

## ARTS

## Might this be the Age of Ambiguity?

by Howard Kaman

Bad Cheese  
The Cabana Room  
October 4, 1990

I know what you're saying: "What kind of a name is 'Bad Cheese'?"

Think the name sounds unusual? Wait until you hear the lyrics. Some of the topics covered by lead singer/songwriter Mark Harrington include male chauvinism, fads and East Indian philosophy. When the songs include lines like "We began his funeral before he was dead," it may seem difficult to take the music lightly. Yet, in Harrington's case, it is actually quite easy.

While most socially conscious musicians wallow the listener in guilt while singing about the ills of our age, Harrington is different. He offsets the apparent seriousness of his music by peppering his show with light comedic touches, such as an impromptu rendition of New Kids on the Block's "Hangin' Tough," or patter in which he tells the audience to "feel free to laugh at the lyrics."

His lighthearted attitude is refreshing in an age of self-important rock stars intent on changing the world. Unlike many of these singers, he realizes that it is only music and shouldn't be taken too seriously.

So, he intersperses his own originals, such as "Man's World," ("The macho man with the hairy chest/Walks with a pickle up his ass") with covers ranging from "New York, New York," to REM's "Pop Song 89."

The show covers a lot of ground, as Harrington goes through material representative of every stage of his unusual devel-

opment as a singer. His independent tapes, including this year's Help Yourself, have shown development in both lyrical wit and production value. Help Yourself, in particular, is a meticulously crafted recording.

Indeed, most of the evening's finest performances were of songs culled from his latest tape. "I don't want to wear black anymore/I've forgotten what this earring stood for," he sang on "Wear Black," one of the few songs played solo, with only Harrington on guitar.

With the exception of a few solo numbers, Harrington was consistently backed up by three supporting players: bassist Pete Floro, guitarist "The Ed," and his drummer for the evening, Chris Zigrovich. Together onstage, Bad Cheese invigorates Harrington's music with an earthy feel — far removed from the spacey keyboards and drum machines so evident on his recordings.

A perfect example of how the approach can transform the music was found in the revealing "Age of Ambiguity." The song ruminates on a topic almost totally ignored in modern pop music, of how people tend to skirt their problems and refuse to deal with anything in specific terms. In a much more full bodied rendition, Harrington sang the thought provoking lyric: "Could this be the dawning of the Age of Ambiguity?/That could be the reason that nothing seems too clear to me."

One thing that should be clear is that Harrington is a talent to contend with. Such serious ponderings, mixed with a wry sense of humour give Bad Cheese a sharp edge that never leaves a bad taste.

## 3 guys named Sven



Clive Cohen photo

by Josh Rubin

Northern Sweden is not the first place that comes to most people's mind when discussing jazz.

But the Lystedt Jazz Power from Umea did their best to change that when they visited the Grad Lounge last Friday.

Fronted by veteran Swedish trombone man Lars Lystedt, the six piece group were here as part of an exchange between York and the University of Umea.

The Power have been playing together for two years now, but according to Lystedt, jazz in Umea has been around since after WWII, when a musical army regiment was based there: "A lot of the players spent time in cafes, where jazz was always on the record player... that atmosphere really rubs off."

Putting a finger on a precise musical style for Lystedt's band isn't easy, as they went from traditional jazz standards like Freddie Freeloader to more modern and Latin songs without missing a beat.

Also strutting his musical stuff was alto sax player Aake Thordendal, whose driving solos were matched by his solid skills on the congas.

One of Power's more obvious influences is Dizzy Gillespie, but strains of early Miles Davis could be heard as well. "We really play a lot of east coast jazz," said Lystedt.

Rounding out Power's lineup were guitarist Andreas Pettersson, piano player Bo Bygoen and a steady rhythm section of Kenneth Oesterlund on bass and drummer Aake Burman.

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