

Condition Does The Swampwalk

Nine years ago, a group of musicians formed in Montreal, calling themselves Condition. During the past nine years, the band has survived line-up changes, and managed (through various means) to release three albums. Their latest release, entitled *Swampwalk*, is a melange of jazz (Duke Ellington covers) and freak-rock. In mid-summer they graced our fair city, playing Crackerjacks. One of CJSR's radio personalities caught up with the band's singer, Julia Gilmour, supplying us with these insights.

interview by Mike Fy

MF: So how's life in Montreal?

JG: Big city, but still not a lot of venues for live music to vent its anger. Montreal's still the fashion capital. Everyone would rather go to a disco and stand around and listen to recorded dance music, and not have the added competition of live music going on at the same time.

MF: But how is the band situation?

JG: The band situation is extremely healthy. How it exists in a vacuum I'll never know. But one thing still about Montreal is that the live bands that are there are all different. It's a real healthy scene as far as that's concerned. But a lot of Montreal bands have to get outside the city to really make a go of it, so that's what usually happens. Everybody gets the hell out of Montreal and just pays rent there!

MF: So *Swampwalk* was recorded in Germany.

JG: It was recorded in Berlin.

MF: I understand you received some help from the German government?

JG: Yah. We were there as part of a cultural exchange with the city of Berlin. They sent a band to Montreal, and we were the band sent to represent Canada in Berlin for their 750th anniversary. Berlin is an extremely subsidized city for the arts. Such that they have a cultural senate and a rock bureau.

And apart from performing about ten times in the city, we recorded *Swampwalk* there.

MF: So did they pick up the tab?

JG: For everything!

MF: So Amok records [their label] got off pretty easy then?

JG: Yah! You could put it that way. So far so good. They got off pretty good, yah!

MF: So what were the crowds in Berlin like?

JG: Incredible. The independent scene there has been around for a long time and really functions well. The press covers it. The clubs support it. Audiences support it. You know, it works the way it's supposed to work. So much so, that towards the end of our stay we were playing packed houses, five or six hundred people. It was really a great reaction. I think Berlin was very surprised by the type of music we do. I don't think they were expecting that from a Canadian band. They have a very strange concept of what Canada is about. They think we're all lumberjacks!

MF: Oh. I see. Tents and Igloos!

JG: Not entirely untrue, but...

MF: So were you happy with the result of the album?

JG: Yah. Very much so. It represented us working in a much more state of the art recording studio than usual. It was also neat getting out of Montreal to record an album. You get away from those city pressures and stuff... Ultimately what we did was record the stuff the way we do it live. And we used the extra tracks [24], lord knows Condition doesn't need that many tracks to record something, to create more of an atmosphere. We used the extra space basically to create a feel, which is very much what *Swampwalk* is about.

MF: What was your motivation behind covering Duke Ellington's *Caravan*?

JG: It's just one of those great songs that we had to redo ourselves. A lot of our motivation for doing covers is so that people can kind of

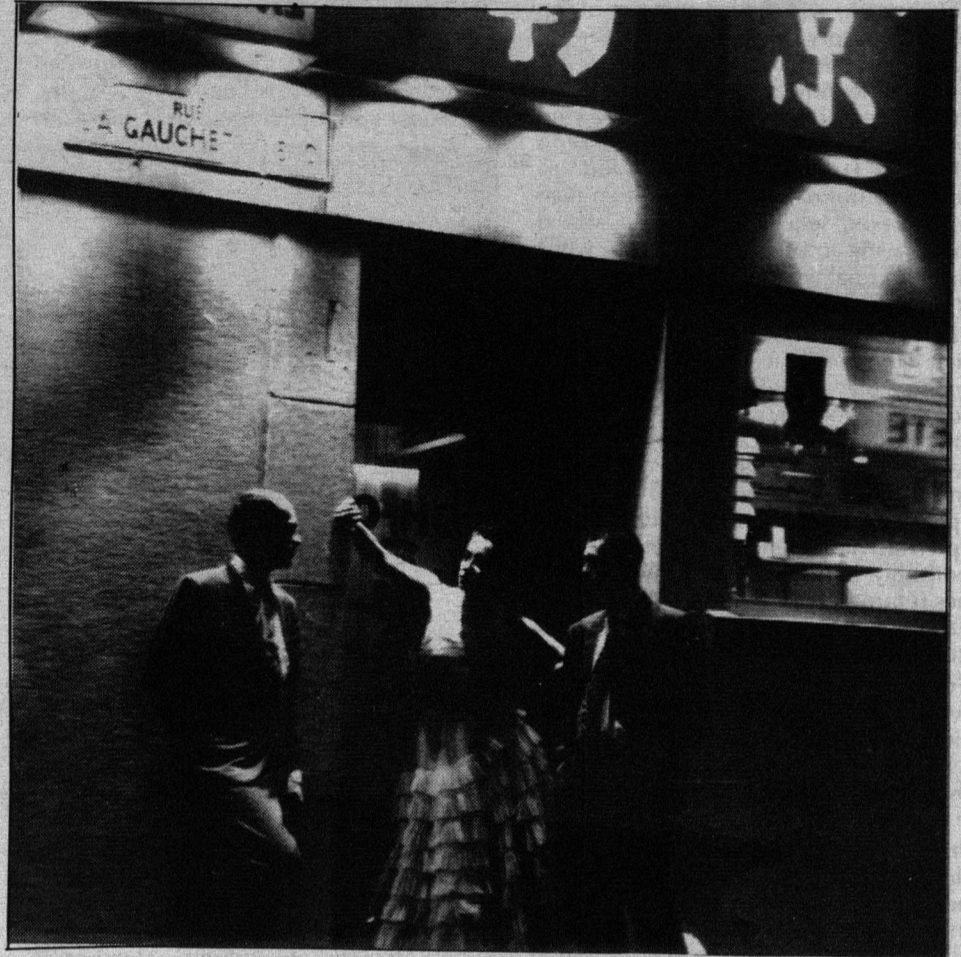
get the picture of what we're trying to do with our original material. When people see how we handle a cover, or what covers we choose to do, they tend to say, "Oh, I get it!" The song warrants being brought back to life, ultimately.

MF: What would it feel like to turn on the top 40 radio station and hear yourself?

JG: I think it would be pretty much a riot, considering where we've come from and how long we've been struggling at this thing. I don't see why it can't happen. Given the

kind of change in attitudes that's been going on out there. I think the nineties are going to be an anything goes kind of decade. Another goal for us is that people would, on a larger scale, understand and appreciate what we're doing, and feel what we feel from the music — which is what keeps us doing it. Believe me.

(Mike Fy is a disc jockey and reporter for CJSR radio.)



Condition: hanging out in Montreal or Berlin

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7:30A » 1:00P