

## Existere editors discredit selves as well as magazine

OPINION BY JASON SHERMAN

**E**xistere, the Vanier College literary magazine, has lost whatever iota of respect or attention left to it by the students and faculty of this University. Those responsible for this achievement are its co-editors, who prefer to be identified without capitals as gary barwin and margaret christakos.

Around this time last year, gary barwin made application for, and was elected to the position of editor of *Existere*. margaret christakos, who made no application, appealed the decision and demanded an editorial position. barwin graciously submitted and the two became co-editors.

Existere has lost whatever iota of respect left to it

This was barwin's first mistake. It was also his last, because from that time forth, according to barwin, christakos proceeded to hamper the operation of the magazine, by stalling on a good number of decisions and procedures, not the least of which was the tabling of a budget for Vanier Council.

barwin, for his part, rather than forging ahead on his own, allowed the stalling to fester, so that decisions on distribution, on acceptance of material, on methods of presentation were all held off until such time as christakos deemed necessary. barwin says he wanted to make *Existere* accessible to the York community. christakos wanted to maintain the standards of the previous year. What christakos'

standards amounted to was this: taking an extraordinarily long time to produce a mediocre journal destined, perhaps, for her own coffee table and, mostly, a good many trash cans.

christakos said she wanted two issues, one of fair quality and one a bound work to be kept for posterity. So far, we have seen one issue, and neither approaches seem to have been taken.

Further, barwin and christakos wanted posters featuring art and poetry for greater recognition of the magazine; no such posters were made.

barwin and christakos were granted money in September. They were given office space in October. It took them five months to put together one issue. In previous years there have always been at least two issues, one in each term.

After this first issue christakos reportedly resigned. Now she is back, attempting to put together a hastily assembled collection of poetry and prose. This issue, if it is realized, will come out just in time for classes to be about one week over, and few people will be around to read it.

If all christakos wanted was to see her name in print, and we're not saying she did, then we suggest she grab as many copies of this newspaper as she can, cut out every mention of her name and paste them into a scrapbook, so that all posterity will know that, yes, once upon a time at York University, margaret christakos did indeed exist here.

Let us hope that Chris Keep, next year's editor, maintains his promise to establish an editorial board, so that fiascos like the one this year will, like the editorship of barwin and christakos, be a thing of the past.

## Megabyte worth a hundred words

By JASON SHERMAN

**A**n exciting new approach to the communication of literature in Canada will allow people with access to computers to read the works-in-progress of such well-known figures as Margaret Atwood, George Bowering, Clark Blaise and Robert Kroetsch. The man responsible for the innovation is York Professor Frank Davey, who, on the suggestion of long-time colleague Fred Wah, proposed the idea of "an electronic literary magazine" to the Canada Council. That body was sufficiently impressed to allow the magazine, cleverly named *Swift Current*, to begin operation July 1.

Davey, no stranger to self-starter projects (he was involved in the founding of *Tish*, with Wah and two others, and the influential journal *Open Letter*), contacted a number of writers whom he knew had an interest in microcomputers and word processing. He eventually put together a cross-country network, with heavy concentrations in Toronto and Vancouver. These cities will house database terminals, to which writers will, with the appropriate password, gain access and be able to enter up to 50,000 of their own words and 50,000 words of writers of their choice. The current storage capability for *Swift Current's* computers is about 800 million characters. Davey is hoping that video disk technology will come into wide, inexpensive use, so that the magazine may expand to 800 billion characters, a virtually inexhaustible amount.

"It's hard to tell what use will be made of it," Davey says, referring to reader involvement. Likely, at the outset, only institutions will subscribe. Readers will have a passive relationship with the computer, but will be allowed if they have printers to make hard copies of material of their choice. The most immediate benefits will be to writers taking part, because, says Davey, they will have an "electronic mail service," and will be able to communicate with writers from across the country.

The idea behind *Swift Current* sounds as though it would have been tried elsewhere, but Davey says that, to the best of his knowledge, Canada is the first place to use a database for literary purposes. There are three very good reasons. First, "We have a very clean telephone system, free of static and interference," so that a similar project would likely not work in England or Third World nations.

Secondly, the system "needs to have a literary community sufficiently small that it could serve everyone," which eliminates the possibility of a national system in the United States. In fact, there is an upper limit on the number of writers on *Swift Current's* system. The group will decide, as a whole, on the selection of new members, but so far the only criteria seems to be, Davey says, that the writers be "serious and competent," and that they display "enthusiasm" for the project. Davey points out that readers need not even bother with writers they don't want to read, since all material will be on index, waiting to be called up by the subscriber.

The third reason for Canada's good position is that writers here are "sufficiently spread out that there is much to gain in tying them together." This again eliminates England, where most writers live in one centre, London. "There is a major argument," Davey says, "in favor of breaking down regional literatures, which tend to develop in 'ghettos'."

Davey, while acknowledging that *Swift Current* has tremendous potential, wants to play this aspect down until reaction to the magazine can be gaged, which will take two years. Once it catches on, *Swift Current* could "relieve the isolation of writers outside major centres, because the centre will be everywhere."

"We don't want people to look on it as a major revolution," Davey says, "because they may be disappointed." For \$25 (the annual individual subscription fee, inside Metro Toronto), *Swift Current* might be worth the let-down.

## Well-respected (jazz) men bop, boil and bounce with York Jazz O.

### York Jazz Orchestra presents piano trio to end all piano trios in smouldering set

By HELEN HINKLE

**I**t's hard to pin down the York Jazz Orchestra. At their very successful Christmas concert the band neglected to include an accompanying instrument (piano or guitar) in the varied program of contemporary jazz. But at Tuesday night's year-end performance, not one but three pianists participated in the exciting program. Why the change?

Well, for one thing, judging from its diverse repertoire (from the simple melodic grace of Duke Ellington's "Cottontail" to the frenetic, free jazz textures of leader David Mott's opus "Chord") and the odd mix of individuals that make up the 16-piece orchestra, it's easy to see that the band doesn't like to be pigeon-holed. So the boisterous horns and strong rhythm section easily carried off the Christmas concert. Who's to stop the band from adding a pianist or two at their final musical offering of the year?

And what pianists! Featured were three York professors—Frank Falco, John Gittins and Casey Sokol—who are well-respected in jazz and new music on the Toronto and national scene. However, before these apt ambassadors from the chordophone world took to the stand, the orchestra warmed up the large crowd with an energetic and varied first set.

"Jump Monk," an impassioned blues testimony by the late Charles Mingus, set the tone for the evening, the sinewy melody leading into finely crafted spirited soloing by tenorman Richard Underhill and trumpeter Bill Perison. Contrasting this vehement, vigorous composition was "Sour Sayings," an aptly named tune whose smouldering contour created a boiling cauldron of unresolved energy which was released in surts of soloistic expression by alto

saxists Jonnie Bakan and Richard Howse and bassist Mark Shannon.

The band regained its blues stride on fine arrangement of the Miles Davis standard "All Blues" by student Len Graf before blasting off into the uncharted worlds of Pan-Galacticism on Al Henderson's "Behind the Walls." The accompanying poem—"Behind the walls of space and time, lie stranger tunes by far than mine. So if you think this chart is square, imagine what they play out there"—hardly prepared the audience for the double-edged onslaught of jazz atonalism that followed. Once again the boisterous sax section provided keen soloistic pyrotechnics, tenorman Bill Mulhal joining Richard Howse in diverse interpretation of the tune. Not to be outdone, the brass also got into the act, trumpeters Roger Shepherd and Mike Grieco creating a tempestuous duet. Both Shepherd and Mulhal were featured on the final tune of the set, bebop standard "Bouncin' with Bud."

And then the pianists arrived! No, not in a thundering caravan of grand pianos, but one at a time, each featured on tunes best suited to their styles.

First up was Frank Falco who responded to the funky latin soloing of Mark Husbands on trumpet and Bill Mulhal on tenor with chorus after chorus of masterful bluesy improvising, using rich tonal clusters in conjunction with percussive rhythmic phrasing to create a marvelous effect.

John Gittins, in his inimitable lyrical style, fashioned a flowing solo on the languid Benny Golson standard "Along Came Betty" and was followed by a laudible effort by tenor saxist Richard Underhill who had to leave the concert fearing the crush of the crowd thronging too near him.

The highlight of the evening was "Chord." A David Mott composition, this piece could well have been written for Casey Sokol, York's own prodigy of free improvised piano.

An interesting and exciting piece, "Chord" exploited the tribal and tonal potential of the band and left plenty of room for the intense, tumultuous piano work by Sokol. The piece was also extremely visual, featuring a roving sax solo by Richard Underhill who broke new barriers in musician mobility.

All in all a fine concert.



Real gone cat: Yaaaaaaassssss! John Gittins bops.