

## ARTS

# Uzeb's World Tour 90: 99.425% Perfect

BY MICHAEL GRAHAM

EVER HEARD OF A band called Uzeb? If not, that's understandable — very few people seem to know about them. You may have seen them on Much Music. They have that video with all the milk which gets played about once every month as a time killer. They get virtually no exposure at all. This is too bad considering that they are Canadian and one of the most interesting instrumental bands around.

Music  
Uzeb  
World Tour 90

Uzeb is a Montréal trio who formed in 1977, released their first album in 1981, and have been playing their unique flavour of fusion ever since. The band consists of Paul Brochu

(percussion), Alain Caron (basses), and Michel Cusson (guitars and main composer).

*World Tour 90*, Uzeb's latest release, is a collection of recordings from their last tour of Europe (where they find the most popularity), and it shows the band at their best. Most of the songs on this 116 minute double cd are from the two previous Uzeb albums *Noisy Nights* and *Uzeb Club*. The songs can sometimes run as long as 14 1/2 minutes, but they never seem to drag. In addition to their own material they also do covers of "Blue N Green" by Miles Davis, and Donna Lee (acoustically) by Charlie Parker.

The band embraces technology, using midi instruments and such, but this is never used as a crutch of any sort; just an extension to their already phenomenal musical abilities. On *World Tour 90* for example,

Cusson will occasionally play keyboard parts through his guitar, and on the song "Après Les Confidences" Alain Caron plays a beautiful flute solo through his six string fretless bass.

I cannot emphasize enough how musically brilliant these three guys are. Alain Caron's fretless bass solos on such songs as "New Hit", "Perrier Citron" and "Loose" are beautiful. His tone, fluidity, vibrato and chording are truly amazing. Caron is no slouch on the fretted bass either. He has the slap/pop technique down. "Wake Up Call", for example, is the funkiest bass playing I have ever heard (yes, I've heard everything by the Red Hot Chili Peppers). A further example of his bass playing abilities is heard on "Donna Lee" where Caron plays some brilliant acoustic bass.

Michel Cusson is a very talented guitarist to say the least. His playing

on *World Tour 90* is original and diverse. He is well versed in jazz, rock and funk guitar, and he is, for the most part, responsible for the composition of the 18 songs on this double cd. His playing throughout the album is great. "Home", "Uzeb Club" and "Loose" are some standouts.

Paul Brochu is a very solid, tight jazz and rock drummer with a lot of finesse. He really shows his stuff on

**Midi technology is just the icing on the cake for Uzeb's already phenomenal musical abilities**

"Riff 55" and "Not Even the Shadow of the Tail of a Lizard". He makes excellent use of his array of "effects" to create intense grooves and jungle-like rhythms on some songs.

So we have three god-like instrumentalists — so what? Technical virtuosity does not imply great music. In the case of Uzeb and *World*

*Tour 90* it does! Uzeb works as a band extremely well. All three musicians combine their talents to make each song as great as possible. And the songs are indeed, great! Some are wild, with screaming guitar solos and slap bass. Others are the opposite. One thing that really hits you while listening to most of the songs are the band's killer grooves ("Spider" immediately springs to mind). I find myself listening to this release as loud as possible whenever I put it on.

The only complaint that I could find after scrutinizing/revelling in this 116 minute double cd many times is that Michel Cusson's solo at the end of "Spider" is very disjointed. He gets into Eddie Van Halen mode for a minute and then seems to lose it for about 40 seconds. Maybe too much adrenalin... I don't know. So that is my sole complaint about Uzeb's *World Tour 90*.

To add some more icing to the cake, this is the highest quality live recording I have heard (DDD for those with cd players). So, overall, if you can put up with 40 seconds of not so great guitar soloing (out of 116 minutes of brilliant music!) buy this double cd!

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