

Rajin' cajuns

Michael Monastyrskij
Last Thursday, four French-speaking musicians invaded Stong College where they played some thigh-slapping, spoon-clanging music.

The performers, fiddler Dewey Balfa, accordionist Marc Savoy, guitarist Tony Balfa (Dewey's nephew) and triangelist Bill Rise aren't Quebecois, nor do they come from France. They are Louisiana Cajuns from the home of the lovable Huey Long.

The music they play represents a 200-year old culture that originated when the British government expelled the Acadians from Nova Scotia. The Acadian population has since absorbed other ethnic strains (Lopez is a Cajun name) but hold fast to their traditional culture.

In recent times, however, this has become more difficult. After World War Two many Cajuns abandoned the small villages where they had sharecropped cotton and moved to larger towns.

According to Professor Jerry Gold who introduced the

musicians, "Music was one of those things that helped the people through difficult changes." Dewey Balfa added, "Our music is as important to us as our wine, our food, our women... It is everything to me."

Recently, Cajun music has become popular throughout Louisiana, but at the same time it has been changed to accommodate commercial demands. For example, a song dealing with a dance called the *colinda*, became in its English version a story about beautiful Linda.

Dewey Balfa feels that his group is rare in that it still plays its music in a traditional style. "Mark and I are two of the few people keeping the music as we play it to you tonight."

What is Cajun music? It is fast and it is repetitive: it has the kind of rhythm that demands participation, as Marc Savoy demonstrated grabbing a woman from the audience and dancing, Cajun-style. Meanwhile, the rest of us had to be satisfied with toe-tapping, spoon-banging and the odd hoot.

Whatever Cajun music is, let's hope it sticks around for awhile.



Bruce Cockburn
True North/CBS
Humans

"so i find out that the luxury of hate is as exciting maybe as doing the dishes"

Funny, no, but that's what happens when Bruce Cockburn tries being profound. The few such songs on his new album *Humans* betray Cockburn's political naivete. Phil Ochs he is not.

When concentrating on his strengths, though, Cockburn is a master craftsman. *Humans* presents polished songs in a range of musical styles. The upbeat reggae tunes "Rumour of Glory" and "What about the Bond" capitalize on Cockburn's melodic strengths.

At his best, Cockburn creates a near flawless fusion of verse and song, demonstrated in "Rose above the Sky" and "Fascist Architecture"; easy melodies in tune with the message, true poetic harmony.

However, as Cockburn's songwriting skill increases, his severe vocal limitations begin to show. His guitar work, however, continues to grow.

Carefully selected musicians (many of whom toured with Cockburn this last summer) further minimize any such inadequacies. Especially complementing the music are High Marsh's violin and Pat La Barbera's sax; never demanding too much attention (although deserving).

Cockburn is a great songwriter/musician, but no-one can do everything.

V. B.

Clair Lawrence Band Sloth/A & M

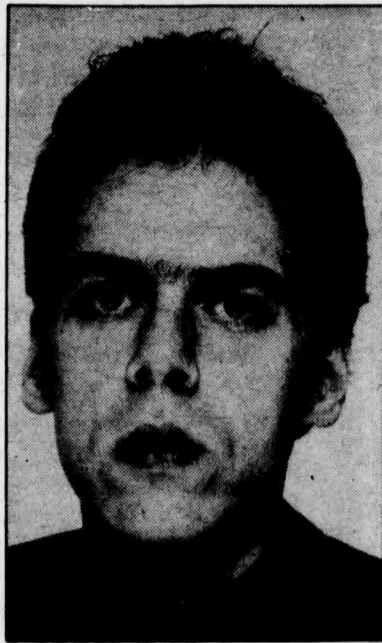
Saxman Claire Lawrence has done some interesting work in the past with Valdy and with the Hometown Band. For his first solo recording, self-produced for the fledgling Sloth Label, Lawrence has tried to pull all the stops. Unfortunately he pulled too many and the result is an overproduced and rather anonymous session. Lawrence hits the listener first with a slick fusion tune called "Knives". Then a reggae song complete with island-type vocals titled "I Don't Know". "Dawn" is a nice ballad a la Tom Scott featuring a fine guitar solo by Harris Van Berkel. But Lawrence and band never quite reach those heights again.

The whole idea behind the album seems to be "a bit of this, a bit of that", some funk on "Elevator Wallpaper" and some blues on "Harpo's Blues". For some artists this could all be interpreted as a sign of diversity but the sounds on this album are too cliched for that. Lawrence, though, does seem to have the potential to find his identity as both a musician and a producer,

Bug Muffins

as he shows on the album's showcase piece, "Night Suite, Sweet Night".

Hacker & Goldstein, Inc.



"Hug me. I'm Hiatt."

John Hiatt MCA

Two Bit Monsters

Sometimes you just wanna grab people by their slimy collars and say, "Listen to this, jerk!" John Hiatt has come out with his worthy follow-up to *Slug Line* and nobody knows. Hiatt is one of the most unjustly ignored artists today.

His incredible, desperate bug-voice reminds one immediately of Parker and Costello, as does his ability to come up with sharp, irresistible hooks, but his lyrics and music are unique. Throughout *Two Bit Monsters*, his characters—spys in shades, valium addicts—are carefully-sculpted misfits skirting around a world that we recognize all too well. Hiatt is also wonderfully inventive on the guitar at a time when 60's-rehashing runs rampant, and Shane Keister's keyboards help form the threatening Bug-Sound.

With powerful songs like "Back to Normal" and "I Spy (for the FBI)", Hiatt has a right to be heard. Yes, John, as you say yourself: "They've got your ashes scattered before you've even burned."

Stuart Ross

The Vapors Capitol

New Clear Days

The Vapors' *New Clear Days* is a classic in every sense of the word. In fact, it represents a perfect blend of new wave lyrics and beat, coupled with a sense of '60's rhythmic fusion.

All the cuts show a different aspect of the band's utter versatility. Sure, they produced a mass-appeal cut, "Turning Japanese", but that is in no way indicative of their total effort. "News at Ten" is a virtual gem. "Somehow reminds me of a cross between The Stranglers and The Doors. In any respect, these guys

have talent, lots of it. "Prisoners" is another contagious tune with wild guitar leads that could easily bring The Vapors vast sums of cash, just as "Trains" should chug its way to hitdom. Finally, the wild "Bunkers" illustrates The Vapors at their very finest musical and lyrical moment.

The Vapors will be more than just a one-trick pony.

Terry Crawford Band RCA

Terry Crawford Band

This effort marks the debut of RCA's latest act, the Terry Crawford Band. The band was showcased at DJ's recently where they played a couple of fast-paced sets of songs ranging from their own bluesy rockers to sixties' golden oldies. There is a naive straight-forward energy on this album, coming at a time when most bands are falling over themselves trying to jump on the new wave bandwagon.

The band's strong point clearly rests in the hoarse bluesy voice of singer Terry Thorne-Johnson. Her depth of feeling in such songs as the Stones-like "Eye For an Eye" and a gentle rocker called "You Take All My Money" are reminiscent of the power of the late Janis Joplin, while at other times her sophistication brings Carol Pope to mind.

It is difficult to be as kind to either the backup band or its material. While Thorne-Johnson is giving her all, much of the material seems oddly uninspired. The arrangements are pedestrian; the guitar riffs commonplace. This really is too bad, for one senses the honesty of the band's effort, and even moreso because the rawness of Thorne-Johnson's voice seems to be just itching to tear into some meaty material.

Paul Turrin

Martha and the Muffins DinDisc/Polygram Trance and Dance

The Muffins deliver. With *Trance and Dance*, The Muffins continue their very progressive concept of how pop music should sound. This is new music; this is the music of the 80's.

This impressive package begins with a Marth-Lady-painted front cover, continues with sympathetic, ingenuitive production from England's Mike Howlett, and climaxes in good playing on intelligent compositions.

Credit must be extended for *Trance and Dance's* subtle sound. "About Insomnia" is a creamy, delicious treat, "Primal Weekend" pays homage to the new jazz that has influenced the group.

The Muffins promised much when they began a couple of years ago and *Trance and Dance* realizes much of the early promise.

Elliott Lefko

Cries in the night

Last week cries were heard as two student theatre groups dazzled audiences at the Sam Beckett Theatre in Stong College with their shocking brand of stage acrobatics. Pictured left, a frozen moment

from *Gum and Goo*; below, a memorable slice of time from *Vanities*.

Our reviewer, Ivar Estragon, swallowed his tongue in his excitement—hence this existential review. But these Beckett Theatre productions are dangerous, so watch out for them.

Now, if I could just get my other boot on.

Molloy



photos by
Renuka De Silva



Now, the play...

Half-baked horror

Lloyd Wasser

Take one sweet transvestite, add an incestuous brother-sister team, mix in two virginal innocents and what have you got? A bad rehashing of the most over-exposed and under-baked show of the '70s—*The Rocky Horror Show*, now playing for an extended run at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre in Exhibition Place.

The play began the entire sub-cult, running seven years in London before metamorphosing into the *Rocky Horror Picture Show* six years ago. (It still plays weekly at the Roxy.) The movie is a fun, insanity-packed two hours combined with a generous sprinkling of bizarre audience participation. What sets it apart from this stage version is its unrestrained energy and enthusiasm. This company just goes through the motions, oblivious to any audience beyond the stagelights.

Frank Gregory (Frankie) was far too campy—to the point of becoming tiresome. He tried too hard to be a Tim Curry clone, and in this case it just doesn't work. Dennis Daniels (Rocky), Pendleton Brown (Riff-Raff), and Steve Lincoln (Narrator) are also guilty of a similar crime. However, praise must go to C.J. Critt for her exceptionally funny portrayal of the tap-dancing Columbia.

If you already have tickets to this show, or have actually suffered through it already, you have my deepest sympathies.

Virgin Wilderness

Her ski outfit caught on the artificial limb, she unzipped to the antelope's quick breath. Suddenly she's in a Hawaiian ballroom housebreaking a neophyte.

Mark Laba

Stevie sparkles

Paul Ellington

Stevie, playing through November at Young People's Theatre, is the story of British poet Stevie Smith. Stevie is a middle-class lady with middle-class values, but she is also a writer with just the right amount of cynicism—a cynicism that translates into a sparkling sense of humour.

Roberta Maxwell does a fine job in the leading role, injecting wit into an otherwise serious and sad play. The lighthearted nature of the dialogue takes away from the

underlying pathos, obsession with death and an attempted suicide, but the effect is not farcical.

The role of Stevie's aunt, played by Kate Reid, is in a similar vein. Her approaching senility is treated more as eccentricity, and the interplay between her and Stevie is humorous, but underlined with a real tenderness and love.

The play is also sprinkled with passages of Stevie Smith's witty, stimulating poetry, and the resultant package is fine entertainment.

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