

Burning Spear reggae marathon at the Flamingo in Halifax.

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, funkinfluenced 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.

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 ecologi-

cal issue, seems to give in to

didacticism and heavy-

handedness, in both lyrics and

musical accompaniment. Here

the message overwhelms the

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.

Though the rest of the album

medium.

quasi-country to

funk-influenced grooves

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.

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 prms with a world where "Anyt ing Can Happen' where humanity produces such

Cockburn sees his role as that

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

These songs affirm that the

almost imcomprehensible beauty

which surrounds us is also pres-

ent, fragile but real in the hearts

and minds of all human beings.

The "Pangs of Love" which pro-

vides the titles for one of the finest

songs here, are evident through-

out the album and Cockburn,

with his poetic sense and the mar-

vellous cohesion of words and

music brought about by himself

and the other musicians, has

made of Big Circumstance a Big

Event, and an unqualified

death.'

success.

driving,

Take Twelve

Continued from page 12 power and tenacity to make even some of the weaker songs come alive

Author/lyricist David Overion, a drama professor at Dal. eamed 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 ombination 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 ght entertainment over the break, Take Twelve, runs from now through March 5.

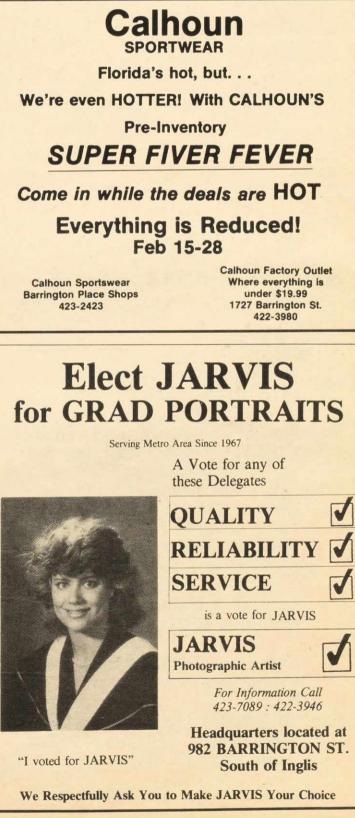
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Burning Spear, reggae giant

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 natural mystic of love blowing through the air. Each night Spear played one set lasting almost 21/2 hours with a splendid 15 minute encore. CKDU in association with Riddim Trax and Carribean 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.





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