

# Entertainment

## RAVE

## GENRECID

MICHAEL EDWARDS



by Sherry A. Morin

The first Rave to be held in Fredricton for this term fell on the evening of Saturday, October 2. The Rave, called "Zero Gravity", got off the ground to a flying start at about 10:00 P.M. and kept roaring with a fervor until four-thirty in the morning.

Three d.j.'s were assigned to the night. These included D.J. Mastermind from Halifax, Jason Pelletier from Moncton, and this university's own "D.J. Nonsense". The latter has impressed me before, but I could hardly believe how enthralled the crowd was with his performance on Saturday. He seemed to overshadow the d.j.'s from away with the trance-inducing rhythms that he played.

Most of the music was very much in the throbbing Belgian style, and very repetitive with very few samples or chord variations. This reflects the recent turn in the European Rave scene, away from the more commercialized music. A good way to describe it is "stark", but in a beautiful, pristine way. Minimalism is back. For some people, this is a bad thing; they see the music as too simplistic - of no creative merit. On the contrary, this music takes more merit and ingenuity to create than does an over-produced techno track. It's more difficult to sculpt a masterpiece of simplicity from a lump of complexity than vice-versa.

I'm ambivalent about this new Techno. On one hand, I liked the pure, progressive techno/house that was played on Saturday. On the other hand, my wimpy, conservative side rather misses the richly-sampled and multi-tonal tracks by Age of Love and Pere Ubu.

You won't find commercial-

ized techno being played at many raves in Canada or Europe, these days. Perhaps this turn in musical tastes reflects a sublimated push on the part of Ravers to steal Techno-culture back to the alternative scene. The Rave Movement has lately become rather mainstream, and exploited, by large promotional companies. It has become very tired. I think that veteran Ravers resent this, and now they are trying to break into a new mode of music that will deter the predatory mainstream, but appeal to Techno and House's cult-followings.

There was only one glitch in the evening. It was a brief interruption caused by a particularly obnoxious high school student who decided that he and his friends would try to enter without paying. However, the agitators weren't allowed to enter the Rave, and no one was hurt. Authorities were called in by the Rave organizer. They arrived within minutes; but the wannabe-West Side Story Crew had already fled, and there was no further sign of them.

In any case, the music played at Zero Gravity was very rich. The beat was intense. The lighting was good, and the smoke machine was puffing all night, helping to distort the surroundings. It was quite an experience. If you would like to attend the next Rave in this area, stay tuned to Bass Bin (Friday, 7:00 P.M.) Beat Confusion (Wednesday, 5:30 P.M.) or Techno Prisoners (Friday, 11:00 P.M.) on the campus radio station, 97.9 F.M. These three programs will give you regular updates. Don't plan to attend the next Rave without paying, however, unless you're a reviewer, like me.

This week I have decided to pay tribute to the grandeur and magnificence that is Jim Steinman. A man that will cheerfully use an orchestra at the drop of a hat. A man who never uses one backing singer when he could use a choir of five hundred instead. You get the idea. I've always thought that if Wagner was alive today then he would be Jim Steinman, and writing real rock operas. Not in the way that "Tommy" isn't but in the overblown, pompous way that "Bat Out Of Hell" can sort of be considered one. The mention of "Bat Out Of Hell" should alert you to the reason for this tribute - the recent release of "Bat Out Of Hell II" (or "Back Into Hell" if you prefer...). I was rather cynical about the whole venture when I heard about it as I thought it was simply an excuse for Meatloaf to resurrect his flagging career by trying to cash in on his former glory days but when I discovered that Mr. Steinman was in charge of writing, arranging and producing it I decided that it deserved some attention. And incidentally, I've always wondered if that is "Meatloaf" is one or two words; you know - first and second name. Like Mr. M. Loaf. Just a thought. Can anyone help me with this? But I am digressing; back to the subject in hand.

The thing with Jim Steinman is that he uses the artists in a way that I can only compare to Phil Spector - they are simply brushes that he uses to paint his own masterpieces, but I mean that in a nice way. The point is that the artist has little or no control over the outcome - the material is hardly strikingly different from album to album but the sound is remarkably constant which is some sort of honour to his skill. Think of how

Meatloaf disappeared so rapidly after his two Steinman albums (despite releasing another few since - the names escape me showing how memorable they were) or how Bonnie Tyler was plucked from nowhere with her "Faster Than The Speed Of Light" album or, for that matter, how The Sisters Of Mercy broke from relatively obscurity thanks to his production. Not that all his projects are successes though - his own solo



album didn't do too well and neither did his all-female project Pandora's Box despite having some wonderful songs on them. And curiously enough some of those songs have now turned up on BOOH II, but recycling of old, less familiar material is acceptable in this case if it reaches a wider audience.

I still remember when Bat Out Of Hell came out in 1977, it came as a complete revelation. It was so wonderfully over the top with its overblown ballads and rock epics that seemed to last forever. Its success was phenomenal on both sides of the Atlantic and even though the follow up "Dead Ringer For Love" had the same sort of sound it didn't have the same level of success. The themes of the songs on both al-

bums were doomed love, teenage lust, motorbikes and loud rock and roll. Thankfully these are also the themes explored on Bat Out Of Hell II along with all the other cliches that Steinman adores. The overall feel of BOOH II is that it could have come out in any year after the first one - its sound is very much rooted in the seventies and neither Steinman or Meatloaf have progressed very far at all. But why change what has turned out to be an effective formula? Its actually a pretty good album, especially if you liked the previous ones - I don't think it will win any new fans but the existing ones will be more than satisfied. The slower songs tend to be the better ones including "Objects In The Rear View Mirror May Appear Closer Than They Are" - a song whose title would take longer to say than the actual song if it wasn't for the fact that the song lasts for around 11 minutes. Its a long album clocking in at over seventy minutes with only really nine songs so you can work out for yourself how long most songs are. Another particularly fine song is "Rock And Roll Dreams Come Through" which turned up previously on Steinman's solo album "Bad For Good" and may well have been a minor hit - its always been one of my favourites so I was somewhat happy to see it turn up here although, for my money, Meatloaf's version isn't quite as good as the original. Still, all in all its a return to form for both parties involved and a worthy successor to that legendary recording Bat Out Of Hell. But more importantly, the majesty of Jim Steinman lives on for another decade even though he is still living 16 years in the past. Long may he reign.