



Burning Spear reggae marathon at the Flamingo in Halifax.

Burning Spear, reggae giant

by George O'Gilvie

Pub Flamingo became the famous Cafe of Reggae on February 7 & 8, 1989, when Jamaican born Winston Rodney better known as Burning Spear performed to an energetic audience. The show demonstrated the power of Reggae. As Spear appeared on the stage the Pub transformed into a Reggae skanking session. The music was soul seeking and it focused on the unity of the races. As the master started "people of the world were one".

As the audience danced to Spear songs, one could feel a nat-

ural mystic of love blowing through the air. Each night Spear played one set lasting almost 2½ hours with a splendid 15 minute encore. CKDU in association with Riddim Trax and Caribbean Profile must be credited for publicising the Burning Spear Reggae Show at Pub Flamingo. The master of Reggae gave an exclusive interview on CKDU, 97.5FM. Reggae program, Riddim Trax, prior to his Reggae splashdown at the Pub Flamingo. We hope Burning Spear will return again due to Halifax's amicable accomodation.

Bruce Cockburn's Message music

by Christopher Elson

The recently released *Big Circumstance* is Bruce Cockburn's first album of new songs since *World of Wonders* appeared nearly three years ago. It is also quite likely his finest work since the starkly beautiful *Inner City Front* of 1981.

Ranging musically from quasi-country to driving, funk-influenced grooves, and lyrically from forceful 'message' songs to strikingly delicate and personal imagery, this new record gives us an overview of Cockburn the writer and musician which is more complete and coherent than such recent albums as *The Trouble With Normal*, *Stealing Fire* or *World of Wonders*.

In this collection of songs, specific issues or situations, while still eliciting a serious and intense response, are placed within the broader context of sensitivity to human mortality and imperfection, to contingency and fragility, to the 'Big Circumstance' of the title.

Cockburn sees his role as that of a catalyst, someone who is open to, and who passes on "The Gift" which "keeps moving". So when he sings "All these years of thinking/ Ended up like this/ In front of all this beauty/ Understanding nothing" he is expressing neither despair nor bitterness. His sustained reflection has failed to come to terms with a world where "Anything Can Happen" where humanity produces such



Take Twelve

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power and tenacity to make even some of the weaker songs come alive.

Author/lyricist David Overton, a drama professor at Dal, teamed up with composer John Arnold to produce a repertory of relatively effective songs. In some cases it was the lyrics which stood out. In other cases it was the melody which carried the song. Songs such as *Back to the Sixties* and *Top Banana* were a perfect combination of clever lyrics and catchy tunes.

Director Richard Ouzounian and set and costume designer Andrew Murray should once again be congratulated for transforming the worn-down Neptune Theatre into yet another attractive stage. In keeping with the 60's theme, the set and costumes were made of brightly coloured, geometrical shapes.

For anyone interested in some light entertainment over the break, *Take Twelve*, runs from now through March 5.

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quasi-country to driving, funk-influenced grooves

The first single, currently being heard on radio, is in many ways the least successful piece on the album. "If A Tree Falls in the Forest", while passionately addressing a very serious ecological issue, seems to give in to didacticism and heavy-handedness, in both lyrics and musical accompaniment. Here the message overwhelms the medium.

Though the rest of the album covers a great deal of moral and political ground, it rarely lapses into such overt speechmaking. Cockburn seems to be growing more allusive in his lyrics, more sure in his handling of political content, with images used less to evoke a specific external reality than to convey an emotion or impression. Musically too, the fit is more exact and the sound of the band more like that heard on recent concert tours.

horrors as "Radium Rain" or "Death Squad(s)" yet this failure is offset by resurgent confidence; confidence that in spite of the temporary, flawed nature of our actions and life itself, we can be lifted up, sustained by hope and love, which is, . . . "stronger than darkness/ . . . stronger than death."

These songs affirm that the almost incomprehensible beauty which surrounds us is also present, fragile but real in the hearts and minds of all human beings. The "Pangs of Love" which provides the titles for one of the finest songs here, are evident throughout the album and Cockburn, with his poetic sense and the marvellous cohesion of words and music brought about by himself and the other musicians, has made of *Big Circumstance* a Big Event, and an unqualified success.

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