts, writer and director of the Acting Company (Toronto) will talk about contemporary theatre in China on Sept. 28 from 1:30-3 pm at Atkinson Theatre. Free.

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Reggae experiment

By BRIAN T. WRIGHT

Could it be that the empty space created in the international reggae market by Bob Marley's demise has finally been filled?

Although bands like UB40, Third World, Satellites, and Messenjah have caught media attention, I have not heard another reggae band get regular airplay on a Toronto commercial radio station. Bob Marley's "Could You Be Loved," however, achieved consistent airplay in the early '80s on an FM station that played music labelled by its listeners as "hard rock."

But now Aswad is on the scene — or at least within earshot of an international crowd — with a new album titled *Distant Thunder* and a hit single, "Don't Turn Around." Radio jocks both at home and abroad are often unaware that Aswad has been playing a special brand of reggae since the mid-'70s when they backed up reggae mystic Winston Rodney of Burning Spear.

On this album, Brinsley Forde, Tony Gad and Drummie Zeb experiment more than on any of their

other efforts. Not every song is performed in the reggae idiom. There are touches of hip-hop beats and South American and South African riffs. "Give A Little Love," "Set Them Free," and "The Message" are songs in which Aswad experiments with contemporary pop rhythms, something they have been hinting at since their 1984 album, *Rebel Souls*.

On the mellow side, Aswad offers "lovers' rock" songs. "Feelings," "Bittersweet," and "International Melody" feature the familiar call and response vocal patterns. Each song is cleanly produced and does not lose ground in the roots department. Aswad is one of the few reggae bands that has managed to maintain its original sound.

Distant Thunder captures the excitement and expectation of a hot summer; it should go down nicely in the dance clubs — remixed versions of some of the tracks are already in the record shops. Hopefully it will live longer than most summer albums and provide the world with a long-awaited "International Melody."