



GRANDY/DAL PHOTO

National Ballet at the Cohn, no Karen Kain but still spectacular.

Demics confront "new music"

One of the newest bands to appear on the Toronto scene is the Demics, a four-man outfit which plays new wavish rock reminiscent of the music the British mods listened to in the early 1960s. The result is danceable, energetic and tough, with an emphasis on strong guitar playing. The Demics remind me somewhat of Britain's current heroes, the Jam — the singing is not as good, but the punch is there.

This debut album has in its production a "live" feeling which makes me feel that this band probably prefers the stage to the recording studio. The Demics are not virtuosos, but they are strong, efficient instrumentalists. The vocals are harsh, but carry the cynical and effective (if unexceptional) lyrics well.

Of the songs, which generally deal with the day-to-day frustrations of the common man, "New York City," "The 400 Blows" and "Talk Talk" are the most successful. "Talk Talk" also appears on Alice Cooper's latest record, but the Demics give the song a more forceful, direct and sincere treatment, climaxing in the tight, angry, repeated shout of the title.

"The 400 Blows" takes its title from a critically-acclaimed movie about adolescence, directed by Francois Truffaut, and deals with people who suf-

fer mental scars from society's blows: "They came when it was dark outside / Left their marks inside your minds / The scars are of a different kind / The 400 blows." The song employs a crisp piano line and strong, capable drumming.

"New York City" starts slowly, with traffic sounds in the background, then builds with effective drumming and Springsteen-esque guitar work into an angry song with an edge of desperate longing, possibly the best and most effective song on the record: "And I want to go to New York City / Cause they tell me it's the place to be."

With its hauntingly scratchy guitar work, snarling vocals and solid, upfront drumming, "All Gone Wrong" (the final track on the record) sounds as if the Demics have been listening to Public Image Ltd. The song is more immediately

melodic (and less lyrically sharp) than any of PiL's work, but it is far more experimental in sound than anything on "Demics." It is ambitious, and often interesting, but not quite successful. The Demics are better at producing faster-paced, more danceable songs dealing with the frustrations of ordinary life.

It will be interesting to see if the Demics' second record continues in the direction of rockers like "New York City," "The News" (which has good saxophone work from Steve Kennedy), and "I Won't See You No More," or if it develops the experimental style of "All Gone Wrong." The band also shows some Public Image Ltd. influence in their liner notes, which credit most of the songs to the band as a whole, and do not credit individual members in terms of instruments or vocals handled.

The Demics are not a blatantly commercial band, though they have enough energy to make them quite accessible. The Demics are probably not a great band, either, although it is early to tell. However, the Demics are at least an indication that some Canadian bands are willing to confront the new music and fashion a sound which respects the past, and even derives from it, but has its sights firmly set on the next decade.



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