

Professors swing out

by Christopher Elson

Last Wednesday night at the Pub Flamingo, the Saint Francis Xavier faculty quintet Jazz FX gave a large and enthusiastic crowd a highly impressive demonstration of their individual and collective musical skills.

The program included both original and standard tunes, allowing a tremendous interpretative range. From Latin to ballads, bop to modern, the approach was equally inventive, and the ensemble equally sure.

Perhaps the dominant improvisatory voice on Wednesday evening was that of saxophonist Andy Weizler. Alternately growling, singing, lamenting, or just plain swinging, his thoughts, expressed on tenor, alto, and soprano saxes, were always direct yet never simple-minded.

His compositions, too, displayed both originality and a certain faithfulness to jazz tradition (whatever that might be!).

Pianist Bruce Budley (whose compositions were inadvertently left behind in Antigonish) showed us a wide variety of creative faces. Whether soloing in long, sweeping, breathless lines, or comping with great broken-toothed chords, he demonstrated an incredible sensitivity

to the other players and a risk taking spirit that generated a great deal of excitement.

Gene Smith, on trombone and various valved things, suggested a wry and often playful perspective, a welcome change from the frequently darker musings of Weizler. His confidence of tone and clarity of melodic line belied the awkward humour he displayed at the microphone when introducing the pieces.

Bassist Skip Beckwith was everything Haligonians have come to expect, and a little bit more. Ever the fundamentalist, his solo in "Oleo" was a masterpiece of jazz understatement, yet other tunes (particularly the band's original numbers) found him venturing into some more unusual rhythmic territory, more evidence that Skip is indeed one of Canada's great acoustic players.

On drums, Terry O'Mahoney was both discreet and supportive, providing a near-seamless fit with Beckwith's playing, and vital rhythmic foundation upon

which rests the equilibrium of the group. He was particularly expressive in the Latin-flavoured portions of the show.

Naturally, the whole was greater than the sum of its parts, and some of the highlights of the interplay here were an explosive exchange near the end of "Nica's Dream", the laid-back, oh-so-cool opened St. F.X. Blues", a Weizler composition entitled "Now is the Time", and a humorous "I'll Dismember April", which revealed the band's many personalities.

Appreciative Halifax jazz fans can look forward to the imminent release of an album from this group, Canada's only resident performing faculty jazz ensemble. It is also to be hoped that we won't have to wait long for another case of the "Saint F.X. Blues".



Boston's Scruffy the Cat recently released *Tiny Days* (Relativity)

NEW RELEASES

by Andrew M. Duke

The Dik Van Dykes — *Nobody Likes the Dik Van Dykes* (Og Records) is rather amazing for a "vinyl frisbee". One might be reminded of the Ramones, but the humour of the Diks is by far superior. Hell, the music is well done too, despite the fact that one guitarist continues to play despite the loss of three strings, leading to a sound sometimes reminiscent of Deja Voodoo. In fact, Voodooers Van Herk and Dewald along with Condition seem to have inspired the opening cut, "Garage Sale" The "it" of "my mother does it with my father" turns out to be curling, with tales of people "throwing rocks at houses".

Their strength is in taking clichés and well-known sayings and fashioning songs from them. "Six Feet" uses "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep", and in "Lime Green Slime", which begins with a message from Flash Gordon on environmental destruction, the result is, "it's good to touch the lime green slime of home". "Disneyland" is built from "liar, liar, pants on fire", though it provides a great foundation.

You'll learn how to do the "Pterodactyl"; get the inside news on "Harold Snepsts"; and experience the hilarious, twisted "Birthday Song". A deal you cannot possibly refuse.

Boston's Scruffy the Cat have recently released *Tiny Days* (Relativity), the follow-up to their *High Octane Revival* EP. On the LP they follow no trends and though they've been labelled hundreds of ways, they prefer to call themselves a rock and roll band. We've got straight rock, fast rock, banjo rock, and lots more, then, because *Tiny Days* is full of variety. Highlights include the title track, along with "Time Never Forgets" and "When Your Ship Comes In".

In the same vein is the Tragically Hip, from Kingston, Ontario, who "draw heavily on the influence of the English club

scene of the early 1960s" for a roots-rock, foot-stompin', croon-along-with sound on tracks such as "Small Town Bringdown" and "Evelyn", found on their debut for RCA/BMG.

Songs I Never Wrote (World) is the debut from Ottawa's The Speakers, a concept album in that side one is the commercial portion, suitable for top-40 stations. Side two is for those who appreciate music, making it hard to believe the group who cranks out gems such as "Father's Lament" and "Holiday Samba" on this "experimental side" is the same one who sounded like Platinum Blonde on the other.

Squeeze have released their eighth album, *Babylon and On* (A&M). "Hourglass", their biggest single, and "853-5937" will satisfy those hungry for hits, while "Cigarette of a Single Man" and "Splitting Into Three" take more in-depth looks at life. The LP is produced by Eric Thorngren, who has worked with Talking Heads, and could be their best ever.

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