

ARTS

Album & concert showcase talent of 13 Engines

By LISA ROCK'N'ROLL

The 13 Engines
Byram Lake Blues
Nocturnal Records
Siboney Club, January 21

The 13 Engines seem to be a lucky band, and if we lived in a just and perfect world they would be huge pop stars, exponentially more famous than the likes of REM.

They're in such an enviable position, perhaps they could soon lead one of those career seminars, "What Can I Do With A Fine Arts Degree?" Their second independent record just came out on a US label that actually does constructive work for the band; it'll be distributed domestically by Fringe Product.

They've garnered piles of good press all over the continent, and they write plenty of catchy songs. They're an amazing live band, they could be considered good looking, and they attract crowds.

It's a cold January night, but there are no empty chairs at the Siboney, a spacious Latin ballroom turned rock showcase in the Kensington Market. The crowd has an obviously upscale, older contingent, as well as all the usual suspects. Rumours are flying as to exactly which major labels reps are present.

After the heavy press coverage prior to their jam-packed New Year's Eve gigs, The 13 Engines ought to be a hot commodity. Kids are sitting at the edges of the tiled dance floor but no one's dancing yet.

Byram Lake Blues is a strong record, full of anthemic numbers one can hum for days. (This is not a new phenomenon with them — their raw

demo tapes still refuse to be put neatly aside.) The Engines rework such well-worn themes as lost love, drinking, loneliness, adolescence, and suicide to great effect, matching slightly complicated lyrics (cenotaph? stellar? coliseum? unfurl?) with a crunching wall of guitars.

This record would suit perfectly one of those old turntables with automatic repeat. The entire second side should be played until it wears right out.

They have an angst-ridden romantic air to them, but the slight daze apparent in all their press pictures disappears in their driving live shows.

John Critchley is a remarkable lead singer, the focus of the audience's attention as he rocks back and forth in his black cowboy boots, strumming a big dark red semi-acoustic guitar. He should soon have a fan club of 17-year-old girls from Unrequited Love Collegiate Institute.

Mike Robbins, the other ex-York student, favours the crazed and bare-foot school of manic guitar playing, off in his own corner. Jim Hughes on bass and Grant Ethier on drums form a steadfast and sturdy rhythm section. Grant's also responsible for background vocals.

January is an odd time for a record release, just missing the Christmas rush, but potentially being forgotten by next year's inevitable "best of 1989" lists. Hopefully Byram Lake Blues will escape that fate, as it's chock-full of great songs — whether you're looking for a garage number like "My Time," the

melodic "Making Love Alone," or the "Blue Smoke Curl," pigeon-holed by numerous critics as their country stomp.

"Beached," "Rest In Between," "Blue Funk," and "Love Blooze" are all worthwhile examples of The 13 Engines' distinctively cool style.

The well-crafted 75-minute set is about halfway through, and The Engines' infectious songs have finally enticed people onto the dance floor, led by Pigfarm's indefatigable drummer Liz Becker. The Engines mix songs from both their vinyl

releases with new material, boding well for the future.

Standout songs from *Before Our Time* (a record with a medieval painting on the cover) include "The End of Your Chain" and the Edgar Allan Poe poem "Annabel Lee," which incorporates the word "sepulchre." Critchley can actually sing clearly and occasionally quietly, drawing the audience like a magnet.

The floor doesn't clear until the last encores end, one of which was a never-to-be-repeated and extremely heavy Neil Young cover.

In the last year or so the band's

been dividing its time between Toronto and Michigan, where the new record was recorded after frenetic US touring. If The Engines can keep up their good press they should stand head and shoulders above a mass of American guitar bands, all the while keeping their loyal Canadian following.

Any band that works this hard with this much talent deserves to do very well, despite the clichés.

Now if we could only convince Ethier to play "Indian Arrow" just one more time . . .



BEAM ME UP, RITA JOE . . .

Canadian actor August Schellenberg stars in a York Theatre production of *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*.

Schellenberg starred in the play's 1967 premier at the Vancouver Playhouse. The drama, by playwright George Ryga, deals with the problems of Canada's natives, struggling to fit into a society dominated by whites.

Directed by Joseph Green, featuring the talents of several fourth-year theatre students, and with original music by York alumnus Don Ross, performances will take place in the Moot Court at Osgoode Hall Law School, January 30 to February 3. Admission is \$7, \$5 for students and seniors.

For reservations, call the box office at 736-5157.

Symposium investigates glasnost effects on Ukraine

By SUSAN (THE CLAN WHO RUNS TORONTO) VANSTONE

Stong College is presenting the Inaugural Proc Memorial Lecture Series: *Glasnost in Soviet Ukraine*, from January 28 to February 1. The symposium will investigate the application of *glasnost* in a non-Russian republic.

Programme Committee member Romana Bahry said that there have been improvements in Ukrainian arts since *glasnost's* inception. Films and literature that were previously banned are now being released. For example, two avant garde films made by Yuri Ilienko, *Spring for the Thirsty* (1965), and *St. John's Eve* (1968) were banned in the Soviet Union until 1987. Both films will be screened at the York symposium.

Topics to be discussed in the lectures include religion, politics, and the arts. Art exhibits, films, and a concert by violinist Oleh Krysa will also be presented.

For more information, call 736-5132, ext. 7305.

Beverley Daurio's concept of justice

By LORRAYNE ANTHONY

Embarrassing men through sexual manipulation is Beverley Daurio's idea of female justice.

This unconventional idea is the underlying theme in her latest work, *Justice*, a collection of fiction and prose poetry. The plot of most of the fiction follows a basic sequence:

woman has bitter feelings about man, woman meets new man, woman plays cruel game on new man. Through variations of this plot, Daurio examines relationships in the socially turbulent '80s.

Daurio, a native of Toronto, studied Creative Writing at York University with Don Coles, bpNichol

and Matt Cohen. She admits that she attended York in order to make time for her writing. She feels that it is difficult for a writer to set aside time for his/her craft; York provided that time for her. Daurio revealed that Nichol influenced her greatly. . . .

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