

# Music for motorheads and weirdos

review by Jens Andersen

Los Angeles

X  
Slash Records SR 104

Wild Gift  
X  
Slash Records SR 107

Incorrect Thoughts  
The Subhumans  
Friends records FR 1008

When SU Entertainment Director Alex MacDonald dumped these three records on me with the notice that the two bands were coming to SUB this weekend, I had visions of having to write yet another nasty review, thus making another enemy in this world.

Happy to say the records are eminently pogo-able, and I can, with a clear conscience, recommend them to all the motor maniacs in the audience.

Having said that however, I must register a few minor complaints. First, all this stuff is hopelessly derivative, and when I hear the intro from Chuck Berry's "Brown-eyed Handsome Man" in the middle of "Year 1" by X, and the drum flourish that opened both the Turtle's "Santa and the Sidewalk Surfer" and Bobby

Pickett's "Monster Mash" also opening the same song, my appreciation dwindles somewhat.

Also the uniformly simplistic music and its almost uniform freneticism sets my teeth on edge after a while.

But perhaps this is more symptomatic of my creeping arteriosclerosis than the music itself. At any rate, the only way you can avoid dancing to something like X's "I'm Coming Over" would be to strap yourself to a chair. What more could a Dinwoodie patron ask for?

Dementia Royal  
Doctor Demento  
Rhino Records RNLP 010

Being funny isn't all that easy, and the collection of tunes and errata assembled here by Doctor Demento illustrates the point rather well. "Making Love in a Subaru," for instance, is exactly what you would expect from a song about sex in cramped quarters. Yawn. Ditto for the disco-jewish jokes in the Yiddish People's "Kosher Delight." Ditto for "Gotta Get a Fake ID" Ditto for "Three Drunk News."

The program gets a bit better with Bobby Pickett's "Star Drek" a carefully and cleverly crafted spoof of the the TV show:

("These are the voyagers of the starship Booby Prize. Its five year mission: to sell T-shirts, toy phasers, plastic communicators and anything else we can think of. To seek new life in old plots and communications: TO BOLDLY GO WHERE EVERYONE HAS GONE BEFORE!")

"My name is Larry" by Wild Man Fischer is easily the wierdest thing on the album and devastating the first time one hears it. In the liner notes Dr. Demento describes it as the sort of thing a caveman probably sang when he first discovered singing. The initial devastation of the song, however, is largely the result of wondering what the hell Fischer is going to sing next, and it pales with repeated listening.

The real meat of the album lies in three songs. First, "Punk Polka" which makes you want to do just that. Polka. It is not recommended for people who take punk music too seriously, though. Second is Fred Blassie's "Pencil Neck Geeks," a truly awe-inspiring string of insults against skinny wimps, by the renowned TV wrestler. His gravelly redneck vocal delivery backed by a perfect country and western accompaniment make the song some sort of modern classic.

Third is "Davy's Dinghy," by Ruth



Wallis, a smutty sea shanty from the pre-rock 1950s. In those innocent days, porn could only be hinted at, yet somehow Ruth Wallis' teasing song manages to pack ten times the smirking suggestiveness of today's blatantly candid anthems. Maybe it is the incongruously bouncy and innocent tune and girlish vocals that do the trick.

There are other interesting moments on the album, like Scott Beach's "Religion and Politics," which must be the longest sentence ever uttered in a single breath, and Dr. Demento's "Shaving Cream," which has some of the oldfashioned charm of Ruth Wallis, but the abovementioned trio are the winners here. Any one of them alone is worth the price of the album

# Garp sequel not up to snuff

The Hotel New Hampshire  
John Irving  
1981

Review by Peter West

Those of us who are warped enough to enjoy *The World According to Garp* looked forward to hearing more from its author, the American wrestler and part-time novelist John Irving. *Garp* seemed to differ from most recent American fiction in not being about New York people in their mid-life crisis, or about earnest young women whose husbands were giving them a hard time, or Jewish academics concerned about their masculinity. *Garp* seemed to have that comic boisterousness which made *Catch-22* so much fun, and as its hero lurched from one crisis to another, the novel swept the reader along with a series of improbably hilarious incidents.

There are certainly some comic scenes in Irving's new novel, *The Hotel New Hampshire*. Take, for example, the story of Sorrow, the dog who suffers from gas:

"You smell worse than Earl (the

bear)," Iowa Bob was telling the dog. And, in truth, Sorrow was dreadful to smell; not only his farting but his halitosis could kill you if you weren't careful, and the old black Labrador retriever seemed viler to me, too, than my faint memory of the foul odours of Earl. "What are we going to do with you?" Bob mumbled to the dog, who enjoyed lying under the dining room table and farting all through mealtimes.

Or again, there are amusing scenes in Vienna, with its decrepit hotel full of whores, anarchists and writers, all plotting someone's destruction. Or take this passage about Susie, who eventually stops living in a bear suit and begins to run rape crisis centres:

The rape crisis center was not welcome in Boston, and Susie admits that not all the hostility was external. There were rape lovers and women haters everywhere, of course, and a variety of stupid people who were willing to assume that women who worked in a rape crisis center had to be what Susie called 'hardcore

dykes and feminist troublemakers. The Bostonians gave Susie and her first rape crisis center a rather hard time. Apparently, as a way of making their point, they even raped one of the rape crisis center employees.

The curious fascination of the novel with rape recalls the emphasis on rape in *Garp*, with its lugubrious trails of women called Ellen Jamesians who have cut out their tongues to protest the face of rape. Clearly Irving is a novelist who will appeal more to men than to women, although the comments Irving makes about pack-raping football players (in both senses of the phrase) will not endear the novel to these men either.

Irving was unfortunate to have the success he had with *Garp* so early in his career. With the novel on sale at supermarkets all over North America and his face on the cover of *Time*, he has clearly become the novelist for the eighties. The point is, where does he go from here? *The Hotel New Hampshire* tries to catch some

of *Garp*'s comic genius, with mixed success. The comments about Sorrow, for example, become tedious as soon as Irving labours the point: Frank, the mournful brother of John, the novel's narrator, spends half the novel trying to stuff the dog, with the result that "Sorrow" never leaves the family. Although some of the scenes of family life are credible, others are improbable or tragic in a heavy-handed kind of way, notably one suicide towards the end of the novel. Thus, although I enjoyed the book, I was a little relieved to finish it. To those who want a good laugh, I'd sooner recommend *Garp*. This novel has its moments, but it won't be as successful as *Garp* was, and I suspect that the continuing emphasis on bears, rape, labradors and Vienna in Irving's novels will eventually turn readers off. In the meantime, Irving will make a small fortune, demonstrating that an interest in rape can be very profitable.

# A fifty-grand reward... for this???

Odd's End  
by Tim Wynne-Jones  
Bantam-Seal (1981)

review by Durk Boivin

Question: How many would-be novelists are there in Canada?

Question: How many aspiring Canadian novelists have published their first novel this year?

I have just completed reading *Odd's End* a first novel by Canadian author Tim Wynne-Jones. Apparently the novel has been warmly received in Canada, the U.S.A. and Great Britain. It is billed as a "cleverly crafted psychological novel" (*Toronto Star*), "a grippingly sinister chiller" (*Sunday Express U.K.*), and a combination "of mass market appeal with literary merit" (*Globe & Mail*); moreover, it received the *Seal Canadian First Novel Award*, which comes with a generous \$50,000 prize. Admittedly, it is probably the latter point which colours my review.

The story takes place in an extremely large, century-old mansion on the coast of Nova Scotia. The estate derives its name from an altercation between the original owner and his park warden Jeremy Odd. Their disagreement results in a murder-suicide and the subsequent naming of the estate as Odd's End. It is here, over a century later, we are introduced to the protagonists, Malcolm and Mary Close; he a prominent English professor and she a successful artist. They have been married happily for eight years and Odd's End has provided them with the seclusion they desire to pursue their interests. It has also become somewhat of a museum, festooned with works of art, expensive furniture and

books.

The trappings of the house are described by "Mr. X". Mr. X. is presented throughout the book in the first person, as opposed to the other characters who are revealed from an omniscient point of view. He constantly carries on a one-sided conversation, talking of his travels around the world, his love of art, his culinary expertise, and, more of all, his search for the ideal dwelling. Mr. X. is a psychopathic maniac. From his monologues we are able to ascertain that as a child he lived in a house much like Odd's End, however, the house was lost, thus, Mr. X. has spent his life searching for another. The searching has led Mr. X. to develop a peculiar habit: driving out the current owners of any house that suits his fancy. He accomplishes this by attempting to drive the owners crazy; doing small things around the house like rearranging furniture or misplacing items, tiny deeds which eventually develop into larger and larger acts. It is implied that he has murdered more than once in the past to achieve his goals.

The trouble starts at Odd's End when Mary and Malcolm return home one evening to discover a lavishly prepared meal awaiting them on the dining room table. Each first suspects the other of playing a game. However, when it finally becomes apparent that neither has done it, the mystery begins. Further, inexplicable incidents arise (Mary's painting is tampered with, Malcolm's manuscripts have been tampered with, their stationary is turning up in odd places), and the couple's relationship begins to fray; Malcolm suspects Mary and vice versa. And



so it goes. There is a murder, then a number of close calls, and finally, the inevitable chase scene.

It all becomes rather tawdry. This \$50,000 award winning novel is really not much more than a rather lacklustre horror story. At no point was I sitting on the edge of my seat, and I certainly didn't find the

climax to be "a showdown so relentlessly horror-filled that it could make readers scream with relief" (*Publishers Weekly*).

This is not to say that Wynne-Jones is a poor writer, on the contrary, he writes clearly with a level of rhetoric which could be put to a better use. It is his plot, hackneyed and cliched, that brings this novel to the level of the drugstore rack. I'm sure a novelist can find a better device to inspire interest than putting his characters in the proverbial haunted house.

I'm also sure that people who are married for eight years are not apt to begin suspecting one another crazy almost immediately after a few unexplained phenomena. I doubt if this novel will even become a major success despite recent interest in cheap, horror novel — movie productions (i.e. *Hallowe'en*, *Friday the Thirteenth*, and so on). Other novels in this category relied on explicit sex and violence to gain interest, neither is overly abundant in *Odd's End*.

This aside, it is my first point which I find has particularly determined my response to this novel. Why have they given away \$50,000 for this? Can it be that Canada is producing so little in the way of new writing? Does it mean that all new writers are turning out no better material? I happen to have somewhat more faith in Canadian Literature than to come to such conclusions. Consequently, if you aspire to be an author, and you could use that \$50,000 (not to mention the publicity that comes with it), I recommend this book to you. It should inspire even the most reluctant would-be author to return to their typewriter.